

MÉTIS FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS: THE DECLINE AND RECLAMATION OF MÉTIS  
IDENTITIES IN SASKATCHEWAN, 1885-1980

A Dissertation Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and Research  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in History

University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon

By

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## ABSTRACT

In the late-nineteenth century, Métis families and communities resisted what they perceived to be the encroachment of non-Aboriginal newcomers into the West. Resistance gave way to open conflict at the Red River Settlement and later in north central Saskatchewan. Both attempts by the Métis to resist the imposition of the newcomer's settlement agenda were not successful, and the next 100 years would bring challenges to Métis unity. The transmission of knowledge of a Métis past declined as parents and grandparents opted to encourage their children and youth to pass into the growing settler society in what would become Saskatchewan. As parents restricted the flow of Métis knowledge, missionaries who represented Christian churches collaborated to develop the first Northwest Territories Board of Education, the agent responsible for the first state-supported schools in what would become the province of Saskatchewan. These first schools included Métis students and helped to shift their loyalties away from their families and communities and toward the British state. However, many Métis children and youth remained on the margins of educational attainment. They were either unable to attend school, or their schools did not have the required infrastructure or relevant pedagogy and curriculum. In the years after World War II, the Government of Saskatchewan noticed the unequal access to and achievement of the Métis in its schools. The government attempted to bring Métis students in from the margins through infrastructural, pedagogical, and curricular adaptations to support their learning.

Scholars have unearthed voluminous evidence of missionary work in Canada and have researched and written about public schools. As well, several scholars have undertaken research projects on Status First Nations education in the twentieth century. However, less is known about Métis' interactions with Christian missionaries and in the state-supported or publicly funded schools. In this dissertation, I examine the history of missions and public schools in what would become Saskatchewan, and I enumerate the foundations that the Métis considered important for their learning. I identify Métis children and youth's reactions to Christian and public schools in Saskatchewan, but I argue that Métis families who knew of their heritages actively participated in Roman Catholic Church rituals and activities and preserved and protected their pasts. Although experiences with Christianity varied, those with strong family ties and ties to the land adjusted well to the expectations of Christian teachings and formal public education. Overall, I tell the story of Métis children and youth and their involvement in church and public schooling based on how they saw Christianity, education, and its role on their lands and in their families. And I explain how Métis learners negotiated Protestant and Roman Catholic teachings and influences with the pedagogy and curriculum of public schools.

Oral history forms a substantial portion of the sources for this history of Métis children and youth and church and public education. I approached the interviews as means to generate new data – in collaboration with the people I interviewed. Consequently, I went into the interviews with a list of questions, but I strove to make these interviews conversational and allow for a two-way flow of knowledge. I started with contextual questions (i.e. date of birth, school attended, where family was from) and proceeded to probe further based on the responses I received from the person being interviewed and from previous interviews. As well, I drew from two oral history projects with tapes and transcripts available in the archives: the Saskatchewan Archives Board's "Towards a New Past Oral History Project 'The Métis'" and the Provincial

Archives of Manitoba's Manitoba Métis Oral History Project. See appendices A and B for discussion of my oral history methodology and the utility of the aforementioned oral history projects for my own research.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

No project is ever completed by one person; a Ph.D. dissertation is no exception. There are a number of people to whom I owe substantial gratitude. The first and most significant acknowledgment is to Dr. J.R. Miller for his willingness to take on my proposal for doctoral research on Métis childhood identity early in 2003, and he has been a wonderful, caring, and fair supervisor ever since. In the Department of History, Keith Carlson, Ken Coates, Valerie Korinek, and Bill Waiser agreed to sit on my advisory committee and have provided valuable assistance throughout this journey from proposal to comprehensive exams to research to writing. Margaret Kennedy from the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology sat as my external committee member. Without my committee's support, guidance, feedback, and criticisms, this dissertation project would not have the scholarly significance that it has. Of course, Dr. Miller's Canada Research Chair in Native-Newcomer relations grant funded the research for this dissertation, and I thank him for his willingness not only to supervise me but to support financially my research endeavours.

I am grateful to a number of people at the University of Saskatchewan who also provided both professional and personal support as I learned and engaged with Métis childhood identity over the past five-and-a-half years. Graduate and undergraduate student friends in the Department of History and from many other departments were there to provide encouragement, coffee breaks, and nights out and away from the dissertation research and writing. I thank Jean-Paul Cote, Nich Fraser, Carmen Gillies, Michael Kirkpatrick, Nikki Maclean, Pavan Kumar Malreddy, Clayton Rudy, Jolene Sander, Ana Valiard, and Jenn Wilcox especially for their ongoing belief in my ability to see this project through to completion. Department of History alumni Tracy Strom was a valuable assistant to me when I was President of the Graduate Students' Association and was there for many discussions of university politics as well as Canadian Native-newcomer relations history. Len Findlay, Glenys Joyce, Chary Rangyacharyulu, and Ed Tymchatyn were excellent colleagues who shared with me in their practices, beliefs, and scholarship the importance of activism in our teaching and research roles as university graduate students and instructors.

In my fourth year, I was hired as a research assistant at the Aboriginal Education Research Centre in the College of Education under the supervision of Dr. Marie Battiste, Dr. S'ak'ej Henderson, and Yvonne Vizina. Marie, S'ak'ej, and Yvonne as well as Rita Bouvier, Angie den Brok, and Stephanie Kehrig have been warm and welcoming colleagues; Marie and S'ak'ej in particular have nourished my learning spirit and commitment to culturally safe, relevant, respectful, reciprocal, and responsible university pedagogy, curriculum, and research practice with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners. This dissertation has benefitted enormously from my conversations with Marie and S'ak'ej and their own published work and presentations. I feel that my words in this paragraph cannot even begin to describe my gratitude to them for the opportunity to work alongside them for the past two years.

I have also benefitted from valuable work experience at the Community-University Institute for Social Research at the University of Saskatchewan. Early in 2008, Louise Clarke and Maria Basualdo hired me to undertake a mapping project of social economy organizations in rural, southeast Saskatchewan under the leadership of Isobel Findlay. I am indebted to Isobel

and Maria for their confidence in my abilities as a researcher, writer, leader, and mentor to my research assistant, Heather Williamson.

Additionally, Frank Tough and Keith Carlson provided me with research opportunities on their Métis atlas work in northwest Saskatchewan. Partial assistance for research work and conference presentations came from the Messer Fund for Research in Canadian History, the Canadian Historical Association, and the Canadian History of Education Association. In sum, the aforementioned jobs and small grants were more than means to support myself as I fulfilled the requirements for my doctorate; they collectively helped me to conceptualize this dissertation and my future work in Aboriginal lifelong learning and Native-newcomer relations history.

Outside of the university, there have been several people to whom I am indebted for their nourishment of my research work and support of its presentation in this dissertation. Participant Anna and Beverley Worsley, Executive Director of Eastern Region III of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan provided contextual information and strategic advice on my work. Bev's insights and stories have not only influenced my dissertation, but they remain with me personally and help me to live my life. As well, I thank Gabriel Dumont Institute, especially Darren Prefontaine, for his willingness to post my Calls for Participants and link me to potential candidates to interview. And I am especially grateful to all of the participants who welcomed me into their homes and places of work and shared with me their histories of Christian and public education in twentieth-century Saskatchewan. Nadine Charabin and Ken Dahl of the Saskatchewan Archives Board helped with the location and retrieval of important documents for this project. As well, I thank the staff at the United Church of Canada Archives/Victoria University Archives, the Presbyterian Church Archives of Canada, Queen's University Archives, Library and Archives Canada, *Archives Deschâtelets*, Anglican Diocese of Saskatchewan, Glenbow Museum and Archives, Provincial Archives of Alberta, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Saint Boniface Historical Society, St. Pascal School, and *Archives nationales du Québec* for their assistance with the location of textual records and contextual information. Bev was able to get the permission of the Lebret-Lestock Métis Farm Board for my use of the records from the farm.

Finally, my family deserves recognition for their continuous support of my research work. My parents, Joan and Ernest Anuik, provided additional financial support during my many years in undergraduate and graduate school. Thank you!! Additionally, they were always there to provide useful and relevant advice on my pursuits, even if I did not want to hear it! My brothers, Jason, Jeff, and Jared, always listened to my many, many long talks about this project, and they listened sympathetically and kindly!! James Ostime came into my life halfway through this project and his patience, love, support, and never-failing editorial assistance have gone a long way toward what follows here.

Finally, thank you to the Métis Nation!! May the next 100 years be full of joy, happiness, and social and economic prosperity!

Jonathan Anuik  
March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009

For Anna & Bev: Thank you for being leaders of your people!

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Aboriginal Healing Foundation – AHF  
Anglican Diocese of Saskatchewan – ADS  
*Archives Deschâtelets* – AD  
Department of Natural Resources – DNR  
Federation of Saskatchewan Indians – FSI  
Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations – FSIN  
Hudson’s Bay Company – HBC  
Library and Archives Canada – LAC  
Northern Teacher Education Program – NORTEP  
Oblates of Mary Immaculate – O.M.I.  
Presbyterian Church Archives of Canada – PCAC  
Provincial Archives of Alberta – PAA  
Provincial Archives of Manitoba – PAM  
Record Group – RG  
Royal Canadian Mounted Police – RCMP  
Saskatchewan Archives Board – SAB  
UCCA/VUA – United Church of Canada Archives/Victoria University Archives  
Union of Saskatchewan Indians – USI  
Women’s Missionary Society – WMS

## INTRODUCTION: Métis Children and Youth and Christian and Public Education in the West

The 2001 Census reported that Métis people composed forty-nine percent of Saskatchewan Aboriginal people who reside off-reserve.<sup>1</sup> These Métis children and youth and their families may be thought of as resilient. Their families shared a history of two failed attempts to settle with the Canadian federal government their land claims in the West: the Red River Resistance of 1869-1870 and the Northwest Resistance of 1885. Furthermore, most of the written history of Canada neglected the Métis, until recently.<sup>2</sup>

Métis identity, starting in the last decade of Red River, was caught up in an ethnic dilemma. In Red River's Alexander Ross family, the children established cognitive and emotional distance from their mother in order to avoid racist sentiments expressed by non-Aboriginal newcomers in the settlement. Their Okanagan mother, a respected woman in her society, became a source of embarrassment for Ross's children. By 1869, their son James faced an identity crisis. He was not sure whether he could assist Louis Riel in the Red River Resistance.<sup>3</sup> After 1870, Métis family heads faced similar dilemmas, to support their people or to pass into the new social and economic order of what would become the Prairie Provinces, and many children and youth born in the twentieth century did not know of their Métis past. Families in the years after the end of the Red River Settlement and the formation of the Province of Manitoba passed into the growing newcomer society. Family heads covered up their Métis pasts or split off Métis ancestors from their family trees. Consequently, branches disappeared from the overall family tree. Memory was gendered. Children and youth celebrated their Euro-Canadian fathers and grandfathers' histories, and forgot about the pasts of their mothers and grandmothers. Colonization and missionary and immigrant settlement on the prairies and in the twentieth century helped to set these processes of passing, forgetting, deleting, and

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<sup>1</sup> Evelyn Bougie, "Literacy Profile of Off-reserve First Nations and Métis People Living in Urban Manitoba and Saskatchewan: Results from the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey" (Ottawa: Statistics Canada), retrieved 30 April 2008 from <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/81-004-XIE/2007005/article/10500-en.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Kathy Hodgson-Smith Infinity Research Inc., *State of Métis Nation Learning*, September, 2005. Retrieved 22 October 2006 from the Canada Council on Learning website at <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/ccl>, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Sylvia Van Kirk, "'What if Mama is an Indian?': The Cultural Ambivalence of the Alexander Ross Family," *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, eds. Jennifer Brown and Jacqueline Peterson Manitoba Studies in Native History I (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1985) 207-208.

splitting into motion. Families and their children and youth set their knowledge of a Métis past to the periphery where it could be easily ignored.

The aftermath of these two conflicts and the increase in the number and stature of the settlers alienated Métis from their homeland, diminished Métis' cultural integrity, threatened the maintenance of Métis languages such as Michif and Cree, and temporarily severed multi-generational kinship ties. Historians neglected to investigate the Métis Nation<sup>4</sup> of the West in the years that followed 1885 or considered the influence of Christian missionaries on Métis families. The majority of the studies of the Métis concentrated on the Métis in the Red River Settlement years, and those Métis families who were involved in the Hudson's Bay Company and the Northwest Company fur trade. Scholarly investigations of missionary activity on the prairies focused exclusively on First Nations societies; therefore, there have been no studies undertaken of Métis families and their involvement with Christian missionaries in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Newcomer families and the clergy of their churches sought to erect schools and contributed to the formation of a Northwest Territories Department of Education. However, the scholarship on education has discussed schools under the assumption that they were primarily for newcomer children.

In the late-nineteenth century, non-Aboriginal politicians established and sustained territorial and later provincial governments. They initiated policy that resulted in the creation of day schools; some of the day schools in Métis communities were staffed by Roman Catholic clergy. However, all teachers in all day schools were expected to belong to a Christian church and attend it regularly. The federal government in concert with the Christian churches began a seventy-five-year policy relationship known as the church-state residential schools. Their teachers imparted Eurocentric ideals through the use of what they considered objective and unbiased pedagogy and

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<sup>4</sup> The Métis emerged as a distinct people in west central North America in the early nineteenth century. Initially, the Métis were the mixed-ancestry progeny of liaisons between fur traders and First Nations women but early in the nineteenth century, distinct Métis settlements evolved along the Great Lakes in what is now Ontario, Red River in what is now Manitoba, Batoche, in what is now northwest Saskatchewan, and as far west as the Mckenzie River. For the purposes of this dissertation, the Métis Nation includes the Red River Settlement, northern Manitoba, and all of contemporary Saskatchewan. See "MNC: Who are the Métis" at <http://www.metisnation.ca/who/index.html> for a brief overview of the history of the Métis Nation as well as chapter one for a discussion of the historiography that concerns the identification of historical Métis communities.

curriculum. Such pedagogy stressed mental discipline and neglected spiritual, emotional, and physical health, the three components that almost all traditional Aboriginal societies considered to be integral to the health of their children. Furthermore, instruction was primarily in English and secondarily French. The subjects taught were math and science and European history and literature. These denominational and public schools stabilized Euro-Canadian dominance on the prairies.

Teachers were either unable or unwilling to understand the epistemologies of their students, who came to know the world through comprehension of their kinship ties, the land, and Cree and Michif, or the teachings of the students' Métis families. Instead, teachers stressed the acquisition of literacy in English and French, proficiency in math and science, and pressured their students to convert to Christianity. Marie Battiste called this unequal relationship that existed in the residential schools and denominational and public schools cognitive imperialism. Battiste argued that such an unequal power relationship continues to play out in many Canadian schools.<sup>5</sup>

By the 1960s, the number of denominational educators declined. In this same decade, university-trained teachers gradually replaced clergy as the teachers of Métis children and youth. The federal government officially terminated its educational relationship with the Christian churches in 1969. Although teachers trained in publicly funded post-secondary institutions strove to attract and retain Métis children and youth in their classrooms through adaptations to policy and curricula, the official aims of education, to acculturate Métis as well as continental European children into the Canadian body politic, continued unabated until recently. However, Status First Nations and a growing number of Métis began to challenge the unquestionable hold of the state over the education of their children. These desires were articulated amidst a rebirth in the awareness of a Métis identity and a Métis past.

Canadians have witnessed a massive and systematic rebirth of Métis identity in Canada. The 1982 Constitution definitively affirmed that the Métis are one of the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada, and recent rulings from the Supreme Court of Canada as well as provincial courts have entitled the Métis to hunting and fishing rights on their

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<sup>5</sup> Marie Battiste, "Maintaining Aboriginal Identity, Language, and Culture in Modern Society," *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, Ed. Marie Battiste (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000) 192-193, 200-204.

homeland. Genealogical research projects led by academic and popular scholars of the Métis revealed vast and interconnected family ties that stretched the boundaries of provinces, territories, and countries. As families reconstructed the pasts of their mothers and grandmothers, scholars questioned when the indigenous renaissance began.<sup>6</sup>

J.R. Miller believed that the indigenous renaissance began in the years after World War II. For Miller, two distinct phenomena supported the growth in awareness of Canada's Aboriginal past and a paradigmatic shift in terms of the treatment of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.<sup>7</sup> Canadians recognized the horrors of the Holocaust on Jewish families, persons with disabilities, and sexual minorities. They respected the soldiers, among them the Aboriginal soldiers, who served in this war against Nazism and Fascism. Non-Native American citizens of the United States commended the contributions of Native American soldiers to the war effort; Australians did the same for their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, and in New Zealand Maori received similar recognition. Finally, military service provided a unique opportunity for these soldiers to share their histories of colonialism.<sup>8</sup>

As Canadians came to terms with the outcomes of World War II, Aboriginal veterans returned to their reserves, road allowance communities, and northern villages or re-located to urban centres like Regina and Saskatoon. Many veterans attended the meetings of the fledgling Union of Saskatchewan Indians (USI), later the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians (FSI), and what is now known as the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN). Initially, veterans remained on the sidelines of political organizing. They watched their leaders, some of whom were veterans of World War I, work on political, social, and economic issues that concerned Status First Nations. By the end of the 1950s, however, these World War II veterans started to talk publicly about land claims, education, healthcare, and social services. Robert Innes defined the

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<sup>6</sup> See Marie Battiste, James Youngblood Henderson, and the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre (ABLKC), Saskatoon, Calgary, Ottawa, Canada, "Naturalizing Indigenous Knowledge in Education," unpublished paper for the World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education, 7-11 December 2008, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>7</sup> J.R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Toronto: UTP, 2000) 324.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Alexander Innes, "The Socio-political Influence of the Second World War: Saskatchewan Aboriginal Veterans, 1945-1960," M.A. Thesis, U of Saskatchewan, 2000, retrieved 13 May 2008 from [http://library2.usask.ca/theses/available/etd-06292007-113525/unrestricted/Innes\\_robert\\_2000.pdf](http://library2.usask.ca/theses/available/etd-06292007-113525/unrestricted/Innes_robert_2000.pdf), 5, 11.

relationship that evolved between the World War II veterans and their predecessors as a form of apprenticeship. Initially, veterans observed the leaders' work and silently supported their campaigns and goals, and then they actively participated in the advancement of these political organizations and by the late 1960s ran for and were elected to executive positions in the FSIN.<sup>9</sup>

Non-Aboriginal Canadians acknowledged that many of these veterans returned to poverty-stricken reserves, road allowance communities, and northern villages.<sup>10</sup> The respect from the non-Aboriginal majority coupled with the growth in the numbers of veterans participating in the FSI and later the FSIN provided the opportunity for these individuals to become part of the work toward notable policy documents such as the 1973 National Indian Brotherhood's "Indian Control of Indian Education" policy proposal to the Government of Canada. Furthermore, these veterans and their children stayed in denominational and public schools for longer periods of time, and their education enabled them to learn how the colonial society operated and to advocate for relevant and respectful educational systems for the next generations of First Nations and Métis learners.

Many of these veterans' and their communities' visions for equal access to education and for learning environments that reflected the epistemologies of First Nations and Métis peoples have not yet been realized. Almost all statistics in reports on the educational attainments of First Nations and Métis learners depict a grim picture of under-employment, poor health, high infant mortality, low levels of literacy, high instances of contact with the justice system, and withdrawal from school. Furthermore, bureaucrats in provincial and federal departments of health, social services, and education stubbornly adhere to prescriptive policy solutions handed down to what they perceive as monolithic Aboriginals. In 2009, Aboriginal scholars stress that only through an understanding of Aboriginal perspectives on learning can schools be responsive to the needs of their First Nations and Métis learners.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Innes 40, 42, 77, 94, 106-107, 111.

<sup>10</sup> See Saskatchewan Archives Board, "Metis Schools, 1938-1945," Ed. Add. 2, File 48, "Indian Half-Breeds Cause Concern: Yorkton and District Board of Trade Discuss Problems," *Yorkton Enterprise* Jan. 21, 1943.

<sup>11</sup> See Michael Chandler and Chris Lalonde, "Transferring Whose Knowledge? Exchanging Whose Best Practices?: On Knowing about Indigenous Knowledge and Aboriginal Suicide," *Aboriginal Policy*

In this dissertation, I address the Métis, who are still outside of discussions on effective practices for Aboriginal lifelong learning.<sup>12</sup> In order to find out how teachers may aid Métis learners to successfully pursue formal learning, we must consider how Métis learners fared in the years after the Northwest Resistance. Scholars need to learn how families, land, region, communities, language, and Christian churches contributed to the maintenance of a Métis identity in the twentieth century, a period in which until recently it was not common to publicly celebrate a Métis identity. I focus this discussion on the learning spirit, the energies inside of us that guide us on our journey to finding what Pueblo scholar Gregory Cajete calls our heart, our face, and our foundation, or the gifts given to us by the Creator.<sup>13</sup> In addition to the identification of the Christian and public authorities responsible for the education of Métis children and youth, I discuss how the pedagogy and curriculum of the teachers affected Métis learners' identity. I investigate how the formal and informal learning contexts both nourished Métis learners' identities and enabled these learners to gravitate toward learning environments that celebrated their Métis identity, or diminished the spirit of Métis learners, contributing to cognitive and emotional distance from the past generations of families. Similarly, I wish to detail the journeys that Métis children and youth took as adults to learning of their mixed-ancestry pasts and to identification with the historical and contemporary Métis Nation. I apply ongoing research in Aboriginal lifelong learning conducted by myself, M'ikmaq scholar Battiste, and literacy practitioner Ningwakwe George on the history of the Métis in Saskatchewan.

I explore how Métis learners negotiated colonial influences based in Protestant and Roman Catholic teachings and public education. I explain the failure of teaching styles and pedagogies to entice Métis learners. I ask why certain faith groups failed to stimulate the learning spirit of Métis children and youth, and why Métis families

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*Research: Setting the Agenda for Change, Volume II*, eds. J. White et al. (Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, 2004) 111-123; Michael Chandler and Chris Lalonde, "Suicide and the Persistence of Identity in the Face of Radical Cultural Change," Presentation to the Assembly of First Nations National Policy Forum, 2005. Also see Jessica Ball, "Promoting Equity and Dignity for Aboriginal Children in Canada," *IRPP Choices* 14.7 (2008): 18-19. And see Innes 40 and Mary-Rose Boyer, personal interview, 26 May 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Hodgson-Smith Infinity Research Inc. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Gregory Cajete, "Indigenous knowledge: The Pueblo metaphor of Indigenous education," *Reclaiming Indigenous voice and vision*, Marie Battiste, Ed. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000) 181-191.

distanced themselves from conversion and interaction with such religious groups. I find that Métis families who knew of their heritages actively participated in Roman Catholic Church rituals and activities. Although experiences with Christianity varied, those with strong family ties and ties to the land adjusted well to the expectations of Christian teachings and formal public education. Overall, I tell the story of Métis children and their involvement in church and public schooling based on how they saw Christianity, education, and its role on their lands and in their families.

This dissertation is not a comprehensive history of mission and public education in the West. I chose to have the participants tell the stories from their viewpoints and their experiences; the archival record provides context and details about missionary aspirations and pedagogies. When necessary, I introduce contextual information in order to acquaint the reader with the history of the regions being discussed, drawing not only on the diverse Christian archival sources but also on the sources developed by community members themselves. Community history books served as one of the instructive tools but like the Christian sources could not be the only medium through which to tell the history of Métis learners. The voices of Métis families enabled examination of experiences of Métis learners in denominational and public schools.

Métis children and youth, like all Aboriginal and ethnic groups throughout the world, require a strong, collective identity from which to draw independence, internal strength, and wisdom.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to understand the historical roots of Métis ideologies of learning and the role of institutions like the Roman Catholic Church in learning if teachers are to erect scaffolds to support Métis learners in the twenty-first century. I show how Métis children and youth came out from the margins and became part of the centre of this history of identity formation and schooling. Métis families who afforded the opportunity for their children to develop ties to the land, participated in hunting, trapping, and fishing, spoke Michif and Cree, and knew of their family ties accepted the teachings of the Roman Catholic church and their denominational and public schools. They adapted select Roman Catholic rituals into their pre-existing spiritual schemas. However, the relationship with public and Christian educational authorities

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<sup>14</sup> Donald M. Taylor, *The Quest for Identity: From Minority Groups to Generation Xers* (Westport: Praeger, 2002) 11-12.

depended on the clergy's acceptance of pre-existing epistemologies. The Roman Catholic Church secured and retained more of these Métis converts because of the clergy's tolerance of pre-existing relationships with the land. The Roman Catholic Church accepted Métis' understanding of their sense of place in creation, despite the strategic moves of Anglican and Presbyterian denominations to develop self-sustaining missions led by Aboriginal converts.

Multiple perspectives have been taken in order to tell the history of Métis children and youth, identity, and Christian and public education in the West. Firstly, I identify the Christian and public authorities responsible for Métis education. Secondly, I investigate public and Christian education from the viewpoint of the Métis children and youth who were involved with the Christian educational agenda. Therefore, in order to set the context, the voices of the Christian and public authorities involved with Christian-based education will be used. However, it is through the voices of the Métis children and youth who attended mission and public schools, and who interacted with the newcomer society that grew in numbers and importance after 1885, that one may understand the formation of a Métis childhood identity. Métis children and youth were those individuals who traced their ancestries back to the Great Lakes in what is now Ontario, Red River in what is now Manitoba, Batoche, in what is now northwest Saskatchewan, and as far west as the Mackenzie River.

The following chapters provide an understanding based on the research of a non-Métis individual who grew up in Saskatchewan of Métis learning, the goals held by Christian and public authorities, and their effects on Métiness and Métis education in twentieth-century Saskatchewan. This dissertation begins with part I, the history of the Métis as seen by scholars, missionaries, and provincial government officials. Chapter one in part I reviews the literature on Métis history and ethnogenesis, the history of denominational and public education, Aboriginal perspectives and beliefs concerning learning, and the history of family and children's work. Chapter two sketches the history of the Roman Catholic and Protestant missionary enterprises on the prairies from 1885-1960. The second chapter in this part or chapter three tells of the takeover by the provincial government as a leader in the development of curriculum, pedagogy, and administration of schools from 1950-1980. Part II contains two chapters. The first

chapter of this part or chapter four discusses how land and kinship inform Métis identity and contribute to a larger discussion of Métis learning. Chapter five addresses how public schooling and those who administered and supported the schools affected the learning journeys of Métis youngsters. It is the thesis for this chapter that those Métis whose families shared the traditions of their mothers and grandmothers were able to participate actively in the new social and economic order of the West without losing their Métis identity. Finally, the third part discusses Roman Catholic missions and pedagogy from the perspective of the Métis children and youth who interacted with the priests and the nuns who led the missions (chapter six), and why Anglicans and Protestants failed to capture the lifelong attention of Métis learners (chapter seven).

Métis learners articulated that their families provided the chance for them to comprehend their sense of place in creation, learn of their ancestors, and to spend time on the land engaged in hunting, fishing, and trapping. Teachers in schools did not always understand Métis epistemologies and perspectives, but provincial laws obligated Métis learners to attend denominational and public schools. Although schools provided Métis with new skills, many Métis believed that teachers and administrators could have provided opportunities for the Métis to learn about their history in Canada.

Part One: Context and Background: Academic,  
Christian, and Government Perspectives on Métis  
Families, Education, and Devotion

## CHAPTER ONE: Métis Families After 1885: A Literature Review of Existing Narratives

The Métis disappeared from the pages of western Canadian history after the 1885 Northwest Resistance. The defeat of the Métis opened the Prairie Provinces for the settlers who hoped to farm the land, and it led to the establishment of railway lines where farming towns sprang up;<sup>1</sup> “the future belonged to the White settlers with the ploughs, not to the Métis with the guns and traps.”<sup>2</sup> Bill Waiser as well as scholars of the Métis like Fred Shore and Lawrence Barkwell considered the twentieth-century Métis to be “the forgotten people,”<sup>3</sup> or a remnant of the groups that once occupied the lands now held by newcomers.<sup>4</sup> The erasure of the Métis presence from the prairies happened even though their families were the first settlers of the prairies.<sup>5</sup> Waiser found 10 000 Métis in the 1901 Census<sup>6</sup> but by the time of the special western Canada Census of 1906, the category for Métis/mixed-ancestry did not appear on any forms.<sup>7</sup> The deletion of the Métis category from the Census forms left a gap in the historical record at a time of newcomer arrival and expansion into Saskatchewan.

Newcomers, the majority of whom were from Europe, settled in Saskatchewan. Their legacy may be observed in census data, homestead patents, and land surveys. Historians grabbed onto these sources stored in provincial and federal archives and wrote histories that concentrated on settler life. The government’s records contributed to tales of harvests, family farms, church picnics, homemaker clubs, resource towns, and government cities.<sup>8</sup> In Saskatchewan, Premier Tommy Douglas inspired settlers to write their and their families’ histories of perseverance and dedication to the settlement of the province. Community history books resulted. These works were penned by settlers and

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<sup>1</sup> Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: UTP, 2002) 221.

<sup>2</sup> D. Bruce Sealey and Antoine S. Lussier, *The Métis; Canada’s Forgotten People* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Metis Federation Press, 1975) 133.

<sup>3</sup> Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 2005) 170.

<sup>4</sup> Fred J. Shore and Lawrence J. Barkwell, *Past Reflects the Present: The Métis Elders Conference* (Winnipeg: MMF, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Flanagan, introduction, *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions*, by George F.G. Stanley, Reprints in Canadian History (Toronto: UTP, 1992) 177.

<sup>6</sup> The 1901 Census enumerated the Métis as ‘half-breeds.’

<sup>7</sup> Waiser 170.

<sup>8</sup> See R. Douglas Francis and Howard Palmer, eds., *The Prairie West: Historical Readings* (Edmonton: Pica Press, University of Alberta Press, 1992), especially the essays in parts VI-XIV and focused on the following topics: settlement, immigration, prairie women, prairie cities, agrarian protest, the Great Depression, and politics.

served as a literary imprint of the newcomer image onto the Saskatchewan landscape.<sup>9</sup> Métis people ‘returned’ to the narrative when the Saskatchewan provincial government ‘found’ them living in ignorance of modern schools and hospitals.<sup>10</sup>

Until recently, academic and popular historical writing almost completely neglected to acknowledge First Nations and Métis peoples’ contributions to settler society. George F.G. Stanley and Marcel Giraud portrayed the Métis as a homogenous group of families who succumbed to the newcomers’ settlement agenda in the post-Red River and Northwest Resistance years.<sup>11</sup> Stanley depicted the Métis as vulnerable to the intrusions of settlers and incapable of resistance against the superior newcomer civilization.<sup>12</sup> For Stanley, it seemed inevitable that the Métis would succumb to the newcomer settlement agenda because, in his opinion, Métis leader Louis Riel’s delegates at the Fort Garry Convention of 1869 were “unschooled buffalo hunters, [who] lacked any real knowledge of parliamentary procedure, and...English-speaking half-breeds...[who] had no clear-cut ideas as to what their role should be [in a resistance].”<sup>13</sup> Giraud argued that the Métis’ ambivalent reaction to the educational and moral reform overtures of the Roman Catholic clergy doomed them to the fringes of the growing settler society; once again the Métis were not politically, economically, socially, and intellectually advanced enough to compete alongside newcomer settlers.<sup>14</sup> Progress in settlement brought material, political, and social advancement for the immigrants who came to the prairies but disaster for the First Nations and Métis in terms of the maintenance of their political, economic, educational, and social structures.<sup>15</sup> And the earlier rejection of missionary teachings perpetuated the legacy of illiteracy, poverty, and under-employment for the Métis on the prairies.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Merle M. Massie, “Scribes of stories, tellers of tales: the phenomenon of community history in Saskatchewan,” M.A. thesis, U of S, 1997, 1-2, 7, 9.

<sup>10</sup> SAB, “Métis Schools, 1938-1945,” Ed. Add. 2, File 48, “Indian Half-Breeds Cause Concern: Yorkton and District Board of Trade Discuss Problems.” *Yorkton Enterprise* Jan. 21, 1943.

<sup>11</sup> Marcel Giraud, *The Métis in the Canadian West*, George Woodcock, trans. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).

<sup>12</sup> Stanley 179.

<sup>13</sup> George F.G. Stanley, *Louis Riel: Patriot or Rebel?* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1954) 7, 9.

<sup>14</sup> Giraud 492.

<sup>15</sup> Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada* 193.

<sup>16</sup> Giraud 506.

Temporally, the Métis represented a past era or spatially belonged on the fringes of towns and cities. Anti-racist educator Timothy Stanley considered this style of writing, that which emphasizes the contributions of newcomers or immigrants to Canada and almost completely ignores Aboriginals, to be indicative of a grand narrative approach to researching, writing, and telling history. According to Timothy Stanley, the grand narrative of Canadian history

begins with the arrival of Europeans...almost completely disregards non-Europeans and focuses on the progress of European resettlement, emphasizing 'nation building' by far-seeing 'great men' and even today, the occasional 'great woman.' The Confederation of four British North American colonies in 1867 is taken as its major starting point, and non-Europeans, such as Louis Riel or Elijah Harper, seem only to intrude when they block European progress...despite its narrative form that moves forward in time from the moment of European arrival...grand narrative imposes an organization on the past that starts with the present and works backwards...the narrative makes the present dominance of Europeans seem inevitable and natural...[and] is premised on a series of exclusions, the marginalization of Aboriginal people, the infantilization of people from Quebec, and the exclusion of Africans and Asians...because it is always told from the point of view of English Canadians.<sup>17</sup>

Until recently, historians prioritized European settlement in their writing about Saskatchewan and positioned their prose in the aforementioned grand narrative, but an increasing number of scholars whose homes were outside of Canadian history implicitly agreed with the musings of Stanley.<sup>18</sup>

Since the 1970s, the number of Aboriginal scholars whose studies informed history has steadily increased. Their presence in the academy was part of a transition from control over knowledge acquisition and production in which men – the majority of whom were Anglo-Saxon and Protestant – had to contend with growing numbers of women and minority scholars whose questions and goals differed from the consensus-

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<sup>17</sup> Timothy J. Stanley, "Whose Public? Whose Memory? Racisms, Grand Narratives, and Canadian History," *To the Past: History Education, Public Memory, & Citizenship in Canada*, ed. Ruth W. Sandwell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006) 34.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Marie Battiste and Sa'ke'j Henderson's *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: A Global Challenge* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Ltd., 2000). Battiste and Youngblood Henderson assert that scholars are trapped in Eurocentric frameworks. Also see Battiste, "Post-colonial Remedies for Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage," *Teaching as Activism: Equity meets Environmentalism*, Eds. Peggy Tripp and Linda Muzzin (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005) who states that "Indigenous people can access what is available [for programs in post-secondary institutions], but they cannot change the existing knowledge base" (224).

based approach to Canadian history shared by the previous generations of scholars.<sup>19</sup> Scholars either re-read the existing public record stored in the nation's archives or presented new sources for examination. In some instances, these same scholars dedicated portions of their scholarly work to their personal histories. Howard Adams' *Prison of Grass* represents the first written articulation, from the perspective of a Métis, of the blatant and systemic discrimination he and his family faced in the first half of the twentieth century. Although criticized as an activist history lacking an evidence base,<sup>20</sup> Adams's narrative was an informative non-fiction account of Métis family history in Saskatchewan, and his work informed what respected Aboriginal leaders such as George Manuel termed as the "worldwide decolonization movement"<sup>21</sup> getting under way in the 1970s.

Histories of women, workers, immigrants and Aboriginals surfaced. These particularist (i.e. women, workers) and revisionist histories<sup>22</sup> challenged the cohesiveness of the grand narrative, upset its logical flow, and defended the integrity of oral histories, diaries, and personal correspondence as historical evidence. Although the documentary record of Métis families waned, available farming land declined, communities were destroyed, and the buffalo hunt ended, and the railroad replaced freighting for transportation, the Métis did not disappear as an Aboriginal group after 1885. However, until recently, the histories of the Métis in Saskatchewan concentrated on the epic nineteenth-century political leader Louis Riel and the events surrounding the Northwest Resistance of 1885.

In 1999, Métis scholars Leah Dorion and Darren Préfontaine argued "the great man of history theory still applies to Métis history and Métis studies. For instance, popular historians continue to work on projects that concentrate exclusively on Louis Riel rather than having a more thorough analysis of the Prairie Métis people's historic grievances."<sup>23</sup> These gaps plagued Métis history long before the aforementioned point

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<sup>19</sup> Catherine A. Cavanagh and Randi R. Warne, "Introduction," *Telling Tales: Essays in Western Women's History*, Catherine A. Cavanagh and Randi R. Warne, eds. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000) 3.

<sup>20</sup> Denis Gagnon, personal communication, 31 January 2008.

<sup>21</sup> J.R. Miller, *Reflections on Native-Newcomer Relations* (Toronto: UTP, 2004) 19.

<sup>22</sup> Cavanagh and Warne 5.

<sup>23</sup> Lawrence J. Barkwell, Leah Dorion, and Darren Préfontaine, *Resources for Métis Researchers* (Winnipeg: The Louis Riel Institute; Saskatoon: the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, 1999) 4.

was made by Dorion and Préfontaine. In 1975, Bruce Sealey and Antoine Lussier said that students of Métis history see the Métis and Louis Riel in 1885 and then witness their subsequent demise in the pages of Canadian history.<sup>24</sup> Researchers of the Métis wished to understand how Métis families and communities adjusted to the changing prairie economy and society after 1885.<sup>25</sup> Their studies informed shifting patterns of Métis ethnogenesis and identified how Métis identity evolved in a myriad of contexts.

The aforementioned evaluation of Métis history by Dorion and Préfontaine neglected to consider two important factors: region and time. Dorion and Préfontaine did not note that Métis history continued to focus on the Métis communities of northern Saskatchewan. There was a paucity of family histories of ‘rank-and-file’ Métis and of Métis who resided in the southern prairies. The second component missed by Dorion and Préfontaine concerned the chronology of Métis history.

Fred Shore and Lawrence Barkwell described the period of 1885-1960 as ‘the Forgotten Years.’ From 1885 until 1960 the Métis, after weathering two significant threats to their cultural autonomy, isolated their families from the increasing numbers of settlers, withdrew from political organizing, and sometimes passed into newcomer society. Shore and Barkwell used anecdotal data gathered through meetings with Métis Elders to argue that in this seventy-five-year period, the Métis managed to preserve aspects of their culture, language, and customs in communities removed from burgeoning prairie cities and towns and from First Nations society. The survivors of removal and dispersion brought by the Red River Resistance and the Northwest Resistance guarded the dissemination of their ancestors’ memories from subsequent generations. Métis society flourished in the bush, but the young never learned of the rich cultural history that preceded them.<sup>26</sup>

In this study, I support the thesis of Barkwell and Shore – which argues that Métis society did not disintegrate after 1885 – and I argue, through the voices of the children and youth who grew up in the years following the Northwest Resistance, that Métis

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<sup>24</sup> Sealey and Lussier iv.

<sup>25</sup> Nathalie Kermoal, *Un passé Métis au Féminin* (Quebec: Les Editions GID, 2006) 13. Kermoal, who studied Manitoba Métis women between 1850 and 1900, suggested that to not question how Métis women responded to the changing economy and society of late-nineteenth-century Manitoba was akin to overlooking a significant aspect of the history of the Métis Nation.

<sup>26</sup> See Shore and Barkwell.

children and youths' lives underwent substantial transformations. Each subsequent generation attended denominational or public schooling for longer periods, had frequent and prolonged encounters with newcomers, and successfully negotiated the demands of denominational and secular education with the traditions shared by their ancestors. The missionaries and the twentieth-century Department of Education provided formal learning opportunities for Métis children and youth that dovetailed with the settlement focus of the federal and provincial governments. However, the absence of Métis voices from the documentary record of schooling was indicative of governmental and periodically church ignorance of the Métis after 1885.

Shore and Barkwell were not the only scholars who studied the history of the Métis outside of the parameters of the two events well known to Canadians: the Red River Resistance of 1869-1870 and the Northwest Resistance of 1885. J.E. Foster provided a socio-economic history of the plains Métis in the period leading up to Red River's annexation to Canada, 1840-1869, and in the years following the birth of the province of Manitoba. Foster found a well-organized buffalo hunt spearheaded by Métis families in what is now Saskatchewan. Work in the fur trade combined with traditional hunting and trapping enabled these hunters to hone their entrepreneurial skills. The emergence of independent hunters and traders happened in the 1840s because of the United States' desire for robes; the Métis carved out a distinct role in the economy of the West.

Métis family heads "with their country wives and children...[who] became *les gens libres* [free men]...hunted and trapped on their own account and marketed their production through the trading post."<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, the independence of these free men came under attack by the 1860s through a series of unfortunate events. The sale of Rupert's Land by the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), smallpox plagues in 1870-1871, the decline in the number of buffalo in the 1870s, and increased settlement contributed to the downfall of this enterprise and altered Métis family relations, settlement patterns, and traditional practices. These challenges were more than mere economic downturns; they threatened the integrity of the Métis Nation and the Métis families who made up the

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<sup>27</sup> J.E. Foster, "The Métis and the End of the Plains Buffalo in Alberta," *Buffalo*, J.E. Foster et al., eds. (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1992) 63.

nation. Nevertheless, the fur trade and the buffalo hunt were integral components of Métis ethnogenesis. Stanley and Giraud highlighted the Métis roles in the fur trade, but Foster thought of these occupations as more than work. These roles were part of a larger story of Métis ethnogenesis in the West.

Foster associated Métis economic activities in the fur and buffalo robe trade with a larger process of Métis ethnogenesis.<sup>28</sup> He argued that by the 1810s “the French-speaking, Roman Catholic, non-Indian native buffalo hunters of the Red River Settlement emerged distinct from the socio-cultural mosaic of the period and the region.”<sup>29</sup> With the merger of the HBC and the North West Company in 1821, the fur trade competition ended; mixed-ancestry families who resided outside of Red River joined up with the Francophone Métis. The result was a diversity of Métis at Red River.<sup>30</sup> Foster’s work led to a larger discussion of Métis ethnogenesis and the factors that affected Métis distinctiveness in the West.

Two scholars of Métis women and family history believed that the story of Métis ethnogenesis in the fur trade was incomplete. They wished to learn how the Métis families fared economically after the end of the buffalo hunt in the 1870s, in the years that followed the HBC’s sale of Rupert’s Land to the Government of Canada. These scholars’ interests dovetailed with the burgeoning body of social histories concerned with women, workers, Aboriginals, and racial minorities, and their work appeared amidst activist movements designed to effect substantial changes in matters of human rights, governance, and education.

Sylvia Van Kirk and Jennifer S.H. Brown pioneered the study of ‘mixed-blood’ and Métis families, indirectly in response to the gap in Foster’s studies. Although Foster discussed how the market for robes triggered a sense of place for the Métis, the knowledge of the relationships that formed in these trading families was not yet known. Van Kirk coined the term ‘women in between’ to describe those First Nations women who married fur-trading men in the years of HBC-controlled Rupert’s Land.<sup>31</sup> Van Kirk

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<sup>28</sup> J.E. Foster, “The Métis: The People and the Term,” *The Western Métis: Profile of a People*, P.C. Douaud, ed. (Regina: Canadian Great Plains Research Center, 2007) 30.

<sup>29</sup> Foster, “The People and the Term,” 22, 26-27.

<sup>30</sup> Foster, “The People and the Term,” 27.

<sup>31</sup> See Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: women in fur-trade society, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer, 1999) especially chapter four entitled “Women in Between.”

also assessed the outcome of these marriages for the subsequent generations of children.<sup>32</sup> Brown identified three types of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Métis alive in an era when families with children born of European and Aboriginal ancestry faced challenges to their unity. Firstly, there were the progeny who joined the homeguard bands gathered to provide food and protection for the trading posts and defend against attacks from rival First Nations groups. Secondly, some children and youth born of fur trade unions found work in the posts.<sup>33</sup> However, the mixed ancestry of these young adults oftentimes hindered their advancement into supervisory or management roles. Racial attitudes fostered by fur trade patriarchs like George Simpson and Alexander Ross prohibited the promotion of ‘half-breeds’ or ‘mixed-bloods.’<sup>34</sup> Finally, there was a small group of Métis who ‘faded’ into the ‘white’ or settler society. None of these Métis joined Louis Riel to resist the intrusion of Canadian surveyors at Red River or to oppose the nation-building goals of the Conservative federal government of then Prime Minister Sir J.A. Macdonald.<sup>35</sup> Economic needs kept some Métis away from the simmering conflict in the Northwest in 1885.

Nicole St-Onge and Frank Tough unpacked the variations in Métis adaptation to the new economic order of the West, focused on agricultural production, in the years that followed the annexation of the Red River settlement to Canada. The theme that united the researches of St-Onge and Tough was their contention that the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries were a period when Métis families in Manitoba adapted to variations in labour arrangements and commodity production. As hunting, fishing, and trapping became less lucrative in the newly formed province of Manitoba, several Métis embraced

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<sup>32</sup> Sylvia Van Kirk, “‘What if Mama is an Indian?’: The cultural ambivalence of the Alexander Ross family,” *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S.H. Brown, eds., Manitoba Studies in Native History I (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 207-17 and “From ‘Marrying-In’ to ‘Marrying-Out’: Changing Patterns of Aboriginal/Non-Aboriginal Marriage in Colonial Canada,” *Frontiers* 23.3 (2002): 1-11.

<sup>33</sup> Jennifer S.H. Brown, “Diverging Identities: The Presbyterian métis of St. Gabriel Street, Montreal,” *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, eds. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S.H. Brown, Manitoba Studies in Native History I (Winnipeg: the University of Manitoba Press, 1985) 198.

<sup>34</sup> For more discussion of the fur trade’s racial glass ceiling and examples from a fur trade family, see Elizabeth Arthur, “Angelique and her Children: Papers and Records,” *Thunder Bay Historical Society* 6 (1978): 30-34.

<sup>35</sup> Brown 198, 204.

farming. Economic needs affected the Métiness<sup>36</sup> of the communities that composed the former Red River settlement. The result was what St-Onge termed variations in living arrangements and cultural practices. Métis residents of Fort Rouge remained committed to seasonal labour and retained Métis cultural practices and kinship bonds, but in Saint-Laurent surplus agricultural production resulted in a gulf between families. This geographical ‘space’ between farms contributed to the decline of Métis identity as profit and not kinship ties dictated living arrangements. Surplus agrarian production rewarded individual and nuclear family enterprise, resulted in the dismantling of communal land tenure, and emotionally and physically distanced family members. In Saint-Laurent, Métis identity collapsed and grew more distant.<sup>37</sup>

Tough reviewed the available studies focused on Aboriginal economic histories in several regional and temporal contexts and found that the Métis of the northern prairies adapted to the growing non-Aboriginal presence by serving as hunters, petty traders, and wage labourers occasionally and intermittently.<sup>38</sup> Meanwhile, the Métis who lived in what would become southeast Saskatchewan advocated for their rights to the fishery resource.<sup>39</sup> These two economic historians led the field of Métis studies outside of the focus on Louis Riel and the Red River-Northwest diaspora. Tough concentrated exclusively on the economic roles of First Nations and Métis in the years following the Red River Settlement whereas St-Onge, in addition to her discussion of shifts toward agriculture, detailed how the changes in economic production affected family relationships and kinship ties. Notably, St-Onge found that at Saint Laurent, by the 1950s, “well over half of the descendants of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century Canadian European workers and local Native women did not perceive themselves, and were not perceived by others, as Métis or ‘Half-breeds’...Métis became synonymous with being poor, unschooled, living in a shack, or engaged in a variety of seasonal employment...being

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<sup>36</sup> I borrowed the term Métiness from St-Onge’s study of Saint-Laurent, Manitoba (full reference in the next footnote) and use it here to mean the attributes that denote a community as Métis: kinship ties, traditional economic pursuits, and a sense of place distinct from First Nations and settlers.

<sup>37</sup> Nicole St-Onge, *Saint-Laurent, Manitoba: Evolving Métis Identities, 1850-1914* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2004), especially chapter five.

<sup>38</sup> Frank Tough, “‘From the Original Affluent Society to the ‘Unjust Society’: A Review Essay on Native Economic History in Canada,” *Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* 4.2: 36.

<sup>39</sup> Frank Tough, “The Importance of Freshwater Fish to the Métis of Western Canada,” unpub. paper, July, 2006, 44.

Métis in Saint Laurent was as much a function of one's class as it was of one's ancestry and culture."<sup>40</sup> The two scholars examined what happened to the Métis who stayed behind after the Resistance or relocated to southern Saskatchewan.

The concentration on narratives of settlers and of Louis Riel neglected to consider how social conditions, economics, and the state affected mixed-ancestry identity maintenance. However, the political climate of the 1980s and 1990s challenged scholars to define the Métis as an Aboriginal people of Canada. Academics identified the 1982 Constitution as the first national document to recognize the Métis as one of Canada's three Aboriginal peoples. David Boisvert and Keith Turnbull noted that this inclusion "means that we must now start defining and identifying these Métis people."<sup>41</sup> Boisvert and Turnbull asked the Métis to situate themselves in the contemporary legal and political contexts. Their own work revealed that many Métis entered the category of the 'non-status Indian' in the years prior to the 1982 recognition; the 1985 Bill C-31 legislation that restored status to the first generation of descendants whose parents lost status through marriage to a non-status Indian under the Indian Act affected the determination of membership in the Métis Nation.<sup>42</sup>

The 1982 recognition inspired scholars to quantitatively determine the number of Métis in Canada. This pursuit detracted from the Métis 'great man of history' preoccupation and informed discussions of twentieth-century Métis identity formation. Evelyn Peters established the field of Métis population studies. Peters' approach differed from Boisvert and Turnbull. She collaborated with the Métis organizations who surveyed their membership about issues concerning self-government and land rights. Surveys allowed for geographers like Peters to glean limited population data about the Métis in Canada. Not only were the numbers available, but the surveys allowed for scholars to find the determinants considered important to Métis self-identification. In the case of the Ontario Métis, Peters observed that "older people's Métis identity appears to be more closely related to a cultural dimension-aboriginal language use, identification with Indian

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<sup>40</sup> St-Onge 4.

<sup>41</sup> David Boisvert and Keith Turnbull, "Who are the Metis?" *Studies in Political Economy* 18 (1985): 108.

<sup>42</sup> Boisvert and Turnbull 108.

ancestry, and the establishment of separate Métis communities.”<sup>43</sup> More recently, Peters used census data to argue for a reconsideration of the contemporary definition of a pure or predominantly Métis group.<sup>44</sup> Both Boisvert and Turnbull and Peters saw the contemporary political and legal climate as a necessary context for the enumeration of the Métis. They ‘got there’ by working with the Métis to define their relationship to legal documents like the 1982 Constitution.

Canadians were not the only ones who wished to reconcile peoples of mixed ancestry with the myriad of racial peoples that populate nations. David Parker and Miri Song and the contributors to their anthology *Rethinking ‘Mixed Race’* argued that individuals of mixed ancestry sought to define their own space in the state. Contributors Parker and Song as well as Stephen Small and Charlie Owen studied campaigns in the United States and the United Kingdom respectively to allow for a ‘mixed-heritage’ category on the census. They researched these movements as a means to measure ethnic pride for those of two or more racial backgrounds. The debate over inclusion of a ‘mixed’ category in the United States’ 2000 Census reflected a desire for individuals to control how they were represented in the government record.<sup>45</sup> The contributors and the editors reinforced how being of mixed ancestry affects one’s interpretation of contemporary legislation and the knowing of one’s past.

Scholars questioned the determinants of Métis and mixed-ancestry peoples’ lives in the past and coined terms such as ‘either-or dichotomies,’ ‘half-caste pasts,’ and ‘Métis ethnogenesis.’ Furthermore, two scholars considered how ‘grand narratives’ of colonial expansion affected Métis and mixed-ancestry peoples.

There were two components to the dichotomy of the ‘either-or’ launched by scholars of mixed-ancestry peoples. Two scholars observe ‘state’ or ‘mainstream-imposed’ categories of ‘white’ and ‘other.’ They positioned their historical characters as individuals who negotiated the dominant societal conceptions of their families and

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<sup>43</sup> Evelyn Peters et al., “The Ontario Metis: Some Aspects of a Metis Identity,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 23.1 (1991): 77.

<sup>44</sup> Evelyn Peters, “Métis Populations in Canada: Some Implications of Settlement Patterns and Characteristics,” *NSR* (forthcoming): 5.

<sup>45</sup> David Parker and Miri Song, “Introduction,” Stephen Small, “Colour, Culture, and Class: Interrogating Interracial Marriage and People of Mixed Racial Descent in the USA,” and Charlie Owen, “‘Mixed Race’ in Official Statistics,” in David Parker and Miri Song, eds. *Rethinking ‘Mixed Race,’* (Sterling: Pluto Press, 2001) 1-22, 117-133, and 134-153 respectively.

communities. Three scholars demonstrated how individuals defied and continue to defy the imposed identities of the mainstream.

Paige Raibmon, in her monograph *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast*, accurately depicted the obstacles faced by ‘mixed’ families with children. Raibmon’s context was turn-of-the-century Alaska, but her findings applied nicely to the Métis children of the prairies. The 1905 Walton Case in Sitka, Alaska provided a public display of what Raibmon termed the ‘either-or’ dichotomy resonating in the minds of many white residents of the community. The case concerned six mixed ‘white’-Tlingit children. The local school board denied them admission to the public school in town because their parents failed to lead a civilized life. Civilization, in the Sitka context, went further than demonstration of individual enterprise and the eschewing of cultural practices such as the potlatch. Those mixed-ancestry individuals who professed to follow a colonial lifestyle had to renounce all familial commitments to their Tlingit relations. If the school administrators suspected that mixed-ancestry families failed to follow a ‘civilized’ lifestyle, then the next generation could be denied formal schooling. Civilization represented the successful completion of re-training facilitated by the mission and public educational systems and involvement in capitalist enterprise. However, there was no room for the ‘mixed’ children or their parents to construct an identity founded on the convergence of two cultures through trade, whaling, hunting, trapping, or other forms of commerce and traditional social activities.<sup>46</sup> Raibmon coined the term ‘either-or’ to describe the dilemmas faced by families whose members lived in both the ‘civilized’ and ‘savage’ camps.

Bonita Lawrence told of ‘mixed-blood’ adjustment to city life through the lenses of economic development, migration, self-identification, and socio-cultural co-habitation. Lawrence examined the process of identity formation in Toronto, Ontario. She used her personal connections with the Toronto ‘mixed-heritage’ community to study how individuals of mixed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ancestry negotiated the expectations of the First Nations community and non-First Nations friends, employers, and relatives in the present and in the past. Many participants indicated their parents were taken to

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<sup>46</sup> Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (London: Duke University Press, 2005) 181, 187.

residential schools and subsequently removed from their reserve communities. The removal was the spark that ignited years of alienation from their Aboriginal ancestries. Other interviewees were adopted into non-Aboriginal homes and in some cases were not provided with any cultural knowledge. According to these participants, such information would have helped to explain their darker skin or their dislocation from the mainstreams. Therefore, many grew up with no ‘point of reference’ for their origin.<sup>47</sup> Lawrence’s interviews revealed the identity struggles that many of her participants faced both in Toronto and in their home communities.

Although Raibmon and Lawrence saw being of mixed ancestry as a dilemma or a form of dislocation, one scholar, who drew from his own family’s history, considered how Métis people defied being categorized by government and its agents. Darcy Belisle contended that the strongest asset of the Métis “is their ability to resist definition and adjust to changing historical, political, and racial contexts.”<sup>48</sup> Belisle went on to say that Métiness “is about the process of moving through...oversimplifications and denying trust in ‘easy oppositions.’”<sup>49</sup> Belisle’s Métis moved between a continuum of ‘Aboriginal’ and ‘non-Aboriginal’ despite the goal of the mainstreams to push the Métis onto reserves as First Nations. Belisle’s writing indicated that Métis sometimes incidentally passed as ‘white.’ The reason for the ‘passing’ was not because of Métis choice but instead was the result of the settler society’s obsession with essentialisms and fixed identities.

Belisle’s identification of the Métis’ willingness to defy fixed identities relates to a larger discussion of passing: those who intentionally or unintentionally concealed traits that could provoke negative reactions from the mainstream. Brooke Kroeger and Arthe A. Anthony discussed passing. Anthony offered a definition of the action. “In cultural studies [passing is]...a metaphor for masking the real-and most often marginalized-self.”<sup>50</sup> Kroeger investigated what she termed ‘everyday people’ who passed and emphasized that the actions were conditioned by prejudice and motivated by individuals’ desires “for opportunity, safety, adventure, or some combination of the three...[to] avoid

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<sup>47</sup> Bonita Lawrence, *‘Real’ Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 105, 107, 111.

<sup>48</sup> Darcy Belisle, “Finding Home on the Way: Naming the Métis,” *Prairie Forum* 31.1 (2006): 105.

<sup>49</sup> Belisle 108.

<sup>50</sup> Arthe A. Anthony, “‘Lost Boundaries’: Racial Passing and Poverty in Segregated New Orleans,” *Creole: the history and legacy of Louisiana’s free people of color*, Ed. Sybil Kein (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000) 297.

conflict or personal rejection or to fulfill serious professional aspirations.”<sup>51</sup> Both Kroeger and Anthony saw passing, as does Belisle, as an act of resistance against an imposed identity and a chance to upset what society perceived to be fixed ethnic, social, and classed identities. However, Anthony exposed the consequence for mixed ‘white’ and ‘African-American’ descendants whose parents departed southern American states for the ‘greener pastures’ of ‘white’ privilege in the northern states. The consequence for Anthony was a loss of contact with “their black families of origin.”<sup>52</sup>

Passing involved more than the defiance of imposed categories. It led historians to question how the actors and actresses saw themselves in the historical narrative. For the Métis, passing afforded families the chance to benefit from the economic and educational changes that happened as a result of the growth, in numbers and political influence, of white society in the West; select families “made it” by splitting off their Aboriginal ancestries from their family histories.<sup>53</sup> The actions of these families inspired me to observe how historical characters constructed their personal narrative within the grand narrative of North American history.

