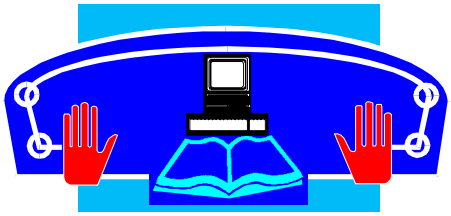

Tanning Hides And Furs In The Nwt
Type of Study: Processing / Manufacturing Wildlife Products, Tanneries
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5-10-2 Dup.

October 14, 1986

Mr. Syd Kirwan
Head Renewable Resources
Department of Economic Development & Tourism
Government of the Northwest Territories

Dear Mr. Kirwan:

RMC Resources Management Consultants (NWT) Ltd. is pleased to submit to you our report on tanning hides and furs in the NWT.

Supplying the local market with locally produced leather and tanned furs can be a viable way of diversifying the NWT economy. This report outlines some of the opportunities and constraints of establishing and operating a small scale tannery in the NWT, and we hope that our study will clarify the marketing, economic, and environmental issues involved.

Thank you for the opportunity to work on this assignment.

Sincerely yours,
RMC Resources Management Consultants
(N. W. T.) Ltd.

Maarten Ingen-Housz
Associate

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encl.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The study of tanning hides and furs in the Northwest Territories was commissioned by the Department of Economic Development and Tourism of the Government of the Northwest Territories and done by RMC Resources Management Consultants (NWT) Ltd. The objective of the study is to investigate the possibilities of establishing a small scale leather or fur tannery in the NWT.

Throughout the report the distinction is made between leather tanning and fur dressing, and the feasibility of a tannery is discussed for both a leather tanning and a fur dressing operation. The emphasis has been placed on a tannery that services the local NWT market, using local skills and inputs as much as possible.

A very small scale leather tannery using Native tanning methods and a low level of technology shows a profit if the operation can maintain near full capacity year round. The capacity of this tannery is 5 hides a week or 240 hides a year which would satisfy the current demand by small craft stores for smoke tanned moose hides. Since there is a level of frustrated demand, this tannery could operate in the NWT without displacing locally produced smoke tanned moose hides. The tannery would, however, displace supplies that now enter the NWT from Alberta and B.C.

Two people are needed full time, and one person part time, to keep this size operation running smoothly. The tanner would take responsibility for both the business and the technical aspects of the operation, assisted by a helper or trainee. Casual help is required to maintain the supply of inputs (especially punk wood). The impact on the environment is minimal because the tannery uses a Native smoke tanning method and operates on a small scale.

A fur dressing plant will have to use non-Native tanning methods to produce a product that is acceptable to the craft industry. Chrome tanning, the most commonly used method, should not be used in the Northern environment because of its highly polluted waste water. Tanning with aluminium salts as the major tanning agent results in acceptable furs and the waste water of this process can be neutralized by a process of settling and oxidization.

Fur dressing is a more complicated process than leather tanning and requires more equipment. The higher capital costs and the non-Native tanning method combined necessitate a slightly larger and more structured operation. This report investigates the economics of a medium small fur dressing plant with a yearly production of some 4500 pelts. This operation shows a profit if it can be run at more than 80% capacity year round with a minimum of spoilage.

Demand by the small craft stores in the NWT is not enough to absorb the output of the operation and it will be necessary to gain access to larger markets such as the Hudsons 8ay Company or the Arctic Trading Company. Consistent quality and competitive prices will go a long way towards the successful establishment of a medium small fur dressing plant in the NWT. The tanner would do well to establish strong links with local hunters and trappers, offering them an alternative market and reliable price information.

A medium small fur dressing plant will require three full time people, and one part time helper: a tanner; a flesher; a trainee; and one casual helper. The tanner needs a substantial amount of training and knowledge to be able to run the technical and business side of the operation. The person running the fleshing knife will also need substantial training.

The economics of the medium small fur dressing plant are positive if the capacity utilization is over 80% year round and if spoilage is kept to a minimum. All calculations in this report assume commercial money for start up and operation, and the financial situation of all operations would improve dramatically if grants or other assistance would be available for capital expenditures or labour costs.

1. INTRODUCTION

The reason for the investigation of the possibilities for a community-based small scale tannery or tanneries lies in the need to make a more complete use of the available resources (in this case hides and skins), to create employment, and to give more control to the owners of the resource.

Currently, the NWT exports raw furs to southern auctions and imports tanned leather and furs as an input into the craft Industry. On the one hand, there is a certain amount of traditional Native tanning going on but not enough to keep the local craft industry supplied. On the other hand, many hides and skins are left in the bush or end up on garbage dumps.

The draft renewable resouces policy emphasizes the need for the NWT to become more self sufficient in food and fiber. This inward look of supplying the NWT market with NWT products before looking at southern export markets is reflected in this report. The study examines the possibilities to set up one or more community based tanneries in the NWT with a first objective to supply the local markets using local hides and skins. As a secondary objective, and this will play only if the local market is well supplied, it can be considered to use the tannery to supply southern markets either directly or via a finishing tannery in a southern location.

Throughout this report we make the distinction between fur dressing and leather tanning. The former is the conservation of a hide or skin with the hair and the latter is the conservation of the hide or skin without any hair, to be used as leather. Fur dressing especially is a very much market driven industry: Fashions change constantly and with them the type of furs that are required by the fashion industry. This uncertainty will be especially true if a NWT tannery is to supply southern markets. Flexibility should be built into the tannery design and management to allow the tannery to react to changes in demand.

This report will look at two different sizes for a tannery. First, we will examine a very small tannery with a throughput of 5 hides a week, and, secondly, we will look at a medium small tannery with a throughput of some 25 hides a week. For each size tannery we will discuss what the appropriate technologies are, whether that size of operation can be economically viable, what kind of jobs will be created, where the hides come from, and where to sell the finished product.

2. THE TANNING PROCESS AND SOME OF ITS IMPLICATIONS

2.1 Summary

Native tanning methods, using moose brain and smoke, can be mechanized to some extent to speed up the process and take some of the hard physical' labour out of the process. Introduction of a circular fleshing knife, a soaking drum, and a **simple** stretching machine are three examples of techniques that can be introduced in the **Native** tanning process without altering the end product.

A tannery set up to produce smoke tanned hides, using a low level of technology can process 5 moose **hides** a week (or 240/year). This tannery would provide work for two people, and have a minimal **impact** on the environment.

A **medium** small leather tannery, **using** non-Native techniques, can process up to 25 **hides** a week (or 1200/year). The use of **aluminium** salts as the main tanning agent reduces the environmental hazard posed by chrome salts, **which** are the most **commonly** used tanning agent. However, the product **is** qualitatively different from smoke tanned hides. A **medium** small leather tannery would employ 4 people.

The same **medium** small tannery set up to process furs would employ the same number of people, and pose the same environmental concerns as the **medium** small leather tannery. The capital expenditure needed to set up a fur dressing plant is **higher** than for the leather tanning plant. The **higher** price is a reflection of the more complex nature of the process.

2.2 Very Small Tannery

2.2.1 Native Tanning **with** a Low Level of Mechanization

Throughout the NWT there are people who **still** tan moose and caribou hides in the Native way using moose brain and smoke. The product is highly valued by the people in the craft industry because it is water resistant and easy to sew.

As with all tanning methods, there is no one traditional method but rather a number of variations on a general procedure. For the purpose of this report it is not necessary to go into the minor differences between Native tanning methods: the analysis here concerns an economic assessment of tanning, not a how-to manual. (For some "how-to" books on Native tanning, see the bibliography.) Most variations of the Native tanning process consist of the following steps:

1. Skin the animal and dehair the hide with a knife.
2. Flesh the hide.
3. Shave the hide to an even thickness.
4. Soak the hide and clean it.
5. Wring the hide and dry it moderately.
6. Hang the hide over the smoke.
7. Soak the hide in brainwater or other softening agent.
8. Scrape hide dry to soften and stretch; repeat soaking.
9. Smoke the hide.

Step 1 - Skinning and Dehairing

There are several methods to prepare the hide for dehairing and fleshing, ranging from stretching the hide inside a large wooden frame to simply draping it over a low upright pole. The objective here is to give the person who dehairs easy access to the hide.

Dehairing is accomplished by shaving the hide with a sharp knife or scraper against the hairs. This operation requires very sharp tools and a steady hand to prevent the knife or scraper from biting into the hide and gashing it.

Step 2 - Fleshing

Fleshing is the removal of the flesh, veins, and membranes exposing those parts of the hide that will be tanned. Traditionally the fleshing is done with bone scrapers, but nowadays people often use special knifes or other metal implements. This job is the hardest of the whole tanning process and requires a number of hours of hard physical labour.

Step 3 - Shaving

Shaving is similar to fleshing in that it removes parts of hide. In this step the objective is not to remove those parts of the hide that will not be tanned, but to produce a hide with an even thickness so that the tanning will be even.

Step 4 - Soaking

Soaking the hide in fresh water removes any blood residue from the hide and prepares the hide for the first stage of the actual tanning. If the hide is especially dirty or bloody, it may be necessary to replace the water several times. Agitating the hide in the soak tub will speed up the process.

Step 5 - Wringing

The traditional methods recommend that two sticks are laced through holes on two sides of the hide. These sticks give a good grip on the hide and allow the tanner to wring out the hide quite thoroughly. The hide is commonly dried further by laying it over a beam. However, the hide is not fully dry before it is used in the next step.

Step 6 - Smoking

Most variants of the traditional tanning method smoke the hide twice. The first time for anywhere between two to eight hours. The type of wood used and the length of the exposure to the smoke are responsible for the colour of the finished product. Punk spruce gives a cool smoke and result in a light coloured leather and only a low level of smoke smell in the hide. Other decayed woods are used and even wood shavings, as long as it is possible to keep a smoldering smoking fire without flames.

Step 7 - Soaking and Softening

Moosebrain, in various stages of decay, is used to soften the hide. This can be done by directly applying the brain on the hide or by soaking the hide in water with moosebrain. Sometimes the brain is kept in a bag and left in warm water to make a kind of moosebrain tea in which the hide is then soaked. Agitation of the hide in the water speeds up the process and results in better softening. Commercial softening agents such as “Fleecy” or "Downey" are sometimes used instead of moosebrain.

Step 8 - Scraping and Drying

This step is often repeated more than once. The hide is taken from the tub and wrung dry. Then the hide is further dried, softened, and stretched by scraping it from one end to the other with a blunt scraper, forcing the liquid out of the hide and smoothing wrinkles, etc. Repetition of this step creates a smooth and soft end product.

