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Brandy and the Natives of New France

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BRANDY AND THE NATIVES OF NEW FRANCE

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by

Anne Bridges

1987


APPROVAL SHEET

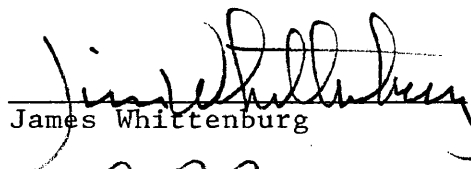
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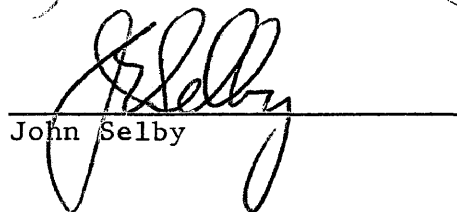

John Selby

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the role that alcohol played in the lives of Indians living in seventeenth and eighteenth-century New France.

The study begins by addressing the myth that Indians could not and still can not "hold their liquor". The assumption behind the myth is that there was/is a genetic factor in Indians which led/leads them to drink alcohol excessively and become alcoholics. By examining the records of Europeans who lived with the Indians of New France, it becomes apparent that some Indians had problems with "holding their liquor" while others did not. Not all Indians drank excessively and the myth does not hold true.

The study goes on to analyze how Indians explained drunkenness in their own terms. Indians did not have experience with alcohol prior to European contact and so explained drunkenness in terms of experiences and states that they were familiar with. Indians treated drunkenness as they did spirit possession, fast-induced dream states, and behavior at religious celebrations. All of their familiar states were sanctioned "time-out" periods in Indian culture. All behavior was accepted and individuals were not responsible for their actions.

The study concludes by examining how Indians dealt with the problems which alcohol and drunkenness introduced to their culture. Because of the nature of Indian psychology and their belief system (lack of political authority, great value on individual responsibility) internal tribal control of alcohol consumption was nearly impossible. Many Indians turned to the Europeans, both religious and civil leaders, to control Indian drinking problems. Depending on European solutions to Indian drinking problems, however, posed significant problems for Indians as if forced them to give up many aspects of their traditional philosophy, religion, and political ideals. But the traditional Indian belief system had not enabled Indians to solve their alcohol-related problems.

BRANDY AND THE NATIVES OF NEW FRANCE

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps three things the Europeans brought with them to North America most changed Indian life: disease, firearms, and alcohol. The Eastern Woodland Indians attempted to cure European diseases the way they had cured native diseases and added European firearms to the native collection of weaponry, but they had no experience with alcohol or drunkenness. The Indians treated intoxication as they did similar states in which the individual was out of control, but drunkenness introduced new problems to Eastern Woodland life that proved hard to solve.

Before the arrival of Europeans, the Eastern Woodland Indians lived on the east coast of North America in a triangle between the Carolinas, the Maritime provinces of Canada, and the western Great Lakes.¹ They were members of four language-speaking groups: Iroquoian, Algonquin, Muskogean, and Siouan. Though these people spoke different languages, their social and cultural lives were similar.

The routine of daily Indian life was broken by a wide variety of rituals and celebrations. Feasts were given after fruitful harvests, successful battles, productive hunts, and on religious occasions. Many tribes gave feasts to honor the dead after burial. And besides the traditional food-oriented feast, the Iroquois celebrated a dream feast in which everyone acted out their dreams to appease their souls.

Religion was an integral part of daily life. Although more than one observer characterized Indian religion as "idolatry of dreams" or

"superstition", the spiritual life was complex and ordered. At the top of the spiritual hierarchy was a Creator who was, unlike the European God, completely benevolent. But this Creator was not the only spirit in the cosmos. According to Indian religion every plant and animal had a spirit which could do both harm and good. Inanimate objects as well as people and animals could be possessed by spirits. The key to the spiritual world lay in dreaming.

In dreams, a person's soul revealed itself and its desires. In order to avoid antagonizing the spirits, one acted out his dreams. These dreams were interpreted by a shaman, the religious leader of an Indian village. The shaman was the only human who could communicate with the spirit world. He was consulted when someone was ill, bewitched, or acting out-of-sorts. With the arrival of European missionairies Indian religion came under attack. Priests challenged many aspects of native religion in an attempt to undermine the power of the shaman and convince Indians to convert.

Europeans also challenged aspects of native warfare that they found too gruesome, namely torture. Yet at the same time, native warfare became much more violent and deadly after European contact. Traditionally, both men and women played a role in war and peace. While young men were eager to rush to war to prove their manhood, women and elders generally wished to avoid war because of the possible loss of lives and the long absences of their husbands and sons. War, however, was more symbolic than deadly before Europeans came. Bows, arrows, and tomahawks were the primary weapons. The trajectory and speed of an arrow kept mortality rates low. War parties were often small by modern standards. Indians went to war only as a last resort.

War and peace, life and death, work and religion, the Indians of the Eastern Woodlands had a rich culture when the European explorers "discovered" them in the late fifteenth-century. By the early seventeenth-century, France increased her exploration of North America. Explorers and traders were the first Europeans to have an impact on Eastern Woodland life. Their primary motive was adventure and riches. They traveled throughout the continent and often lived among the Indians. Since exploitation of the wilderness was foremost on their minds, explorers and traders did not leave many records. This is not to say, however, that they did not have an impact on Indian life. Among other things, they were the first to introduce the Indians to firearms, European diseases, and brandy, a generic term for a wide variety of hard liquors.

The Catholic missionaries were often at odds with the explorers and traders who encouraged Indians to indulge in brandy. Unlike the explorers and traders, the missionaries left many records. Within their journals and correspondence lies a rich source of information about Indian life. Although tainted with the biases of western Europeans, these priests were acute observers of native life.

In 1610, the first group of missionaries arrived in New France; they were a group of Jesuits who settled in modern-day Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. These Jesuits stayed only one year on this first trip and were quickly replaced by the Recollects. The Recollects dominated the Canadian missions until 1629 when they were sent back to France by Cardinal Richelieu for political reasons.² Although both of the orders left records, the Jesuits were especially productive. Their meticulous documentation of their work was later published in 73 volumes;

The Jesuit Relations And Allied Documents is one of the richest sources of early Canadian history.

As France settled Canada, increasing numbers of single men immigrated to and traversed Canada trading with the Indians. These French coureurs de bois (wood runners) along with their Dutch counterparts, boslopen, often lived with the Indians and adopted native customs while they traveled through the woods. Unlike the celibate priests, French traders became involved with Indian women, sometimes marrying them, thus acquiring "sleeping dictionaries" who quickly familiarized them with Indian life. These men played an integral role in the brandy trade. They were the go-betweens for the Indians and Canadian merchants.

Besides traders and priests, members of the French army in Canada also had direct contact with Indians. During the French and Indian War, groups of Indians fought with the French against other Indians and British enemies. Very few wars involved only Europeans on one side fighting only Indians on the other. Living and fighting with the Indians, these soldiers had much contact with some aspects of Indian life and several officers left records of their sojourns in Canada. Both Louis Antoine de Bougainville and Louis Armand de Lom d'Arc left records which are doubly valuable for their comments on Indian life and the French Canadian government.

Of course, missing from the records are the Indians' comments on their own life and the French presence. These would be invaluable but are almost nonexistent. It is not impossible, however, to read between the lines of the Jesuits' and the officers' writings to get a picture of Indian life and Indian reaction to the European presence. There is an abundance of material written describing Indian reactions to alcohol.

Though the Indians had experience with uninhibited behavior, dream-

like states, and huge feasts and celebrations, they were not familiar with drunkenness. When they were introduced to alcohol they had to learn how to behave when drunk, how to explain drunkenness, and how to fit drunkenness into Indian culture. Finally, the Eastern Woodland Indians had to search for ways to solve the problems drunkenness introduced to their culture.

CHAPTER I

COULD INDIANS HOLD THEIR LIQUOR?