I found studies not only from Canadian contexts, but also from the United States and New Zealand. Two studies from outside Canada demonstrated how people of ‘mixed-ancestry’ constructed their own narrative of settlement, economy, and family history. In the case of the New Zealand whaling industry, communities founded on family ties formed in response to the economic needs of British whalers. An investigation of the Métis of Montana revealed not only a dynamic community changing in the face of settlement of the American mid-west but gave a face to Louis Riel in the years when he was in exile from Canada.

Angela Wanhalla situated the half-caste population of nineteenth-century New Zealand within the larger history of British colonial expansion, settlement, and economic enterprise. She used census data, school records, election records, and family archives to construct a ‘half-caste’ past in the New Zealand whaling industry. Hers was a community study of the whaling village of Maitapapa formed in response to the needs of

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<sup>51</sup> Brooke Kroeger, *Passing: When People Can't Be Who They Are* (New York: Public Affairs, 2003) 4, 6, 7.

<sup>52</sup> Anthony 296.

<sup>53</sup> Sealey and Lussier 139, 148-149.

the British whaling industry but united in shared family ties.<sup>54</sup> Wanhalla considered the impact of marriage on this evolving ‘half-caste’ population in New Zealand. While researching marriage, Wanhalla learned that “the centrality of farming to family identity was consolidated through marriage.”<sup>55</sup> She adopted an argument resembling St-Onge’s in that as economic activities shifted away from the whaling resource, the community, Maitapapa, physically and culturally disintegrated.<sup>56</sup> However, during its years as a fishing village, the community responded to the needs of the colonizer and like the farming villages in Saskatchewan marriage united families and anchored the community.

The positioning of the Métis in the ‘grand narrative’ of mid-west American settlement was an investigation undertaken by Martha Harroun Foster. Harroun Foster identified when the Métis or a ‘mixed-blood’ population reached its zenith. She noted that non-Aboriginal exploration, settlement, and economic priorities contributed to the demise of the Métis in Montana. Harroun Foster suggested that the exiled Métis leader Louis Riel provided leadership for the Métis in the period between 1870 and 1884, but his execution following the Resistance of 1885 severed ties between the Métis in their post-1870 settlements and led to a ‘dark age’ for the Métis.<sup>57</sup> Harroun Foster illustrated the plight of the Métis in the years following Riel’s execution.

Like Wanhalla, Harroun Foster observed a cultural disintegration in Montana. In Montana, this demise occurred after the 1885 Resistance in the Northwest Territories. Harroun Foster contextualized Montana as a territory where families collectively forgot language, cultural practices, and the idea of a Métis Nation.<sup>58</sup> Harroun Foster through interviews as well as the use of local newspapers and past census data demonstrated two polar opposites of the Métis, a society growing in solidarity and strength and a nation crumbling in the aftershock of the death of Louis Riel, the arrival of homesteaders and

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<sup>54</sup> Angela Wanhalla, “Transgressing Boundaries: A History of the Mixed-descent Families of Maitapapa, Taieri, 1830-1940,” Ph.D. diss, U of Canterbury, 2004, 266, 294-95.

<sup>55</sup> Wanhalla 292.

<sup>56</sup> Wanhalla 2.

<sup>57</sup> Martha Harroun Foster, *We Know Who We Are: Métis Identity in a Montana Community* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006).

<sup>58</sup> Harroun Foster concluded that few Métis born after 1930 remembered families using terms like ‘Métis’ or ‘half-breed’ to describe themselves and instead chose to call themselves ‘French.’ Harroun Foster 207, 220.

ranchers, the decline in freighting work,<sup>59</sup> and the loss of the buffalo hunt and fur trade. The result was an ethnic dilemma which grew over the nineteenth century in North America and crystallized by the twentieth century. By the twentieth century people of ‘mixed’ ancestry provoked ignorance and isolation from homesteader society at best or hostility at worst. The results of Harroun Foster’s investigation of the census rolls, American Indian land claims cases, scrip applications, land patents, and parish records indicated that Métis families had either moved into Euro-American society, American Indian society, or lived on the margins as ‘Canadian Crees.’<sup>60</sup>

Both Harroun Foster and Wanhalla agreed that British and later state settler economic interests eclipsed Métis and ‘half-caste’ economic pursuits in the twentieth century. The grand narrative minimized their contributions and silenced their voices, despite attempts on the part of the Métis to actively participate in the new economies. Historians associated non-Aboriginal settlement and economic pursuits, notably agriculture, with the grand narrative and ‘progress.’ The Métis families were caught between Status First Nations societies being forced onto reserves and newcomers who wished to take ownership of their lands. Families, either intentionally or unintentionally, passed into non-Aboriginal society working as farmers, farm hands, or professionals while others attempted to live on the fringes of newcomer towns or First Nations reserves. For those Métis who attempted to survive as a cultural group, kinship ties and place reinforced Métiness and Métis identity.

Although the studies of ‘mixed-ancestry’ peoples gave examples of how individuals negotiated relationships with the colonizers and formed communities, less was known about how Métis people understood themselves as one of the three Aboriginal peoples of Canada; questions concerning language, traditions, and places of Métis identity formation received less attention from historians. Contemporary scholars of the Métis argued that despite all of the studies on the Métis, the process of being and

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<sup>59</sup> Diane Payment, *The Free People – Otipimisiwak’: Batoche, Saskatchewan, 1870-1930*, Studies in Archaeology, Architecture, and History, National Parks and Sites, Parks Service, Environment Canada (Ottawa: Environment Canada, 1990) 209, 212.

<sup>60</sup> Harroun Foster 3. I use ‘American Indian’ here as the term is the legislative definition for the registered First Nations of the United States.

becoming Métis was poorly understood.<sup>61</sup> Scholars concerned with this process defined it as Métis ethnogenesis. Members of this academic cohort stepped away from the grand narrative. They sought to disseminate the relationships embedded within Métis families that allowed them to project a shared history, and they launched two avenues for ‘getting at’ Métis ethnogenesis.

Studies of Métis families served as one of the vehicles to understanding Métis history. Heather Devine used the Desjarlais family genealogy to argue that ethnic identification was rooted in ties of kinship. Geographical proximity fostered kinship ties and strengthened them. Shared religious beliefs, cultural practices, values, and history cemented ties between members of the Desjarlais family line.<sup>62</sup> Brenda Macdougall adopted a similar approach but used the village of Ile-à-la-Crosse, Saskatchewan as a starting point. She traced five generations of families in this northwestern Saskatchewan village as a means to understand ethnogenesis. Like Devine, her goal was to write an economic, religious, and socio-cultural history of the Métis families of the village and the region.<sup>63</sup>

Macdougall considered place as central to the genesis of a Métis identity. Work by Jacqueline Peterson and more recently Ruth Swan and Jacqueline Pelletier supported Macdougall’s approach. Before the Métis contested the grand narrative and broke with a ‘great man of history’ approach, they had to understand how place affected identity formation.

Peterson, Swan and Pelletier considered place to be a central determinant of Métis ethnogenesis. Peterson found that Métis in the pre-1830 Great Lakes fur trade resided in communities defined by unique houses and kinship bonds. They worked in trade. They secluded themselves from the British and the Americans. However, they lacked self-ascription and property rights, and these weaknesses encouraged their removal to Red River or their dispersion back into First Nations groups after 1830. Peterson used communities where residents bartered and swapped houses as evidence. She concluded

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<sup>61</sup> Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004) 208.

<sup>62</sup> Devine 208.

<sup>63</sup> Brenda Macdougall, “Socio-cultural Development and Identity Formation of Métis Communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan, 1776-1907,” Ph.D. diss, U of Saskatchewan, 2005, 3.

that no one engaged in farming. The choice not to farm led the American fur traders to believe that the land was not ‘mixed-blood’ property.<sup>64</sup>

Peterson saw the Red River settlement as the place where Métis identity formed and solidified. Swan disagreed with Peterson. She considered Pembina to be the crucible for Métis identity formation. The closure of the Roman Catholic mission at Pembina and its relocation to Red River resulted in the movement of the Métis families to Red River. However, Pembina was the site where Métis consciousness formed because it was where families recognized their distinctiveness from newcomers and First Nations.<sup>65</sup> Pelletier implicitly agreed with Swan. Her study of the Qu’Appelle Valley Métis inspired her to conclude that “places and their narratives contribute to an understanding of shared community histories, denote certain areas as Métis places, and they help to create a sense of community identity and belonging...they illustrate how kinship helps to create a sense of place and community.”<sup>66</sup> Pembina and the Qu’Appelle Valley “highlight Métis traditions, values, and cultural knowledge.”<sup>67</sup> When scholars heard the voices of Métis people, as Swan and Pelletier and Devine and Macdougall as well as Peters did, then one learned where the Métis believed that their histories began.

Awareness of Métis identity did not occur in isolation from First Nations and newcomers. Furthermore, its continuity was challenged not only by the resistances of the late-nineteenth century but also by the growing numbers of mission stations and schoolhouses in the West. Late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Métis parents educated their children according to the teachings of their Elders but also sought assistance from the Christian missionaries. The twentieth century brought formal schooling to the West. Initially, priests, nuns, and other religious teachers delivered formal schooling to Métis children and youth. By the mid-twentieth century, however, larger numbers of Métis children and youth attended public schools. This next section

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<sup>64</sup> Jacqueline Peterson, “Many roads to Red River: Metis genesis in the Great Lakes region, 1680-1815,” *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America*, Jennifer S.H. Brown and Jacqueline Peterson, eds., Manitoba Studies in Native History I (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1985) 37-71.

<sup>65</sup> Ruth Swan, “The Crucible: Pembina and the Origins of the Red River Valley,” Ph.D. diss, U of Manitoba, 2003.

<sup>66</sup> Jacqueline Margaret Pelletier, “The First of all Things: The Significance of Place in Métis Histories and Communities in the Qu’Appelle Valley, Saskatchewan,” M.A. Thesis, U of Alberta, 2006, 64.

<sup>67</sup> Pelletier 110.

discusses the literature concerning formal education, Christianity, and the larger discourse of civilization in terms of the church and state educational systems.

Before starting the review of the literature on the history of education, it is necessary to provide some contextual information. Three types of schools existed in the West for Métis children and youth. These were: public, church-state-operated residential schools for Status First Nations and occasionally Métis children and youth, and private or separate church-operated schools. Elected boards administered public schools, and their operating funds came from taxes paid by local residents. Church-state-operated residential schools were the result of a partnership agreement between the Canadian federal government and the Christian churches. This partnership began in 1883 with the opening of the Qu'Appelle Indian Industrial School. In 1969, the federal government announced that it would phase out the church-state residential schools.<sup>68</sup> Private or separate schools were operated by the Christian churches. Their operating budgets and infrastructure came from the churches' assets and student tuition with little or no funding from any level of government. The exception was the Roman Catholic separate schools of the twentieth century that were taxpayer-funded.

Scholars who pioneered the study of the history of Christianity in Canada started with a disclaimer. They mentioned that the first task in their assessments of the field was to separate their investigations of missionaries and missions from hagiographic works that celebrated church accomplishments in the mission field. Scholars of the mission field saw their studies as contributing to a field defined by C.T. McIntire as missiology: whose practitioners saw missions as the product of the labours of spiritual devotees and as sites for relationships between cultures.<sup>69</sup>

There were few works that assessed the effect of the presence of missionaries on the communities they served. The contributors to the anthology *Canadian Protestant and Catholic Missions, 1820s-1960s* sought to provide a history of the mission field in the context of the larger Canadian state but noted that their anthology did not consider the

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<sup>68</sup> Although the federal government planned to phase out the schools, many continued to operate after 1969. These facilities received federal funds for their operations. In some northern areas, former schools were downgraded to hostels that housed children and youth who did not have schools in their home communities. J.R. Miller, personal communication, 18 July 2008.

<sup>69</sup> C.T. McIntire, "Approaches and Themes in the History of Missions," *Canadian Protestant and Catholic Missions, 1820s-1960s*, eds. John S. Moir and C.T. McIntire (New York: Peter Lang, 1988) 13, 17.

missionized.<sup>70</sup> John Webster Grant addressed this absence in the literature with two groundbreaking studies, *The Church in the Canadian Era* and *Moon of Wintertime*. Like McIntire, Grant made a case for the study of the church as a dynamic entity in the burgeoning Canadian state, but he went one step further in *Moon of Wintertime*.<sup>71</sup> In this investigation, Grant considered the Aboriginal response to Christian missions and missionaries' educational, health, and social welfare work over the entire history of contact between Natives and newcomers in Canada. Grant exposed the shared Protestant and Roman Catholic goals. Both denominations believed the Aboriginals represented a lower culture that needed to be replaced by a superior Christian one. The adoption of European manners, dress, and educational systems completed this transition to the superior culture. Grant went on to show the ruptures between the Protestants and the Roman Catholics in their work with the Aboriginals. Finally, Grant demonstrated the centrality of formal education in the later years of the missionary enterprise or in the decades leading up to the joining of Rupert's Land with Canada.<sup>72</sup>

Grant conceded early on in *Moon of Wintertime* that he had not been able to provide any sort of comprehensive history of the Métis and the Christian missions. Consequently, the Métis were incidental to his story.<sup>73</sup> Despite this shortcoming, Grant may be credited for setting up the missionary enterprise as a part of the larger plan for the civilization of Aboriginals. In this civilization project, formal schooling, especially for the subsequent generations of the Aboriginal families, assumed paramount importance.

A group of scholars agreed that Christian missions existed as part of a larger civilization program. And historians devoted considerable time to the dissemination of the components of the civilization program. Classroom instruction in Christian ritual and the farmer's fields would be the means missionaries used to replace the 'lower' Aboriginal culture.

Initially, the Roman Catholic clergy enjoyed more success with Aboriginal converts. They looked to the Métis as a bridge between European and First Nations

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<sup>70</sup> McIntire 12.

<sup>71</sup> John G. Stackhouse, jr., preface, *The Church in the Canadian Era: Updated and Expanded Edition*, by John Webster Grant (Vancouver: Regent Publishing, 1998) ix-x.

<sup>72</sup> John Webster Grant, *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and Indians in Encounter since 1534* (Toronto: UTP, 1984) 75, 90-91.

<sup>73</sup> Grant, *Moon of Wintertime*, vii.

societies and believed that if the Métis could be brought under the spell of Catholic ritual and schooled in French society and in agriculture, they could model their talents to their First Nations relatives.<sup>74</sup> In Rupert's Land, nineteenth-century Red River was a site for instruction in Christian teachings. Instruction occurred not only at church but also in one-room schoolhouses and academies run by Protestant and Roman Catholic clergy and teachers who belonged to Christian churches. The Protestants expected their flock to be sedentary, but until 1845 the Catholics did not mind travelling with their Métis converts on the buffalo hunts. However, by the 1850s, they realized that this style of preaching would not bring the desired results: conversion to Christianity, a sedentary lifestyle, and engagement in agrarian production.<sup>75</sup>

Farming, Christian marriage ceremonies, and residence in one location ensured that the civilization project worked. Adele Perry found that in nineteenth-century British Columbia, the HBC's Board of Governors, the monarchy in Britain, and the Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries, condemned the living arrangements of the men who mined. These miners lived in what Perry termed homosocial living spaces: they were transient; and they drank.<sup>76</sup> But what is noticeably absent in the literature on civilization is the centrality of teaching to the civilization program.

The scholars who examined education instead opted to study public schooling for newcomers. Their sources were the policies enacted in nineteenth-century Ontario; these policies compelled children and youth to attend school. This education literature existed apart from the literature on Christianity; the questions asked by the education scholars concerned how the school boards and schools formed, and how teachers evolved as a professional group trained in normal schooling outside of denominational influences. Susan Houston and Alison Prentice proposed that the system of public education evolved from the tutor-governess model of upper- and middle-class nineteenth-century Ontario

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<sup>74</sup> Raymond Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and Métis* (Edmonton: U of Alberta Press, 1996) 104.

<sup>75</sup> Jonathan Anuik, "Forming Civilization at Red River: 19<sup>th</sup>-century Missionary Education of Métis and First Nations Children," *Prairie Forum* 31.1 (2006): 3, 10.

<sup>76</sup> Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

homes to a taxpayer-funded system in which an elected board hired the teacher(s), regulated the content of instruction, and oversaw infrastructural needs.<sup>77</sup>

These scholars identified a leader in the evolution of schooling. He was the Methodist education reformer Egerton Ryerson. Ryerson believed that everyone deserved instruction in basic academic skills. However, Bruce Curtis noted that simply making education accessible to nineteenth-century Ontario children would not guarantee their attendance. Many of the male children left school by age fourteen.<sup>78</sup> However, Ryerson received the majority of the credit for providing the design for the early systems of public education.

J.R. Miller and a cohort of policy historians expanded the studies on schools to include British and later Canadian federal government educational initiatives for Canada's First Nations. Miller and John S. Milloy charted the history of church-state operated industrial and later residential and day schools in Canada. Miller's sources were wider than Milloy's as he wanted to prove that the churches, particularly the Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists and Roman Catholics, conceived of and used residential schools before the agreement with the Canadian federal government. Milloy concentrated on the rationale behind the Canadian federal government's acceptance of these residences as the sites for the education of First Nations children and youth. Inevitably, their studies stretched into western Canada as these schools existed in the majority of provinces and territories.<sup>79</sup> Miller warned in the conclusion of his study of the residential schools project that although the system of church-state operated schooling for Status First Nations will never be tried again by the Canadian federal government, the overarching ideology of civilization will continue to affect policy debates on suitable educational interventions for Aboriginal learners.

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<sup>77</sup> See Susan Houston and Alison Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars in Nineteenth-Century Ontario*, A Project of the Ontario Historical Studies Series (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

<sup>78</sup> Bruce Curtis, *Building the Educational State: Canada West, 1836-1871* (London: The Althouse Press, 1988) 72, 169-70, 184-85, 187, 201, 299, 311.

<sup>79</sup> J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: UTP, 1996) and John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Federal Government and the Residential School System* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999). Miller also commented on Aboriginal perceptions of education in *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Toronto: UTP, 2000) on pages 129-30, 135, and 142.

The works of Miller and Milloy inspired Canada's Métis to question how many of them attended residential schools; they wanted to know how their experiences in these institutions paralleled and diverged from those identified by the First Nations who attended the schools and shared their stories with family members and the Canadian public. The outcome was a report published by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF): *Métis History and Experience and Residential Schools in Canada* co-authored by Larry Chartrand, Tricia Logan, and Judy Daniels. Chartrand, Logan, and Daniels found that the topic of Métis children and youth in the residential schools had been ignored and in some instances denied by academics.<sup>80</sup> They noted that in the past Métis children and youth were on the margins of Aboriginal residential schools. They were the last to be admitted but the first to be expelled.<sup>81</sup> Daniels's study of the federal and denominational papers from the residential schools in Alberta provided an image of the bureaucratic haze which clouded the relationship between the Métis and these schools. Finally, the report inspired scholars to learn, through stories, more about the Métis past in the residential schools.

This AHF study is one of only two works where scholars considered the Métis children and youth who attended Christian-influenced schools. The second was by Keith Widder. Widder set up Yellow Lake School as the place where Evangelical Protestants hoped to lure children away from the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. The utility of Widder's presentation was in the register he uncovered of the boys and girls who attended the school. Widder established the Mackinaw mission in the heart of the Great Lakes fur trade as an area where the 'mixed-bloods' faced a decline in status. Many parents hoped their children could re-gain their prominence through education.<sup>82</sup> However, the children Widder studies did not necessarily fit into a 'Métis' category.

The fault of Widder's study was his failure to define Métis in the context of the fur trade. Widder used the observations of the Evangelicals who categorized the Métis as individuals outside of the American fur trade society. The Evangelicals used 'mixed-blood' living arrangements and religious practices as evidence. The Evangelical clergy

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<sup>80</sup> I am grateful to Tricia Logan for this observation.

<sup>81</sup> Aboriginal Healing Foundation, *Métis History and Experience and Residential Schools in Canada*, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation Research Series (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006).

<sup>82</sup> Keith R. Widder, *Battle for the Soul: Métis Children Encounter Evangelical Protestants at Mackinaw Mission, 1823-1837* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1990) 24.

considered as Métis those persons who resided in enclaves, had houses covered with bark, and attended the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>83</sup> However, as Peterson observed, the Métis of the pre-1830 Great Lakes fur trade lacked self-ascription and property rights; Widder's work did not address how place affected Métis identity. Therefore, Widder's failure to address Peterson's conclusions, which pre-dated his study, rendered arguments such as "Jean-Baptiste Corbin, Bazil Beaulieu, and others wanted their children to learn how to fit into a society, where Americans were becoming more numerous and dominant"<sup>84</sup> suspect as he founded the definition of Métis on living arrangements and religious affiliation and less on knowledge of distinctiveness from First Nations and non-Aboriginals. Widder presented no evidence to indicate that 'mixed' residents understood the occupational, residential, religious, and cultural differences between First Nations, Europeans, and themselves.

The literature concerning Métis children and youth and Christian education, taken together, demonstrated that Christianity existed in the larger discourse of civilization launched by missionaries of various denominations in the nineteenth century. As Grant already noted, the churches achieved a consensus on this plan, but, as Raymond Huel and I observed, they differed on how to achieve it. Finally, scholars like Miller, Chartrand, Logan, and Daniels transmitted how the missionized, who most often were the students in the schools, reacted to the at times blatant attempts to silence their pre-contact cultures and societies. Interactions with formal education appeared adversarial in many contexts. However, many families successfully negotiated denominational aggressiveness and rivalries.

The revelation of the abuses committed by teachers and other staff at the church- and state-run residential schools in the 1990s led to the suggestion by the Manitoba Métis that the "Church takes more responsibility for people's lives than they have the right to. Churches have turned people against religion. Church is not the only place where God is. Church is not flexible enough to recognize 'individual' beliefs. The church imposes their beliefs and does not allow a personal perspective on their relationships with God and

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<sup>83</sup> Widder 53, 64.

<sup>84</sup> Widder 24, 53.

their own personal beliefs.”<sup>85</sup> The tone of this passage indicated that the participants who informed Logan’s scholarship on the Métis in residential schools considered church teachings aggressive but not necessarily punitive. Christianity was a belief system that did not completely or permanently damage Aboriginal society. Many scholars have taken this thesis of moderation into their field work.

Before highlighting the scholars who propose that Aboriginals were indeed active agents in their interactions with missionaries, it is necessary to highlight two scholars who disagreed with this position. Karen Anderson and Carol Devens believed that the missionary enterprise in North America undermined the authority of pre-contact women. Anderson argued that the arrival of the Jesuits in seventeenth-century New France upset the position of women in pre-contact matriarchal and matrilineal societies. Jesuit discomfort with women’s authority in governance, justice, and matrilineality contributed to the decline of women’s status.<sup>86</sup> Devens noted that for Native American women “friction...is in fact the bitter fruit of colonization,” and that there was “little evidence that women actively sought to join the conversion trend.”<sup>87</sup> Devens used baptismal records to prove that “males represented a clear majority of the baptisms.”<sup>88</sup> Scholars accepted that missionaries could be aggressive in their efforts to convert Aboriginals, but recent works suggested conversion was not akin to abandonment of one’s traditional practices. Nevertheless, works such as Anderson’s and Devens’ have touched off a larger debate concerning Aboriginal agency in interactions with missionaries.

The authors of recent revisionist studies argued that Aboriginals were not passive recipients of Christian teachings and that Christianity did not supersede traditions; such conclusions emerged from fieldwork conducted in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples with responses and testimonials that informed the interpretation of the missionary records. Sergei Kan and Susan Neylan adhered to the proposition that Aboriginals were not passive recipients of church teachings. Kan, who worked with the northwest coast

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<sup>85</sup> Tricia Logan, “Lost Generations: The Silent Metis of the Residential School System: Revised Interim Report” in *Métis History and Experience in Residential Schools in Canada*, The Aboriginal Healing Foundation Research Series (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006) 89.

<sup>86</sup> Karen Anderson, *Chain Her By One Foot: The Subjugation of Women in Seventeenth-Century New France* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

<sup>87</sup> Carol Devens, *Countering Colonization: Native American Women and Great Lakes Missions, 1630-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992) 5.

<sup>88</sup> Devens 62.

Tlingit, and Neylan, who worked with the nineteenth-century Tsimshian of British Columbia, proposed a process of merger of pre-existing First Nations spirituality and Russian Orthodox and Protestant, respectively, spiritual views.<sup>89</sup>

Macdougall and Tord Larsen found that Roman Catholic rituals did not undermine pre-existing relationships and practices amongst the Métis of Ile-à-la-Crosse and the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, respectively. Instead, Métis and Mi'kmaq positioned Catholicism into their lives and controlled its impact on their annual rituals.<sup>90</sup> Children and youth born at Ile-à-la-Crosse received not only ancestral names but also the names of Roman Catholic saints.<sup>91</sup> Larsen believed that the Jesuit missionaries inserted some of their rituals into Mi'kmaq practice and provided the example of St. Anne's Day to support his argument. In contemporary Mi'kmaq society, he noticed that "St. Anne's Day is still the most important tribal event of the year, but not primarily as an occasion to renew the covenant with the protector saint, but rather as an instrument of ethnic incorporation, an occasion to communicate Indian unity and claim to nationhood."<sup>92</sup> Finally, Daryl Bazylak said that urban Aboriginal students sometimes fare better in Roman Catholic separate school systems because of the emphasis on spirituality and academic training fostered in the educational environment.<sup>93</sup> What emerged was the recognition that "ecological teachings have defined for Indigenous peoples the meaning of life, our responsibilities, and our duties"<sup>94</sup> and depending on the context that "Indigenous spiritual teachings and Christian faiths can be complementary."<sup>95</sup>

Scholars such as Marie Battiste and S'ak'ej Henderson told researchers to situate themselves in relation to the communities they study, to be accountable to communities

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<sup>89</sup> Sergei Kan, *Memory Eternal: Tlingit Culture and Russian Orthodox Christianity through Two Centuries* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999) and Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).

<sup>90</sup> Macdougall 241-42, 248.

<sup>91</sup> Macdougall 272.

<sup>92</sup> Tord Larsen, "Negotiating Identity: The Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia," *The Politics of Indianness: Studies in Native Ethnopolitics in Canada*, ed. Adrian Tanner (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1983) 47.

<sup>93</sup> Darryl Bazylak, "Journeys to Success: Perceptions of five female high school graduates," *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 26.2 (2002): 134-51.

<sup>94</sup> Battiste and Youngblood Henderson 9.

<sup>95</sup> Battiste and Youngblood Henderson 105.

and their leadership, and most importantly, to respect regional differences.<sup>96</sup> Works such as Kan, Neylan, and Bazylak break from studies that painted a broad-brush and generalized picture of Aboriginal spirituality and colonial encounters; they appreciated the context for Native-newcomer contact and the change in cultural relationships over time.

These appreciations of regional and cultural diversity turned up in a study of Christian fundamentalism by Kirk Dombrowski. His research with the Alaskan First Nations communities through the lens of fundamentalist Christian proselytizing noted that the fundamentalist churches began their community ministries with the vulnerable people: alcohol and drug abusers, spousal abusers, and problem gamblers. The modern missionaries linked their flock's problems to pre-existing First Nations spiritualities. In Dombrowski's First Nations communities, 'revivals' occurred. Recent converts burnt their 'Indian' gear and purged themselves of the demons of alcohol, drugs, and violence. Dombrowski's interviews read like vignettes. The participants associated their past problems with their First Nations ancestry. Although cured of their afflictions, factions in the community believed that the presence of these churches has led to increased suicide and cultural shame.<sup>97</sup>

Academics committed to the decolonization of formal learning believe church and state educational apparatuses failed to meet the needs of Aboriginal learners. The pedagogy and curriculum did not align with the teaching and learning styles of Aboriginal families, the system lacked accountability, and instructors imparted to their students that their worldviews and epistemologies were sub-standard, a practice termed by Battiste cognitive imperialism.<sup>98</sup> Within the last twenty years scholars drawing on documentary and anecdotal evidence as well as their own personal experiences in formal

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<sup>96</sup> Battiste and Youngblood Henderson; Kathy Absolon and Cameron Willett, "Putting Ourselves Forward: Location in Aboriginal Research," *Research as Resistance: Critical, Indigenous, and Anti-oppressive Approaches*, eds. L. Brown and S. Strega (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2005) 97, 106-107; Michael Chandler and Chris Lalonde, "Transferring Whose Knowledge? Exchanging Whose Best Practices?: On Knowing about Indigenous Knowledge and Aboriginal Suicide," *Aboriginal Policy Research: Setting the Agenda for Change, Volume II*, eds. J. White et al. (Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, 2004) 111-123; Chandler and Lalonde, "Suicide and the Persistence of Identity in the Face of Radical Cultural Change," Presentation to the Assembly of First Nations National Policy Forum, 2005.

<sup>97</sup> Kirk Dombrowski, *Against Culture: Development, Politics, and Religion in Indian Alaska* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

<sup>98</sup> Marie Battiste, "Maintaining Aboriginal Identity, Language, and Culture in Modern Society," *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, ed. Marie Battiste (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000) 192-193, 200-204.

learning have offered the following to the Canadian public and to their colleagues: answers to why the educational system failed to accommodate and meet the needs of Aboriginal learners and how these diverse educational systems may be remedied to better support and inspire Aboriginal learners.

Initially, scholars defined the approaches used by colonial educational authorities to educate Aboriginal children and youth. Patricia Monture called formal learning delivered under the guise of colonization the missionary approach. She offered the following as a definition of missionary-styled education: “education professionals assume that all students gravitate to the same value base as they do...there is one history and that one history is the truth.”<sup>99</sup> Monture believed that “we [must] completely reject the missionary philosophy, in all its forms as appropriate for the education of Aboriginal people...The historical structures (that is the missionary approach) and definitions of education which can only create and perpetuate otherness must be completely eradicated.”<sup>100</sup> Monture’s definition of missionary education helped scholars to understand how Christian influences contributed to social dysfunction in Aboriginal communities but was less helpful for understanding why some merged Christian teachings with traditional practice and continued to follow Christianity.

In addition to problematizing the Eurocentric frameworks of formal learning, educational scholars provided remedies; the one solution most often highlighted by Elders, Old People, and healers was holistic approaches to teaching and learning that stressed emotional, physical, and spiritual as well as mental competencies or spirit, heart, mind, and body.<sup>101</sup> Such considerations affected approaches to measuring and assessing students, and teachers praised students’ mental proficiencies as well as their spiritual, emotional, and physical health.<sup>102</sup> In schools that successfully educated Aboriginal students, teachers situated Aboriginal languages and literacy in all aspects of the

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<sup>99</sup> Patricia Monture-Angus, *Thunder in My Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1995) 94, 114-15, 117.

<sup>100</sup> Monture-Angus 94, 114-15, 117.

<sup>101</sup> Jonathan Anuik, Marie Battiste, and Ningwakwe George, “Comprehending and Nourishing the Learning Spirit: A Final Summary Report on the Literature Reviews Conducted by Animation Theme Bundle 2,” A Report Prepared for the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre in partnership with the Canadian Council on Learning, forthcoming, 3.

<sup>102</sup> Thérèse Laferrière et al., “The Telesat/SchoolNet Multimedia Satellite Trials Project: An action-research evaluation,” retrieved 13 June 2007 from [http://www.cea-ace.ca/media/en/Telesat\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.cea-ace.ca/media/en/Telesat_ENG.pdf).

curriculum and the learning environment so that students would be capable of “competing on any level, anywhere”<sup>103</sup> and graduate from Kindergarten-grade twelve schooling “strong like two people”<sup>104</sup> or able to function as emotionally, physically, spiritually, and mentally healthy individuals in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal societies. Therefore, the pedagogy “consider[ed] both the immediate needs of the learners (curricula content) and the long-term needs of the Aboriginal graduate.”<sup>105</sup> Those who spoke of decolonizing educational institutions stressed that understanding indigenous childrearing, family structures, epistemologies, and pedagogies improves the possibility that the next generation of children will enjoy more success in formal learning and enabled policymakers to avoid reproducing the educational systems that disadvantaged Aboriginal learners.<sup>106</sup>

The study of children, youth, and family separated from the larger discourses of schooling and church was an under-explored field in Native-newcomer relations. Therefore, most of the literature examined in this section came from studies of non-Aboriginal children and youth and non-Aboriginal families. Many of the studies came from outside history. One comprehensive history of the Canadian family drew huge generalizations across many regional and temporal contexts.

Selma Freiberg and Anna Freud agreed on a phase known as ‘early childhood.’<sup>107</sup> However, these two theorists of childhood informed by psychological perspectives differ from the historians of childhood. Historians such as Philippe Ariès studied the duration of childhood, and the theorists proposed stages for childhood.<sup>108</sup> The consensus reached amongst the early scholars of children and youth was the need to periodize childhood and

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<sup>103</sup> David Bell, ed., *Sharing our Success: Ten Case Studies in Aboriginal Schooling* (Kelowna: Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, 2004) 30.

<sup>104</sup> Chuck Tolley, “3. Chief Jimmy Bruneau School,” *Sharing our Success: More Case Studies in Aboriginal Schooling*, George Fulford, ed. (Kelowna: Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, 2007) 96.

<sup>105</sup> Scott Tunison, “Aboriginal Learning: A Review of Current Metrics of Success,” A Report Prepared for the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre in Partnership with the Canadian Council on Learning, forthcoming, 18.

<sup>106</sup> Jessica Ball and Alan Pence, *Supporting Indigenous Children’s Development* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006) 111.

<sup>107</sup> Selma Freiberg, *The Magic Years: Understanding and Handling the Problems of Early Childhood* (New York: Scribners, 1959) and Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence: The Writings of Anna Freud*, vol. II, rev. ed. (New York: International Universities, 1966). Freiberg would term ‘early childhood’ as ‘the magic years.’

<sup>108</sup> Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, Robert Baldick, trans. (New York: Random House, 1962) 21-22.

understand it as composed of stages and as a time of life with a termination date. The strength of the childhood historians was in their understanding of a growing awareness in history of childhood as a distinctive phase of human development. However, the psychologists and anthropologists tended to take the first eighteen years as a default setting and thus failed to examine childhood as conditioned by cultural texts and societal institutions.

Psychological theorists wrote from a corrective perspective. They saw a need to correct maladjustments highlighted in children. While the gendered contours of these researches are exposed (primarily through the interrogative lens of sexual education and sexual knowledge), the researchers remained unaware of the racial and class differences that altered the accepted precepts. Furthermore, readers of these theorists observed the declining roles of parents in the post-World War II years in favour of a ‘secular’ bureaucracy designed to inculcate modern literacy, numeracy, and citizenship.

Psychologists agreed that the formation of children’s emotional categories was a part of children’s awareness of themselves. The questions posed by scholars varied from ones considering the emergence of emotions in children<sup>109</sup> to association of emotions with failure or success.<sup>110</sup> Psychologists were concerned with how children internalized and expressed emotions according to the external situations in which they functioned.

As well, psychologists who studied emotional development in children engaged two debates: was childhood emotional development and childhood identity formation universal or contingent on cultural codes transmitted by elders? Cultural psychologist James Russell proposed that childhood emotions vary; some are global and others are culturally specific. He believed that “there are differences as well as similarities in the way in which emotions are categorized in different cultures.”<sup>111</sup> Kristen Muis found that children and youth take their epistemologies into formal learning and that as they interact

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<sup>109</sup> Patricia Smiley and Janellen Huttenlocher, “Young Children’s Acquisition of Emotion Concepts,” *Children’s Understanding of Emotion*, eds. Carolyn Saarni and Paul L. Harris (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 27-49.

<sup>110</sup> Nancy L. Stein and Tom Trobasso, “Children’s Understanding of Changing Emotional States,” in *Children’s Understanding of Emotion*, eds. Carolyn Saarni and Paul L. Harris (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 50-77.

<sup>111</sup> James A. Russell, “Culture, Scripts, and Children’s Understanding of Emotion,” *Children’s Understanding of Emotion*, eds. Carolyn Saarni and Paul L. Harris (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 295.

with teachers and students, they revised and re-formulated their ways of knowing to accommodate feedback from teachers and peers.<sup>112</sup> Muis's conclusions may help to explain the challenges that Aboriginal students faced in Eurocentric education, designed to replace Aboriginal children's ways of knowing the world with teachings rooted in the beliefs and values of newcomers.

How did history (i.e. transitions from pre-industrial to industrial societies) affect the transmission of emotion scripts or "knowledge structure[s] for an event in which the event is thought of as a sequence of subevents?"<sup>113</sup> Psychologists had the opportunity to work with children whose facial expressions were visible while historians do not have such resources available. Steven L. Gordon provided a few hints. He rightly acknowledged that personal narratives and diaries combined with anthropological ethnographies were useful for recovering children's emotional histories.<sup>114</sup> "We have cross-cultural and historical data on the circumstances under which children were accepted by adults as emotional equals and about children's exposure to events that would evoke various emotions."<sup>115</sup> Unlike Russell, who was inclined to assign the differences in formation of emotional self to cultural codes encoded in emotional scripts for transmission by elders, Gordon proposed that social structural variables influenced what children learn about emotions and how they learn about them. He believed that important events in human history led to the changes in children's emotional behaviour. For example, "as the [American] economy shifted from farming to entrepreneurial work...parents increasingly socialized children to inhibit angry displays to prepare them to compete later for business partners."<sup>116</sup> However, historical shifts were not universal and varied according to region and culture, as North American Aboriginal history confirmed. Therefore, the work of Russell must co-exist with the studies of Gordon and Muis and lead one to understand the cultural dimensions of emotional formation over

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<sup>112</sup> Muis's work was instructive for studies concerning Aboriginal students in formal learning but her work is not concerned with Aboriginal learning. Kristen R. Muis, "The Role of Epistemic Beliefs in Self-Regulated Learning," *Educational Psychologist* 42.3 (2007): 184-185.

<sup>113</sup> Russell 303.

<sup>114</sup> Steven L. Gordon, "The Socialization of Children's Emotions: Emotional Culture, Competence, and Exposure," *Children's Understanding of Emotion*, eds. Carolyn Saarni and Paul L. Harris (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 319.

<sup>115</sup> Gordon 319.

<sup>116</sup> Stearns & Stearns in Gordon 319.

history. “Emotions are responses to social definitions, particularly about the personal implications of a situation or relationship”<sup>117</sup> as much as they are cognitive experiences that are transmitted as the children experience situations and institutions.

Scholars of children and youth highlighted agency in children’s learning journeys. Susan Ridgely Bales explicitly disputed western culture which she found treated “children as incapable of having their own thoughts or conclusions.”<sup>118</sup> In her study of United States Roman Catholic children’s First Communion, she learned that “artifacts, food, music, dance, dress, [and] gestures...convey crucial messages about their Catholic identity.”<sup>119</sup> Although children and youth fulfilled the expectations of their parents through the taking of First Communion, their engagement and responses to the teachings of the clergy varied. Unfortunately, Ridgely Bales dedicated no space in her study to children’s reactions and responses to the expectations of family members.

Interactions between family members and the roles of family members in learning remain unexplored. Sociologist John Conway has written both the social and political-legal history of the Canadian family and called for research that considers incidents and mindsets. Conway wrote against the moralizing of traditional family activists who believed that the nuclear-style family unit was crumbling by proving that this style of family living, what he termed the ‘companionate family,’ was a recent phenomenon. However, the weakness of Conway’s writing was in the generalizations.<sup>120</sup> The contributors to the anthology *Children’s Work in Everyday Life* asked what children and parents ‘get out’ of child and youth labour. This anthology considered the pedagogical implications of work for children and youth and opened up discussion on questions of intra-familial interactions. However, studies of family roles in the education and training

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<sup>117</sup> Gordon 320.

<sup>118</sup> Susan Ridgely Bales, *When I was a Child: Children’s Interpretations of First Communion* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2005) 9. Terese Fayden challenged the objectivity and neutrality of the United States’ No Child Left Behind Act and found that the children in her Kindergarten class learned through collaboration and copying. Such learning styles contradict the perceived objectivity of standardized tests embodied in the 2001 policy of the United States Federal government. See L. Bartolome and H.M. Levin, forewords, *How Children Learn: Getting Beyond the Deficit Myth*, by Terese Fayden, Series in Critical Narrative, D. Macedo, Series ed. (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2005), especially chapter three. J.R. Miller alluded to cultural differences in childrearing in *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada* (Toronto: UTP, 2000) in his discussion of the 1763 Royal Proclamation (86-90).

<sup>119</sup> Ridgely Bales 27.

<sup>120</sup> John F. Conway, *The Canadian Family in Crisis*, fifth ed. (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd., 2003).

of Aboriginal children and youth remain under-investigated, particularly for twentieth-century Métis families.

Métis families did not disappear from the history of Saskatchewan in the years following the Northwest Resistance, especially in the period immediately following the Resistance. Many rebuilt their communities that had been destroyed in the Resistance,<sup>121</sup> resettled, or moved further north or south. Many hoped that their grievances with the federal and provincial governments would be resolved, the impetus behind attempts at political organizing in the 1930s. Families intended to get their children educated at mission and public schools, and despite the terrible legacy of colonial education many of Canada's Aboriginals still believe that formal education represents the best hope for rebuilding their post-colonial communities.<sup>122</sup>

I will examine the Métis children and youth raised and educated in the period after 1885 and until approximately 1980. I will examine how Christian and secular education affected Métis identity formation in a period that scholars like Waiser, Friesen, and Diane Payment believe was an era of disillusionment for the Métis Nation. The twentieth century was a period when the missionary arm expanded into Saskatchewan, and I argue that the most-visible player in Métis education was the Roman Catholic Church. However, all churches' influence in schooling declined after 1950 as Tommy Douglas's provincial government gradually relieved clergy and nuns of their responsibility for delivering formal education to the Métis.<sup>123</sup>

This study offers the perspective of the children and youth involved with missionary and public education. However, it breaks with the western belief system that sees children and youth as empty vessels that need to be filled with lessons in modern literacy, numeracy, and citizenship. Métis children and youth were not passive recipients of Christian dogma. These young converts wrote the Roman Catholic Church into their Métis history grand narrative but still maintained a distinctly Métis identity tied to place and kinship. Overall, my dissertation is a Métis family history that covers the years

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<sup>121</sup> Diane Payment argued that Métis persistence after the Resistance later turned into disillusionment, particularly after 1910. Payment 11, 208, 313.

<sup>122</sup> See Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Volume III: Gathering Strength: 5. Education*. Ottawa: Author. Retrieved 30 May 2008 from [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/ci5\\_e.pdf](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/ci5_e.pdf).

<sup>123</sup> See David Quiring, "The Ultimate Solution: CCF Programs of Assimilation and the Indians and Metis of Northern Saskatchewan," *Prairie Forum* 28.2 (2003): 145-160.

following the death of Louis Riel and precedes the 1982 federal recognition of the Métis as one of the three Aboriginal peoples of Canada; in the years immediately following the 1885 resistance, the Christian churches sought to provide schools and education for the Métis of the West.

## CHAPTER TWO: The Mission Enterprise and the Developing Educational State, 1866-1960

### Introduction

George H. Gunn, biographer of Peter Garrioch, who travelled through Rupert's Land and the northern United States in the early-nineteenth century, remarked that "facilities for the public education of the youth of the various communities that...make up the Red River Settlement...with the exception of the mission school at St. John's...were chiefly noteworthy by reason of their absence."<sup>1</sup> The absence of state-supported schooling in Rupert's Land continued, for the most part, unabated throughout the nineteenth century. The bulk of the education that the Métis received was in their homes, was related to their occupational pursuits, and was rooted in the teachings of their Elders.<sup>2</sup> Starting in 1866, the Christian churches stepped in to fill a perceived void in the formal learning available to First Nations, Métis, and settlers, actions that the Northwest Territories Government, later the Government of Saskatchewan, recognized when it established the facilities and curriculum for schooling.

This chapter sketches the history of denominational and state-supported schools for the Métis of Saskatchewan. In 1884, state education authorities recognized the educational leadership in the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches and sought their contributions to the development of schools for Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals in the territories. This chapter starts with the legal framework devised by the Northwest Territories Board of Education through collaboration with the local Christian churches. Secondly, I enumerate the goals of the missionaries and the Christian churches they represented in terms of schools and schooling. Thirdly, I discuss the methods used by the teachers from the various Christian denominations. Specifically, this section examines

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<sup>1</sup> PAM, George H. Gunn, "Peter Garrioch, His Life and Times," MG9A73-3, Box 6.

<sup>2</sup> Diane Payment, *The Free People – Otipimisiwak: Batoche, Saskatchewan, 1870-1930*, Studies in Archaeology, Architecture, and History, National Parks and Sites, Parks Service, Environment Canada (Ottawa: Environment Canada, 1990) 11, 61-62, 73, 108, 242. Geography also affected the education available to the Métis. Payment spatially defined the educational levels of the Métis in the years after 1885. She found that the Métis who resided at Duck Lake, St. Louis, and later St. Ann's Convent, in what would become Saskatchewan, and at St. Albert and Lac Ste. Anne, in what became Alberta, received instruction from what she called "the religious teaching communities" there. Having this education paid off for the Métis who, according to Payment, found jobs as farm instructors, teachers, and Indian Agents on local reserves. Those Métis born at Red River who later migrated west after the fall of Red River took their schooling at St. Boniface, St. Norbert, or St. Francis Xavier and had more opportunities for formal learning than their descendants who were born in Saskatchewan in the 1870s and 1880s.

the response to proponents of secular schools. Fourthly, I examine the views held by denominational and government authorities toward the Métis. In particular, this section discusses denominational and bureaucratic views of the Métis as seen through denominational strife and attempts by government to compel Métis youngsters to attend school. Finally, the reactions of Métis learners and their families to the Christian and public school educational agendas are discussed; particular references are made to matters that concerned sectarian strife, parents, and the removal of crucifixes from the classrooms of the public schools in the 1950s.

This chapter is not meant to be a comprehensive and systematic inventory of mission stations and schoolhouses in the province. Instead, it provides an overview of state-supported schools, their missionary antecedents, and the relationship that evolved between the Department of Education and the Christian churches. The coverage terminates at 1960 as the provincial governments of Tommy Douglas and Woodrow Lloyd had, for the most part, realized public education for almost all areas of the province, especially for the Métis and continental European immigrants.<sup>3</sup> However, in some Métis communities, state-supported education was a responsibility devolved by the provincial government to orders of nuns of the Roman Catholic Church, and this arrangement continued past 1960.

Inevitably, linguistic and denominational controversies arose from the involvement of the denominations in the delivery of schooling and the conception of pedagogy, and curriculum for learners. Educational policy in the School Ordinances enabled taxpayer residents in the territories to organize a school district governed by a school board. Bill Waiser noted that “in school districts, the religious minority had the right to establish and support their own separate school”<sup>4</sup> and therefore, a school board composed of members of the religious minority. Therefore, the Christian churches were stakeholders in the delivery of education and religious background was a criterion for teacher candidates who applied for jobs in local school districts. Since the school board was taxpayer-funded, the residents had the right to hold the teacher accountable to their needs and to be of the same religious background as they were.

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<sup>3</sup> Bill Waiser, personal communication, 19 January 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 2005) note 59, p. 522.

By the 1950s, the Department of Education assumed increased responsibility for schools, teachers and teacher training, curriculum, and pedagogy. But the Roman Catholic Church and the Government of Saskatchewan maintained a professional relationship respecting concerns over the availability of schools and childcare centres for the Métis.

The observations that inform this chapter come from the perspective of the clergy and the secular bureaucrats. Missionaries who arrived in western Canada brought a relatively unified message. The way to a civilized life involved a three-part process: conversion to Christianity, academic and practical instruction in English or French delivered by clergy and nuns, and the abandonment of occupations such as fur traders, trappers, and hunters.<sup>5</sup> Consensus on the philosophy for conversion quickly gave way to competition between the mission stations as Protestants and Catholics diverged on how best to convert First Nations and Métis and feared that their parishioners would cross denominational lines.

There is a significant limitation in this chapter. Protestants and Roman Catholics took their civilization messages to both First Nations and the Métis. But it was difficult to learn from the documentary records whether the missionaries desired similar outcomes for the diversity of First Nations and Métis families they encountered. Based on a review of the literature and the missionary records, a few distinctions between First Nations and Métis may be suggested. Raymond Huel argued that Roman Catholic missionaries looked to the Métis as a bridge for them to get to First Nations' souls. Catholics believed that their Métis parishioners' father's blood would aid them in accepting the message of civilization, and their mothers' pasts provided them with the kinship ties necessary to facilitate the conversion of First Nations peoples.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, participants in my study recalled being called '*les sauvages*' by nuns who acted as teachers in the schools they attended.<sup>7</sup> Nuns and teachers sometimes used the term to distinguish Métis students from First Nations students. Presbyterian records identified 'mixed-ancestry' individuals who

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<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Anuik, "Forming Civilization at Red River: 19<sup>th</sup>-century Missionary Education of Métis and First Nations Children," *Prairie Forum* 31.1 (2006): 1.

<sup>6</sup> Raymond Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and Métis* (Edmonton: U of Alberta Press, 1996) 104.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Bishop, personal interview, 19 October 2005.

attended schools at their stations as ‘half-breed;’ First Nations individuals appeared in mission records as ‘Indians’ or ‘Red Men.’

Missionaries shared Garrioch’s concern with the absence of schoolhouses for children. Missionaries familiar with schooling provided at the Red River Settlement knew that many schools instructed students in the rudiments of literacy, arithmetic, and Christian worship and worked to improve the character and behaviour of First Nations and Métis children, youth, and families. At The Forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, in contemporary Winnipeg, Manitoba, James McMillan observed on June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1834 that “our new school is doing wonders in the improvement of our Half Breeds. Mr. McCallum is very attentatives [sic] to his charges – and the girls are coming on rapidly under Mrs. Lowman. Some of them can play several tunes on the Piano, and...are wonderfully...for the better. – I think well of the school.”<sup>8</sup> Although the Red River mission education system lacked compulsion for students, and schools were plagued by issues concerning attendance, irrelevant curriculum, and infrastructure, the desire for a system of mission-based schooling was well-established by the 1860s and by then a cohort of missionaries was ready to bring schooling for the Métis in Rupert’s Land.<sup>9</sup>

#### The Legal Framework for Schools in the Northwest Territories

The Northwest Territorial Board of Education formed in 1884. Administrators in this newly formed department recognized the Protestant and Roman Catholic presence in the mission field. The department brought Protestant and Roman Catholic interests together as it attempted to set up a publicly funded educational system that would train children and youth in English, mathematics, and science so that they would be literate citizens and part of the modern body politic.<sup>10</sup> The newly constituted board had Protestants and Roman Catholic educational authorities on it. The *Regina Leader* reported on January 13<sup>th</sup>, 1891 that “three Roman Catholics and five Protestants constitute the Board, and very harmoniously do the members work together, striving in

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<sup>8</sup> PAM, Gunn, George H. Fonds (1865-1945): Notebooks re Peter Garrioch’s journal, Red River Settlement, the West, Indian Legends, Box 1, MG9 78-1.

<sup>9</sup> Anuik 12.

<sup>10</sup> Waiser 9.

all things, to act intelligently and justly in the interests of the people, and the cause of true education.”<sup>11</sup>

Observers credited the Territorial board for the “progress made in the organizing of school districts and the erection of buildings...[with] the [satisfactory] advancement of pupils in their studies...[and the] arrangements...for the establishment of a High school branch or department in connection with some of the Public schools,”<sup>12</sup> but at the same time, warned that the challenges were formidable. An unidentified critic stated in 1890 that “to be a cowboy seems to be the goal of ambition of most of the boys.”<sup>13</sup> The aforementioned media reports gave the impression that the stakeholders reached a consensus on the educational needs of territorial residents but needed the capacity to carry out their plans to teach all school-age children and youth. Protestant commentators devised remedies for career pursuits dubbed unacceptable by journalists. The Protestant press said in 1891 that children

belong to the state, and it is the duty of the state to supply the best means possible for training the young...Higher education does not mean a special education for any section of the country, or any class. The education which includes languages, drawing, and music applies to the training of the individual in broad principles and is not a class education....to teach the young the principles [of] hygiene, chemistry, and phisiology [sic] is to give a harmonious education which will fit the individual to perform his duties as a member of the state.<sup>14</sup>

No documented objection existed to the overarching tenet of the schools which was patriotism to the state.<sup>15</sup>

It appeared that the Protestants influenced pedagogy and curriculum when changes to the educational bureaucracy occurred shortly after the Board of Education formed. In 1892, the territorial government discontinued the practice of religious control over state-supported schools in favour of a Council of Public Instruction and in 1901 a Department of Education. These moves on the part of the secular educational leaders

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<sup>11</sup> UCCA/VUA, Maclean, John, Fonds, Scrapbook Educational Column, *Regina Leader* 1890-91, “North-West Education, No. 2,” *Regina Leader*, 3270/42/471.

<sup>12</sup> “North-West Education, No. 2,” *Regina Leader*.

<sup>13</sup> UCCA/VUA, Maclean, John, Fonds, Scrapbook Educational Column, *Regina Leader* 1890-91, 3270/42/471.

<sup>14</sup> UCCA/VUA, “Educational Column,” *Regina Leader* (May 12, 1891), Maclean, John, Fonds, Scrapbook Educational Column, *Regina Leader* 1890-91, 3270/42/471

<sup>15</sup> UCCA/VUA, Maclean, John, Fonds, Scrapbook Educational Column, “Educational Column,” *Regina Leader* (January 13, 1891).

were part of “a popular movement in the west toward secular education spearheaded by the largely Protestant population.”<sup>16</sup> However, the controversial provisions of the 1905 autonomy bills for the soon-to-be provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta protected the rights of religious minorities to separate schools for their children.<sup>17</sup>

In the twentieth century, there were attempts made by the Department of Education and the Roman Catholic Church’s personnel to provide formal schooling and childcare for the Métis. Roman Catholics’ early acceptance of Métis pursuits resulted in relationships founded on mutual respect and trust, and “their habit of bringing education to the Métis hunters, gatherers and traders”<sup>18</sup> helped to draw the Métis into their schools. Even though clergy encouraged the settlement of Métis, their travels with the Métis on their buffalo hunts contributed to relationships founded on mutual respect and trust.<sup>19</sup> Historian Keith Widder believed, in the context of the nineteenth-century Great Lakes, that the “Métis affirmed their identity when they renewed their devotion to the Roman Catholic Church...[and that] through their cultural biases and ridicule of the half breeds, the Protestants probably increased the Métis’ awareness of their group identity.”<sup>20</sup> The Government of Saskatchewan witnessed these intimate relationships fostered by religious ties and believed that the Roman Catholic clergy and nuns could provide assistance with the education of the Métis.

School boards formed by the end of the nineteenth century but relied on the efforts of the Protestant and Roman Catholic clergy selected by their respective church superiors to assist with the pedagogy, curriculum planning, and teaching. However, in many districts, educational opportunities for Métis children and youth were limited. In order to establish a school, a group of local taxpayers had to form a school board and since the Métis were not taxpayers, they were not able to establish school boards.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Waiser 10.

<sup>17</sup> Waiser 10.

<sup>18</sup> Anuik 14.

<sup>19</sup> Anuik 9.

<sup>20</sup> Widder, in Larry Chartrand, “Métis Residential School Participation: A Literature Review,” in *Métis History and Experience in Residential Schools in Canada*, The Aboriginal Healing Foundation Research Series (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2006) 42.

<sup>21</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, “Metis Education,” *The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan: A Living Legacy*, retrieved 28 April 2008 from [http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/metis\\_education.html](http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/metis_education.html).

Consequently, missionaries, some of whom were trained as teachers, continued to teach in many districts where Métis families lived.

### Denominational Aspirations for Christian Education in the Northwest Territories

The first documented attempt at formal education for Métis children and youth was in 1866; it pre-dated the development of the Department of Education in the Northwest Territories. There was a ‘half-breed’ school at Prince Albert that operated from 1866 until 1885 and was administered and financed through the labours of Presbyterian missionaries. One of the teachers was the Presbyterian teacher and lay missionary Lucy Baker, who arrived at this mission station from Upper Canada in 1878 to teach in the primary school, staying until 1891, serving as a schoolmistress and after the Northwest Resistance, as a high school teacher in this north central Saskatchewan town.<sup>22</sup> Her biographer reported that Baker’s first classroom held a substantial number of Métis and First Nations students, along with a few ‘white’ students.<sup>23</sup> Baker grounded the majority of the teachings in Bible study and scripture reading and used any other reading materials that were available.<sup>24</sup>

A publicly funded educational system whose schools were staffed by teachers of Protestant faiths promised a reprieve from the heavy financial burden incurred through church delivery of formal schooling to children and youth in the Northwest Territories. In addition to the need for schoolrooms and textbooks, Presbyterians had to provide residences for their students to board, especially for those students who planned to stay on for high school.<sup>25</sup> This situation was noted at the Prince Albert mission station. Boarding facilities promised a remedy to sectarian strife. Presbyterians believed that families would enroll their children in the ‘half-breed’ school instead of Roman Catholic Convents.