Step 9 - Smoking

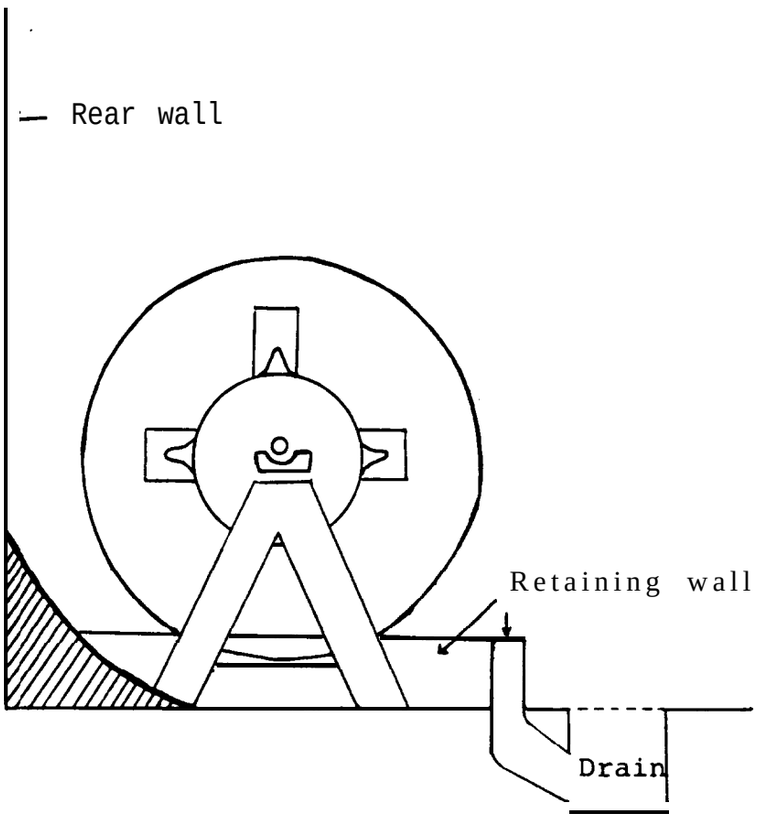
The final smoking is critical for the final appearance of the leather, and may take another day. The hide is often sewn into a sleeve to optimize the contact with the smoke.

All of the stages of the Native tanning process are done by hand and do not need any other Implement than a sharp knife. The Introduction of a low level of technology can ease the work involved, especially the fleshing, the cleaning, and the stretching and softening steps of the process. In the rest of this section we will explore the type of technology that can be used to make the Native tanning process into a semi-mechanized operation.

The simplest fleshing machine consists of a round knife that is spun around by an electric motor. The hide is moved over the knife by the operator piece by piece until a clean fleshing job is accomplished. This knife can also be used to obtain a uniform thickness of the hide. Thus, steps 2 and 3 can be easily mechanized.

Soaking of the hide (step 4) can be sped up and made easier with the introduction of a drum. The agitation of the hide by the motion of the drum makes any handling of the hide unnecessary.

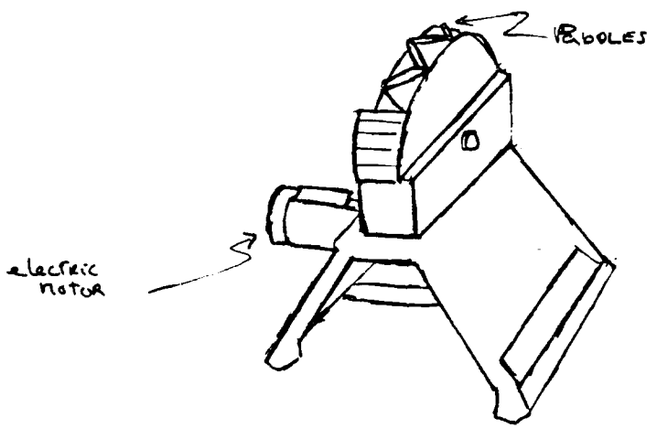
Figure 1: Tanning Drum - side view



Source: FAO (1981)

Stretching can be mechanized by the Introduction of a simple stretching machine that consists of a number of small wooden paddles on a motor driven wheel. The hide is moved over the machine by the operator in such a way that the paddles hit the hide and recreate a motion similar to the hand scraping in the non-mechanized Native tanning method. Thus step 8 is mechanized. More sophisticated stretching or toggling machines are on the market.

Figure 2: Simple Stretching Machine



Other parts of the process can be mechanized. For example, the wringing of the hides to get the water out of them. The original method asks for two sticks that are woven into the edge of the hide so that two people can wring the hide. A centrifuge would do the same job but with less elbow grease. However, the wringing is not as major an undertaking as the fleshing on the stretching/softening and be mechanizing this step is not deemed necessary under this scenario.

2.2.2 Equipment Schedule

1-	**Skinning knife** (also used **for dehairing)**	
1-	Circular knife fleshing machine	$ 900
1-	Drum (including motor and chains)	2,000
2-	Wringing sticks	
1-	Drying rack	
1-	Stretching machine	2,000
1-	Smoke tan pit	

Notes: **Commercial** drums designed for the tanning process are normally way too large for the very small scale tannery discussed here. Large drums need a larger number of hides before they reach capacity. Special smaller drums are available (often described as test drums) and prudent purchasing should allow a tanner to purchase these for around $2,000. The drums are relatively simple machines and can be built locally.

The stretching machine discussed here is hard to find on the market because higher volume and more automated machines are available. Prudent shopping may unearth a stretching machine but more likely they should be made locally.

The small scale of the tannery allows the one drum to be used for both step 4, soaking and cleaning, and step 7, soaking and softening. It is assumed here that one batch of hides is processed per production cycle. The batch is determined by the site of the drum.

2.2.3 Building Requirements

Minimal. A small workshop will do. The only requirements is the availability of water (does not need to be running water) to fill the drum and electricity to drive the fleshing knife, the stretching machine, and the drum.

2.2.4 Environmental Concerns

Minimal. All waste from the hide is biodegradable and can be disposed of on the local dump. The waste water will contain dirt, blood and a softening agent (brain or a commercial product) and could be disposed of in the local water supply without treatment. Worker safety requires good ventilation of the workplace.

2.2.5 Capacity

The tannery as described above would work on a batch system, processing a drumload full of hides per cycle. Depending on the size of the drum, a minimum of five hides per cycle would be processed, giving a capacity of about 5 hides a week. With proper planning of wood and water supplies there is no reason why the process cannot be kept up year round. With a 48 week production year the throughput would run 240. If the tanning is only active from May through October, the throughput would be 130.

2.2.6 Employment and Training

The process above would need two people to help the hide through all the stages. One of these two people would be the trained tanner, the other a helper or trainee. Tanning is an art as much as a skill and the tanner will make the difference between a top quality product and garbage.

There are several places in the NWT where there are women with a good working knowledge of Native smoke tanning methods. Snowdrift and Rae Edzo are two places with skilled people. Mrs. Jane Dragon has for the past few years run a tanning workshop in the Fort Smith area.

The introduction of machinery into the process creates the need for additional training. Especially the circular knife is a machine that requires substantial effort before one is proficient on it. It is estimated that a person can be a good flesher/shaver using a circular knife in no less than 8 months. This timeframe assumes supervision and access to surplus hide that can be ruined without endangering the financial position of the tannery.

The tanner would be expected to take care of the business side of the enterprise, flesh the hides, and supervise all tasks. The trainee would be responsible for most of the physical handling of the hides and helping the hide through the process at times helped by the tanner or casual help. Further casual help may be required in the collection of punk wood.

2.3 Medium Small Tannery - Leather

2.3.1 Technology

This tannery is set up to Investigate a more structured tannery, using small scale tanning technology adapted from non-Native rather than Native traditions. The discussion is more formal for two reasons: 1) the scale is larger and the organization of the tannery will need to be more structured, and 2) there is no indigenous pool of skills and traditions to draw from resulting in the need for a more explicit and business-oriented approach.

The basic process goes through 6 stages:

1. selecting and storing hides
2. soaking
3. liming, fleshing and dehairing
4. deliming, bating, and pickling
5. tanning
6. softening, oiling and drying
7. measuring, sorting and storing

Step 1 - Selecting and Storage Hides

Hide selection is important if there is a surplus of hides to choose from. The objective of the selection process is to obtain those hides with the maximum value. Damage can be due to poor skinning which may result in an asymmetrical hide or a hide with deep knife marks: Other damage includes vein and blood stains, which may spoil the appearance of the hide on the flesh side, scratches and holes, due to old wounds or insect damage, or rot in the hide.

If selection is not possible because only few hides are available, the skinner should try to upgrade the hides that are offered to him by educating the hunter about what devalues the hide. More about hunter education in Chapter 5.

If the hides have not been cured by drying or pickling by the hunter and if the raw hide cannot be processed immediately the tanner will have to dry or pickle the hides himself before storing the hides.

Storage requires protection of the hides against rodents or other vermin by keeping the stored hides off the ground on pallets or shelving.

Step 2 - Soaking

The hides are soaked to wash off dirt and blood and to soften the hides if they were stored in a dried state. Soaking will make the hides swell. In the soaking operation the hides are put in a wet drum and agitated. If necessary, disinfectants can be added to the water to counter bacterial damage to the hide.

Step 3 - Liming, Fleshing and Dehairing

Liming, the immersion of the hide in a mixture of water and lime, destroys or softens the outer layer of the hide to facilitate the dehairing process. It also destroys those parts of the hide such as nerves and sweat glands, that are not converted into leather. Liming also makes the fleshing operation easier.

Fleshing as described in Section 2 is the removal of all the flesh from the hide. A circular knife is assumed here. Dehairing is the removal of all the hair with the help of a scraper. Both fleshing and dehairing can be done without the immersion of the hides in a lime solution. As a matter of fact the Native tanning methods omit liming. However, the liming process makes the dehairing and fleshing easier and allows for a higher throughput.

Dehairing after the liming process is reduced to scraping the loosened hair from the hide using the back of a fleshing knife or any other blunt scraper.

Step 4 - Deliming, Bating and Pickling

The manipulation of the hide in this step is done to prepare the unhaired hide for the tanning process. This preparation has both a chemical and physical component.

Deliming is the washing of the hide to remove the liming solution and bring the hide at one desired pH, which is 7 or 8 for the bating process.

Bating is a further step in the purification of the hide. It is the enzymatic removal of unwanted parts of the hide, such as epidermis, hair, and so-called "scud" on the hide and in the hair follicles and pores.

Pickling is the treatment of the hide with salt and acid to bring the hide to the desired pH for tanning. The pH depends on the tanning process used.

All three parts of this step take place in drums (one drum for each substep), placed close to each other to facilitate the movement of hides through the process. This step underlines the need for an experienced tanner. Each of the parts of the tanning process depend on the prior ones in that successful preservation of the hide will only come about if all variables (such as the pH) are expertly manipulated.

Step 5 - Tanning

Tanning is the conversion of a hide into leather. There are many different methods of tanning and all yield different results. The basic aim of the tanning process is to preserve the hide so that it can be used to make leather goods. Smoke tanning, as discussed In the previous section, results in a very pliable, water-resistant, and easy to sew leather. Chrome tanning, which is the most widely used commercial tanning method, yields a leather that is very resistant to bacterial decay and that stands up to a high temperatures. However, without further processing it is not easy to work with, and the process is highly polluting since the chrome salts do not break down easily.

The choice of tanning method is dependent on the quality of leather demanded, the inputs that are available, the pollution control systems that are in place, and the skills of the tanner. Smoke tanning has been discussed in the previous section and could be adopted to a larger volume tannery by divising a way in which the smoking could take place while the hides are in a drum. Chrome tanning, on the other end of the technological spectrum, has to be rejected for a northern tannery on the basis of environmental concerns.

The discussion in this section will assume the choice of aluminium sulphate as the major tanning agent. This choice is based on the fact that aluminium sulphate does not constitute as large a health hazard as, for example, chrome salts, is relatively easily neutralized in the effluent, and can be purchased from Alberta suppliers. Small amounts of chrome salts may be added to increase the stability of the tanning solution.

One drawback of alum salt tanning is that it results in a leather that is likely to be more stiff and hard. This drawback can be overcome by paying extra attention to the softening process that follows the tanning stage.

Alum salt tanning uses a wet drum placed close by the drums for the deliming, bating, and pickling part of the cycle.

Step 6 - Softening, Oiling and Drying

The tanned hides can be piled on top of each other and allowed to drain. This removes most of the excess tanning liquids from the hides. The leather is further dried by applying a stroking pressure from one end of the piece of leather to the other. This motion which can be done with the stretching machine discussed in the previous section. More sophisticated machinery is available.

