

**Anderson, Erik.**

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**“‘Ready for the Religious Relationship’:  
Carrier Negotiations with Christianity through  
Fur Traders, Prophets, and Missionaries to 1885.” 1996.**

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**ABSTRACT**

The Carrier First Nations of north-central British Columbia were introduced to Christian concepts prior to 1885 by their own prophets as well as by foreign traders and, after 1868, by Oblate missionaries. Oblates continued some practices that began in the fur trade, and Oblate relations with Carrier chiefs were informed by earlier relations between chiefs and traders. Carrier negotiation with Christianity transpired from a complex set of motivations and circumstances, of which the prevalence of disease played an important but not exclusive role. Carrier turned to Oblates, as they had turned to prophets, in an attempt to combat foreign disease and help make further adjustments to an encroaching western world. Oblates had their own agenda of segregation, however, that involved strict adherence to a Christian moral code. Carrier reaction to the Oblates' imposed system of surveillance was mixed. There were both overt rejections and willing compromises, but response was mostly posed as a subtle mixture of these two extremes. Incorporation was one strategy used by Carrier that, rather than representing rejection of their traditions, represented a desire to compete in a changing world without giving up their identities as Carrier. Carrier actively sought out new knowledge of the world to add to their own, and interpreted that Knowledge in unique ways. The Carrier encounter with Christianity up to 1885 should not be dismissed as a simplistic relationship of one way impositions and forced accommodations, but should rather be understood as a dialogue between different systems of meaning.