"Nagging Wife" Revisited: Women and the Fur Trade in New France

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Les femmes jouaient un rôle important dans le commerce des ressources naturelles en Nouvelle-France. Cet article fournit des exemples de la participation des femmes de l'élite dans le commerce des fourrures, puis montre que les femmes du peuple s'impliquaient aussi dans cette économie de diverses façons. L'auteur conclue à la nécessité d'examiner de nouveau les interprétations variées de la condition féminine en Nouvelle-France, y compris ses propres recherches antérieures. Les recherches les plus récentes sur les femmes en Europe montrent que la production et le commerce féminins n'étaient pas du tout exceptionnels dans les sociétés préindustrielles. La participation active des femmes dans l'économie de la Nouvelle-France fut donc tout à fait normale.

The "Nagging Wife" alludes to a phrase written in the 1960s by a highly influential historian of New France, William J. Eccles. He and the other brilliant proponent of the frontier thesis in Canada, Richard Colebrook Harris, made scant allusion to women. Harris perceived young women as a "pull" factor that drew male *habitants* into the fur-trade regions: "the attraction of the fur trade for so many inhabitants is not easily explained. . . . Perhaps the complete independence which a man found in the forest, not to mention the charms of willing Indian girls, was compensation." Eccles, on the other hand, portrayed women as the "push" factor: "Canadians. . . . were men of broad horizons . . . were a wife to nag too constantly, some of them at least could hire out as *voyageurs* for the west."[1]

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But how, historians today are likely to ask, did the *wife* feel as her man headed west towards such enticements? What did the Amerindian "girls" think of these rogue Frenchmen crashing through the bush in their direction? The forest that represented sexual or economic opportunity for restless men entailed a somewhat more complex role for women than "the nag I left behind me." Fortunately, historians of fur-trade marriages have already made the necessary deconstruction of the ever-so-willing Indian maiden, showing that the motivations of fur-trade couples went far beyond sexual gratification.[2] The European wife on the St. Lawrence, however, still stands in need of historical attention. As Micheline Dumont pointed out, even by the year 2000 the history of women had shown little impact on Quebec historiography. In his *Concise Business History of Canada*, Peter Baskerville further observed that "Historians have yet to study systematically the role played by women in business in New France." [3] My own forthcoming book *Lines on Snow: Tracking Women in Early French Canada* strives for a fuller portrayal of the female colonist. Among other things, the book names several hundred women involved in the trade of various natural resources that supplied both regional and international markets. As for the present short paper, the first part confines itself to a sampling of various forms of female involvement in the fur trade, using data uncovered by myself and other historians. The second part situates Canadian activities within broader patterns of preindustrial work.

INVOLVEMENT OF ELITES

By far the leading exports from New France were the furs and hides of animals.[4] Many came from the *pays d'en haut* around the Upper Great Lakes, and (as the French regime progressed) further west, others from the Mississippi Valley. Pelts and marine oils were also taken from the Tadoussac and Labrador posts. The trade included many spin-off activities such as provisioning or servicing the posts, at which military and trade functions were inseparable.

There were substantial dealers at the forts and missions. Madeleine Roybon d'Allone, who may have been romantically linked with the explorer de La Salle, was the daughter of the carver-general at the French court, and perhaps arrived as one of the *filles du roi* drawn from the lesser nobility. She was about 30 years old in 1675 when she was granted seigneurial land near Fort Cataraqui, where she evidently set up trade with native allies before enduring long captivity among the Iroquois. Free

again, she was implicated in the trade of the fort in 1700 and expressly forbidden to trade brandy in a 1708 decree. In 1717 she petitioned the Marine Council on her own behalf, and on that of others, to continue the Cataraqui trade, at which time Governor Vaudreuil advised the Crown that commerce had always been the petitioners' main interest.[5] The St. Joseph River post (near Niles, Michigan) had as its buyer the widow Monfort, who in 1742 came to Quebec to purchase some eleven thousand *livres* worth of cloth, guns and shot, kettles, and axes to take back.[6]

Officers' wives form a significant group. At Fort Detroit, Commander Alphonse de Tonty made himself unpopular by charging exorbitant prices for goods and services. His first wife was in 1707 accused of usurping trading privileges. There was, after all, the usual cramped salary and copious family (wife number one gave birth to the last of 13 infants before expiring in 1713). After Tonty's death, his second wife, Marie-Anne La Marque, would petition for Crown assistance, asserting, "I have worked all my life." It seems she had. She bore 15 children by her first husband. Subsequently, as "Veuve La Pipardière," she had been caught red-handed in Montreal with forbidden English trade cloth. Later given permission to marry Tonty and manage his household, Marie-Anne La Marque found much to do. Whether in Detroit or in Montreal (where she served as his *procuratrice*), she informed the Crown that she had exhausted her own assets in support of the post, which required keeping up the commander's house, maintaining the native alliances, and sustaining the fort's defenses.[7] Thus Tonty's two successive wives were associated with commercial transactions, common enough for women connected with post commanders. At Fort Niagara, Madame Celeron also traded, and we know she branched out into grain, shipping some of it to Quebec. Rouen/Canada agents Havy and Lefebvre's fur-trade accounts also indicate substantial business with Mesdames Guy (Jeanne Trouillier), Brunet, and Moquin, and Mlles Auger, De Joncaire, and Texier,[8] some of whom had relatives at the French posts.