The result of this softening and drying process is a soft and pliable hide that can be finished by the application of some oil, such as neat's foot or castor oil. The product at this stage is semi-finished leather to be sold to the leather product manufacturers or to another tannery for further finishing for specific specialty markets.

Step 7 - Measuring, Sorting, and Grading

This step is not part of the tanning process, but like step 1, the hide selection and storage, a very important part of the tannery as a business. Leather is preserved animal hide and is therefore not a uniform product. Separating the finished pieces of leather by grade and measuring the individual pieces will enable the tannery operator to price his product more precisely and to target separate markets with special needs.

Storage of the finished product should ensure that the quality of the product does not diminish in value due to exposure to weather, especially bright sunlight. Some effort should be made to protect the leather from pilfering or vandalism.

2.3.2 Equipment Schedule

1-	Soaking drum	$2,00
1-	Liming drum	2,000
1-	Circular fleshing knife	900
1-	Circular knife sharpening machine	5,000
1-	Scraper	
1-	Deliming drum	2,000
(1-	Pickling drum)	2,000
(	) optional	
(1-	Bating drum)	2,000
1-	Tanning drum	2,000
1-	Extractor (dryer)	9,000
1-	Stretching machine	3,000
1-	Effluent settling tank	

2.3.3 Building Requirements

A well insulated building with 3 phase power, proper ventilation, good water supply and drainage is required. It is possible to change an existing building to a leather tanning operation with minimal adaptation. Effluent disposal may create the need to build a settling tank.

2.3.4 Capacity

As with the very small tannery discussed above, this tannery would work on a lot basis. A lot is the amount of hides needed to fill a drum and is thus dependent on the drum size. In the earlier stages it is recommended to use small drums of 4-5 feet diameter. This diameter drum can accommodate up to 5 moose or caribou hides.

The fleshing/dehairing stage is the bottleneck in the operation since it is the most labour intensive step. An experienced flesher should be able to flesh 5 moose hides in a day using a circular fleshing knife. If properly timed it is therefore possible to fill one drum per day giving the operation a weekly capacity of 25 hides in which hides fleshed on Friday will start their wet cycle on the next Monday or left to soak (without agitation) over the weekend.

Since the whole process is a single winterized building, the process can be maintained year round. If we assume a 48 week work year, the total yearly throughput would be 1200 hides.

Throughput can be Increased by adding a second circular fleshing machine or upgrading the circular knife to a drum type fleshing machine.

2.3.5 Environmental Concerns

Waste water needs to be processed before it can be let out of the tannery into the environment. There are two major effluent streams: the lime contaminated water from the liming and deliming steps and the alum salt contaminated water from the tanning step. The lime contaminated water is not much of a problem since lime is not a harmful (be it smelly) chemical. Indeed lime is commonly applied to neutralize acidic soils and the water with the lime and fleshing waste makes a good fertilizer and can be disposed of with beneficial effect on soil.

The water contaminated with aluminum salts and other tanning agents should be recycled as much as possible and neutralized before it is disposed of outside the tannery. Charcoal filtration will go a long way to take out the salts; separating the salts from the water by boiling is another method but is unlikely to be used in the NWT due to the high energy costs.

In the summer the salt contaminated water can run into a lagoon or open pit and be oxydized by the action of the sun. A complete system would see two or three settling tanks set up before the water reaches the lagoon. Most solid contaminants settle in these tanks and can be removed and buried in a landfill site. The leftover water is discharged in the lagoon to be oxydized by the sun. This system has drawbacks in that it can be a smelly process and, of course, the open pit lagoon would be frozen solid in the winter. If a special winter lagoon was crated that would be filled over the winter with effluent to be oxydized during the summer, one may get around the fact that the oxidization process doesn't work in the winter.

2.3.6 Employment and Training

The process described above would need the follow crew:

1- master tanner/tannery operator

1- experienced flesher

1- tanner-trainee

1- helper

The master tanner would be responsible for the running of the tannery in both a business and a technical sense. He is the one who makes the ultimate buying decisions, controls chemical levels in each of the process steps, schedules the work, and markets the product. The multiplicity of tasks will require a fair level of delegation of responsibilities to other members of the staff e.g., the tanner-trainee.

Well trained all round tanners are few and far between and it takes at least four years of apprenticeship to reach a level of proficiency. Tanning is an art as well as a skill and requires a good sense of observation, more than a basic knowledge of chemistry, and a lot of practical knowledge of mechanics. All aspects of the tanning process require a high level of skills; fleshing for example, make take 8 months of training, stretching one month, and shaving - 6 months.

2.4 Medium Small Tannery - Furs

2.4.1 Technology

Fur dressing is a slightly more difficult process than leather tanning because besides conserving the hide, the process has to keep the hair not only intact but also firmly bedded in the hide. Our investigation of the demand (see Section 4) indicates that commercially dressed fur is overwhelmingly preferred over home tanned furs. The tannery discussed in this section is there for set up to come up with a product that equals the output of southern tanneries. Several stages of the fur dressing operation are similar to leather tanning process and no further explanation of these steps will be given. The basic process goes through 10 steps:

1. Hide selection and Storage

2. Soaking

3. Washing

4. Fleshing and Shaving

5. Pickling

6. Dressing (tanning)

7. Softening, Washing and Drying (includes stretching)

8. Drumming and Caging

9. Sanding and Ironing

10. Sorting and Storage

Step 1 and 2 are similar to the steps in the leather tanning process (see Section 3.1). Step 3, washing, has the objective to clean out the dirt and possibly blood from the fur, and to degrease the hair. To accomplish this, a detergent is added to the water in the drum.

Step 4, fleshing and shaving, is as described in the leather tanning process. As with leather tanning, the pickling (step 5) is to prepare the fur for the actual tanning. The pH of the hide is of critical importance for the success of the tanning operation.

Step 6, dressing, is similar to the tanning step in the leather operation. It should be noted here that although the tanning method here is based on aluminum salts, it is not true that there is one standard tanning liquid that can be used for all leather and furs. It is specifically in this stage that the craft of the tanner comes into play. Each lot of skins, hides or furs will need individual attention and the tanning solution will have to be adjusted for each type of hide or fur. In general, it is recommended to keep leather tanning and fur dressing separate and not share machines or equipment between them with the exception of the fleshing knifes. Different types of fur can be processed in the same line of equipment but efficency and conservation of inputs require that large runs of each type of fur are processed to minimize the number of times the tanner needs to change tanning solutions, the acidity of the pickling solution, etc.

Step 7, softening, washing, and drying, is very much the same as in the leather tanning process except that the fur will be improved if it is force dried with hot (30-32^{o}C) air blown over it by a fan.

Step 8, drumming and caging, finishes the process for the fur. Special grade sawdust is mixed in with the furs in a drum and spun around. This process removes any impurities from the fur and makes it fluffy and soft. Caging is the removal of the sawdust.

Step 9, ironing and sanding, can be seen as optional. Ironing gives a lustre to the fur and sanding gives a soft finish to the leather side. Step 10, storage, is much the same as in leather tanning.

2.4.2 Equipment Schedule

1-	Fleshing machine	$ 900
6-	Drums	@ 2,000
1-	Stretching machine	3,500
1-	Sawdust drum and cage	5,000
1-	Ironing machine	9,000
1-	Sanding machine	8,500
1-	Forced air furnace and ducts	2,500
1-	30" extractor (dryer)	9,000

2.4.3 Building Requirements

As with leather tanning

2.4.4 Capacity

As with the leather tanning process, the bottleneck is the process in the fleshing stage. Table 2.1 shows estimates for the number of furs by type that can be processed on one circular fleshing knife in one day. A second factor in the capacity of the tannery is the need to process the furs in drumloads. Table 2.1 also indicates how many drumloads an experienced flesher can hope to fill in a day's work.

Table 2.1 Estimates of Daily Production of an Experienced Flesher using a Circular Fleshing Machine

	Number	Drumloads
Bear	5	N.A.
Beaver	20	2/3
Buffalo	2	1
Coyote	20	3/4
Fox	30	3/4
Rabbit	75	3/4
Muskrat	75	3/4
Seal	20	1
wolf	15	2/3
Wolverine	20	N.A.

Source: N. Guilbeault

Since the fur dressing process omits the liming and deliming step which makes the whole process shorter, it remains possible to process 5 drumloads per week. The actual number of furs will depend on the type of fur processed, which is dependent on the demand for furs (see SectIon 4). Total yearly throughput will be 240 drumloads in 48 weeks.

2.4.5 Environmental Concerns

see leather tanning

2.4.6 Employment and Training

see leather tanning

3. SUPPLY AND DEMAND OF HIDES AND FURS

3.1 Summary

The demand for tanned hides in the NWT equals, to a great extent, the demand for smoke tanned moose hides. For 1985, the demand for tanned moose hides by small craft stores in the NWT is estimated at 226 hides, and most of the demand is generated in the Southern NWT. The 226 smoke tanned moose hides are not the extent of the market. There is some frustrated demand for more moose hides and the market for smoke tanned caribou hides is estimated at 197.

Since the area around the Great Slave Lake in the dominant hunting grounds for moose, and since the demand for hides is centered in Yellowknife and Rae Edzo, it seems logical to locate a very small tannery using Native tanning methods in Rae Edzo. A large and active pool of talent among the Native population reinforces the choice of Rae Edzo.

A medium small leather tannery would process a number of hides that is far in excess of the local needs. On top of this, there is a very strong preference for smoke tanned over aluminium/ chrome tanned leather among NWT based users of leather. The lack of demand, even if larger users such as the Hudson's 8ay Co. are included, make a medium small leather tannery not viable.

Demand by small craft stores in the NWT for tanned fur is mostly demand for commercially tanned furs and is estimated at over 4500 pelts in 1985. This demand would absorb only about half of the capacity of the medium small fur dressing plant, and the viability of the operation would require that the tannery gets access to larger markets through e.g., the Hudson's 8ay Company or the Arctic Trading Co.

Minimization of transportation costs points to Hay River or Pine Point as the location of a fur dressing plant. One kg. of tanned fur or hide takes roughly 5 kg. of chemical inputs (mainly salt), and it makes more sense to transport the furs to the plant than move the plant to the area of most abundant supply.

3.2 Verv Small Tannery

3.2.1 Demand

The very small tannery with a' throughput of 5 hides a week or 240 hides per year is modelled on the Native tanning methods that are used in the Northwest Territories. Leather produced in this fashion will be the same as the leather now produced by hand methods. Native leather tanning is limited mainly to moosehides with some tanning of caribou hides. This observation itself already gives an indication of the demand for Native tanned leather. Contact with most art and craft stores in the NWT and a number of persons and companies involved in the purchase, manufacture, wholesale, and resale of leather goods lead to the conclusion that demand for leather for the handicraft industry in the NWT is roughly equivalent with the demand for tanned moosehides (with a poorly developed demand for tanned caribou hide as a distant second) and that the demand for tanned moosehides is overwhelmingly a demand for smoke tanned leather.

Table 3.1 and 3.2 show the estimated demand for smoke tanned moosehide and caribou hide in the NWT. The figures are the results of a survey of craft stores and cooperatives in the N.W.T. The figures presented in Table 3.1 and 3.2 are conservative estimate of the demand because it only takes into account the demand of local NWT stores contacted by RMC and does not include tanned moose or caribou hides that could be marketed through larger companies such as the Hudson's Bay Company, the Arctic Trading Company and Northern Impressions.