The Assembly in its deliverance of 1884 established a High School here of which Miss Baker’s school was to be a department, but in some way or other Miss Baker and her school have dropped out altogether[,] and she has gone for much needed

<sup>22</sup> PCAC/WMS Fonds, W.M.S. (W.D.) Publications: Elizabeth A. Byers, “Lucy Margaret Baker: A Biographical Sketch..., 1920,” 1988-2004-60-2, 11-12.

<sup>23</sup> PCAC, James Nesbet to Mr. Robert Wilson, Presbyterian Mission, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Sept. 17, 1867, James Nesbet, Mark Y. Stark, and Neil Smith Fonds, James Nesbet 1973-5037-1-1.

<sup>24</sup> Priscilla Lee Reid, “Lucy Baker: The First Woman Missionary to Canada’s North West,” *Called to Witness: Profiles of Canadian Presbyterians: A Supplement to Enduring Witness*, Vol. I, Ed. W. Stanford Reid (Presbyterian Publications, 1975) 73.

<sup>25</sup> Anuik 4.

rest...to Portland[,] Oregon where she is or was recently residing with the Rev. Donald Ross. We are very anxious to get here [sic] back again[:] (1) to preside over a boarding establishment for girls from a distance and (2) to teach certain branches in the school. Both of these objects are of great importance to our success. We cannot get girls from a distance, Indians, half-breed or white[,] unless we have some place to board them[,] and she is admirably suited to take care of them. We want her also to teach some branches in the school which a lady can manage much better than M. Campbell or I. Without a lady teacher in the school we are unable to compete with the Convent here which take[s] some of our best Protestant girls.<sup>26</sup>

Government investment from taxpayer dollars promised more resources that would help to finance formal schooling for Métis children and youth in the Northwest Territories and later Saskatchewan.

Anglicans started schools at the same time as their Presbyterian educational colleagues. In the nineteenth century, Anglican missionaries extended their missions into the Northwest Territories. Histories published by clergy noted that “the school system was adopted as a missionary project...[and] all schools were operated on the same plan of giving the children a working knowledge of western civilization and above all a personal knowledge of Christ.”<sup>27</sup>

Emmanuel College, established in 1879 at Prince Albert through the efforts of the Anglican Bishop John McLean who had arrived in the town in 1875, was to be the institution that would train the future generations of Aboriginal Anglican missionaries. Initially it delivered academic training to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, but the late 1880s brought more settlers into the Northwest Territories and an increase in the number of publicly funded schools governed by local taxpayers and available for non-Aboriginal students. These changes resulted in the exodus of the white students from Emmanuel College as well as a decline in attendance at the mission station schools.<sup>28</sup> However, the institution did continue to deliver schooling to Aboriginal children and youth, and received support for the education of Status First Nations through the federal

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<sup>26</sup> UCCA/VUA, Dr. Jardin to Wm McMurchy, Prince Albert Saskn, 4th April 1887, Records Pertaining to Missionaries to the Aboriginal People in Western Canada Fonds, Presbyterian Church in Canada. Home Mission Committee. Correspondence, Manitoba. 79.199C 122-series 14/1/1.

<sup>27</sup> ADS, Indian Missions & Indian Work – Reports [W.E.J. Paul] – 1928-1955 Vol. 3/3 I2, The Trail of the Cross. [Ca 1950], 5.

<sup>28</sup> ADS, The Trail of the Cross, 6.

Indian Department, including in-service training for teachers who intended to enter the mission field and teach Aboriginal students.<sup>29</sup>

The Anglicans knew Métis families lived in the villages and towns where they operated their missions. Annual reports submitted by the missionaries from stations at Cumberland House, Montreal Lake, and La Ronge referred to Métis and non-status First Nations families who lived on the fringes of the reserves in these communities or in the main settlement in the cases of Cumberland House and La Ronge.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, many of these same reports contained no information concerning attempts on the part of Anglican personnel to provide religious training or academic instruction to these Métis and non-status First Nations families. Their efforts in formal learning, concentrated in northeastern Saskatchewan, focused on Status First Nations children and youth.<sup>31</sup>

Financial reasons, as well as shifting governmental jurisdictional responsibilities, explained why such a gap in Anglican mission and academic education existed. In accordance with its philosophy of indigenization of its ministries advocated by McLean and realized through Emmanuel College in Prince Albert, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in London, England announced in 1900 that it was steadily withdrawing its funding to foreign missions. The withdrawal took the form of a one-twentieth per year funding cut to its foreign missions. For the missions in existence in what would become the province of Saskatchewan, this announcement meant that funding from London would become nil by 1916. These budget cuts also affected the funding of Emmanuel College, the training institute for Aboriginal children and youth and Anglican teachers.<sup>32</sup> The withdrawal meant a decline in the resources available to support the training of Aboriginal children and youth for missionary work in their communities.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> ADS, Indian Missions – Province of Rupert’s Land – Reports 1890-1902 I2, Committee on Indian Missions (1902), *The Indian Missions of the Ecclesiastical Province of Rupert’s Land, Canada: Fourth Triennial Report 1899, 1900, 1901 to the Provincial Synod, 1902*, 7-8.

<sup>30</sup> ADS, Northern Churches – Bishop’s Correspondence 1961-1963 I3, Church of the Good Shepherd, Cumberland House.

<sup>31</sup> ADS, Series III – Diocese of Saskatchewan Synods, Box S-1, I-2, Indian Day Schools – Appointment [Bishop’s Correspondence] 1946-1948, Statement of Indian Work and Indian Missions/Indian Work – Assistance - Bishops Correspondence – 1965-1974.

<sup>32</sup> ADS, Series III – Diocese of Saskatchewan Synods, Box S-1, I-2, Indian Day Schools – Appointments [Bishop’s Correspondence], Indian Missions/Indian Work – Reports 1898-1909, *Indian Missions. Diocese of Saskatchewan. Missions, Schools, Etc. 1900*. Toronto: The Oxford Press, 13, 15.

<sup>33</sup> ADS, Indian Missions & Indian Work – Reports [W.E.J. Paul] – 1928-1955 Vol. 3/3 I2, Stories about the Indian Children in the Diocese of Saskatchewan. [n.d.], 2.

This decision was made at a time when the Government of Canada had, for the most part, completed the treaty negotiations with Status First Nations, and this same government was attempting to fulfill its obligations for education to Status First Nations living on reserve. The Anglican Church sought to recoup its budgetary shortfall through involvement in the delivery of education to Status First Nations children. For the Anglicans, Status First Nations children could be a source of revenue should it become involved in the delivery of formal schooling. Although the Anglican Church intended to continue its religious service work amongst the Métis as well as First Nations not registered with the Department of Indian Affairs as ‘Status Indians,’ the Government of Saskatchewan would now fulfill the role as provider of formal schooling and the Anglican Church would direct its efforts toward the operation of residential schools for Status First Nations children.<sup>34</sup>

#### Methods Used by the Denominational Teachers

Guidance on denominational schooling came from eastern Canadian Christian education scholars. These intellectuals believed that religion affected all aspects of the education given to children who lived in the Northwest Territories. Rev. William H. Hincks wrote that “national strength can only come from a religious foundation...Civilization depends on religion...Even the wild Indian in the woods cannot live without some measure of religion.”<sup>35</sup> Such writing proposed that “the school-house and the church are the only sure fortifications of...a [Christian] nation...Education and religion must keep up with them [population growth], or they will break down the strongholds of our public safety, and submerge the national morals and order.”<sup>36</sup> A Presbyterian civilized child was “(1) Obedient to parents (2) Seemed to love her Bible (3) the Presbyterians trust...loved the Saviour (4)...[and] loved the Sabbath School.”<sup>37</sup> Pedagogy influenced by Christian epistemologies ensured that First Nations, Métis, and

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<sup>34</sup> ADS, Bible churchmen’s Missionary Society – Correspondence – [W.E.J. Paul] – 1945-1948, I3 (p), Report for First Quarter of 1948, 2.

<sup>35</sup> UCCA/VUA, Rev. Wm. H. Hincks, LL.B., “Present Day Lessons for Practical People,” *The Adult Class* II.1 (1910): 31.

<sup>36</sup> UCCA/VUA, Rev. A. Stevens, LL.D., “The Priesthood of the People,” *The Christian Journal* XIII.33 (Friday, February 21, 1875).

<sup>37</sup> “Infidelity and Popery,” *The Home and foreign record of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces*, Oct., 1868: 276-77, fiche 1, CIHM no. 04281-016191 ICMH no. in Anuik, 28.

newcomers could be drawn in by “Christ and the power of His gospel above, [it] can bring them together, and through him, they are being brought together.”<sup>38</sup>

Although Protestants and Roman Catholics collaborated to advise the territorial and later provincial government on the delivery of formal schooling, one critical lesson they wanted children and youth to learn was that marriages between Protestants and Roman Catholics were not to happen. ‘Civilized’ children and youth did not condone or practice marriages between Roman Catholics and Protestants. “Mixed religions...[did] not amalgamate,” and this rule “applied to most mixed marriages between Romanists and Protestants;”<sup>39</sup> Métis children and youth understood these consequences of the prohibition on romances and marriages between Protestants and Roman Catholics.

*Methods: Secularization*

In the early-twentieth century, Protestant and Roman Catholic educational specialists and administrators in Saskatchewan debated the secularization of schools. The discussions that concerned secularization began with the 1918 appearance of a book by an educational leader in Saskatchewan, Dr. J.T.M. Anderson. The Protestant press provided the outlet for debates amongst specialists in Christian education on the increased role of the state and its taxpayers in the provision of formal schooling to all learners. Relations between the Roman Catholic clergy and the nuns changed as the Government of Saskatchewan invested more financial and intellectual resources into Roman Catholic schools, schooling, and social service agencies.

It appeared as though school superintendent Anderson’s vision of pedagogy and curriculum laden with discourses of patriotism and influenced by Christianity dovetailed with the desires of Protestant academics and observers. Anderson believed that if images that depicted British history were on the walls of the classrooms, along with portraits of state figures such as members of the royal family and current and past Premiers, then they would, over time, provoke admiration and respect for the Canadian state and the Government of Saskatchewan.<sup>40</sup> Anderson practiced and wrote in an era of continental

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<sup>38</sup> UCCA/VUA, Donald Ross to Profs McLaren, Prince Albert, Sept. 6<sup>th</sup> 1880, Records Pertaining to Missionaries to the Aboriginal People in Western Canada Fonds, Presbyterian Church in Canada, Home Mission Committee, Correspondence, Manitoba, 79.199C 122-series 14/1/1,

<sup>39</sup> Hincks 23.

<sup>40</sup> J.T.M. Anderson, *The Education of the New Canadian: A Treatise on Canada’s Greatest Educational Problem* (Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1918) 93, 147.

European immigration. He expected all immigrant children to embrace the English language and saw public schools as not only the means to attaining proficiency in the English language but as the institutions that would inspire loyalty to Canada, Protestantism, and the Commonwealth. However, factions within Protestantism emerged that opposed secular influences in schooling.

The Protestant press contained critiques of the movement toward public education or schooling not directly controlled by church authorities and pedagogy and curriculum devised through collaboration with Roman Catholic teachers and scholars. Ontario Methodist clergyman Reverend Alexander Sutherland believed that

an education which excludes the religious element tends toward infidelity and atheism... We must remember that education is carried on by a twofold process—the knowledge communicated and the impressions produced. The one largely determines what the student shall know; the other determines what he shall become. Now what are the impressions that will inevitably be left upon the mind of a youth by an education that is purely secular? As a rule, the impressions will be that religion is a very secondary matter; that it is out of place in the spheres of philosophy and science, and is antagonistic to the advanced thought of [the] age.<sup>41</sup>

In the last years of the nineteenth century and in the first years of the twentieth century, Protestant commentators debated their roles and responsibilities in teaching and learning. Newspapers served as a medium for discussion, as did public talks. Some commentators echoed Sutherland's critiques of secular education. Dr. Oliver of St. Andrew's College, the Saskatoon institution for the training of United Church ministers,<sup>42</sup> argued that it was unacceptable for "1300 school sections in Saskatchewan [to] have no religious ordinances [sic]."<sup>43</sup> For Oliver, secular teachers in public schools taught students to be indifferent to religious teaching.<sup>44</sup> It appeared that some Protestants were reluctant to accept public influence in schooling. However, as the twentieth century progressed, many Protestant intellectuals refined their arguments concerning secularism in education.

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<sup>41</sup> Rev. A. Sutherland, "The Religious Element in Education," *Methodist Magazine and Review* XLIV.1 (1896): 31.

<sup>42</sup> The United Church formed in 1925 as a result of a merger of the Congregationist, Methodist, and most of the Presbyterian churches.

<sup>43</sup> UCCA/VUA, Personal Papers, McDougall, John Fonds, Unveiling of portrait of J. McDougall, Carlton St. U.C., Tor., 22 Sept. 1927. Programme, addresses, flyer, 1927, 86.291C 3282/9.

<sup>44</sup> UCCA/VUA, Personal Papers, McDougall, John Fonds, Unveiling of portrait of J. McDougall, Carlton St. U.C., Tor., 22 Sept. 1927. Programme, addresses, flyer, 1927, 86.291C 3282/9.

A moderate faction believed that religion was, indeed, an integral component of one's life but not necessarily the responsibility of the school system. Christian educational scholar Donald Solandt synthesized the responses to the question of how to measure an educated man. Drawing from a number of works, he said "that education means the 'stimulation and enrichment of the soul,' a training of the mind 'to see the greatness and beauty of the world.' An educated man is a world citizen. To be such he should know the general history of the world, know the history of human ideas, know one science, and know one language, preferably his own.'...[However,] 'an educated man lives a great religious life.'"<sup>45</sup> United Church reporter Nelson Chappell approved of public schooling in the province that he felt provided "physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual activities."<sup>46</sup> According to Chappell, schools enabled children, through "actual experience...to enjoy and appreciate health and healthful living...[or] general well-being."<sup>47</sup> Teachers spoke of "the blessings and privileges of home life, school life, community life, and church life."<sup>48</sup> Most Protestant clergy and parishioners had definite expectations of public schooling. They believed that Christianity had to permeate the entirety of the schooling delivered. Many Protestant authorities monitored and reported on policy discussions happening amongst government officials.

The United Church applauded the Department of Education's delivery of new courses and curriculum relevant to the mission field. In 1939, the *United Church Observer* commended the "greater emphasis...[given] to Agriculture and Agricultural Economics in public and high school grades respectively, since most pupils will enter this life when they leave school."<sup>49</sup> Protestant clergy, since the days of the Red River Settlement, likened the pursuit of farming to a civilized society.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, it was no surprise that Protestants would commend government education initiatives that aligned with their past pedagogies. These United Church clergy and the aforementioned

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<sup>45</sup> UCCA/VUA, Board of Home Mission Fonds, General Files, "A Synopsis of the Marks of an Educated Man (Dr. A.E. Wiggam's book)" by Donald M. Solandt, M.A., Associate Book Steward, United Church of Canada (1931), 83.050C, 509/15/105.

<sup>46</sup> Nelson Chappell, "A New Curriculum: Saskatchewan Proposes Changes in Rural Education," *The United Church Observer* 1.5 (1939): 15.

<sup>47</sup> Chappell 15.

<sup>48</sup> Chappell 15.

<sup>49</sup> Chappell 15.

<sup>50</sup> Anuik 1.

moderate faction believed that the Government of Saskatchewan, through its educational policies, supported the desire of the churches for an agrarian society in Saskatchewan.

*Methods: Secularization and the Roman Catholic Separate Schools*

Faced with a shortage of taxpayers to fund school boards, the Government of Saskatchewan tapped into an existing resource, teaching and social service nuns who already resided in many Métis communities. These nuns served as low-cost teaching labour in school districts with scarcer resources. In the middle of the twentieth century, Roman Catholic nuns taught children from Roman Catholic families in at least five public schools and to a predominantly Métis student body in Saskatchewan: Lebret Public in the predominantly Roman Catholic village of Lebret, St. Pascal School in Green Lake, Ducharme School in La Loche, at Cumberland House, and at Marieval. Their role as teachers – as well as social service workers and nurses – began long before the Government of Saskatchewan recognized officially their contributions to learning, health, and wellness in Métis communities. Fort Qu’Appelle residents Jimmy and Lucy Larocque said that Roman Catholic nuns served as teachers to both the Métis students and to status First Nations students who stayed at the Qu’Appelle Indian Industrial School residence at Lebret Public.<sup>51</sup> However, the numbers of nuns who taught in the schools declined over the twentieth century. Bernice Park Campbell started school when the majority of the teachers at Ducharme School were nuns,<sup>52</sup> but her younger brother, Julius, who started school in 1971, knew that he “was taught by a few nuns in the elementary school and that as the years went on there were less, maybe two or three, nuns in the Ducharme School.”<sup>53</sup> This order of nuns at Ducharme School, the Grey Nuns, was not the only order of nuns teaching in northern Saskatchewan schools.

In the northern village of Green Lake, established in 1782 as a Northwest Company wintering post,<sup>54</sup> the Government of Saskatchewan in 1940 recruited Roman Catholic nuns of the teaching order Sisters of Presentation to serve as teachers<sup>55</sup> to this

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<sup>51</sup> Jimmy Larocque and Lucy Larocque, personal interview, 10 May 2006.

<sup>52</sup> Bernice Park Campbell, personal interview, 15 April 2008.

<sup>53</sup> Julius Park, personal interview, 8 February 2008.

<sup>54</sup> “Northern Village, Green Lake, About Us,” retrieved 2 June 2008 from [http://www.nvgreenlake.ca/about\\_us.php#history](http://www.nvgreenlake.ca/about_us.php#history).

<sup>55</sup> PAA, “Green Lake – *Correspondance avec le provincial 1938-1966*,” Government of the Province of Saskatchewan, Department of Education, W.D. Brennan, Inspector of Schools, to Father Lacombe, St. Walburg, March 12, 1940. St. Pascal School District formed in 1920 through the efforts of a Deputy

“Métis community of Catholic background.”<sup>56</sup> The Sisters revived this school that had opened in 1890 with one teacher but had closed in 1937 due to shortages of financial resources and provided low-cost teaching labour. Arrangements with Roman Catholic teaching orders also existed in other sections of the province.

In the southeast Saskatchewan town of Marieval, the Government of Saskatchewan ensured that Métis children and youth received formal schooling through agreement with the Roman Catholic Church. From 1942-1943, J.H. McKechnie, Deputy Minister of the province’s Department of Education, reported to the Honourable Hubert Staines that “further east in the valley near Marieval we are paying [a] grant for a school in charge of a Sister. Fortunately, a building was available when the school was started and probably some seats.”<sup>57</sup> McKechnie also reported that the Government had “been assisting [the school] for some considerable time...[and that] There is a qualified Sister in charge. [With] an enrollment for last term...[of] 21.”<sup>58</sup>

In 1900, few Métis children and youth had the opportunity to attend publicly funded schools. Therefore, Roman Catholic nuns who enjoyed success with the conversion and instruction of souls helped to address the inequality in terms of access to education amongst Métis and settler children. Since the first decades of the Red River Settlement, the Roman Catholic clergy and nuns provided schooling for children and their families.<sup>59</sup> The Government of Saskatchewan considered Roman Catholic clergy to be vital to the delivery of formal schooling in the province. Catholic philosophies of education enabled “their missionaries, especially those of the Oblate order...[to] achieve...a remarkable reputation for adventurous pioneering, and selfless dedication.”<sup>60</sup> The Government of Saskatchewan supported Roman Catholic educational and social

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Minister in the Government of Saskatchewan who petitioned for a grant for the school district. See St. Pascal School, Deputy Minister to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council, Regina, January 20, 1920. Copy available at the school.

<sup>56</sup> Laurence Arnault, personal interview, 26 March 2006.

<sup>57</sup> SAB, Metis Schools, 1938-1945, Ed. Add. 2, File 48, J.H. McKechnie to Hon. Hubert Staines, Regina, May 28, 1943, Re: Mr. Brandt’s Commission of May 24 and Metis Children.

<sup>58</sup> SAB, “Metis Schools, 1938-1945,” Ed. Add. 2, File 48, J.H. McKechnie to Hon. Hubert Staines, Department Memo, July 11, 1942.

<sup>59</sup> Jonathan Anuik, “Forming Civilization at Red River: 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Missionary Education of Métis and First Nations Children,” in Gregory P. Marchildon, Ed., *The Early Northwest*, History of the Prairie West Series, Ed. Gregory P. Marchildon (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2008) 265.

<sup>60</sup> John Webster Grant, *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and Indians in Encounter since 1534* (Toronto: UTP, 1984) 49.

service initiatives to the Métis. In the 1940s, the provincial government not only negotiated partnerships with the Roman Catholic Church for teaching services, but also for the provision of care to children and their families. One of the notable attempts was the Green Lake Orphanage project, negotiated and built through partnership with the Government of Saskatchewan from 1944-1946.

The establishment of the Orphanage and a second occurrence right after the Orphanage opened demonstrated that although the provincial government relied on the Roman Catholic Church to provide teachers and workers to support the education and care of Métis children and youth, their actions were under continual surveillance by the state and its Protestant supporters. Protestant minorities complained if they felt that the Roman Catholic Church exceeded the one half-hour of religious instruction that was legally permitted after school. Professional disagreements between clergy and government personnel occurred, and Roman Catholics and Protestants quarreled over the use of crucifixes in the classrooms of Green Lake's St. Pascal School.

*Methods: The Green Lake Orphanage, 1944-1946<sup>61</sup> and the Crucifix Controversy, 1956-1957*

Post-World War II Green Lake was a Métis community of Roman Catholic religious background located on a long-established fur trade route whose residents shared multi-generational kinship ties. However, Green Lake also had high rates of child poverty and orphans who required care through social services intervention. In 1944, negotiations between the Government of Saskatchewan's Department of Municipal Affairs Branch, Northern Areas Branch and the Roman Catholic Church pastoral charge at Green Lake commenced to establish a system of childcare for local Métis and First Nations children. The collaboration was not a new arrangement for either party as the Roman Catholic teaching order, the Sisters of Presentation, had revived the ailing St. Pascal School.<sup>62</sup> However, tensions in the relationship soon surfaced. The provincial

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<sup>61</sup> The Green Lake Orphanage stayed open until the late 1950s, but the documentary record of the provincial government and Roman Catholic Church planning concerns the years 1944-1946, or the years when the Government of Saskatchewan and Roman Catholic Church leaders attempted to establish a mutually beneficial partnership for care to orphaned or 'at-risk' Métis children and youth. The children and youth who stayed at the Orphanage attended St. Pascal School across the street and received instruction from the Sisters of Presentation. Laurence Arnault, personal communication, 23 February 2008.

<sup>62</sup> Bishop and "Northern Village of Green Lake," retrieved 23 January 2006 from <http://www.nvgreenlake.ca/history.html>. PAA, "Green Lake – Correspondance avec le provincial 1938-

government believed that the clerical personnel stationed at Green Lake lacked accountability to the provincial government in its operation of the separate school and to the orphanage project.<sup>63</sup> Finally, the tensions erupted over the decision of the provincial government to hire a non-Catholic worker to care for the children. An unknown person wrote to Premier Tommy Douglas prior to the opening of the shelter in 1946 with concerns about the appointment and to highlight the consequences for the operation of the facility.

The shelter will be opened soon, and our children 100% Catholic, will be under the care of Miss Shiver, though much interested in the work, is not of their denomination. This seems to be in direct contradiction with the policy of your Government [sic]...So, we consider the Green Lake Shelter as a Protestant Home[,] and we [would] like to draw your attention to the facts above mentioned, hoping that you will remedy to what we consider an injustice to a great number of your subjects.<sup>64</sup>

The policy referred to by the author of the letter was the 1946 Province of Saskatchewan Child Welfare Act. The section that concerned foster homes and child institutions stated that “particular attention must be taken respecting the religion of the home and the religion of the child. A Protestant child may not be placed in a Roman Catholic home nor may a Roman Catholic child be placed in a Protestant home, unless consent from all concerned is obtained.”<sup>65</sup> The author of the letter correctly interpreted the orphanage at Green Lake to be a ‘child institution,’ and therefore, governed by this section of the Act. However, the Act did not contain any policy that detailed how administrative personnel were hired. The only note about personnel for orphanages was that “all welfare workers employed by a children’s aid society must be approved by the Minister of Social Services. Similarly the Local Superintendent must be a full-time employee whose appointment has been approved by the Minister.”<sup>66</sup> The observer

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1966,” Government of the Province of Saskatchewan, Department of Education, W.D. Brennan, Inspector of Schools, to Father Lacombe, St. Walburg, March 12, 1940. The Sisters also ran a health care clinic for village residents.

<sup>63</sup> PAA, “Green Lake – *Correspondance avec le provincial 1938-1966*,” 71.220, 1498, Government of the Province of Saskatchewan, Department of Municipal Affairs, Northern Areas Branch, G.J. Matte, Commissioner to Rev. Henri Routier, O.M.I., Regina, March 5, 1941.

<sup>64</sup> PAA, “Green Lake – *Correspondance avec le provincial 1938-1966*,” 71.220, 1498, Honorable Prime Minister T.C. Douglas, Green Lake, Sask., November 14, 1946.

<sup>65</sup> *Your Legislators at Work: A Summary and Review of Important Legislation Passed at the 1946 session of the Saskatchewan Legislature* (Regina: The Bureau of Publications, 1946) 20-21.

<sup>66</sup> *Your Legislators at Work* 20-21.

wanted government appointments to reflect the religious composition of Green Lake and believed that a Protestant administrator would not be able to work with the predominantly Roman Catholic residents and personnel at the orphanage who had long-established faith and cultural ties to the Roman Catholic Church.

Conflict over religious influences in teaching and social service work would surface ten years later, in 1956, at St. Pascal School. The incident involved a complaint launched by the Protestant minority at Green Lake. Represented by the Meadow Lake Ministerial Association, the Protestant families argued that “Section 254 of the School Act is being violated in St. Pascal’s School District No. 4918.”<sup>67</sup> Part one of Section 254 of *The School Act The Larger School Units Act The School Attendance Act and The School Grants Act* (1954) read that “no emblem of any religious faith, denomination, order, sect, society or association, shall be displayed in or on any public school premises during school hours, nor shall any person teach or be permitted to teach in any public school while wearing the garb of any religious faith, denomination, order, sect, society or association.”<sup>68</sup> The complaint required investigation by the Government of Saskatchewan in order to find out if the School Act rules were being broken by teachers at the school.

The reason the use of the crucifixes in the classrooms of St. Pascal School resulted in an investigation by the Department of Education concerned the goals for schooling enumerated several decades earlier by Anderson. Schooling was to inspire patriotism to Canada and the British state through instruction in the English language. Increasingly, Protestantism was seen as the faith most amenable to the goals of inculcating modern literacy, numeracy, and ideals of citizenship in Métis and immigrant pupils. Consequently, the observation of crucifixes in use in the classrooms was considered to be contrary to the aforementioned goals for schooling in Saskatchewan.

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<sup>67</sup> PAA, Green Lake – *Correspondence au sujet de l’école de 1955-1959 (photocopie)*, 71.220, 3753.89, T.H. Waugh to Rev. Father Rodrigue, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 1956. Father Rodrigue’s name is spelled in correspondence authored by him as ‘Rodrigue’ and in correspondence authored by the provincial government as ‘Rodrique.’ I use ‘Rodrigue’ unless quoting directly or referencing a provincial government letter or document. Waiser noted that in some communities “there were not enough Protestant families to support their own school and hence the children had to attend the local Catholic school,” Waiser, note 59, p. 522. This arrangement could be controversial for proponents of non-denominational public schools. See p. 251 of Waiser.

<sup>68</sup> *The School Act The Larger School Units Act The School Attendance Act and The School Grants Act* (Regina: Thos. H. McConica, Queen’s Printer, 1954).



2.1 The Green Lake Orphanage (undated). I thank Laurence Arnault for the photo.

The complaint reached the provincial Department of Education Administrative Branch Remote Northern Areas in Prince Albert on June 8<sup>th</sup>, 1956 and fell into the hands of Administrator T.H. Waugh who investigated the “complaint...[about] Roman Catholic religious pictures, charts and a miniature shrine in one of the senior rooms.”<sup>69</sup> Waugh contacted the Chair of the Green Lake School Board, Reverend Father A. Rodrigue of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (O.M.I.), who circulated a memo to the Sister Principal at the school one week later, on June 15<sup>th</sup>. Rodrigue asked the principal whether pictures from the last half an hour of class were being displayed, if a miniature shrine was on

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<sup>69</sup> Waugh to Rodrigue.

display, and whether Catholics were proselytizing to the Protestant students.<sup>70</sup> Rodrigue handled the complaint tactfully and attempted to respect the rights of Protestant families whose children attended the public school.

The reply from the Sister Principal of St. Pascal School adhered to Rodrigue's professional tone. The principal said in response to the questions that concerned the presence of religious visual displays that "as a woodworking project, some of the Pupils of Grade 4 and 5 made some miniature shrines which they wished to offer to their parents."<sup>71</sup> Therefore, the displays may have been exposed to the Protestant students at the different stages of construction. The principal investigated the complaint about Catholic proselytizing and affirmed the right of students to choice when it was time for Catholic instruction.<sup>72</sup> The Sister did not apologize for the display of the shrine, but assured Rodrigue that there were no overt attempts to convert the students away from Protestant faiths.

As quickly as the incident surfaced, it abated without any public discussion. There was no evidence that the issue was on the agenda for the school board meetings. The only potential explanation for the lack of public debate was the villagers' religious convictions. The majority of long-term residents followed the Roman Catholic faith and the minority of Protestants were usually non-Aboriginal, had no familial ties to the community, and were brought by the provincial government into the community. Many of the Protestants were transient and usually provincial government personnel who stayed for only a few years.<sup>73</sup> Therefore, the chances for the complaint to gestate into an open religious conflict were slim.

However, the two incidents, the appointment of a Protestant administrator for the provincial government-funded orphanage and the complaint about the display of religious symbols and overt proselytizing, revealed the authority of the state over the lives of residents in this Catholic community and the frustration from the Roman Catholic Church. A letter, a little over a year after the complaint was raised by the Department of

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<sup>70</sup> PAA, Green Lake – *Correspondence au sujet de l'école de 1955-1959 (photocopie)*, 71.220, 3753.89, Rev. Fr. A. Rodrigue, o.m.i., to Sister Principal, Green Lake, Saskatchewan, June 15, 1956.

<sup>71</sup> PAA, Green Lake – *Correspondence au sujet de l'école de 1955-1959 (photocopie)*, 71.220, 3753.89, Sister M. St. John Regis to Reverend Father A. Rodrigue, Green Lake, Saskatchewan, June 15, 1956.

<sup>72</sup> PAA, Sister M. St. John Regis to Rodrigue.

<sup>73</sup> I am grateful to Laurence Arnault and other former as well as current Green Lake residents for these observations.

Education and penned by Waugh, informed Rodrigue that “a letter of apology from Green Lake [was sent to him] about the complaint that was raised.”<sup>74</sup> However, the tone of a response from Rodrigue indicated his frustration with the Protestant minority in the northern village. Rodrigue was grateful for the apology but argued that “instead of having to make an apology, it would be more sensible to think twice before going right out. It is childish. I hope these bigots will become matured men.”<sup>75</sup> The Roman Catholics provided education for the Métis in the communities in the province’s northwest corner – La Loche, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Beauval, and Green Lake – and believed they represented the beliefs of the majority of the residents of these villages.

*Methods: Protestants and Roman Catholics in the mid-twentieth century*

By 1950, Roman Catholic Church teachers stressed an understanding of the cultural differences between First Nations and Métis and non-Aboriginal persons of Saskatchewan. In the 1960s, Oblate educational pioneer André Renaud, O.M.I. would take church practice into the planning and delivery of an Indian and Northern Education Program at the University of Saskatchewan. He based his pedagogy for teachers in First Nations and Métis communities on helping “teachers to (1) recognize in the students the presence and functioning of a culture (Indianish) other than their own personal one which is of the majority culture; (2) study the origin and development of this second culture in such a way that they can appreciate it as both a human and Canadian culture; and (3) develop for and with these children a curriculum—a sequence of learning activities—that will make them ‘educated Indians,’ ... as well, as ‘educated Canadians.’”<sup>76</sup> This recognition, on the part of Roman Catholic teachers, of cultural differences in teaching and learning contributed to what contemporary scholars of Aboriginal education and child welfare Jessica Ball and Alan Pence call cultural safety. Pedagogy guided by this approach stressed a shared teaching and learning relationship between students and instructors. Teachers stressed two-way learning; they shared knowledge and learned

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<sup>74</sup> PAA, Green Lake – *Correspondence au sujet de l’école de 1955-1959 (photocopie)*, 71.220, 3753.89, T. H. Waugh to Father A. Roderique, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, September 9, 1957.

<sup>75</sup> PAA, Green Lake – *Correspondence au sujet de l’école de 1955-1959 (photocopie)*, 71.220, 3753.89, Father A. Rodrigue, o.m.i. to Mr. T.H. Waugh, Green Lake, Saskatchewan, September 12<sup>th</sup>, 1957.

<sup>76</sup> Catherine Isabel Littlejohn, “The Historical Background of the Indian and Northern Education Program,” Ph.D. Diss., U of Calgary, 1983, 1.

together.<sup>77</sup> Consequently, pedagogy and curriculum grew organically and evolved to meet the needs of Métis learners. Such principles dated to the first Red River Catholic schoolhouses of the 1820s and guided Roman Catholic missionaries throughout the period 1820-1870, when they travelled with the Métis on the buffalo hunts around the Red River Settlement and lived as the Métis did.

From 1960-1972, the Roman Catholics stressed to non-Roman Catholic educators and policymakers that their successes in the teaching of Métis students came as the result of a validation of First Nations' and Métis' educational values and the recognition of pre-existing systems of learning that stressed the importance of contemplation, place, and kinship ties.<sup>78</sup> The Government of Saskatchewan realized that these ties provided an opportunity for clergy and nuns to inform pedagogy in Aboriginal communities across Saskatchewan.

However, the Protestants believed that their efforts also aided in the establishment of education and social services in Saskatchewan and throughout western Canada. From the church, which was the centre of every community, missionaries and clergy “pioneered much of the work for which the State now assumes responsibility. Day schools were established by the church, and every mission house had a dispensary.”<sup>79</sup> Pessimism concerning secularism in formal education gave way to the recognition that although Christianity was important for education, Sunday schools could provide an ethical guide for their young converts. Sunday school textbooks told teachers how to operate a Sunday school classroom.

In the Sunday church school, we [teachers] must utilize the abilities [discipline, punctuality, responsibility, obedience, and generosity] and skills that children learn, but we must go far beyond the mere use of them. We must give them knowledge and understanding of how their abilities can serve them and the world in which they live, and thus help them begin to fulfil [sic] the meaning of their lives as given by God...The primary child is faced with learning the ethical patterns of his family

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<sup>77</sup> Jessica Ball and Alan Pence, *Supporting Indigenous Children's Development* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006) 83.

<sup>78</sup> AD, *Collections Indiens*. HR231.A18R389, Denis, Soeur Margaret, S.O.S. (1972), *L'Éducation Religieuse des Indiens et des Métis*, 12, 15; AD, Manitoba Fonds, L931.M27R12, Educational Psychology (Third Conference).

<sup>79</sup> E.L. Homewood, “Okemow and his Crees,” *The United Church Observer* 19.1 (1957): 10.

and community...They need help in being honest...During these years they emerge from a world of fantasy into a world of reality.<sup>80</sup>

The United Church provided the strongest support for the Department of Education's curriculum that was rooted in agriculture and designed to inspire patriotism to Canada. They believed their lessons complemented the pedagogy and curriculum shared in the classrooms. By the mid-twentieth century, Protestant clergy and church members looked to the public schools to fulfill the responsibilities for providing formal learning for their children and youth.

On reflection, Anglican clergyman W.E.J. Paul reported in the 1950s that newcomers who met those students fortunate to receive schooling in these early schools "have only to meet Indian or Métis people to know whether they have been to one of our schools. There is poise and dignity, a sense of self-respect and nobleness amongst the Native people that have attended our schools or who have been under the influence of our missions for two or three generations, that is not found with the others. As Native people they are equally proud to be a part of us."<sup>81</sup> However, like the schools operated by the first Presbyterian missionaries, these schools started to close in the 1880s as newcomer settlers arrived; gradually, their schools would be replaced by public schools.<sup>82</sup>

Like their Presbyterian counterparts, Anglican schools provided their students with basic knowledge of western society. Anglican missionaries hoped that their proselytizing and teachings would inspire Aboriginals to train as ministers who would then lead the missions in their home communities. Therefore, their personnel intended to train the next generations of Aboriginal children and youth in mission work so that they could return to their people and lead the churches in their communities.

#### Missionary and Bureaucratic Views of the Métis: Stories of Denominational Strife and Provincial Government Attempts to Compel Métis Students to Attend School

Since 1894, missionary authorities had reported low educational attainments for Métis families in Saskatchewan; their responses flowed from the belief that Métis parents

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<sup>80</sup> E. Cyril Blackman et al., *The Primary Teacher's Guide: A Guide for Teachers of Six-, and Seven-, and Eight-year-old Children in the New Curriculum of the United Church of Canada for Year 2 emphasis: Jesus Christ and the Christian Life* (Toronto: The United Church Publishing House, 1965) 60.

<sup>81</sup> ADS, Indian Missions & Indian Work – Reports [W.E.J. Paul], 6.

<sup>82</sup> ADS, The Trail of the Cross, 6.

were not capable of effective planning for their children's education because, according to Father A. Lacombe, O.M.I. and Vicar General of Roman Catholic Bishops, of "their natural improvidence" compounded by their inclination to waste "what they received" from the federal government.<sup>83</sup> From 1894 until 1906, Christian authorities believed that impoverished and improvident Métis parents would succumb to the denominational strife in the Northwest Territories. By the twentieth century, provincial bureaucrats felt that Métis parents did not wish to have their children educated in public schools and used the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to intervene on their behalf and force children to attend school.

The documentary record and stories from the Métis shared with me contained official correspondence and reminiscences that concern denominational strife between Protestants and Roman Catholics. At the Presbyterian Prince Albert station, sectarian strife between the Protestants and Roman Catholics arose with Métis families at the centre of concerns over spiritual hegemony in the Rupert's Land, later the Northwest Territories. In 1867, one correspondent told of "an Indian woman who was a widow and who is now the wife of a French half-breed wishing us to take two of her children to keep them from coming under the influence of the popish priest."<sup>84</sup> In another letter from the 1860s, the Reverend James Nisbet, the first Presbyterian missionary to the Aboriginals in north central Saskatchewan and founder of the Presbyterians Prince Albert mission station, discussed his concern for youngsters under his care. He said that

a few days ago I had a letter from the guardians of the Pruden children requiring me to send them to Red River to their Mother by the first opportunity & so they must go by the carts now expected & will likely leave here next Monday. The children themselves would rather remain where they are, although they would like very well to come here again & per-haps [sic] I may offer to board and educate them for a while longer for the work that they may do out of school hours provided they should return. They all say that they will not go to the R.C. [Roman Catholic] church [sic] or school & that they will not part with their bibles if they can help it. I know that their mother is much under the influence of the bishops & priests[,] but

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<sup>83</sup> LAC, RG 15, Reel T-12437, Father A. Lacombe, O.M.I., Vicar General of the Bishops, "A Philanthropic Plan to Redeem the Half-Breeds of Manitoba and the North West Territories: An Application to the Department of Indian Affairs," 1894-1906, 1.

<sup>84</sup> PCAC, James Nisbet, Mark Y. Stark, and Neil Smith Fonds, James Nesbit 1973-5037-1-1.

they know that their father wished them to be protestants [sic], & they wish to do as their father desired.<sup>85</sup>

Tensions between Presbyterian and Roman Catholic missionaries involved the Métis. In an article that reflected on the old days of mission work in western Canada, the United Church observed that “in the north, Protestant missionaries sometimes...[had] to race to christen babies before they...[were] baptized into the Roman Catholic fold.”<sup>86</sup> Mission attempts, on the part of the Protestants, revealed that a small number of Métis families appeared receptive to the overtures of Presbyterian clergy and missionaries, and parents followed the principles taught and shared by the Protestant missionaries.

However, nineteenth-century parents who resided in the West sometimes disagreed with each other over the participation of their children in mission education. In 1877, Reverend Alex Stewart of the Presbyterian Prince Albert mission station noted a conflict over the appropriate spiritual foundation of a family’s children.

Re: attempt to entice John McKay to P.A. station: From a conversation with Mr. McKay, yesterday morning, I learn that the chief barrier in the way of his accepting the Committee’s offer, is his family. His children are all young. Cree is almost their mother-tongue; and, like all children brought up in similar circumstances, they are more or less disposed to follow Indian habits. You can easily see the danger to which they would be exposed, if entirely cut off from civilization, and obliged to associate with Indians. Mr. McKay naturally desires to give them a good English education, and to keep them away as much as possible from Indian influences until they are able to resist them.<sup>87</sup>

Presbyterians and other Protestant denominations understood that mixed-ancestry marriages represented a challenge for the conversion and civilization of the progeny born of these unions. Their missionary teachings and their Christian periodicals<sup>88</sup> obligated

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<sup>85</sup> UCCA/VUA, Canadian Presbyterian Church Committee on Foreign Missions Fonds, Rev. James Nisbet, Letters from Prince Albert, 1861-1874 86.249C 3240 1 reel (pos.).

<sup>86</sup> Homewood 10.

<sup>87</sup> UCCA/VUA, Rev. Alex Stewart to Rev. Prof. McLaren, Prince Albert, March 23rd 1877, Records Pertaining to Missionaries to the Aboriginal People in Western Canada Fonds, Presbyterian Church in Canada. Home Mission Committee. Correspondence, Manitoba. 79.199C 122-series 14/1/1.

<sup>88</sup> Christian periodicals that provided insights on education with a Protestant spiritual foundation are: *The Adult Class*, *The Canadian Methodist Magazine Devoted to Religion, Literature, and Social Progress*, the *Christian Journal of the Primitive Methodist Church in Canada*, the *Christian Guardian*, *The Home and Foreign Record of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America*, the *Methodist Magazine and Review*, and the *United Church Observer*.

them to achieve conversion if the Canadian West was to become a civilized space and not a savage frontier.

Although the Government of Saskatchewan attempted to provide opportunities for formal schooling to the local Métis, many Métis children and youth did not attend school for substantial periods of time. One of the reasons noted by non-Métis observers was the distance that young children had to travel to attend school.<sup>89</sup> However, the media and the provincial government were not sympathetic to the plight of these same Métis families. The author of a newspaper account about the Métis families in southeast Saskatchewan reported that “the parents at least pretend that they are anxious to have their children attend school,”<sup>90</sup> and the RCMP blamed family heads for what they perceived was their ignorance of the formal schooling being offered by church and public authorities.

In the Qu’Appelle Valley, many Métis families of Roman Catholic denominational background struggled to earn a living as farm labourers. Fred Fayant was the family head of one of these families. For Fred, work as a farm labourer required him and his children to move frequently. These moves reduced his children’s chances to attend school.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, his and other Métis children and youth had to work to contribute to the family’s coffers.<sup>92</sup> The RCMP was aware of the Fayant family because his children did not attend school. RCMP Officer M.F.A. Lindsay reported that Fayant “does not own any property, nor is he steadily employed, and there is nothing to hinder him and his family from moving to some point within range of a school in order that the children might attend and receive proper education.”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> SAB, “Metis Schools, 1938-1945,” Ed. Add. 2, File 48, “Indian Half-Breeds Cause Concern: Yorkton and District Board of Trade Discuss Problems.” *Yorkton Enterprise* Jan. 21, 1943. See sub-heading “Re: Metis children in the Qu’Appelle Valley who are not attending school - investigation.”

<sup>90</sup> SAB, “Metis Schools, 1938-1945,” Ed. Add. 2, File 48, “Indian Half-Breeds Cause Concern: Yorkton and District Board of Trade Discuss Problems.” *Yorkton Enterprise* Jan. 21, 1943.

<sup>91</sup> Albert Fayant, personal communication, 5 October 2006.

<sup>92</sup> George Klyne, personal interview, 17 May 2006.

<sup>93</sup> M.F.A. Lindsay, S/Insp. Commanding Regina Sub-Division of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police filed a report about a Fred Fayant, in violation of the School Attendance Act in the Indian Head Detachment, May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1944 (in SAB’s “Metis Schools” file). I know members of the extended family, and the Fayants were a farm labourer family who relied on service to local farmers for sustenance.

## Métis Reactions to Denominational and Public Education

### *Métis Reactions: Sectarian Strife*

Qu'Appelle Valley Métis resident Bob Desjarlais remembered a story shared with him by family members. His great-great-aunt dated the millionaire bachelor Ernest Skinner, a local farmer who employed several Métis families. Bob recalled that his great-great-aunt dated Skinner for two years but that “religion broke them apart. When the nuns found out at Lebret here that the girl was going with Ernie Skinner, they picked her up and her sister[,] and they took them down to Winnipeg.”<sup>94</sup> His great-great-aunt was put into a convent because the nuns “didn’t want nothing to do with that Protestant.”<sup>95</sup> Bob’s story demonstrated that Roman Catholics and Protestants tried to keep their converts away from unacceptable spiritual or religious influences.

### *Métis Reactions: Distance and Relevance in School*

The Klyne ancestors originated in the File Hills region north of Balcarres, Saskatchewan. In the 1930s, the men of the family worked as farm labourers; one of their employers was the Qu'Appelle Valley bachelor farmer Skinner. As a young person, George Klyne spent a lot of time in the hospital. He suffered from pleurisy at the age of two and one-half, an illness which kept him in the hospital for four months. “[My mother] said I was a weak guy and she hated to let me out and do anything.”<sup>96</sup> The Klyne house was seven miles from the school and until his father obtained a horse for travel, his parents decided to keep him at home. George tried school at age eleven in the mid-1930s, but left after only two days.

I was eleven years old; Dad got me a horse to go to school, and I went to school and [the] kids, they looked at me and bugged me because I could hardly talk English because my mom talked our language. I didn’t know what they were talking about. It was pretty hard for me and then they were laughing at me, so I grabbed one of them and punched him in the nose because he was giving me a hard time. The teacher took me in and gave me the strap that time. So on the second day, I came to school and hid behind the hill and the bush. I went there with my lunch and watched the kids come there and when school was out, I went home. And pretty soon the trustees found out and asked my parents why I wasn’t going to

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<sup>94</sup> “Desjarlais, Bob, Interview (01),” The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture, retrieved 11 August 2007 from <http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/05847.pdf>.

<sup>95</sup> Bob Desjarlais.

<sup>96</sup> George Klyne, personal interview, 2 February 2006.

school. My dad was going to give me a licking, and my mom had to stop him. Then, we decided that I was going to look for a job.<sup>97</sup>

The Government of Saskatchewan was aware that illness and distance from schools, contributed to the low enrollments and high levels of attrition from schools.

Klyne's experience was not unique for a Métis boy growing up in the 1930s. Beverley Worsley's uncles completed grade eight and in her opinion, such a grade level for the Métis as well as continental European immigrants was exceptional.<sup>98</sup> A 1945 report from the provincial Department of Education referenced a recently completed



2.2 Tipperary School near Balcarres, Saskatchewan. Some of the Métis in southeast Saskatchewan went to school in this one-room building in the two decades between World War I and World War II. Photo taken on 15 May 2006. I thank Beverley Worsley for the information about the school and the identification of the site.

<sup>97</sup> George Klyne, 2 February 2006.

<sup>98</sup> Beverley Worsley, personal interview, 24 October 2005 and supported by her uncle's, Joseph Alexander Fayant, soldier service book from his years of service in World War II. He completed grade eight at Sintaluta in 1939, according to the section 'Educational Qualifications' of his *Soldier's Service Book (For use on Active Service)* (Ottawa: Author, n.d.) n.p.

study that found that in the classrooms of the Qu'Appelle Valley “there were 174 children and youth in schools that were over the average age for the grade. 6 are 5 years overage[d][,] [sic] 10 are 4 years overage[d][,] [sic] 24 are 3 years overage[d][,] [sic] 53 are 2 years overage[d] [sic] [, and] 81 are 1 year overage[d] [sic].”<sup>99</sup> The report’s author acknowledged illness as a factor which contributed to the delay in students’ registration and in the completion of the required work for the elementary grades.

Although Roman Catholic Church clergy and nuns as well as Protestant clergy and adherents aided in the provision of schooling to Métis children and youth, family responsibilities, illness, and distance kept Métis children from attending school. Furthermore, not all regions of the province were fortunate enough to have access to nuns who were able to teach at the schools. Chris Blondeau-Perry remembered her school years being abruptly ended when the local school board, having graduated most of the children and youth of local immigrant farmers, closed her one-room schoolhouse and left her with a grade two education.<sup>100</sup> Consequently, most early-twentieth-century Métis children and youth obtained very little formal schooling from public schools taught by religious and lay personnel.

#### *Métis Reactions: Use of Crucifixes in the Classrooms*

The conflict over the use of crucifixes at Green Lake in 1956 did have a ripple effect on other Saskatchewan communities whose schools had nuns as teachers. Doris Desjarlais, a Métis student at Lebret Public in the late 1950s, said that the Department of Education administrators ordered the removal of crucifixes from the classrooms in the school. This demand devastated the Roman Catholic students who attended the school. “I can remember the day the government said you can’t have a crucifix in school that was a black day.”<sup>101</sup> The provincial government not only ordered the removal of the crucifixes from the classrooms at Lebret Public, but also ended the catechism classes offered by the nuns employed at the school. “Yes, ’57 or ’58 or something like that, and I just hated that, and the Sisters were very, very sick about it [regarding the crucifixes

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<sup>99</sup> SAB, “Metis Schools, 1938-1945,” Ed. Add. 2, File 48. Director of School Admissions to Deputy Minister, Department of Social Welfare, October 13, 1945.

<sup>100</sup> Chris Blondeau-Perry, personal interview, 24 October 2005.

<sup>101</sup> Doris Desjarlais, personal interview, 2 February 2006.

being taken off the walls] but then they were not supposed to teach catechism either, but we got some kind of teaching.”<sup>102</sup>

Roman Catholic social service workers and teachers believed that their administration and pedagogy reflected the wishes of the communities they served. The Roman Catholic clergy committed themselves to the spiritual service of Métis families and believed that their schools, pedagogy, and curriculum met the needs of Métis children. Despite attempts by the provincial government to firmly entrench a system of secular education, Roman Catholics and Protestants were not always willing to concede their influence in formal schooling and in social service work, and the Métis did not always support moves by the Government of Saskatchewan to secularize their schools.

*Métis Reactions: Opportunities for Advanced Education*

A small number of Métis children and youth attended private Roman Catholic-run schools, because their parents wanted them to receive advanced education, or the clergy wished to recruit priests.<sup>103</sup> Green Lake resident Laurence Arnault attended elementary school at St. Pascal School in Green Lake. In grade eight, Arnault and a few boys left Green Lake to attend school at the Catholic seminary of Otterburne, sixty kilometres south of Winnipeg, Manitoba. “The nuns asked some of us boys if we would like to become priests so they sent us.”<sup>104</sup> Arnault recalled that “it was a good place; we were treated good there. The idea was to teach us Latin and to instruct us in other Catholic rituals in order to prepare us for training in a Catholic seminary.”<sup>105</sup> Arnault stated that when he returned to Green Lake for the summer, he decided that he preferred to live in the village and therefore declined to return for the next school year.<sup>106</sup>

Private secondary schools administered by the Roman Catholic Church authorities also operated in Saskatchewan. Northern Saskatchewan resident David attended high school at the Roman Catholic-run Collège Mathieu in Gravelbourg, Saskatchewan. Established in 1918 as a private Francophone Roman Catholic high school whose student body identified predominantly as French Canadian, David admitted his parents were one

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<sup>102</sup> Doris Desjarlais, personal interview, 2 February 2006.

<sup>103</sup> Brenda Macdougall, “Socio-cultural Development and Identity Formation of Métis Communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan, 1776-1907,” Ph.D. Diss., U of Saskatchewan, 2005, 165.

<sup>104</sup> Laurence Arnault, personal interview.

<sup>105</sup> Laurence Arnault, personal interview.

<sup>106</sup> Laurence Arnault, personal interview.

of a privileged Métis few, persons with sufficient resources to ensure their children had access to the best forms of education. David was the eldest in what he observed was the wealthiest family in the area. His father was an intelligent and astute businessperson and a proficient farmer who bought and sold real estate as a second job.<sup>107</sup> Many Saskatchewan priests successfully lobbied Collège Mathieu to waive tuition fees for select students from their parishes for at least for one academic year.<sup>108</sup> Other Métis students attended church-state run residential schools for at least a few months.<sup>109</sup> When he was a child, David's family told him that he was "French Canadian," and he mentioned that although he suspected some of the students who stayed at the school were of French and Aboriginal ancestries, they decided to call themselves French Canadian.<sup>110</sup>

### Conclusion

In 1870, the Northwest Territories was barren of schools for children and youth. Until the Northwest Territorial government could remedy this deficiency, the Presbyterian, and Anglican churches attempted to fill the educational void, and Roman Catholic Churches saw existing churches and ministries with Métis families as foundations to formal learning in schools. In their work with Aboriginals, the churches strove to assist them with the changing socio-cultural and economic order. In the late-nineteenth century, their success was limited as students were not compelled to attend school, and the shortage of resources and high levels of mobility hampered attempts to provide schooling.

When the Territorial Board of Education (later the Department of Education) formed, it sought assistance with school planning from members of the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches. Gradually, teachers trained in secular institutions or normal schools assumed responsibility for the delivery of education. However, such a transition did not occur in many of the Métis communities. The nuns attempted to serve the communities and reflected the religious views of the residents. However, Protestant minorities as well as the provincial government oftentimes questioned their loyalty to the larger project of espousing British authority, ensuring English language proficiency in the

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<sup>107</sup> David, personal interview, 9 January 2006.

<sup>108</sup> Richard Pashelka, personal interview, 18 April 2006.

<sup>109</sup> Chartrand stated that "at least nine per cent of those who attended residential schools identified as Métis." Chartrand 9.

<sup>110</sup> David.

students who attended the schools, and prohibiting religious teaching outside of the allowed one-half hour per day. Despite the conflicts over the Green Lake orphanage and at St. Pascal School, the nuns did build supportive classrooms for Métis students.

However, Métis students received few years of schooling. Family poverty obligated many students to work, and this same poverty required families to move often in order to support themselves. Furthermore, sickness kept children away from schools as did the distance to schoolhouses. As well, northern schools like St. Pascal School in Green Lake did not have the resources to offer secondary school training. Therefore, many students' education ended at grade eight or sooner.

Protestants and Catholics conceived of the mission field in Rupert's Land, later the Northwest Territories, as the site for the civilization of the next generations of Métis children and youth. Conversion was the first step in the process. Protestants and Catholics expected children and youth to follow conversion with instruction in the dogma and rituals of the church complemented by a program in basic academics. Christian missionaries believed in the selection of an occupation that would ensure children and youth would grow up into adults who remained at or close to their mission stations. Roman Catholics heaped another expectation onto their Métis disciples. They were to serve as the role models for their First Nations relatives of what a properly constituted society looked like.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, agriculture was the most-preferred choice for Métis converts. Protestants commended the work of the public system of education that evolved in the twentieth century. The United Church applauded initiatives in agricultural instruction undertaken by the Government of Saskatchewan and in the Sunday schools; they provided lessons in ethical conduct as reinforcement. Since the 1810s, the Roman Catholics enjoyed greater success in the education of Métis children and youth. Their successes stemmed from their history of acceptance of Métis occupational pursuits in the early years of the Red River Settlement. Furthermore, their understanding and recognition of Aboriginal epistemologies and worldviews aided them in their attempts at providing formal schooling for the Métis.

Spiritual combat between the churches was one of the outcomes of work in the mission field. At times, competition for parishioners eclipsed attempts at achieving

conversion and understanding across cultures. Furthermore, the mission record contained no space for children's responses to proselytizing, ritual, and schooling. It neglected to consider how children's epistemologies and worldviews evolved as they passed through denominational and public education.

Métis learners who attended public schools in the 1950s recalled that their teachers and the textbooks they assigned acknowledged and at times celebrated the histories of Aboriginals in Saskatchewan. Many of these learners received part or all of their instruction from teachers trained in publicly funded colleges. Furthermore, many of these learners had access to secondary training; the Government of Saskatchewan invested in school improvements and accommodations to support Métis learning. Finally, by the 1970s, the Government solicited commentaries and critiques from academics, practitioners, and others involved with education on effective pedagogy and curriculum for Aboriginal learners. In the next chapter, I share the history of textbooks, policy supports, and research on pedagogy and curriculum to support Métis learners in the years of 1950-1980. By 1950 and throughout the aforementioned period, the Government of Saskatchewan had almost uncontested authority over schools, pedagogy, curriculum, and teacher training requirements.

The next part of this dissertation considers Métis understandings of teaching and learning relationships formed with the lands on which they lived, and the family ties that bound individuals. Whereas missionaries tended to see the delivery of education as distinct from ties to the lands and to families, the Métis looked at spiritual and academic teachings as part of a larger whole of the spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical dimensions of their humanity. Chapter four tells two significant Métis understandings of learning: the sense of place and family ties.<sup>111</sup> Chapter five examines these Métis understandings in the context of the delivery of public schooling which, by the 1960s, was available in almost all areas of the province. Those students who successfully negotiated Christianity with their traditional teachings established relationships founded

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<sup>111</sup> Jacqueline Margaret Pelletier, "The First of all Things: The Significance of Place in Métis Histories and Communities in the Qu'Appelle Valley, Saskatchewan," M.A. Thesis, U of Alberta, 2006, 64, 110; Paul Cappon, "Measuring Success in First Nations, Inuit, and Metis learning," *Policy Options* (May, 2008): 61, 63.

on cultural safety and positioned their teachings to complement those shared by clergy, nuns, and public school teachers.