The stereotype of the drunken Indian who could not hold his liquor persists. The image of Indian men, half-crazed in search of brandy to quench their incredible thirst, has some validity, as all stereotypes do, but is not thoroughly understood. Drunkenness played a significant role in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Indian life. It often replaced religious rituals and secular celebrations that were being questioned, challenged, and ridiculed by the French in Canada. Intoxication was sought by many, but its results -- violence, destruction, and poverty -- threatened the peaceful existence of tribal life.

Intoxicating liquors were first brought to eastern North America with European explorers. Indians had no cultural practices to monitor their uses. The social uses of alcohol had to be borrowed from Europeans or invented by the Indians.

The stereotype of Indians unable to hold their liquor originated with European traders and settlers who witnessed Indian drinking patterns. Indians drank to become drunk and often did not stop drinking until they passed out. Most did not drink in moderation. The French priests who witnessed these drinking patterns had been members of the upper-middle class in which social drinking was the norm. They were disgusted and horrified by the Indians' excessive drinking. This is reflected in the priests' writing.

Most outrageous of Indian drinking celebrations was the brandy

feast. The purpose of this social event was for "all the Guests to get drunk."¹ Often the guests would sit in a circle and pass a jug of brandy. This continued until the jug (after many refillings) was empty.² These galas lasted anywhere from an evening to many days. Sometimes after a trader passed through an Indian village, these "debauches" would "continue for twelve or fifteen days"³, or as long as the brandy did.

If there was a large supply of brandy, people would pass out before the supply was gone. Louis de Bougainville, a captain in the French army fighting in Canada in 1757, witnessed a drinking spree and commented that the Indians "were swimming in this liquor, drinking it by the kegfulls and not leaving the keg until they fell down dead drunk."⁴

By not eating during drinking sprees, the Indians speeded up the process of intoxication. Father Claude Dablon wrote that at brandy feasts "no food is prepared or fire lighted in the Cabins..."⁵

Getting drunk was dependent on finding brandy. Often alcohol was not readily attainable by the more western tribes; getting it meant a trip to a French town or post. If the French would not sell brandy to the Indians, the Dutch in New York would. The Mohawks were especially close to the Dutch, but even for them the trek was many miles. Father Jacques Bruyas, a missionary to the Oneidas, wrote that they had "such a mania to get possession of this baneful drink that they (did) not complain of going 200 leagues to Bring three or four pots of it, into their own country..."⁶ Whether because of mania, thirst or adventure, many natives would make long voyages in pursuit of brandy. Like any trade commodity, brandy was not free. French merchants, Dutch traders, coureurs de bois, and boslopen traded it

for furs and skins which the Indians had trapped and cured. European traders were not picky, so they often accepted furs that had been worn or buried in a grave for some time. Thus, just as an Indian thought he had traded his last fur, the trader would offer to take the Indian's clothes for one more cup of brandy. Once intoxicated, the Indian was only too happy to make the exchange. Indians often returned from drinking in a French town or post nearly naked.

The brandy trade proved to be detrimental to Indian economic resources. Furs and skins that had been prepared to trade for necessities (European items that Indians had become dependent on) were instead traded for brandy. This happened both in French towns and on the hunting trail.

As Indian men returned from winter hunting trips "richly laden with beaver skins, instead of furnishing their families with provisions, clothing, and other necessary supplies, they (drank) away the entire proceeds in one day and (were) forced to pass the winter in nakedness, famine, and all sorts of deprivation."⁷ Not only did this bring economic hardship to entire tribes, but it put a strain on family relationships. Women and children remained at home awaiting the return of men piled high with furs only to be greeted by empty hands and alcoholic breaths.

It was not only the economic hardship which put a strain on family and tribal life but the drunken episodes themselves. In many tribes, men, women, and children of all ages partook in drinking. When intoxicated, friends and family abused and sometimes killed each other. Violence was in the air. Father Vincent Bigot wrote that when drunk, the Iroquois committed "a thousand insolent actions; they fight and

tear one another with their teeth; one casts one's eyes on the wounded, the dead, and on the children cast into the fire..."⁸ To a gentle bystander, the sight was gruesome.

Under normal conditions, parents did not punish their children physically. But when intoxicated, parents beat and bit their children. More than once a father threw his child into a boiling cauldron.⁹ Children were equally violent. After drinking, they "beat their parents without being punished for it."¹⁰ If family and marital relationships were strained by economic hardship, they were severely tested when husbands burned their wives and wives "disgraced" their husbands.¹¹ Under intoxication, entire tribes went crazy and no one was safe from the violence and fury.

Property as well as relationships were destroyed during drinking binges. Drunkards kicked and threw whatever was in their path. Burning was a favorite means of destruction. At an Iroquois mission "a drunken man set fire to a cabin and everything in it was burned in less than a quarter of an hour."¹² This was not atypical. Often drunks grabbed burning sticks and waved them about threatening to burn people and homes.¹³ The fright which fire caused delighted the drunkard as did its destructive potential.

More important than causing violence and damaging property, intoxication was partly responsible for the high mortality rate among Indians: tribal and family members killed each other when drunk, on drinking sprees at French posts Indians traded their clothes for brandy and froze during the night, and regular drinking reduced resistance to disease and illness. As early as 1637, Father Paul Le Jeune explained the decrease in the number of Hurons: "I would have considerable trouble to assign a natural cause for their dying so much

more frequently than they did in the past. It is attributed to the beverages of brandy and wine, which they love with an utterly unrestrained passion."¹⁴ The number of Illinois also decreased dramatically. Father Louis Vivier wrote in 1750: "When the first missionaries came among the Illinois, we see, by the writings which they have left us, that they counted five thousand persons of all ages in that Nation. Today (sixty years later) we count but two thousand."¹⁵ As drunkenness increased in tribes, their numbers decreased. Besides intoxication, increased disease and more deadly warfare also greatly increased mortality rates. All were results of Indian-European contact.

The violence, destruction, and deaths that accompanied drunkenness did not put a damper on most Indians' passion for brandy. To contemporaries, they seemed hopelessly addicted. Indians themselves believed that alcohol affected them differently than it did Europeans. Many Europeans wondered if it was not a peculiar weakness of Indians that led them to drink excessively. Recent studies argue that there is no genetic correlation between Indians and alcoholism.¹⁶ Contemporary sources indicate that there were many Indians who did not have a passion for alcohol. A blanket statement about a correlation between Indians and alcoholism is not possible.

Some Indians drank with moderation. They kept alcohol on hand and drank it socially much the way the French did. Father François de Crepieul of Tadoussac mission wrote in 1686: "I have seen Louÿs Kestabistichit, my host, keep a pint for more than ten days--and on more than four or five occasions,--and not touch what I had put in a little bottle to test him, although he knew where it was."¹⁷ Even the priest doubted the possibility of a moderate drinking Indian, but it proved

true time and again. Tall Charles, also living at Tadoussac mission, was another moderate drinker. This man "drank some Every Morning as long as his little Keg or case of Bottles lasted; he also took but one drink when he returned from hunting or from a Journey, and he told everyone that this suited him very well."¹⁸ These two men were representative of a small group who enjoyed drinking brandy in moderation.

Lest it be thought that there was something peculiar about the Tadoussac mission that caused Indians to drink with moderation, there were other social drinkers. Father Jacques Bigot of Sillery wrote that "some drink merely out of human respect, without having any great craving for liquor."¹⁹ Not all Indians were driven by a mad passion to drink all that was available.

Some who did not drink heavily traded brandy. Although the brandy trade was dominated by coureurs de bois, Indians participated in it. Of the Montagnais, Father François de Crepieul wrote: "Many have carried Barrels of Wine and of Brandy to Lake St. John more faithfully than some Frenchmen and than Some of the hired Men."²⁰ Some Indians thus took advantage of the profit involved and partook in the brandy trade.

Other Indians who did not drink moderately could still store alcohol until a brandy feast occurred. When a group of mission Algonquins decided to give up alcohol in 1650, several brought barrels full of brandy that they had hidden underground.²¹ They were not addicted in the sense that they needed alcohol daily to function. When they chose to drink, however, they got extremely drunk.