Table 3.1
Estimated Demand of Smoke Tanned Moosehides
By Region 1985

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Tota 1
1985	175	13	18	20	0	0	226

Table 3.2
Estimated Demand of Smoke Tanned Carriboo Hide
By Region 1985

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Tota 1
1985	147	10	0	40	0	0	197

Estimated demand is subdivided by region to give a first indication of where the tannery should be located. The subdivision of the NWT is the same of the one used in the Diand publication 'Fur Trade Posts of the NWT, 1870-1970' by Peter Usher. The regions are:

1. Great Slave Lake
2. MacKenzie River
3. MacKenzie Delta
4. Western Arctic
5. Eastern Arctic
6. Keewatin

The total number of smoke tanned moosehides demanded is very close to the total capacity of the very small tannery as outlined in Section 2 giving the tannery a initial market of at least the full capacity of operation. Not all suppliers will be pushed out of the way by a new tannery in the NWT; some hides will be supplied by individual women in the NWT and B.C. On the other hand a recent ban on the interprovincial trade in smoke tanned hides introduced by Alberta helps the new tannery in finding an outlet for its total production.

The market for smoke tanned moosehides is not limited to the numbers presented in Table 3.1 Several people in the arts and craft industry in the NWT indicated a certain level of frustrated demand. This unfulfilled demand allows for a guarded optimism that the output of very small tannery can be marketed in the NWT even in the absence of any market development efforts.

So far, the discussion has centred on tanned moosehides, and Ignored cariboo hide. Total demand for cariboo hide is not well developed and there are a lot of quality difficulties with caribou leather due to insect and parasite damage. Inclusion of the cariboo hides as part of the 240 hide total output would ensure the marketability of the total output of the tannery, even though it would lower the gross and net revenue of the operation. (See section 4 for a discussion of the economics of tanning in the NWT.)

3.2.2 **Supply**

Moose is hunted by General Hunting License (GHL) holders and to some extent by resident hunters. Figures based on GHL holder information is not very reliable; however, there seems to be a clear downward trend in the total moose harvest from around 1800 in the mid sixties to 600-1000 in the early eighties. These numbers may show substantially under-reporting of the kill, but even at these conservative levels it is clear that the annual moose harvest is more than sufficient to supply all the hides (i.e., 225) that the very small tannery can process.

Figure 4.1 shows the location of moose kills by resident hunters between 1981/82 and 1983/84. Even casual inspection of the map shows the area around the Great Slave Lake as the dominant moose hunting area with the MacKenzie Delta and the MacKenzie mountains as two other important areas.

3.2.3 Location

It is established that sufficient numbers of moose are harvested each year, and that the area around the Great Slave is the dominant hunting grounds. It is also established that the Ft. Smith region (region 1 in Table 4.1) has the highest apparent demand (mainly centered in Yellowknife and Rae Edzo). The conclusion regarding the location seems straight forward if we consider further that most regular inputs are supplied locally (power, punk wood, moose brain).

Rae Edzo seems likes the most likely place to locate the very small tannery because:

- located close to major centres of demand,
- located in the area of most moose kills,
- large and active pool of talent among the Native population.

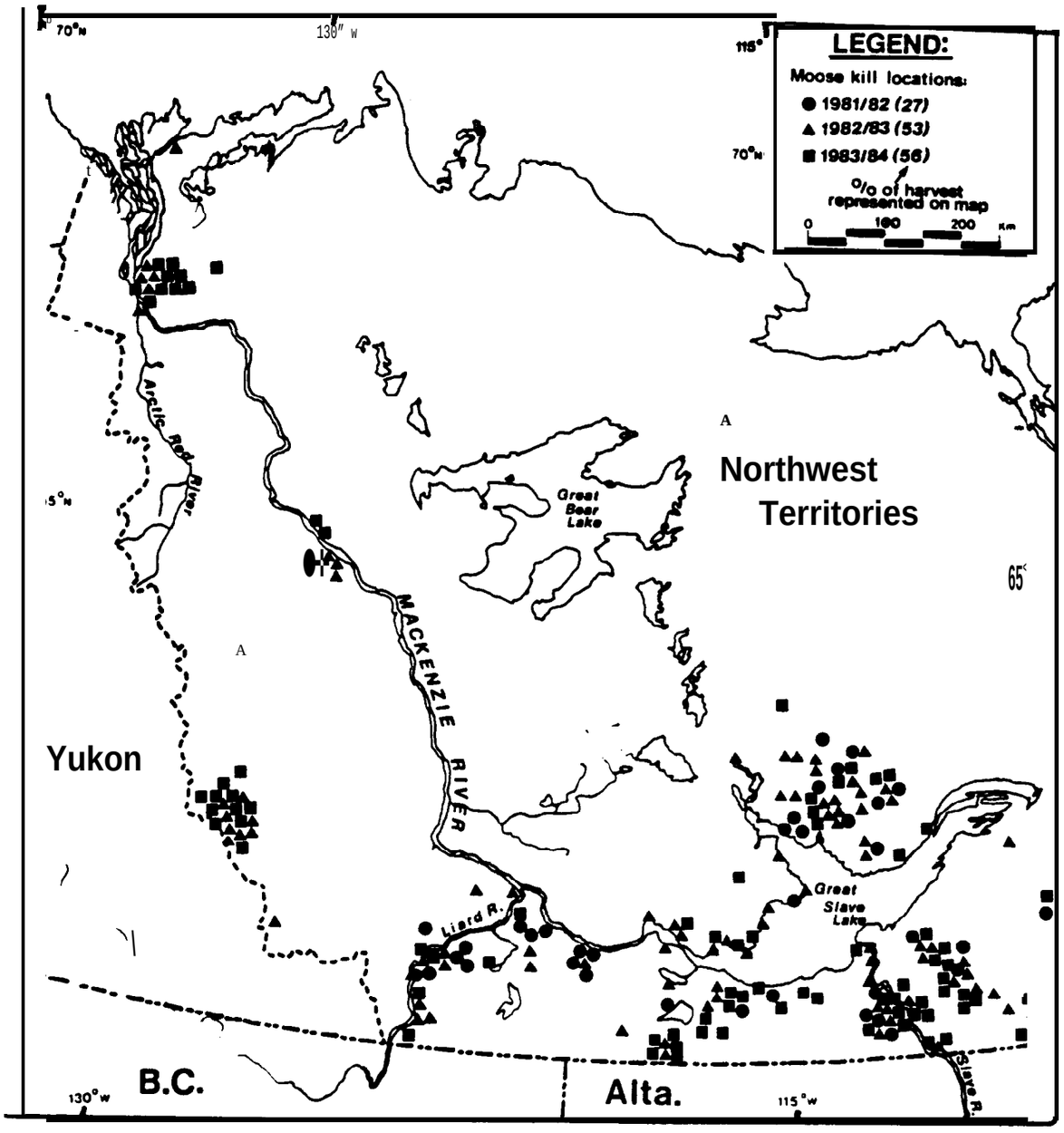


Figure 4.1 Distribution of moose kills by resident hunters, 1981-1984.

Source: Treseder and Graf 1985

3.3 Medium Small Tannery

3.3.1 Demand for Leather

Demand for tanned moose and caribou hide through small craft stores was approximately 400 hides in 1985 (see tables 3.1 and 3.2). This demand is far below the potential output of a medium small leather tannery with an output of 1200 hides. Active market development and the inclusion of large organization such as Arctic Trading, Northern Impressions, and the 8ay will not increase the total number of hides demanded over 700-800 hides.. This lack of demand for tanned leather is what makes a Medium Small Leather Tannery a marginal undertaking. This demand analysis does not even take into account the very clear preference of NWT consumers for smoke tanned leather, which decreases the likelihood of success for the leather tannery.

3.3.2 Demand for Furs

Arts and Craft shops contacted by RMC voiced an overwhelming preference for commercially tanned furs. Commercial furs are more durable than home tanned pelts, and have a higher consumer appeal. Table 3.3 shows the estimates of the demand for furs in the NWT based on RMC contacts with local arts and craft organizations. Not all respondents were able to give a breakdown of the total number of furs demanded. As with Table 3.1 and 3.2 the estimated demand has been broken out by region.

Table 3.3
Estimated Demand for Furs in the NWT
by Region 1985

Type	Region 1	2	3	4	5	6	Tota 1
Beaver	305		50				355
Coyote	100		50	50	3	50	253
Fox	230			75	20	50	375
Musk ox	60						60
Rabbit	870		750	7			1627
Sea 1				500			500
Wolverine	5		50	25		50	130
wolf	285			75			360
Other	625		100	100		50	875
Tota 1	2480		1000	832	23	200	4535

Source: RMC Survey

Figures presented in Table 3.3 should be used with care as an indication of demand only and not as an absolute measurement.

As with the figures presented' in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 larger companies such as Hudson's Bay Company, Arctic Trading and Northern Impressions have not been included to prevent double counting furs that travel through the wholesale channels.

One conclusion that can be drawn from these Indications of demand in the NWT is that the demand for furs by small art and craft shops is not enough to use the total capacity of the medium small tannery. Figures in Table 3.3 can be converted to lot sizes using the numbers presented in Table 2.1. A lot is the number of furs need to fill one drum to an efficient capacity and is the size of each batch of furs processed. The demand figures of Table 3.3 convert to approximately 100 lot sizes or less than half the capacity of the tannery.

To increase the volume of furs that can be processed by the tannery it is necessary to get access to the larger markets. Northern Impressions of Yellowknife the Arctic Trading Co. of Churchill Manitoba and the Hudson's Bay Company are three major users of fur and fur products. Each one of these companies handles enough furs to keep the tannery working at full capacity or close to it.

3.3.3 Supply

The NWT is a major supplier of raw furs to the world markets. Even casual inspection of fur harvest statistics (e. g., Resources Initiatives 1985) shows the potential abundance of fur supplies in the region. Tables 3.4 through 3.8 show harvest estimates by region. The figures in the table can be related to the size of the fur dressing plant discussed here by expressing some of the harvest numbers to lot sizes of our tannery. The Inuvik muskrat harvest alone equals over 1400 lots (or batches of pelts enough to fill a drum) as compared with a total capacity of 240 lots for the size of tannery discussed here.

This casual indication that there are more than enough pelts being produced in the NWT to keep a medium small fur dressing plant more than busy, begs the question whether a NWT tannery will be able to get access to this supply. Most furs are now harvested and sent as raw pelts to southern auctions. This flow of fur goes via the established fur trading channels such as the Hudson's Bay co. or via the NWT Wildlife Officials on behalf of individual hunters and trappers.

