

The currency problem will ultimately prove far more difficult to resolve. Already NAFTA has been seriously buffeted by the 1994 collapse of the Mexican peso, and the current weakness of the Canadian dollar similarly affects trade on the northern border. It is interesting to note that the European Community has had the same problem, and the creation of a standard EC currency is often cited as the last barrier to complete economic integration. Similarly, North American free trade will eventually require a continental currency unit if it is ever to work as envisioned (Thomas, 1993).

It is our primary conclusion that the concept of a distinct northern borderland has taken on greater significance with the passage of the FTA and NAFTA. The resulting economic integration has solidified and reconceptualized the concept of continentalism through increasing the exchange of goods, services, capital and people, thus beginning to recreate a level of rational economic organization not visible since the Hudsons Bay era. Border communities, as our research indicates, are feeling the most profound effects of this increased interaction, and the impact is not just economic but also social and cultural in nature. The result is a unique human landscape reflecting both the best and the worst of the two distinct national systems.