There were Indians who neither liked nor drank brandy. Several tribes which had a distaste for alcohol avoided it altogether.²² This was unusual. More typical was that certain groups within a tribe

refrained from drinking. More often than not the women and older men abstained.

Father Jacques Frémin probably exaggerated when he said that among the Iroquois in the 1660s, "the women and the old men" were not given to intemperance.²³ Although other accounts describe Iroquois women drinking, groups of them did not. Father François Vachon de Belmont, superior of the Sulpician missions, wrote in the late seventeenth-century that "almost all the old people and women do not drink...and... the important personages or captains who have the management of affairs are given to sobriety."²⁴ Among the Indians of New France, the women and older men had some interest in remaining sober.

Since childrearing was largely the responsibility of women, it was in their interest to avoid excessive drinking. When a brandy feast occurred, they were responsible for protecting their young from the violence. Since they were responsible for feeding their families, it was the women who missed the variety meat brought to cooking when their husbands returned from hunting empty-handed. When the supply of dried vegetables ran low, it was the mothers who dealt with hungry children; the fathers returned to the hunt. Women refrained from drinking in order to protect their children.

When the young and middle-aged men went out to hunt or fight, older men remained at home to build fishing traps, bows, and canoes. Being home everyday, they too saw the destitution drunkenness caused and took an interest in remaining sober.

Not only could Indians refrain from drinking when it was in their interest, they could also feign drunkenness to avoid punishment. Father Jerome Lalemant wrote that among the Ottawas "those that have any quarrels

pretend to be intoxicated in order to wreak vengeance with impunity..."²⁵ In some circumstances it obviously paid off to be both level-headed and drunk.

Indians could also get just drunk enough to excuse their actions. Father Jacques Bruyas wrote: "When our savages have received injury from any one, they get half drunk and do with impunity all that passion suggests to them."²⁶ Again and again, Indians committing violent crimes were described as "having purposely become half intoxicated."²⁷ The combination of some reason and passion worked to their advantage. They could express their anger without fear of reprisal because the liquor was blamed for their actions. And they did not have to worry about passing out in the middle of their crime because they were only half drunk.

Indians obviously could hold their liquor when they chose to do so. Since drunkenness was such a destructive force in Indian society, it is hard to imagine why they continued to become intoxicated. Yet they did.

The Indians of New France lived in a face-to-face society in which emotional restraint and inhibition were the norm. Stoicism and courage were valued. Anger, aggression, and hostility were not openly expressed toward one's tribesmen. Amiability and mildness characterized interpersonal relations. Father Belmont wrote that the Indians "quarrel little. Excesses and impurity are frowned upon among them, not so much from a motive of human respect as from a sincere abhorrence of misbehavior."²⁸ In native society there was a noticeable lack of expressed hostility and misbehavior.

Yet once alcohol was introduced to native society, many Indians took

advantage of drunkenness to commit acts they would not have otherwise done. After years of repressing anger against a fellow tribesmen, a drunken Indian could knock the senses out of him. He could kick him, bite him, or even kill him and be excused for his behavior because he had been drunk.

Since anger, hostility, and aggression could not be expressed spontaneously and overtly, they had to be expressed covertly. Traditionally, anger had been expressed in witchcraft and malicious joking. Witchcraft was especially prevalent in the causing of sickness. Father Paul Le Jeune wrote that among the Montagnais, witchcraft "is so common among them, at least in their own opinion, that I hardly ever see any of them die who does not think he has been bewitched."²⁹ If a person was accused of witchcraft, the shaman was consulted. If the shaman concurred in the verdict, and if the witch was discovered, the witch was killed.³⁰ Indirect expression of anger in the form of witchcraft had more variables than drunken violence. One had to be ill to make an accusation and the sick person had to have the shaman believe that he had, in fact, been bewitched. With drunkenness, there was less chance involved and one had the satisfaction of physically expressing anger.

Although expressed anger was absent in tribal life, joking and humor were acceptable. Indians often loaded their jokes with slander they could not otherwise express. Father Le Jeune wrote: "I do not believe that there is a nation under heaven more given to sneering and bantering than that of the Montagnais."³¹ The Micmacs also expressed resentment in their joking. Father Biard wrote in 1616: "They are droll fellows, and have a word and a nickname very readily at command if they have any occasion to look down upon us."³² Since it was not

acceptable to express anger overtly, Indians covertly expressed their anger in humor, which had the guise of amiability.

Traditionally, anger and hostility had been overtly expressed in warfare and the torture of captives. Enemies were killed and scalped and captives were burned slowly over a fire or maimed. Not all captives were tortured, but torture did happen. Drunkenness gave one the opportunity to behave violently toward one's own tribesmen and family.

Another way in which aggression had been expressed was in the acting out of one's dreams. Dreaming was a sacred experience and an integral part of Iroquoian religion. Dreaming was the means by which the soul expressed its desires. In 1642 Father Jerome Lalemant stated: "The Savages have no stronger belief than dreams; they are the Oracles which they obey as a sovereign Divinity."³³ Iroquois believed that it was important to fulfill the desires of the soul and thus act out their dreams.

Since physical illness and spiritual illness were believed to be related, a shaman often analyzed a patient's dreams to identify his illness. To heal the patient the shaman might organize the relatives and have them act out the patient's dreams. This ritual might include running through the village kicking things out of the path or striking a particular person. When a young Iroquois girl was ill, the shaman informed her parents that she had seen nine feasts in her dreams. The shaman told her parents "that if they gave these (feasts) she would be cured."³⁴ Thus, dreams were regarded as religious experiences.

Becoming drunk facilitated both dreaming and interpreting dreams. Instead of fasting and going without sleep for several days, an Indian could drink a jug of brandy to reach a dream-like state. What the soul

wanted to do was clear to the Indian and he did not need a shaman to interpret it; he acted on impulse. The soul's desire expressed in an alcohol-induced dream tended to be more violent than in a fast-induced dream. Nonetheless, the power of alcohol was included in the realm of the supernatural.

When introduced to alcohol, Indians quickly made the association between drunkenness and supernatural experiences. When in 1646 an Algonquin told another Indian about baptism, he explained: "That... is to receive a water of great importance, which effaces all the spots and stains from our souls." The Indian immediately recognized this water of baptism: "Ah!" he exclaimed, "the Dutch have often given me of that water of importance; I drank so much of it and became so tipsy that it was necessary to bind my feet and hands for fear lest I should injure some one."³⁵ From the beginning, Indians recognized the drunken experience as sacred in character.

The Indians' notion of the supernatural was challenged and ridiculed by the Jesuits who wanted to convert them to Catholicism. In fact, the Jesuits and French-Canadians alike challenged many aspects of Indian life: their religion, values, gender roles, and some of their warring practices. Drinking became a way for Indians to raise their self-esteem, a way to artificially recover the pride one felt in his Indianness.

Father Paul Le Jeune wrote that the Montagnais "imagine in their drunkenness that they are listened to with attention, that they are great orators, that they are valiant and formidable, that they are looked up to as chiefs hence this folly suits them..."³⁶ Father Belmont also believed that Indians became intoxicated to raise their self-esteem: "For the Savage, drunkenness is a voluntary frenzy which

gives them courage and impunity..."³⁷ Drinking gave Indians courage and strength during changing times.

The value of men's work was being challenged most seriously. The experiences that traditionally had been considered courageous and symbolic of true manhood were being eliminated by French influence. The Jesuits and Canadian officials often tried to prevent aspects of Indian warfare such as torture. Traditionally, warfare had been the way in which young men proved themselves to their friends and family. When the Jesuits first arrived in Canada in the early seventeenth-century, they wanted Indian men to take up farming. Originally this had been women's work and considered degrading for men to do. As the traditional means of obtaining status and displaying courage were eliminated, men turned to alcohol.