Table 3.4

Inuvik fur harvest (no. of pelts)

Species	1980-81"	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84
Bears:				
Polar	2s	8	3	17
Other	12	16	14	17
Beaver	415	458	255	295
Caribou	--	--	--	--
Coyote	--	--	--	--
Fisher	19	--	--	--
Fox				
Blue	2	4	1	2
cross	316	572	367	515
Red	470	917	584	862
Silver	77	78	61	92
White	2,551	2,338	321	1,626
Lynx	242	3,929	584	441
Marten	10,485	8,705	7,350	7,055
Mink	1,876	1,137	1,675	1,207
Muskrat	87,854	105,864	11S,798	119,161
Muskox	11	--	--	--
Otter	2	3	1	11
Rabbit	--	--	--	--
Squirrel	728	368	52	--
Weasel	191	159	54	237
wolf	57	36	33	234
Wolverine	5	1	4	39
Total Value:	S1 ,161,288	$1,045,878.80	8966,310.46	S1 ,121 ,319.27

Table 3.5

Fort Smith fur harvest (no. of pelts)

Species	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84
Bears				
Polar	--	--	--	--
Other	75	52	21	44
Beaver	4,612	1,857	2,459	2,297
Caribou	--	--	--	--
Coyote	16	52	29	15
Fisher	107	64	55	51
Fox				
Blue	3	--	7	--
Cross	346	296	247	121
Red	844	521	504	268
Silver	64	45	39	14
White	332	16	374	32
Lynx	2,963	2,051	1,616	858
Marten	18,318	17,283	10,153	6,517
Mink	2,968	1,933	1,093	1,242
Muskrat	37,601	27,619	15,311	27,983
Muskox	--	--	--	--
Otter	94	52	39	74
Rabbit	--	--	--	A-
Squirrel	20,524	6,863	2,360	12,218
Weasel	1,497	1,183	303	865
wolf	94	121	248	292
Wolverine	35	54	91	59
Total Value:	$1,705,706.01	$1,511,488.08	$1,103,595.88	$853,611.89

Table 3.6

Kitikmeot fur harvest (# of pelts)

Species	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84
Polar bear	96	50	2s	60
Fox				
Blue	96	32	28	39
cross	113	140	79	204
Red	383	283	304	538
Silver	19	45	8	40
White	22,882	8,642	3,495	8,773
Marten	--	4	2	1
Muskox	2	--	--	--
Otter	--	1	2	--
Rabbi t	--	--	--	3
Squirrel	--	10	64	12
Wease 1	14	7	--	1
wolf	142	157	95	170
Wolverine	15	26	38	37
Total Value:	%770,343.45	S351 ,257.82	S145,822.52	%319,398.10

Table 3.7

Keewatin fur harvest (no. of pelts)

Species	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84
Polar bears	78	96	98	100
Fox				
Blue	10	7	21	3
cross	7	7	19	3
Red	64	35	70	24
Silver	6	2	7	1
White	6,274	1,426	7,666	1,943
Muskox	--	1	--	--
Weasel	14	--	--	1
Wolf	142	71	107	129
Wolverine	15	6	3	6
Total Value:	$233,572.50	$133,825.02	%280,467.39	S190,364.50

Table 3.8

Baffin fur harvest (no. of pelts)

Species	1980-81	1981-82	1982-S3	1983-84
Bear				
Polar	134	144	70	12s
Other	**1**	--	--	--
Fox				
Blue	**18**	**13**	2	20
Cross	23	**40**	12	17
Red	119	**69**	2s	118
Silver	4	**3**	--	3
White	S,276	**2,809**	796	3,097
Weasel	1	--	--	--
-idol f	62	58	40	64
Wolverine	2	1	1	--
Total Value:	**%268,143.00**	**%218,480.00**	**%77,924.00**	**$154,943.00**

Source for Table 3.4 - 3.8: Resource Initiatives(1985)

Fur buyers who frequent the auctions are a small sophisticated tightly knit group reacting to the very fickle requirements of the International fashion industry. Once bought the fashion manufacturers usually have their furs custom tanned to the specification of that specific time.

The link between the fur auctions and the international fashion world and the dominance of the Hudsons Bay Co. in this trade suggest that this market is not an appropriate one for a small NWT based fur dressing plant. Stronger yet it can be debated that the fur auctions are a system that the NWT hunter and trapper should shy away from as much as possible. Prices for each type of fur vary widely by grade, colour, cleanliness, and freshness, leaving the hunter with very little information about the real value of his product. In general there, is a real lack of information available to the hunters and trappers about when to market furs. Insufficient information leads to lower returns to the producer. The existence of so-called treaty sales, sale of lots of fur that were not sold at a regular auction or arrived too late for the auction, often further depresses the returns to individual trappers.

The distance between the trapper and the fur auction may open a door for a NWT based fur tannery. By virtue of its location in the NWT, the tannery will be able to establish a good working relationship with many hunters and trappers and their organization. Better lines of communication, the opening up of an alternative marketing channel, and at least equal returns, will go a long way to convince individual hunters and trappers to divert part of their harvest to a NWT base tannery.

3.3.4 Location

The total harvest of pelts in the Inuvik region is estimated at $1.1 million dollars in 1983/84 (Resource Initiatives 1985), while the Ft. Smith region's harvest was estimated at $850,000 and the Kitikmeot harvest at $320,000. Thus, if the tannery were to be located close to the major supply of furs to minimize freight for furs, a location in the Inuvik region would be selected. However, all other criteria, and as location of demand, minimization of input costs such as chemicals and power, point into the direction of locating the tannery in the Ft. Smith region.

Fur dressing is very Input intensive. A industry rule of thumb is that 1 kg of tanned leather will need 5 kg of chemical inputs. In terms of bulk it is thus more efficient to have the furs travel to the tannery than have the tanning chemicals travel to where the furs are. The majority of the input is salt which is easily transported, but many of the other chemicals, such as chromium salts that are added to the aluminium salt to stabilize the tan, are often in the form of an emulsion and very sensitive to temperature and temperature changes. Winter transport of these chemicals increases the chances that the chemicals become inactive.

Hay River has the infrastructure for a tannery. Good road access to Alberta will allow for a least cost location (for the NWT) when it comes to inputs such as chemicals and sawdust. Hay River's established industrial base will make it possible to find existing warehouse or factory space that can be adopted to the needs of a tannery. Pine Point has a pretty well the same advantages as Hay River as a location for a tannery.

4. THE ECONOMICS OF SMALL SCALE TANNERIES

4.1 Summary

A very small tannery using a low level of mechanization and Native tanning methods shows a small profit after all expenses, including depreciation, are taken into account. This small profit is realized if the plant can maintain full capacity and operates flawlessly. If the capacity utilization drops to 90% the plant only breaks even and any spoilage of hides in the tanning process will endanger the profitability.

Operating the tannery for 26 weeks reduces profits by more than half, because the labour costs are reduced by less than half and capital costs do not go down. The tanner would be needed for more than the 26 week production period to start the process up and sell output.

Increasing the throughput of the very small tannery by adding another drum and some other equipment actually decreases the profitability. This drop is mainly due to the lack of demand for a smoked moose hide. The extra production would be mainly cariboo hides, and the tanning margin for cariboo is substantially lower than for moose.

A medium small leather tannery cannot compete with southern tanners. Local demand is insufficient to absorb the supply, and in southern markets the NWT based tannery would have to compete with 1000 hide a day operations. By concentrating on a specialty market, such as seal leather, a NWT based tannery may find a niche for itself, but the economics of a medium small seal leather tannery are marginal at best.

The level of profitability of a medium small custom fur dressing plant will depend on the types of pelt that are processed. Wolf and bear, for example, command a higher than average tanning fee, while tanning fees for e.g., beaver and coyote are lower than average. The operation shows a profit only if the capacity utilization is 80% or higher year round. Part-time operation of the plant creates a loss because of high equipment and building investment.

All calculations assume commercial money and the economics of all operations would improve if grants for either equipment or labour would be available.

4.2 Very Small Tannery

The very small tannery discussed in Section 2 is basically an adaptation of existing Native tanning methods. Simple machinery is Introduced to take some of the drudgery and hard physical labour out of the process.

Aspirations for this tannery are limited to the supply of the local (NWT) market, which absorbed at least 226 smoke tanned moose hides and 197 smoke tanned cariboo hides in 1985. This tannery will only process moose and cariboo hide and produce smoke tanned leather; no other products or types of hides will be considered in the initial phases of the tannery because moose and cariboo hides, especially moose hides, will find a ready market in the NWT arts and crafts industry.

Moose is the prime hide to be processed because it is in high demand and fetches high prices. The price for a smoke tanned moose hide in the NWT ranges from $250 to $375 while tanned moose hides sell between $50 and $60. If we assume a conservative average price for tanned moose hides of $300 and $50 for a untanned hide, we arrive at a $250 spread that can be absorbed by the tannery as a tanning fee.

The figures for cariboo are a lot lower, reflecting both the more abudant supply of cariboo hides and the less developed demand. Average price for smoke tanned cariboo hide was around $50 in the Ft. Smith region, in 1985 and $15 for untanned hides, leaving only $45 per hide for the tanning process.

Transportation costs do not play a major role here since the practice now is that the hunter will offer the raw hide for sale at one of the major centres such as Yellowknife, Rae Edzo, or Hay River, thus absorbing the cost of transporting the hide from the outlying communities to the centres. More critical is that the tanner establishes a relationship with the hunters so that they know where to bring the hide and is what state or form. Many moose hides are left in the bush or end up in land fill sites because hunters do not know the hides can have value. Positioning the tannery close to the major sources of demand in Yellowknife, Rae Edzo, and the craft shops along the Liard highway minimizes the transportation cost from the tannery to the customer.

Table 4.1

VERY SMALL TANNERY
MEEKLY THROUGHPUT OF 5 HIDES

	48 WEEKS CAPACITY FULL	26 WEEKS CAPACITY FULL	4B WEEKS CAPACITY	0.87
EQUIPMENT	$7,000.00	$7,000.00	$7,000.00	
BUILDING	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	
VARIABLE COSTS:				
KNIVES	$200.00	$120.00	$174*00	
CHEMICALS	S240.00	$130.00	$240.00	
RENT	$6,000.00	$6,000.00	$6,000.00	
UTILITIES	$3,050.00	$1,850,00	$3,050.00	
COST OF HIDES	$12,000.00	$6,500.00	$10,440.00	
COST OF STOCK	$1,200,00	$650.00	$1,044.00	
INTEREST COST	$2,580.00	$2,300.00	$2,244,60	
EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE	$350.00	$3s0.00	$350,00	
WATER	$144,00	$78. 00	$125.28	
LABOUR TRAINEE	$16,640.00	$8,320.00	$16,640,00	
LABOUR TANNER	$31,200.00	$18,000.00	$31,200.00	
LABOUR FLESHER	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	
LABOUR HELPER	$1,280.00	$640,00	$1,280.00	
FIXED COSTS:			$3.00	
BUILDING DEPRECIATION	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	
EQUIPMENT DEPRECATION	S462.00	$462.00	$462.00	
TOTAL COSTS	$75,346.00	$45,400.00	$73,252.88	
REVENUE	$84,000.00	*$45,500,00*	$73,080.00	
PROFIT (LOSS)	$8,654.00	*$100,00*	($172.88)	

Table 4.1 shows estimates of cost of production and revenues for the very small tannery under various assumptions regarding number of weeks in operation per year and level of utilization of the capacity. Further assumptions used in the calculation of the figures presented here are compiled in Appendix A.

The assumption of full capacity for 48 weeks means a total production of 240 tanned moose hides, slightly above the identified demand for moose hides by small craft stores in the NWT, but definitely not outside the realm of possibilities if some market development is done. All assumptions are chosen so that the economic picture presented in Table 4.1 is as realistic as can be. However, the very nature of this approach makes it more of a depiction of the situation when everything goes well than the reflection of the actual budget of an operating tannery. Small changes in the assumption quickly whittle away the $8,500 profit that the enterprise shows. For example, what if full capcity during the whole year cannot be maintained? The third column in Table 4.1 shows that the tannery breaks even if the capacity utilization drops to just below 90%. Spoilage of hides also would make a quick dent into the operation's profitability. A 10% spoilage of tanned hides because of mismanagement or inexperience would eat away most of the profits. Any additional labour cost would be critical for the tannery since labour is the largest cost factor.

Column 2 of Table 4.1 shows the results of a partial operation of the tannery. In the 26 weeks of operation this tannery would process 130 moose hides. Labour costs go down, and labour is the main cost in the tannery discussed here, but not proportional to the reduction is working weeks. The tanner has been deemed to be on the job for four weeks outside the 26 weeks production season to prepare the tannery for the new season, to market the production after the close of the production season, and to take care of all necessary paperwork. However, the tannery still shows a positive, be it small, return.