Family interests in fur ventures survived the death of a husband. The rank of Louise Chartier de Lotbinière, daughter of a Quebec government official, is indicated by having as godfather Governor Frontenac, and godmother the lovely Elisabeth de Joybert, wife of a future governor. At 18 she married 34-year-old Louis Denys de la Ronde. Procurations of 1734 empowered her to administer her husband's business affairs, for he was in present-day Wisconsin pursuing his unsuccessful copper-mining venture near Lake Superior. When Louis died, he left the family heavily in debt. Their son took over the father's

former command at the post of Chagouamigon (near Ashland, Wisconsin). Louise instead hastened east to the French court, to petition for family retention of the post. She succeeded handsomely, retaining a substantial share in the post for years.[9]

The brother-in-law of the failed copper miner, Pierre D'Ailleboust Desmusseaux D'Argenteuil, wasn't much of a businessman either. At 28, he married 16-year-old Marie Louise Denys Laronde Delatrinité, and the couple produced eight children. She eventually asked for a separation of goods from her husband on grounds of his mismanagement of their affairs. Living more than three decades after his 1711 demise, Louise Denys de la Ronde conducted a long and eventually successful legal dispute with the Sulpicians over claims to the Argenteuil *seigneurie* west of Montreal Island. The location was ideal for intercepting furs. Both the Sulpicians and Governor Vaudreuil accused her of this activity, pointing out the lack of clearing and the fact that her children had learned more about fur and Indian languages than about agriculture. The notarial documents seem to confirm their suspicions. In 1717 Louise Denys de la Ronde commissioned a *voyageur* to journey to Michilimackinac for furs; a few years later she entered business with tanner Louis Mallet on the understanding it was she who would supply the animal skins. When she died, her assets totalled over 46,000 *livres*.[10]

By the eighteenth century, hides sometimes outperformed beaver as exports. It is not surprising that Louise Denys de la Ronde and other women with sufficient capital seized the opportunity presented by this new staple, setting up operations to tan hides that arrived from the trading posts. Another Montreal noblewoman, Agathe St. Père, experimented with native dying and tanning processes, and persuaded townspeople to wear skin clothing that they apparently found more palatable after it was dyed green or brown.[11] Montreal governor's daughter Louise de Ramezay established tanneries too.[12]

Well-known are the activities of Labrador and Tadoussac trader Marie-Anne Barbel (Madame Fornel), who expanded the fur and marine-oil business despite being left a widow with five children aged 6 to 19. Twenty-four men worked for the "Veuve Fornel et Compagnie" she formed in conjunction with merchants Havy and Lefebvre. Also trading on the Labrador coast was Marie-Charlotte Charest (Madame Courtemanche). She engaged a trader to establish a post on the St. Paul River and was "apparently quite a masterful woman who had her say in the affairs of the post."[13] Besides being instructed in Inuit diplomacy, she used diplomacy

at the French court too, going there to represent the family interests. She also inducted her daughters into the business.

There is a long list of such people. Historian Kathryn Young counted up some 30 female entrepreneurs, many of them involved in one way or another with the fur staple. By the eighteenth century, there were several transatlantic traders. Young found that widows D'Argenteuil, Fornel, and Pascaud "assumed control of the family *comptoir* when their husbands died. On their own, they continued to outfit vessels, to underwrite insurance, and to make investments . . . (also) training their sons."[14] Marguerite Bouat (Veuve Pascaud) helped operate the most prominent La Rochelle company involved in the Canada trade, running the business for a decade after her husband's death in 1717. Governor Vaudreuil even recommended her appointment as a commissioner at La Rochelle to regulate the excessive prices charged by merchants there. She gave the French government pointed but accurate advice about the perils of monopoly, and the likelihood that it would drive Canadians to trade illegally with the English.[15] Marie-Anne Busquet and her sister-in-law (Mme Catignon and Mlle Catignon) worked for a decade as colonial agents in Quebec for a La Rochelle concern. Such individuals were, Young concluded, "serious and competent players in the transatlantic trade."[16]

There were other kinds of involvement, too. The sister and the wife of Charles Juchereau de Saint-Denys (Charlotte Francoise Juchereau de St. Denys and Thérèse Migeon) made loans to fur traders and joined trading factions.[17] Mesdames Baby and St. Anges Charly were active members of merchant families who provisioned the trade. Though the many widows and daughters who received fur-trade permits (*congés*) as emoluments from the Crown often transferred them to a professional trader right away, what did it mean when in 1718 Mlle Desforest, Veuve Rudepalais, and the Catalogne sisters did not? How many of the recipients maintained a financial interest in the trade? We do not know all the answers. Nor will we ever know all the female players who took part in the smuggling of furs across the border to Albany; those outlaws, rich and poor, are a study in themselves.[18] Clearly, there were a multitude of ways—marginal or major, fleeting or lifelong—that women might involve themselves in the colony's staple trade.