## CHAPTER THREE: Government Policies to Support Métis Learning in Saskatchewan, 1950-1980

### Introduction

From 1938 to 1945, Saskatchewan's newspapers and administrators from the Government of Saskatchewan's Department of Education highlighted the social deficiencies of the Métis of southeast Saskatchewan. Stories by reporters as well as reports and correspondence from provincial bureaucrats and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police told of transience, low rates of school attendance, high attrition from school, and age-grade retardation. The Province's response to the memos, letters, reports, and media coverage was to bring Métis children and youth in from the margins of educational attainment and Canadian history through a three-part plan: studies of the deficiencies of Métis learners and their families; investment in schools, truancy officers, and teachers; and solicitation of evidence-based expert opinions from teachers and scholars on effective pedagogy and curriculum for Métis learners. Bureaucrats and Members of the Legislative Assembly hoped that they could adapt the existing school system to support Métis learners. The policy reforms would target Métis families in northern Saskatchewan communities where they were the majority population, even though the first reports that concerned Métis poverty and low educational attainment came from southeast Saskatchewan.

The plans to reform the existing pedagogy and curriculum and to invest in school infrastructure occurred in a policy climate of modernization, tolerance of racial diversity, and jurisdictional disputes. The federal government wished to devolve its educational responsibility for Status First Nations students to its provincial governments. Saskatchewan was the only province that accepted this 1948 proposition from the federal Liberal government of Louis St. Laurent. St. Laurent asked the provincial governments to assume authority over the administration of Status First Nations education in lieu of church-state operated residential schools.<sup>1</sup> The proposed federal plan was in line with the goal of the provincial government, led by Premier Tommy Douglas of the Co-operative

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<sup>1</sup> Byron K. Plant, "'The Indian Administration Problem': Aboriginal urbanization and federal-provincial Relations, 1945-1969," A Paper Prepared for the 85<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association, York University, May 29-31, 2006.

Commonwealth Federation, to modernize northern Saskatchewan, where the majority of the province's Aboriginal population resided.<sup>2</sup>

However, the reforms and new textbooks that came in the years after 1950 were of negligible value to Métis learners. Although the policy reforms provided required infrastructure for the schools and scholars, and administrators struggled to develop programs to support Métis learners through adjustment of pedagogy and curriculum, the gatekeepers or administrators of the existing system did not engage Aboriginal families meaningfully in discussions. No one asked how Métis children and youth learned or what values, pedagogy, and curriculum were important to families and communities. Thus, Métis learners may have stayed longer in school, but their educational experiences changed very little. The government saw them as 'culturally different' pupils who needed to learn how to cope with social and economic change. The provincial government initiated socio-economic change in the north and therefore, the local Métis families had no control over education in their communities.

In this chapter, I examine the educational deficiencies of the Métis in the middle of the twentieth century as seen by the provincial government. I discuss how the Government of Saskatchewan addressed these deficiencies. I describe the consultations that the government held in the 1970s on effective pedagogy and curriculum. I cover ongoing efforts by government personnel to devise transitions that promised to alleviate the cross-cultural cracks that occurred between the schools, and the communities they served.

The four aforementioned goals for this chapter were motivated by the attempts of the provincial government to modernize the province's northern schools and to promote racial tolerance and cross-cultural understanding in them. Their efforts resulted in course proposals for classes that would help learners to adjust to modern society. This chapter closes with a discussion of why attempts to correct deficiencies did little to help Métis learners feel comfortable in school. I argue that in the middle of the twentieth century, government leaders and their appointed bureaucrats believed that the traditional Métis economy with its concentration on fur trading, trapping, hunting, and fishing, barter

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<sup>2</sup> David Quiring, "The ultimate solution': CCF programs of assimilation and the Indians and Métis of northern Saskatchewan," *Prairie Forum* 28.2: 145-60.

exchange, the kinship ties shared by families on the land for several generations, and the Michif and Cree languages shared by relatives represented relics of a pre-modern and preliterate society. As well, fur trading, trapping, and hunting had guaranteed the Métis a subsistence life in that families had not embraced the modern and monetary economy. Consequently, schools and their pedagogy and curriculum were redesigned to help Métis children and youth adjust to changing social norms and wage labour. Unfortunately, there were no outlets for Métis families to critique the principles and practices of reformed schools.

Government personnel argued that modern schools were a panacea for the social deficiencies of Métis families and communities. They reached a consensus on the operating principles for a reformed system of schooling and then implemented new courses that they believed would serve students in northern Métis communities better. Despite advocacy from educational lobby groups for parental involvement in school planning, school administrators and teachers believed that they understood best how to educate Métis children and youth. But they never questioned how Métis students learned, what values Métis families thought were important for their communities' schools, and their comprehension of how schools affected their families and communities.

It is important to remember that the Government of Saskatchewan in the post-World War II years considered its educational reforms to be of value not only to the Métis. In the decades following World War II, increased attention was given to the plight of continental European immigrants whose experiences in the public school had been as dismal as the Métis' were. High rates of early withdrawal from school, age-grade retardation, and the phenomenon of cross-cultural misunderstanding plagued relations between British and northern European people and families of continental origin as much as it affected the Métis families, some of whom lived very close to the farms operated by Ukrainians and Poles. Acknowledgement and acceptance of racial diversity would include Métis and immigrants in this newly reformed system of public schooling.

#### Federal Government Involvement in Education, 1950-1980

The federal government attempted to assist Status First Nations youth in their transition to off-reserve high schools. The Indian Affairs Branch in concert with the

Anglican Church of Canada discussed recommendations in 1967 that when “children need to leave home to continue their education a number of resources [should] be developed including:...transition centres where special emphasis will be placed on assisting the child to adapt from the Indian to the white culture...[and] hostels to provide...group care for Indian children in the urban setting.”<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, there were no federal policy initiatives for Métis youth who left their communities to pursue secondary or higher learning. The Government of Canada believed that its responsibilities to the Métis ended at the turn of the twentieth century when the “Half-breed Scrip Commission” attempted to satisfy land claims from those left out of the numbered treaties. However, the Government of Saskatchewan attempted to conceive strategies designed to retain and support Métis youth in formal school.

#### Government Enumeration of Métis Learners’ Deficiencies

The Government of Saskatchewan recognized the challenges associated with education for Métis learners. Their memos and media reports had already affirmed the educational shortcomings of southeast Saskatchewan Métis families. For the Government, schools and wage labour promised to remedy the problems in Métis communities. The Government hoped to rectify the problems, difficulties associated with high rates of withdrawal from school, age-grade disparity, and family transience, through financial investments in education, especially in northern Saskatchewan communities.

From 1938 to 1979, Department of Education administrators, curriculum planners, and teachers became attuned to Métis educational needs in Saskatchewan. Since the first media and government reports on Métis families were written, administrators identified and attempted to correct the educational deficiencies of Métis families throughout Saskatchewan. Bureaucrats in educational, social welfare, and northern services argued that “education for Métis...is one phase of a larger problem – the adjustment of these people to our mode of living.”<sup>4</sup>

Although the provincial government recognized that Métis and First Nations

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<sup>3</sup> ADS, Indian Affairs Dept. – Bishop’s Correspondence – 1960-1969 (I)1(f).

<sup>4</sup> SAB, Metis Schools, 1938-1945, R.C. Moir to N.L. Reid, Director of School District Organization, Govan, Nov. 20, 1959. In these early days of debates over Métis education, one administrator suggested the problem was the presence of a Métis population in Saskatchewan. “So long as the Dominion Government maintains Indian reserves in the midst of white settlements there will be half-breed children.” Memorandum for Dr. McKechnie, October 12, 1938, Re: The Education of Half-Breed Children in Saskatchewan.

students and workers faced obstacles such as racism, unemployment and underemployment, and homesickness, their administrators believed that the acquisition of English and Euro-Canadian worldviews concerning education, household organization, and profit accumulation would reduce the barriers to training and workforce participation. Families who lived on the land and spoke Michif or Cree hindered their children's chances to receive an elementary and secondary level of education. The provincial government thought of these languages as transition languages; extended families were unnecessary holds on children and youth, and the communities had to modernize.<sup>5</sup> The languages that these Métis families spoke undermined the chances for students to participate in the modern and post-World War II wage labour economy. Students stayed on the margins because their parents did not teach their children English. Overall, the social structures of Métis families and communities were deficiencies that required correction; the public school system promised to identify and remedy linguistic, economic, and familial deficits.

Therefore, the Government of Saskatchewan measured Métis communities' social and economic wealth through the lenses of educational attainment and wage labour. For example, Native Studies scholar Laurie Barron found that one of the post-World War II provincial government's success indicators was "the extent to which Métis children were leaving the rural areas for employment in the cities."<sup>6</sup> The departure of children and youth represented a chance for them to become citizens of the modern state of Canada.

Saskatchewan's government was partially correct in its promotion of the value of public schools for Métis children and youth. When Métis activist Howard Adams surveyed Métis and non-status First Nations in 1972 and inquired about what they desired from a public educational system, participants responded that a 'white' or western-based style of instruction was important for the success of the children and youth in public schools. The participants in Adams' study went on to suggest that instruction in topics

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<sup>5</sup> W.D. Knill and A.K. Davis, "Provincial Education in Northern Saskatchewan: Progress and Bog-down," A.K. Davis et al., eds. *A Northern Dilemma: Reference Papers*, Vol. I. (Bellingham: Western Washington State College, 1967) 275, 278.

<sup>6</sup> F. Laurie Barron, *Walking in Indian moccasins: The Native policies of Tommy Douglas and the CCF* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997) 57.

related to social services, the law, and policy was needed.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, Saskatchewan's Métis recognized the inherent value of modern education for their communities; change would result from Métis integration into modern schools.

#### Financial Investments in School Infrastructure and Personnel

Firstly, the Government of Saskatchewan needed to address the immediate needs of its Métis learners. Many of these youngsters resided in communities without secondary schools. The Education Committee Saskatchewan Task Force on Indian Opportunity, composed of school superintendents, principals, and teachers representing the Department of Education and the Northern School Board and mandated to investigate, plan, and improve funding, pedagogy, curriculum, and infrastructure in schools in Saskatchewan that served Aboriginal students, delivered Recommendation I.C. (6). The Recommendation supported twelve bursaries and grants for Métis youth unable to afford post-secondary education. For the students in Division IV or the high school grades, this same commitment allowed northern students who resided outside of La Ronge to obtain full financial assistance to go to high school in Prince Albert, Nipawin, and other towns in north central Saskatchewan. It also directed the provincial Department of Education to review the grants policy for Northern Education.<sup>8</sup>

#### Teachers, Scholars, and Bureaucrats Work to Address Métis Learners' Deficiencies, 1970-1979

##### *Ideologies that Governed Attempts to Address Deficiency*

In this sub-section, I discuss the larger concepts that governed the operation of transition programs, pedagogy, and curriculum. Administrators and scholars agreed that children from the northern areas were culturally different and not deprived or disadvantaged.<sup>9</sup> Scholars had beseeched the Government of Saskatchewan's educational administrators to reconsider how they perceived Métis students, especially those who spoke English as their second language. These scholars asked administrators and

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<sup>7</sup> Howard Adams, *The Outsiders: An Educational Survey of Métis and Non-Treaty Indians of Saskatchewan* (Saskatoon: Metis Society of Saskatchewan, 1972) 18, 44.

<sup>8</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 2.5 Interprovincial Conference Instructional Materials for Children-Indian Ancestry, "Recommendations of Education Committee Saskatchewan Task Force on Indian Opportunity and Comments by Department of Education and Northern School Board."

<sup>9</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 4.9 Curriculum Committees, 1950-1976, Minutes of Early Childhood Readiness Committee for Northern Areas Meeting, Buffalo Narrows School, Buffalo Narrows, Saskatchewan, Thursday, November 9, 1972, Friday, November 10, 1972, 4.

teachers to think of these children as culturally different and not as ‘culturally deficient’ or incapable of understanding the modern school system, its pedagogy, and curriculum. Administrators hoped that education would help Métis families to acculturate or adopt the socio-cultural and economic practices of settler society. Through integration, families would be part of ‘progress’ and not ‘relics of a past society.’ In order to be ready to emulate self-sufficient settlers, Métis students needed to understand that mainstream society now relied on wage labour as the means for survival. Métis children and youth needed to recognize that they could modernize their people. They could use their education to change their families and communities, or they could be hunters, fishers, and trappers, professions that guaranteed poverty, age-grade retardation, and high attrition from school. Understanding change would enable children and youth to become economic and political leaders. Métis children and youth could work with settlers to build understanding across cultures. Efforts to address deficiencies would help to bring Métis students into the body politic of modern Canada. Therefore, administrators and teachers identified differences amongst learners, taught them about progress and change, and helped Métis communities to define what progress meant for them. The existing school system would remedy differences, and then Métis communities could effect social and economic change that would keep their families away from the margins.

### *Culturally different Children*

The one scholar who was most passionate about English as Second Language students and their abilities to learn English as culturally different and not culturally deficient students was University of Alberta professor Gloria Sampson. In 1970, she told Department of Education administrators that literacy reflected the objectives that society had for its learners.<sup>10</sup> According to a speech given by Sampson, teachers unfairly assessed students whose spoken language satisfied community expectations but failed to

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<sup>10</sup> Also see contemporary arguments that flowed from the first discussions of literacy held in the 1970s: Jim Cummins, “Putting Language Proficiency in its Place: Responding to Critiques of the Conversational/Language Distinction,” in J. Cenoz and U. Jessner, eds. *English in Europe: The Acquisition of a Third Language* (Multilingual Matters Ltd., 2000) 54-81; Linda Doige, “Literacy in Aboriginal education: An historical perspective,” *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 25.2 (2001): 117-129; M.J. Morgan, “Alternating literacies: An ethnohistorical examination of literacy ideologies on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, Montana,” Ph.D. Diss., Indiana University, 2001; and G.M. Gutwein, “Native American women and literacy: Looking through and beyond a thematic view of the landscape of literacy in six Lakota women’s lives,” Ph.D. Diss., Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 2003.

meet the standards of the Department of Education. She said in terms of rural First Nations and Métis in Saskatchewan that

The problem in the classroom of non-readers and non-speakers may be due to the fact that the classroom incorporates none of the situations or aspects that would evoke a linguistic outpouring from these groups of people or other people from communities where a nonstandard dialect of English is used. After all, what is left for a child to say, when after he expresses himself saying [‘]Tanks, I don’t want non a dat.[’] he [sic] is told that this language, which he uses to his mother and father and which they use to him, is not good English, and that nice people or intelligent people don’t talk like that. What is he to think of his mother and father and of other people he loves. Either they are not nice people, or the people who speak Standard English (such as his teacher) aren’t worth listening to. If the child has any family loyalty, the proper thing to do is just to turn himself off and not listen too much to the teacher who either has stated this explicitly, or functions with this implicit premise in the classroom.<sup>11</sup>

In order for culturally different students to learn Standard English, teachers in the existing system needed to understand that the schools had contributed to the marginalization of Métis students. Teachers had labelled Métis students culturally deficient and doing so had made the existing system seem irrelevant for their students.

Sampson believed that teachers saw spoken English as objective and value-free. Rather than embark on a journey to understanding the children’s home environments and the communities’ command of spoken English, teachers tended to label students’ English as deficient and their home environments as disadvantaged.<sup>12</sup> For the Government of Saskatchewan, the appreciation of Métis learners as culturally different from the mainstream of students would give way to a larger discussion of supports to help Métis students progress through the mainstream school system. The term ‘educational deficiencies,’ used extensively in government correspondence in the years leading up to the 1970s was replaced with a discernible goal, ‘integration.’ Administrators would now

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<sup>11</sup> SAB, R-1234, Department of Education, I. Administrative and Background Studies, 1971-1983, 4.9 Curriculum Committees, 1950-1976, Early Childhood Readiness Committee for Northern Areas, 1972-1973, Minutes of Early Childhood Readiness Committee for Northern Areas Meeting, Provincial Building, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Thursday, January 18, 1973 Friday, January 19, 1973 Saturday, January 20, 1973 Gloria P. Sampson, “Culturally atypical children and language conflict, a presentation made to the Elementary School Curriculum Board on May 22, 1970,” p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> SAB, R-1234, “The language of culturally-different children.” Also see: Saskatchewan Education, *Better beginnings, better futures: Best practices policy and guidelines for prekindergarten in Saskatchewan community schools* (Saskatoon: Author, 1997) and L. Bartolome and H.M. Levin, forewords, *How Children Learn: Getting Beyond the Deficit Myth*, by Terese Fayden, Series in Critical Narrative, D. Macedo, Series ed. (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2005), especially chapter three.

strive to integrate culturally different Métis children who were once on the margins of the school system into the existing school system.

As culturally different students, Métis learners would be proud of their distinctive history in Canada while they embraced social and economic change in the province and accepted the literacy, numeracy, and citizenship lessons offered by their teachers. At an interprovincial conference on education held in Saskatoon on June 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup>, 1970, veteran administrator M. Pitsula identified Métis education as a topic for further study. His comments indicated that there was a need for curriculum relevant to these culturally different youngsters.

There is a need for more social studies material that is unbiased[,] and which positively portrays Northern and Indian/Métis<sup>13</sup> life-past and present. Resources such as booklets, case studies, filmstrips and tapes could meet this need...instead of preparing materials relative to ‘Indians of Saskatchewan’ or ‘Indians of Manitoba’, it would be preferable to deal with ‘the Swampy Cree of the Prairies’ or ‘The Ojibway of Ontario and the Prairies.’...More literature books should be written about contemporary Indians...A boy hunting with his father...using guns...A boy’s encounter with the elements showing how his experience with his environment enables wise action on his part...A guidance kit should be provided containing material that will serve to make a child aware of his cultural background. This could be tied in with social studies as he learns of treaties, status and non-status Indians, Federal and Provincial governments, etc.<sup>14</sup>

The proposed material would “produce pride in native students” but also acknowledge the problems faced by Aboriginals in contemporary society.<sup>15</sup> A delegate at the aforementioned conference, Mr. Currie, suggested that teachers consider both cultural background and the local community when they crafted lessons and curriculum. For example, the teaching of Canada’s Food Rules would be revised in a northern

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<sup>13</sup> It is interesting to note Mr. Pitsula had an awareness of Métis identity when several of my participants did not know the term ‘Métis’ but instead used terms like ‘half-breed’ or ‘*les sauvages*’ to identify themselves. I am grateful to participants Anna, Peter Bishop, Joe Perreault, and Val Perreault for this observation.

<sup>14</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 2.5 Interprovincial Conference Instructional Materials for Children-Indian Ancestry, Province of Education Interprovincial Conference – Instruction Materials, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, June 1 & 2, 1970 *For the Education of Children of Indian Ancestry*, Sponsored by the western section of the Curriculum Directors Committee of the Council of Ministers of Education.

<sup>15</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 2.5 Interprovincial Conference Instructional Materials for Children-Indian Ancestry.

Saskatchewan classroom to reflect the diets of the families.<sup>16</sup> Or in a grade one classroom in northern Saskatchewan, teachers would refer to a “skidoo instead of a train...[or sing] ‘The Trapper in the Bush’ instead of ‘The Farmer in the Dell.’”<sup>17</sup> Therefore, classroom lessons and curriculum would be culturally relevant for these culturally different children and youth, and germinate from the surroundings in which they were raised; lessons would help students to adjust to the schools in their communities.

Teachers who attended the aforementioned conference announced a series of projects intended “to provide material and approaches for units which would be particularly applicable to Indian, Métis, and Northern students”<sup>18</sup> as part of their attempts to bring Métis students in from the margins. Teachers would publish “resource materials...in reading, literature, social studies and language arts...about native [sic] people...pictured in the contemporary local scene...[and] produced by Indian people in the Indian language.”<sup>19</sup> They believed that people in communities where their culturally different students resided could participate in the development of films and filmstrips that showcased the socio-cultural and economic pursuits of these communities.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, teachers and their supervisors strove to modify their schools and curriculum to produce pride in Aboriginal students, improve their chances for academic and social success, and integrate them into the mainstream system.

### *Progress and Integration*

In the 1970s, educational administrators, curriculum planners, and teachers recognized the challenges the public school system imposed on First Nations and Métis

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<sup>16</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 2.5 Interprovincial Conference Instructional Materials for Children-Indian Ancestry.

<sup>17</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 4.9 Curriculum Committees, 1950-1976, Early Childhood Readiness Committee for Northern Areas, 1972-1973, Minutes of Early Childhood Readiness Committee for Northern Areas Meeting, Provincial Building, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Thursday, January 18, 1973 Friday, January 19, 1973 Saturday, January 20, 1973, 2.

<sup>18</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 4.12 Curriculum Committees, 1950-1976, General Advisory Committee – Education, 1969-1973, “Report of the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation to the General Advisory Committee on Curriculum,” Department of Education, November, 1970,” 2. The province’s Educational Council had to approve the delivery of the proposed courses that resulted from these teachers’ projects.

<sup>19</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 2.5 Interprovincial Conference Instructional Materials for Children-Indian Ancestry, 14-15. The content informed Recommendation I. C. (3).

<sup>20</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 2.5 Interprovincial Conference Instructional Materials for Children-Indian Ancestry, 13.

children and youth. These conclusions resulted from the recognition that students were culturally different but not culturally deficient. In their quest to integrate Métis students into the public schools, Government of Saskatchewan administrators developed programs and committees that explored promising practices for the integration of students into public schools. Integration satisfied the larger goal of social progress. Education worked to shift Métis learners away from the social, economic, and cultural practices of their families and toward advanced education and the workforce. Schooling would enable Métis learners to become citizens of modern Canada; Department of Education administrators believed that the aforementioned outcomes represented progress for Métis learners.

Throughout the proceedings of committees and in every proposal for programs, administrators and teachers stressed that Métis children, especially children from northern Saskatchewan, were only culturally different and in need of special supports, especially in the early years of their schooling.<sup>21</sup> Senior Department of Education administrator D.M. McLeod wrote in a 1973 letter that “a committee of Northern Areas teachers is working on a program designed to assist Indian and Métis children [aged five to seven] in their orientation to school and to develop a language arts program that will enable them to make the transition from native language to English.”<sup>22</sup> The program was developed in tandem with an Early Childhood Readiness Committee for Northern Areas, established in the early 1970s. Schools also devised English as a Second Language programs to support learners.<sup>23</sup> Committees and the programs and services they created worked to integrate Métis learners into the school system and interventions like English-language training would start as soon as the students began school.

Teachers, administrators, and curriculum developers at the Departmental and School Board levels believed that schools helped to develop “attitudes necessary for

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<sup>21</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 4.9 Curriculum Committees, 1950-1976, Minutes of Early Childhood Readiness Committee for Northern Areas Meeting, Buffalo Narrows School, Buffalo Narrows, Saskatchewan, Thursday, November 9, 1972, Friday, November 10, 1972, 4.

<sup>22</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 4.9 Curriculum Committees, 1950-1976, Early Childhood Readiness Committee for Northern Areas, 1972-1973, D.M. McLeod to E.H. Fowlie, January 9, 1973.

<sup>23</sup> See SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 9.52 Program and Course Development, 1964-1980 Social Studies 1973; 1973-1974, R.B. Cook to Mr. B. Norman, September 20, 1979 for a brief overview of curriculum overhaul in Saskatchewan.

living”<sup>24</sup> in modern Canada. If teachers were attuned to the distinct needs of Métis students and used culturally relevant material, and the Department of Education explored ways to integrate Métis students into the existing schools, then Métis students would accept English, math, and science instruction in schools. Furthermore, these Métis students would help to lead their families and communities out of traditional pursuits – based primarily on a barter system – and into the modern wage labour economy, where the majority of the families’ resources would be generated through money and not through trade. Economically and socially, the next generations would share the same values as the settler society in Canada.

*Curriculum: Social Stability versus Reconstruction*

Some time in 1971 or in early 1972, Departmental administrator Pitsula referenced a survey conducted by the Department of Education’s General Advisory Committee on Curriculum on school textbooks. The survey results criticized the simplicity and prescriptive orientation of textbooks and recognized the need for a shift to a process-oriented and reason/discovery-based system with learning and not teaching as the focus. The shift toward ‘learning’ would help Métis students to take responsibility for their education. They would strive to apply the lessons they learned to the community settings where they resided.

Administrators and teachers abandoned rote memorization. Both groups came to a consensus on a new style of learning: an atmosphere in which individual inquiry was encouraged, and personal conclusions were the result of research and discussion.<sup>25</sup> In the changed system, Saskatchewan teachers recognized that “each person is an independent learner and must make meaning and coherence out of the content for himself.”<sup>26</sup> Finally,

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<sup>24</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 4.9 Curriculum Committees, 1950-1976, Early Childhood Readiness Committee for Northern Areas, 1972-1973, Minutes of Early Childhood Readiness Committee for Northern Areas Meeting, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Thursday, January 18, 1973, Friday, January 19, 1973, Saturday, January 20, 1973.

<sup>25</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 4.10.2 Educational Council, “Trends in Program Development.” SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 4.14 General Advisory Committee – Minutes of Meetings, Expense of Meetings, Expense Statements, 1969-1974, Province of Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Program Development – General Education Branch, Regina, Minutes of the General Advisory Committee on Curriculum Meeting, February 22, 1972, 3.

<sup>26</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 6.9 General Correspondence – Associations and Schools, 1965-1980, Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation (General Correspondence) 1967-1976, “Approach to Program Development in Saskatchewan: A Proposal to the S.T.F. Advisory Committee on Curriculum March, 1969 A.G. McBeath, Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation,” 3. The recognition was by the

learners needed more Saskatchewan content in their courses if they were to use their lessons to effect local change.<sup>27</sup>

A dichotomy of social stability and reconstruction formed in the scholarly literature. The author of a 1975 presentation to the Faculty of Education at the University of Regina espoused the view that school and curriculum could preserve the existing social, cultural, and racial order or social stability, or encourage students to participate in a project of reconstruction, whereby students received the tools to enact social change. Under the model, teachers served as a bridge between ‘what was’ or ‘what would be,’ and students travelled along this bridge.<sup>28</sup> The presenter criticized “educators...[who] operate under an illusion of guaranteed social stability...[whereas] Reconstructionists advocate a curriculum focused on skills that would help a student when he faces social, technological, or psychological revolution.”<sup>29</sup> For reconstructionists, “the future orientation assumes a non-constant social context and...the school...approximate[s] some desirable future.”<sup>30</sup> Thus, future teachers had to be adaptable to the circumstances of the region in which they practiced, and learners had the responsibility not to simply absorb content but to consider its relevance to their lives, their families, and their communities.<sup>31</sup>

Schools had reinforced the Métis’ marginalized position in Saskatchewan society. Teachers had either unintentionally kept students on the margins through the use of irrelevant curriculum or because of their ignorance of Michif and Cree, hunting, fishing, and trapping, and Métis kin ties. Or administrators had not understood the differences held by Métis and non-Métis society over the value of schools for their children and youth. Conversely, federal and provincial insensitivity to the Métis’ plight in the years

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Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation as well as the Department employees and was on page four of the aforementioned document.

<sup>27</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 13.1 Miscellaneous, 1956-1973 [Curriculum Development], 1973, “Issues and Choices (1973 Fall Conferences),” Curriculum Development.

<sup>28</sup> *Current Conceptions of Curriculum*. A seminar report presented by Craig Melvin, April 14, 1975 to the Science Education Area of the Faculty of Education, University of Regina in SAB, R1234, 87-361, Curriculum – Western Conference 2.4 7.

<sup>29</sup> Melvin 8.

<sup>30</sup> Melvin 8. An unidentified presenter at a 1973 conference “Issues and Choices” agreed with the argument of ‘social stability’ but used it as a means to overturn the current expectations of Saskatchewan teachers in favour of those instructors who believed in a curriculum that would give children and youth the chance to consider change. SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 13.1 Miscellaneous, 1956-1973 [Curriculum Development], 1973, “Issues and Choices (1973 Fall Conferences),” “Curriculum Development,” 5.

<sup>31</sup> Melvin 8-9.

prior to World War II showed how schools deliberately stymied attempts by the Métis to receive an education and integrate into settler society.

However, the aforementioned presenter at the University of Regina explicitly asked the administrators from the Department of Education and their teachers to consider education as a tool for social advancement for all people. Teachers could not simply reinforce socio-economic and racial differences through the use of prescriptive textbooks. Instead, teachers had to facilitate intellectual and social growth in the classrooms of the province. For Métis students, such processes had the potential to make them understand how they could become active agents in the social and economic advancement of their communities. Schooling for Métis students would no longer stabilize differences between the Métis and students of settler parents, but instead work to reconstruct new contexts for race relations whereby Métis and settler students were able to understand differences between cultures and people.

#### *Cross-Cultural Understanding and Cooperation*

Throughout the period under discussion, the writers of history textbooks and administrators attempted to facilitate cross-cultural understanding. For example, researchers attempted to write Canadian history that covered the history of Canada's First Nations and Métis. Métis learners who attended school in the 1950s said that their social studies and history teachers and textbooks recognized the contributions of First Nations and Métis peoples to the settlement of the West.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, students gained new insights on the roles of Aboriginal people in the history of the West.

One participant, David, recalled that between “the 1950s and the 1980s if I could put a label on the period, I would label it as one of enlightenment. People became more aware and more open.”<sup>33</sup> In response to this suggestion, made by my participants, that school textbooks and teachers acknowledged and discussed the histories of First Nations and Métis peoples, I reviewed one important textbook used in social studies classes at the elementary school level (grades six-eight). This review is done in order to assess how the writer of the textbook *Canada: Then and Now* treated the histories of First Nations and Métis peoples in Canada.

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<sup>32</sup> David, personal interview, 9 January 2006; Paul Chartrand, personal interview, 28 June 2006; Mary-Rose Boyer, personal interview 26 May 2006.

<sup>33</sup> David.

Aileen Garland's *Canada: Then and Now*<sup>34</sup> did not illustrate the Métis Nation homeland on the map in the first pages of the book. It contained more pages about explorers than the Natives who assisted the newcomers. Garland asked students at the end of each chapter to undertake activities like "a mural depicting the adventures of La Salle."<sup>35</sup> She celebrated Lord Durham's finding that the British of the post-Lower Canada Rebellions of 1837-1838 enjoyed more prosperity and the benefits of a higher level of education.<sup>36</sup> She asserted that "the railways made Canada a nation...[brought] Canada out of the pioneer stage by opening up trade between the provinces and with other nations...[and allowed] Canadians to grasp the vision of a 'Great British Empire of the North.'"<sup>37</sup> She discussed the rejection of Irish and French components in the nationality equation and promoted George Brown's vision of a Pacific Coast boundary for the nation.<sup>38</sup>

However, Garland, whose textbook served as an introduction to Canadian history in one participant's senior elementary (grades six to eight) class, stated "the Indians were here long before the white man came...[and were] the earliest inhabitants of our country."<sup>39</sup> Garland also identified the *coureur de bois* who

lived with Indian wives, married Indian women, and returned seldom to the [fur trade] settlements...[or in some cases] after a few years in the woods, came home and settled down to live quietly on farms... 'The lords of the lakes and the forests' as the Nor'Westers called themselves, are all passed away... But the memory of such path-finders as Alexander Mackenzie, Simon Fraser, and David Thompson, is still green. Their achievements are written forever on the map of the Dominion of Canada.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> I thank Paul Chartrand for identifying this textbook from his senior elementary years. Those interested in comprehensive studies of curriculum and its Aboriginal content should consult *The Shocking Truth about Indians in Text Books*, Textbook Evaluation, Manitoba Indian Brotherhood and Donald Hobday, "The Threshold of Great Achievements: Curriculum Adaptation and Cultural Relativism on the Six Nations Reserve During the 1940s and 1950s," MRP, Wilfrid Laurier U, 2005. I restrict this analysis of particular school textbooks, filmstrips, and other audio-visual materials to ones suggested by my participants in this chapter and in the larger project.

<sup>35</sup> Aileen Garland, *Canada: Then and Now* (Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1954) 115-16.

<sup>36</sup> Garland 267.

<sup>37</sup> Garland 284.

<sup>38</sup> Garland 291, 297.

<sup>39</sup> Garland 1, 3.

<sup>40</sup> Garland 91, 220.

Thus, Métis students identified with these aforementioned progenitors of the Metis Nation.<sup>41</sup> The book's recognition of First Nations and Métis peoples as First Peoples, though not necessarily a nuanced depiction, aided Métis students to recognize the value of their ancestry, especially those who grew up in towns and villages where there were not large Aboriginal populations.

Not only was Garland able to recognize the presence of Aboriginals as First Peoples, but she also knew that there was a diversity of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Garland began with a discussion of the First Nations who resided on reserve. Then, she stated that "there are also many citizens of Canada who though descended from the Indians, do not live on the Reserves. Many of them fought bravely for their country during the World Wars. Many of them have good farms or good positions and are honoured in [the] communities in which they live."<sup>42</sup> Garland recognized that not all Aboriginals resided on reserves and that many lived alongside non-Aboriginals in areas which did not contain a large First Nations or Métis population.

Mixed-heritage youth identified with the fate of the Acadians in British North America and the Métis in the West. In a section entitled "The Fight for North America," Garland discussed the "unhappy fate" of the Acadians, deported from Canada after what the author termed as "The Final Conflict."<sup>43</sup> Anna, from northern Manitoba, remembered the treatment of the Acadians by the British and likened the occurrence to later British treatment of the Francophone Métis.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps other 'mixed-heritage' or First Nations children and youth found comfort in knowing they were not the only victims of federal aggressiveness or later recalled the teachings because they found some relevance to their own families' histories.

Garland did not criticize or condemn the actions of the Métis leaders at Red River and at Batoche. Garland said that if "the settlers had been consulted during the

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<sup>41</sup> I borrow the term "progenitors" and its association with the servants of the North West Company such as Garland's *coureur de bois* from S. Campbell, "'I shall settle, marry, and trade here': British military personnel and their mixed-blood descendants," in Ute Lischke and David T. McNab, eds. *The Long Journey of a Forgotten People: Métis Identities and Family Histories*, Aboriginal Studies Series (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007) 82.

<sup>42</sup> Garland 11-12.

<sup>43</sup> Garland 144.

<sup>44</sup> Anna never identified where she learned of the history of the Acadians, but it is safe to speculate that it was from a school lesson. Anna, personal communication, 20 June 2006.

negotiations, or if their interests had been safeguarded, it is probable that the transfer of the North West Territories to Canada would have passed off smoothly.”<sup>45</sup> For Garland, if Lieutenant-Governor William McDougall had helped the Métis to understand the transition, then a resistance could have been avoided.<sup>46</sup> At Batoche, resistance (or rebellion as Garland termed it) was the outcome of federal government indifference and carelessness.<sup>47</sup> Garland covered Métis history until 1885. However, like so many of her contemporaries, Garland closed off the discussion with the conclusion that “Indians, Métis, and white men live at peace side by side on the western plains [1954].”<sup>48</sup> Despite the lack of information about the Métis Nation after 1885, the text served as a first chance for Métis learners to see their history reflected in the curriculum of their elementary school social studies classes. Thus, contributions such as Garland’s augmented the chances for Métis learners to stay committed to their studies.

Furthermore, textbooks like Garland’s told non-Métis students of the history of one of Canada’s First Peoples. Settler students’ classmates learned of the rich history that preceded their ancestors’ settlement in Canada; all students gained an appreciation of the diversity of people in western Canada. Textbooks such as Garland’s enabled students to get along better and facilitated cross-cultural understanding and cooperation. Students were led to conclude that there was a diversity of residents who had contributed to the development of the West. This understanding would contribute to cross-cultural interaction and acceptance. Therefore, Métis students no longer sat on the margins but started to take their place in the mainstream school curriculum.

*Tangible Outcomes of Provincial Government Attempts to Modernize Culturally Different Métis Children and Youth*

The 1970s brought a large number of new courses proposed by teachers across the province. The course proposals were not only in the social sciences, languages, and humanities but also in the burgeoning practical and applied sections where classes like

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<sup>45</sup> Garland 314-15.

<sup>46</sup> Garland 315.

<sup>47</sup> Garland 337.

<sup>48</sup> Garland 338.

Home Economics, Art, Physical Education, and Environmental Studies belonged.<sup>49</sup>

Administrators and curriculum planners hoped that new courses, renovated facilities, and revised pedagogy would help to attract and retain Métis learners. School plans would be designed according to the social and economic backgrounds of community members as a means to make schools relevant and remedy Métis alienation from public schools.

Schools' infrastructure reflected the social and economic backgrounds of the students they served. The Education Committee Saskatchewan Task Force on Indian Opportunity conceived a recommendation "that highly flexible schools be established...Conceivably, in a workshop, one student could be studying the snowmobile, another the oil furnace[,] and a third building a canoe...[and] with these activities, relevant and related 'academic' programs could be provided."<sup>50</sup> These flexible schools delivered effective, relevant, and engaging curriculum to their students. Teachers responded enthusiastically with course proposals designed to reflect the social, economic, and racial composition of the communities where they taught. Provincial committees and interprovincial conferences between academics, administrators, and teachers led to curriculum that reflected the racial diversity of the province. Overall, it was no longer acceptable for teachers to accept Métis students' withdrawals from school, age-grade retardation, and truancy.

In accordance with attempts by teachers and administrators to facilitate understanding of differences between Métis and non-Métis children and youth at school, new and revised courses were developed to inspire students to propose solutions to contemporary issues. Sheldon Williams Collegiate in Regina proposed an Environmental Studies program which required students in grade eleven to develop pamphlets of sites around Regina and to disseminate the information to youngsters in the elementary grades.<sup>51</sup> A mathematics program proposal directed students "to have the intellectual

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<sup>49</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 4.14 General Advisory Committee – Minutes of Meetings, Expense of Meetings, Expense Statements, 1969-1974, Province of Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Program Development – General Education Branch, Regina, Minutes of the General Advisory Committee on Curriculum Meeting, February 22, 1972, 4.

<sup>50</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 2.5 Interprovincial Conference Instructional Materials for Children-Indian Ancestry, "Recommendations of Education Committee Saskatchewan Task Force on Indian Opportunity and Comments by Department of Education and Northern School Board," Recommendation I.C.(5), 3.

<sup>51</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 3.17 Curriculum-General 1957-1975, Schools – Correspondence – Approval Courses, Texts, Etc., 1973-1975, "Environmental Studies (ES 20)...Regina

security and self-confidence...derived from having mastered the skills of independent inquiry...[and] should...[allow the ability of independent thought to develop for] the pupils of all ability levels.”<sup>52</sup> The Department of Education’s Educational Council discussed the work of “a committee...attempting to develop an integrated or unified program [Division IV Science] for Grades X, XI[,] and possibly XII. The new program will be designed to be more meaningful to life by integrating concepts common to biology, chemistry and physics.”<sup>53</sup>

Course proposals from communities with a majority Métis student population highlighted the importance of these towns’ attachment to the land and of the need to maintain emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental balance, values of educational importance for local Métis families. The author of a proposed Grade Ten and Eleven Art Program at Buffalo Narrows included a project which required the students to present twelve pictures from one of four categories: “work in Buffalo Narrows...school life...town recreational activities...[or] effect of a season on people.”<sup>54</sup> In Ile-a-la-Crosse, a proposed grade XII Physical Education Program for the second semester of the 1975-1976 academic year would allow students “to appreciate the importance of regular exercise found in various activities...to value optimal fitness, respect for themselves as fully functioning human beings,...strive to gain and maintain a satisfactory level of mental and physical health[,]...[and] contribute to a personal value system.”<sup>55</sup> These courses attempted to make formal learning relevant for the students in these communities who had sat on the margins of formal learning because of their culturally different

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Board of Education/Sheldon Williams Collegiate Pilot Project.” Environmental Studies programs came into vogue in the 1970s either in a single course format or as supplemental material for existing courses. SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 4.11 Curriculum Committees, 1950-1976, Educational Council, 1969-1973, Province of Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Program Development – General Education Branch, Regina, Minutes of the Educational Council Meeting, Tuesday, December 11, 1973, 4.

<sup>52</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 3.17 Curriculum-General 1957-1975, Schools – Correspondence – Approval Courses, Texts, Etc., 1973-1975, “Mathematics – Walter Murray Collegiate Institute [Saskatoon, Saskatchewan].”

<sup>53</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 4.10.2 Educational Council, Province of Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Department of Education Minutes of the Educational Council Meeting, Regina, Wednesday, May 13, 1970, Afternoon Session, 7.

<sup>54</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 9.41 Program and Course Development, 1964-1980 Northern Areas, 1969-1976, “Grade Ten and Eleven Art Program,” 2.

<sup>55</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 9.41 Program and Course Development, 1964-1980 Northern Areas, 1969-1976, “Request for Credit Grade XII Physical Education Rossignol School, Ile a la Crosse.”

backgrounds.

Courses also addressed race relations and social inequality in Saskatchewan. A teacher in Saskatoon, Miss Helene Burnstien, said that any revisions to Christian Ethics courses should include a comparative framework as a means “of removing prejudice due to ignorance and in understanding others.”<sup>56</sup> A grant proposal to the federal Citizenship Branch for the Project Canada West program<sup>57</sup> underscored the need to reflect on the diversity of cultures that resided in Canadian cities and to translate the knowledge into lesson plans for the students in six classrooms at Saskatoon’s Brunskill School.<sup>58</sup> The developers of an Economics 30 course proposed “core Issues...as basic areas of study...inflation and unemployment, poverty and regional disparity...The Supplementary Issues includ[ing]...pollution, regulation of competition, labour relations...health/educational and social services...[and] urban economies.”<sup>59</sup> All of the proposals required the students to conduct a form of original research, to share their findings, and draw their own conclusions in a culturally sensitive framework.<sup>60</sup> Curriculum was to ensure that no racial groups sat on the margins of learning.

In 1969, the Government of Saskatchewan’s Educational Council addressed a proposed course from Saskatoon’s E.D. Feehan High School. The course was “History and Culture of Indian People.”<sup>61</sup> Although teachers and their supervisors wanted to include Aboriginals in the curriculum of Saskatchewan’s schools, they were not ready to accept a course focused exclusively on Canada’s First Peoples. Although approved on an

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<sup>56</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 9.49 Program and Course Development, 1964-1980 Religious Education – 1973; 1973-1975, Miss Helene Burnstien to the Minister of Education, Saskatoon, May 2, 1973.

<sup>57</sup> The Project Canada West program involved “fourteen groups of teachers in the four Western Provinces preparing material on the study of a Canadian city...[and included] elementary and high school levels.” SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 4.12 Curriculum Committees, 1950-1976, General Advisory Committee – Education, 1969-1973, “Report of the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation to the General Advisory Committee on Curriculum Department of Education, November, 1970,” 2.

<sup>58</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 3.17 Curriculum-General 1957-1975, Schools – Correspondence – Approval Courses, Texts, Etc., 1973-1975, “Identity in a Canadian Urban Community” and “Secretary of State: Citizenship Branch: Grant Application Form,” 2, 4.

<sup>59</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 9.36 Program and Course Development, 1964-1980, Miscellaneous – 1973; 1973-1975, “Economics 30 – Canadian Issues Course.”

<sup>60</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 9.36 Program and Course Development, 1964-1980, Miscellaneous – 1973; 1973-1975, 1973 – 74 *Science*.

<sup>61</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 4.10.2 Educational Council, Province of Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Regina, Saskatchewan, August 15, 1969, D.M. McLeod to Members of the Educational Council, Agenda.

experimental basis with the condition that the Department be kept apprised of the course's development,<sup>62</sup> dissenters and moderates stressed a "preference for a more general type of program on Canadian Studies which would make provision for local history and include the study of Indian history and culture."<sup>63</sup> Educators wanted to revise the curriculum to reflect local issues and to sensitize students to Aboriginal issues as part of their plans to retain Métis students and facilitate cross-cultural understanding.<sup>64</sup> However, they were not entirely sure how best to position topics in the existing curriculum.

### Discussion

Educational administrators, curriculum planners, and school boards acknowledged the need to revise the curriculum and include local topics in the course materials. Administrators and teachers believed that relevant curriculum and lessons would keep Métis students in school and rescue them from the margins of prairie society. However, students had to accept the existing system of education if they were to meet the standards. The goal was to graduate students proficient in English and ready to attend post-secondary institutions or join the workforce. Many of the proposed revisions to the curriculum rested on the willingness of teachers to undertake new projects, and school boards and superintendents willing to approve these initiatives. No new courses and major structural overhauls could occur without the approval of the Educational Council, and only one new course in which Aboriginals were at the centre of the lesson plans was created in the years leading up to 1980.

The Department of Education was not willing to revise its pedagogy and overhaul the curriculum so that it could place Aboriginal literacy, epistemologies, and knowledge at the centre of the curriculum or naturalize Aboriginal perspectives into lesson plans. Instead of placing Aboriginal history, culture, and political issues at the centre of the lessons, curriculum planners continued to keep the issues on the margins of curricula. In

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<sup>62</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 4.11 Curriculum Committees, 1950-1976, Educational Council, 1969-1973, Province of Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Minutes of the Educational Council Meeting, Regina, Thursday, August 28, 1969, 2.

<sup>63</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 4.11 Curriculum Committees, 1950-1976, Educational Council, 1969-1973, Province of Saskatchewan, Department of Education, Minutes of the Educational Council Meeting, Regina, Thursday, August 28, 1969, 2.

<sup>64</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 2.4 Curriculum – Western Conference, *A Proposed Statement of a Philosophy of Education*, second draft.

Saskatchewan, administrators allowed more relevant local curriculum but tried to situate it in the existing courses or in the mainstream system without substantial changes to school policies and expectations. Some teachers tailored their courses to the environment or to regional needs, actions which inadvertently led to inclusion of more Aboriginal topics.

The Department of Education wanted to include Aboriginal perspectives in its curriculum and to bring Métis families into the schools. However, it did not develop clear mechanisms to facilitate the inclusion of Métis families in policy discussions that would support the culturally different Métis children. Even though the bodies that represented the teachers and parents in Saskatchewan advocated parental representation, there was no evidence of Métis or any Aboriginal family participation in discussions of school reform that took place in the 1970s.

Parents and their children continued to remain outside the development of teaching styles, content, and grade-promotion standards. Three organizations, the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation (STF), the Saskatchewan Federation of Home & School Associations (SFHSA), and the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association (SSTA) argued for family and community involvement in the creation of courses. In 1970, the STF issued a report to the General Advisory Committee on Curriculum which argued that to insert relevance and tailor content to location necessitates “a great involvement by teachers and students in decisions about content, resources, texts, and approaches which are best suited to young people in each classroom.”<sup>65</sup> A delegate in attendance at an annual convention of the SFHSA argued that

parents and teachers must somehow get together to improve the education of the young. A clear verdict: seven out of eight<sup>66</sup> think there should be established everywhere boards (or committees) composed of parents, students, teachers and ordinary citizens...the biggest problem is lack of parental interest...In the very choice of recipients of government funds politicians play an important role in determining the format of parent involvement in education...any school could have parents voluntarily assisting teachers or assisting in various activities, or attending

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<sup>65</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 4.12 Curriculum Committees, 1950-1976, General Advisory Committee – Education, 1969-1973, “Report of the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation to the General Advisory Committee on Curriculum,” November, 1970, 2.

<sup>66</sup> The delegate did not identify if the survey was performed by the SFHSA.

educational meetings.<sup>67</sup>

At its 1973 Annual Convention, SSTA delegates voted on the motion “BE IT RESOLVED that we ask the Minister of Education to include lay persons on provincial curriculum committees and that they be assured of direct involvement in all curriculum activities.”<sup>68</sup> Teachers wanted more involvement from the community, but the use of local resources for the development of school policy escaped visibility in the 1970s and continues to plague the educational system, particularly Aboriginal education, into the present.

The Department of Education in Saskatchewan refused to ‘step up’ to the task of formalizing the style of community participation. Coincidentally, members of the Early Childhood Readiness Committee for Northern Areas listed objective seven under a category of ‘Readiness’ as “learn[ing] through the utilization of parents and other community resources.”<sup>69</sup> However, there was a substantial void between theory and practice. Even though committees wanted children’s relatives to participate in policy discussions, no documented conversation existed. Therefore, revisions to the existing curriculum and inclusion of Aboriginal topics happened but not because of contributions from Elders, parents, and other persons involved with childrearing in Métis communities.

Without the insights of family members, the pedagogy and curriculum that evolved served only the needs of the Government of Saskatchewan whose politicians, administrators, and teachers wanted to modernize the families living in the northern areas of the province. In order to facilitate changes in economic pursuits, living arrangements, and the languages spoken at home, the government needed the support of Métis families and communities. Government personnel used education to garner support from

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<sup>67</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 6.7 General Correspondence – Associations and Schools, 1965-1980. Saskatchewan Home and School Association, *Saskatchewan Federation of Home and School Associations* 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention, November 16 and 17, 1973, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. *Community Involvement in Education: Wanted but not Found – Why?* Ronald F. Gray, Western Vice-Pres. CHSPTF.

<sup>68</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 4.12 Curriculum Committees, 1950-1976, General Advisory Committee – Education, 1969-1973, “Submission to the Department of Education.”

<sup>69</sup> SAB, Department of Education, 87-361, R1234, 4.9 Curriculum Committees, 1950-1976, Early Childhood Readiness Committee for Northern Areas, 1972-1973, Minutes of the Early Childhood Readiness Committee for Northern Areas, Buffalo Narrows School, Saskatchewan. Thursday, November 9, 1972, Friday, November 10, 1972.

communities and to convince the youngsters to accept socio-economic change.<sup>70</sup>

Changes in pedagogical approaches and curriculum were the outcome of discussions of how best to support Métis learners in the western system of education. However, English literacy, numeracy, and citizenship skills remained the fundamental functions of schools and schooling. The changes that stakeholders in education contemplated would help to retain Métis learners but did not get to the spirit of Métis learning, with its attachments to traditional pursuits on the land, place, kinship, and languages. Instead, textbook authors, curriculum designers, teachers, and principals integrated Métis and First Nations history into the existing narrative of Canadian history through an “add and stir” approach.<sup>71</sup> Those involved in formal learning did not experience a paradigmatic shift that obligated them to ask how children learned and the values that were for Métis students important to their learning journeys.

Marie Battiste said that modern teachers consider English literacy to be a “benign liberator of the mind.”<sup>72</sup> Anishinaabe literacy practitioner Ningwakwe George supported Battiste’s contention that the acquisition of English literacy has been thought of as liberating, objective, and value-free.<sup>73</sup> The provincial government believed that their policies, pedagogies, and curricula would be the means for the elevation of Métis children and youth from poverty. Thus was created an ‘objective’ curriculum that policymakers believed all children needed to live in modern Canada. Through ‘add and stir’ methods the Department of Education attempted to modernize the Métis and their families; administrators and teachers integrated tiny components of Aboriginal history into a few of the courses offered to students.

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<sup>70</sup> These conclusions have been inspired through discussions with Education scholar Marie Battiste.

<sup>71</sup> See Marie Battiste and S’ak’ej Henderson, “Naturalizing Indigenous Knowledge in Education: A Synthesis Paper,” unpub. paper for the World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education, Melbourne, Australia, December, 2008, who said that indigenous knowledge “is not a ‘add and stir’ method of cultural topics, but rather a foundational learning process that draws from a particular perspective of holism, recognizing the interrelated and holistic nature of one’s place in the universe, and the historical links to Indigenous peoples,” p. 13.

<sup>72</sup> Marie Battiste, “M’ikmaq Literacy and Cognitive Assimilation,” in Jean Barman, Yvonne Hebert, and D. McCaskill, eds., *Indian Education in Canada: Volume I: The Legacy*, Nakoda Institute Occasional Papers (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986) 23.

<sup>73</sup> See Ningwakwe George, “Aboriginal Adult Literacy: Nourishing Their Learning Spirits: A Literature Review,” forthcoming paper for the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre, in Partnership with the Canadian Council on Learning, February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

Teachers and their supervisors did not understand that their Métis students brought with them distinct epistemologies and worldviews when they devised policy supports and attempted to revise curriculum. Instead, governmental personnel operated from the mistaken assumption that their Aboriginal learners represented a preliterate population who required intervention by educational authorities.<sup>74</sup> The English that the students used was the result of limited contact with non-Aboriginals and was not specific to their socio-cultural backgrounds. The Department of Education apparently believed that Métis students gravitated toward the same English as their non-Métis peers.

Although topics in First Nations and Métis history appeared in some of the rewritten textbooks, their representation was within the confines of a Euro-Canadian system of schooling and decided by non-Aboriginal practitioners. Teachers and administrators did little to effect positive self-esteem and foster healthy identities in Métis learners. The only notable change was in the belief held by teachers and administrators that the learners who sat in their classrooms were culturally different students who required extra supports in order to draw them into the modern Canadian body politic.

Despite the reports that came from southeast Saskatchewan that covered the social deficiencies of Métis families, much of the research and committee work of the Government of Saskatchewan concentrated on Métis families who lived in north central and northwest Saskatchewan. The record of interventions and supports for Métis learners in the south is notable by its absence. The Government of Saskatchewan mistakenly assumed that needs were greater in the northern regions of the province and devoted less attention to the implementation of supports for Métis learners in regions such as the Qu'Appelle Valley and the Souris River Valley.

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<sup>74</sup> Literacy scholars continue to support this mistaken belief. See R. Adams and M. Burt, "Research on reading development of adult English learners: An annotated bibliography," (Washington, DC: National Center for ESL Literacy Education, 2002), retrieved 24 June 2008 from [http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content\\_storage\\_01/0000019b/80/1a/4a/e4.pdf](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/1a/4a/e4.pdf); M. Burt and J.K. Peyton, "Reading and adult English language learners: The role of the first language," ERIC brief (Washington, DC: Office of Vocational and Adult Education (ED), 2003), retrieved 23 June 2008 from [http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content\\_storage\\_01/0000019b/80/1b/90/af.pdf](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/1b/90/af.pdf); and M. Burt et al., "Reading and adult English language learners: A review of the research" (Washington, D.C.: National Center for ESL Literacy Education and Center for Applied Linguistics, 2003), retrieved 24 June 2008 from [http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content\\_storage\\_01/0000019b/80/29/d7/9c.pdf](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/29/d7/9c.pdf).

## Conclusion

Government control over schools and their pedagogy and curriculum helped to provide better opportunities for Métis learners to graduate from high school. However, subsequent reviews of pedagogy and curriculum in the 1970s proved to be less successful at the task of identification of the forces that needed to be harnessed to promote Métis learning. The Department of Education attempted to decentralize its curriculum creation and approval processes, solicited critiques from academics and practitioners, and tried to sensitize its personnel and teachers to Aboriginal cultures and heritages. However, little evidence of effective practice was shared by teachers, educational scholars, and administrators in the provincial committees concerned with formal schooling. Furthermore, there was no substantial discussion of the successes or failures of proposed courses once they were approved by Educational Council.

The voices of Métis families did not emerge in any policy discussions, despite the attempts on the part of the Departmental officials to build school environments, pedagogy, and curriculum that reflected Aboriginal perspectives on the history of Canada. Therefore, the next part of my dissertation addresses this void. Firstly, part II (chapter four) enumerates the centrality of place and kinship ties to the history of Métis learners and their families. Secondly, chapter five examines Métis interactions with the public schools of western Canada. Both chapters look at the history of Métis children and youth in terms of their experiences with traditional and publicly funded learning environments throughout the twentieth century and in both public and denominational contexts. Therefore, the next part is a discussion of the components of Métis learning and of how Métis students negotiated their families' teachings with the academic expectations of their improved public schools. Despite attempts by textbook writers and the provincial government to effect changes to improve high school completion rates while at the same time trying new teaching approaches, designing culturally relevant courses, and putting cultural sensitivity into practice, the knowledge of Métis lifelong learning escaped the eyes of those responsible for the education of Métis children and youth.

School administrators strived to improve educational attainment for Métis children and youth through improvements to school properties and academic support

systems. Pedagogy and curriculum concentrated on the adaptation of the existing system to support learners. However, teachers and administrators were less successful at finding out how Métis children and youth learned. I now turn to the twentieth-century Métis learners in order to find out what life-giving forces empowered Métis learners and the assets that Métis learners brought to formal schools that enabled them to learn in the Euro-Canadian setting and to become “strong like two people.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Chuck Tolley, “3. Chief Jimmy Bruneau School,” *Sharing our Success: More Case Studies in Aboriginal Schooling*, George Fulford, ed. (Kelowna: Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, 2007) 96.

**Part Two: Traditional Métis Learning and Publicly  
Funded Schools in Twentieth-Century Saskatchewan**

## CHAPTER FOUR: Nourishing the Métis Lifelong Learning Journey: Place and Kinship Ties

### Introduction

Place, ceremony, and kinship ties were the critical components of twentieth-century Métis lifelong learning. In this chapter, I share the journeys that Métis learners took to reconnect to the places where their ancestors lived and discuss the kinship ties that bound their families. Therefore, the family, school, and community narratives in this chapter come from stories shared by Métis participants. Ceremony is dealt with in chapters six and seven; these chapters concern Roman Catholic and Protestant worship and Métiness in Saskatchewan. I begin with the principles of Aboriginal lifelong learning as articulated by scholars.