Table 4.2 shows a slight variation in the setup of the tannery and investigates a higher production is an economical alternative. To make the larger throughput possible, one extra drum has been added so that there are two separate soaking drums. Two drums will allow one drum to be used exclusively for the initial soaking and washing and one for the soaking of the semi-tanned hide at the end of the process. An extractor has been added to the equipment to mechanize the wringing of the hide after the soaking stage. The casual help is used year round in this scenario.

Table 4.2

VERY SMALL TANNERY
WEEKLY THROUGHPUT OF 10 HIDES

	48 WEEKS CAPACITY FULL	26 WEEKS CAPACITY FULL	48 WEEKS CAPACITY	0.96
EQUIPMENT	$13,500.00	$13,500.00	$13,500.00	
BUILDING	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	
VARIABLE COSTS:				
KNIVES	$400,00	$240.00	$384.00	
CHEMICALS	$480.00	$260.00	$480.00	
RENT	$6,000.00	$6,000.00	$6,000.00	
UTILITIES	$3,170.00	$1,940.00	$3,170.00	
COST OF HIDES	$12,250.00	$12,200.00	$11,760.00	
COST Of STOCK	$1,22s,00	$1,220.00	$1,176.00	
INTEREST COST	$3,120,00	$2,600.00	$2, 995* 20	
EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE	$675.00	$675.00	$675. 00	
WATER	$288.00	$156.00	$276.48	
LABOUR TRAINEE	$16,640,00	$8,320.00	$16,640.00	
LABOUR TANNER	$31,200.00	$18,000.00	$31,200.00	
LABOUR FLESHER	$0.00	$0,00	$0.00	
LABOUR HELPER	$16,640s00	$8,320.00	$16,640.00	
FIXED COSTS:				
BUILDING DEPREC1ATION	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	
EQUIPMENT DEPRECATION	$891.00	$891.00	$891,00	
TOTAL COSTS	$92,979,00	$60,822.00	$92,287.69	
REVENUE	$96,000.00	$85,000.00	$92,160.00	
PROFIT (LOSS)	$3,021.00	$24,178.00	($127,68)	

The tannery still shows a positive return with the higher throughput, but the profit has more than halved. This drop in profitability is due mainly to the lack of demand for smoked moose hide. The 240 hides that the tannery produced on full capacity before the expansion filled the current demand for moose hide, leaving the extra production capacity for the production of smoke tanned caribou hides. This market is less well developed and the tanning margin for caribou is substantially lower than for moose ($40 vs. $300).

It is clear from the figures presented here that the profitability of the tannery is optimized by concentrating on moose hides and minimizing labour costs. Indeed the tannery shows a healthy profit in the scenario of a 26 week production season, 260 hides (240 moose and 20 caribou), as shown in column 2 of Table 4.2, the breakeven capacity of this expanded very small tannery is now over 95% reflecting the lower tanning margin of caribou as compared to moose hide.

Expansion of the tannery necessitates the inclusion of caribou hides if the tannery is to operate year round. The lower tanning margin for caribou lessen the profitability of the operation but does increase employment.

4.3 Medium Small Tannery

4.3.1 Leather Tanning

The medium small tannery discussed in Section 2 is a small scale version of a commercial tannery as found in Canada. Machinery have taken over all hard physical labour and modern tanning agents are used to preserve the hides. The major adjustments made for the northern location is the substitution of an aluminium salt based tanning solution for the more common chrome salt tanning solution. This substitution makes the tanning process less polluting.

At full capacity, the medium small tannery will produce 1200 hides per year, far in excess of the current demand for leather in the NWT. Even if the consumer acceptance of commercially tanned moose and caribou hides was equal to the acceptance of smoke tanned hides (and this is not the case) the NWT based tannery would be working at less than half capacity if it would supply all of the local demand.

Table 4.3

MEDIUM SMALL TANNERY WEEKLY THROUGHPUT	100 SEALS 48 WEEKS CAPACITY FULL	200 SEALS 48 WEEKS CAPACITY FULL
EQUIPMENT	$31,300,00	$47,700.00
BUILDING	$135,000.00	$180,000.00
VARIABLE COSTS:		
KNIVES	$0,00	$0.00
CHEMICALS	$13,200.00	$26,400.00
RENT	$0.00	$0,00
UTILITIES	$10,000.00	$12,000.00
COST OF HIDES	$72,000,00	$144,000.00
COST OF STOCK	$7,200,00	$14,400.00
INTEREST COST	$21,480.00	$25,000.00
INSURANCE	$2,494, so	$3,415,50
EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE	$1,565.00	$2,385,00
WATER	$360.00	$720,00
LABOUR TRAINEE	$16,640,00	$16,640.00
LABOUR TANNER	$31,200.00	$31,200.00
LABOUR FLESHER	$20,800.00	$41,600.00
LABOUR HELPER	$16,640.00	$49,920.00
FIXED COSTS:		
BUILDING DEPRECIATION	$4,455,00	$5,940.00
EQUIPMENT DEPRECIATION	$2,065.80	$3,148.20
TOTAL COSTS	$220,100.30	$376,768.70
REVENUE	$192,000,00	$384,000,00
PROFIT (LOSS)	($2B,100.30)	$7,231.30

Itis clear that the NWT based medium small leather tannery needs a major market development effort before it can hope to sell its production. This market development effort would have to be directed towards southern markets because the NWT consumers prefer smoke tanned hides. Contacts with southern based tanneries Indicate that the smallest size leather tannery would process about 1,000 sides a day (mainly beef) and employ 95 people. An operation like this would have a price tag of 10 million dollars and is clearly in another league that the medium small tannery discussed in this report.

The conclusion can be drawn that a NWT based leather tannery cannot compete with southern tanneries. Perhaps a possibility for this size tannery is to create a niche in the specialty leather market. Table 4.3 presents the estimated cost of production and revenues from a medium small tannery set up to process seals into seal leather. this specialty market is currently being investigated by the Nunasi corporation using an Ontario based tannery. Assumption underlying the figures presented in Table 4.3 are compiled in Appendix A. Table 4.3 shows that apart from being a very capital intensive operation, the seal leather tannery as outlined In this report is not profitable. The Inclusion of freight costs from the communities on the Arctic Ocean and Hudson Bay would further deteriorate the economics of this undertaking.

Column 2 of Table 4.3 shows the economic picture for a leather tannery with twice the throughput (i.e., 200 seals/week).

Adding a second tannery line of 6 drums, an extra fleshing machine, and a second stretching machine does change the economic picture. A second tanning line has repercussions on the size of the building and utilities, and especially on the labour requirements. One extra flesher and two extra helpers are needed. As is seen in column 2 of the Table 4.3 the tannery set up like this shows a very modest profit. Inclusion of freight costs of the pelts to the tannery would more than wipe out this positive return.

Considering the fact that the seal leather market is not yet developed and considering the economic of a medium small tannery are negative or very marginal, it seems warranted to consider a medium small leather tannery in the NWT as uneconomical.

4.3.2 Fur Dressing

All fur demanded in the NWT is of commercially tanned quality and the fur dressing plant discussed in this report is set up to be a small scale version of commercial tanneries in southern Canada. A NWT based fur dressing plant will have to equal the quality of southern tanneries to be able to market its production. This is especially critical if the larger NWT consumers of fur are to be catered to.

Price considerations are an equally important factor and the analysis of tannery discussed here will use current tanning rates. Tanning rates for fur are most often quoted on a custom work basis. Especially the small fur dressing plants operate as custom tanneries, and do not take ownership of the pelts. This organizational set-up has been adhered to in our analysis.

Table 4.4 shows the estimates of the cost of production and revenues for the medium small fur dressing plant. Assumptions underlying these figures have been gathered in Appendix A. The figures presented in table 4.4 underline the higher capital costs due to the higher level of mechanization. Higher machinery cost also increase the interest costs.

Revenue figures are very hard to assess in a custom fur tannery because of the large number of different furs that can be processed. The figure used in table 4.4 is an average of tanning fees adjusted for size for 12 types of furs likely to be processed in the tannery (see Appendix A for details). The actual mix of furs processed will depend heavily on the market and the skill of the tanner. If the tannery can concentrate on furs that command a higher than average tanning fee (such as wolf or bear) than the tannery will do better than depicted in table 4.4. If beaver or coyote become the mainstay of the tannery the economic performance will deteriorate because tannery fee for these pelts (adjusted for size) is less than the averaged used here.

The operation shows a profit under the assumption made. Again, however, the figures presented in Table 4.4 only show how the fur dressing plant would do if everything goes right and is more a normative statement about what the costs and returns should be than a true reflection of the real life situation of a tannery in the NWT. Spoilage, mistakes, untimely delivery of supplies, difficulties with procurement of furs are but a few of the reasons why actual costs will be higher and actual returns lower.

Table 4.4

MEDIUM SMALL FUR DRESSING PLANT
WEEKLY THROUGHPUT Of 5 LOTS OF FURS

	48 WEEKS CAPACITY FULL	26 WEEKS CAPACITY FULL	48 WEEKS CAPACITY 0.8
EQUIPMENT	$47,900.00	$47,700.00	$47,900.00
BUILDING	4150,000.00	$1s0,000,00	$150,000.00
VARIABLE COSTS:			
KNIVES	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
CHEMICALS	$13,200,00	$7,150.00	$13,200.00
RENT	$0.00	$0,00	$0,00
UTILITIES	$12,000.00	$7,000.00	$12,000.00
COST OF HIDES	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
COST OF STOCK	$1,100.00	$593.83	$880.00
INTEREST COST	$34,020,00	$34,020.00	$27,216,00
INSURANCE	$2,968. SO	$2,968.50	$2,968,50
EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE	$2,395.00	$2,385.00	$1,916.00
WATER	$360.00	$19s.00	$288.00
LABOUR TRAINEE	$16,640.00	$8,320.00	$16,640.00
LABOUR TANNER	$31,200.00	$18,000,00	$31,200.00
LABOUR FLESHER	$20,800.00	$10,400.00	$20,800.00
LABOUR HELPER	$8,320.00	$4,160.00	$8,320.00
FIXED COSTS:			
BUILDING DEPRECIATION	$4,950000	$4,950.00	$4,950.00
EQUIPMENT DEPRECIATION	$3,161,40	$3,148.20	$3,161.40
TOTAL COSTS	$151,114.90	$103,292.53	$143,539.90
REVENUE	$180,000,00	$97, s00.00	$144,000.00
PROFIT (LOSS)	$28,8II5.10	($5,792.53)	$460.10

Reduction of labour costs by operating the tannery for only 26 weeks out of the year, results in a loss for the operation (see column 2 of table 4.4). The need for expensive equipment to produce the necessary quality of furs does not allow for part time operation. Column 3 of table 4.4 shows the percentage capacity that the tannery needs to maintain to break even. If utilization of the plant drops below 80%, the profit is reduced to zero.

Transportation costs can be ingnored in this analysis because the revenue Is based on custom tanning fees. In this organizational set-up the owner of the fur is responsible for getting the furs to the plant and back again. Since custom tanning is the normal way of doing business in the industry, a NWT based tannery may have a slight edge over southern tanneries because the customers have to absorb less transportation costs.

5. IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Summary

Quality and price are the two critical variables with respect to the procurement of hides. At $50/raw moose hide, hunters are often reluctant to skin an animal carefully and bring the hides out of the bush. If a tannery can establish Itself as a reliable market for moose hides, this reluctance can be overcome, especially if other parts of the animal, such as the brain, and bones, would also be bought by the tannery.

A top price can only be paid for a top quality hide and it is in both the tanneries and hunter's best interest to strive for expertly skinned hides without any deep knife marks or putrification.