"SMALL FRY" IN THE TRADE

Less well-known are the many humble, even anonymous, petty traders and provisioners. In the region around the Great Lakes, native and métis women

who trapped and traded are very hard to trace.[19] At and around the French posts, however, the records reveal many "small fry." At Detroit, for example, many women supplied goods and services to the Jesuit mission or to the Crown. Madame Goyau began to do the laundry work and baking for the mission to the Hurons in 1743, with 100 *livres* per annum as her salary. Evidently happy with trade goods in lieu of cash, she received from her employers shirts, blankets, pairs of *mitasses* or leggings, brandy, peas, deer and beaver skins, and powder. Likewise, Madame L'Oeil Eraillé must have traded the beads and vermilion, the multiple shirts and pairs of footwear she received from the mission. Madame St. Martin also was supplied with trade goods: 46 Siamese knives and 24 woodcutter's knives. The missionary said he "gave to Gambille's wife 40 branches of porcelaine, to sell for me. . . . [and] 3 large cloth blankets, one of which is trimmed and half scarlet, and [16] . . . pairs of *mitasses*, 13 shirts, large, medium-sized, and small; [and]. . . . 7 half-livres of vermillion." Detroit women supplied other goods and services, too. Madame St. Martin may have been a moneylender, for she conveyed to the Jesuits the 144 *livres* Charles Courtois owed them for wheat. She also proffered stockings and the iron for a mattock that another woman, "Cecile," had made. One woman, Madame Cuillerier, stipulated that before fixing the exact price on the barrel of powder and 50 *livres* of ammunition she bought from the Jesuits, she would await her husband's return; but husbandly intervention is not mentioned in the other accounts cited here from the Detroit Journal of the Jesuits. "Caron's wife" was another active trader, paid by the mission for "62 brasses of deerskin thongs," 500 nails, porcelain beads she sold, and "ten pistoles for the purchase of a farm." Mademoiselle Royale and Madame Skotache also traded with the mission—goods such as knives, steel for striking fire, beads, and vermilion. Madame Delile sold the Jesuits meat, and Madame Pilette did some grinding.[20] Madame Mallet sold brandy, while Madame Barrois earned 112 *livres* sewing garments ordered by the officer *baron* de Longueuil for chiefs and tribes proceeding to Montreal or to Fort St. Joseph.[21]

At another large trading station, Michilimackinac, Manon Lavoine (Veuve Chevalier) sold provisions for natives accompanying the French, including a horse for a feast. On the orders of Commander LaCorne, Marie Laplante Bourassa provided a hundred pounds of grease to the natives at a tense time, as well as lodging for a French envoy. Demoiselle Blondeau collected 26 *livres* for the *capot* she contributed to the French diplomatic efforts.[22]

Others stood to profit when Amerindians brought their furs down to the colonial towns. In 1742 the Crown paid Marguerite Launay, for

example, to lodge 38 Indians, also rewarding "Suzanne" and another woman, as well as two others who supplied food and firewood.[23] Veuve Laprairie ran a cabaret that sold visiting Amerindians beer. The generally small amounts involved in these various transactions make an important point: petty trading was an everyday activity by ordinary people. It may have been a sideline, but it helped support families and individuals. Detroit, Michilimackinac, and Montreal were all local exchange economies in which female traders and workers were fully integrated.

There were three significant groups of female suppliers whose size remains a mystery. In the 1750s, French engineer Louis Franquet found a dockyard where the best birch-bark canoes in the colony, hefty cargo and military craft bound for the *pays d'en haut*, were manufactured. He reported:

> They were building an eight-man one; it was thirty-three feet long five feet wide, two and a half high, with a price of three hundred livres . . . [They make] so many that they bill the Crown for more than six thousand livres per year; it is women and girls who build them; they are completely made of birch bark with rounded flooring of cedar or fir. . . . the seams, covered with resin, are waterproof, but one must avoid rocks.[24]

Making cloth and clothes was another activity of growing importance, some of it meeting the strong Amerindian demand for these items. In November 1685, Governor Denonville noted of Canadian girls and women that "les menus ouvrages de capots and de chemises de trait les occupent un peu pendant l'hiver."[25] Toques were another trade good that were surely produced by *Canadiennes*. Peter Kalm reported that young women at Montreal continually picked up their needles when they were not performing other duties. We know some of them sewed for the trade, since Madame Benoist, wife of the commander at Oka, oversaw a Montreal operation making shirts and petticoats for that purpose around the time of the Conquest.[26]