In such turbulent times, many Indians developed a thirst for alcohol. But others did not. Indians could keep, store, and trade brandy when it benefitted them. They used alcohol for their own ends: to reach a spiritual state, raise self-esteem, express anger and aggression within their tribe, and to commit acts for which they would not be held responsible. Indians could drink moderately or feign drunkenness when it was to their advantage. The stereotype of the out-of-control Indian in search of brandy is incorrect. Many were in control of the process. Of course, once they were drunk they were out of control, but that was a chosen state.

CHAPTER II

EXPLAINING DRUNKENNESS

Alcohol was not a substance known to the Indians of Canada before the arrival of Europeans. The French gave Indians alcohol, and as role models taught them that drinking made people become crazy and act out of character. But Indians had to understand drunkenness in Indian terms. They compared it to similar Indian experiences: the dream feast, Onnonhouaroia, spirit possession, and witchcraft. When drunkenness resulted in violence and destruction, the Indians blamed the French for introducing and trading alcohol to them. They initially blamed everything and everyone except themselves for the problems that resulted from drunkenness.

When a person was intoxicated he was believed to be bereft of reason. Thus when a drunk misbehaved it was not considered his fault since he was in no state to make judgement. Among the Iroquois, before drinking one would typically sing; "I am going to lose my head; I am going to drink of the water that takes away one's wits."¹ After committing a cruel act when drunk, all would excuse the drunkard's behavior lamenting "He was drunk; he had lost his reason."² Indians initially accepted this loss of reason as one of the unfortunate aspects of drinking brandy.

Since drunkards were not responsible for their destructive behavior, the blame was initially put on brandy. Indians believed that it was not personal motive, but the substance which caused the misbehavior.

After hurting a friend when drunk, an Iroquoian man told his friend:

"It is not I who wounded thee, but the drink which used my arm."³

Alcohol was believed to have infinite power to do harm.

The belief that alcohol had power to do harm was consistent with the Indians' view of spirits. They believed that there were many spirits. For example, they explained that though the sun was inanimate, it was a spiritual force which made it rise and set each day.⁴ Similarly, though brandy was a substance, it was a spirit in brandy that spoke through a drunk's mouth and acted with his arms and legs. The Indians considered the spirit in brandy to be responsible for the acts it did through a drunken person.

The Indians blamed the Europeans for exposing them to the evils of alcohol. When Father Paul Le Jeune accused an Iroquois of killing a prisoner, the Iroquois replied: "It is thou and thine who killed him; for if thou hadst not given us brandy or wine, we would not have done it."⁵ By blaming the Europeans and their brandy, the Indians denied all responsibility for their actions. Above all else, Indians did not want to admit the anger, aggression, and negative feelings that they felt toward their fellow tribesmen which caused them to harm each other when drunk.

The type of behavior that brandy induced was not unknown to the Indians. They were familiar with behavior in which the individual was out of control. When someone was ill or behaving out of character, the shaman often diagnosed them as being possessed by an evil spirit. This spirit entered one's body and caused illness or misbehavior. Brandy was believed to have a similar power. If one was possessed by an evil spirit or brandy, his behavior was uncontrollable.

Misbehavior and illness could also be the result of witchcraft. When ill or behaving strangely, Indians often accused others of practicing witchcraft and causing their problems. By accusing another of causing one's own misbehavior, Indians denied their own negative feelings and evil motives. When a person was under the influence of witchcraft, he was not responsible for his behavior. Being under the influence of alcohol was interpreted similarly; under both, any behavior was excusable because it was uncontrollable.

Drunken behavior was also interpreted in terms of dreaming. If drinking put one in a spiritual state, then the urge to behave in a particular way was actually a message from the soul. At dream feasts Indians acted out their dreams or the dreams of a sick person in order to cure an illness. Father Jacques Bruyas, missionary to the Oneidas, wrote that when a person was being healed, the other Indians' dreams "must be carried out: otherwise, one draws upon himself the hatred of all the dreamer's relatives, and exposes himself to feel the effects of the anger."⁶ As at a dream feast, a drunken Indian felt compelled to act out the desires of his soul.

The behavior exhibited at a dream feast was often violent and gruesome. Everyone was encouraged to act out all and anything that he had dreamed. Accused of cannibalism, an Indian at the Onondaga mission gave as his reason for doing so "that he was invited to a feast commanded by a dream and which They were to eat nothing but human Flesh, to be brought by those who were invited to it."⁷ Other people ran through homes breaking household utensils, or fled through the village screaming and crying. All of this behavior was expressed

to appease the spirit. Indians were not responsible for their actions at dream feasts. The dream feast and drunkenness were similar in that during both one acted out the desires of an uncontrollable force.

Another event at which people were not responsible for their behavior was Onnonhouaroia, "upsetting the brain". This was a celebration among the Iroquois and Hurons in which all social restraints came down. Any behavior was accepted during this time. It was a sanctioned "time-out".

Father Jean de Quens witnessed Onnonhouaroia among the Iroquois and wrote: "Men, women and children (are) running like maniacs through the streets and cabins...Some carry water, or something worse, and throw it at those whom they meet; others take firebrands, coals, and ashes from the fire and scatter them in all directions, without heeding on whom they fall; others break kettles, dishes, and all the little domestic outfit they find in their path."⁸ This celebration was a recognized "time-out" period in which all behavior was allowed. Nobody was responsible for his actions.

Among the Hurons, the celebration was much the same. "All the youth, and even the women and children, run about as if they were mad, insisting upon obedience being paid to their Demons by making them a present of something...which has been suggested to them in a dream."⁹ The behavior displayed at Onnonhouaroia was remarkably similar to drunken behavior. Indians seemed to go into a frenzy at both, releasing all of their pent-up anger before the "time-out" period was over.

The behavior exhibited during drunkenness was not new. It had all been exhibited before at religious and secular celebrations. The drinking practices were not new either. The ritual of the brandy feast

in which everyone drank until the alcohol was gone was consistent with the Indians' belief that gorging was good. After a harvest, there was often a huge feast at which gorging was encouraged to celebrate a good crop and to thank the spirits for making the weather conditions good. Most notorious of all the feasts was the eat-all feast. At this feast, huge meals were prepared and the guests did not leave until the food was gone. In many cases the eat-all feasts were as excessive as the brandy feasts.

Eat-all feasts often lasted several days during which there was eating, singing, dancing, and speeches; they were celebrations. Often so much food was served that guests had to vomit before they could finish their meals. A group of Hurons attended such a feast in 1637: "Finally they had to disgorge, doing so at intervals, and not ceasing on this account to continue emptying their plates...They worked at it a very long time, encouraging one another."¹⁰ The Jesuits continually preached against "the gluttonous excesses" during eat-all feasts, which left many ill.

The Jesuits were also concerned about the uninhibited sexual activity that took place during drunkenness. Although incest was taboo in the majority of northeastern tribes, when an entire tribe was drunk, this taboo was not respected. Charles Aubert de la Chesnaye wrote in 1677 that when drunk, Indians "commit a thousand abominations--the mother with her sons, the father with his daughters, the brothers with their sisters."¹¹ Sexual activity between adolescents also greatly disturbed the priests. In 1659 Father Jerome Lalemant wrote that young Ottawa men used brandy "as a philter, corrupting girls after making them drunk..."¹² When drunk, inhibitions fell, taboos were

ignored and sexual activity took place in public.

The excessive drinking of brandy brought so much violence, destruction, and public sexual activity into Indian life that the Jesuits became convinced that if only alcohol was removed from Indian society, the Indians would lead moral lives. Father Claude Chauchetiere wrote in 1678: "When drink is removed from among the Iroquois, one removes a thousand sins of impurity of which they had no knowledge before the introduction of liquor."¹³ Although this statement was true of incest, all other "sins of impurity" committed while drunk had been done before when sober at Onnonhouaroia, dream feasts, and in warfare.