Procurement of furs will need carefull cultivation of contacts with hunters and trappers. If the tannery can develop itself into a reliable and processor of furs, it should be able to carve out a niche as an alternative market outlet. The dur dressing plant will be set up as a custom tanning operation.

When it comes to marketing, most of the marketing effort of a very small tannery is already done by using Native tanning methods, and producing the product that the craft Industry in the NWT prefers. Marketing for the medium small fur dressing plant is not the marketing of furs but the marketing of a service. Negative experiences with souther custom tanneries should give a NWT based tannery an edge with the craft industry. For the larger customers the price and the quality if the product will be the overriding factor.

Starting up the operations discussed in this report will severely strain the financial resources of the fledgling tannery. When some start up difficulties are encountered it may take 2 to 3 years before the revenues exceed direct costs and 5 to 7 years before the cumulative losses of the start up period are paid off. Grants or other ways of financial help would ease the start-up pains.

The economic analysts of different possible scenarios for a northern tannery, presented in section 4, allows us to Ignore the medium smal 1 leather tannery in respect to the implementation phase. The figures do not add up for this operation. Implementation of a very small leather tannery and of a medium small fur dressing plant will be discussed below in terms of procurement of supply, marketing, training needs, and possible start-up scenario.

5.2 Procurement of Hides and Furs

The very small leather tannery discussed in this report will use essentially Native tanning methods and concentrate as much as possible on moose hides. This tannery will need 240 hides to operate year round. The medium small fur dressing plant will need 240 lots of furs.

There are two barriers that may stand in the way of procuring enough hides and furs: 1) price, and 2) quality. The price of $50 for a raw moosehide is used in this report because that is the price that is currently being paid in the NWT. Some people contacted In the course of this study commented on the fact that even at that price (Alberta prices are lower), hunters often do not think it worthwhile to put in the extra effort to carefully skin the hide and bring it out of the bush. One of the underlying reasons here is that there is no established reliable market for raw moosehides in the NWT. A new tannery will thus have to establish itself as a reliable market for moosehides; creating a sense of trust in the hunter that he will be able to sell the product of the extra effort.

Uncertainty about the real price of furs because of the poor information from the fur auctions to the hunters and trappers may work in favour of the chances of a small NWT tannery to procure enough furs. Please refer to section 3.2.3 for a further discussion of this topic.

The financial reward to the hunter may be increased if the tannery would be organized to use mainly local products, which would mean the use of bones to make neat's foot oil for softening the hide or the use of moose brain. Especially collecting bones, which are carried out of the bush with the meat, may create an added incentive to bring In the moosehides.

Quality is definitely a consideration for the tannery. Inexpertly skinned hides will result in lesser quality leather. Deep knife marks or putrification are both factors that reduce the value of the raw hide or fur and thus the incentive of the hunter to supply hides to the tannery. The answer here lies in communication and training. Careful skinning techniques can be taught, for example by the tanner, and the training will be well received if the tanner can convey an understanding of why certain techniques will result in a better hide and thus higher returns. Preservation of hides, for example, by simply salting them soon after the kill, and then folding them up into a relatively small parcel is an acceptable method and easier and quicker than stretching the hide on a frame to dry.

Procurement of moose hides should not be a problem if the tannery can establish itself as a reliable outlet of raw hides for the hunters, and if the tannery succedes to spread information of what a quality hide is.

Procurement of furs will not be an easy as that of moose hides but prudent cultivation of contacts with hunters and trappers will allow the tannery to carve out a niche as a small alternative market outlet for NWT hunters and trappers.

5.3 Marketing

The target market for the very small leather tannery is the craft industry in the NWT. This industry is almost without exception adamant that it needs smoke tanned hides and a major portion of the marketing effort is, therefore, already done by the use of Native tanning techniques.

Craft shops in the NWT are currently being supplied by both local women and Alberta and B.C. based tanners. In our contacts with craft stores, some people mentioned quality concerns about their current suppliers, especially about the colour of the tan which shows regional differences. Other concerns were raised about the timeliness of the supply of moosehides.

A NWT based tannery would be well advised to concentrate its marketing efforts on the displacement of out-of-territory hides and on the expansion of the market for hides. Discouraging local women to supply the craft stores would be counterproductive because it would destroy the pool of skills that the tannery needs, and possible create unnecessary animosity towards the tannery which may, in turn, reflect on the possibility of the tannery to procure hides.

Since most craft stores expressed Interest in buying hides from a NWT based tannery, we don't expect any great difficulties as long as the tannery can build a good working relationship with the craft stores based on a good product, reliability of supply, and competitive prices. The tannery would benefit if it could bring the craft stores to order their requirements well in advance of the time when they need it.

Most craft stores need only a small number of hides per year (most requi re less than 10 hides a year). There wi ll be no need for a special transportation network. Existing transportation facilities like bus, truck, or scheduled airplanes are sufficient to bring the production of a very small tannery to its customers.

Marketing of the output of the fur dressing plant is not so much the marketing of the product but of the service. Small fur dressing plants operate on a custom work basis and the plant discussed in this report follows this set up. A custom tannery does not take possession of the pelt, but rather charges the owner of the pelt a fee for tanning it.

A NWT based fur dressing plant is thus in direct competition with established southern plants for the loyalty of customers. In our contacts with craft stores, we found a positive attitude towards the idea of using a NWT based tannery because several craft stores expressed a feeling of lack of control about the pelts sent out to be tanned. The quality of the tanning is not always satisfactory but many craft stores feel that they have little or no recourse by the time their pelts come back. Competitive prices, good service, and open lines of communication should allow a NWT based tannery to win the loyalty of these customers.

The demand generated by craft stores in the NWT is not enough to operate the plant with sufficient capacity to make its operation profitable. Part of the business will have to come from the larger users of furs such as the Hudson's Bay company and the Arctic Traing Co. Quality and consistency of supply are the critical factors here or are the ability to follow the market when it comes to the type of fur demanded.

Custom tanning for southern sport hunters may be another market for the NWT based tannery. This market is not large but will likely be a good supplement to the demand from craft stores in the earlier stages of the development of the tannery.

5.4 Training Needs

Section 2 outlined the amounts of time needed to train people on the machinery proposed for the tannery. From the implementation point of view, the need to train people reflects on when a tannery can be started up. The possible scenarios include: 1) hiring an experienced tanner to run the operation and train local people, and 2) send Interested local people to apprentice in an existing tannery. The first scenario would allow for a quick start up of the tannery because all that is needed is to buy a limited amount of equipment and hire the tanner. The second scenario would put the opening of the tannery at least one but possibly two years in the future.

Both Mr. Norm Guilbeault, a traveling tanner, and Mr. Schluessel of Edmonton Tannery and Buckskin Leather Co. Ltd., as well as Mr. Cano of Techno Tan of Montreal, all of whom were contacted in the course of this study, expressed interest in cooperating with a NWT based tannery and could be approached to provide the needed training. A small tannery in the NWT could be in a relatively strong position to obtain training, and expertise from existing tanneries because of their need for supplies of furs and hides. The establishment of firm links with selected smaller tanneries in the south may benefit the fur Industry in the NWT by opening up an additional marketing channel.

5.5 Start-up Scenarios

This section presents two possible scenarios of setting up a tannery to conclude this investigation of the possibilities for a small scale tannery in the NWT. These start up scenarios are necessarily only poor approximations of the start-up procedures and costs of an actual tannery because so many variables are not yet fixed.

5.5.1 Very Small Leather Tannery

The start-up of the very small leather tannery is not very complex because it involves a process that is already well established in the NWT. Table 5.1 shows the proforma income statements for the first seven years of operation of ths tannery, and is a reflection of the following scenario. All figures are based on Table 4.1.

Prior to Start-up: One person, who is to become the tanner in the new tannery is sent down to a southern tannery to apprentice as a flesher. A wage subsidy of $5,000 is budgeted to supplement the income as an apprentice. First contacts are made to purchase equipment.

Year 1: Equipment Is bought and small workshop is rented. Trainee is hired and production is started. First year's production is at half capacity to reflect start-up difficulties. 80% of the hides are successfully tanned and marketed.

Year 2: Continuing marketing efforts and training in the plant result in operation at over 80% capacity (200 hides) with a 90% success rate.

Year 3-7: Tannery is running smoothly and at full capacity.

Table 5.1

PRO FORMA INCOME STATEMENT
VERY SHALL LEATHER TANNERY

	PRIOR TO START UP	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YEAR 6	YEAR 7
RENT		$6,000,00	$6,000.00	$6,000.00	$6,000.00	$6,000.00	$6,000.00	$6,000.00
UTILITIES		$2,000.00	$3,050.00	$3,050,00	$3,0s0. 00	$3,050.00	$3,050.00	$3,0s0. 00
COST OF HIDES		$6,000.00	$10,000.00	$12,000.00	$12,000.00	$12,000,00	$12,000.00	$12,000,00
COST OF STOCK		$600,00	$1,000.00	$1,200.00	$1,200.00	$1,200.00	$1,200,00	$1,200.00
INTEREST		$2,580,00	$2,580.00	$2,580.00	$2, 580s 00	$2,580,00	$2,580.00	$2,580,00
MAINTENANCE		$350.00	$350.00	$350. 00	$350.00	$350.00	$350.00	$350.00
WATER		$50,00	$100.00	$144,00	$144,00	$144,00	$144.00	$144,00
LABOUR TRAINEE		$16,640.00	$16,640.00	$16,640.00	$16,640.00	$16,640.00	$16,640.00	$16,640.00
LABOUR TANNER	$5,000.00	$31,200.00	$31,200.00	$31,200.00	$31,200.00	$31,200.00	$31,200.00	$31,200.00
LABOUR HELPER		$0.00	$1,280.00	$1,280.00	$1,280.00	$1,280.00	$1,280.00	$1,280.00
REVENUE		$33,600.00	$63,000.00	$84,000.00	$84,000.00	$84,000.00	$84,000.00	$84,000.00
PROFIT (LOSS)	($S,000.00)	($31,820,00)	($9,200.00)	$9,556.00	$9,556.00	$9, S56.00	$9,556.00	$9, SS6,00
CUMULATIVE	($5, 000. 00)	($36, 820. 00)	($46, 020. 00)	($36, 464. 00)	($26, 908. 00)	($17,352. 00)	*($7,796,00)*	$1,75[illegible]0

As can be seem from Table 5.1, even modest start-up difficulties as outlined above create a financial stress on the fledgling tannery, and it takes three years before the operation is in the black and seven years before the start up costs have been paid off. All calculations assume commercial money, no wage subsidies, or grants, and are, thus, conservative estimates.

By year 3, the first year that the tannery shows an operating profit (depreciation costs have been kept out of the analysis here), the total investment has been $46,000. This investment created two full time and one part time job.

5.5.2 Medium Small Fur Tannery

Starting up a fur dressing plant in the NWT is a more complex undertaking. Not only is there no existing skill base, but there is also not as ready and easily accessible a market as is the case with smoke tanned moose leather. The scenario behind the pro forma statements presented in table 5.2 reflects the anticipated difficulties. All figures are based on table 4.4.

Prior to Start-up: One person, who is to become the tanner, is sent south to apprentice in a tannery. A wage subsidy of $5,000/ year for 3 years is budgeted to supplement the apprenticeship wages. $2,500 is set aside as a wage subsidy for a flesher apprentice for 6 months prior to the actual start-up. Purchasing and plant location decisions are made in the year before start-up.

Year 1: Fur dressing plant starts operation. A trainee is hired and the semi-skilled flesher is further trained. Wages of flesher reflect the fact that he/she is in training. Plant is operating on half capacity and the spoilage is at 20%.