Another group of women were employed to make the posts run smoothly. Missionary father Claude Godefroi Coquart at the King's Domain discussed the three daughters of Joseph Dufour. The "eldest girl is at the head of the farm," the missionary reported; for modest wages, she and her two sisters were "occupied in raising the calves and lambs. . . . besides, the housekeeping is considerable. They have to churn the milk two or three times a week; to do them justice, it can be said that they are

busy all day, even going beyond their strength."[27] Even in the 1740s when efforts were made to reduce female personnel, an exception was made for laundresses, bakers, and other domestics. We do not know how many in total worked at the forts, but records indicate Marianne and Marie Texier were paid for these duties at Fort St. Fréderic.[28] How many women farmed, milked, baked, and laundered to keep the posts running? How many others were scattered around towns and backwoods? The count can only grow as other researchers comb the enormous database of notarial records, as well as business records and colonial correspondence. Moreover, we think all the numbers that can be found there are just the tip of the iceberg, a fraction of the women who had some involvement in the collection, production, processing, or exchange of marketable natural resources, especially when agricultural products are included.

RECONCEIVING PREINDUSTRIAL WOMEN

How can we characterize women's place in the economy of New France? Allan Greer referred to a mere "several" female entrepreneurs, and Peter Moogk termed wives "dependents." Noting trade partnerships and correspondence between women of Montreal, Quebec, and the French ports, Kathryn Young raised the possibility of a female "network" of traders; and my own early work argued that women in New France seemed "favored" in this regard relative to the Victorian women who came after them, and perhaps even to their contemporaries in other countries and colonies.[29]

I wonder if all these characterizations are somewhat wide of the mark. Young's research, as well as my own, makes it clear there were considerably more than "several" female entrepreneurs. The fact that so much essential work was done by women in households, on farms, and in various kinds of trade, plus their substantial property rights under the Custom of Paris, makes labeling them "dependents" inaccurate. A "network" suggests a self-conscious group clinging together with other members of this minority for support, but trading women seem too many, too unselfconscious, and too scattered for such a concept to apply generally. Being "favored" suggests unusual privilege or fortune. Yet the more one looks at the expansive wilderness that constituted New France, the more one appreciates how arduous was the task of culling, growing, trading, processing, packing, and shipping animal pelts and other natural resources along the routes from the western interior down to the towns, and (for most of the cargo) out the great river and across the sea. This was, as

struck many a colonial official arriving there, a poor colony, with even its noble families dependent on fur trading and Crown subsidies.[30] Work was required of both sexes, and remained so throughout the history of the colony.

Scholarship in recent decades on the history of women in Europe allows us to appreciate how ubiquitous and varied such work was. In *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Europe, 1500–1800*, Olwen Hufton stressed continuity as she outlined the typical activities of farmwomen in France and elsewhere on the Continent. At the top of the ladder, the *seigneuresse*, or lady of the manor, managed the household and perhaps domestic production, along with garden and orchard. She might direct the entire estate while her husband was away for purposes of business, sociability, war, or politics. Lower on the social ladder, typical farmwives engaged in a wide variety of production, including the dairy work that provided much of the family's fat and protein, field work at harvest and hay time, making clothes, preparing goods for sale, and perhaps taking them to market. Lower still, the poverty of the French peasant promoted the "economy of makeshifts" in which people combined any available kinds of work, exchange, and poor relief to make ends meet. Hufton's work suggested a similarly wide range in town.[31] In France, as in England, "proto-industrialization" by large-scale producers employed women in both town and country: spinners of flax and wool, makers of pins and small ironware. Eighteenth-century *marchandes* in the lace trade might have four or five employees, including their own daughters. Everywhere they worked in the poorly paid needle trades. Change came slowly in the relatively stagnant economy of France.

England led the way towards a narrowing conception of women's work. Bridget Hill's *Women, Work and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England* discussed female activities that were common at the beginning of the eighteenth century. They included spinning, supervision of market and domestic gardening, managing livestock, keeping farm account books, and work as herbalists, midwives, healers, miners, traders. England's dynamic, industrializing economy helped assure that all of these occupations that were common in 1700 became less so over the course of the eighteenth century.[32] A study by Peter Earle provided statistical evidence that female employment shrank over time. Examining preindustrial London of 1695–1725, he found 851 respondents at Church courts, a sample that was "somewhat biased towards the poorer women of London," but included all classes. Far exceeding the 28 percent of women