Jesuits continued to support the ideal of the moral and noble savage. In opposition to French and Canadian officials, the Jesuits wanted to Catholicize Indians before civilizing them. It was in the Jesuits' interest, therefore, to present Indians as having a "robust and natural virtue."¹⁴ If Indians led moral lives without alcohol, then there was no need to civilize them before converting them. The Jesuits had to prove that alcohol caused the violent and immoral behavior of Indians. Since Canadian officials seldom witnessed Onnonhouaroia, dream feasts, and religious ceremonies, they did not witness Indians' violent behavior when sober. This ignorance made it easy for the Jesuits to say that drunkenness was the cause of Indians' immoral, destructive, and violent behavior.

Although most behavior exhibited in drunkenness had, in fact, occurred before alcohol was introduced, there were important differences between drunken behavior and traditional "time-out" or religiously sanctioned behavior. When Indians were drunk, they inflicted bodily

harm on members of the tribe. Traditionally only tribal enemies were hurt physically. Even during Onnonhouaroia, rarely was a fellow tribesman seriously hurt. People were not shot, noses and ears were not bitten off, and children were not burned in cauldrons. Drunken violence inflicted on family and friends put a strain on tribal relations. This strain was apparent when Christian Indians fled to missions and praying towns to avoid the problems which drunkenness had caused.

Destruction and violence became more frequent once alcohol was introduced to Indians. Onnonhouaroia had occurred only once a year, dream feasts only when someone was seriously ill (serious illness increased dramatically with European contact), and the killing of witches only rarely. Depending on the availability of brandy, drinking sprees occurred much more regularly.

Whereas Onnonhouaroia, dream feasts, and witchcraft were strictly Indian affairs, drunkenness involved Europeans. Indians were dependent on traders for their brandy. If they drank in French towns, Indians often came into conflict with the French, causing Canadian officials to interfere in the Indian judicial system. Since Indians wanted to control their own affairs, this was an unfortunate aspect of drinking brandy.

Indians understood drunkenness in terms of experiences they were familiar with--the dream feast, Onnonhouaroia, spirit possession, and witchcraft--experiences in which the individual was acceptably "out of control". By not accepting responsibility for their actions when drunk, Indians made it hard for themselves to maintain control of tribal life. Yet control was needed because drunkenness was breaking families, causing poverty, and reducing the number of Indians.

CHAPTER III

DEALING WITH DRUNKENNESS

Indian drunkenness created problems for Indians and Jesuits alike. For the Indians, the effects of drunkenness were devastating: poverty, broken family and tribal relations, destruction of property, violence, and death. The Jesuits also saw the detrimental effects of drunkenness on Indian society but also worried that drunkenness greatly hindered their efforts to convert the Indians. Both Indians and Jesuits tried to eliminate drunkenness from tribal and mission life, but with mixed success. Antagonism from non-Christian Indians, French Canadian traders, and government officials impeded their progress, though some success with temperance was achieved.

Indian leaders and chiefs, frustrated that their tribes could not practice temperance, approached Jesuit and French Canadian leaders and asked them to take action against the brandy trade. As early as 1632, Father Paul Le Jeune wrote of the Iroquois: "Some of their Captains have come to plead with the French not to sell them brandy or wine, saying that they would be the cause of death of their people."¹ Fifty years later, the Indians were still pleading with the French to stop the brandy trade. Of the Abenakis, Father Jacques Bigot wrote: "There is nothing more usual to see savages, both men and women, come to beg me to prevent the French of our district from giving them excessive quantities of liquor..."² But the Indians quickly came to realize that simply asking the French to stop the liquor trade did

little good.

Understanding the importance of the written word, many Indians asked the Jesuits to write to France to ask the authorities to stop sending brandy by ship. In 1642 Father Richard wrote that the Indians of the Baie des Chaleurs told him: "Write to France, and tell the Captains to send ships here, and not to send us any more of the poisons that destroy us, that take away our senses, and cause us ultimately death."³ The Abenakis who lived near the English also took this form of action. They planned to go to the "Deputy of English" and say to him: "Thou deputy of Pleimont (Plymouth) and Boston, paint our words on paper, and send them to those on whom thou art dependent; and say to them that all the allied savages dwelling on the river Kenebek hate firewater as much as they hate the Hiroquois; and that if they have any more of it brought hither to sell the Savages, the latter will believe that the English wish to exterminate them."⁴ Though the written words usually arrived in Europe (if sent in care of the Jesuits), the authorities in Europe rarely made attempts to stop the brandy trade.

Frustrated that neither the French nor the English would stop the brandy trade, several tribes simply left their native country and settled elsewhere to avoid the temptations and harassment of brandy traders. Father Thierry Beschefer wrote in 1683 that "many have left Nipissing--which is their country--to avoid occasions in which they do not feel themselves strong enough to resist the excessive tendency that all savages have for drunkenness, and the solicitations of the french, who spare no pains to allure them to it."⁵ The Abenakis, who had been living near English settlements, warned Father Jacques Bigot in 1684 that they had already moved once to avoid English

traders and could move again if the French traders pursued them.

"Watch the french well, so that they may not intoxicate any of our people. We are going away from the English soley because they tormented us too much, and would give us nothing but liquor for all our peltries; and we see many frenchmen who wish to do the same."⁶ Predictably, the French did not leave the Abenakis alone. Although moving to avoid traders initially seemed like a good idea, as the years went by the coureurs de bois penetrated even the most inland tribes with their brandy. There was little escape from the traders.

Another alternative to avoid the temptations and problems associated with drunkenness was simply to not buy brandy. This proved easier said than done, but apparently the Algonquins had some success with this. In 1683 Father Beschefer wrote that "they are beginning to have a horror of the evil ways into which it has cast them. Some time ago, they even twice sent back two Canoes loaded with brandy, which the french brought to them..."⁷ If a tribe or its leader could ban brandy drinking, the intoxication problems would have been solved.

Most chiefs, however, could not stop their tribes from becoming intoxicated. Tribes had trouble achieving effective internal control. Instead, they continually looked to the Jesuits and the French to stop the brandy trade. An Abenaki said in 1683: "We have long desired that we should be really prevented from drinking. We could not do it of ourselves, without an order from the great Captain (French governor)-both against our drunkards and against the French who make us drink almost in spite of ourselves."⁸ In fact, it was a two-sided problem. Yet the Indian chiefs could not do their part in stopping their tribal members from becoming intoxicated because traditionally they had no

coercive power, only persuasive authority.

When the English and French encountered the various Indian tribes, they imagined the chiefs' power to be much like that of a European king or ruler. They assumed that the chief could control the tribesmen's actions. But the Indian chief's primary role was as an advisor, not a ruler. He did not set laws, command, or punish. He advised the tribe on military and agricultural matters. Father Jerome Lalemant wrote that "from the beginning of the world to the coming of the French, the Savages have never known what it was so solemnly to forbid anything to their people, under any penalty, however slight. They are free people each of whom considers himself of as much consequence as the others; and they submit to their chiefs only in so far as it pleases them."¹⁰ A Huron chief said "Our Generals and Presidents of the Council have not more Power than any other Huron; that Detraction and Quarelling were never heard among us; and in fine, that everyone is his own Master, and does what he pleases, without being accountable to another, or censur'd by his Neighbour."¹¹ The Indian chief was obviously not the equivalent of a European king, intendant, or governor; he had a different role altogether.

The political organization and psychology of the Indians prevented effective tribal-wide restrictions on drinking brandy and doling out punishment for law-breakers. Indian culture placed a high value on independence and individual responsibility, which led to a relative absence of political authority. Father Christien LeClerc wrote: "In a word, they hold it as a maxim that each one is free: that one can do whatever he wishes: and that it is not sensible to put constraint on men."⁹ Each person was responsible for his own behavior.

The lack of political authority in Indian society made it extremely difficult for tribes to control their consumption of brandy. Chiefs had to turn to Europeans to stop their own tribal members from drinking. And the Jesuits were only too happy to help.

