BCFNS 12

**Ch. 4 – Women’s Role in the Fur Trade**

* men would not close a bargain without consulting the women and if the women didn’t agree the deal wouldn’t happen
* men were responsible for trapping and trading
* women of village were left to provide for families while men were away
* women were responsible for preparing the furs
* salmon was as important a trading item as furs and women had to clean and dry the salmon

**Life in the Fort**

* FNs women frequently married company employees and had raised their children inside the forts, forming complex social, economic, and political relationships
  + More structured coast societies marriages considered to be alliances between high-ranking families and officers of the trading post, forging a political and economic bond between the two sides
  + Most marriages were personal – FNS women offered companionship for employees and a family environment and also they also looked after domestic duties
  + Women not considered equal to men and also suffered from racial discrimination
  + Quality of life for women in forts varied:
    - some had happy marriages
      * Partners shared in traditional culture and interacted with their families
      * Some cases they were able to bridge two cultures and share skills and knowledge between them such as food preparation
    - Some marriages were only for convenience
      * When men returned to eastern Canada or Britain they abandoned their wives and families

**The Children**

* on the Prairies, children of Aboriginal women and fur trade employees shared many customs and a distinctive Metis culture with its own language and values
* in BC many children of mixed marriages returned to their Aboriginal families, some adopted their Euro-Canadian heritage and assimilated into mainstream culture, and others found themselves stuck between two worlds, never completely accepted in either (often labeled “half-breed”)