Although there are regional, linguistic, and dialectical differences amongst Canada's Aboriginal people, there are threads that run through the hearts of these same communities, families, and nations who engage the question of lifelong learning.<sup>1</sup> Aboriginal lifelong learning stresses relationships based on knowledge of place and kinship ties.<sup>2</sup> Scholarly investigations in history and education are situated in paradigms that consider learners' relationships to place, kin, and spirituality in terms of lifelong learning. Pueblo scholar Gregory Cajete said that Aboriginal lifelong learning strives to inspire students to find their heart, their face, and their foundation.<sup>3</sup> S'ak'ej Henderson said that knowledge of local ecologies and ceremonies that honour individuals' spiritual relationship with the natural environment are principles of the indigenous humanities.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, scholars who work in Aboriginal history and education respect creation and understand people's harmony with places and their relationships with the spirits of the

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<sup>1</sup> See Jonathan Anuik, Marie Battiste, and Ningwakwe George, "Comprehending and Nourishing the Learning Spirit: A Final Summary Report on the Literature Reviews Conducted by Animation Theme Bundle 2," Report for the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre, in Partnership with the Canadian Council on Learning, forthcoming.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Cappon, "Measuring Success in First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Learning," *Policy Options* (May, 2008): 63; Jacqueline Margaret Pelletier, "The First of all Things: The Significance of Place in Métis Histories and Communities in the Qu'Appelle Valley, Saskatchewan," M.A. Thesis, U of Alberta, 2006, 64.

<sup>3</sup> Gregory Cajete, "Indigenous knowledge: The Pueblo metaphor of Indigenous education," in Marie Battiste, ed. *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000) 183.

<sup>4</sup> S'ak'ej Henderson, "Insights on First Nations Humanities," *Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* 34 (2005): 143-144, 150.

ancestors in these areas.<sup>5</sup> Scholars argue that places and ceremonies forge kinship ties between family members.

The western model that dominated the classrooms of Saskatchewan's public, denominational, and separate schools emphasized histories of European settlement and agriculture. The teaching of history was caught up in the rubric of the grand narrative scheme for Canadian history already documented and discussed in chapter one; in Saskatchewan, community history books were a literary imprint of the settler image onto the landscape of the province.<sup>6</sup>

Teachers trained in Eurocentric normal schools taught children and youth how to be independent of their families, communities, and traditions. These teachings would be transmitted through instruction in English literacy, numeracy, and citizenship.<sup>7</sup> Pedagogy that stressed individualism contradicted worldviews shared by Métis families who tended to "define a self as an interpersonal agent in relation to a family or community."<sup>8</sup>

Case studies of individual Métis learners emphasized that the transmission of cultural knowledge eclipsed that of academic knowledge in discussions of the life-giving forces that nourished these twentieth-century Métis learners' lifelong learning journeys. These students' learning journeys began in homes where the ties to Euro-Canadian fathers were acknowledged and accomplished through acts such as passing. Paget Code and Erin Millions implicitly conceptualized passing as a response to the hostilities of the Northwest Resistance of 1885 and the subsequent displacement of the Métis from north central Saskatchewan.<sup>9</sup> After the conflict at Batoche, the next generations of Métis

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<sup>5</sup> Henderson 144; Robin Cavanagh, "The Anishinaabe Teaching Wand and Holistic Education," Peggy Tripp and Linda Muzzin, eds. *Teaching as Activism: Equity meets Environmentalism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005) 250.

<sup>6</sup> See Merle M. Massie, M. Massie, "Scribes of stories, tellers of tales: the phenomenon of community history in Saskatchewan," M.A. thesis, U of S, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> R. Fivush, "Remembering and Reminiscing: How Individual Lives are Constructed in Family Narratives," *Memory Studies* 1.1 (2008): 51.

<sup>8</sup> Fivush 51.

<sup>9</sup> See Erin Millions, "Ties Undone: A gendered and racial analysis of the impact of the 1885 Northwest Rebellion in the Saskatchewan District," M.A. Thesis, U of Saskatchewan, 2004, 38, 110. Millions said that Métis economic pursuits and their proficiency in the English language enabled them to integrate into non-Aboriginal society in north-central Saskatchewan. Also see Paget J. Code, "*Les Autres Métis: The English Métis of the Prince Albert Settlement, 1862-1886*," M.A. Thesis, U of Saskatchewan, 2007, retrieved 7 May 2008 from [http://library2.usask.ca/theses/available/etd-01072008-183323/unrestricted/code\\_p.pdf](http://library2.usask.ca/theses/available/etd-01072008-183323/unrestricted/code_p.pdf), 63. Code said that "relations with the white community are...hard...to

families with French, Scottish, or British ancestries passed into the socio-cultural and political worlds of their fathers and gradually split off their mothers' ancestries from their families' genealogies.<sup>10</sup>

The decision to slice off parts of family trees was indicative of a process known as “forgetting that is constitutive in the formation of a new identity.”<sup>11</sup> Parents, grandparents, and other family members fragmented the transmission of memories that they believed were of no emotional, spiritual, or cognitive value for the next generations. Seen in the context of the Red River Resistance and the Northwest Resistance the new identities were not only the result of humiliation over Métis defeat and displacement but also to fulfill a desire to be a part of the growing newcomer society. And this phenomenon was not only distinct to the Métis. Hence, memory transmission to the next generations was broken by the desire of adults to prevent the continuation of trauma to their children and youth.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the memory of a distinct Métis past faded because of the anticipation of newcomer settlement and the desire to become a part of the modern Canadian body politic.

Stories shared with me showed that passing was not only a phenomenon for Protestant and English-speaking Métis in north central Saskatchewan. Passing affected Métis family relations and cultural transmission throughout the Prairie Provinces. The phenomenon of Métis passing began in the years that followed 1885. In 1902, an aide to federal Minister of the Interior Clifford Sifton noticed that Aboriginal people in the Northwest Territories concealed their mixed ancestry. In reference to Ile-a-la-Crosse he said that “the Chipewyans are more likely to class themselves as Indians than are the Crees who have white blood.”<sup>13</sup> The anecdotes that follow indicate that Francophone and Roman Catholic Métis heads made decisions similar to those carried out by the

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decipher,” especially in the context of inter-marriage with non-Aboriginal settlers at Prince Albert. Also see pp. 64-66, “many apparently obscured their Aboriginal heritage, after 1885 created racial hierarchies in the area, in an act of collective forgetting...those who wished to avoid all responsibility for the conflict and distance the community from its Métis past.”

<sup>10</sup> I thank Sherry Farrell-Racette for the identification and definition of the term “splitting” as it related to the history of the twentieth-century Métis in western Canada.

<sup>11</sup> P. Connerton, “Seven Types of Forgetting,” *Memory Studies* 1.1 (2008): 62.

<sup>12</sup> Connerton 63, 67-68.

<sup>13</sup> LAC, Indian Affairs, RG 10, Volume 4006, file 241, 209-1, reel C-10171, Mr. McKenna, Memorandum for the Minister, Ottawa, 27<sup>th</sup> September 1902.

farmers and merchants around Batoche after 1885. These stories helped to explain why Sifton's aide made the aforementioned observation.

### Demographic Data on Participants

In the chapters in Part II and Part III, the information supplied by participants helps to tell the story of Métis children and church and public schools in Saskatchewan. The birth dates of the participants range from 1916 until 1966. Therefore, all of my participants were born after 1885 and prior to the 1982 constitutional recognition of the Métis as one of the three distinct Aboriginal peoples of Canada. In total, fifty-five participants were interviewed. In this small section, I share data on the participants in terms of age, gender, class, educational attainment, region, and faith, and the implications of these variances for the rest of the dissertation.

#### *Age*

Out of fifty-five participants, thirty-five or sixty-four percent were born between 1916 and 1945 or in the years prior to the development of provincial government policies to support Métis learning in Saskatchewan. The remainder or twenty (thirty-six percent) were born between 1945 and 1966 and received the majority of their schooling in the growing number of public schools. This generation of learners dedicated portions of their interviews to the discussion of reclaiming their Métis pasts and the growth in awareness of a distinct Métis identity in Canada.

#### *Gender*

Twenty-six out of the fifty-five participants or forty-seven percent of the participants were women, leaving the remaining twenty-nine or fifty-three percent as men. Early on in my interviews in the Qu'Appelle Valley, the area director of Eastern Region III of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan strove to find men interested in participating in my project. It seemed based on my discussions with her that women were more inclined to participate in oral history projects and that she wished for more men to be interviewed.

#### *Class*

Class is very difficult to tease out of the data because neither I nor my participants addressed it. However, the next section on highest formal educational attainment may provide some clues.

### *Educational Attainment*

The highest formal educational attainment of participants may be divided into five categories: less than grade eight, grade eight-twelve, completed high school, some post-secondary education, and completed post-secondary education. I further divide the data according to the age categories enumerated in the aforementioned sub-section.

In the pre-1945 group, the educational attainments of the thirty-five participants were: eight or twenty-three percent had less than grade eight, eleven or thirty-one percent had from grade eight to grade twelve, five or fourteen percent had completed grade twelve, two or six percent had some post-secondary education, and five or fourteen percent had completed post-secondary education. Three or nine percent did not identify their highest level of educational attainment. Therefore, the majority had at least a grade eight level of education.

In the post-1945 group, the educational attainments are much higher. All of the twenty participants had completed at least grade eight with four or twenty percent having completed grades eight through twelve, four or twenty percent with a completed high school diploma, and three or fifteen percent having some sort of post-secondary education. Forty-five percent (nine participants) had completed post-secondary education at the time of our interview.

It is also important to note that many of the participants had returned to school to upgrade their education at some point during their life, especially those born prior to 1945. Consequently, a high premium has been placed on formal schooling for those participants in my study.

### *Region*

The majority of my participants are from Saskatchewan and from southeast Saskatchewan. The imbalance in favour of southeast Saskatchewan came as the result of my collaboration with the area director of Eastern Region III of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan. Thirty-one or fifty-six percent of the participants were born and raised in the southeast corner of the province. Seventeen or thirty-one percent of the participants

came from north-central or northern Saskatchewan. Two or four percent were born and raised in Alberta, and three or six percent came from Manitoba.

### *Religion*

Data on religious background from my participants may be classified into three groups: Roman Catholics, Protestants, and no religious affiliation. The term ‘no religious affiliation’ describes those from families who did not attend church, and persons who currently do not attend church. The bulk of the participants are of Roman Catholic denominational affiliation (twenty-three or forty-two percent). Seven or thirteen percent came from families of Protestant faith backgrounds. Finally, twenty-five or forty-six percent had never belonged to a church congregation. The numbers do not add up due to rounding.

### *Note on Statistics*

The statistics given in this section should not be taken as representative of all Métis people in Saskatchewan. The educational attainment data is not meant to be used to justify policy interventions as critical factors are not accounted for in the calculations. I do not consider variables such as access to educational upgrading in each community or school operation in each district of the province.

### Passing: The Beginnings of Cognitive Displacement from Métis Learning

In this section, three Métis learners tell their stories of passing.<sup>14</sup> In each context, the act of passing was unintentional. They either had no idea of Métiness or a Métis

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<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that the people who have shared the stories with me do not attribute their actions to passing. However, the emerging body of scholarship on passing amongst African Americans in the United States as well as the ongoing debates amongst policymakers in the United States and the United Kingdom over the representation of mixed-ancestry individuals in official government documents is instructive for this discussion and has influenced my own analysis of the stories shared by my participants. Those interested in understanding the term passing as well as the contexts in which people have deployed passing in international contexts should see the following references: Brooke Kroeger, *Passing: When People Can't Be Who They Are* (New York: Public Affairs, 2003); Arthe A. Anthony, “‘Lost Boundaries’: Racial Passing and Poverty in Segregated New Orleans,” *Creole: the history and legacy of Louisiana's free people of color*, Ed. Sybil Kein (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000) 295-316; *Lost Boundaries*, video, Warner Home Video, 1996. Also see two biographies by Donald Smith: *Chief Buffalo Long Lance: The Glorious Imposter* (Red Deer: Red Deer Press, 2000) and *From the Land of the Shadows: The Making of Grey Owl* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1990). For the discussions on the representation of mixed-ancestry individuals in census records in the United States and the United Kingdom, see: David Parker and Miri Song, “Introduction,” Stephen Small, “Colour, Culture, and Class: Interrogating Interracial Marriage and People of Mixed Racial Descent in the USA,” and Charlie Owen, “‘Mixed Race’ in Official Statistics,” David Parker and Miri Song, eds. *Rethinking ‘Mixed Race,’* (Sterling: Pluto Press, 2001) 1-22,

Nation, or were told by their parents that their family trees had no Métis branches. Guy, Anna, and David said that their parents' decisions were the outcome of newcomer hostility to western Canada's First Nations and Métis populations. Initially, their lives were individual narratives and not connected to a shared Métis consciousness. These three learners were cognitively and spatially isolated from the vision of a unified Metis Nation. In their early years, they were raised as Euro-Canadian children and youth, and their parents raised them to be independent citizens of modern Canada.<sup>15</sup>

Guy spent his formative years in Jasmin and Lestock, villages in southeast Saskatchewan. He remembered that his Métis mother spatially and emotionally distanced herself from the Métis who resided in the area. He knew that "dad found it a disadvantage to be Métis and speculated maybe she felt the same way. It was more important to be French then."<sup>16</sup> Therefore, Guy's family identified as French and Roman Catholic. This identity helped the family to integrate with both communities' predominantly Francophone and Roman Catholic populations.<sup>17</sup>

Anna originated in northern Manitoba, in a community "where people stayed and the population was never more than 300 and could have been less."<sup>18</sup> The residents of the village relied on the fur trade, muskrat, and stretched-out beaver for sustenance.<sup>19</sup> Family ties bound most of the residents of the community as many migrated from the

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117-33, and 134-53 respectively. For personal reflections on passing and the splitting of family identities, see: Gloria Mehlmann, *Gifted to Learn* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008); Kathy Absolon and Cameron Willett, "Putting Ourselves Forward: Location in Aboriginal research," in Leslie Brown and Susan Strega, eds. *Research as Resistance: Critical, Indigenous, and Anti-oppressive Approaches* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2005) 97-126. Genealogical research has helped many African Americans to rebuild their fragmented family trees and to find relatives whom their parents and grandparents left behind in order to socially and economically advance their families.

<sup>15</sup> Fivush, 51 said that "adults in western cultures provide personal narratives focusing on themes of autonomy and achievement, whereas adults in eastern cultures tell personal narratives focused on community and the moral good." Also see Jessica Ball and Alan Pence, *Supporting Indigenous Children's Development* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006) who advocated for generative early childhood education curricula that take into account the perspectives of community members and leaders as opposed to "top-down" or "donor-beneficiary" knowledge sharing approaches; pp. 17, 77.

<sup>16</sup> Guy Blondeau, personal interview, 03 October 2006.

<sup>17</sup> Verna Goddard, foreword and introduction, *Reflections: Kelliher-Jasmin District* (Kelliher Historical Society, 1982) 257.

<sup>18</sup> Anna, personal interview, 02 September 2005.

<sup>19</sup> In a review of the state of the literature on Aboriginals and the fur trade, Frank Tough found that until the middle of the twentieth century, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) continued to rely on labour from residents 'in the bush.' Frank Tough, "'From the Original Affluent Society to the Unjust Society': A Review Essay on Native Economy History in Canada, *Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* 4.2 (2005): 36. Anna said that when she was a child, people in her village operated hunting lodges for American hunters. Anna, personal communication, 20 June 2006.

Red River settlement in the years after the 1870 resistance. Many were 'pushed off' their land and forced to establish communities away from farm land. In Anna's village, the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches provided for the spiritual needs of the people, and the children attended public school. One could leave town only once every three days when the train passed through the village bound for either Churchill or Winnipeg. Isolation allowed the residents to establish a 'safe' community where prejudice failed to overwhelm them.

Anna's family did not immediately settle in northern Manitoba. Her father was born in 1897 not far from Red River and met her mother in 1912. The two then went north, where Anna and her siblings were born. Anna's father spent his formative years in a family traumatized by removal and dispersion after the annexation of Rupert's Land to Canada. Anna's mother attended residential school and suffered abuse from teachers angered by her inability to speak English. The North promised a reprieve from prejudice and provided a 'safe' atmosphere for their family.

Anna's mother worked as a wet-nurse in a largely 'mixed-heritage' community. She breastfed at least twenty-five babies whose mothers could not breastfeed their newborns. Anna's mother never looked at the 'skin colour' of the newborn as it was understood that if the infant was not fed, it would die. The lives of the children revolved around church services, Sabbath Schools, and public school. In Sunday school, students learned the "Gospel of Christ" embodied in hymns like "Jesus Loves Me" and led by women and men from the community. The children coloured cartoons depicting stories from the Bible, and each week those aged three to fourteen learned a new Bible verse or story. In July and August, many children attended Vacation Bible Schools. Since there was no running water or electricity, children contributed to the maintenance of their households. In the fall, winter, and spring, girls and boys attended school. Anna and her classmates learned to read and write and to solve math problems. However, there was no class time spent on current events or discovering one's racial or cultural background.

Anna's father provided her with a few shreds of traditional Métis knowledge. She described her father as a man who "retreated into the bush",<sup>20</sup> in an attempt to cope with their family's isolation from newcomer society and displacement from their homeland.

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<sup>20</sup> Anna, 2 September 2005.

To her father, the village was a bush, and he was ‘hiding out.’ Anna spent many weeks on the trap line with her father. He would often say “*motootoofee*:<sup>21</sup> if there ever is a war in Winnipeg, come back.”<sup>22</sup> Although the two formed a close bond while they hunted and trapped, she would not learn her culture and history from her father, and the teachers were not trained in Métis history. They were not trained to discuss self-esteem and confidence with their students. When it was time to go to high school, the prejudice overpowered the fond memories of church, family, and nature.

There was no high school in Anna’s village. Therefore, she had to choose one of two high schools. She chose the community closest to her father and left her village after completing grade eight. In town, she attended a public high school and resided in a boarding home.

Anna was a fair-skinned teenager in a town where the majority of people were ‘white.’ A First Nations reserve was across the river from the town, and ‘Indian’ and ‘white’ often engaged in violent confrontations. However, with her fair skin, Anna had no problem ‘fitting in’ at the new school or in to the new community. No one in her community of origin knew what a Métis person was, and as far as she, her classmates, and people in town knew, she was not an ‘Indian’ but a ‘white’ person. During her interview, she repeatedly said that “it is important to remember that no one had any idea of ‘Métis.’”<sup>23</sup>

Anna understood the pressure to conceal her Aboriginal ancestry from the majority of individuals in town. She learned this lesson when she had the chance to become closer to her brother. Anna had two brothers whom she was close to both in age and bond. Brian and Chris were born in the two years preceding Anna; she had once shared a crib with Brian. Anna, Brian, and Chris also started elementary school together at the respective ages of six, seven, and eight. When Brian informed Anna of his troubles

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<sup>21</sup> Translated from Michif into English the phrase means “my baby girl.” During trapping season, the older children left school to assist their families. The teachers allowed their students to go on the trap line.

<sup>22</sup> Anna, 2 September 2005.

<sup>23</sup> Anna, 2 September 2005. Anna was born in the post-World War II period, and the children and youth born in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s received the least instruction of any at all in Métis tradition, culture, and language. Martha Harroun Foster, *We Know Who We Are: Métis Identity in a Montana Community* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006) 207, 220. These aforementioned Métis born in post-World War Canada did not learn the term ‘Métis’ until the mid-1980s or early 1990s. “Not me, I don’t think I heard it until the 1980s. Before, it was always just half-breed, that is what they were always called was half-breed and not Métis.” Val Perreault, personal interview, 11 October 2006.

with the high school in the town where he stayed, she offered him a chance to stay in the extra space at her boarding home. The home manager agreed to have Brian as a boarder. However, Anna and Brian's relationship would permanently change as a result of this arrangement. Brian had darker skin, and very soon Anna learned about prejudice and racism.

In the town where Anna resided, 'white' residents considered First Nations to be 'Dirty Squaws,' and the First Nations considered the whites to be 'white trash.' 'Trash' and 'Squaw' were the only terms the people knew to use when distinguishing each other. People judged both First Nations and whites by their skin tone, and for Anna and Brian these associations destroyed their relationship and adversely affected their family back 'in the bush.'<sup>24</sup>

The 'whites' who welcomed Anna now considered her a 'Dirty Squaw.' She feared for her personal safety. She decided not to leave her boarding home in the evening, and she rode her bike to school long before the other students arrived. She never joined any extracurricular activities as she felt unaccepted by her peers once her classmates saw her with her brother and concluded she had First Nations blood. Despite her best efforts to shield herself from harm, First Nations girls from the reserve outside of the town accosted her at school and burnt her winter jacket.<sup>25</sup> An environment of hostility clouded the hallways of the high school, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police routinely came to the school to break up fights between students.

Racism in her high school and around town adversely affected Anna's relationship with her brother, Brian. Despite the closeness of their relationship forged by attendance at primary school and play in the crib, the two grew emotionally distant. Brian fell in love with a First Nations girl from the nearby reserve. The girl's parents disliked 'whites' so Brian learned to 'hide' his 'white' or French background from her.

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<sup>24</sup> Also see Howard Adams, *The Outsiders: An Educational Survey of Métis and Non-Treaty Indians of Saskatchewan* (Saskatoon: Metis Society of Saskatchewan, 1972) 20. The majority of the respondents (eighty percent) to his educational survey of Métis and non-status First Nations in Saskatchewan indicated non-Aboriginals stigmatized them as 'Indian' based on appearance or lifestyle.

<sup>25</sup> Maggie Siggins told the story of North West Mounted Police officer Thomas Aspdin who sent his two oldest mixed-ancestry daughters to the Regina Industrial School in 1893. For daughter Alice "with auburn hair and fair skin, she didn't look like an Indian, and her classmates were unrelenting in their teasing." Maggie Siggins, *Revenge of the Land: A Century of Greed, Tragedy, and Murder on a Saskatchewan Farm* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991) 97-98.

When Brian left the boarding home to go to school or to see his girlfriend, he disassociated himself from his sister, a situation Anna considered painful and heartbreaking. Brian successfully passed as First Nations, but when he was seventeen, he committed suicide. In his suicide note, he said that the world was “too mean.”<sup>26</sup> Anna said that she could not discuss the circumstances of Brian’s death for seven years.<sup>27</sup>

David’s roots are in northern Saskatchewan. He is of French and Aboriginal background, but his mother never spoke of their family’s Aboriginal relatives. High school was not the first separation David endured from his family. He had suffered a bout of polio during the summer of his seventh birthday, and after he recuperated his parents sent him to a convent where he resided for five years and attended school. The experience was traumatic for David. He recalled that the worst aspect was the distance from his family. He knew that his parents wanted him to receive a high quality education. At the Convent and later at high school David learned in an atmosphere of Roman Catholic spirituality and faith.<sup>28</sup> David admitted that his parents were one of a privileged Métis few. They enrolled their children in the best schools with the hope that they would fit in to newcomer society.

David described his childhood family as French Canadian. He was raised Roman Catholic and believed every dogma. Both of his parents originated in Saskatchewan and met in the province. David was the eldest in the wealthiest family in the community. His father was an intelligent and astute businessperson, and a farmer who bought and sold real estate as a second job. In the community where he resided, David observed tension between the Ukrainian, Polish, German, and French ethnic groups. He believed that the conflicts stemmed from racial and religious intolerance in their countries of origin. First Nations residents dotted the landscape immediately outside of town, but David did not feel any cognitive or emotional connection to these families or to his Métis roots.

Based on conversations with David, I infer that his grandmother and mother knew of the family’s Aboriginal heritage. However, these women also understood the mindsets held by the newcomer majority. Consequently, David never learned any Aboriginal

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<sup>26</sup> Anna, 2 September 2005.

<sup>27</sup> Anna, 2 September 2005.

<sup>28</sup> David, personal interview, 9 January 2006.

languages, and the Roman Catholic Church protected David from the savagery associated with a 'pagan' spirituality.

David remembered the shame which affected him from his early days at the Convent and continued into his years at the Francophone private school. He knew his family understood the need to 'cover-up' the Aboriginal ancestry. "I asked my cousin about my aunt: did Auntie ever speak of her Native side? No, she was ashamed. My mother never spoke of her Native side."<sup>29</sup> David's family used a more-acceptable ethnic title, French Canadian. David knew that many mixed-ancestry students attended the Convent elementary school. However, he believed that every student's parents had decided to conceal their children's mixed ancestry. The private school had a Francophone majority recruited from non-Aboriginal communities. Unfortunately, David's family heaped enormous amounts of pressure on him to be successful as a student and to pass as 'white.' He suffered a nervous breakdown in his last two years of undergraduate study.<sup>30</sup>

The suppression of the ancestries of Aboriginal mothers and grandmothers, the fragmentation of genealogies, and passing into settler society started in the last two decades of the Red River Settlement. Sylvia Van Kirk found that the Red River historian Alexander Ross's mixed-ancestry children were embarrassed by their Okanagan mother. Van Kirk argued that missing lines on family trees or omissions in family records were the outcome of the growth and permanence of Europeans in the West, a settlement pattern that was evident in Red River by the 1860s. Even if the progeny of Métis families grew up to become successful professionals, they never overcame the stigma of having an Aboriginal mother. Bruce Sealey and Antoine Lussier and Van Kirk noted the pressure to assimilate as well as a fear of rejection from the growing and soon to be dominant settler society. Fathers discouraged their children from cultural identification with the pasts of their Aboriginal mothers and grandmothers. Over time, references to being Métis or to having any Aboriginal blood were dropped in favour of claiming European ancestry and marrying into the settler society.<sup>31</sup> The result was a combination of

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<sup>29</sup> David.

<sup>30</sup> David.

<sup>31</sup> Sylvia Van Kirk, "What if Mama is an Indian?": The cultural ambivalence of the Alexander Ross family," *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer

ignorance, ambivalence, and shame that lasted for the twentieth-century Métis until very recently. Family heads who chose to pass contributed to the alienation of the next generations of children and youth from their mothers and grandmothers' ancestries and fragmented children's and youth's knowledge of place and heritage. Children and youth were removed from Métis places, and the memories associated with them.

However, not all families experienced cognitive and emotional displacement from their ancestries. In southeast Saskatchewan, Métis families were able to cultivate a sense of place amidst the European settlement of the Qu'Appelle Valley. These families saw themselves as a part of the grand narrative of Saskatchewan history; the places where they resided were also distinct Métis places.

### Knowledge of Place

This section focuses on a group of Métis families who lived in the Qu'Appelle Valley. Some resided on farm land owned by the bachelor millionaire farmer Ernest Skinner and others lived on the road allowances. The bond that united the families was service to farmers. In 2009, the remains of the farming days may be seen in the decaying farm buildings present on the grid roads rarely travelled now because modern highways connect Fort Qu'Appelle and Lebret with cities like Regina and Yorkton.

Two families worked as farm labourers: the Racettes and the Klynes. The Racettes resided on land owned by the Skinner family, and both father and his son Bill served as labourers. Bill grew up in the Qu'Appelle Valley and attended school until he was fourteen. Bill left school with a grade five education.<sup>32</sup> The ten Racette children all attended Katepwa School. Bill remembered

There were quite a few families there in them days. They used to have a ball game to play ball football. We used to play on Sundays, as it was sports day down there and a place to play ball, and everyone played ball. In the winter, we had a hockey team, and we used to play hockey.

[Anuik] Were there a lot of Métis/mixed kids at school?

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S.H. Brown, eds., *Manitoba Studies in Native History I* (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1985) 207-208. Also see D. Bruce Sealey and Antoine S. Lussier, *The Métis; Canada's Forgotten People* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Metis Federation Press, 1975) 148-149.

<sup>32</sup> The Métis children and youth who went to school in the Qu'Appelle Valley were served by Katepwa School District No. 116. SAB, *Metis Schools, 1938-1945*, Ed. Add. 2 File 48, R.B. Gould to Dr. McKechnie, Deputy Minister, Department of Education, Grenfell, July 14, 1943.

Yes, most of them. There is only about two or four outfits of white guys. The rest were all Métis. There were quite a few kids there, about forty kids going to school there.<sup>33</sup>

Bill told me of his early years as a child in the Qu'Appelle Valley. George Klyne provided a family history which included not only the experiences of his family but also his family's history in the region, and the memories shared by his relatives.

In the early 1930s, George resided in the same valley as the Racettes, and his family earned their living as farm labourers for Skinner.<sup>34</sup> The Klyne ancestors originated in the File Hills region north of Balcarres. George's grandparents had their second homestead in the area, but when they left, they lost the land. George spoke of his paternal grandfather. His grandfather's history in Saskatchewan began at Batoche.

When the war was over there at Batoche in the 1885 Northwest Resistance, they moved from there. My grandfather was a pretty smart guy, I guess. He went to school. He learned how to speak, read, and write English, that is what my grandfather did. Then, when they came into the Qu'Appelle Valley, they had a farm, and they raised a bunch of horses, and that is where they had his boys, my dad. In the Qu'Appelle Valley, they got some land. There was no such thing as a chief in those days, and they had to get an outsider to look after the First Nations who lived on reserve. So my grandpa took the job. He looked after the Indians.

[Anuik] The Indian Agent?

Yes. He had bought some land not too far from the reserve, and he got that there, and he got a store there.<sup>35</sup>

George talked about his mother's family: the mother's maiden name was 'Amyotte,' and her father used to be a priest at the Qu'Appelle Indian Industrial School. His maternal grandfather left the priesthood, became a sheep farmer, and married his grandmother.<sup>36</sup>

For George and Bill, Cree, Michif, and French were the languages which united their farming families.<sup>37</sup> Work as a farm labourer combined with odd jobs around the region were the memories many Métis shared of their lives in the Qu'Appelle Valley.

George spoke of the ways his family fed themselves and maintained their home.

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<sup>33</sup> Bill Racette, personal interview, 16 May 2006.

<sup>34</sup> Klyne stated that Skinner obtained his land through purchase from the HBC. George Klyne, personal interview, 2 February 2006.

<sup>35</sup> George Klyne.

<sup>36</sup> George Klyne.

<sup>37</sup> George Klyne. Klyne's father knew English but due to his frequent absences from the household, he did not share the language with his children. Klyne's mother did not know English and therefore, his father spoke Cree around the family.

There was a wood pile, and my dad would cut wood, and they hauled the wood in to the house. That's how we lived there because there was not much to do there. My dad used to put snares out for birch rabbit. In the summer time, we used to trap prairie gophers. They made a big fire and singed the hair off them, cut them up, roasted them, and cleaned them out good. We used to eat them, and mom used to clean them out and eat them. The bush rabbit, they were really good, and we used to call it *carrababo* or rabbit stew. In those days, the Métis could not shoot the deer. If you shot a deer, you went to jail.<sup>38</sup>



4.1 The Racette farm house. Photo taken on 15 May 2006. I am grateful to Beverley Worsley for the information about this location.

George's father found work throughout the valley, oftentimes on the Skinner farm but also on the farms of others. Pay was often not in cash but instead through barter. "When my dad worked for different farmers, he got a load of hay here and when harvest time came, maybe he got oats and could have a stack of hay."<sup>39</sup> However, the family required groceries through the winter months so his father, Henry, worked on the municipal road crews. "If there were any big rocks on the road, he would pile them up. That money came from the municipality in Abernethy. Through the winter that was his money to get his groceries. A lot of them said 'oh, they are getting relief,' but that was not relief."<sup>40</sup>

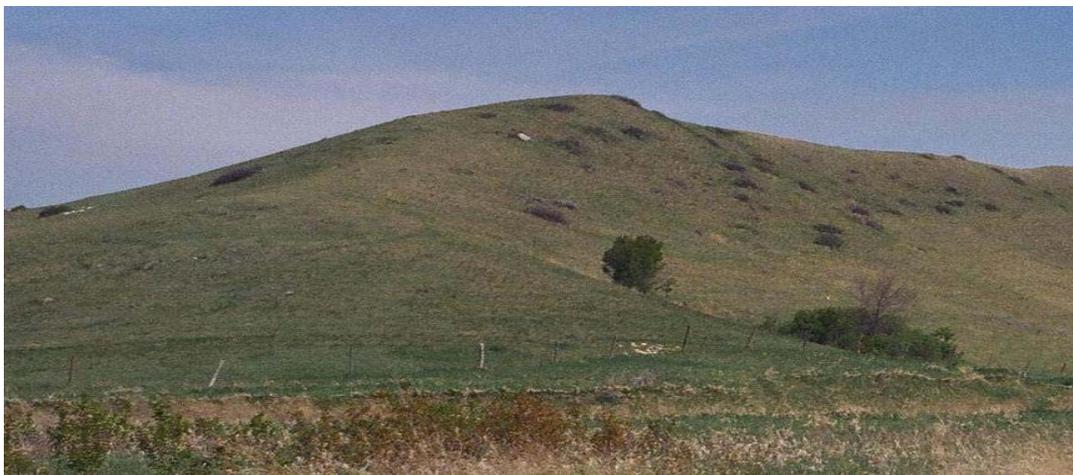
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<sup>38</sup> George Klyne.

<sup>39</sup> George Klyne.

<sup>40</sup> George Klyne.

George grew up during the Great Depression. However, his father Henry “always looked around for a job. He would come along and take his tent because they hired him to clean the graveyards. He took his tent close to the graveyard and with scythes, he cut the grass.”<sup>41</sup> George spent part of his teen years hauling wood with the assistance of his cousin and drove horses and ran tractors.<sup>42</sup> Finally, the Métis trap line ensured subsistence for the families who worked on southeast Saskatchewan farms.



4.2 The Klyne house used to be in front of this hill off the Ellesboro Trail. The Ellesboro Trail was a path that Métis farm labourers and their families travelled to work, to church, and to the surrounding towns of Lebret, Fort Qu’Appelle, Indian Head, and Abernethy, Saskatchewan. Photo taken on 17 May 2006. I thank George Klyne for the information about this area.

George remembered the spring when his father went trapping with his relations. “Every spring, my dad, his friends, and his brother, my uncle René, went down to the trap line and hunted muskrat and trapped. Nobody owned the river. Therefore, on the river, anybody could trap.”<sup>43</sup> Klyne stated that those families who resided on Skinner’s farm had the privilege of trapping and hunting on his land.<sup>44</sup>

Work as a farm labourer coupled with occasional wage labour not only supported Métis families but provided them with a chance to settle in the valley and claim it as their own space. Generous farmers like Skinner allowed their Métis farm labourers to pursue traditional hunting, gathering, and conservation practices on the land. Their work as farm

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<sup>41</sup> George Klyne.

<sup>42</sup> George Klyne.

<sup>43</sup> George Klyne.

<sup>44</sup> George Klyne.

labourers allowed the Métis to contribute to the settlement of the prairies. Therefore, they made space in the grand narrative of Saskatchewan history through their work as farm labourers. They also retained the occupations of their ancestors; they transmitted the knowledge to the next generations, and spoke in the languages of their mothers and grandmothers.

These stories seem trivial, but they demonstrate how the Métis formed a connection to place in the Qu'Appelle Valley and made spaces for themselves in the history of newcomer settlement in Saskatchewan. Family members contributed to the construction of a Métis narrative connected to Métis places in the Qu'Appelle Valley and shared tales for the next generations of Métis. Place nourished kinship ties and narratives emerged that continue to be shared amongst family members in the Qu'Appelle Valley. In the final decades of the twentieth century, individuals who were raised as Euro-Canadian journeyed to a Métis place, married into Métis families, and engaged with Métis Nation activism. Reconnections with place, marriage into Métis families, and activism allowed the Métis to recover their pasts and enabled three people to reclaim a Métis identity.

#### Renewal of Kinship Ties, Regaining Knowledge of Place

Guy and Val were raised as Euro-Canadian by their parents. Thus, their journey to reconnection with places and kinship ties began when they were adults and occurred through a process of reflection, genealogical research, and settlement in Métis places and communities. For Val, marriage into the Métis Nation enabled her to retrace her mother's ancestral past. Val's husband Joe believed that a recent legal case helped him to understand why his parents disassociated themselves from the dream of a unified Métis Nation. Guy traced his Métis past after he arrived in a Métis village and discovered that his surname had not only French but also Métis antecedents. Linda's involvement with Aboriginal and feminist activism helped her to understand her own personal history in relation to the Métis. Finally, some Métis asked a genealogist to help them reconstruct family trees.

*"I wasn't really brought up Métis."*<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Val Perreault, personal interview, 25 May 2006.

Val Perreault's family history was a mystery. Born in Midale, Val spent her childhood and youth in this farming community and later in the cities of Estevan and Regina. Val said that there were few Aboriginals in Estevan and Midale. "Just the odd time with the oil or for seasonal work but not in Midale at all."<sup>46</sup> Val's mother told people she was 'of German descent,' and she knew her father was a Norwegian. Val believed that her maternal grandmother was a First Nations person who married a German. Val graduated from high school in Regina and got married shortly after graduation.

Val's mother and her family came to the Souris River Valley from Minnesota when her mother was a young adult. The Little Pine family intended to farm at Macoun but three months after their arrival, the family returned to the United States. Val could provide no reason why the family left, but her mother met her father during the family's brief stay in Canada, and the two married shortly after her maternal grandparents returned to the United States.

*"Everything was Unknown."*<sup>47</sup>

As a child, Val had only one visit with the family on her mother's side. She never learned of her maternal grandmother's ancestry. When her mother died in 2004, Val sorted the papers she left. By this time, Val had married a Métis with strong ties to his family and the Métis Nation. She knew the history of Métis families in the southeast part of the province. She discovered Métis surnames in the papers her mother left. Her involvement with the Métis through marriage inspired her to learn more about her mother's ancestral roots. After reviewing the files, she wondered if her mother, like her husband, was a Métis.

Val researched her mother's past. However, the pursuit led to more questions and no answers.

I thought it was strange so I found the name of my mother's family and then I thought I would look up that name. Well, I found my mother's maiden name, but it named who she married and us kids. But when I went back further, it told me where she was born was unknown. Birth, I forget how they termed it, it was unknown, everything was unknown. They had everything else. For example, when she married and who she married. However, there were no records from before her

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<sup>46</sup> Val Perreault, 25 May 2006.

<sup>47</sup> Val Perreault, 25 May 2006.

marriage. So then I got curious. I asked why everything was so unknown. That is when I started asking the family, and that is when I got told quite bluntly to ‘shut-up, \*laughs.\*’<sup>48</sup>

Val’s anecdote showed how family members controlled their representation in documentary records; they were able to conceal their maternal, ancestral roots.<sup>49</sup> Val discovered her Métis heritage ‘by accident,’ and the reconstruction of the family’s history challenged her because her mother is deceased, and she is not able to locate her mother’s relations.<sup>50</sup>

They were all of German descent. It was drilled into them. I do not know if it was because they came up to Canada that they were of German ‘descent’ or when it was. I do not know, but it’s funny and interesting, \*laughs.\*<sup>51</sup>

Children and youth like Val were not always able to pass as Euro-Canadian. Val remembered residents in the community not accepting the German-Norwegian descent of the family. Furthermore, Val said that the first friends she made in Estevan and Regina were of Aboriginal ancestry; her parents disliked her associations with these children and youth. “But they were all my friends, \*laughs.\* Blondeaus and Klynes and Pelletiers, \*laughs.\*”<sup>52</sup> Val believed that individuals in the communities where she spent her formative years suspected she had Aboriginal ancestry. The last teacher she had in Estevan organized the desks in her eighth-grade classroom into groups. The group where Val sat was “this group, sort of the Aboriginal kind. I never thought of it at the time, but there were the smart, ‘goodie’ kids over here, and we were the dumb, well not dumb, kids over there but the different kids, and that was how I thought of it when I got older, \*laughs.\*”<sup>53</sup> There were no visual indicators of these distinct groupings, but she felt that the seating plan created by the teacher was meant to denote the racial and socio-economic

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<sup>48</sup> Val Perreault, 25 May 2006.

<sup>49</sup> Perreault had two sisters and one brother, and none of the siblings admitted to any Aboriginal ancestry in their family. The reactions by family members to Val’s inquiries ranged from lack of interest to denial to hostility. I suggested on the advice of a researcher from Library and Archives Canada that perhaps Val’s grandparents adopted her mother. The adoption policy for the state of Minnesota, the birthplace of the other siblings in her mother’s family, could have been to delete the information about the birth family. Val was not sure, but we both agreed that because her mother was a middle child, adoption, unless it was within the family, was not a likely explanation. Val Perreault, 10 October 2006.

<sup>50</sup> Val has a cousin in Minnesota who assists with the investigation.

<sup>51</sup> Val Perreault, 25 May 2006.

<sup>52</sup> Val Perreault, 25 May 2006.

<sup>53</sup> Val Perreault, 25 May 2006.

differences of the students in her class. She mentioned two statements her teacher made that reflected his opinions of the students who sat around Val in class.

I used to baby-sit quite a bit when I was younger. The teacher's house was between our house, and the house where I babysat. I had to walk past his house to go and baby-sit and then the next day he would look right at me and say: 'these individuals who walk the street at night.' This other boy was part Aboriginal and Chinese, and his mother had divorced. He would look at him and say: 'those individuals who do not have proper parents.' He was bad. He would look right at you and say it, and you knew who he was talking about. This was how he would treat you, but he never did it to the other side of the room, \*laughs.\*<sup>54</sup>

When she moved to Regina for high school, Val continued to make friends with Aboriginals who lived in the city.

Val believed the tone of her and her brother's skin affected the treatment that the two received from the teachers and residents of Estevan. Val's two sisters had fairer skin, whereas she and her brother had darker skin. Finally, Val would like to uncover some of the history of her mother's family to add to her maternal family's history.

I would like to know something before too long so that my kids can know the truth because on my dad's side it goes all the way back to the King of Norway 'for crying out loud' in the 1600s and my mother's side, it just stops right with her brothers and sisters.<sup>55</sup>

Val's story identified the conundrum of the Métis. Many families who experienced displacement and hostility after the two resistances or read the less-than-favourable and highly romanticized descriptions in community history books of First Nations peoples attempted to suppress or conceal their Aboriginal heritage, if it was possible. Merle Massie, speaking of community history books, indicated that local residents chose whether or not to contribute their family history to these books' family history sections and controlled the content which the readers, most often the community members, read.<sup>56</sup> Community history book committees had limited knowledge of the history of Aboriginals particularly the Métis and often accepted the family's choice to be German or French, or ignored the ancestry and ethnicity of a family. Val was not the only person who grew up in a family where the Aboriginal ancestry remained hidden.

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<sup>54</sup> Val Perreault, 25 May 2006.

<sup>55</sup> Val Perreault, 25 May 2006.

<sup>56</sup> Massie 112-13.

Guy moved into the Métis community of Lebret to take a teaching position at the Qu'Appelle Indian Industrial School. Guy arrived in Lebret in 1958. Guy discovered the popularity of his surname in the Lebret area. He started to learn of his Métis ancestry; he was not only French as his parents had said but also Métis. He slowly learned of his Métis ancestry as “we still didn't really associate that much with any of them, the Blondeaus in town, because we were part of the residential school community at first. But some of these guys were my distant cousins. As I learned more, I started to ask more questions.”<sup>57</sup> For Guy, his move to Lebret enabled him to conduct genealogical research and to learn of the kinship ties that his parents denied him in his formative years. Guy felt emotionally and cognitively tied to the pasts of his ancestors; it was through residence in a Métis place that he learned of his Métis past. He recognized the challenges faced by his ancestors to fit in with the burgeoning newcomer society in Saskatchewan.

Born in the Saltcoats area, Joe Perreault's family worked for farmers in the Saltcoats, Atwater, and Yarbo areas in southeast Saskatchewan. Many of Joe's paternal relations lived at the Métis settlement at Crescent Lake, but Joe did not visit until he was a teenager; he was not sure why his father decided to keep the family away from the community. Joe speculated that his mother was born in the United States, but like his wife Val, he had no concrete evidence of where she originated, how she met his father, and why they settled a short distance from a Métis settlement. However, Joe remembered that his father struggled with alcoholism. His father often told him: “you will be a nobody.”<sup>58</sup> When he was younger, Joe did not understand what his father meant or why he made such statements. In 2006, Joe and Valerie understood the difficulties the Saskatchewan Métis faced with adjustment to newcomer settlement on farm land. “I never knew what in the Hell he meant by that statement. He just kept the reasons from me. He never told anyone, never said anything. It was not until that case from the Supreme Court, the Powley Case. Do you remember at the end of that court case when Audrey Poitras<sup>59</sup> got up and said: ‘they finally recognize us as a nation?’ Well, that is when I realized what my father meant. That was when I stopped and thought this is what

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<sup>57</sup>Guy Blondeau, 1 February 2006.

<sup>58</sup> Joe Perreault, personal interview, 11 October 2006.

<sup>59</sup> Audrey Poitras is the President of the Métis Nation of Alberta.

dad meant when he said: ‘I will be a nobody.’”<sup>60</sup> Joe now understood the losses of his parents, individuals who had to change their means of sustaining their families from hunting, fishing, and trapping to farming. The *Powley* decision enabled Joe to understand why his father felt isolated from the vision of a unified Métis Nation.

The *Powley* ruling was the first time, since the fall of Louis Riel’s provisional government in 1885, that the Métis had the legal opportunity to build the foundations of a government;<sup>61</sup> the decision obligated provincial governments to recognize the rights of its enumerated Métis to hunt, fish, and trap on vacant crown lands.<sup>62</sup> *Powley* helped Joe to understand the history of the twentieth-century Métis as a people dispossessed of their lands through newcomer settlement. For Guy and Joe, knowledge of place was considered an important ingredient for their comprehension of Métiness in the West.

Linda’s sense of place emerged from her involvement in two movements in Saskatoon: the Aboriginal activism of the early 1970s and second-wave feminist activism for changes to women’s and men’s relations. Initially, Linda found contradictions in the two movements. However, she was able to reconcile their purposes as part of a larger vision for the improvement of humanity and the advocacy for the political, economic, and social advancement of historically marginalized peoples. Involvement in both movements enabled her to gain knowledge of Aboriginal peoples’ place in Canada and of women’s rights to equality alongside men in Canadian public life.

Linda was born in 1954 in Radisson, Saskatchewan. Linda knew of her Métis ancestry and, unlike Anna and David, grew up in a town where people distinguished between ‘white’ and Métis. However, residents premised their understanding on skin tone, and the fair-skinned Linda often fell into the category of ‘white.’ Linda’s mother was a status First Nation who lost her status when she married her father. In Radisson, Linda’s family enjoyed respectful treatment. Her father maintained a garden and shared

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<sup>60</sup> Joe Perreault.

<sup>61</sup> The Right Honourable Paul Martin, foreword, *Quiet Revolution West: The Rebirth of Métis Nationalism* by John Weinstein (Calgary: Fifth House Ltd., 2007) 163.

<sup>62</sup> Jean Teillet, “The winds of change: Métis rights after *Powley*, *Taku*, and *Haida*,” *The Long Journey of a Forgotten People: Métis Identities & Family Histories*, Ute Lischke & David T. McNab, eds., Aboriginal Studies Series (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2007) 72.

the produce with local residents. Linda, like many Métis youth, went to Saskatoon for advanced education.<sup>63</sup>

For Linda, passing was easy. She knew that Euro-Canadians used superficial categories to highlight differences between individuals and found such actions humorous. “You can tell I’m Indian when I am with Indians [braids in her hair]. But living amongst whites many people would ask...if...[I] was Greek or Italian or over from Europe?”<sup>64</sup>

I would like to see the Indian people unite and keep their culture, but I would like for them to work with the white people, but [I] don’t want to see the Indian culture lost.<sup>65</sup>

The aforementioned quote accurately described Linda’s political convictions. When she arrived in Saskatoon, she immediately became involved in women’s liberation and Aboriginal rights organizations. Linda quickly learned that there was a contradiction between the two movements. As a woman, Linda strove to overcome the dominance by men that she observed in her family and in her home town. Therefore, she began to attend meetings of the nascent women’s movement. In order to maintain her culture, she sought the guidance of Aboriginal leaders, some of them women. Although the two groups never interacted in Linda’s presence, she accurately depicted the contradictions inherent in the two political movements.

It’s kind of hard – those women’s liberation meetings. When we go to powwow and without even thinking, men expect women to get food ready and if I start to take [down] tent posts, I would be told to put the poles down because I am a woman, and I shouldn’t be doing that and if the older men see it they tell me it’s wrong. I shouldn’t chop wood. I have to wash the dishes....Maybe it’s not different because a lot of men in white society expect women to do housework and look after the kids and wash floors but just different because you are at a powwow.<sup>66</sup>

Linda told of the contradictions between traditional Aboriginal teachings and contemporary feminist perspectives. She experienced difficulty identifying with the Elders who re-enforced teachings the women’s movement contested.

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<sup>63</sup> SAB, “Towards a New Past Oral History Project The Métis,” R-799(B), Youens, Linda, Saskatoon, 5 July 1973. The interview occurred in 1973 and prior to Bill C-31.

<sup>64</sup> Linda Youens.

<sup>65</sup> Linda Youens.

<sup>66</sup> Linda Youens.

When I was at the Native youth conference in Prince Albert, we had some people in the American Indian movement. They came up, and they spoke and one woman spoke on Native women and their role. She said that women are very sacred which I think they are. A woman's role is to look after the children, do the housework, and to do everything that is expected in our society away from the women's movement. It was wrong to wear tight sweaters and to have any sexual appeal and that a man, before he goes out and does something, he will always ask the woman so that the woman is a stronger power than the man. The man who goes out and does the work.<sup>67</sup>

Linda mentioned satisfaction with the leadership of both the women's and the Native movement. However, she felt reluctant to speak against the Elders at conferences and concluded that such actions would be disrespectful.

Linda found a role model in Maria Campbell. She read Campbell's book *Halfbreed* and identified with a section where Campbell discussed the Métis organization in Alberta. Linda recounted Campbell's frustration with the 'higher-ups' in the organization who minimized the contribution of women to campaigns and policy development.<sup>68</sup> Linda mentioned that she "would be upset if someone told me what to do because I think that a man is equal to a woman."<sup>69</sup> Linda comprehended the objectives of the two political movements: the women's liberation movement has worked for the betterment of women in the workforce whereas the Native movement has worked for the improvement of people through education, affordable housing, and cross-cultural understanding across communities.<sup>70</sup> Linda resolved to continue involvement in both groups as she believed members of these movements worked for the "betterment of people."<sup>71</sup>

Finally, several Métis embarked on genealogical research to learn of their past relations. Twentieth-century Métis reconnected to their mother's and grandmother's pasts and overcame the shame of having Métis ancestral backgrounds. And retired librarian Pat McCloy would help many people to recover Métis ancestors.

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<sup>67</sup> Linda Youens.

<sup>68</sup> Linda Youens. Also see "The Man That We Knew: A Conversation between Maria Campbell and Donna Heimbecker" in Hartmut Lutz et al., eds., *Howard Adams: Otapawy!: The Life of a Métis Leader in his Own Words and in Those of His Contemporaries* (Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2005) 237-44.

<sup>69</sup> Linda Youens.

<sup>70</sup> Linda Youens.

<sup>71</sup> Linda Youens.

Pat McCloy was a World War II veteran, librarian at the Provincial Library of British Columbia, for the University of British Columbia, and later the Glenbow Foundation, the predecessor to the Glenbow-Alberta Institute. In his spare time and after his retirement from the Glenbow, he helped both Métis and non-Métis people complete their family trees. His papers contained several letters from individuals eager to locate relations, some of them Aboriginal. Pat's research went further than the extraction of raw data such as dates of birth and death but progressed into a discussion of locations of residence and places of employment. He used Hudson's Bay Company records, available personal papers, newspaper articles, and relevant secondary sources to provide a history that accompanied the genealogical table that was requested.<sup>72</sup> The letters started in 1965 and ended in 1995; all of these letters revealed a desire to locate lost Aboriginal ancestors.

One of Pat's correspondents, Mary Wharton, welcomed him back to Canada after his trip to Ireland.

I hope you achieved all that you had hoped to achieve...but somehow we never do, when it comes to ancestry. The more research we do, the more interesting things we learn[,] and it whets our appetite to learn more. We know a fair bit about our Black ancestry...I would love to know a bit more about my grandfather's grandmother – Clementine Ross. You told me that she was the daughter of Malcolm Ross & an Indian woman. I have often wondered if Malcolm Ross was a relative of Chief John Ross who led the Cherokees to Oklahoma after they were driven out of their tribal lands by the whites. My grandfather had Cherokee blood. He told my mother's cousin that his great-grandmother was a Cherokee & from one of Granddad's children has come the story that she was a Cherokee princess, or a chief's daughter or something like that. I find the story fascinating, & have often wondered how a Cherokee woman came to be living in Canada in those days. My theory is that Malcolm Ross married her in Cherokee country & took her there.<sup>73</sup>

Mary looked to Pat as the genealogist who could verify the stories she heard from relatives.

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<sup>72</sup> See his "genealogical table to the first three generations of descendants of John McKay (1763?-1810) and Mary Favell (1776?-1810)," in GMA, Acc. 72/604, Series 1, M8486/5, Series 1, M8486/6 "Explanation of 'Table A,'" Acc. 72/604, Series 1, M8486/7 "Hudson's Bay Company, employee service sheets for 'A' individuals," Acc. 72/604, Series 1, M8486/8 "John McKay and Mary England," and Acc. 72/604, Series 1, M8486/9 "Margaret McKay and John Hourie" for examples of his reports.

<sup>73</sup> GMA, Acc. 72/604, Series 1, M8486/10, "John McKay and Elizabeth McKay (A 3)," Mary Wharton to Mr. T.R. McCloy, Forrestfield, W. Aust., 3.12.89.

Another family wanted Pat's help in their planning for a family reunion. Garry McKay wanted Pat to assist in the completion of a "genealogy from John Favell and Titameg up to John Richards McKay...I had an understanding that my grandmother Maria Rowland was part Cree[,] and I suspect others were too, but I am also aware that other Indians traded into Hudson's [sic] Bay."<sup>74</sup> Garry wished to present his relatives with a complete family tree and perhaps, although unstated, to include as many living descendants as possible.

The author of one letter to Pat revealed the silence that afflicted families with Aboriginal ancestry. Bill McKay of Saskatchewan told Pat that

one thing dad never told me much about is my Indian blood. I know my grandfather William spoke Cree and that his wife Maria, who I knew as a small boy was at least part Cree if not all[,] but I dont [sic] know much or anything much about her except I have an old newspaper clipping about her death which states that in her prime she was one of the most beautiful women in all of Sask. Yes[,] I remember Grannie but dont [sic] remember Mushum. When I was about five years old we visited here [sic] at their farm about eight miles from P.A.[Prince Albert]...she did beautiful beadwork[,] and I recall that my mother had a tobacco...[pouch] Granny had beaded which was a real work of art with very tiny real glass beads. Also[,] I remember a pair of eskimo [sic] [-] type sunglasses made of wood which hung on a nail[,] but I don't know what became of these either...I intend to do one [biography] on my father Walter and one on my mother too.<sup>75</sup>

Bill wanted to learn more of his father's European and his mother's Aboriginal ancestry because he had recently had a son and named him after his grandfather, William. He struggled to provide Pat with as much detail as he could in order to reconstruct his family tree. Several letters later, Bill told Pat that "it looks like I am hooked on my ancestors and you have already done so much to...help me find out more about them."<sup>76</sup> Pat helped families deal with silence and found information that sparked their interest and made family members proud.

The letters written to McCloy demonstrate that people had a number of reasons for researching their ancestors. A lot of the letters analyzed were from people with

<sup>74</sup> GMA, Acc. 72/604, Series 1, M8486/18, "William McKay and Maria Rowland (A14)," Garry to Pat McCloy, Cobble Hill, B.C., May 30, 1995.

<sup>75</sup> GMA, Acc. 72/604, Series 1, M8486/18 "William McKay and Maria Rowland (A14)," Bill McKay to Pat McCloy, Cardston, Feb. 28, 1980.

<sup>76</sup> GMA, Acc. 72/604, Series 1, M8486/18 "William McKay and Maria Rowland (A14)," Bill to Pat McCloy, Cardston, March 24, 1981.

Aboriginal ancestry. The authors of the letters did not state how they identified. They requested more data about relatives, an indication that maybe each family history researcher was not yet ready to make a conclusion.

The letters to McCloy showed how the learning spirits of these individuals gravitated toward learning of their family's Aboriginal past, and its representation in the documentary record that preceded them. They struggled to overcome the shame of having Aboriginal roots and started to see their heritages as an asset to their overall self. Cultural shame predated their generations; when these individuals began their research, they met with criticism and denial from family members.<sup>77</sup>

University of Saskatchewan Native Studies Professor Brenda Macdougall mentioned the barriers erected by family members who refused to acknowledge their mixed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ancestries in a letter to her mentor, the late Métis Activist Howard Adams. "You mentioned to me a relative of yours – named Macdougall. Could you send me some information on him. My half-sister is attempting to trace our Grandfather Macdougall's family. Your relative may be a connection that is worth checking out. So far my half-sister is getting nowhere with my Grandfather's background due to his efforts to hide his ancestry."<sup>78</sup> Late-twentieth-century Métis children and youth recovered the Aboriginal pasts of their ancestors as a means to overcome the cultural shame and the decline in the transmission of Métis knowledge, processes that began in the final years of the Red River Settlement.

#### Conclusion: Nourishment of the Lifelong Learning Journey

The knowledge of a sense of place where the ancestral memories of kin<sup>79</sup> were stored helped Métis youngsters to nourish their lifelong learning journeys. For George and Bill, the stories of the land allowed for them and their ancestors to cultivate indigenous space<sup>80</sup> on landscapes that newcomers claimed as their own. Unfortunately,

<sup>77</sup> Leo, personal interview, 9 October 2006.