Living with Indians, Jesuits saw the destruction that intoxication brought to native life. But the Jesuits' opposition to the brandy trade also stemmed from their belief that brandy was the major impediment to native conversion to Christianity. Father Jean de Lamberville wrote in 1682 that "the greatest evil done here by drunkenness is, that its consequences utterly estrange the savages from Christianity."¹² Living among the Illinois in 1723 Father Sebastien R  le wrote: "among the Savages this liquor is the greatest obstacle to Christianity, and is the source of countless numbers of the most enormous crimes."¹³ Father Claude Dablon believed that if brandy were banished from an Iroquois village in 1675, "we would see the whole of that village become Christian."¹⁴ To the Jesuits, brandy was the biggest obstruction to their otherwise successful evangelizing.

The Indians themselves often blamed brandy for their low number of conversions. Father Richard wrote that at the Miscou mission in 1646 "they themselves say that they would all be Christians by this time, were it not for the liquor that is traded to them."¹⁵ Both Indians and Jesuits recognized that continual intoxication impeded the process of conversion to Christianity.

But perhaps the Jesuits were overconfident when they declared that drunkenness was the major obstacle to conversion or that an entire village would become Christian if it were not for brandy. There were other impediments to conversion as well. Father Joseph Germain believed

that the English were one of the obstacles to conversion of the Iroquois. In 1711 he wrote that "the English constitute one of the greatest obstacles that we have to encounter in connection with the propagation of the Faith and the conversion of the infidels... They frequently intoxicate them, in order to excite them against the missionaries..."¹⁶ Father Louis Vivier believed that the Illinois' laziness as well as drunkenness impeded their conversion.

Besides the English and the Indians' laziness, Father Jacques Frémin believed that the Indians' "jugglers", their shamans, greatly discouraged conversion. The shamans interpreted the Indians' dreams and encouraged them to act out those of particular significance. "This", Father Frémin wrote, "is the greatest obstacle that these people have to the faith, and it may be said to be the stumbling block of Christianity...."¹⁷ In fact, Father Frémin went on to say that many people in the Iroquois tribe he lived with did not drink brandy, thus alcohol was not the major obstacle to their conversion.

Actually, there were many obstacles to the Indians' conversion. A primary one, as Father Frémin noted, was that the Indians already had a religion. Christianity did not fill a void or vacuum. Since religion was such an integral part of Indian life, converting to Christianity was considered by many a form of cultural suicide. Sober and drunken Indians alike challenged missionaries and converts because they realized that the Christians were giving up important aspects of native life.

Each mission was harassed and attacked by native traditionalists. In 1672 Father Claude Chauchetière wrote of the Sault St. Louis mission: "the onnontague (Onondaga), with his usual plots undertook to destroy

our little church through his treacheries, under pretext of an embassy; and these men became ministers of hell by sowing false reports. They said much evil of the faith. They exaggerated the unhappy lot, as they said, of our christians, who were then on probation...."¹⁸ Though Father Chauchetiere meant the converting Indians' somber behavior to be temporary (thus the word "probation") the Onondagas did not understand this. They found the Christian Indians' behavior frustrating. Why were they converting to a religion that required "unhappy" behavior?

Much of the traditionalists' aggression was directed against the missionaries and the converts. Claude Dablon wrote in 1675 that at the Mohawk mission several nonconverted Indians were frenzied that their relatives had become Christians. He wrote of one Iroquois in particular: "one of his relatives who could not endure that he should become a Christian, having purposely become half intoxicated, threw himself upon him; he snatched away the rosary and the crucifix that Assendasse wore suspended from his neck, and threatened to kill him if he would not renounce all those things."¹⁹ Mission property as well as rosaries and crucifixes was destroyed in attempts to force Christian Indians to give up their new way of life.

The threatening of a convert with death if he did not renounce Christianity was not an isolated incident. At Sault St. Louis in 1694, Father Chauchetiere wrote that "We count three or 4 martyrs there, who have been burned by their own kindred in their very cabins, because they refused to abandon the faith and the french."²⁰ Converting was taken very seriously by relatives of Christian Indians; often they would do anything to stop this form of cultural suicide.

Other Indians accosted missionaries and Christian Indians verbally.

At a baptism in 1637, the Hurons present were shown a picture of hell. The damned were shown "with serpents and dragons tearing out their entrails."²¹ When told by the Jesuit priest that those portrayed in the picture were sinners, the native Hurons countered that instead they were converts. Non-Christians tried any means they could to stop their relatives from abandoning their traditional ways.

Taking a vow of temperance was symbolic of discarding traditional values and of converting to Christianity because all missionaries denounced drunkenness. After abandoning intoxication, Christian Indians in turn tried to stop their family members and friends from drinking. This infuriated the non-Christians. When an Iroquois Christian woman broke an earthen jar of brandy because she was annoyed with the drunkenness of her fellow tribesmen, one of the drinkers became furious. He "said aloud that we (drinkers) should not survive so great a loss to a Christian. About midnight he ran to our Lodging; He furiously entered the chapel, and after aiming at my brother a pistol, without effect, grappled with him."²² Such instances were not uncommon because most non-Christians did not want to be denied their right to become intoxicated. Drunkenness ironically became symbolic of one's Indianness.

Indians believed that adopting Christianity meant more than giving up their native religion. Since Indian religion was integrated into every other aspect of Indian life (war, agriculture, justice, medicine), giving up religion was tantamount to rejecting traditional life. This was the major obstacle to Christian conversion.

But the Jesuits continued to believe that drunkenness was the greatest obstacle to conversion. In order to increase conversions

and alleviate the destruction that accompanied drunkenness, the Jesuits tried to eliminate intoxication from Indian life. Many Indians appreciated their help. In "flying" missions (those in which a priest followed and lived with a tribe in their native country) the Jesuits had little success in preventing intoxication because they did not have the authority to enforce (or establish) rules. The Jesuits' greatest success with temperance was seen in the missions.

Sault St. Louis was perhaps the most successful Jesuit mission. Sault St. Louis was originally located several miles from Montreal but moved four times, always farther from the French town. The Jesuits encouraged these moves because the French in Montreal were continually tempting the Indians with brandy and thus undermining the Jesuits' attempts at keeping the mission alcohol-free. Explaining the recent move, Father Chauchetiere wrote in 1694: "we all desire...to see ourselves so far away from the french with our beloved savages that we may no longer have stumbling blocks."²³ Away from the French settlers, the Jesuits had better control of Indian life at the missions.

The residents of Sault St. Louis, primarily Iroquois, lived, in general, Indian-style. The cabins in which they lived were traditional Iroquois longhouses. Native languages were spoken and traditional roles kept; men went off to hunt in the winter and women worked in the fields in the summer. Daily life, however, revolved around the Catholic church. Indians who lived in the village were encouraged to convert. Mass was given twice daily, confession once a week, and Sundays were devoted to church activity. One did not need to be a baptized Catholic to live at Sault St. Louis, one simply had to follow the three rules of the mission: no alcohol, no polygamy,

and no belief in "superstition" or the "idolatry" of dreams.

These rules were established by the Jesuits who found polygamy and "superstition" (native religion) incompatible with Catholicism and the effects of alcohol both an impediment to conversion and a destructive force in Indian society. The rules were enforced by elected Indian captains, four at a time. Indians thus regulated their own daily life, and total authority did not lie with the Jesuits.

For those Indians who wished to give up brandy, Sault St. Louis (and other Jesuit missions) became a haven from the drunken violence of tribal life. By 1671 Father Chauchetiere noted that among the Iroquois "I am off to La Prairie", the first site of the Sault mission, had become a proverb which implied "I give up drink and polygamy."²⁴ The Sillery mission was also known as a haven from drunkenness. Father Vincent Bigot wrote that it was the "fame of this excellent regulation" (no alcohol) which caused the Iroquois to "leave their own country... and settle down in this territory...."²⁵ Indians from many tribes flocked to the missions knowing beforehand the rules and lifestyle to be expected there. In fact, it was the promise of alcohol-free living that motivated many Indians to leave family and friends to start over. The promise of community temperance was one of the major forces that populated the missions. Once at the missions, most Indians converted to Catholicism, which reinforced their decision to live sober lives.