Year 2: Plant is running at 75% capacity and spoilage is at 10%. All staff is hi red and marketing efforts are ongoing.

Year 3: Plant is running smoothly (o% spoilage) and throughput is at 200 lots (83% capacity).

Year 4: Plant at full capacity.

Table 5.2

PRO FORMA INCOME STATEMENT
MEDIUM SHALL FUR TANNERY

	PRIOR TO START UP	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YEAR 6	YEAR 7
CHEMICALS		$6,600.00	$9,625.00	$11,000.00	$13,200.00	$13,200.00	$13,200.00	$13,200.00
COST OF STOCK		$550.00	$802.00	$916.67	$1,100.00	$1,100.00	$1,100.00	$1,100.00
UTILITIES		$9,000.00	$10,000.00	$11,000.00	$12,000.00	$12,000.00	$12,000.00	$12,000.00
INSURANCE		$2,900.00	$2,900.00	$2,900.00	$2,900.00	$2,900.00	$2,900.00	$2,900.00
INTEREST		$34,000.00	$34,000,00	$34,000,00	$34,000.00	$34,000.00	$34,000.00	$34,000.00
MAINTENANCE		$1,200.00	$1,800.00	$2,000000	$2,400.00	$2,400.00	$2,400.00	$2,400.00
HATER		$180.00	$270.00	$300.00	$360.00	$360.00	$360.00	$360.00
LABOUR TRAINEE		$16,640.00	$16,640,00	$16,640.00	$16,640.00	$16,640.00	$16,640.00	$16,640.00
LABOUR FLESHER $2,500.00		$15,600.00	$20,800,00	$20,800.00	$20,800,00	$20,800.00	$20,800.00	$20,800s 00
LABOUR TANNER $15,000.00		$31,200.00	$31,200.00	$31,200.00	$31,200,00	$31,200.00	$31,200.00	$31,200.00
LABOUR HELPER		$0.00	$8,320,00	$8,320.00	$8,320.00	$8,320,00	$8,320.00	$8,320.00
REVENUE		$67,500.00	$121, S00.00	$150,000.00	$180,000.00	$180,000,00	$180,000.00	$180,000.00
PROFIT (LOSS)	($17,500.00)	($49,370,00)	($14,857.08)	$10,923.33	$37,080.00	$37,080.00	$37,080.00	$37,080000
CUMULATIVE	($17,500. 00)	($66,870. 00)	($81,727. 08)	($70,803.75)	($33,723.75)	$3,3S6.25	$40,436.2S	$77,516.25

The figures in Table 5.2 show the higher costs of starting up a fur dressing plant as compared to the cost of the leather tannery. However, in this scenario the fur dressing plant starts to show a profit in year 3 (excluding depreciation) and has paid off the start up costs by year 5. Again, as with the very small leather tannery, wage subsidies, grants, or low interest loans would improve the economics of the operation.

By year 3, the first year in which the operation is in the black, the total investment is $82,000 and 3 full-time and 1 part-time job has been created.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Hides

Current demand by small craft stores in the NWT for tanned hides is estimated at 210-230 moosehides and 190-200 cariboo hides, mainly centered in the area around the Great, Slave Lake. This demand is sufficient for the full-time operation of a very small leather tannery that processes 5 hides a week or 250 hides a year.

A very small leather tannery should use Native tanning methods, with only slight modification due to the introduction of some simple machines such as a circular fleshing knife, a soaking drum, and a stretching machine. This set up of a very small tannery shows a profit if its is run at near full capacity and delivers constant high quality smoke tanned hides with minimal amounts of spoilage in the tanning process.

The profitability of this tannery is aided by:

Size; at 5 hides a week the tannery can concentrate on moosehides which have a higher tanning margin than cariboo hides.

Low Level of Mechanization; using a only slightly modified Native tanning method, the tannery can use local skills and inputs.

Right Product; smoke tanned hides are overwhelmingly preferred over commercially tanned hides.

Receptive Market; there is a level of frustrated demand for tanned moose hides, and some quality concerns about out-of-territories supplies.

6.2 Furs

A small scale fur dressing plant in the NWT will have to use non-Native tanning methods in order to have a product that can compete with southern tanned furs. Rather than the highly polluting chrome salts, a NWT based fur tannery should use aluminium salts as the basic tanning agent. Waste water contaminated with aluminium salts can be disposed of after a process of settling and oxidization.

Higher capital costs of equipment and building and the tanning techniques used point to a larger size operation. A medium small fur tannery, processing up to 4,500 pelts, shows a profit if it is run at more than 80% of capacity year round with a minimum amount of spoilage.

The demand by small craft stores in the NWT is only enough to absorb about-half of the output of the tannery. Other markets, such as the Hudson's Bay Co. and Arctic Trading Co. are more than large enough to absorb the rest of the production, but these markets are highly competitive and only a reliable high quality service at the right price will allow a NWT based fur dressing plant to enter those markets.

The profitability of the tanning is aided by:

concentration on those pelts, such as bear and wolf, that command a higher than average tanning fur;

close contacts with hunters and trappers, giving them a reliable alternative market;

competitive price and better quality information to hunters and trappers than is available from southern auctions;

further development of the craft industry in the NWT; and,

custom tanning for sport hunters.

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APPENDIX A

Assumption underlying Table 4.1. Estimated cost of production and revenue of a very small leather tannery.

1. Equipment as per equipment schedule in Section 2.

1-	Circular knife	$ 900
1-	Wet drum	2,000
1-	Stretching machine	3.500
	Miscellaneous tools	600
	tota 1	$7,000

2. Variable costs:

replacement knifes for the fleshing machine are needed because knives dull quickly while working on moosehides. The assumption is that dull knives will be sent out to be professionally sharpened. A $5,000 sharpening machine is part of the circular fleshing knife assembly but is not Included in our equipment schedule due to the relatively low useage of the knife.

A small workshop of around 500 square feet is assumed with a monthly rent of $500. Utility costs are estimated as $400/month in the winter and $150/month in summer.

Cost of hides	240 moosehides: $12,000
Cost of stock	10% of costs of hides to finance small stockpile to about one month of hides to secure continuity of operation.

Interest costs

Equipment loan of $7,000 is amortized over 5 years at 13%, compounded semi-annually: monthly payment $160.

Operating line of credit of $5,000 at 13%: monthly interest payment $55. Operating line of credit figures are adjusted for scenario where the tannery only operates part time or at less than full capacity.

chemicals @ $45/batch for softening agent.

Equipment maintenance at 5% of value of machinery.

Water use is estimated at 1500 litres per batch of hides @ $2 per cubic metre (including sewer).

Labour rates

Tanner $15/hour - year round
Trainee $ 8/hour - year round
Helper $ 8/hour - 4 weeks

3. Fixed costs:

No building depreciation: workshop is rented

Equipment depreciation is a straightline depreciation of 6.6% annually which equals a depreciation period of 15 years.

4. All figures have been adjusted to reflect the scenarios of 26 weeks production at full capacity, 48 weeks at 82% capacity (breakeven point) and for the same three scenarios at 10 hides a week throughput. Labour costs of the tanner in the 26 week scenario is set at 30 weeks to reflect start up and wind down time.

Assumption underlying table 4.2.

1. Equipment Schedule

as for assumption table 4.1, plus

1-	Wet drum	$2,000
1-	Extractor (rebuilt)	4,500

2. Variable costs

as for assumption table 4.1 but utility costs Increased to reflect extra machinery operations. Labour cost have been Increased to reflect two full time helpers.

Assumptions underlying table 4.3

Machinery as per equipment schedule

6-	Wet drums	@	$2,000 ea.
2-	Circular knives	@	900 ea.
1-	Circular knife sharpener		5,000
1-	Stretching machine		3,500
1-	Extractor (dryer)		9,000

Building 3000 square feet @ $45 Includes effluent settling tanks (3) of 3-5 m3

Cost of hides

Sealskins bought **@ $1.50 sq.** foot 20 seals make one lot or one lot **equal** 200 **square-foot. Full capacity is 4BOO0** square feet of **sealskin**

Interest cost:

Building costs **of $135,000 amortized over 25 years @ 11%:** monthly payment: $1325

Equipment costs **of $31,000 amortized** over 10 years **@** 13%: monthly payment: $465

Insurance costs are calculated at $1.50 per $100 or

$$\frac{166.000 \text{ X } 1.50}{100} = 2500$$

Equipment maintenance **@** 5% of equipment value

Water useage of 1500 **litres** per lot **@ $2 per m^3 (including sewer).**

Labour costs

Tanner	**@** $15.00/hour
Flesher	10.00/hour
Trainee	**8.00/hour**
Helper	**8.00/hour**

Depreciation is **straightline:** 15 years for equipment and 30 years for building.

Assumptions for Table 4.4

Building
As for medium small leather tannery includes heating system capable of keeping drying room at required temperature includes anti-pollution **system @** 10% of building costs.

Equipment Schedule

1-	Fleshing machine		$ 900
6-	Drums	@	2,000
1-	Stretching machine		3,500
1-	Sawdust drum and cage		5,000
1-	Ironing machine		9,000
1-	Sanding machine		8,500
1-	30" extractor		9,000

Chemicals

* Soaking	10 grams of	salt/litre
* Washing	3 grams of	soap/litre
* Pickling	6 grams of	salt/litre
	10 grams of	formic acid/litre
* Tanning	65 grams of	salt/litre
	20 grams of	alum salt/litre
	2 grams of	Bicarb/litre
	10 grams of	chrome salt/litre
* Oiling	2 mg	oil/batch
	40 grams of	ammonia/gram
* Cleaning	50 grams of	saw dust/batch

Estimate chemical costs per batch or lot $55.00 (Includes transportation)

Chemical prices

Salt	$9.00/7 kg
Soda Ash	. 65/kg
Bicarbonate	.89/kg
Hydrogen Peroxyde	1.43/kg
Aqua Ammonia	.90/kg
Alum Sulphate	. 76/kg*
Formaldehyde	1.1 5/kg
Formic Acid	2. 20/kg
Perchlorethylene	1 .55/kg
Saw Dust	.07/bag

Note: Aluminium chloride can be bought as a tanning agent under the name of Luthan F for $2.50/kg.

Interest costs

Building mortgage as with leather tannery: payment $1470

Equipment costs of $47,900 amortized over 10 years @ 13%: monthly payment: $715

Working capital of $5,000 @ 13%: monthly payment: $650

Insurance: as with leather tannery

Cost of chemical stock estimated at one month's supply.

Labour requirements

Tanner	$15.00/hour	year round
Trainer	8.00/hour	year round
Flesher	10.00/hour	year round
Casual help	8.00/hour	half time

Revenue

Custom tanning rates 1986

Revenue is calculated by taking the average of the whole sale and retail tanning fee for each fur (and thus Implying that half of the business will be in the wholesale and half in the retail trade) and calcualting the daily production in that fur expressed in dollars gross revenue.

The revenue per day has been averaged over 12 types of fur likely to be processed in a NWT tannery.

	WHOLESALE	RETAIL	DAILY OUTPUT	AVERAGE REVENUE
BEAR	80	140	B	8B0
BEAVER	30	40	20	700
BUFFALO	260	340	2	600
COYOTE	30	40	20	700
FOX	30	37	30	1005
LYNX	35	45	1s	600
HARTEN	13	18	40	620
HUSKRAT	5	8	75	488
RABBIT	5	8	80	520
SEAL	45	60	20	1050
WOLF	60	85	15	1088
WOLVERINE	40	45	20	850
AVERAGE	53	72	29	758