who would report paid employment in 1851 London, 57 percent of the 1695–1725 group did so—more than *double* the mid-nineteenth-century figure. Earle observed that early eighteenth-century Londoners did "not seem to have had any moral objection to women working for their living, quite the opposite in most cases, and one does not read in this period that a woman's place is in the home."[33] While Earle did not believe the female occupational range of 1695–1725 was particularly wide relative to 1851, his respondents from the earlier period did report a considerable range of jobs that included butcher, tallow-chandler, linen draper, wholesale stocking dealer, goldsmith, stone engraver, chair caner, tobacco-pipe deliverer, water seller, pawnbroker, and "hard laborers, day laborers." Women made fans, bellows, bricks, flasks, pipes, pottery, sacks, and sieves. Other categories included teacher, professional letter writer, parish clerk, vestrywoman, singer and singing teacher, mistress of a company of comedians, upholsterer, sailor, discounter of sailors' wage tickets, errand runner for prisoners, turnkey in a prison, and a widow who did searches for others in the Fleet Registry—plus all kinds of victualers and shopkeepers. All this material suggests that female breadwinners were ubiquitous, and they graced every class of society.

Peter Kalm, that most helpful of travelers, confirmed that not long afterwards, Anglo America stepped into the vanguard of gender change. Traveling from his native Sweden to England in the mid-eighteenth century, he was startled to see the narrowing range of female work in England. He noted shrinking activities in the city. Outside London in 1748, he was struck that "it was very rare to see any women at the work in the meadows." After touring the countryside, he reported that English women kept clothes, dishes, and floors very clean and did very precise sewing. However, they turned to local bakers for bread and now purchased things they had formerly spun and woven themselves. And men now did the dairying! Kalm wrote:

> I confess I rubbed my eyes several times to make them clear, because I could not believe I saw aright, when I first came here . . . and saw the farmers' houses full of young women, while the men, on the contrary, went out both morning and evening to where the cattle were, milk-pail in hand, sat down to milk. . . . In short, when one enters a house and has seen the women cooking, washing floors, plates and dishes, darning a stocking or sewing a chemise, he has, in fact, seen all their economy. . . . Nearly all the evening occupations which our women in Sweden perform are neglected by them . . .[34]

Kalm added that "It is true that the common servant-girls have to have somewhat more work in them. But still this . . . seldom goes beyond what is reckoned up above." He contrasted this to Sweden, where "the wife, no less than the husband, is obliged in every way to bestir herself and keep her wits with her," while "to help to win the bare necessities of life, an English wife would not seem to be particularly well-suited." Kalm noted the indispensable catalyst for these changes: the affluence and ready circulation of cash in England. The same affluence greeted him when he went to America, where the women also spent much of the day inside doing limited work while the men toiled outdoors.

Entering Canada, though, Kalm saw again the pattern familiar to him in preindustrial Sweden. He criticized the lack of domestic cleanliness, noting that the women wore dirty jackets and sprinkled the dirt floors with water to congeal the dust. It hardly mattered, for they were busy *out*-of-doors. "The women in Canada on the contrary do not spare themselves, especially among the common people, who are always in the fields, meadows, stables, etc, and do not dislike any work whatsoever . . . they are not averse to taking part in all the business of housekeeping . . . they also carry their sewing with them, even the governor's daughters." Kalm added that "The common people in the country seem to be very poor. They are content with meals of dry bread and water, bringing all other provisions, such as butter, cheese, meat, poultry, eggs, etc to town, in order to get money for them, for which they buy clothes and brandy for themselves and finery for their women." Lest one think the women stayed home, Kalm clarified that "the daughters of all ranks, without exception, go to market."[35] In short, this was the kind of traditional, preindustrial market economy that tourists encounter in some remote areas to this day: primitive housing and hygiene, with both sexes doing all kinds of work and hawking their wares in open-air markets. Almost everywhere in the Atlantic world, women's work *did* eventually change, in the direction of less outdoor work, fewer home manufactures, less economic production and exchange, generally less visibility in public. In eighteenth-century Canada, *it had not changed yet.*

Conclusion

In a colony where over 80 percent lived in the countryside, men, women, and children spent much of their lives outdoors. The populace gathered, grew, traded, processed, packed, and shipped its natural resources of furs,

fish, marine oils, timber, earthenware, fibers, and foodstuffs produced on farms or culled from waters and forests. All this did not involve just a few unusual women, nor was it a slightly larger "network" that clung together for mutual support. Studies relating to the history of women in preindustrial Europe document that women's economic production and exchange was common to all classes. Referring generally to women in New France as a group involved in trade is not some form of essentialism that conflates a small minority with the majority or ignores class differences. Women customarily took responsibility for some of the family's livelihood. It is anachronistic to carry around in one's head an image of the "ordinary" female confined inside some cozy cottage, too sweet to think of money, just cooking, cleaning, and singing nursery rhymes. Would any able-bodied person spend any more time than necessary in most of those cramped, dirt-floored cabins? Nineteenth-century "separate sphere" theorizations of men as breadwinners and women as homemakers do not fit preindustrial regions, particularly regions that depended so fundamentally on selling fur and other natural resources to towns and distant markets.