Catholicism introduced a new psychology as well as religion to Indians. Jesuit priests taught Indians that man was, by nature, evil. Man was tainted with original sin and thus destined to sin. This countered the Indians' belief that man was naturally good. The priests also taught that when man sinned, God was displeased. To appease

God, man had to repent and punish himself. To prevent sinning, men instituted rules to control their behavior. These new concepts countered the Indians' philosophy, psychology, and political organization which lacked a formal set of written rules and corporal punishment. With the adoption of punishment for drunkenness, Indians could better control their consumption of alcohol.

Many Indians adopted Catholicism with great fervor and inflicted severe self-punishment for any sin they committed. Christian Indians denied themselves entrance to church, whipped themselves, wore hair shirts, and stood naked in the snow to punish themselves. A group of Algonquins and Hurons at Tadoussac mission punished themselves in 1650 for sins they had committed some time earlier: "Some--touched with regret at having offended God having allowed themselves on former occasions, to be beguiled by the intoxicants which the French bring them--protested loudly and publicly that they were unworthy to draw near the image of Jesus Christ; and requested that they should be permitted only to kiss the pavement of the Church."²⁶ These new Christians had quickly come to respect the sacredness of the Church.

Indians also physically abused themselves for breaking Church laws. In 1646 at Sillery a group of Indians drank excessively and wished to punish themselves. They obtained a whip and severely flogged each other. The shoulders of none were spared.²⁷ Drinking was one of the main sins that the Jesuits preached against, and thus Indians contrived the worst punishments they could fathom to repent for intoxication.

At Tadoussac mission in 1648 alcohol was deemed responsible for many of the disorders which had occurred while Father Jerome Lalemant

was away. When he returned, the guilty "pronounced their own sentence, which they carried out. They climbed up inaccessible rocks and there, exposed to the view of all who stood below and of the French themselves, who anchored in front of the mountain, they caused themselves to be given heavy blows with scourges upon their shoulders--more or less severely, according to the grievousness of their sin."²⁸ The French who witnessed this display were most likely astounded at the dedication that these recent converts displayed.

Deeply affected by the evangelism of the Jesuits, the converts attempted to stop their fellow tribesmen from becoming intoxicated since this was a sin and thus an insult to God. One Christian returned to Onnontague "where His former companions in debauchery at once approached Him, offering him brandy, and asking him to drink with them. He took it, and after thanking them, spilled it all in their presence, reproaching with the misconduct into which it led Them."²⁹

In 1682 an Iroquois woman, recently converted, became greatly annoyed with some drunkards in her vicinity. "She broke in pieces a great earthen jar containing their brandy, after reproaching them with their indifference to their Salvation."³⁰ The drunkards became angry and a large brawl took place.

Recognizing the sinfulness of drunkenness led some Christian Indians to approach French Canadian leaders and demand that they take action against the brandy trade. In 1681, Estienne, an Abenaki from the Sillery mission, went to a French establishment where his relative was drinking. He "seized the bucket, spilled all the wine, and himself went, with his brother and nephew to lay a complaint before Monsieur the Intendant (Jacques Duchesneau) against the frenchman

who had given the Savage an excessive quantity of liquor."³¹ Despite Christian Indians fervor in wishing to stop their friends and family from drinking, approaching French Canadian leaders only rarely succeeded.

Despite all the antagonism and temptation, several missions were successful in remaining relatively alcohol-free. Their success was attributable to a unique combination of dedicated Indians who adopted Catholicism wholeheartedly and zealous priests who worked hard to keep the missions temperate. When rumor spread that there was a threat of brandy entering the missions, the Jesuits responded quickly.

In 1679 a Frenchman set up trade in a cabin in Caughnawaga, the town where Sault St. Louis was then located. The Frenchman began as a gunsmith, but rumor quickly spread that he planned to introduce brandy to his trade. The Jesuits recognized the threat involved and quickly approached the intendant, Jacques Duchesneau, who ordered the man to leave the village.³² This sort of quick action prevented problems before they could develop. Although the Jesuits had little success affecting legislation and long-term solutions, they were more effective with incidents like the gunsmith--they came up with short term solutions to the larger problem.

Also in 1679, there was talk of a trade house being opened above Sault St. Louis which would sell brandy. Though there was a law forbidding the sale of brandy to the Indians of Sault St. Louis, the tradesmen planned to have the law revoked. Again, the Jesuits acted quickly. Father Jacques Frémin made a trip to France to speak to officials there about preventing the opening of the trade house. The trade house never opened, and the Jesuits believed it was because of

Father Frémin's voyage. Father Chauchetière wrote that the "adroitness of father fremin together with his zeal, checked the progress of this wretched traffic and saved his flock from the waves of the red sea which were likely to swallow it."³³

The Jesuits had limited success in influencing French Canadian law. In 1673 Governor Louis de Buade de Frontenac passed a law forbidding the sale of brandy to Indians of Sault St. Louis, but this law was not passed because of his concern for the Indians. It was passed because when Frontenac was building a fort at Cataracouy, Father Jacques Frémin supplied Frontenac with the flour to feed his workmen. To show his appreciation, Frontenac passed the law. Three years later, however, Frontenac allowed a saloon to open near the mission with the provision that alcohol not be sold to the Indians of Sault St Louis, a provision that was hard to enforce.

Other laws also were not enforced. In 1679 Louis XIV forbade anyone from taking brandy to Indian villages. The law further stated that in French towns Indians were only allowed to buy a limited amount of alcohol, not enough to make them drunk. Since Indians specifically drank to become intoxicated, the law was hard to enforce.³⁴

Many of the missions' problems with intoxication were due to the Canadians officials' refusal to pass and enforce effective laws. The official French position with regard to the brandy trade was to encourage it. Louis XIV wanted Canada to be a profitable colony and the brandy trade was extremely lucrative. Brandy was the primary item that the Indians wanted to trade for their furs. Furs were the primary resource of Canada and brandy stimulated the trade. Many including Jean Talon, the intendant during the late seventeenth-century,

believed that the prosperity of New France was due to the brandy trade.³⁵

An argument was made that if the French did not sell the Indians brandy, the Indians would take their furs to the English and Dutch who would give them brandy. Though this possibility was greatly feared, it was not an entirely persuasive argument. The Iroquois were situated between New France and New York and would not let other Indians through to trade with the Dutch as the Iroquois preferred to play the role of middlemen. Canadians opposed to the brandy trade believed that the Indians would remain loyal to the French with or without brandy. The Chevalier de Vaudreuil believed that banning brandy would not hinder Canadian trade: "it has been claimed that if the Indians didn't get brandy from us they would go to the English. I can assure you that even if a few drunkards did go to them, twice as many others would come to us."³⁶ Nevertheless, many believed the brandy trade to be an integral part of the Canadian economy to be preserved at all costs.

French Canadian leaders (most notably Frontenac) had personal economic interests in the brandy trade and thus did not enforce the few laws that were passed. Frontenac would not pass any rule hindering the trade or enforce any that other officials had enacted.

Frontenac and Jean Baptiste Colbert, the French minister, not only wanted profit from the brandy trade, they had a personal dislike of the Jesuits. In the French Canadian officials' quest for power, they saw the Jesuits as competitors since the priests had much control over the Indians and often tried to influence Canadian laws. When Father Claude Dablon petitioned Frontenac for land at the Sault, Frontenac evaded signing the deed. Frontenac wrote to Colbert that the Jesuits

wanted to move so that the French could not watch them "at close quarters."³⁷ In 1677 Louis XIV ordered Frontenac to sign the deed.

Several Frenchmen visiting Canada during the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries commented on the inefficiency of the government there. Louis Armand de Lom d'Arc was in Canada from 1683-1693 as an officer of the colonial army. He commented on the hostility between the various leaders of the colony: "But the most important alteration (to Canadian government) would consist in keeping the Governours, the Intendants, the Supreme Council, the Bishops, and the Jesuits from splitting into Factions, and making clubs one against another, for the consequence of such Divisions can't but thwart His Majesty's Service and the Peace of the Publick."³⁸ The hostility between the various leaders greatly hindered consistent public policy. Louis de Bougainville commented on the inefficient government in 1757. "In brief", he said, "it is a land monstrous in politics."³⁹ The hostility between the Jesuits and the French Canadian leaders severely impeded any progress towards compromise or effective legislation.