<sup>78</sup> LAC, Howard Adams Fonds, "General Correspondence & related material 1993 2-5," Brenda Macdougall to Howard Adams, Oct. 3 '93.

<sup>79</sup> See David T. McNab, "A Long Journey: Reflections on Spirit Memory and Métis Identities" in Ute Lischke and David T. McNab, eds. *The Long Journey of a Forgotten People: Métis Identities & Family Histories*, Aboriginal Studies Series (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007) 21-37.

<sup>80</sup> I draw on the ideology of 'indigenous space' from Ocean Mercier, "An Academic Opportunity: Creating Indigenous Space in the Institution," public talk, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK, Canada, Thursday, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Ocean Mercier has challenged scholars to open the existing space in post-secondary institutions for Aboriginals.

not all Métis families were able to nourish and sustain these connections in the twentieth century.

Newcomer settlement not only physically displaced the Métis but also upset the transmission of cultural knowledge in Métis places and through the voices of Métis family members. Children like Valerie, Guy, and Joe grew up as non-Métis, ‘white,’ German, or French. Anna and Linda knew their families were not ‘white’ or part of settler society but lacked any knowledge of the origins of their families. As adults, places and kinship ties (i.e. marriage) enabled many learners to reconnect to their Métis roots or to attempt to reclaim their Métis heritage through involvement in activism. For Joe, his understanding of the Supreme Court’s ruling in the *R. v. Powley* case helped him to comprehend the legacy of Métis displacement in twentieth-century Saskatchewan. His remaining lifelong journey was dedicated to reconnecting to the roots of his ancestors and to the assertion of Métis nationalism in southeast Saskatchewan. Linda’s ‘sense of place’ came through her first encounters with Aboriginal politics and women’s rights organizing in Saskatoon. Knowledge transmission occurred through her participation in Aboriginal cultural events and women’s rights activism. The knowledge she gained and shared aided her to comprehend and nourish her lifelong learning journey. Gradually, the aforementioned participants sought to overcome the legacies of passing, cognitive imperialism, and ethnic drift that accompanied the post-Northwest Resistance years.

Linda’s anecdotes demonstrated that many Métis people became “strong like two people”<sup>81</sup> in the years that followed World War II. They attended public schools regularly, graduated high school, successfully pursued post-secondary education, and grasped Euro-Canadian literacy and numeracy. As adults, they knew how to participate in the modern state. They were citizens who voted, sat on school boards, and raised their own families who were proud to be Métis. They recognized that their learning journeys were not complete without recognition as Métis peoples with their own epistemologies and worldviews that informed how they saw the history of Saskatchewan and the purpose of education. Métis individuals like Val, Guy, Joe, Anna, and Linda learned of their Indigenous ancestry, sought out Métis knowledge in Métis places and with Métis Elders

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<sup>81</sup> Chuck Tolley, “3. Chief Jimmy Bruneau School,” *Sharing our Success: More Case Studies in Aboriginal Schooling*, George Fulford, ed. (Kelowna: Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, 2007) 96.

and Old People, and normalized these epistemologies and worldviews into their pre-existing cognitive framework that had been dominated by Eurocentric paradigms.

English literacy was not always a liberator of Métis peoples. Acquisition of literacy, numeracy, and citizenship skills did not mean progress for the Métis. Instead, those children who were raised to value English and French over Michif and Cree and western epistemologies and worldviews over the knowledge of their mothers and grandmothers questioned the inexplicable silences and fears of their parents. They knew gaps plagued their own personal schemas. In order to live a meaningful life, these learners sought out their “old” or traditional knowledge to complement the “new” knowledge shared with them by teachers, co-workers, professors, and newcomer community members.<sup>82</sup> Parental decisions to suppress ancestral ties in order to reinvent themselves did not help the next generations of children born into these post-Northwest Resistance families. Passing did not socially improve families’ lives. Instead, these silences and acts of concealment disrupted children’s learning journeys. Rather than assimilating into the newcomer or immigrant majority, they recovered the pasts of their mothers and grandmothers so that they could become ‘whole’ and transmit the cultural knowledge to their children and grandchildren.

The larger Aboriginal renaissance as well as the recent *Powley* ruling and the evolution of Métis-based educational organizations such as Kapachee Training Centre and the Gabriel Dumont Institute have positively affected the journey to identification as Métis. However, not all of the people who participated in my research established a concrete link between the political activism and educational advancement of the Métis and their own journey to becoming Métis. For Guy, it was also the relationships with the local Métis who helped to nourish his learning journey to understanding his Métis past.

The goal of chapter five is to understand how Métis knowledge of place, kinship ties, and the transmission of this information carried Métis learners through primary, secondary, and post-secondary schools in the West. This chapter also discusses how

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<sup>82</sup> The last two sentences draw from Anthony N. Ezeife, “Integrating the Learner’s Schema, Culture, and Environment into the Science Classroom: Some Cases Involving Traditional and Aboriginal Societies,” *Canadian and International Education* 30.1 (2001): 32. Ezeife said in reference to public school science curriculum that “to achieve meaningful science teaching, the teacher needs to recognize the existence of ‘old’ (traditional) knowledge (adequate or inadequate) when giving ‘new’ knowledge in a modern science classroom.”

Métis knowledge interacted with the Eurocentric pedagogy and curriculum of the public schools. These journeys are told through the voices of the learners who received their education in Saskatchewan's public schools.

## CHAPTER FIVE: Resilience, Persistence, and Confidence in Métis Girls and Boys: Educated by Traditional Families and Public Schools

### Introduction

The premiership of Tommy Douglas mandated public schooling for all children and youth in Saskatchewan. By 1960, his government had built or upgraded schools in almost all areas of the province. Legislative revisions extended the length of time that students spent in school; provincial laws required students to attend school until age sixteen. The growth in the number of public schools combined with the increased post-secondary training of public teachers diminished the authority of churches and families over children's learning. However, not all parents believed that the increased provincial influence on schools' pedagogy and curriculum would reduce their role in their children's learning. Métis families were able to negotiate the authority of the schools with the knowledge shared by their ancestors. Families encouraged their children to attend and stay in school so that they could become "strong like two people"<sup>1</sup> or be able to compete on "any level, anywhere."<sup>2</sup> Children whose families encouraged them to attend school, that shared knowledge of Michif, Cree, and Dene and kin ties, and fostered in their children a sense of attachment to place or one's homeland all in the languages of their grandparents succeeded academically and socially. They were resilient, despite facing linguistic challenges and teachers and students who did not understand the history of the Métis as one of the First peoples of Canada and poverty, persistent with their studies, and confident in their abilities as workers and post-secondary students. The lessons shared by their parents applied equally to girls and boys.

In this chapter, I take a look at five Métis children and youth who became the first individuals in their families to spend a substantial period of their childhood years at school. I argue here that these students fared well in school because of the family supports that existed in their homes; supports that facilitated resilience, persistence, and confidence. These same students also knew the places and the lands where they

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<sup>1</sup> Chuck Tolley, "3. Chief Jimmy Bruneau School," *Sharing our Success: More Case Studies in Aboriginal Schooling*, George Fulford, ed. (Kelowna: Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, 2007) 96.

<sup>2</sup> David Bell, Ed., *Sharing Our Success: Ten Case Studies in Aboriginal Schooling* (Kelowna: Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, 2004) 30.

originated; the kinship ties that bound them; and the languages that gave them access to their Métis worldviews. Their families also valued formal learning and encouraged their children to attend school. Following a brief discussion of the literature on Métis learning and its intersection with contemporary schooling, I introduce and analyze Métis students' school days through the narratives and perspectives of these five Métis children and youth.

### Language, Bilingualism, and Biculturalism

Postcolonial scholars of education like Marie Battiste and S'ak'ej Henderson know that language was the gateway to the traditions and heritages shared by Indigenous peoples around the world. Children who understood the languages of their ancestors had access to knowledge of their peoples' history and their relationships with the land and kin. Most scholars argued correctly that Eurocentric schooling contributed to a subtractive bilingualism. Students learned English, but the acquisition of this language resulted in the loss of their literacy in indigenous languages. And students whose learning concentrated entirely on English language proficiency, both in school and at home, did not graduate with the ability to speak, read, and write English at the same level as Native English speakers. Instead, "students...don't speak either of their two [or more] languages very well"<sup>3</sup> and were "torn between participating in the wage economy and following a traditional lifestyle."<sup>4</sup> However, the adult relatives of the Métis children discussed in this chapter attempted to maintain their children's proficiency in Michif, Cree, and Dene and preserve the knowledge shared through the traditions of their ancestors, such as hunting, fishing, and trapping. This way, formal schooling and informal learning gave these children a bicultural education; their children did not have to sacrifice their ancestries in order to succeed in formal learning. By being proud of their ancestry, these same children established relationships with teachers and fellow students that were based on respect and reciprocity, and teachers tried to make the pedagogy and

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<sup>3</sup> Ian Martin, "Aajiqatigiingniq language of instruction research paper: A report to the Government of Nunavut, Iqaluit, Nunavut, Canada," 2000, retrieved 19 June 2007 at <http://www.gov.nu.ca/education/eng/pubdoc/ENG%20LOI%20Report.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Ron Saunders, "Employer Investment in Workplace Learning: Report on the Yellowknife Roundtable," Work and Learning Knowledge Centre and Canadian Policy Research Networks: Ottawa, Canada, 17 pages.

curriculum relevant to their students' lives. This way, schooling for these learners strengthened the pre-existing Métis knowledge these youngsters took to the classroom.

Bicultural education enabled learners to 'find their faces,' "which means finding out who you are, where you come from, and your unique character... That education should help you to find a foundation on which you may most completely develop and express both your heart and your face. That foundation is your vocation."<sup>5</sup> Adults who raised Métis children to value Cree, Michif, and Dene, ties to the land, and kinship bonds nurtured children who also valued formal learning situations; their parents were able to provide constructive solutions to any discrimination, intolerance, and hostility that their children faced.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, learners tried to find learning environments that nourished their self-esteem, and they attempted to inform teachers of the Métis past in Saskatchewan. Ties to traditional languages, the land, and knowledge of kinship bonds energized students and inspired them to gravitate toward the learning and training that attracted their learning spirits.

Pueblo scholar Gregory Cajete warned that most schooling was designed by non-Aboriginal people and therefore did not meet the needs of Aboriginal learners. As well, "most research on Aboriginal learning is oriented toward the educational deficits of Aboriginal people, overlooks positive learning outcomes, and does not account for the unique political, social and economic realities of First Nations, Inuit and Métis."<sup>7</sup> As well, the standardized tests used in schools operated under the assumption that all important learning occurred at the schools. Teachers and administrators believed that schools were the only places where cognitive and intellectual development occurred, and the data they collected on students, such as grades, did "not reflect Aboriginal experiential learning and traditional educational activities outside the walls of the classroom."<sup>8</sup>

The families of the five Métis children examined here were able to inspire in their children respect for teachers' expectations, that they understand lessons in English

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<sup>5</sup> Gregory Cajete, "Indigenous knowledge: The Pueblo Metaphor of Indigenous Education," in Marie Battiste, ed., *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000) 183.

<sup>6</sup> See Jacqueline Ottoman, "10. Princess Alexandra Community School," in Bell, 2004, p. 225.

<sup>7</sup> Canadian Council on Learning, "Redefining how Success is Measured in First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Learning," final draft, October, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Canadian Council on Learning 5.

literacy, numeracy, and citizenship, and in the subjects associated with the English language. Adults in their families shared with their children the teachings conveyed by the Elders, Old People, and healers of the previous generations, who stressed the development and maintenance of ties to place, kinship, hunting, fishing, and trapping, and language. Métis children's families not only shared the knowledge of their families' pasts and fostered the chance for their children to ignite the spirit of learning, but adults in these families also complied with the educational laws of post-World War II Saskatchewan and encouraged their children in the pursuit of English literacy, numeracy, and citizenship<sup>9</sup> and supported their children's attempts to educate their teachers about the Métis past. Children learned that they are spirit, heart, mind, and body; that they were a part of creation and not in control of it or separate from it; and that they had a purpose in this world, a purpose that urged them to direct their learning toward the discovery of their gifts.<sup>10</sup> Whereas these students' families taught them to direct their energies to the discovery of their gifts, schools worked on English literacy, numeracy, and citizenship or stressed mental competencies. Using the knowledge of Cree, Michif, and Dene, kinship ties, place, and spirituality, and the English language skills gained from the public schools, these children became adults who had both a strong personal identity and an understanding of their place in a larger, collective consciousness.<sup>11</sup>

The Métis children discussed in this chapter were the progeny of a strong, collective consciousness passed on to them by parents and other adults who valued the pasts of their ancestors but understood the importance of formal schools for the future success of their children and the Métis Nation. In addition to the gifts of language, kinship ties, and the sense of place, these five Métis children were resilient, persistent, and confident learners and workers. They attended school in the 1950s and 1960s, the years when the Government of Saskatchewan enforced mandatory school attendance. And the lessons shared by families applied equally to girls and boys.

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<sup>9</sup> Gloria Mehlmann, *Gifted to Learn* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008) 22.

<sup>10</sup> Jonathan Anuik, Marie Battiste, and Ningwakwe George, "Comprehending and Nourishing the Learning Spirit: A Final Summary Report on the Literature Reviews Conducted by Animation Theme Bundle 2," Report for the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre, Canadian Council on Learning, forthcoming.

<sup>11</sup> Donald Taylor, *The Quest for Identity: From Minority Groups to Generation Xers* (Westport: Praeger, 2002) 11-12.

### Women's Roles, Gender Norms, and the Métis Nation

Métis girls and boys were not raised according to the gendered norms shared by post-World War II settler society. Although the following poem that appeared in the *La Loche Weekly News* in December, 1983 conveyed a normalized ideal of women's roles in Christmas celebrations, the anecdotes shared later in this chapter depicted different learning expectations for Métis women in post-World War II Saskatchewan. Parents, grandparents, and other family members' educational goals for their girls differed sharply from those held by non-Métis families, and the messages shared by adults with the girls in their families were closer in meaning to the criticisms of second-wave feminists.

Métis girls' lives did not always resonate with the gendered teachings embodied in the following poem, published as part of community literacy class project in the Dene-Métis village of La Loche, Saskatchewan:

Christmas:  
 Christmas is a jolly time  
 Gifts are wrapped beautiful  
 Decorations and lights  
 looked lovely  
 They sparkle and glow  
 The people are busy shopping  
 The ladies are busy in the kitchen  
 Baking goodies for a christmas [sic] dinner  
 christmas [sic] is a happy time;  
 even though; lots of money  
 is spent on gifts; clothes  
 and decorations.  
 But its [sic] to celebrate the  
 birth of christ [sic] our Savior.<sup>12</sup>

This poem identified some of the Christian and commercial rituals behind the holiday of Christmas; it also suggested women's roles in the preparation for Christmas in this Dene-Métis community. In many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal homes, women spent their Christmases in the kitchen cooking Christmas dinner and baking Christmas treats. However, baking in the kitchen was not the only responsibility for Métis girls, according to the anecdotes shared with me in this chapter.

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<sup>12</sup> "Christmas," *La Loche Weekly News* 9 (December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1983) n.p.

Valerie Korinek and Joanne Meyerowitz argued in the respective contexts of 1950s-1960s Canada and the United States that the visible second-wave feminist activism of the late 1960s and early 1970s had its origins in the decades that immediately preceded it. Anglophone and Francophone print media started to transmit teachings of women's equality alongside women's and men's critiques of inequality in the educational system and the workplace to girls who were the descendants of settlers and immigrants in the 1950s. However, such critiques neglected to consider the teachings that Aboriginal families shared with their children about women's and men's public and private roles and responsibilities.<sup>13</sup>

Métis women's histories afford two opportunities. Firstly, one may learn of how gender affected informal learning, or learning that occurred in Métis families, and secondly, one may examine Métis women's reflections on the messages shared with them by their parents and other adults. "Colonization affects men and women differently"<sup>14</sup> and in order to understand how Christian and public schools affected Métis identity formation, one must consider if there are distinct women's experiences that were the result of families' teachings and school attendance. Two Métis women's histories discussed how family members challenged them to think about their career and life aspirations outside of rigid gendered norms enforced by settler society; baking was not the only expected or prescribed role for these Métis girls. These stories are not based on a large data sample. The stories shared by the participants were not the outcome of a direct line of questioning used by me; the participants were not asked how their gender influenced their knowledge of Métiness, and the academic expectations they and their teachers had of them at school. Instead, these two women offered their stories to me and framed them in contexts that considered women's roles and families' expectations.

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<sup>13</sup> See Valerie J. Korinek, *Roughing it in the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties* (Toronto: UTP, 2000) and Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Post-war America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

<sup>14</sup> Emma Larocque, "The Colonization of a Native Woman Scholar," Mary-Ellen Kelm and Lora Townsend, eds., *In the Days of Our Grandmothers: A Reader in Aboriginal Women's History in Canada* (Toronto: UTP, 2006) 398.

### The Participants and their Families

The Métis children discussed in this chapter are: Beverley, Bernice, Julius, Mary-Rose, and Margaret. The five individuals were born between 1940 and 1966. All five students attended school in Saskatchewan.

Beverley and Mary-Rose grew up in the southeast Saskatchewan towns of Sintaluta and Macoun respectively. Beverley's grandmother cared for her. Beverley remembered that her grandmother "believed nothing was a secret which I think kept our family very special. And we were told about our relations and discussed relationship matters."<sup>15</sup> Mary-Rose described herself as the daughter of "a Native American and a Métis woman."<sup>16</sup> Mary-Rose's parents separated before she started grade one, and she lived with her maternal grandfather for the majority of her formative years. However, Mary-Rose stated that her home life was stable and that she grew up comfortably. Margaret was born into the Pelletier family in 1941. She spent eleven years of her life at Katepwa Lake, Saskatchewan. Her father, Frederick Pelletier, had heart problems for most of his adult life; he died in 1952. After her father's death, Margaret's mother moved the family to the Souris River Valley; they lived at Estevan and later at Macoun.

Beverley and Mary-Rose's families taught their history and language to the children and ensured that they went to school. In 1932, Beverley's recently widowed grandmother moved her children out of the Qu'Appelle Valley and into Sintaluta, Saskatchewan. According to Beverley, her grandmother said she moved so that her children could be educated.<sup>17</sup> In Mary-Rose's family, her maternal grandfather ensured that she attended school.

I lived with him the most after I started school. He made sure I got to school. It was quite a struggle for him because we lived two-and-a-half miles at the end of a prairie trail. Therefore, the school bus couldn't even come to our place. He would have to get me to the school bus stop by himself. He had a variety of ways to get there. He had an old Model T car. I remember helping him start it in the mornings. I would hold something by the steering wheel, and he would crank and away we would go, and he would drive me to the bus stop, \*laughs.\* The other way was the sleigh. He would have to get up pretty early, in the dark, and get out there and hitch up the horses and get me over to the school bus stop. Later, they had to pay

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<sup>15</sup> Beverley Worsley, personal interview, 24 October 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Mary-Rose Boyer, personal interview, 26 May 2006.

<sup>17</sup> Beverley Worsley.

someone for me to live in town, for a while, when I was in grade two and grade three.<sup>18</sup>

Beverley and Mary-Rose's grandparents stressed the value of formal education for their children's social and economic success in post-World War II Saskatchewan.

Siblings Bernice and Julius grew up in the northwest Saskatchewan town of La Loche. Julius described the town as a Dene community,<sup>19</sup> and Bernice told of her family's history in the town. "My family, we, there was twelve of us, mom and dad, and I started school here when I was six-and-a-half, and I went to church here, same church, Catholic church, and my dad was a fisherman, a trapper, he worked seasonal for at that time they called it DNR or Resources, and my mom raised us, she was a homemaker plus she did laundry and housekeeping for at that time the Hudson's Bay Company and their staff, she did that and me, I grew up here, and I went to school here, and we all lived in La Loche."<sup>20</sup> Bernice left La Loche for a brief period of time so that she could attend high school in Prince Albert, but when Julius was ready for high school, one had already opened in town.

Like the adults in Beverley and Mary-Rose's families, Bernice and Julius's parents also stressed the importance of school; their parents encouraged their children to stay in school. Bernice emphasized that her parents believed that "we needed an education"<sup>21</sup> and that this encouragement kept her in school. Julius echoed Bernice's comments. He said that "my parents knew that we needed to be in school, we needed to learn, and they supported us and encouraged us to stay and maintain that, continue to go to school and get an education, get our grade twelve and move into other areas when you finish grade twelve, so I would say that support from our parents kept us going to school."<sup>22</sup> For all of the children and youth, the importance that the family placed on education fostered a love of learning and strengthened their commitment to finishing school, despite the challenges that could surface.

These five Métis people said that their families provided them with the knowledge of the rich traditions that preceded them such as the languages of the Métis, ties to kin

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<sup>18</sup> Mary-Rose Boyer.

<sup>19</sup> Julius Park, personal interview, 8 February 2008.

<sup>20</sup> Bernice Park Campbell, personal interview, 15 April 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Bernice Park Campbell.

<sup>22</sup> Julius Park.

and to the land, and a sense of place in creation. However, their parents and grandparents valued formal schooling, and encouraged their children to attend school, despite linguistic challenges as well as teachers who did not understand the Métis as one of the First peoples of Canada. However, the strong, collective consciousness from which these children originated fed their self-esteem and enabled them to overcome language barriers, to defend their ancestries if questioned by teachers or students, and to gravitate toward those learning and work situations that appealed to them. These children turned learning environments that had the potential to erase their identities into positive learning experiences that resulted in strong friendships with non-Aboriginal students and affirmation of their families' histories by teachers. Resilience in the face of potential adversity, persistence in school and at work, and confidence in their abilities as well-educated Aboriginal people allowed these students to gain strong footholds in the Métis Nation and modern Canada. These students attempted, whenever possible, to convert the prejudices and inaccurate stereotypes held by teachers and their fellow students into learning experiences that would clarify understandings of the history of the Métis in Saskatchewan.

### Resilience

Three students faced challenges in the classrooms of their schools from teachers and fellow students and townspeople. Issues shared with me related to language, enumeration on school forms, relationships with teachers, and mindsets influenced by racism. In the following narratives, participants credited their parents and grandparents for supporting them through the adversities and challenges associated with school and socio-economic inequality between the Métis and settlers in twentieth-century Saskatchewan.

Bernice highlighted the difficulties she encountered when she was learning to read and write in English in an era when English as a Second Language instruction was, for the most part, non-existent in public and separate schools in Saskatchewan. For Bernice, learning the alphabet, how to read, how to count, and to speak English at school was “an experience, something new because we spoke Dene at home, but when you first start school, and someone is speaking to you in a foreign language, and that was a foreign language at that time, but I remember my mom telling me that the teacher doesn't speak

Dene, and you have to listen, and you have to learn to speak English, so it wasn't a scary experience or anything."<sup>23</sup> Bernice believed that her mother knew she needed to attend school so that she could "be enriched by new knowledge that supplemented [her pre-existing] Aboriginal knowledge."<sup>24</sup>

Beverley's grandmother served as the gateway into the history of her family and their kinship ties to the Qu'Appelle Valley of southeast Saskatchewan. Her grandmother's honesty and openness toward her when she was a child and later when she went to school gave her the strength to defend the integrity of her ancestry in two situations. The two situations were: when she registered for public school and in her relationships with her teachers and her classmates.

Beverley remembered a registration form from one of the first days of class during one of her elementary school years. There was a question on the form that asked the students to identify the ethnic background of their families. Beverley told the teacher that she "couldn't fill out the form because I was not French but French and Cree. The teacher insisted that I choose one option or another. And I replied 'no,' and the teacher replied: 'you had better fill out the form.' I wouldn't, and that was in grade 6, and I refused to sign something that was not myself."<sup>25</sup> Despite the pressure from the teacher to fit in to a prescribed ethnic category, Beverley refused to register for school under an ancestry to which she did not belong.

Beverley was aware of the mindsets people held concerning the Métis population of her community. She recalled that although the Métis and non-Métis children grew up together and played together, there were some settler families who did not allow their children to play with the children of Aboriginal ancestry. One of Beverley's friends stated that she "did not understand why she was not allowed to play with me. She would say: 'my parents think you are a dirty half-breed, but your house is always cleaner than ours.' We did get to play together because she told her parents she was going to run away and that I had talked her out of it."<sup>26</sup> Beverley knew residents of her town considered her "and several of the families to be poor. People considered us, the Métis in

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<sup>23</sup> Bernice Park Campbell.

<sup>24</sup> Marie Battiste, "Enabling the Autumn Seed: Toward a Decolonized Approach to Aboriginal Knowledge, Language, and Education," *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 22.1 (1998): 19.

<sup>25</sup> Beverley Worsley.

<sup>26</sup> Beverley Worsley.

the community, to be poor. We didn't have a lot of things, but I didn't consider ourselves poor. We didn't have a lot of material things. We had things because we made them."<sup>27</sup>

Beverley observed that many of the Métis children and youth lived between acceptance and contempt and inclusion and isolation. When the students in her class at her school misbehaved, many teachers punished only the Métis children in the classroom. Beverley remembered all of the students jumping out of the window of her classroom to avoid punishment from the teacher but that she was the only one who was punished by the teacher. Beverley attributed her resilience to the pressures heaped on her by her teachers and the occasional racial conflicts with the other students to her grandmother's love, care, and the wealth of history she shared with her granddaughter.

Like Beverley, Mary-Rose understood the prejudices held by the settlers in and around her home town of Macoun. She mentioned that people thought of all of the local Aboriginals as alcoholics or as predisposed to unemployment. However, Mary-Rose knew that her family members did not always have these same problems and therefore, they did not deserve to fit into such arbitrary designations.

I knew that people were talking about other First Nations and Métis people in the community as being Souris Valley Half-Breed River Rats or something like that and in a way, that was quite negative, of course, but I would say that I don't like Indian people being talked about as being shiftless and lazy, and I just said maybe there are people who are Métis who are lazy, but my family is not like that because my grandfather and all of my uncles were hard workers, and they had good and decent jobs in the community. Everybody had drinking problems, every family, so it wasn't a big deal, especially in Macoun, \*laughs.\* You know, when I was growing up, it wasn't just my father. Although he would come home with drinking partners, there was this one guy who was Norwegian, and therefore, I know that not only Indian people got drunk, \*laughs.\* And then the other thing was that I had uncles, and my uncle and my grandfather were veterans, and I think that had an effect on how the community treated me because there was a great deal of respect for the veterans.<sup>28</sup>

Mary-Rose's awareness of the respect held by residents for veterans; that her family members always worked; and that challenges to the social cohesion of Macoun related to alcohol consumption were not unique to her family enabled her to resist accepting false stereotypes. This knowledge helped her to confront the ignorance of local residents.

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<sup>27</sup> Beverley Worsley.

<sup>28</sup> Mary-Rose Boyer.

Local residents, their children, and the teachers they employed did not understand the history of the Métis as one of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. Learners like Mary-Rose helped their teachers and fellow classmates to appreciate the ancestries of their mothers and grandmothers, fathers and grandfathers. Because Mary-Rose and Bev had the Métis collective consciousness to draw on, these two children were able to turn negative or challenging learning environments into positive experiences. Mary-Rose and Bev understood the negative impressions that some settlers and their families had of the Métis, but their pride in their shared Métis ancestry eclipsed the negative sentiments of non-Aboriginal community members. These two learners sought out healthy relationships that built up their self-esteem or in the case of Bev, left school until they could find a supportive learning environment that affirmed their ancestries. Overall, Mary-Rose and Bev read conflicts at school as challenges, and they strived to turn what they saw as misunderstandings into learning outcomes that validated their families' pasts. They believed that learning could affirm their Métis ancestry; teachers and students often responded enthusiastically to their hopes.

Margaret believed that her mother made an important decision that affected her family's life in an impoverished road allowance Métis community in the Qu'Appelle Valley after her father died. Margaret remembered the reasons her mother gave for the relocation of the family to Estevan.

Mother couldn't provide for the family if she continued to live at Katepwa Lake by herself. Before he died, my father told her that she should move away from the Valley because there was strife between her and many of our relatives in the area. There was a lot of alcohol and drinking when I was younger, and it was very, very scary. I would see my uncle drunk, and where we lived, there was so many families in the area, and some of them were not churchgoing people. Anyhow, it was pretty rocky in there, especially at election time when liquor was bought for the people for their vote and so you would see people drunk all over, and it was terrible.<sup>29</sup>

The steps taken by Margaret's mother to secure a financially and emotionally safer environment for her children served as an example of her mother's ability to lead the family out of poverty and away from a dysfunctional community. She admired her mother's ability to raise her children as a single parent. Margaret believed her mother

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<sup>29</sup> Margaret Harrison.

inspired her to resist the challenges associated with violence and poverty faced by many Métis families and children in the post-World War II years.

Bernice, Julius, Beverley, Mary-Rose, and Margaret believed that the adults in their families taught them resilience, especially when they faced ignorance, stereotypes, or social and economic adversities. Beverley believed that she retained her Métis identity, despite attempts by teachers to identify her as French, Cree, or some other ethnic variation. Bernice and Julius continued to go to school even though they experienced many challenges associated with learning English. Mary-Rose retained her pride in her family; she knew veterans were respected and that her family members were respected members of the village of Macoun. Margaret's mother showed that Métis families were not helpless and vulnerable to the overtures of politicians. Instead, her mother relocated the family and ensured that they remained self-sufficient in the years after her father's death. In addition to being resilient, these same children were dedicated to their studies. For these Métis children, school helped them to gain new skills that would enable them to enrich their existing knowledge of a shared Métis past.

### Persistence

Julius and Mary-Rose gave credit to the schools for two reasons: validation of pre-existing knowledge and the chance to participate in extracurricular activities that motivated them to stay in school. In the 1950s, school curriculum planners and teachers started to recognize the contributions of Canada's Aboriginals to Canadian history and contemporary Canadian society. Teachers recognized their First Nations and Métis students as the first peoples of Canada, and some teachers rewarded students who discussed their family backgrounds in class assignments.<sup>30</sup> Mary-Rose was fortunate because she had an enlightened teacher who validated her family as one of the First Peoples of North America.

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<sup>30</sup> It is important to remember that this 'recognition' was not in the official policy of the provincial Department of Education or the school boards. Systemic and blatant racism was still present in many schools, school divisions, classrooms, and administrative offices in the 1960s and 1970s. See one Cree/Saulteaux's teacher's reflections on the 1960s and 1970s in Mehlmann. Mehlmann said that many children in the 1960s, when she started teaching, "were [still] taught a false and damaging picture of who they actually were," (22) and few curriculum resources existed, despite recognition by educational administrators and curriculum planners in the 1960s and 1970s that the current textbooks did not affirm Aboriginal peoples' identities (255-256).

Mary-Rose believed an important achievement in her schooling occurred when she was a fourth-grade student in a social studies class at a public school in Estevan, Saskatchewan in 1955, a town near her home community of Macoun. Mary-Rose and her classmates had to prepare a family tree for homework.

I was going to school in Estevan, in a public school where I was the only Métis child, as far as I knew. The teacher asked us to do this ‘ethnic background check.’ Everybody reported back on the next day. They told who they were (i.e. I am English or French). Then it came to my turn, and I replied: ‘my grandmother was a Chippewa from Turtle Mountain.’ Then, I noticed a little bit of a silence in the classroom, kind of a break in the rhythm. Then, the teacher said to the class: ‘well,’ she said, ‘there’s really only one person in this classroom that we can say is Canadian’ and of course that was me. My ancestors had resettled in what became Canada. And because she saw my ancestry as a positive thing, the students did too; they thought my family tree was just as good as theirs were. No one bothered me, and life continued as before. I had a lot of friends and fun.<sup>31</sup>

The teacher satisfied two of Cajete’s requirements for the successful learning of Aboriginal students: Mary-Rose looked in the mirror (or the pedagogy and curriculum of her class) and saw her family’s history and conveyed it to the class; she saw herself in the mirror when she looked at Canadian history and by doing this she was also able to see Canadian history from her own point of view. And the teacher reinforced her understanding of the history of Aboriginal peoples in western Canadian history by informing the students that she was one of the First Peoples of North America and one of the First peoples of the country. Acceptance, celebration, and nurturing by the teacher helped to build Mary-Rose’s confidence in her abilities as a student and positively affected her learning journey; Mary-Rose wanted to continue to go to school and stayed dedicated to formal learning.

Part of the reform to school curriculum, pedagogy, and infrastructure was increased investment in extracurricular activities like sports teams by the Government of Saskatchewan. These government investments helped Métis children and youth to get involved in sports. Julius’s involvement in sports combined with his parents’ involvement in hunting, fishing, and trapping, and like Mary-Rose, dedicated and caring teachers and coaches, sustained his interest in formal learning. “In my position, I was involved in a lot of sports at school and to be able to play on a sports team, you needed to

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<sup>31</sup> Mary-Rose Boyer.

be in school, and you needed to maintain a good academic average if you were to participate in sports. In the school, I think there were some people that supported you, and there were teachers as well, there were friends as well, and they cared about our education and helped us along the way, both the teachers and the sports kept me in school.”<sup>32</sup> When he was not playing basketball or travelling to compete in tournaments, Julius spent time on the land with his parents. Julius remembers going “on a few hunting expeditions, duck hunting, and we were connected to the environment.”<sup>33</sup> Julius remembered the teachings embodied in these lessons on the land and their linkages to the larger history of the Dene people; like Mary-Rose, his schooling enriched his existing knowledge.

For Mary-Rose and Julius, the teachers and coaches kept them interested in school. Therefore, both their parents and their teachers inspired in them a passion for learning. For these two individuals, formal learning enriched their pre-existing knowledge because the “goals of the home and community ‘matches the school’ and vice versa;”<sup>34</sup> instruction was useful because “it respects and builds upon the cultural integrity of the student;”<sup>35</sup> and schools operated on the basis of respect and reciprocity between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals. These children and youth who had caring and respectful teachers and supportive families were confident in their academic and social abilities when they started post-secondary school or went to work.

### Confidence

Beverley and Mary-Rose grew up in families whose adults spoke Cree and Michif and shared the stories of their family’s history in southeast Saskatchewan with their children. Role models in their families aided them in combating the racial sentiments expressed by non-Aboriginals in town. Although Beverley’s school teachers did not appreciate her Métis heritage, her grandmother’s teachings gave her the strength to endure the prejudicial remarks, attitudes, and attempted forced isolation imposed by the

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<sup>32</sup> Julius Park.

<sup>33</sup> Julius Park.

<sup>34</sup> Ruth Epstein, “The languages we speak: Aboriginal learners and English as an additional language in the literature: Promising approaches and practices,” a literature review prepared for Manitoba Education Citizenship & Youth, 2007, p. 34; also see H. Roessingh, “The teacher is the key: Building trust in ESL high school programs,” *The Canadian Modern Language Review* 62.4 (2006): 563-590.

<sup>35</sup> Verna J. Kirkness and Ray Barnhardt, “First Nations and higher education: The four rs—Respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility,” *Journal of American Indian Higher Education* 30.3 (1991): n.p.

‘white’ majority. Mary-Rose’s family shared her family’s history with her and instilled in her feelings of pride in her family’s ties to the region. Both women’s families stressed the importance of formal education and emotionally, spiritually, and cognitively helped to sustain them throughout these early years of their learning journeys. Margaret attributed the independence of her mother to her confidence in her ability to financially support herself after she finished school. Bernice believed that her parents imparted to her that “you can have your traditional knowledge or your culture, and you can have your education that teaches you to speak at the same level as anyone else, and you can still have your language.”<sup>36</sup> All of the women thought that their confidence as learners and workers was directly influenced by the teachings of their families; two of the women acknowledged that their parents and grandparents did not discriminate or compartmentalize their teachings according to the gender of their children.

Margaret’s and Mary-Rose’s experiences in school and at work inspired me to question if these women were the progeny of value systems not yet influenced by feminist teachings. Their personal narratives revealed that Métis parents valued formal education for both their sons and daughters, and that family members did not frame their expectations for their children in terms of gender roles. They stressed financial and social independence for their daughters, at least for a short time until marriage. Although no direct link may be established between their personal histories and the teachings of second-wave feminism, whose liberal adherents stressed equality of educational and workplace opportunities alongside men, it appeared that these women went on to raise children and had already internalized the values and lessons conveyed by second-wave feminists.

After moving her family to the Souris River Valley, Margaret’s mother worked for farmers and hunters cleaning ducks and geese. When Margaret turned fifteen, she quit school. Her mother responded by taking her to Estevan and finding her a job.

So mother took me down to the hospital which was Catholic and Catholic-run, and she took me down there and said to the nun: ‘this girl is not going to school, she doesn’t want to go to school anymore, so you better put her to work,’ \*laughs.\* The nun replied: ‘alright Mrs. Pelletier, I’ll put her to work.’ So I got a job right there and so then mother took me and my girlfriend Eva, who was non-Catholic and not Métis, but who was also fifteen, out of school, and now employed at the same

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<sup>36</sup> Bernice Park Campbell.

hospital as I, to get an apartment because mother lived in Macoun, and this was Estevan. We had to have a place to live, and mother wouldn't allow me to stay with relatives, she would not let me do that.<sup>37</sup>

Margaret's mother wanted her to learn how to be financially independent. Margaret and her mother "found this apartment, it was a little attic room is what it was. It had no door on it, so we lived in an attic room with our bed. And we had only a hot plate, a bed, and a dresser, double bed, and that was our apartment. I forget how much we paid for that each month."<sup>38</sup> Margaret met her husband a short time after she started work at the hospital, and the two married when she was sixteen.<sup>39</sup>

Mary-Rose provided several examples of how her upbringing in the 1940s and 1950s differed from that of girls born into settler families. She remembered

being treated well by my maternal grandfather, like his princess, \*laughs.\* I see pictures of myself with my grandfather, and he seems to be quite a doting grandfather. He would take me with him when he was building his new house, probably to get me out of my mother's hair, \*laughs.\* I would have been only about four, and he would be pounding nails and doing whatever he had to do to build this house. But he would be with me and in some pictures, he was there with the little girl, me, doing little girl things.<sup>40</sup>

In Mary-Rose's family, education was important; Mary-Rose's maternal grandfather ensured she went to school. At age thirteen, Mary-Rose moved into her father's home where she stayed until she left for university when she was eighteen. This living arrangement benefited Mary-Rose. She mentioned that her father was involved in Cooperative Commonwealth Federation politics. She said that her father "never treated me like a child, he treated me like an adult. Therefore, he discussed politics with me. At first, I couldn't say hardly anything because I didn't know anything. My father was pretty smart and if you wanted to debate with him you had to know your stuff, \*laughs.\*"<sup>41</sup>

Mary-Rose explained that despite the dissolution of her parents' marriage, the messages they and her grandfather conveyed were uniform and helpful. As a preteen,

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<sup>37</sup> Margaret Harrison.

<sup>38</sup> Margaret Harrison.

<sup>39</sup> Margaret Harrison.

<sup>40</sup> Mary-Rose Boyer.

<sup>41</sup> Mary-Rose Boyer.



5.1 Margaret’s paternal grandparents (left to right): Vitalene (Cardinell) Pelletier and Josuē Pelletier. Photo taken at Macoun, Saskatchewan in 1959. Photo provided by Margaret Harrison.

Mary-Rose remembered that her mother told her to stay in school so that she “could become an independent person.”<sup>42</sup> Her father taught her not to classify work as men’s work and women’s work. Instead, her father stressed that availability should determine who worked and its arrangement.<sup>43</sup> She remembered one conversation between her grandparents before she graduated high school. She told her grandmother: “I was applying for scholarships and deciding what I was going to do. I listened to grandma telling him what I was doing. They didn’t know I was listening. Grandpa said: ‘she will do well regardless of the career she chooses.’”<sup>44</sup> As a young adult at the University of

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<sup>42</sup> Mary-Rose Boyer.

<sup>43</sup> Mary-Rose Boyer.

<sup>44</sup> Mary-Rose Boyer.

Regina in an era when women expected equality with men, Mary-Rose learned through conversations with girlfriends in her classes that she had been raised differently from the



5.2 Ernest Boyer, Mary-Rose's father, on the left with a woman by the surname Shaw who was his partner for several years. Ernest initially hired Shaw as his housekeeper. Photo provided by Marianne Lukye (Blondeau). Ernest dated Margaret's mother in the years following the family's move to Macoun and prior to Ernest's relationship with the lady in this photo.<sup>45</sup> Date of photo is unknown.

majority of her female classmates. Many of her classmates, who were the daughters of immigrants and settlers, came from families who pressured them to marry and discouraged their pursuit of post-secondary education.<sup>46</sup>

Independence, education, and lessons in gender equality were the experiences shared by Margaret and Mary-Rose. These two Métis women received these lessons through informal education offered by their parents and practiced them in wage labour

<sup>45</sup> Margaret Harrison, personal communication, 14 March 2007.

<sup>46</sup> Mary-Rose Boyer.

and in their professional pursuits. For Mary-Rose, the knowledge of her right to an education alongside men and to share in the household work and in duties in the workplace resulted in her not being able to identify with the goals of the nascent women's liberation movement of the 1960s. She did not identify because her beliefs contradicted the values her girlfriends shared, but instead because the teachings of her parents and grandparents had already conveyed the messages of second-wave feminism. Overall, the women profiled in this section were confident in their academic, social, and work skills; their parents and the other adults in their family taught them how to be independent and confident adults.

#### Discussion: Resilience, Persistence, and Confidence

Contemporary educational scholars argue that Aboriginal students who succeeded in formal schooling came from homes where traditional languages, ties to the land, and kinship bonds were reinforced and celebrated.<sup>47</sup> Their parents valued formal learning and encouraged their children to attend school; they provided constructive solutions to challenges or negative encounters their children experienced with intolerance, stereotypes, prejudice, and language. In the case of the five Métis children discussed in this chapter, not only did they emerge with the skills needed to persevere in formal learning and to find their faces and their vocations, they and their families developed resilience. They stayed focused on formal learning and were persistent in their attendance at school. And they were confident in their academic abilities and wanted to share their ancestral knowledge.<sup>48</sup>

Families' support of their children's educational pursuits inspired resilience, persistence, and confidence in Métis youngsters. Beverley refused to accept an identity assigned by her teacher; she refused to sign a document that did not correctly enumerate who she was as an individual. The adults in the Park family advised their children to stay committed to their studies, despite linguistic challenges. The adults in Margaret and Mary-Rose's families encouraged their daughters and granddaughters to pursue advanced education and work before marriage and urged them to be financially and socially

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<sup>47</sup> See Bell and Fulford.

<sup>48</sup> Ottoman 225.

independent, at least for a few years. All of these youngsters were able to function in modern society as Métis adults; they had the skills to succeed in settler communities.

### Conclusion

Ties to traditional languages, the land, and knowledge of kinship bonds energized students and inspired them to gravitate toward learning and work situations that attracted their learning spirits. The Métis learners discussed in this chapter graduated from school with a strong base of knowledge of Métis society and with the English literacy, numeracy, and citizenship skills needed to pursue advanced education and work in modern Canada. The life histories discussed in this chapter are evidence of the ability of students to perform well in the classroom and, when necessary, defend the integrity of their ancestries. Students' parents valued the contributions of formal schools to the education of the Métis, but their families shared their pasts with their children and spoke of these pasts in Cree, Michif, and Dene. These children's knowledge of their Métis ancestry helped them to be resilient; they had the internal psychological strength to inform their teachers and fellow classmates of the history of the Métis and correct any misinterpretations by historians, textbook writers, and curriculum developers. They met the standards of teachers at school. Teachers who validated children's pride in their ancestries and traditions reinforced their students' self-esteem and provided a safe learning environment for Métis children and youth. Métis children and youth received an education and went on to the workforce but did not lose the knowledge they had of the Métis past; their parents did not believe that the gender of their children predisposed them to a particular learning or occupational path. These five children's personal journeys through schooling showed how mutually respectful and relevant pedagogy and curriculum may evolve in contemporary schools that serve Aboriginal learners and their families.

Chapters three, four, and five indicated to me that to be Métis was to be labeled by the non-Métis majority living in twentieth-century Saskatchewan as unschooled, living a subsistence lifestyle and therefore, poor, Roman Catholic and not Protestant, and ignorant of the modern wage labour economy. For those Métis who passed into the settler society, becoming a 'settler' meant adopting not only mannerisms and lifestyles, but, to non-Métis observers, it meant that these families had become a part of the lower-

middle to upper-middle classes of society. It seemed that to be Métis meant to be poor or working class but to be 'white' involved becoming part of the middle class and being perceived as embracing not only wage labour but also home ownership, consumption of goods produced outside of the home, and educated in the formal school system. Despite what non-Métis observers thought, not all families adhered to the middle-class norms of settler society and strove to merge the benefits of modern schooling and wage labour with the traditions shared by their families in distinct Métis places and through the use of Cree, Michif, and Dene. As well, part of this Métis past involved devotion to the Roman Catholic Church.

Although Métis children and youth were mandated to attend public schools, many Métis students shared fond memories of their involvement in the Roman Catholic Church. They adopted the church, its clergy, its teachings, and its rituals into their spiritual frameworks although they also critiqued church pedagogy, curriculum, and practices. The next part of this dissertation discusses Métis families' relationships with the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches in terms of rituals, schooling, work, and ceremonies. Chapter six addresses Roman Catholicism and its influence on Métis children and youth and their learning and identities, and chapter seven examines Protestantism's effect on Métis children's learning and their identities. In the next part, I explore the history of church-based schools and workplaces through the narratives of the Métis children and youth who interacted with the Christian educational agenda in western Canada.

Part Three: Christianity and Métis Learning in  
Twentieth-Century Saskatchewan

## CHAPTER SIX: Christianity and Métis Learning: Roman Catholicism and Métis Children and Youth in Twentieth-Century Saskatchewan

Participants with ties to place, knowledge of their family's history, and who achieved academic success in public and Roman Catholic separate schools were also parishioners in the Roman Catholic churches that dotted Saskatchewan's landscape. The church was an integral part of settler and Aboriginal communities around the province. And Roman Catholicism was the denomination with the largest following of Métis families.

This chapter seeks an answer to the following question: why did Métis families and their children and youth attend and remain faithful to the Roman Catholic Church? It proposes that Roman Catholic worship, or at least the lived experience of it, was a large part of Métis family history. Those persons who came from families with knowledge of language, heritage, and their families' traditions were also devout parishioners of Roman Catholic churches. Therefore, this chapter explores Roman Catholicism through the activities in which the children and youth who attended church participated. It studies the memories of worship and activities associated with it, such as pilgrimages, summer camps, holiday festivities, and marriage ceremonies. However, it also examines the Church's involvement in secular activities, such as sports.

Participants emphasized that their respect for the Roman Catholic Church's teachings stemmed from the loyalties of their parents, grandparents, and relatives to the Church. Therefore, Roman Catholic rituals such as baptism, First Communion,<sup>1</sup> and the pilgrimages<sup>2</sup> have been, throughout the generations, naturalized into the Métis' spiritual schema. In the twentieth century, the majority of Métis children and youth spent greater periods of time in public schools. Public education, in the 1950s, graduated people who, according to David, were "more aware and more open."<sup>3</sup> Public schooling honed students' powers of analysis. This education enhanced students' understanding of

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<sup>1</sup> "The Dictionary of Catholic Terms" defines First Communion as "the reception of the Sacrament [or the dispensation of divine life] of the Eucharist [or mass] for the first time." See "The Dictionary of Catholic Terms," retrieved 20 October 2008 from <http://www.thesacredheart.com/dictionary.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> A pilgrimage is a "journey to a holy place" according to "The Dictionary of Catholic Terms." For the Métis of the West, pilgrimages not only renewed ties to the Creator, but these travels also renewed kinship ties between families. "The Dictionary of Catholic Terms," retrieved 20 October 2008 from <http://www.thesacredheart.com/dictionary.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> David, personal interview, 9 January 2006.

Canadian history and inspired many students to reconstruct their own personal and family histories. Teachers and clergy provided instruction in English literacy and numeracy, and prepared students for their roles as citizens of Canada. Students reconsidered their families' involvement with Roman Catholic schools and hospitals, and formulated critiques of the Roman Catholic Church's roles in mission work, education, and healthcare. These former students used their own journeys to reclaim lost traditions as well as memories of runaway children, racial segregation, and sexual violence as the evidence upon which to base their arguments. Although many Métis adults still attend Roman Catholic churches and financially contribute to the Church's missionary work, the Métis of the twentieth century have redefined the depth of their relationship to the Church and questioned its role as a spiritual leader, educator, and healthcare provider to the Métis Nation. And for some Métis, the attitude to the Roman Catholic Church now is one of ambivalence.

Census data along with data from three oral history projects – the Saskatchewan Archives Board's Towards a New Past Oral History Project 'The Métis' done in 1973, the Manitoba Métis Oral History Project interviews conducted in the summers of 1984 and 1985, and my own interviews accomplished from 2006-2008 gave a broad-brush image of Métis religious activity in twentieth-century Saskatchewan. Two census returns provided the necessary data on ethnicity and denominational affiliation: 1901 and 1911. Census categories are problematic. Although the 'mixed-blood' category disappeared by the 1906 special census of western Canada,<sup>4</sup> enumerators continued to assign terms such as 'half-breed,' 'English half-breed (EB),' 'French half-breed (FB),' 'all other breeds (OB),' and sometimes a mixture of a First Nation group and a non-First Nation person (i.e. 'Salteaux half-breed') to census respondents in the censuses that followed 1906. Therefore, the data must be used with caution. Furthermore, the census records did not account for family heads and family members who passed into the newcomer society and enumerated themselves as 'French,' 'Scottish,' or 'British.'

The Census returns from 1901 and 1911 showed that the Roman Catholics had a larger number of followers than the Protestant denominations, but the majority varied. This variation may be explained by the actions of the enumerators. Enumerators did not

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<sup>4</sup> Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Saskatoon: Fifth House) 170.

always travel to each community or in some cases residents blocked their entry. Residents refused to complete census forms or protested the categories that the government officials had created.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the census picture may be incomplete.

Roman Catholic and Francophone Métis were part of a minority Roman Catholic population in early-twentieth-century Saskatchewan. Bill Waiser has found all French-speaking and Roman Catholic newcomers to be only about five percent of Saskatchewan's population in the 1906 special Western Canadian Census.<sup>6</sup> In 2001, Roman Catholics represented almost thirty percent of the population. The growth over the period was due in large part to the arrival of newcomers from continental Europe who belonged to Roman Catholic faiths. Nevertheless, the Roman Catholics – and Métis Roman Catholics – were part of a religious minority in Saskatchewan throughout the twentieth century.

I learned from some of my participants that families passed as French or German. However, there was no evidence to suggest the Métis or 'mixed-ancestry' families enumerated themselves as French or German on the census. It is likely that if families told their children that they were French or German, then they could have enumerated themselves as Euro-Canadian on the census returns.

In 1901, the Census reported 789 Métis or 'mixed-ancestry' people living north and west of Ontario for whom information on religion is available. Five hundred and twenty-eight or sixty-seven percent reported their religious affiliation as Roman Catholic or Catholic. In 1911, the Roman Catholics retained a majority, but their numbers fell substantially. The census reported 2 368 Métis or mixed-ancestry people on the prairies and in the Northwest Territories who gave information on their religious affiliation. The variation may be explained by the actions of the enumerators. In 1911, they visited more Métis communities, and residents complied in greater numbers with their requests. One thousand, one hundred and seventy-eight or fifty percent belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, and 146 or six percent did not declare their religious affiliation to the

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<sup>5</sup> Lisa Dillon, personal communication, 24 August 2007. The latter suggestion was the outcome of conversations with participant Beverley Worsley.

<sup>6</sup> Waiser 67.

enumerators.<sup>7</sup> Taken together, the two censuses proved that the Roman Catholics held at least a small majority of Métis in their church pews.

Several oral history projects contributed reflections on the influence of church in Métis lives and painted a denominational complexion of Saskatchewan and Manitoba in the years after 1911. The birth dates of the participants in the Saskatchewan and Manitoba projects and my own oral history research ranged from 1874 to 1966. Therefore, there was some overlap with the census data. But the majority of the participants in the three projects had birthdates after 1911, or the year the last complete sample of the Canadian census is available. The information the participants provided demonstrated that the Roman Catholics held on to their majority in the years following the 1911 census.

In total, 101 people from Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta were interviewed for the three aforementioned projects. Seventy-six people or seventy-five percent reported that they were born into a Roman Catholic household. However, the data from the three oral history projects had a significant shortcoming. I found that there were few participants of Protestant background who participated in the three projects. For example, the Manitoba project occurred over the summers of 1984 and 1985. The project leader, Nicole St-Onge, after the 1984 interviews wanted to obtain more interviews with Anglican Métis because the participants in the first phase were largely of Roman Catholic background. Therefore, she deliberately sought out Anglican and other non-Roman Catholic Métis for interviews. The majority of my participants turned out to be Roman Catholic Métis. The ones from southeast Saskatchewan were the result of collaboration with the area director of Eastern Region III of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan. After my interview with the director, she found contacts for me to interview. This process created a snowball effect. The director did not target Roman Catholic Métis, but I found that the majority of the Métis participants who lived in the Qu'Appelle Valley were Roman Catholic.

At the same time, it was evident that Roman Catholic Métis were eager to participate in all three of the oral history projects. This tendency made me question why

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<sup>7</sup> One hundred and thirty-five of the 146 Métis resided in the district known as 'Unsurveyed North.' This district included the villages of Ile-a-la-Crosse and Green Lake, communities of Roman Catholic religious background. Laurence Arnault, personal interview, 26 March 2006.

the most-visible Métis to the interviewers were Roman Catholics. Secondly, it begged for a resolution to the issue of why the non-Roman Catholic Métis had to be deliberately targeted for interviews. Therefore, I dissected the interview data in order to offer up some reasons why the Métis followers of the Roman Catholic Church displayed the strongest sense of ethnic pride in Saskatchewan both in the past and in the present.

The voluminous material gleaned from the oral history projects suggested that Roman Catholic Métis children and youth had more opportunity to ‘live their faith’ and ‘experience it’ than the Protestant Métis children and youth. The children and youth attended Roman Catholic separate schools, public schools staffed by teacher nuns, and Roman Catholic boarding schools and residential schools. In the Qu’Appelle Valley, Corpus Christi Day, the Thursday that followed Trinity Sunday or the Sunday after Pentecost and the celebration of the ritual of mass, came at the end of the school year. It brought people from across the region together. It was the one day when First Nations, Métis, and settlers gathered in worship through procession and prayer. After Corpus Christi Day, some Métis children and youth went to Roman Catholic-operated summer camps. Religion was the foundation of these camps as children and youth remembered learning their catechism for two weeks. However, many also remembered sporting activities. Several participants came from families who did not have the money or the opportunity to purchase sporting equipment. The nuns and Priests gave this equipment to some children and youth so they could play hockey and baseball and skate. Every Roman Catholic Métis recalled the Christmas Eve mass. When they grew up, a few Métis youth found work in Roman Catholic-run hospitals and educational facilities. Other Métis youth attended the Roman Catholic-operated secondary and post-secondary institution, Collège Mathieu, in Gravelbourg, Saskatchewan, the Juniorat at Saint-Boniface, Manitoba, and convent schools and private boarding schools across the West.

Many participants’ parents worked for or conducted business with the Roman Catholic clergy. Joseph Remeauld Perreault’s father purchased land from the Grey Nuns when they moved to Saint-Laurent, Manitoba;<sup>8</sup> Lucie Beaudry’s father sold wood to the Grey Nuns Hospital at Saint-Boniface.<sup>9</sup> Métis families in the Qu’Appelle Valley in

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<sup>8</sup> PAM, Manitoba Métis Oral History Project, “Joseph Remeauld Perreault,” 1984.

<sup>9</sup> PAM, Manitoba Métis Oral History Project, “Sister Lucie Beaudry,” 1984.

Saskatchewan worked at the Oblates of Mary Immaculate-run Métis farm near Lebret, Saskatchewan. Therefore, Catholic influences permeated many Métis families and filtered down to the children and youth.

The limited anecdotal evidence from Protestant faiths indicated that these churches did not affect Métis children and youth's lives to the same extent as the Roman Catholic faiths. Secondly, the Protestant Churches, despite their presence in the communities, did not provide the opportunity for spiritual growth, academic instruction, sports, and employment; opportunities that Saskatchewan's Roman Catholic Churches gave to Métis children and youth. The Roman Catholic Church maintained its spiritual influence on the Métis Nation because of the opportunities it provided for spiritual, academic, and economic advancement in Métis communities.

The Roman Catholic Métis children and youth have a history of near-complete interaction with Roman Catholics. Priests and nuns served as teachers, coaches, summer camp leaders, and employers in Métis communities. The Roman Catholic Church maintained its hold on the Métis children and youth because they had daily contact with Roman Catholic schools and the Church's clergy, nuns, parishioners, and staff. The Métis children and youth accepted the Roman Catholics into their lives and in the twentieth century they wrote the Roman Catholic Church into their historical narrative.

Roman Catholic worship formed an important component of the life experiences of Métis children and youth. Four Métis people of the Qu'Appelle Valley, reflecting on their spiritual history in the Roman Catholic Church, said that children attending school at Lebret Public would "pray at recess...Confession<sup>10</sup>...at lunch time, [and] recess again. At home too. [There was] Confession every day. [And] Catechism [instruction in Roman Catholic dogma and ritual], we had catechism after school, for a half an hour or something, and then the benediction [a short church service]...[As well,] [t]he religious holidays...ya[,] we spent just as much time in church as we did in school."<sup>11</sup> It was no

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<sup>10</sup> Students shared their sins with a Priest.