This was a poor colony, as many an official noted. The colonists made do with what the land offered them. Frequently enough harvests failed, throwing farm families back on any other available resource. It is time to stop applying anachronistic notions of female domesticity to preindustrial economies based on family production. Even *habitant* women, many observers noted, possessed a few pieces of imported finery.[36] The little cash families could scrape together for such items had to come largely from the trade in natural resources, and there was no reason for women to eschew such opportunities. These were not "dependents," and they were not doing something "exceptional" when they grew and sold cabbages at the town market, or peas that went to Louisbourg, or knit woollens that went to the *pays d'en haut.* As always, women tended to be multi-taskers, interspersing resource work with their other responsibilities. The "nagging wife" may not have joined her husband in the canoe, but there was a good chance she grew the tobacco, made the shirts he took west to trade—maybe even made the canoe itself!

NOTES

1. The nagging is described in W. J. Eccles, *The Canadian Frontier, 1534–1760* (Toronto: Holt Rinehart Winston, 1969), 92; the charms in Richard Colebrook Harris, *The Seigneurial System in Early Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's, 1966), 164.

2. Sylvia Van Kirk, *"Many Tender Ties": Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670–1870* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980); Carol Devens, *Countering Civilization: Native American Women and Great Lakes Missions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Susan Sleeper Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001).

3. Peter Baskerville, *Concise Business History of Canada* (Toronto: Oxford, 1994), 66–67; Micheline Dumont, "Un champ bien clos: L'histoire des femmes au Québec," *Atlantis* 25, no. 1 (2000): 102–18.

4. *The Historical Atlas of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), vol. 1, plate 48, for example, shows the value of exports to France in 1736 consisting of beaver (43%), other furs (32%), hides (19%), fish and other (6%). (The compilers note that the beaver were undervalued, bills of exchange not being included in the calculations.) A chart covering 1718 to the end of the French regime shows the same upward trend of animal exports in the regime's last decades that Miquelon also notes. The amounts of beaver, other furs, and hides could vary, the latter two not infrequently outperforming beaver in the years after 1735. A very small proportion of exports consisted of victuals, fish, and timber bound for the Gulf of St. Lawrence (chiefly Louisbourg) and the West Indies, amounting to about 10 percent of total exports in 1736. Plate 41 indicates that in most years there were some 400 to 500 men recorded (apart from the illegals) in the trade by the 1730s and 1740s, soaring to almost 700 men employed seasonally in 1754. Whether these figures include some women, or whether the women should be added to the numbers, is difficult to say.

5. On Madeleine de Roybon d'Allone, see Archives des Colonies(France) [hereafter AC], C^{11A}, 1700, vol. 18, fols. 220–27; and 1701, vol. 19, fols. 156–61; "Roybon d'Allone, Madeleine de," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* [hereafter *DCB*] (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966–present), vol. 2.

6. The widow is described in Dale Miquelon, *New France, 1701–1744: "A Supplement to Europe"* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987), 132–33, 153.

7. AC, C^{11A}, 1707, vol. 26, fols. 176–219; 1729, vol. 120, fols. 243–46; 1731, vol. 54, fols. 282–85; 1753, vol. 99, fols. 25–90; "Tonty, Alphonse de," *DCB*, vol. 2. There are numerous references to Madame La Pipardière in AC, C^{11A} 1715–17 (vols. 35–38 and 123); 1717, vol. 38, fols. 109–16 alludes to her journey to join Tonty after his marriage proposal was approved. On Tonty's bad marriage, see 1721, vol. 43, fols. 32–34, 320–31. For charges of wifely fur trading, see 1707, vol. 26, fols. 176–219; 1708, vol. 29, fols. 140–43; 1717, vol. 37, fols. 140–43; 1717, vol. 38, fols. 119–20v. Contrats de mariage: Archives nationales du Québec à Montréal—documents notariales (hereafter ANQM), Raimbault, P., 18 February 1712; and Lepailleur, M., 17 April 1717. Lepailleur, M., 26 August 1724, procuration Alphonse de Tonty à M.-A. Lamarque; Adhémar, J.-B., 16 July 1729, inventaire après décès mentions her travel to Detroit. Marie-Anne La Marque, a rare only child in that colony of big families, ended up burying three husbands. Apparently alive to her interests, she had set aside various financial reserves for herself in her successive marriage contracts.

8. Kathryn Young, "'. . . sauf les perils et fortunes de la mer': Merchant Women in New France and the French Transatlantic Trade, 1713–1746," in V. Strong-Boag et al., eds., *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History* (Toronto: Oxford, 2002), 39–40.