As the Jesuits did not have much success influencing French Canadian laws, they exerted their force within the Church of New France. In May 1659 Bishop Laval issued a proclamation that anyone caught selling brandy to the Indians would be excommunicated from the Church.⁴⁰ The threat of excommunication did little to solve the brandy problem among the Indians because most of the coureurs de bois were not as good Catholics as the Indians of the missions. Finally in 1679, twenty years after the proclamation, Louis XIV ordered the bishop to withdraw his threat of excommunication.

Because of the antagonism of traders, French Canadian officials,

and non-Christian Indians, many missions had periodic problems with drunkenness causing Christian Indians to leave the missions dissatisfied. In 1685 Father Jacques Bigot wrote that "nine or ten Cabins left the Sault mission last year, because they said that they had withdrawn there solely to live in peace, far from the orders caused by temperance; but they found themselves as greatly annoyed by drunkards as they were in their own country."⁴¹ Thus, though Sault St. Louis was one of the most successful missions, it still wrestled with the problems of drunkenness.

Drunkenness was never completely removed from Indian society, although Indians and Jesuits alike worked to reach that goal. The most successful results were reached in the missions where strict rules were established and enforced. There was a drawback with mission life, however. Indians had to give up major elements of their traditional religion, philosophy, and political ideals upon entering Christian society. But the traditional belief system had not allowed the Indians to effectively deal with and control their drunkenness. Catholicism offered one way for the Indians of New France to structure their lives without drunkenness.

CONCLUSION

Drunkenness was never eliminated from Indian life. It is still associated with the "downfall" of native Indian culture and life. The concept of the "downfall" of native culture is faulty, however, because it assumes that the culture of Indians "should" have remained static in pre-Columbian "purity". No culture is static; it is changing. Nonetheless, most of the problems the Eastern Woodland Indians dealt with in the colonial period are attributed to alcohol and drunkenness. But drunkenness was only one problem among several that the Indians experienced. Disease and firearms also greatly changed Indian life.

European firearms transformed Indian warfare into a much more deadly affair. Entire bands of warriors were killed by these guns. Losing a group of warriors quickly brought a village to poverty because the warriors were the strongest and bravest men who would have otherwise hunted and fished to help feed and clothe the tribe. European firearms also changed the nature of hunting. Whereas before hunting had been a strenuous as well as ritualistic activity, guns made hunting easier, making it possible to kill more animals in less time. Often, in fact, Indians killed excessive numbers of animals, more than needed for food and clothing, in order to trade their pelts for alcohol.

So, European firearms went hand in hand with alcohol as factors that both increase Indian mortality rates and inticed Indians to kill larger and larger numbers of animals native to the east coast.

As animals such as beavers became increasingly hard to find, the Indians had to go farther west in search of pelts to trade. Moving west they invariably came into conflict with the western Indians whose hunting grounds they were using.

Not only did certain animals become nearly extinct during the colonial period, but some villages of Indians were almost completely wiped out by disease. When Europeans first discovered North America, the Indians had had no contact with peoples of any other continent for thousands of years. They were a "virgin soil population" and had not had a chance to build immunities to European diseases. Smallpox, colds, and simple viruses killed entire villages of Indians. In fact, alcohol was much less lethal than warfare and disease. Although the killings and deaths occurring during drunken brawls were gruesome, they were undoubtedly fewer than deaths from disease and warfare.

As large numbers of their people died, the Eastern Woodland Indians began to question their own belief system and lifestyle. Many wondered whether European civilization might not be superior since Europeans could withstand most disease. And before the Indians acquired European firearms in large numbers, surely the European intruders were awesome and unstoppable in their power to destroy human life. Once the Indians acquired guns, both Europeans and Indians died during warfare, but the Europeans were always more than ready to arm the "friendly" Indians against the "enemies," thus reducing European casualties. Alcohol, firearms, and disease, therefore, worked together in causing the Indians to question the superiority of their own culture and belief system.

Alcohol was by no means the only problem Europeans introduced to

Eastern Woodland society. Many of the problems that were attributed to the introduction of alcohol were not due totally to intoxication. In some senses, alcohol was a scapegoat for the Jesuits who had a hard time explaining why more natives were not converting. Obviously the brandy feasts were directly due to brandy, but the behavior that the Indians displayed at these extravaganzas was not new. All had occurred before, with the exception of incest, when the Indians had been sober. Nonetheless, alcohol introduced some lasting changes to Indian society. Since alcohol was readily available, uninhibited "time-out" behavior took place much more often than it had before the Europeans arrived. This disrupted the daily and seasonal routine of native life.

Another lasting change to native life was the Indians' growing dependence on Europeans for brandy. Their thirst drove Indians into constant contact with coureurs de bois and merchants. The more contact the Indians had with these Europeans the more they felt the effects of Europeans' attempts to change the natives into "civilized" people.

As Indians adopted European practices and merchandise and converted to Catholicism, they succumbed more readily to drunkenness. In fact, Nancy Lurie argues that Indians of the modern United States still drink as a means of retaining their Indian identity. Throughout history, Indians have wanted to succeed in their lives according to Indian goals and standards. When their success has been thwarted, Indians have turned to alcohol as a means of retaining their Indian identity.

As the colonial period closed in New France and New England, white Americans and Canadians continued to attempt to put a damper on Indian drinking as the Jesuits had. In the United States, the General Indian

Intercourse Act of 1832 prohibited Indians from buying or drinking alcohol. This law was in effect until 1953.¹ In Canada a series of Indian Acts prohibited the possession and drinking of alcohol by Indians. In the 1950s Canadian Indians were finally allowed to drink alcohol, but only in public places and not on the reservations. Finally, in 1968, all bans on Indian drinking were lifted in Canada.² Besides the obvious denial of civil rights, these laws and acts stopped the Indian community from developing moderate drinking patterns.

But it was not only whites who tried to stop Indians from drinking alcohol; various Indian leaders also attempted to curb Indian drinking practices. One of the first, and certainly one of the most charismatic, was Handsome Lake of the Seneca. Handsome Lake founded a religious movement (which continues to the present day) that had as a central theme the prohibition of alcohol. In the early nineteenth-century Handsome Lake began preaching his Code and from that point on his followers avoided the use of alcohol. Other prophets and religious leaders have also denounced the use of alcohol by Indians.

Both white Americans and Canadians as well as Indian leaders have attempted to legally curb Indian drinking as a means of solving problems that Indian drunkenness has brought to both Indian and white communities. Among Indians, alcoholism and alcohol-related illnesses are the greatest health problems today. The three leading causes of death among Indians are all alcohol-oriented: cirrhosis of the liver, suicide, and homicide. For the U.S. as a whole, cardiovascular illness, cancer, and accidents are the leading causes of death. Thus the Indian community has a unique, or at least more concentrated, health problem.³

Indian drinking today affects the white community in the form of

Indian crime. Whereas liquor-law violations, drunk driving, and public drunkenness constitute the basis for one-third of all arrests in the United States and Canada, they constitute the basis for three-fourths of all Indian arrests in the two countries.⁴ And of all homicides committed by Indians in the United States, in ninety percent alcohol was a factor.⁵ Since Indian drinking affects the white community, white leaders as well as Indian leaders remain active in the struggle to reduce Indian drinking problems.

There are no easy solutions today just as there were none in the colonial period. Perhaps "do-good" white Americans use alcohol as a scapegoat just as the Jesuits did to explain why American Indians have not assimilated completely into white society. Nonetheless, it is useful to trace the patterns of Indian drinking back to their origins, to the colonial period of Canadian and United States history. For it is at that point that drunkenness assumed its present form and function in Indian society.

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