<sup>11</sup> "Anderson, Pauline, Robison, Billie, and Welsh, Norma, Interview (01)," The Virtual Museum of Metis History and Culture, Retrieved 9 August 2007 from <http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/05853.pdf>. This passage may not be entirely accurate. Priests administered confession. It is possible that these individuals' school day could have included a visit from the Priest, especially because they attended school when a seminary was open at Lebret. However, the teachers, even if they were clergy, would not have been able to incorporate Confession into the school routine without the presence of a Priest. I thank J.R. Miller for this note.

surprise that these same individuals concluded that in their childhood years at Lebret, “the church was a big part of our lives. We went to church every Sunday. We’d go to Benediction. There was always a reason, I think almost every day of the week that we had to go to church. We were all in the choir. We always sang in the choir. Once we were old enough to do that.”<sup>12</sup> These adults remembered that Roman Catholic worship was a well-established ritual in their daily lives, passed on by their family members, and seen as important to their lifelong health and wellness.

Despite the emphasis on prayer and devotion, one person in the Qu’Appelle Valley felt that “in spite of all the fear of God and stuff, I, I really, truly believe it gave us a good start.”<sup>13</sup> In Anna’s mixed-ancestry northern Manitoba home village, the lives of the children revolved around church services, Sabbath School, and public school.<sup>14</sup> Paul, who grew up in Saint Laurent, Manitoba and attended a convent day school run by the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary and one year of residential school (Juniorat) operated by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate at St. Boniface, mentioned the comfort he experienced in worship. The worship in Latin and the sense of mystery were the two elements of the Catholic faith that appealed to him.<sup>15</sup> The aforementioned Métis people from Lebret recalled that “our Dad sang in the choir for years. That was very nice.”<sup>16</sup>

Family gatherings followed Sunday church services. After church, Qu’Appelle Valley resident Bob Desjarlais’s family went “down to Grandpa Joe Cardinal’s...[to] play cards...horse shoes...and then a bunch of kids...they’d have racing for peanuts and they’d have ah, the kids go and hide these darn things and they’d have to go look for them...[all] just [to] keep the kids occupied.”<sup>17</sup> In Lebret, families knew that “every Sunday, mostly it was Sunday, we [would] get together and play cards and uh just [have] lots of fun. With your family all the time.”<sup>18</sup> Maurice Cardinal, who also grew up in the Qu’Appelle Valley, remembered that after Sunday services “the people used to basically have a picnic, a gathering, and play softball and stuff like that in and around the church.

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<sup>12</sup> Pauline Anderson, Billie Robison, and Norma Welsh.

<sup>13</sup> Pauline Anderson, Billie Robison, and Norma Welsh.

<sup>14</sup> Anna, personal interview, 2 September 2005.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Chartrand, personal interview, 28 June 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Pauline Anderson, Billie Robison, and Norma Welsh.

<sup>17</sup> “Desjarlais, Bob, Interview (01),” The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture, retrieved 11 August 2007 from <http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/05847.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> Pauline Anderson, Billie Robison, and Norma Welsh.

It was a small white church, maybe thirty feet by sixteen to eighteen feet with two small rows of pews on each side. Our Priest came from Lebret, where there was a seminary where they trained.”<sup>19</sup> Batoche resident Adelaide Ranger reminisced about Gabriel Dumont at mass. “And the kids would sit in the pew upstairs with the teacher Miss Dorva...[and they would be] pointing at Gabriel Dumont’s bald head.”<sup>20</sup> These memories were the result of participation in the rituals of the Roman Catholic faith. The discussions about the Roman Catholic Church evoked positive memories for Métis children and youth, as did talk about the holidays shared by Roman Catholics.

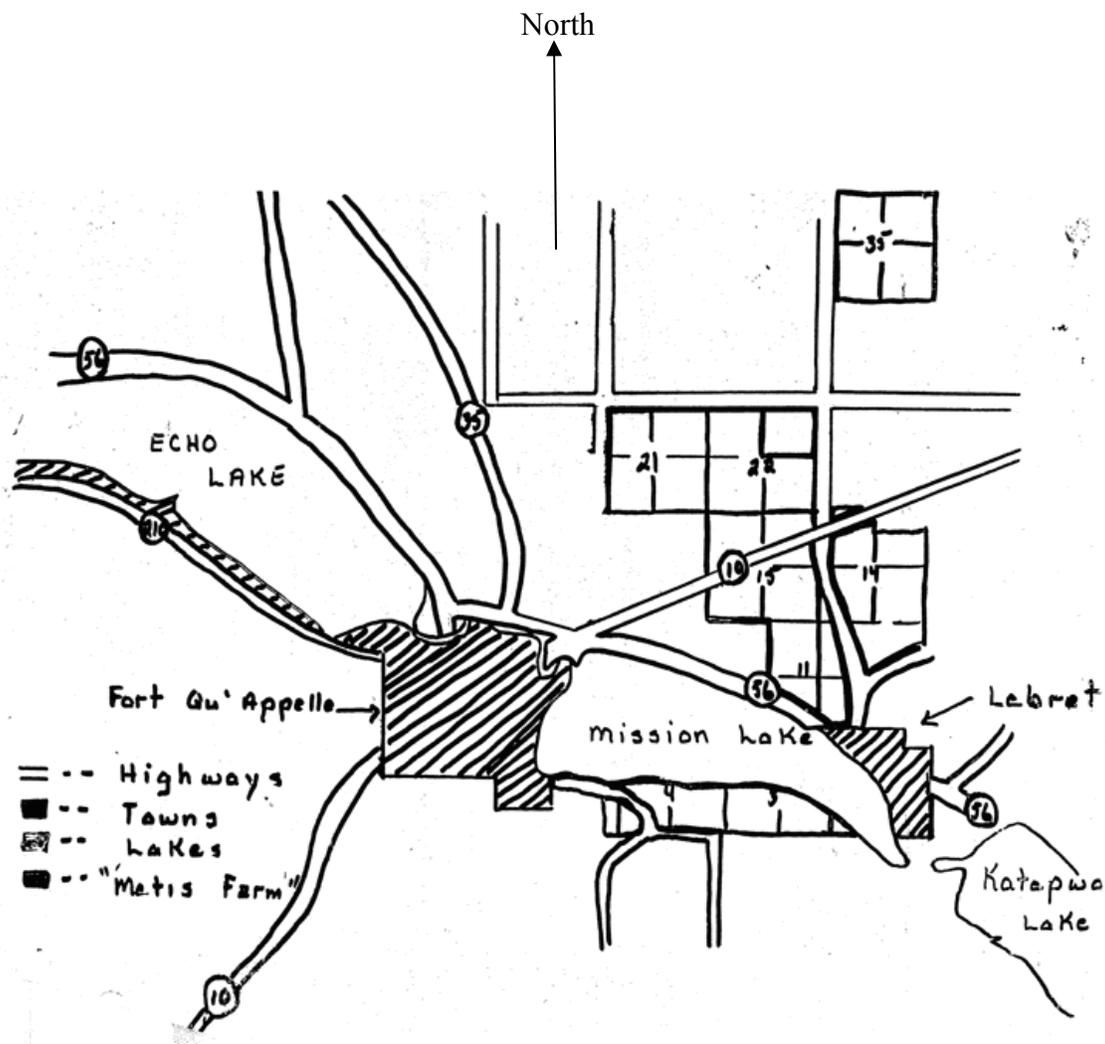


6.1 The Qu’Appelle Valley’s Katepwa Roman Catholic Church was located here. It was the Church that Maurice Cardinal and many Qu’Appelle Valley Métis attended. The lot is now part of a privately owned farm. Photo taken on 17 May 2006. I thank George Klyne for the information about this site.

<sup>19</sup> Maurice Cardinal, personal interview, 8 December 2006.

<sup>20</sup> SAB, “Towards a New Past Oral History Project: The Metis,” A-821-A Ranger, Mrs. Adelaide, Batoche, 19 July 1973.

Christmas and Easter, as well as the summer months of July and August, were holidays that involved church. As adults, Métis recalled pleasant memories from the



6.1 The Lebrét Métis Farm Plan, undated. The key supplied in this illustration is difficult to decipher, but Métis in the Qu'Appelle Valley noted that section numbers eleven, fourteen, fifteen, twenty-one, twenty-two, and twenty-five were the pieces of land that belonged to the Farm when it was operated by the Oblates. I am grateful to Beverley Worsley for a copy of this map. The Oblates started the farm at the turn of the twentieth century as an Oblates of Mary Immaculate agricultural project; Oblate Fathers employed many Métis families as workers on this farm.<sup>21</sup>

Roman Catholic Church services they attended. Norma Welsh, also a Qu'Appelle Valley resident, enjoyed "midnight mass because...it seemed to be just about always we had to

<sup>21</sup> L-LMF, Levasseur, A., O.M.I. to Karen Main, Winnipeg, November 14, 1980.

walk to the church...from the Métis farm or where ever [sic] else we lived. It would snow...when we were walking to mass.”<sup>22</sup> Christmas was a special occasion for many Métis families. It was a chance to renew family ties, and the festivities provided distinctive roles for children and youth. Pauline Anderson, Billie Robison, and Norma said that “people used to come and visit New Years...[and] We always got candy and stuff...Mom made sure we got something.”<sup>23</sup>

Joanna Potyondi, who spent her formative years in the Souris River Valley, agreed and added that on Christmas Eve, “a lot of our Ukrainian and German friends were at our door. The Ukrainians had their Christmas two weeks later, and we were there with all their breads and traditions, and I know a lot about our Ukrainians. I was very fortunate to grow up in that environment.”<sup>24</sup> In southeast Saskatchewan, Christmas celebrations represented an opportunity for the Métis to socialize with the settler families of the local area and from the surrounding communities.

Peter Bishop talked about the non-Aboriginal southerners who spent Christmas in Green Lake and “bought Christmas presents for the children and produced a Christmas show for the children’s viewing.”<sup>25</sup> He remembered “at one Christmas show when an announcement of Santa coming was made when Santa was at Uranium City, then at Buffalo Narrows, and then at Green Lake. However, when the Santa arrived at Green Lake, he was drunk, and therefore, the coordinators had to take twenty minutes to locate another Santa.”<sup>26</sup>

However, these children also knew that at Christmas, “we celebrated the birth of Jesus.”<sup>27</sup> Peter believed that the non-Aboriginal settler society introduced the commercial component of Christmas celebrations. For the Métis, although Christmas involved the sharing of dessert foods and candy, it was not a chance to exchange gifts. Instead, the celebrations represented the opportunity for Métis families to renew ties to the Creator.

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<sup>22</sup> Pauline Anderson, Billie Robison, and Norma Welsh.

<sup>23</sup> Pauline Anderson, Billie Robison, and Norma Welsh.

<sup>24</sup> Joanna Potyondi, personal interview, 30 January 2006.

<sup>25</sup> Peter Bishop, personal interview, 19 October 2005.

<sup>26</sup> Peter Bishop.

<sup>27</sup> Pauline Anderson, Billie Robison, and Norma Welsh.

The spring and summer months brought Roman Catholic events that excited Saskatchewan's Métis children and youth. Memories of Easter time preparations represented the convergence of past traditions with modern Church festivities. Qu'Appelle Valley resident Pauline Anderson told of "growing up setting snares with my brother Ernie, and I caught a snare, and I started crying because I thought I killed the Easter Bunny."<sup>28</sup> Or the Priests, who would "come up the hill after we moved off the Métis Farm...and then we used to have...treasure hunts with them. I think this was at Easter time, and they'd hide the candies and things in the trees, in the bushes, and they'd make us go look for them."<sup>29</sup> During the summer, children "had catechism for two months."<sup>30</sup> The Priests took the children, by barge, to camp. "And we used to go to camp for maybe five or six days."<sup>31</sup> However, the summer camp was not exclusively tied to bible study in that "at the last day of catechism they'd...put on this great big barbeque with hotdogs and homemade ice cream and took us out on the boat. This one time we went out on the boat ourselves and got stuck out there. Somebody had to swim and get us."<sup>32</sup> The Priests "had canoes and sometimes we could use them."<sup>33</sup> Summer meant, in addition to work for farmers, trapping, hunting, and berry picking, significant Roman Catholic rituals that involved Métis, First Nations, and non-Aboriginal families.

In the Qu'Appelle Valley, the annual Corpus Christi Day attracted Roman Catholic residents from all over southeast Saskatchewan. Corpus Christi Day happened in late June and for the Métis children and youth of the Qu'Appelle Valley, it was the beginning of a summer filled with Roman Catholic teachings. Margaret Harrison, whose family resided near Lebret, recalled that

in Lebret you would see droves of people coming, wagons of people, and we would see them go by at Katepwa Lake, at our place. My grandparents lived there as well, and there was about five or six families living on the hill area and down by the lake as well and others around the other side of the lake. We would see these people come, and it was such a mystery and exciting for us to see Indians coming on this day because there would be wagonloads of people coming, and this was a holy day

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<sup>28</sup> Pauline Anderson, Billie Robison, and Norma Welsh.

<sup>29</sup> "Anderson, Pauline, Robison, Billie, Welsh, Norma, Sullivan, Pat, and Welsh, Lawrence, Interview (3)," The Virtual Museum of Metis History and Culture, retrieved 11 August 2007 from <http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/05858.pdf>.

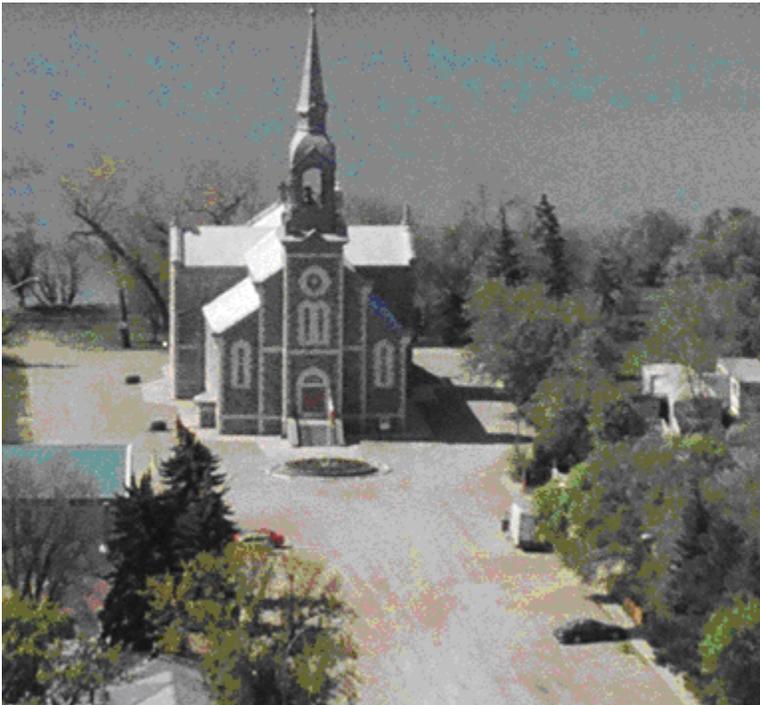
<sup>30</sup> Pauline Anderson, Billie Robison, and Norma Welsh.

<sup>31</sup> Pauline Anderson, Billie Robison, Norma Welsh, Pat Sullivan, and Lawrence Welsh.

<sup>32</sup> Pauline Anderson, Billie Robison, and Norma Welsh.

<sup>33</sup> Pauline Anderson, Billie Robison, Norma Welsh, Pat Sullivan, and Lawrence Welsh.

and celebrated in the Catholic Church. They would all meet at Lebret at the church, and then everybody would be picnicking, and there would be a mass. There would be a big supper in the church, and as a little kid I would wonder what it was like inside of the church, where they had all these different foods. But you had to have money to go in there. I don't know what you paid for your meal, but you would have to buy your meal, and so we never could afford that. We never were allowed to go in there, to eat in the church, but mother always made such special things for that day and so did all the women because none of the Métis would go in the church in Lebret. They never could afford it, and the Indians never went in there either.<sup>34</sup>



6.2 The Lebret Roman Catholic Church. Photo taken on 15 May 2006.

Margaret noted that status First Nations families from the surrounding reserves came to see their children at the Qu'Appelle Indian Industrial School, also located at Lebret. Corpus Christi Day was one of the few days when Métis, First Nations from surrounding reserves, and Euro-Canadian Roman Catholic farmers gathered to celebrate mass. Métis who worked as farm labourers did not leave the Qu'Appelle Valley often, and therefore, the families did not have the opportunity to interact with other racial and cultural groups. Overall, the annual Catholic 'Corpus Christi Day' was a religious holiday that closely

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<sup>34</sup> Margaret Harrison, personal interview, 30 January 2006.

reflected the ethnic and cultural composition of Saskatchewan with newcomers and Natives of a diversity of backgrounds in attendance.

Margaret described the procession or pilgrimage.

We processed up to the cross to that little church on the top of the hill at Lebret. You would process up, praying during stations of the cross<sup>35</sup> all the way to the top, and there would be people at the bottom of the hill who never really got to the top because there was so many people, and because these people would go up and have to come back down. So these people would have to go back up, and then others would come down. I don't know if they had church services up there. You would be praying because you would be praying the stations of the cross if you went up it.<sup>36</sup>



6.3 The church on the hill at Lebret. Used only on Corpus Christi Day. Photo taken on 15 May 2006. I thank Beverley Worsley for the information about this church.

<sup>35</sup> "The Dictionary of Catholic Terms" defined 'stations of the cross' as: "A series of fourteen meditations on incidents in the suffering and death of Christ." See "The Dictionary of Catholic Terms" at <http://www.thesacredheart.com/dictionary.htm>.

<sup>36</sup> Margaret Harrison.

Métis children and youth from outside of the Qu'Appelle Valley knew of processions as the days for the convergence of Roman Catholic ritual with the renewal of kinship ties with family members from the surrounding areas.

As a student at the Ile-a-la-Crosse Boarding School, Tony Durocher served “mass and from the church to that grotto at the end of the point past the barns, we would pray there. We used to walk with the old people carrying something the Priest walked under because I remember I would have to walk in front of it but facing it and therefore, backward toward the street.”<sup>37</sup> Julius Park said that he attended pilgrimages at Lac St. Anne “with my mom, she’s a strong believer in the Roman Catholic Church, and she encouraged us to go to church and practice this religion that we were taught and so every year the pilgrimage came up, and it’s hosted in Lac St. Anne in Alberta, and a lot of the Dene people from the North would attend the pilgrimage, and it still continues today. It carried on from the community level to outside communities, and Dene communities might host a pilgrimage of a similar type.”<sup>38</sup> Since “my mother was originally from Dillon, Saskatchewan which is a couple of hours from La Loche, I see family members every time we go to a pilgrimage. You meet up with lots of relatives, friends, and people that you know from your work and community.”<sup>39</sup> Therefore, the processions, or pilgrimages, were an opportunity for Métis families, as well as their children and youth, to practice Roman Catholic ritual, renew kinship ties, and reconnect to the lands of their ancestors.

Summer also brought weddings. The weddings occurred in the Roman Catholic churches of Saskatchewan and evoked many fond memories from Métis children and youth who argued that, although Roman Catholic dogma obligated couples to marry in the churches, Métis traditions accompanied these nuptials. Lebret resident Bob Desjarlais remembered that

my dad participated in a lot of them but how my dad used to participate, he was the guardian, and he used to...make these ornaments for them [the couple getting married]. My dad was good at making those[,] and then[,] when they [the couple] would get to a place [to be married], they always fired the shotgun two or three

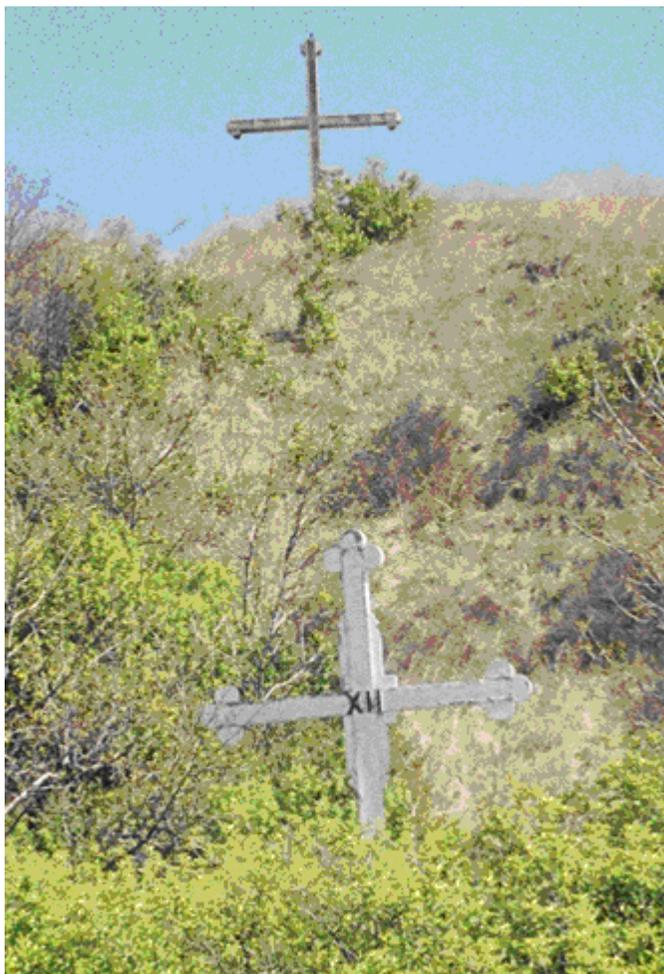
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<sup>37</sup> Tony Durocher, personal interview, 11 February 2008.

<sup>38</sup> Julius Park, personal interview, 8 February 2008.

<sup>39</sup> Julius Park.

times, that was just tradition. When my sister got married...in Abernethy, right in town, when they pulled up in front of the hall, my brother drove us to the back of



6.4 Procession route up the hill in the Qu'Appelle Valley. The Stations of the Cross. Photo taken on 15 May 2006. I am grateful to Beverley Worsley for information about this site and the spatial history of the processions at Lebret.

the hall[,] and he fired two shots with the shotgun...the old tradition[,] hey[,] and you should have seen my dad....Before they would eat the wedding dinner[,] they always get somebody to come sing in French. So my dad knew four songs that they sang at wedding tables, and this is the only time they sing these songs.<sup>40</sup>

For Bob, these wedding celebrations merged Métis traditions from the days of the fur trade with modern Roman Catholic marriage rituals.

During the regular school year from September until June, sports were an important part of the children's days. When students stopped by the Lebret Seminary, the

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<sup>40</sup> Bob Desjarlais.

Priests “used to give us baseball bats and stuff.”<sup>41</sup> Lebret resident Lawrence Welsh received his “first pair of skates...from Father Cause[,] he was a little guy, he was only about five foot, he was a nice old guy.”<sup>42</sup> The children and youth credited the priests for their donations of sporting equipment in addition to providing leftover food for their families. “Our baseball team was called...the kids that lived up the hill used to play the Métis kids that lived at the bottom of the hill. And our name was the Seminary Crap Eaters. Because the Priests at the Seminary at Lebret used to bring all their left over [sic] food to us.”<sup>43</sup> Norma believed “they [the priests] were good to us...[we] were always having games with them...and one way or another, spring and ah, winter and summer...there’d always be a lot of kids around, so we...had baseball games.”<sup>44</sup>

Despite the academic pressure in his private Roman Catholic boys high school, David believed the extracurricular activities reduced some of the stress associated with his studies. David was a member of a theatrical group that performed “extremely well.”<sup>45</sup> He played exhibition games with the Allouettes hockey team against the Moose Jaw Canucks and the Regina Pats. Once in a game in Regina, one player “checked me...right over the boards into the front row seats of the bleachers. I wasn’t a star player, but I certainly was proud to be part of the team. Thank God for sports, it was a respite that provided me with a momentary distraction from the pressures of study, absence from home, and that nagging psychological problem I had about religion.”<sup>46</sup> Many Métis children and youth remembered that their families did not have the financial means to pay for their involvement in sports and arts activities. The chance for recreation and to participate in other non-academic activities attracted Métis children and youth to the Roman Catholic Church and encouraged them to remain faithful to Roman Catholicism.

Worship and the activities connected to it retained Métis children and youth and their families in the Roman Catholic Church. This dedication to the Roman Catholic Church continued into their adult lives. Julius believed part of his respect for the Roman Catholic faith came from the teachings shared with him by his parents. His family

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<sup>41</sup> Pauline Anderson, Billie Robison, and Norma Welsh.

<sup>42</sup> Pauline Anderson, Billie Robison, Norma Welsh, Pat Sullivan, and Lawrence Welsh.

<sup>43</sup> Pauline Anderson, Billie Robison, and Norma Welsh.

<sup>44</sup> Pauline Anderson, Billie Robison, Norma Welsh, Pat Sullivan, and Lawrence Welsh.

<sup>45</sup> David, personal communication, 14 March 2006. David was from northern Saskatchewan, and he was in his mid 60s in 2006.

<sup>46</sup> David, 14 March 2006.

retained their ties to traditional pursuits such as hunting, fishing, and trapping and spoke the Dene language to their children. His father

took us on a few hunting expeditions, duck hunting, and we were connected to the environment. That is the people we are as Dene people. We hunted wild game and small game for survival and made the clothing that we wore, like moose hide clothing. Being exposed to those kinds of things, we gained knowledge of respecting the environment and respecting the animals. They provided food for us, shelter, and these lessons were taught through our language. I think some of the practices today are carried on because of what our parents taught us.<sup>47</sup>

However, his parents also followed the Roman Catholic faith. His sisters and his mother went through “the first process of First Communion, that was basically the practice of the community, and I think every year there is that Confirmation ceremony and celebrations.”<sup>48</sup> Julius “strongly respects what my mother taught me through the Catholic system as well, and I think I respected her strong belief in what she thought of the values and stuff, and I go to church whenever I can.”<sup>49</sup>

His sister Bernice said that the Dene-Métis people of La Loche, like the Métis of the Qu’Appelle Valley, have adopted certain Roman Catholic rituals into their spiritual framework and learning systems for their children and youth. She said that

my mom and dad were I wouldn’t say they were religious, conscious that all of the children made sure they got their First Communion. For some people today, it is still like that. I know there are a lot of people who take Communion now. I made sure that my sons had their First Communion and took their Confirmation,<sup>50</sup> and that was here in La Loche. It has become a tradition with the Dene people. You are Catholic, you get baptized, you take your First Communion, and then you take Confirmation. It is something that is just carried on, I guess. I hope my kids carry it on, \*laughs.\*<sup>51</sup>

Adults passed the Roman Catholic teachings down to their children and later, to their grandchildren. The subsequent generations respected their relatives’ devotion to the Roman Catholic Church and remembered their families’ history on the land, and the family ties that formed there. These traditional lessons were also passed on to their

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<sup>47</sup> Julius Park.

<sup>48</sup> Julius Park.

<sup>49</sup> Julius Park.

<sup>50</sup> When children graduated from confirmation, the journey to full membership in the Roman Catholic Church was complete.

<sup>51</sup> Bernice Park Campbell, personal interview, 15 April 2008.

children. The lessons in English literacy and numeracy and Canadian citizenship provided these students with the skills to research and write about their Métis pasts and to celebrate the histories of their ancestors. This negotiation of the Roman Catholic faith and education with the traditional teachings enabled Métis children and youth to remain devoted to Roman Catholicism.

However, the generations of Métis children and youth who grew up in the post-World War II years, and who received more of their formal education from secular authorities, shared some criticisms of the involvement of the Roman Catholic Church in education and family life. Although Julius acknowledged, accepted, and respected his parents' teachings influenced by Roman Catholic clergy and fostered by his own experiences as a student of Confirmation and an attendee of the church in La Loche, he knew that

we had some practices that were discouraged by the Catholic Church, like the Drum Songs and the gatherings of the Dene people. The Dene had their way of practicing their religion, and I wasn't exposed to those kinds of things. The Elders certainly talked about the Dene Drum and its role at gatherings. It is used for praying and for giving to the Creator, giving to the environment, and praying for the food that was given. The Drum reinforces the values of: respecting other people, your family, your environment, animals, and those kinds of things. I have learned that through talking to other people but not through being exposed to that in modern society. But, on the other hand, we have the Catholic system that we have been exposed to, and my parents and their parents have been exposed to those kinds of practices, and so this is also the Dene way of practicing, historically. I would certainly like to reconnect to our heritage, our religion, in terms of our way of educating our children and keeping our language and what it means to have your own spirit and the practices that have been going on through school, the Catholic system truly didn't reflect us as a Dene people but sometimes there's pieces here and there that captures our traditions of knowing, I guess.<sup>52</sup>

He believed that with a strong knowledge of Dene-Métis languages, places, and kin ties, students would be able to succeed in formal schools.

As well, some parents and grandparents prevented their children from attending Roman Catholic private schools. They wished to control the level of contact children had with the Roman Catholic Church. As a young child, Beverley saw "other brown girls

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<sup>52</sup> Julius Park.

like me”<sup>53</sup> at a convent school in Wolseley, Saskatchewan. However, her grandmother refused to allow her to attend this convent school. On reflection, Beverley believed that her grandmother’s decision not to let her attend school at this convent stemmed from her fear that the pedagogy of the school resembled the church-state operated residential schools. “It was quite possible because of the stories about the Priests. I used to ask ‘why,’ and grandma would reply: ‘you have a good home.’ I can’t remember how she would phrase it. She would say that the convent in Wolseley was for children who didn’t have parents. And I would reply: ‘but my mom is in Calgary.’ She would respond that I had a grandma. She said: ‘you have people to look after you.’ So I thought these kids were all orphans.”<sup>54</sup> Beverley was not the only Métis child who wondered about the differences between herself and other Aboriginal children and why certain children attended private Roman Catholic and church-state operated residential schools.

Margaret heard stories about the Roman Catholic Qu’Appelle Indian Industrial School at Lebret and saw the children and youth who fled from the school.

I grew up with a fear of residential school because there was one in Lebret; so if we weren’t good, that is where they said they would be sending us. At that time, I was very fearful to go there because we saw some of the young people who ran away from the school; they would be going to the north and east. I didn’t realize there were reserves east of our home in the Qu’Appelle Valley. I remember them walking down the road by our home,<sup>55</sup> and their hair was shaved right off, and they looked scared, gaunt, and so sick, like skeletons. That was how I remember them running. So those are the kinds of things that we saw. I think I was eleven years old when I left the Qu’Appelle Valley so up until ten years old that was our fear. We didn’t want to go there, to the Qu’Appelle Indian Industrial School. Of course, they weren’t taking Métis at that time, but we later learned that our parents wouldn’t have allowed us in there.<sup>56</sup>

Margaret was correct to fear the residential schools. Although a large number of Métis and status First Nations children and youth did not attend the schools, many of their families were scarred by the stories they heard from others who attended the residential schools.

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<sup>53</sup> Beverley Worsley.

<sup>54</sup> Beverley Worsley.

<sup>55</sup> Margaret’s family resided immediately outside of Lebret, Saskatchewan at the junction of the highways to Katepwa Beach, going to Indian Head, and the highway going to Balcarres.

<sup>56</sup> Margaret Harrison.

Admissions of Métis children and youth were not consistent, but some families had members who attended residential schools as well as convent schools. When Margaret's mother "was a young girl, her mother died, and she was put into a convent which was at Lebret. Her father put her in there because there were fourteen children in the family, and he couldn't look after all of them."<sup>57</sup> Her mother's experience in the convent was not pleasant. Margaret learned that her mother "had a terrible time in the convent. She said that her ears were so sore that she said that they were always burning because she could not make her bed good enough. She said that if she didn't get that bedspread right and that sham on there when the nuns came around to check, her ears were twisted, and she had to kneel down and pray because she had been bad in the eyes of the nuns."<sup>58</sup> Margaret knew that adults in her road allowance community rescued the children who ran away from the Lebret residential school and sheltered them while the Royal Canadian Mounted Police traced these runaways' tracks.

Angus Gardiner, a former student of the Ile-a-la-Crosse Convent, believed the Priests and the nuns in the Ile-a-la-Crosse Convent failed to provide adequate healthcare for his brother who died, at the age of seven, from double pneumonia. Angus and the majority of Roman Catholic Métis children and youth resided across the lake from the mission, requiring the families to send their children to board at the Convent in order to receive elementary schooling. In 1956, Angus and his younger brother Frank travelled across the lake to stay in the convent. Angus and his brother settled into a strict routine of prayer, classes, hockey against teams from Beauval and Buffalo Narrows, and visits to see his family across the lake on weekends and holidays. However, the predictability of the school year was disrupted for Angus and his younger brother when Frank fell ill with pneumonia.<sup>59</sup> Angus remembered

the way it happened. He was sick inside the Convent. I remember seeing him looking outside from his window and all you could see was the sadness in his eyes, and they didn't take him to the hospital even though it was only 100 yards away. He was really sick before they took him to the hospital, and he had double pneumonia. They had to cut a hole in his neck so that he could breathe. I still remember that time. I think it was 1958 when he passed away, and I blame the

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<sup>57</sup> Margaret Harrison.

<sup>58</sup> Margaret Harrison.

<sup>59</sup> Angus Gardiner, personal interview, 16 April 2008.

Church. He could have survived if he was taken to the hospital earlier but when he finally got there, they couldn't do anything.<sup>60</sup>

After the death of his brother, school “was really hard. A big part of me was missing.”<sup>61</sup> Death and illness caused by negligence occurred in Roman Catholic schools and hospitals throughout Saskatchewan.

Starting in the 1940s, Métis youth found work away from their families. Two of Chris Blondeau-Perry's sisters worked in a Grey Nuns hospital in Regina during World War II. Labour shortages during the war years opened up jobs in hospitals for women and Aboriginals. However, the circumstances of these new jobs were far from ideal, as in the case of one of Chris's sisters. She was an employee in the laundry section of the hospital and “was a victim of rape, and she tried to report it and of course, the Christians never do anything wrong. Therefore, she was wrong and they were right.”<sup>62</sup> Most disturbing about the incident was that Chris's family assumed the two sisters were employed at the hospital only to learn suddenly that one of their daughters was in a psychiatric hospital. The circumstances that surrounded the hospitalization of Chris's sister were not entirely known. However, her sister's hospitalization demonstrated the perils that plagued young Métis women who worked for wages in Roman Catholic hospitals. And the opportunity to work for wages did not always empower Métis youth.

Although clergy and nuns provided shelter, food, and care for Métis children and youth from impoverished families,<sup>63</sup> the clergy and the nuns usually charged most students high tuition fees. Although students such as David and those fortunate enough to be sponsored by the priests like Laurence of Green Lake, Saskatchewan had the chance to pursue high school, most Métis students left school after they finished the elementary grades. Doris, of Lebret, completed grade nine and then had to leave school “because my family couldn't afford to pay for the textbooks. In those days, we had to buy our own textbooks, and we were very poor, very poor; so I couldn't finish school, and I had to quit in grade nine.”<sup>64</sup> She attempted to pay for her books through part-time work, but these

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<sup>60</sup> Angus Gardiner.

<sup>61</sup> Angus Gardiner.

<sup>62</sup> Chris Blondeau-Perry, personal interview, 24 October 2005.

<sup>63</sup> Tony Durocher.

<sup>64</sup> Doris Desjarlais, personal interview, 2 February 2006.

obligations resulted in lower grades.<sup>65</sup> Other Lebret residents commented that “most of them [girls] quit school because they didn't have the books for, because, you know, Catholic school you have to pay for everything.”<sup>66</sup>

And the cost of education did not correlate with the quality of the schooling delivered. Former students of the Ile-a-la-Crosse Convent thought that their schooling was compromised because the clergy needed the boys to work in the boarding school's barns.<sup>67</sup> Ideally, children received instruction in English literacy, numeracy, and citizenship as well as industrial training, but most that stayed at the Convent in the period 1878-1945 spent their school days engaged in manual labour to support the mission. Furthermore, the size of the classrooms, compounded by the lack of school supplies like paper, pencils, and books, impaired the teaching of the students. Chores and insufficient writing and reading materials made it difficult for the students to learn. Students who graduated from the Convent came out with a grade five or lower grade equivalent which prevented them from finding jobs that required high levels of academic skills or pursuing advanced training.

And former students of Roman Catholic-operated schools commented on other conditions in the schools that polluted the learning environments. Peter argued that the Roman Catholic Sisters of Presentation teachers at St. Pascal School perpetuated the racial segregation between the Métis and the non-Métis minority, whose families were usually civil servants hired to modernize post-World War II Green Lake. His observations played out in one Christmas celebration from his childhood years. He remembered that the white people of Green Lake who directed one of the school's annual Christmas concerts stuck his cousin behind the ‘whiter-looking’ students in one of the Christmas shows. “The children at the school produced a show but my cousin who had dark skin was cast in a part alongside two white boys. My cousin was forced to act behind a room off the side of the stage to prevent the display of his face.”<sup>68</sup> In addition

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<sup>65</sup> Doris Desjarlais.

<sup>66</sup> “Fisher (Amyotte), Agnes and Poitras (Amyotte), Celina, Interview,” The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture, retrieved 11 August 2007 from <http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/01010.pdf>.

<sup>67</sup> Jim Favel, personal interview, 13 February 2008.

<sup>68</sup> Peter Bishop.

to the short amount of time spent in the classrooms, students faced school environments that did not facilitate their learning.



6.5 Frank Gardiner, Angus Gardiner's brother. Photo taken by Kevin Gambell on 27 May 2008.

Earl Cook's public school in Cumberland House was, like the schools at Marieval, Lebret, and Green Lake, operated by nuns who, in his opinion, "preached love and caring and practiced hate. Any excuse to harm or hate you. For example, straps, I remember after school watching some girls and boys chasing one another around the

outdoor toilet, and they all got the strap. It was memories like that. You couldn't speak Cree, but the nuns spoke French, and we felt that it was a double-standard."<sup>69</sup> Therefore, the work expectations compounded by the punitive pedagogy of the nuns resulted in many bitter memories from former students of Christian educational systems.

Métis youth found the Roman Catholic Church's rituals could, at times, be inflexible and explanations given by clergy and nuns to justify them, dubious. For Bernice Olson of Lebret, her first contact with the Roman Catholic Church occurred when she was twenty-one years old; after the death of her father. Bernice's widowed father placed her in the care of adoptive parents when she was one-and-a-half years old, and her adoptive parents belonged to the United Church. Consequently, Bernice had no knowledge of Roman Catholic dogma and rituals before her father's death. However, she maintained a relationship with her father; she had yearly visits with him. Bernice's father passed away in Ste. Rose, Manitoba in 1959, and Bernice travelled for his funeral and began to make arrangements for his service and burial. When she arrived at Ste. Rose, a local child told Bernice: "the priest wants to see you, and he wants to see you right away."<sup>70</sup> Bernice went with her brother to see the priest in town, who told them that

one of the things is that we had to pay 1 500 dollars to get our father's soul out of purgatory. I asked: 'why is my father in purgatory?' And the Priest replied: 'he didn't have Easter confession.' Well, I said: 'what's that got to do with anything?' And the Priest said that 'he must have Easter confession, and we don't know if he did.' And I said: 'well, he wasn't at home.' He attended church. He was in Winnipeg visiting his sister and brother. Well, the Priest insisted that 'he didn't have his Easter confession,' and I said: 'how do you know?' Well, he said, 'they said he didn't,' and I said: 'well, to me that seems pretty strange. He could have walked into any Catholic Church in Winnipeg and had Easter confession; they would not necessarily know.' So we went from that to all of a sudden he was telling us that if we couldn't pay this we could get someone to come down and confirm that he had Easter confession and made a confession. And I said: 'you mean to tell me, then, if somebody lost one of his relatives, and they lied then that would make it alright, and we wouldn't have to pay the 1 500?' 'Yes, yes, that would probably do it,' the Priest replied. Oh, I was just livid. I was so angry.<sup>71</sup>

Due to her father's absence from confession, the funeral service for Bernice's father occurred in a funeral home. Bernice felt that the reasoning of the priest at Ste. Rose did

<sup>69</sup> Earl Cook, personal interview, 26 February 2008.

<sup>70</sup> Bernice Olson, personal interview, 8 December 2006.

<sup>71</sup> Bernice Olson.

not satisfy her. Her first encounter with Roman Catholicism made her feel that “we just weren’t good enough to be there, in the eyes of the Church, and the Church didn’t take us seriously, not as seriously as they would now.”<sup>72</sup>

Former Green Lake resident Marilyn recalled that Roman Catholic teachers at St. Pascal School taught their students to fear Protestants and Protestantism. Born in 1943, she attended school at St. Pascal for four years and said that “whenever there was an opportunity to bring up religion, in whatever context, that was done, there was no question, a lot of religion inserted in the curriculum or where they found that they could put it in our thoughts.”<sup>73</sup> One cross-cutting theme of all instruction was to never turn Protestant, a lesson that Marilyn and her friends took literally.<sup>74</sup> She and her friends wondered why Protestants represented such threats to their spirituality and overall health and wellness. On one occasion, when she was six or seven years old, she and her girlfriends, in response to the warning not to ‘turn’ Protestant, “spun around and around and around until we almost passed out, and we were waiting for the change to happen.”<sup>75</sup> Like Bernice, Marilyn believed that the Roman Catholic Church held too much authority over education and public affairs in Green Lake. Sometimes, church stances on matters concerning education and politics did not resonate with the aspirations of the local Métis families.<sup>76</sup>

Two Métis children and youth witnessed their families challenge the church’s partisanship. Peter and Frank Tomkins of Grouard, Alberta believed that the Roman Catholic clergy’s support of the Liberal party prevented many Métis families from meaningful participation in Canadian politics. In his home village, Frank said that “they all voted Liberal because the Church voted Liberal, and the Church dominated them.”<sup>77</sup> In Green Lake, Peter said that the “priests intimidated voters who, due to a low level of educational attainment, did not know politics, and therefore, they were easily swayed by the vote of the local priests, who always voted for the Liberal candidates, especially when

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<sup>72</sup> Bernice Olson.

<sup>73</sup> Marilyn, personal interview, 25 June 2008.

<sup>74</sup> Marilyn, personal communication, 30 June 2008.

<sup>75</sup> Marilyn, 25 June 2008.

<sup>76</sup> Marilyn, 25 June 2008.

<sup>77</sup> Frank Tomkins, personal interview, 28 January 2006.

Louis St. Laurent was the Prime Minister of Canada.”<sup>78</sup> Peter’s father was a supporter of and later organizer for the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. These partisan ties “resulted in hostility, which could sometimes be blatant and physical,”<sup>79</sup> between his father and the local priests and nuns. Peter and Frank came from families whose heads were unwilling to allow the Roman Catholic Churches in their communities to maintain a political hold on their parishioners.

The Métis have, in the years following World War II, formulated a substantial critique of the pedagogy and practices of the Roman Catholic Church, its clergy, its teachers, and its effect on Métis school experiences, family life, and their epistemologies and worldviews. These critiques came despite families’ decisions to incorporate or naturalize certain aspects of the Roman Catholic faith into their pre-existing spiritual framework and thus, their overall worldviews. Like Julius, Anna attempted to interpret the myriad of messages she learned through the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and used her thoughts to inform discussions concerning learning in the twenty-first century. Unlike Julius, who felt that the Roman Catholic Church teachings were one part of the worldviews of the Métis, Anna saw the Roman Catholic faith as the centre of Métis learning and spirituality.

Anna adhered to the concept of a Creator whose message flowed from both the land and the Holy Bible. She contended that “the Ten Commandments elevates the mind and brings one into harmony with our Creator. It teaches self-control, promotes health and promotes safety in our society. Enables our youth the education to care for themselves and their family in an honest and ethical manner as they excel in their chosen profession.”<sup>80</sup> Anna argued that through fear of God, wisdom began, and this education was provided exclusively through the Holy Bible. However, Anna credited the First Nations influences on Métis education observing that the

youth were trained to see God in the scenes of nature and the words of revelation. The awesome wildlife, the beautiful sky, the stars of heaven, trees and wild flowers, clean cool spring waters, and huge mountains all spoke of the Creator. Neighborly [sic] love and kindness also spoke everyday of our Creator. Singing and training of the voice was an important feature in education and also frequently taught in the

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<sup>78</sup> Peter Bishop.

<sup>79</sup> Peter Bishop.

<sup>80</sup> Anna, “Metis Spirituality – Metis and the Education System: Thesis: The Ten Commandments of the Holy Bible are part of the Metis’ Spirituality,” unpub. paper 2.

homes. Music was also made to serve a holy purpose, to lift the thoughts to that which is pure, noble, and inspiring, and to awaken in the soul acknowledgement of and devotion and gratitude to our Creator...The student would seek the development of the Creator's gifts in him, not to excel others, but to fulfill the purpose of the Creator and to receive His likeness. Instead of being directed to mere earthly standards, or desires for self-exaltation, which in itself dwarfs and weakens, the mind would be directed to the Creator, to know Him and to become like Him to live in harmony with all.<sup>81</sup>

Anna believed that the Roman Catholic Church's teachings provided for the Métis instruction in self-discipline or self-control and tasked the Métis with their ethical duties and educational roles in society.

Sports, theatre, music, and worship brought Métis families into the Roman Catholic churches, schools, and hospitals and kept subsequent generations involved with masses, pilgrimages, and First Communion. The lived experience of Roman Catholicism dovetailed with traditional Métis teachings. Certain rituals, such as the marriage ceremony and First Communion, have been adopted into the spiritual schemas of Métis families throughout the province of Saskatchewan. Pilgrimages drew families together and operated as chances to renew kinship ties in addition to celebrating Roman Catholic Saints. Holidays were a chance to bring families together and to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

However, children and youth were aware of the conflicts raised by Roman Catholic training. There was pressure to abandon languages and sever ties to the land. Most important was the failure of the Roman Catholic systems of formal learning to adequately prepare Métis children and youth to be competitive workers as the provincial economy changed from fur trading and trapping to agriculture and mining. Roman Catholic Métis children like Julius and his sister Bernice, as well as Peter and Frank, who came from families with strong ties to their homelands, knew their families' histories, and learned from watching their parents make their living on the land refused to accept Roman Catholic pedagogy that pressured them to abandon their families' traditions and sense of place in creation. For these students, the Roman Catholic Church was a part of their Métis spirituality, but by no means was it the only spiritual and educational belief system that they accepted.

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<sup>81</sup> Anna, "Metis Spirituality," 3-4.

The Métis remained faithful to the Roman Catholic Church because it was part of a spiritual framework handed down to them by their adult relatives. Parents and grandparents ensured that their children received First Communion and brought their children to the annual pilgrimages in the Qu'Appelle Valley, Lac St. Anne, Alberta, and Ile-a-la-Crosse. Participation in these Roman Catholic rituals evoked positive memories, despite the contradictions and confusion in spirituality and teachings that occurred. The Roman Catholic Church clergy accepted some families' teachings and spirituality, and clergy supported attempts by Métis people to reclaim language and traditions lost as a result of colonization. The Church has accepted criticisms from Métis people such as the one articulated by the Manitoba Métis Federation in chapter one and is working to reconcile Métis worldviews and spirituality with Roman Catholic practice.

Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools (GSCS) acting superintendent Darryl Bazylak gave a few reasons why twenty-first-century Roman Catholic separate schools in Saskatoon attracted Aboriginal students. He studied the factors influencing the success of five female Aboriginal students at Saskatoon's Oskāyak high school, loosely affiliated with GSCS. Bazylak noted that the spiritual foundation, coupled with the dedication of Roman Catholic personnel throughout the centuries to the elevation of the poor and disadvantaged, increased the chances of Aboriginal students for academic success. The student participants in Bazylak's Masters of Education study appreciated the respect Catholic teachers had for Aboriginal spirituality. They defined their own spirituality as influenced by both Aboriginal and Roman Catholic teachings. Furthermore, the emphasis on spirituality as an essential ingredient for their academic success resembled teachings from Aboriginal Elders and Old People. The outcome, for Bazylak's students, was positive attitudes about learning.<sup>82</sup>

Three of Bazylak's five female Aboriginal students claimed Métis ancestry. Two of the Métis students, Sici and Zeara, observed "that Christian Ethics teachers played an important role in their spiritual development and discussed the importance of tolerance of Aboriginal spirituality in their high school."<sup>83</sup> Therefore, across the generations,

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<sup>82</sup> Darryl Bazylak, "A Study of Factors Contributing to the Success of Female Aboriginal Students in an Inner City High School," M.Ed. Thesis, U of Saskatchewan, 2002, 106, 108, 132.

<sup>83</sup> Bazylak "A Study of Factors" 123.

continual emphasis was placed on Roman Catholic spirituality as a component in the academic and life successes as well as the spiritual health of Métis children and youth.

In the time period under consideration for my study, the Métis had adopted Roman Catholicism as an integral component of their spirituality. Therefore, Roman Catholic-operated schools and social service facilities were relatively well-embraced by the Métis. However, the practices of the clergy and nuns resulted in substantial criticisms from Métis adherents who believed in the faith of the church but disliked some of the actions toward their families.

The Roman Catholic Church's spiritual, educational, and recreational involvement in Métis communities has been a testament to its appeal, on certain levels, to Métis' entire spirituality. Métis families saw their spirituality as part of the larger whole of mental, emotional, and physical health and wellness. Roman Catholics saw spirituality as affecting all aspects of their adherents' lives. And the memories of Roman Catholic Church involvement in families' lives indicated that the Church was a substantial component of Métis children and youth's lives because the practices of its clergy and nuns appealed to the worldviews of their parishioners – who saw spiritual wellness as integrated with mental, physical, and emotional health. No other faith group may make a claim to such a rich history in the lives of the Métis, as we shall see in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Métis Children and Youth and Protestant Faiths: Stories of Indifference to Faith, Identity, and Church Attendance

Protestant Métis children and youth were a religious minority in Saskatchewan's Métis communities. According to the demographic data presented at the beginning of chapter six, the Protestant faiths, represented by the Anglicans and the Presbyterians with a small number of Methodists, Episcopalians, Baptists, and Lutherans, seemed to be an important faith group amongst the Métis. In 1901, the Census reported 199 or twenty-five percent of Métis belonged to the Anglican Church, twenty-eight or four percent to the Presbyterian Church, and twenty-four or three percent to the Methodist Church. By 1911, out of 926 enumerated Protestant Métis, thirty-nine percent were Anglicans and Presbyterians, and the Methodists had four or 0.20 percent and 231 or ten percent respectively of Protestant Métis parishioners. The Census of 1911 enumerated 2 368 Métis people who gave information on their religious affiliation. Therefore, Protestant Métis represented thirty-nine percent of this western Canadian Métis population.

Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Lutheran Métis children and youth saw church and their faith as distinct from their school, work, and family lives; over time, they grew indifferent to the proselytization of clergy, communicants, and parishioners. In interviews, these participants had to be prompted to identify their faith. When they discussed church, their initial responses resembled this one offered by Valerie Perreault: "I am a Christian Lutheran."<sup>1</sup> Jay, a Métis child who grew up on the land outside of Arcola, Saskatchewan, provided a response similar to Valerie's. He said that "my father was part of the Church of what do you call United Church, and we went to Sunday school in the United Church, and that's about it."<sup>2</sup> For Valerie and Jay, attendance at church in their formative years did not substantially shape their worldviews. The two did not think that church attendance and participation in Sunday services contributed to their spiritual frameworks.

Some Protestant Métis children and youth indicated that they, like their Roman Catholic Métis counterparts, went to summer camps hosted by Protestant clergy<sup>3</sup> and participated in Protestant religious celebrations such as Easter and Christmas. The

<sup>1</sup> Valerie Perreault, personal interview, 25 May 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Jay, personal interview, 25 May 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Charlotte Ross, personal interview, 11 January 2008.

participants told of summer camps and Easter celebrations. However, those Protestant Métis who discussed their religious background did not identify if the summer camps and festivals that they attended were opportunities to renew their ties to the Creator, nurture their spiritualities or comprehension of their faith, or reinforce their commitment to their churches; there was no evidence that their participation in these festivities continued into adulthood.

Ellen Dunning of St. Peter's, Manitoba grew up at the United Church Round Lake Boarding School in Saskatchewan, where her mother worked. Mother and daughter attended the local United Church on Sundays. In the summer, she went to camp at Round Lake. Her story ended without comments on how the camp contributed to her spiritual schema or reaffirmed kinship ties and ties to her homeland.<sup>4</sup> Lena (Karol) Flett, who resides north of Selkirk, Manitoba, went to what she called the Ukrainian Church in Winnipeg with her mother. She took her Easter eggs to the Church at Easter to be blessed.<sup>5</sup> Like Ellen, her religious history stopped after this story; I did not learn if this act nurtured her spiritual ties to this Ukrainian Church. Roman Catholic and Protestant Métis children and youth shared memories of summer camp and participation in Christian rituals, but for the Protestants summer camp and religious holidays existed apart from their families' lives, school, and traditional pursuits.

Protestant participants evinced a separation of church from their educational and work lives. Bernard Tripp and Valerie remember that Sunday school was their only interaction with Christianity or any lessons in spirituality. They attended church on Sundays because it was an expectation of their parents,<sup>6</sup> but none of the clergy provided the opportunity for these children to join sports teams or visited with their families outside of church. After church, Protestant families returned home; they did not go out and visit relatives, play cards, or form baseball teams, activities of the Roman Catholic Métis families in the afternoons that followed worship.

From the 1911 Census to the 1960s, the decades when Bernard, Valerie, and Jay were youngsters, the numbers of Protestant Métis declined, as did their visibility in western Canada. And in the families of the three aforementioned participants, knowledge

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<sup>4</sup> PAM, M11, Manitoba Métis Oral History Project, "Ellen Dunning," 1985.

<sup>5</sup> PAM, M11, Manitoba Métis Oral History Project, "Lena (Karol) Flett," 1985.

<sup>6</sup> Bernard Tripp, personal interview, 6 December 2006 and Valerie.

of one's Métis ancestry remained hidden. Bernard attended school at Horse Lake, a one-room house near the southern Saskatchewan town of Kelliher. At Kelliher, his parents and the handful of 'mixed-blood' families who resided near this farming town concealed their Aboriginal ancestries. In Bernard's family, the decision to renounce all intimate ties to his Aboriginal ancestors began with his grandfather, a homesteader who arrived from Ontario early in 1904 and settled at Sheho, Saskatchewan. His grandfather passed into settler society as a 'Canadian' and the next generations of Tripp men, according to Bernard, enumerated themselves as British and Canadian on the censuses that followed their arrival in western Canada.<sup>7</sup> Bernard knew that if "you were a Métis, you were no good. If you were an Indian, they would say your place was on the reserve, but the half-breeds came along, and people thought you were Indians."<sup>8</sup> Although Bernard now considers himself to be Métis, in his youth, he passed as a 'white' Protestant. Valerie's mother passed as a woman of "German descent."<sup>9</sup> Jay's parents covered up the 'mixed' ancestry of his family and encouraged their children to speak English. "Nobody, oh God no, my parents would have never mentioned it. No. No not until years later did we find out about it, but when we looked in the mirror, we had always suspected it."<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the Protestant Métis families from which Bernard, Valerie, and Jay originated were Métis who adopted their fathers' and grandfathers' English, French, or German identities. In some cases, their ancestors emphasized their European heritage because of their disillusionment after the Northwest Resistance of 1885 and in recognition of the subsequent growth in the number of settlers in twentieth-century Saskatchewan.<sup>11</sup>

The chances for Protestant Métis families to pass into settler society and become a part of the agrarian fabric of Saskatchewan arose because settlers saw Protestantism as a religion that advanced the social and economic agenda of the British state in the province. Therefore, settlers likely received Protestant Métis families headed by English-speaking men with fewer reservations than Francophone Roman Catholic families 'loyal' to papal authorities in Rome. Paget Code said that "the aftermath of 1885 and the increased

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<sup>7</sup> Bernard Tripp.

<sup>8</sup> Bernard Tripp.

<sup>9</sup> Valerie Perreault.

<sup>10</sup> Jay.

<sup>11</sup> Diane Payment, *'The Free People – Otipimisiwak': Batoche, Saskatchewan, 1870-1930*, Studies in Archaeology, Architecture, and History, National Parks and Sites, Parks Service, Environment Canada (Ottawa: Environment Canada, 1990) 79, 313.

hostility of the Euro-Canadian population towards Aboriginal peoples would lead to the demise of this ethnicity [the English Métis] as a self-identifiable group.”<sup>12</sup> Therefore, passing as ‘white’ combined with the lack of spiritual nourishment provided by the Protestant Churches contributed to the lack of identification of Métis children and youth with these faiths in twentieth-century newcomer society and perpetuated a gulf between their Anglo-Saxon and Scottish roots and the Aboriginal pasts of their mothers and grandmothers.<sup>13</sup>

This ethnic distance explains why the number of Protestant Métis who agreed to be interviewed for the oral history projects of 1973, 1984-1985, and 2005-2008 did not reflect the 1911 Census data. Out of the participants interviewed in the three oral history projects, nine or nine percent grew up in an Anglican household. Eight people or eight percent reported Presbyterian or Lutheran religious backgrounds. Eight people or eight percent did not mention church in their interviews, and two people or two percent were not raised in churchgoing families. One person or one percent came from a family who belonged to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, a non-Protestant church closer in ritual and ceremony to the Roman Catholic faith. Protestant Métis did not actively participate in these oral history project samples, despite efforts made by project leaders to recruit more Métis of diverse European and religious backgrounds and to discuss religious affiliation and rituals in the interviews. For the Métis Oral History Project in Manitoba, such attempts were undertaken because the project leader believed that there were some Métis who were either not aware of their Aboriginal pasts and therefore, did not associate the spiritual teachings of the Protestant faiths with their Métis pasts.<sup>14</sup>

It is clear from the discussion of missionary education in chapter two that there were attempts in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries by Protestant clergy to draw Métis families into the Protestant religious fabric of the Northwest Territories, later Saskatchewan, through formal schooling, and these clergy worked to Christianize Métis who had already adopted Roman Catholicism and its practices into their spiritual frameworks. However, the pressure on Métis families to conceal their Aboriginal

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<sup>12</sup> Paget Code, “*Les Autres Métis: The English Métis of the Prince Albert Settlement, 1862-1886*,” M.A. Thesis, U of Saskatchewan, 2007, 72.