9. ANQM, Pinguet de Vaucour, J.-N., 5 October 1746, inventaire; 17 October 1746, renonciation; and 29 April and 4 May 1734, procurations; 21 October 1734, obligation; AC, C11A, 1747, vol. 87, fols. 171–72v; 1748, vol. 91, fols. 24–25v.; 1751, vol. 97, fol. 201v.

10. Marie Louise Denys de la Ronde's activities are discussed in Lorraine Gadoury, "Une famille noble en Nouvelle France: les D'Ailleboust" (thèse de maîtrise, Université de Montréal, 1982), see especially 74–75, 107–115; and Louise Tremblay, "La politique missionnaire des Sulpiciens au XVII^{e} et début du XVIII^{e} siècle" (thèse, Université de Montréal, 1981), especially 144–48; AC, C11A, 1717, vol. 39, fols. 217–18; 1731, vol. 56, fols. 97–99; ANQ-M, Adhémar, J.-B., 7 May 1717, engagement; 21 September 1723, convention et société. A very large marriage settlement for her daughter in 1732 suggests the enterprises were going well, as does the accounting in Gadoury's thesis. See also "Ailleboust D'Argenteuil, Pierre d'," *DCB*, vol. 2.

11. For this detail, which does not appear in most accounts of St. Père, see AC, C^{11A}, vol. 27, fols. 142–43. Some of the trainees long continued at St. Père's workshop; other men and women plied looms she distributed to their homes. In 1707, when about 70 weavers were at work, 120 *aunes* (ells) a day were being produced. For 40 years to come, successive intendants were sufficiently impressed to continue the bonus, partly because in 1748 they still found scarcely any formal manufactories in this country. Another important letter is in AC, C^{11A}, 1706, vol. 24, fols. 331–52. The strong, coarse cloth her St. Joseph Street manufactory produced provided working-class Montreallers with warm, heavy jackets (*chemises*). In 1706, when she informed the court that 28 people were weaving, Intendant Raudot Sr. said that without this enterprise, half of "the poor people in that poor country . . . would be without jackets."

12. "Ramezay, Louise de," *DCB*, vol. 4.

13. "Acoutsina," *DCB*, vol. 2, describes Charest. AC, C^{11A}, 1750, vol. 96, fols. 101–8 gives the widow Fornel's own account of her pelt and marine-oil operations. For a summary of her activities, see Lilianne Plamondon, "Une femme d'affaires en Nouvelle-France: Marie-Anne Barbel, Veuve Fornel, *Revue d'Histoire de l'Amérique Française* 31 (1977): 165–85.

14. Kathryn Young, *Kin, Commerce, Community: Merchants in the Port of Quebec, 1717–1745* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 22.

15. AC, C^{11A}, 1717, vol. 38, fols. 133–37v; 1723, vol. 45, fols. 121–23v; Miquelon, *Supplement*, 81 and 127. Notarial records show a series of transactions, including procurations empowering Pascaud's wife to act in a legal sense without his presence as early as 1697; ANQM, Adhémar, A., 3 October 1697, procuration. On Mme Pascaud, see also John Bosher, *Men and Ships in the Canada Trade, 1660–1760: A Biographical Dictionary* (Ottawa: Ministry of Supply and Services, 1992), 101–3.

16. Young, *Kin*, 39–40.

17. "Juchereau de Saint Denys, Charles de," *DCB*, vol. 2; AC, C^{11A}, 1702, vol. 36, fol. 411ff.

18. Jean Lunn, "The Illegal Fur Trade Out of New France, 1713–60," 61–76, Canadian Historical Association *Annual Report*, 1939. Lunn exposed the activities of the three

single Desauniers sisters and some of the native women who collaborated with them in this trade. Revisiting Lunn's and other sources reveals a number of additional examples, discussed in my "Disruptive Females: Iroquoia and its Neighbours," *Lines on Snow: Tracking Women in Early French Canada* (forthcoming).

19. Peter Kalm caught one glimpse of that involvement on a road near Niagara, where he "met a great number of Indians of both sexes, who were engaged in carrying their skins and other goods to Quebec." A. Benson, *Peter Kalm's Travels in North America* (New York: Dover, 1937), 696. Another glimpse is Governor Beauharnois' description of Ottawa chiefs who had promised him they would not go to Chouaguen, but their wives went in their place. AC, C^{11A}, 1742 vol. 76, fols. 225–30v.

20. Father de Ricardie and Pierre Potier, extracts from *Journal des Jesuites* (1710–1755), in R. Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1896–1901), 69:261–75 and 70:23–27, 91–93, cited in Katherine Lawn and Claudio Salvucci, *Women in New France: Extracts from the Jesuit Relations* (Bristol, Penn.: Evolution Publishing, 2005), 288–90.

21. Mme Mallet is mentioned in connection with a seizure of brandy at Detroit. AC, C^{11A}, 1723, vol. 45, fols. 356–61v; Mme Barrois, 1749, vol. 118, fols. 378–79.