<sup>13</sup> Code 72.

<sup>14</sup> PAM, Nicole St-Onge, “Métis Oral History Project 1985,” M11, 2-4.

ancestries and the ease with which Anglophone and Protestant Métis families passed into settler society indicated that the number of Protestant Métis declined in the twentieth century because their children and youth stopped attending church in their teenage years and never again attended church. Church attendance and the activities associated with the church declined in importance for Protestant Métis children and youth.

Protestant rituals did not appeal to Métis children and youth. This lack of identification with church teachings resulted in a wall between Métis families and the church. Confirmation did not build relationships between families, and neither the church nor Sunday worship involved substantial periods of contact between families. Protestant faiths lacked celebrations such as the Corpus Christi Day and other pilgrimages that afforded the chance for families to come together and to renew kinship ties.

The Métis children and youth interviewed in my project did not feel that protestant clergy understood Métis families' ties to the land or help children and youth to establish a sense of their place in creation. Overall, the twentieth-century children and youth who share their memories of Protestant church attendance in this chapter lacked a cognitive and spiritual affinity with the Protestant faiths. They faced pressure to pass into the Euro-Canadian and Christian majority and to abandon the spirit memories held by their ancestors on the lands<sup>15</sup> and any Aboriginal practices of their parents and grandparents. Children and youth made a conscious decision to discontinue church attendance when they were young and did not bring their children into the churches to receive a Christian education.

The Métis children and youth who attended Anglican Churches in northeast Saskatchewan informed me that the clergy understood Aboriginal families as either 'savage' and 'heathen' or 'pure' and 'good.' Clergy measured the spiritual character of Aboriginals through their participation at church as parishioners or through their practice of Aboriginal traditions. A Métis youngster whose family resided on a Métis settlement near the Montreal Lake Cree Nation remembered such a dichotomy in existence in her childhood years at her mixed Métis and non-status First Nations settlement.

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<sup>15</sup> David T. McNab, "A Long Journey: Reflections on Spirit Memory and Métis Identities," Ute Lischke and David T. McNab, eds. *The Long Journey of a Forgotten People: Métis Identities and Family Histories*, Aboriginal Studies Series (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007) 32.

The Anglican Church enjoyed a near monopoly over the souls of the status Cree, Métis, and non-status Cree First Nations who resided on the reserve and in the Métis and non-status First Nations communities that surrounded Montreal Lake Cree Nation: Molonosa, Weyakwin, Timber Bay, and Tweedsmuir.<sup>16</sup> According to the Anglican documentation, the churches were started in 1889 through the efforts of the Anglican missionaries.<sup>17</sup> In the 1960s, when data on converts and communicants are first available on Montreal Lake's St. Joseph Church, church enumerators recorded "information on 436 individuals."<sup>18</sup> Enumerators reported that ninety-nine percent of the parishioners had been baptized and that 98.3 percent were communicants.<sup>19</sup>

In 1948, Montreal Lake had thirty students in school who were instructed by one teacher.<sup>20</sup> Twelve years later, in 1960, ninety-four children and youth, or 23.4 percent of the population, lived on reserve and in the surrounding Métis and non-status First Nations settlements.<sup>21</sup> Despite the efforts of the clergy and their teaching personnel, a slight majority or 35.4 percent of residents had no formal education. 28.2 percent and twenty-nine percent had from one to four and five to eight years, respectively, of elementary schooling, and 6.3 percent and 1.1 percent of persons had nine to twelve and thirteen or more years, respectively, of formal schooling.<sup>22</sup>

In 1953, Anglican clergy described Montreal Lake in terms of its economic, racial, and social characteristics. Economically, they described the settlement as one "with several lumber mills."<sup>23</sup> It had "a mixed population...[with] Indians [who] seem to be specially exposed to temptations...There is a good Government Teacherage, but no Mission House. Another settlement with a few Whites, and many Métis and Indians is situated 40 miles North on the highway. This is attached to the Montreal Lake Mission. A Missionary could be really busy ministering to the various settlements on the shore of

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<sup>16</sup> ADS, Series III – Diocese of Saskatchewan Synods, Box S-1, I-2, Indian Missions – Finances, etc. – 1888-1897, Prince Albert, Nepowewin, St. James, Sturgeon Lake & Montreal Lake 1895.

<sup>17</sup> ADS, Series III - Indian Missions – Reserves Record Book 1929-1956 [W.E.J. Paul] I2, Diocese of Saskatchewan: Indian Missions. Comparative Statistics 1943-1944, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> ADS, Series III – I-210, I-8, 5 – Data on the Congregation.

<sup>19</sup> ADS, Series III – I-210, I-8, 5 – Data on the Congregation.

<sup>20</sup> ADS, Series III - Indian Missions & Indian Work – Reports [W.E.J. Paul] – 1928-1955 Vol. 3/3 I2, Diocese of Saskatchewan: Indian Work. [Ca. 1948].

<sup>21</sup> ADS, Series III – I-210, I-8, 5 – Data on the Congregation.

<sup>22</sup> ADS, Series III – I-210, I-8, 5 – Data on the Congregation.

<sup>23</sup> ADS, Indian Missions & Indian Work – Reports [W.E.J. Paul] – 1928-1955 Vol. 3/3 I2, Report for Provincial Synod, 1953, Montreal Lake, 2.

the lake which is about 30 x 8 miles.”<sup>24</sup> Anglican clergy considered the Métis and non-status First Nations who resided in the villages and hamlets surrounding Montreal Lake to be threats to the moral conduct of the status First Nations on-reserve. Another report from 1953 on Indian Missions said that the “mixed population...[created] many temptations for Indians.”<sup>25</sup>

Throughout the 1950s, the Anglican clergy submitted reports concerned with the spiritual well-being of the 400 Métis and First Nations residents at the mission.<sup>26</sup> Clergy felt that although “nearly all the people are Anglicans & good Churchgoers...some people do not realize what the Christian life implies, & seem to think that if they are baptized & confirmed, & receive Holy Communion it does not matter what sort of life they live.”<sup>27</sup> In accordance with the Anglican philosophy of missions by Aboriginal converts, the clergy hoped that the young people, regardless of their First Nations or Métis background, would “find a vocation to service...their people, more particularly as priests, teachers, nurses and doctors.”<sup>28</sup>

However, the Anglicans also believed that several social issues hindered the provision of formal schooling to children and youth. According to the clergy, the dissolution of marriages and the mixed marriages between ‘white’ men and status First Nations women from the reserve created substantial conflicts in and around the Montreal Lake mission. Clergy believed that the ‘white’ men hastily married local women from the reserve community. Soon, these men formed the impression that their wives were indifferent to formal schooling for themselves and their children. Furthermore, they thought of their wives as disobedient and lazy. Clergy reports blamed these wives for the failed mixed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal marriages in the settlements that surrounded Montreal Lake.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> ADS, Montreal Lake, 2.

<sup>25</sup> ADS, Report of the Standing Committee on Indian Missions to the Synod of the Province of Rupert’s Land, April 1953, 6.

<sup>26</sup> ADS, Indian Missions + Reserves – Record Book – 1955-1957 [A.E. Woodcock] I2, Archdeacon A. Woolcock, *Indian Missions Record Book* (Prince Albert: Synod Office, n.d.), p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> Woolcock 6.

<sup>28</sup> ADS, Indian Training College 1957-1959 I3, *M.S.C.C. Popular Report – 1958: Tell it out...* (Toronto: The Missionary Society of The Anglican Church of Canada, 1958), p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> ADS, BFS-5 Montreal Lake – St. Joseph’s Field Study: 1960’s, I-201 Parish of Montreal Lake, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Despite the moral temptations and the family dysfunction, the lumber mills, as well as the traditional economy of hunting, fishing, and trapping, kept family heads employed.<sup>30</sup> Métis and non-status First Nations families who could not reside on reserve had to make their living through hunting, fishing, and trapping on the land. However, by the 1960s, under pressure from the Government of Saskatchewan, Métis families chose to settle at least part of their families in the towns surrounding or outside of the reserve.

Charlotte Ross, born in 1965, grew up in Molonosa, one of the communities surrounding the Montreal Lake reserve. Five years prior to her birth, Anglican enumerators reported that Molonosa “is a community of about 200 people near the north end of Montreal Lake, and approximately halfway between the community of Montreal Lake and the community of Lac la Ronge.”<sup>31</sup> Church reporters enumerated residents who struggled to earn a living in the declining trapping industry and through the commercial fishery. However, these same reporters commended the community’s devotion to the Anglican Church, housed in the community schoolhouse, despite its lack of a Sunday school, although the stories shared by Charlotte illustrate that not all Métis families would stay devoted to the Anglican Church.<sup>32</sup>

Although Charlotte’s father did not have any formal education, putting him in the norm of educational attainment for the residents of the area, he was successful in business, was a member of the Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan, now the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, and sat on the Local Community Authority for the village. Charlotte grew up in a community with a gravel highway to connect it to the rest of the province but without modern utilities like electricity, running water, and central heating. However, Charlotte was able to attend school as the provincial government operated a school in the community. Charlotte’s family life did not reflect the descriptions of church reporters, who described Montreal Lake residents as prone to alcoholism. Charlotte remembered her parents as industrious Métis whose priorities concerned the sustenance of their family. However, Charlotte recalled that when her family moved away from Molonosa in 1973, her parents, as well as other

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<sup>30</sup> ADS, Data on the Congregation.

<sup>31</sup> ADS, Church I-8a, Molonosa, Saskatchewan Parish of Montreal Lake, I-218.

<sup>32</sup> ADS, Church I-8a.

families in her new community, struggled with problems associated with alcohol and declining returns on the traditional economy, based on hunting and trapping.<sup>33</sup>

Unlike the Roman Catholic communities of Saskatchewan's west side, the clergy did not serve as teachers to the children at Molonosa. Students attended a public school run by a teacher recruited by the Government of Saskatchewan. Charlotte remembered that her

grade one teacher was one of the first graduates of the NORTEP [Northern Teacher Education Program] in 1973, and she was bringing the Cree language into the curriculum and so we were her 'guinea pigs,' in a positive way. She would be learning all of this stuff in La Ronge,<sup>34</sup> and she would come home and practice, and she would do the whole lesson in Cree or a song in Cree. We would sing songs; remember the colours; and all of this I learned in Cree at a young age. I just happened to have the right teacher.<sup>35</sup>

Charlotte, like Mary-Rose Boyer, was fortunate to have a teacher who reflected her family's language and heritage in the classroom instruction; the pasts of her ancestors were the touchstone to the later lessons in western literacy, numeracy, and citizenship.

Unfortunately, Charlotte's grade one teacher shared community space with Anglican Clergy who condemned the practices of traditionalists who lived on the reserve and in the surrounding Métis settlements. In Molonosa, as well as the surrounding communities of Montreal Lake Cree Nation, Charlotte and her family knew that "Native traditions...[were] seen as 'evil' and an offence against the Anglican Church."<sup>36</sup>

Charlotte's parents were devout followers of the Anglican Church, and she believed that her parents' devotion to the church alienated her and her siblings from Cree spirituality. Charlotte said that "my dad had all of this knowledge, about the traditional Cree spirituality, but it was not anything that was talked about, it was never talked about."<sup>37</sup>

As an adult, Charlotte was told stories by her relatives that revealed the origins behind her family's non-status/Métis heritage. Her relatives told her that her paternal

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<sup>33</sup> Charlotte Ross.

<sup>34</sup> The degree program, NORTEP, started in 1976. Its predecessor was a two-year training program whose students trained to become teacher assistants. Charlotte's grade one teacher had taken the teacher assistant training in La Ronge, and she went on to obtain a Standard A Teaching Certificate and later, she completed an education degree from NORTEP. Charlotte Ross, personal communication, 29 October 2008.

<sup>35</sup> Charlotte Ross, 11 January 2008.

<sup>36</sup> Charlotte Ross, 11 January 2008.

<sup>37</sup> Charlotte Ross, 11 January 2008.

grandmother felt she was banned, by the Anglican Chief and Church Council authorities, from living on the Montreal Lake reserve because of her refusal to convert to the Anglican Church and her devotion to Cree spirituality. Consequently, her paternal grandmother left the reserve, but she remained on the membership list for the band, kept by the Department of Indian Affairs. Since her grandmother left the reserve, she lost her status even though she was an original band member of the Montreal Lake Cree Nation.

My grandmother was a traditional spiritual leader, and the political chiefs who were in power did not practice traditional ways. The Anglican Church had a very strong hold on the community and so anybody who was not conforming, and that was my grandmother, anyone who was following Indian ways, was literally banned from living on the reserve. So my grandmother and all of her brothers fell under that category because they had traditional ceremonies, and they held different ceremonies, and they were recognized medicine people in the traditional sense and for the healing and practicing of traditional ceremonies. So it was a real shock when my father's lawyer conducted the genealogy searches for my father's birth certificate, and we found out that our father was on the band registry, although under a different name, and so were all of his relatives. So after the alterations to the Indian Act in 1985, all of his children came and registered as original, not Bill C-31, members that should have been on the band list.<sup>38</sup>

Charlotte discovered that in the early twentieth century, for the Cree spiritual leaders at Montreal Lake to retain their band membership, they had to participate, as parishioners and communicants, in the rituals of the local Anglican Church and suppress any knowledge and application of traditional Cree spiritual practices. The Band Councillors were devoted parishioners in the Anglican Church; they adhered to the teachings of the clergy, and their actions satisfied the assimilationist mindset of the administrators in the federal Department of Indian Affairs.

Although the clergy used the Cree language, their control of local leadership helped to split the Aboriginal culture and heritage from the Cree language. Clergy did not understand that Cree was the gateway to indigenous worldviews and epistemologies and therefore to the foundations of Aboriginal lifelong learning.<sup>39</sup> For Charlotte, the Anglican Church did not validate her language or nurture the knowledge of her family's hunting, fishing, and trapping on the land, and the judgments and teachings of the

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<sup>38</sup> Charlotte Ross, 11 January 2008.

<sup>39</sup> M.L. Aylward, "Discourses of Cultural Relevance in Nunavut Schooling," *The Journal of Research in Rural Education* 22.7 (2007): 6, retrieved 10 July 2007 from <http://www.umaine.edu/jrre/22-7.htm>.

Anglican clergy placed her at a spiritual and cognitive distance from the churches in Montreal Lake and the surrounding area.<sup>40</sup> And she permanently stopped attending church when she was a young adult.

Despite the policy directive of the Anglican Church, which was to train Aboriginals to lead mission stations, clergy adopted only the languages of the parishioners but not the customs of the people into their overall spiritual framework and their missionary outreach activities.<sup>41</sup> Indigenous languages were to be learned as transition languages, to be used only until students and parishioners attained conversational and academic competence in English.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, for many young Métis parishioners, the church became a fragment of their lives. Children and youth obeyed their parents and attended church, but once they reached their teen years they stopped attending church, renounced their spiritual and cognitive ties to the Anglican Church and later in life, these former Anglicans strongly criticized the clergy for their inflexible dogma.

Earl Cook came from Cumberland House, a village that witnessed strong sectarian strife between Anglican parishioners, Roman Catholics,<sup>43</sup> and by the 1960s, Northern Evangelicals.<sup>44</sup> Anglican clergy celebrated Cumberland House as the birthplace of Anglican mission work in the West. The renowned Cree 'mixed-blood' Anglican catechist Henry Budd founded the mission station in 1840, and his actions touched off 100 years of concerted Anglican mission work to northern Aboriginals.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Charlotte Ross, 11 January 2008.

<sup>41</sup> Charlotte Ross, 11 January 2008.

<sup>42</sup> Aylward 6.

<sup>43</sup> ADS, Series III, "Report of Visit to Cumberland House, August, 1950.

<sup>44</sup> ADS, Series III, "Cumberland House Indian Reserves, Diocese of Saskatchewan (Triplicate), July, 1960. Participants from northeast Saskatchewan did not remember the denominational affiliation of the Northern Evangelicals, but they recalled that the clergy from these churches came only during the summer months to run Christian bible camps, leaving the northeast in the fall. The Anglican Church's records for northeast Saskatchewan identified the Northern Evangelicals but did not identify the denominational affiliation of these missionaries. An internet search of the Northern Evangelicals finds that clergy and parishioners associate their churches in other areas of North America with the Lutheran Church, but there is no conclusive evidence that these same churches in northeast Saskatchewan were of Lutheran denominational background.

<sup>45</sup> ADS, Series III, "Report of the Executive Committee, June 8, 1939, p. 2.

When Earl was born, in 1950, the family heads at Cumberland House relied on trapping and fishing<sup>46</sup> for sustenance.

However, Anglicans did not celebrate the state of the mission field at Cumberland House in post-World War II northeast Saskatchewan. Like the schools in the Métis villages on Saskatchewan's west side, Cumberland House's elementary school relied on Roman Catholic nuns to teach in its classrooms and educate the non-status First Nations and Métis youngsters who lived in the village, jeopardizing the hold of Anglican clergy on their flock. Missionary reports from 1961 to 1963 highlighted the poor condition of the Anglican Church of the Good Shepherd and recommended that, in addition to the construction of a new building to house the church services for the families, "a program of Christian education, particularly for the children, is of the utmost importance."<sup>47</sup> The near monopoly of the Anglican Church on the Christian souls of this village as well as the nearby reserves and non-status First Nations and Métis settlements was further threatened by the middle of the twentieth century when the Northern Evangelicals, a fundamentalist Christian church, began to establish summer ministries throughout the northeast corner of the province.<sup>48</sup> Overall, the Anglicans' new but unidentified and vague plans for young people's Christian education brought negligible results. By 1980, Anglican ministers and educators continued to discuss ways, at Cumberland House, to "inculcate in young children a sense of obligation to the church's Mission, or Outreach as it is more frequently called today...[as] we do have...a real mission in our own country to the Native people."<sup>49</sup> Consequently, at Cumberland House, the influence of the Anglican Church on the spirituality of Métis children and youth declined steadily in the twentieth century.

Earl's comments on Anglican teachings explained why the Anglican and even the Roman Catholic clergy at Cumberland House failed to retain the post-World War II

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<sup>46</sup> ADS, "Cumberland House Indian Reserves," p. 4; ADS, Series III, "Northern Churches – Bishop's Correspondence 1961-1963 I3," (Synod Office Copy) St. Mark's Church Pemmican Portage, Saskatchewan, Diocese of Saskatchewan, p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> ADS, "Northern Churches – Bishop's Correspondence 1961-1963 I3," (Synod Office Copy) St. Mark's Church Pemmican Portage, Saskatchewan, Diocese of Saskatchewan, "Church of the Good Shepherd, Cumberland House."

<sup>48</sup> ADS, Indian Missions – Reserves Record Book 1929-1956 [W.E.J. Paul] I2, Montreal Lake with Molonosa: Indian Reserves Diocese of Saskatchewan (Triplicate) (July, 1960), p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> ADS, XP-7 La Ronge 1978-1985, Bishop of Saskatchewan to Mrs. David Mitchell, January 24, 1980.

generation of Métis children and youth and their families. Earl remembered sectarian strife being firmly embedded into the social and cultural fabric of the village. As in other regions of Canada, Roman Catholics actively discouraged marriage across religious lines, messages from the pulpit that splintered families. Although Earl remembered that clergy who represented the Anglican Church did not stigmatize inter-denominational marriages or illegitimate children, he concluded, based on his contact with the Roman Catholic nuns in his elementary school and his attendance at Anglican Sunday church services, that “from an early age, I felt religion was something that did not appeal to me because of the practice.”<sup>50</sup> Like Charlotte, Earl disliked the clergy’s practice, manifested in their discouragement of Aboriginal spirituality, emphasis on absolute devotion, and lack of relevance to his family’s economic pursuits. He reasoned that the church’s rituals led to his own spiritual, cognitive, and spatial distance from the village’s Anglican Church. Once Earl entered his teenage years, he ceased attending church.

Another experience, in this instance at school and early in his educational career, contributed to his overall desire to distance himself from church-based teaching, both academic and spiritual. Like many heads of northern Saskatchewan families, his father made his living from the land, and “we grew up on the trap line. I failed grade one because of that, because school was tied to Family Allowance, attendance at school, and I started school in the early 1950s. I spent some time on the trap line in the spring and fall, and I was out commercial fishing and trapping, that kind of thing; so I missed school.”<sup>51</sup> Earl saw religion and formal schooling as incompatible with his family’s traditional pursuits, and the lessons learned out on the trap line.

Métis children and youth remember the Protestant churches as a fragment of their lives. The clergy and catechists appeared once a week and did not participate in their daily lives nor did they express any interest in their families’ activities or in children’s play. Whereas Roman Catholic Métis saw their church life as inseparable from the schoolhouses, traditions, and family rituals, for the Protestant Métis, church was an event; one attended on Sundays when they were children and youth. Like the Roman Catholic children and youth, Protestant parents expected their children to attend church, but once

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<sup>50</sup> Earl Cook, personal interview, 26 February 2008.

<sup>51</sup> Earl Cook.

this requirement ended these same youth stopped attending church. The Roman Catholic children and youth continued to attend church as adults, despite their criticisms of the ability of the clergy and the nuns as teachers in the schools. Protestant children and youth made a complete break with church teachings as soon as their parents allowed them to stop attending church. Participants stated that the clergy did not make any sincere attempts to understand families' socio-economic and spiritual beliefs, nor did they encourage children to stay involved with their local church's religious activities and organizational bodies after they became youth and when they were adults.

The Qu'Appelle Valley Métis families sometimes travelled up to two hours to attend the closest Roman Catholic churches,<sup>52</sup> but Protestant Métis families who, at times, had to travel similar distances did not see their church attendance as an obligation. Instead, Sunday church services were a reprieve from the heavy labour associated with farming. Bernard thought of Sunday school at the United Church that his family attended as an opportunity "at haying time, to get out of work. \*Laughs,\* you heard the church bell, and you got to leave the field."<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, Protestant Métis children and youth did not believe that their co-religionists of settler background were aware of the Métis' socio-cultural history in Saskatchewan. Unlike the Roman Catholic Métis families who resided in the nearby Qu'Appelle Valley and looked at church attendance as a chance to renew kinship ties and to play sports, memories shared by Protestant Métis are not as rich. Finally, like Earl and Charlotte, obligations to attend church ceased for Bernard when he reached his teenage years.

Protestant Métis from the Souris River Valley (Val and Jay), Kelliher (Bernard), north central Saskatchewan (Charlotte), northeast Saskatchewan (Earl), and the small number of Manitoba participants in the province's Métis Oral History Project did not provide substantial recollections of their involvement in Protestant and other non-Roman Catholic Churches. Val and Bernard required prompts to answer questions that concerned their religious backgrounds, and Val only gave the name of the church and its affiliation. Furthermore, none of these individuals passed along the church teachings to their own children. The dearth of anecdotal evidence meant, primarily, that Protestant

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<sup>52</sup> George Klyne, personal communication, 17 May 2006.

<sup>53</sup> Bernard Tripp.

faiths did not affect Métis family life the same as did the Roman Catholic faith, and secondarily, that the Protestant Churches, despite their presence in Métis settlements and towns and villages with Métis residents, did not provide opportunities for Métis children and youth's spiritual growth, academic instruction, sports, and employment, opportunities the Roman Catholic Churches provided.

The Roman Catholic Church maintained its visibility in Métis families and communities through the opportunities that it provided for Métis children and youth to grow, spiritually and academically, to renew and to learn of family ties, and to find employment. Unfortunately, the decline in the number of Protestant Métis and the difficulty with the location of Protestant Métis to participate in oral history projects was due to the decline in Métis adult participation in Protestant churches, and the unwillingness, on the part of the Protestant Métis parents who grew up after World War II, to pass along Christian instruction to their children and grandchildren. Their experiences with Protestant churches did not inspire them to carry the clergy's teachings with them into adulthood and to encourage their children to attend church.

Protestant missionaries sincerely wished to provide Christian education for both First Nations and Métis children. These desires are revealed in attempts by missionaries like the Presbyterian Lucy Baker to provide schooling for 'half-breed' children who resided at the late-nineteenth-century Prince Albert Presbyterian mission station. However, Protestant teachings failed to capture the attention of the Métis. Charlotte and Earl implied that Protestant dogma and rituals were spiritually and cognitively irrelevant. Furthermore, clergy did not assist post-World War II children and youth who attempted to reconcile their Métis pasts with modern or public institutions and practices.

Protestant churches' involvement in the formal and informal learning of Métis children and youth resulted in the spiritual and cognitive alienation of the Métis children and youth in their congregations. Without a substantial amount of foundation and scaffolding built through contact with clergy, Métis children and youth had no opportunity to establish lifelong relationships with the spiritual leaders of the Anglican, United, and Lutheran Churches. Charlotte provided an explanation for her decision to limit her cognitive and spiritual contact with the clergy in the Montreal Lake area. Charlotte's investigation of her family's history, combined with her knowledge of the

Plains Cree history in Saskatchewan, indicated to her that the Anglican Church was an active agent in the disruption of Cree healing practices and contributed to her father's silences about the Cree traditions that preceded him. Church attendance meant the abandonment of one's ancestral maternal ties and the practices that accompanied them. At Molonosa and in the other communities that surrounded the Montreal Lake reserve, and on the reserve, Anglican tribal leaders denounced her grandmother's teachings, learning, and healing practices. The leaders removed her from the reserve in order to prevent her from influencing others' practices, potentially weakening Anglican influence. Protestant clergy, communicants, and catechists expected a complete conversion to their ways and afforded little opportunity for Métis children and youth to negotiate traditional teachings, family ties, and holistic views of teaching and learning with the rigid fragmentation of worship and civilized standards of behaviour expected by Protestant churches.

For Métis children and youth, the integration and merger of Roman Catholicism with their traditional Métis ties to place, family, and the language facilitated a lifelong relationship with clergy and nuns. Roman Catholic traditions such as pilgrimages brought Roman Catholic Métis children and youth into the orbit of the Catholic faith and kept them as parishioners. Certain Roman Catholic rituals – such as First Communion, pilgrimages on Corpus Christi Day, and Confirmation – have been naturalized as part of the lifelong learning journey of the Métis. Anglican and United Church rituals did not hold the same appeal for the Métis; no participants reported that their families considered Protestant rituals to have become a part of Métis spirituality. Despite the ties to Roman Catholicism, nurtured by Roman Catholic clergy through spiritual practices and daily interaction in school as well as participation in sports and work in Catholic facilities, twentieth-century prairie Métis witnessed a disruption in the knowledge of their family ties across the generations.

However, the ancestral and spatial distance from the pasts of mothers and grandmothers existed amongst the Roman Catholics and the Protestants. It was a thread that united the experiences of Métis children and youth who received Christian education. In the years following the Northwest Resistance, persistence gave way to disillusionment as growing numbers of newcomers and settlers arrived in the West. Diane Payment

believed that by 1910, Métis communities in north central Saskatchewan began a sharp decline in numbers, as families moved away and attempted to start anew.<sup>54</sup> As Code observed, many Anglican and other Protestant Métis passed into the newcomer society. They claimed the ancestries of their fathers and forgot the ancestral pasts of their mothers. Many Francophone Roman Catholics followed paths similar to the Protestants, except these children and youth retained the Franco-Catholicism of the Red River Settlement and of those Métis who resided in and around Batoche. But their families split off the Aboriginal ancestries of their mothers and grandmothers. As Guy has already said, the next generations harboured suspicions that their families concealed Aboriginal pasts and speculated that their mothers deliberately put up spatial and emotional distance from local Métis and First Nations who were maternal relatives. Despite the material, spiritual, emotional, and educational support given by the Roman Catholic churches and their clergy to the Métis Nation and its communities, the twentieth century was an era when the Métis – after two unsuccessful challenges to the rule of colonial authorities in the West – either moved further north, passed by emphasizing their fathers' ancestries into settler society, or lived on the road allowances alongside settler families. Family heads believed that children's knowledge of their Métis ancestry would hinder their educational, social, and material advancement in settler society. Their actions represented attempts to survive and to prosper in twentieth-century Saskatchewan.

However, those Métis children and youth who were able to successfully pursue formal schooling, build relationships with the newcomer society, participate as parishioners in the Roman Catholic Church, and find employment came from families who shared their Métis pasts. This knowledge of place, kinship ties, traditions, and the languages of their ancestors provided them with the resilience needed for interactions with insensitive teachers, ignorant community members, and hostile employers. Of course, the greatest gifts passed on to the next generations were embodied in the traditional knowledge shared by parents and grandparents.

Métis children and youth whose parents concealed their pasts found school to be a challenge. They faced trauma and anxiety as a result of the cognitive and emotional

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<sup>54</sup> Payment 79, 313.

displacement from their pasts. Although their parents and grandparents believed that they aided them in adjusting to the settler society, through the use of the English and French languages and the exclusive worship of Christian faiths, their children did not have the cultural supports that they needed to adjust to high school in a new town or to understand the prejudices of the non-Aboriginal majorities in their communities.

Protestant faith leaders undermined pre-existing traditions and family structures and over time contributed to the erosion of Métis learners' knowledge of place, hunting, trapping, and fishing, and family ties, or the life-giving forces that enabled Métis learners to successfully travel on their lifelong learning journeys.

## CONCLUSION: Denominational and Public Schooling, Changing Settlement and Economic Patterns, and Métis Learning

Métis learners stressed that knowledge of place, the traditional economy based on hunting, fishing, and trapping, and family ties guided them along their lifelong learning journeys. Communication of these teachings in the Cree, Michif, and Dene languages of their mothers and grandmothers, or their ancestors, strengthened their ties to place, their knowledge of traditions, and their links with family members across the generations. Part of the knowledge base came from their fathers. And they were men who, prior to the nineteenth century, were fur trade personnel, and who sometimes stayed with their families. These families adopted components of Roman Catholic worship into their spiritual schemas.<sup>1</sup> Prior to the late-nineteenth century, these mixed-ancestry families and the surrounding First Nations represented the majority of families in Rupert's Land. The fall of the Red River Settlement in 1870, and the subsequent birth of the province of Manitoba led to the growth in the number of immigrants or newcomers to western Canada and challenged the transmission of Métis knowledge to the next generations of children and youth.

The Red River Resistance of 1869-1870 was the first of two conflicts that would challenge the spirit of Métis people in western Canada. Families established new communities such as St. Laurent and Batoche in north central Saskatchewan and hoped that their grievances with the federal government over their land claims would be resolved. They wished to settle their land claims and to exercise their right to self-determination in the new social, racial, and economic order.<sup>2</sup> However, their 1885 defeat under the Métis leader Louis Riel altered Métis socio-economic and cultural life in

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<sup>1</sup> J.E. Foster, "Wintering the Outsider Adult Male and the Ethnogenesis of the Western Plains Métis," *The Western Métis: Profile of a People*, ed. P.C. Douaud (Regina: Canadian Great Plains Research Center, University of Regina) p. 99. Foster referred to Roman Catholic missionary observations. These first missionaries in the West were surprised to find inland trader families engaged in the practice of Roman Catholic ritual.

<sup>2</sup> There are comprehensive histories of the land claims of the Métis and attempts by the Métis, the Government of Canada, and the Government of Manitoba, to honour Métis land tenure and to settle Métis land claims in Manitoba and later, in the Northwest Territories. See the following essays, originally published in *Prairie Forum* and reprinted in Patrick Douaud, ed., *The Western Métis: Profile of a People* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2007): Thomas Flanagan, "The Market for Métis Lands in Manitoba: An Exploratory Study," 105-123; D.N. Sprague, "Dispossession vs. Accommodation in Plaintiff vs. Defendant Accounts of Métis Dispersal from Manitoba, 1870-1881," 125-144; and Thomas Flanagan, "Métis Land Claims at Saint Laurent: Old Arguments and New Evidence," 145-154.

Saskatchewan. Initially, the Métis attempted to rebuild their communities in north central Saskatchewan, but as the newcomer society grew, it overcrowded the Métis, and gained in stature and priority in the eyes of the provincial and federal governments;<sup>3</sup> Métis resilience gave way to disillusionment and discouragement. Late-nineteenth-century Native-newcomer contact in the Northwest Territories broke the spirit of many generations of Métis families.

Throughout Métis communities, the churches, especially the Roman Catholic Church, assumed a social service and educational role for the Métis families. In many Métis communities in western Canada, the Church was the centre of culture, religion, and education, and overall community life. Church-based teaching enabled the Métis communities to survive the aggressive agricultural pursuits of the newcomers but at the same time inadvertently contributed, according to Patrick Douaud, to Métis isolation from newcomer society.<sup>4</sup> Protestant educational authorities extended an arm of partnership to the Roman Catholic Church in the early days of the public schools and established partnerships with Catholic personnel in the delivery of childcare and education to Métis children and youth. By mid-century, however, the provincial government started to relieve the churches, especially the Roman Catholic Church, of their educational and social service duties, and replaced their facilities and teachers with public schools and health care and social service facilities and workers. The change in teaching personnel occurred in tandem with the evolution of the Roman Catholic Church from an evangelical missionary approach to teaching and social service delivery to a formalized, diocesan structure. Communities were now under the care of bishops. Métis reaction to the changes in the practice of missionary activities of the church was bittersweet. Métis communities respected the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and its clergy and adopted select practices into their spiritual schema, but also wanted their children to have a public education that would enable them to be competitive with non-Aboriginals in the workforce.

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<sup>3</sup> Policy such as the federal 1872 Homestead Act not only brought in newcomers but emphasized the importance of their contributions to the settlement of the Northwest Territories and the changes in the economy. John Warnock, *Saskatchewan: The Roots of Discontent and Protest* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2004) 6. Also see Diane Payment, *'The Free People – Otipimisiwak': Batoche, Saskatchewan, 1870-1930*, Studies in Archaeology, Architecture, and History, National Parks and Sites, Parks Service, Environment Canada (Ottawa: Environment Canada, 1990) 313.

<sup>4</sup> Douaud, "Canadian Métis Identity," 75.

When Métis families were resettled by the Government of Saskatchewan, their children had access to primary and secondary education. The Government of Saskatchewan's Department of Education hoped to bring Métis learners in from the margins of society through adaptations to support the learning of children and youth. Scholars and administrators hoped that revisions to the philosophies that guided the development of curriculum, textbooks that embraced and celebrated the histories of Canada's Aboriginals, new policies to support the development of technical subject areas, and encouragement of community-based leadership for school administration and curriculum development would enable the development of more responsive schools. New course proposals prepared by in-service teachers tried to integrate First Nations and Métis family histories and hunting, fishing, and trapping into the existing pedagogy and curriculum in publicly funded schools. However, the application of the new guidelines proposed by government administrators was uneven, very little follow-up happened with schools, and the small adaptations did not captivate the Métis students who attended school. Publicly funded schools did not enrich or nourish the Métis identities of their learners; teachers contributed to the diminishment of Métis identity, a process that had begun long before the development of new schools and facilities for education and training in northern Saskatchewan.

It would be impossible to document whether Métis families decided deliberately and consciously to break with their pasts and pass into newcomer society. However, the anecdotal evidence provided by participants such as Anna, Guy, David, and Val suggested convincingly that after the conflicts of 1885 and the subsequent settlement of western Canada, families gravitated toward and emphasized the heritages of their Euro-Canadian fathers and grandfathers. These participants argued that one or both parents or grandparents attempted deliberately to conceal the Métis and Aboriginal pasts of their mothers and grandmothers or decided to ignore the past by electing not to discuss it.

The four aforementioned participants gave examples that demonstrated how their parents erased or ignored their ancestry. Val learned after the death of her mother that she, or someone she knew and trusted, deleted all references that pertained to her family's history. Although Val had always suspected she had Aboriginal ancestry, evidenced by her dark skin, fondness for the children of Métis families who resided in Estevan,

Saskatchewan, and the actions of a culturally insensitive teacher, her mother said she was of German descent.

David's family members treated their Aboriginal grandmother as a liability for them in their immigrant community and sent David away to receive an education rooted in Roman Catholic spirituality where all of his classmates were allegedly French. Even though he knew that many, like him, could be of mixed Native-newcomer ancestries, feelings of shame hindered any potential for the revelation of these ethnic differences. Having an Aboriginal grandmother brought shame to the family, and family heads feared that newcomer residents would cast a cloud of suspicion over them.

Guy never saw his maternal relatives, even though they lived only a few kilometres away from his family, residing in Jasmin, Saskatchewan. His mother maintained spatial and emotional distance in order to preserve their family's reputation and respect amongst the immigrant farmers in the surrounding area, and the immigrant majority accepted Guy and his family as 'white.' Therefore, families permanently erased any documentation of their Aboriginal pasts, controlled the frequency of intimate contact with Aboriginal relatives, or ignored these relatives. All of these efforts were undertaken to ensure that other townspeople and local farmers had no idea of their Métis pasts. Whereas their parents understood themselves as part of a Métis past or as bicultural, the next generations, people like David, Guy, and Val, at least for a period of time, saw themselves as uni-cultural.<sup>5</sup>

Anna relayed how the community members in her northern Manitoba village, despite being related and descendants of the Métis of the Red River Settlement, prevented the transmission of their Métis heritage to the next generations of children and youth. Although she came from a mixed-ancestry community, Anna said that "no one had any idea of what a 'Métis' person was or had even heard the term."<sup>6</sup> When she grew up, "when a baby was born, you did not know if it was white, dark, or fair until it was born."<sup>7</sup> And no one in her community was able to explain the differences in the appearance of

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<sup>5</sup> D. Bruce Sealey and Antoine S. Lussier, *The Métis; Canada's Forgotten People* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Metis Federation Press, 1975) 139, 148-149; Guy Blondeau, personal interview, 3 October 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Anna, personal interview, 2 September 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Anna, personal communication, 29 June 2005.

newborn babies. Anna's journey to self-identification as a Métis person began in the early 1990s.

Martha Harroun Foster said that cognitive and emotional distances in Métis families occurred in Montana,<sup>8</sup> and Val and her husband Joe implicitly agreed with her and with Anna. Val said, in reference to Métis organizing in the 1980s, that "before, it was always just half-breed, that is what they were always called was half-breed and not Métis."<sup>9</sup> People thought of themselves as of mixed-ancestry but not as part of a larger Métis Nation, and they did not remember the history of this nation in western Canada.

Stories such as Anna's may be used to challenge arguments that Métis communities in the northern areas of the prairie provinces were able to maintain their socio-cultural distinctiveness while southern Métis faced challenges to their existence as a racial and ethnic group.<sup>10</sup> The Métis who settled in the northern communities, although still a majority, collectively forgot their pasts and abandoned the transmission of language to their children. Parents emphasized the use of English and French.<sup>11</sup> Marie Battiste asserted that through a process of orality, language and ritual serve as "the storehouse of knowledge and, through the medium of analogy, provided harmony for all life, including plants and animals."<sup>12</sup> Therefore, Indigenous peoples learned of their duties and responsibilities to creation. However, modern literacy, taught in the denominational and public schools, the "benign liberator of the mind...[and] the modernizing agent of society and an economic commodity necessary for national development,"<sup>13</sup> was the instruction that the northwest Saskatchewan Métis children received. Consequently, the act of congregating in one village or settlement did not ensure the transmission of Métis identity to the next generations, even if the entirety of the families settled in and around northern settlements were of mixed-ancestry.

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<sup>8</sup> Martha Harroun Foster, *We Know Who We Are: Métis Identity in a Montana Community* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006) 174.

<sup>9</sup> Val Perreault and Joe Perreault, personal interview, 11 October 2006.

<sup>10</sup> See Patrick C. Douaud, "Canadian Métis Identity: A Pattern of Evolution," *Anthropos* 78 (1983): 76, 78, who drew on this argument made in Sealey and Lussier's aforementioned book.

<sup>11</sup> Anna, 2 September 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Marie Battiste, "Micmac Literacy and Cognitive Assimilation," *Indian Education in Canada: Volume I: The Legacy*, eds. Jean Barman et al., Nakoda Institute Occasional Papers (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999) 25.

<sup>13</sup> Battiste 23.

Sylvia Van Kirk argued that the missing lines on family trees were a result of the growth and permanence of Europeans in the West, a settlement pattern that was evident in Red River by the 1860s. Van Kirk showed that the roots of this shame dated to the Red River Settlement and were present in the behaviours of settlement historian Alexander Ross's children. Van Kirk told of Ross's daughter, Jemima, whose ears "were stung by remarks that Mr. Black [Presbyterian minister at Kildonan parish and husband of Ross's daughter Henrietta] must feel rather ashamed to look down on all his "black" relations when he stepped into the pulpit" at church.<sup>14</sup> These comments, from newcomer Red River settlers, indicated that many Métis children and youth grew up with the stigma of mixed ancestry and decided to conceal this Aboriginal past after the death of their mothers and grandmothers, easily done through marriage into the settler society.<sup>15</sup> Even if the progeny of Métis families grew up to become successful professionals, they never overcame the stigma of having an Aboriginal mother. Bruce Sealey and Antoine Lussier and Van Kirk noted the pressure to assimilate combined with a fear of rejection from the growing and soon to be dominant settler society. Their fathers discouraged their children from cognitive and emotional contact with the pasts of their mothers and their grandmothers. Over time, references to being Métis or to having any Aboriginal blood were dropped in favour of being white and of marriage into the settler society.<sup>16</sup> The result was a combination of ignorance, ambivalence, and shame that lasted, for the twentieth-century Métis, until very recently. For the Métis, the journey to finding oneself and the path to the assertion of their rights in education began with the recovery of the pasts of their mothers and grandmothers.

Twentieth-century Métis reconnected to their mother's and grandmother's pasts and overcame the shame of having Aboriginal women in their ancestral backgrounds. The papers of Pat McCloy contained several letters from individuals eager to locate Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations. The letters sent to McCloy demonstrated that people had a number of reasons for researching their ancestors. The authors did not state

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<sup>14</sup> Sylvia Van Kirk, "'What if Mama is an Indian?': The cultural ambivalence of the Alexander Ross family," *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S.H. Brown, eds., *Manitoba Studies in Native History I* (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1985) 211.

<sup>15</sup> Sealey and Lussier 148-149.

<sup>16</sup> Van Kirk 207-208; see Sealey and Lussier 149.

how they identified but instead requested more data about relatives, an indication that maybe each family history researcher was not yet ready to make a conclusion.

The letters to McCloy showed how the writers struggled to overcome the shame of having Aboriginal roots and started to see their heritages as an asset to their overall self. Cultural shame predated their generations. But those individuals who researched the pasts of their mothers and grandmothers or were interviewed by me met with criticism and denial from family members.<sup>17</sup> Late-twentieth-century Métis children and youth recovered the Aboriginal pasts of their ancestors as a means to overcome the cultural shame and the decline in the transmission of a Métis past, processes that had begun in the final years of the Red River Settlement.

Many Métis children and youth passed unintentionally into settler society in the years following the Northwest Resistance of 1885. Val, David, Guy, Anna, Linda, and Jay were the progeny of parents who had sliced off or suppressed the mixed-ancestry of their mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers, or resisted sharing this rich knowledge of the preceding generations. These participants believed that their parents thought they provided their children with an advantage in settler society, but their children regretted that they were unable to access the rich Métis history of their ancestors until very recently. In their adulthood, these Métis strived to reconnect to the heritage of their mothers and grandmothers through genealogical research, the renewal of ties to distant family members, and involvement in Aboriginal political activism and advocacy. They seek to overcome the damage to their identities caused through their unintentional passing; they hope to overturn the legacy of colonialism, the shame that accompanied the settlement of immigrant farmers, and contribute to the rewriting of the history of the Canadian prairies.

Amidst the erosion of Métis identity was a change in land use and land tenure apparent in western Canada after 1885. Gradually, agriculture and railroad transportation superseded the traditional Métis economy of fur trading, trapping, hunting, fishing, and freighting as the economic mainstays of Saskatchewan. The economic changes justified racist policies that, in practice, negatively affected Aboriginal peoples.<sup>18</sup> In the

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<sup>17</sup> Leo, personal interview, 10 October 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Warnock 7.

Qu'Appelle Valley, the Métis worked as seasonal labourers for local farmers. Other families were able to either use their scrip claim to upgrade their land for a patent<sup>19</sup> or took out a land patent as the immigrant farmers did.<sup>20</sup>

A family like Bernard Tripp's farmed and took on newcomer appearance, lifestyle, and economy while others retreated further north. Nicole St-Onge noticed, at Saint-Laurent, Manitoba that

what is striking about the history of the settlement...is that by the 1950s well over half of the descendants of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century Canadian European workers and local Native women did not perceive themselves, and were not perceived by others, as Métis or 'Half-breeds'...In the 20<sup>th</sup> century 'Métis' came to be synonymous with being poor, unschooled, living in a shack, or engaged in a variety of seasonal employments – persons not very submissive to authority who formed a significant part of Manitoba's labour force...By the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, being Métis in Saint Laurent was as much a function of one's class as it was of one's ancestry and culture.<sup>21</sup>

As the clergy of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate transformed Saint-Laurent into an agricultural settlement, and the Métis there embraced capitalist agriculture, knowledge of Métiness in the next generations declined. Métiness became associated with a class, not a nation.<sup>22</sup> Métis families who were farmers and operated as a family farm unit, such as Guy's and David's families, retained their Roman Catholic and Protestant faiths but split their worship off from their Métis past, connected to the land. The vision of a unified Métis Nation and its ideals collapsed after 1885 because participation in the new economy of Saskatchewan took priority over a sense of unity.

Students who were able to successfully complete school and understood racism and combated it at school and in the communities where they lived believed that their families were the strength or the foundation upon which they were able to grow. These children and youth understood their place in creation and saw their sense of place as a source of pride; they had energy that carried them through the at times assimilative

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<sup>19</sup> Flanagan, "The Market for Métis Lands," 115-116 and Flanagan, "Métis Land Claims," 153.

<sup>20</sup> Leo, personal interview, 10 October 2006 and personal communication 04 July 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Nicole St-Onge, *Saint-Laurent, Manitoba: Evolving Métis Identities, 1850-1914* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2004) 4.

<sup>22</sup> St-Onge 81, 94, 96.

pressures of Eurocentric education.<sup>23</sup> These learners were able to educate their teachers and classmates about their Métis pasts. It is ironic that individuals whose parents attempted to conceal their pasts or tossed their Métis pasts from their cultural make-up actually harmed their children. Participants attributed their mental and emotional breakdowns and personal tragedies to not knowing who they were as people, their history in Canada, and their place in the natural and spiritual worlds.

Efforts need to be made to understand how Métis children and youth learn and to understand how past teachings in denominational and public schools affected Métis' epistemologies and worldviews. Métis children and youth who were able to succeed in the mainstream school system had teachers and peers who honoured their epistemologies and respected their perspectives on history. Pueblo scholar Gregory Cajete likened this process to looking in the mirror. When Canadian history and religious teachings considered Métis or any Aboriginal views, students saw their worldviews and perspectives validated.<sup>24</sup> However, some students did not identify with the history and other subject teaching shared with them by public and sectarian teachers.

Many Métis communities welcomed the Roman Catholic clergy and nuns, adopted their teachings into their pre-existing spiritual schemas, and accepted their presence amongst their families. Protestant churches did not fare so well, partly because the personnel were less tolerant of the traditional Métis economy, did not understand Métiness and its ties to the land, and did not make attempts to understand how families understood spirituality and Christianity and how their children learned. Anglicans' strictness on conversion and acceptance of Christianity amounted to a crude dichotomy of 'civilized' and 'savage.' Protestant teachings alienated many Métis learners who saw their worlds as holistic and their spirituality as integral to all aspects of their lives. At the same time, the imposition of public schools and modern facilities in their communities has made the later generations recognize how agriculture and colonialist institutions contributed to the erosion of Métis identity and how the Roman Catholic Church personnel who, although sincere, were substantial players in keeping the Métis isolated

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<sup>23</sup> Jessica Ball, "Promoting equity and dignity for Aboriginal children in Canada," *IRPP Choices* 14.7 (2008): 19.

<sup>24</sup> Gregory Cajete, "Indigenous knowledge: The Pueblo metaphor of Indigenous education," in Marie Battiste, ed. *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000) 186.

from the mainstream settler society. Nevertheless, from the earliest days of the fur trade in Rupert's Land, Roman Catholic teachings informed Métis identity formation and in the twentieth century, such sectarian teachings affected the history of Métis learning in Canada.

However, the denominational and public educational authorities did contribute to these children and youth becoming uni-cultural.<sup>25</sup> Public and sectarian teachers passed on the ideals of settler society to their children and youth; their efforts were a part of the Christian educational agenda. We may only imagine how many Métis families became uni-cultural as they embraced the opportunities afforded by Christian and public education and the modernization through agriculture in the years that followed the Northwest Resistance. However, we also know that in the past twenty years, the number of Métis and First Nations people has grown. Part of this growth stemmed from the desire to identify with the ancestries of their mothers and grandmothers,<sup>26</sup> and evidence may be taken from the genealogical requests to McCloy. Late-twentieth-century Métis wished to reconnect to the pasts of their mothers and grandmothers.

Kathy Absolon and Cameron Willett drew from the work of Nabigon, Hagey, Webster, and MacKay to indicate that “research is understood in native terms to be a quest for the roots of problems, and a convening of the voices needed to re-member the history and assess the future.”<sup>27</sup> Willett, a Métis man, believed that “the very fact that his ethnic heritage was not acknowledged or celebrated, as if it were something to be ashamed of, was racism.”<sup>28</sup> The recognition of a shared history of colonization and oppression along with cultural shame is being replaced with optimism for the future of an education<sup>29</sup> for the Métis that meaningfully integrates the “knowledge, skills and values inherent in Metis Nation cultural traditions and ways of being into the pedagogy and curriculum...[or] transformative education.”<sup>30</sup> In order to rethink the past and

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<sup>25</sup> Sealey and Lussier 148-149.

<sup>26</sup> Kathy Hodgson-Smith Infinity Research Inc. *State of Métis Nation Learning*. September, 2005. Retrieved 22 October 2006 from the Canada Council on Learning website at <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/ccl>, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Nabigon, Hagey, Webster, and MacKay (1998) in Kathy Absolon and Cameron Willett, “Putting Ourselves Forward: Location in Aboriginal Research,” *Research as Resistance: Critical, Indigenous, and Anti-oppressive Approaches*, eds. L. Brown and S. Strega (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2005) 116.

<sup>28</sup> Absolon and Willett 119.

<sup>29</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. M.B. Ramos (New York: Seabury Press, 1970) 21-22.

<sup>30</sup> Hodgson-Smith Infinity Research Inc. 22.

meaningfully accomplish a relevant education, an understanding of Métis learning that emphasizes place and kin ties must exist and be promoted throughout all school systems.

It is clear that the majority of Métis in Canada embraced the Roman Catholic Church teachings and accepted them into their spiritual and educational schemas. But for many Métis, this acceptance was incomplete because Roman Catholic worship was only one component of their identity. Now, it is understood that knowledge of one's place, family ties, traditions, and languages as well as attendance at and satisfaction of the requirements of denominational and secular schools factored into the formation of Métis childhood identity in Saskatchewan.

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## APPENDIX A: Recruitment, Relationships, and Identification of Participants

### *Recruitment*

Oral history forms a substantial portion of the sources for this history of Métis children and youth and church and public education. The first step that I took in the recruitment of participants was to advertise my study through the following media: periodicals and newspapers published by Aboriginal organizations concerned with education, politics, and policy. As well, I developed a spreadsheet of a number of political organizations on the prairies and faxed or e-mailed my research proposal to these organizations. I contacted the organizations once every week to find out if the directors or executive officers had any questions or comments about my proposal and to see if they were interested in circulating my call for participants. One person who took an immediate interest in my research was Beverley Worsley, the area director of Eastern Region III of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan. I met with Beverley and interviewed her for my project. She suggested many of the candidates whom I interviewed in this dissertation, and this relationship created a snowball effect.

In November, 2007, Dr. Keith Carlson, Associate Professor in the Department of History at the University of Saskatchewan, asked me to craft a plate on the Convent school at Ile-a-la-Crosse, Saskatchewan for the forthcoming *Otipimsuak - the Free People: Métis Land and Society in Northwest Saskatchewan* atlas. Through Carlson's research assistant, Kevin Gambell, I was able to listen to a number of interviews conducted by research assistants with residents of Ile-a-la-Crosse in the summer of 2006. I followed-up with those participants whom I felt had information that would be of relevance to my own study and to the atlas plate that I was creating.

In the winter of 2008, I met with Georgina Jolibois, mayor of La Loche. Ms. Jolibois provided me with the names of individuals in La Loche whom she believed would be helpful to interview.

Finally, I attempted to contact people who participated in two oral history projects undertaken prior to my study: the Saskatchewan Archives Board-led "Towards a New Past Oral History Project 'The Métis'" and the Manitoba Métis Oral History Project. I was unable to set up follow-up interviews with participants in these projects.

Finally, a handful of people responded to my advertisements in the Aboriginal periodicals and newspapers.

### *Relationships*

I approached the interviews as means to generate new data – in collaboration with the people I interviewed. Consequently, I went into the interviews with a list of questions, but I strove to make these interviews conversational and allow for a two-way flow of knowledge. I started with contextual questions (i.e. date of birth, school attended, where family was from) and proceeded to probe further based on the responses I received from the person being interviewed and from what I had learned in previous interviews. Questions relevant to southeast and northwest Saskatchewan were asked. For example, I often asked about the Lebret-Lestock Métis Farm as well as the Corpus Christi Day pilgrimage when I interviewed those from the southeast corner of the province and questioned northerners about the Convent at Ile-a-la-Crosse.

For the majority of interviews, I travelled to people's homes. In the Qu'Appelle Valley, the area director accompanied me to interviews with elderly participants. She and I believed that it was necessary to have her present in order to ensure that people were comfortable with participating. I noticed early on in the interviews that not all participants would be comfortable with signing a Consent Form. Therefore, the Research Ethics Board at the University of Saskatchewan was alerted, and I was able to secure the chance to use verbal consent which became the protocol for elderly participants or those with limited English literacy.

Interviews were tape-recorded and even though my Research Ethics Board clearance did not obligate me to transcribe the interviews, I felt that it was important to do so. I then sent a copy of the transcript to the participant through regular mail or e-mail along with a list of follow-up questions that emerged as I was transcribing. For participants with less years of formal learning or who I felt would appreciate a follow-up visit, I returned with the transcript and reviewed it with the participant present. Such was especially the case with elderly participants.

### *Identification*

The majority of participants were comfortable with the use of their names and with reference to their home communities and other contextual information. When participants requested anonymity, I assigned a pseudonym and changed some details in order to avoid identification.

Every participant whose anecdotes are shared in this text had the opportunity to discuss their contribution with me. Follow-up conversations concerning the use of direct quotes were done through telephone, e-mail, or in-person meetings. Sometimes, these follow-up meetings

turned into second or third interviews, and with their permission, I often tapped our conversations because new information was being shared.

## APPENDIX B: Use of Oral History Project Data: Project Goals and Implications for Research

Two oral history projects were consulted for my dissertation: the Saskatchewan Archives Board's 1973 "Towards a New Past Oral History Project 'The Métis'" and the Manitoba Métis Oral History Project, conducted over the summers of 1984 and 1985.

### *Goals*

#### *Towards a New Past*

The "Towards a New Past Oral History Project" was an interview project that occurred in the summer of 1973 designed to capture the voices of Métis in Saskatchewan from the years of 1885 to the present. Participants in the project ranged in age from twelve to ninety-nine. The anecdotes shared in this project were to help with the development of curriculum for children in the public and separate school systems. Métis were not the only group recruited by the project director and interviewers – immigrants to Saskatchewan were also interviewed, but I did not listen to those tapes.

#### *The Manitoba Métis Oral History Project*

The Manitoba Métis Oral History Project was led by the Provincial Archives of Manitoba under the direction of Nicole St-Onge. Like *Towards a New Past*, the goal was to capture the life stories of Métis in Manitoba. The interviews occurred during the summers of 1984 and 1985. St-Onge noted after the summer of 1984 that the initial response to the requests for interviews came from Francophone and Roman Catholic Métis, and she wished to expand her coverage to include non-Francophone and non-Roman Catholic Métis. Interviews were conducted in both French and English, but all transcripts are available in English. St-Onge also interviewed a handful of Francophones who were Roman Catholic clergy and had spent a substantial portion of their lives amongst the Métis.

### *Implications for Research*

I listened to these tapes because I believed that some of the stories might enhance my own research on Métis children and youth and their families. While the life stories were interesting, much of the detail provided by the participants did not concern education or schooling. As well, the "Towards a New Past" interviews were often quite short. The post-interview reports indicated that the majority of the tapes were not useful for audio-visual displays which could enhance curriculum in the public school system. Overall, a handful of the tapes

from both projects provided data on religion and schooling. Most powerful was the interview given by Linda Youens of Saskatoon for the “Towards a New Past” project. I attempted to locate Youens for a follow-up interview as well as another participant – Marlene MacDonald. MacDonald was initially interested in meeting with me but then stopped returning my phone calls. However, the tapes produced in these two projects did enable me to calculate some rough estimates of religious affiliation amongst the Métis.