22. AC, C^{11A}, 1747, vol. 117, fols. 144–46, 363, 383–84; and 1746, vol. 118, fols. 30–31 (Laplante Bourassa); 1747, vol. 117, fols. 364, 383; 1748, vol. 118, fols. 178–85 (Manon Lavoine); 1749–50, vol. 119, fol. 184 snf 278–87 (Blondeau).

23. Launay and some others are mentioned in 1742, vol. 114, fols. 261–306v; see especially 289v.

24. Louis Franquet, *Voyages et mémoires sur le Canada* (Montreal: Éditions Élysée, 1974), 17. (All translations by author unless otherwise specified.)

25. Cited in J. N. Fauteaux, *Essai sur l'industrie au Canada sous le Régime Français* (Quebec, 1927), 459.

26. Hilda Neatby, *Quebec: The Revolutionary Age* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966), 72–73, refers to this activity shortly after the Conquest. Franquet encountered Madame Benoist in 1752–53; *Voyages*, 150. On women making clothes for trade, see also Dechêne, *Habitants et marchands de Montréal au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Plon, 1974), 151–53, 187, 391. Some weaving was begun also at the Montreal Hôpital-Général at the start of the eighteenth century, though what connection if any it had to St. Père's ransoming of the English weavers is unknown. See AC, C^{11A}, 1706, vol. 25, fols. 261–64.

27. "Memoir of Father Claude Godefroi Coquart on the Posts of the King's Domain" (April 1750), in Thwaites, ed., *Jesuit Relations*, 69:91–93, cited in Lawn and Salvucci, 290.

28. Bread was so vital a commodity that Peter Kalm was forced to postpone his departure from Fort St. Fréderic for a day until fresh bread was baked, because Englishmen stopping over for the night had taken away with them the previous supply; Benson, *Peter Kalm's Travels*, 580. On Crown efforts to reduce the numbers of women at the posts, see AC, C^{11A}, 1741, vol. 75, fols. 324–28; 1742, vol. 77, fols. 344–51v. The Texiers are mentioned in AC, C^{11A}, 1746, vol. 85, fol. 329 and following, and fols. 392–94; 1747, vol. 88, fol. 246. The Fort St. Fréderic cleaning lady received the same pay as

the barber (60 *livres* a year). Does this indicate the high status of women—or the poor quality of military haircuts?

29. Allan Greer, *The People of New France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 68; Peter Moogk, *La Nouvelle France: The Making of French Canada—A Cultural History* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000), 161, 207; Kathryn Young, "'. . . sauf les perils,'" 44n (see also 37–38); Jan Noel, "New France: Les Femmes Favorisées," in V. Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman, *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History* (Toronto: Oxford, 1997), 33–56.

30. This phenomenon is discussed in my "Women of the New France Noblesse," in Larry Eldridge, ed., *Women and Freedom in Colonial North America* (New York: NYU Press, 1997), which discusses the economic contributions elite women made to their families. On the poverty of New France, one of many examples is Intendant Raudot's 1706 remark that "dans ce pays il n'y a personne de riche," adding that without the king's help, the people could not survive. It is true Kalm mentioned that in Quebec, unmarried "young ladies, especially those of a higher rank, get up at seven, and dress until nine," then placed themselves at the window looking for suitors. But this in itself was sound economic strategy in a port town where eligible gentlemen arrived and frequently married the locals. By contrast, Kalm mentioned that their mothers were occupied with "all the business of the house." At Montreal he found young ladies (one assumes he is discussing the higher classes) to be more industrious, rising early and always at their needlework.

31. Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe*, vol. 1, *1500–1800* (London: Fontana, 1997), 70, 146–53.

32. Bridget Hill, *Women, Work and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1989), 50–67, 259–63.

33. Peter Earle, "The Female Labour Market in London in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries," *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, vol. 42, no. 3 (1989): 346; for his complete findings, see 328–53. Earle's turn-of-the-eighteenth-century sample suggested that at least in London, couples did not typically work together, and widows did not typically take over their husbands' trades, but tended instead to pursue their own forms of revenue generation, "much of it of a casual nature."

34. *Kalm's Account of His Visit to England on His Way to London* (London: Macmillan, 1892), 327–28. See also 80–95.

35. The remarks of Kalm on Canadian women are found in Benson, *Peter Kalm's Travels*, 403, 417, 479, 525–26. An official dispatch of 1679 also observed women and children farming and tending livestock, and attributed it to the absence of five to six hundred *coureurs de bois*. AC, C^{11A}, 1679, vol. 5, fols. 32–70.

36. One of the many was a French visitor who remarked in 1737 that girls who tended cows during the week dressed up in lace and hoop skirts on Sundays; W. J. Eccles, *Canadian Society in the French Regime* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1968), 74. See also Benson, *Peter Kalm's Travels*, 402, 525.