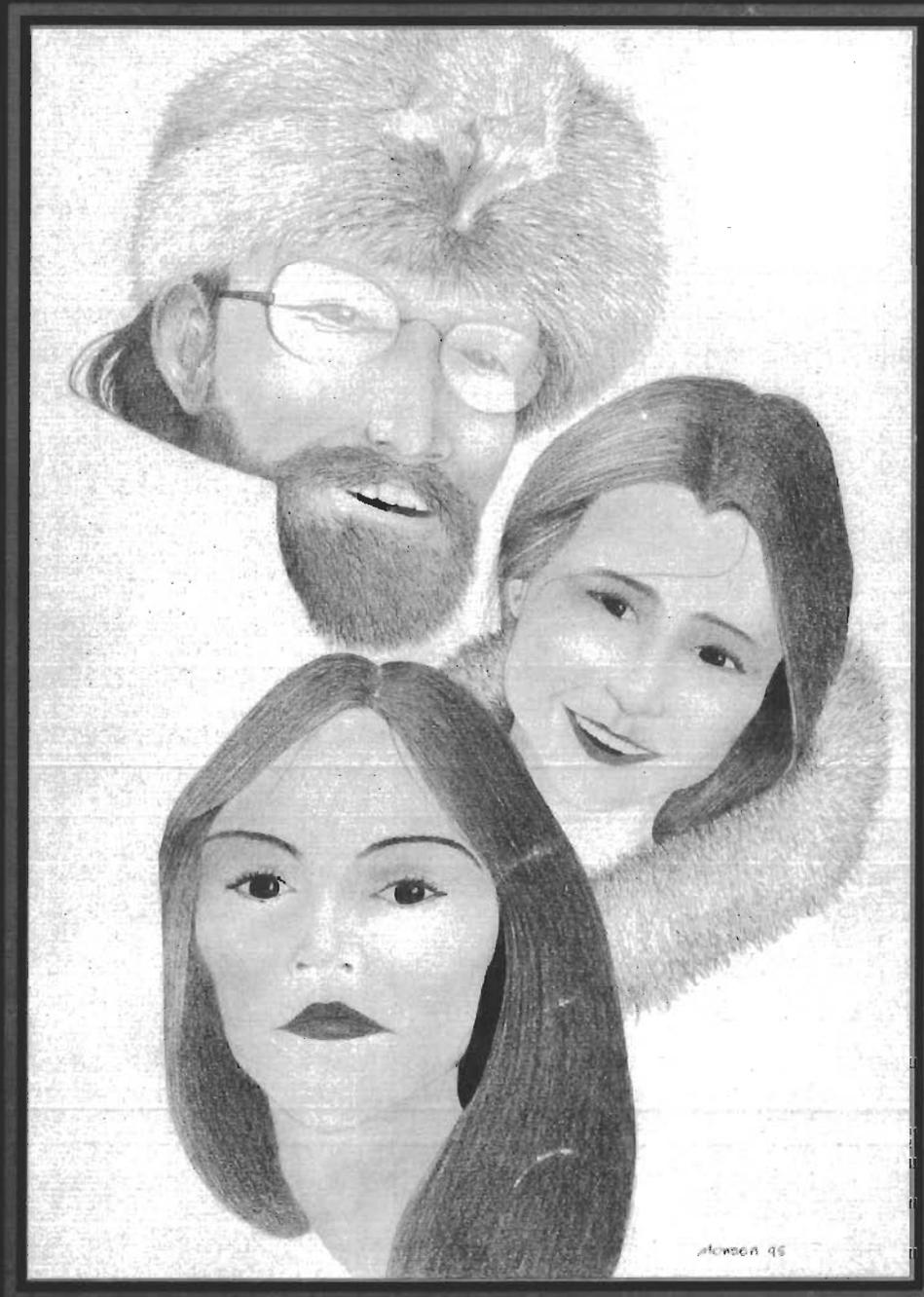
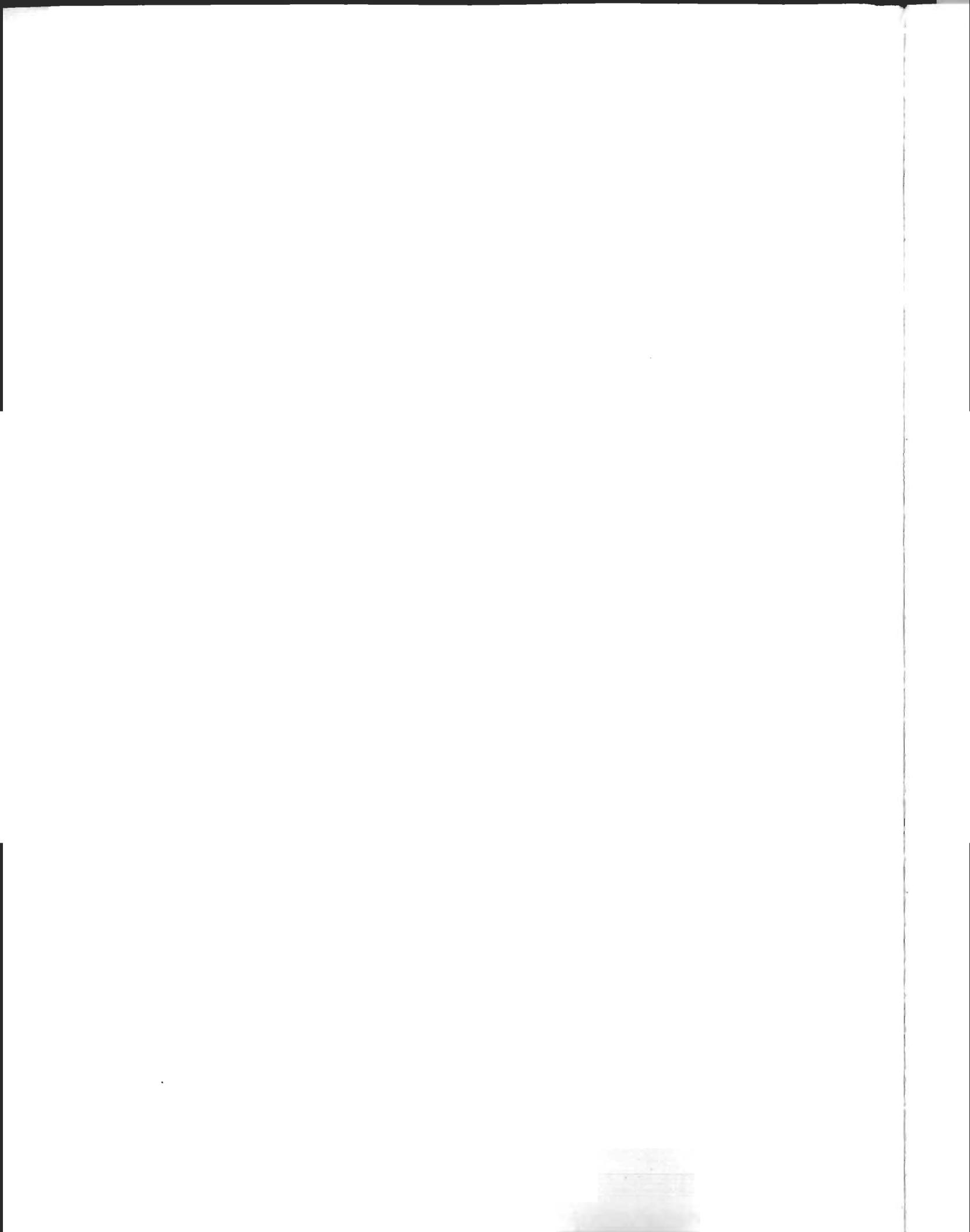


Native Studies 370

HISTORY OF THE CANADIAN MÉTIS





Native Studies 370

History of the Canadian Métis

Study Guide

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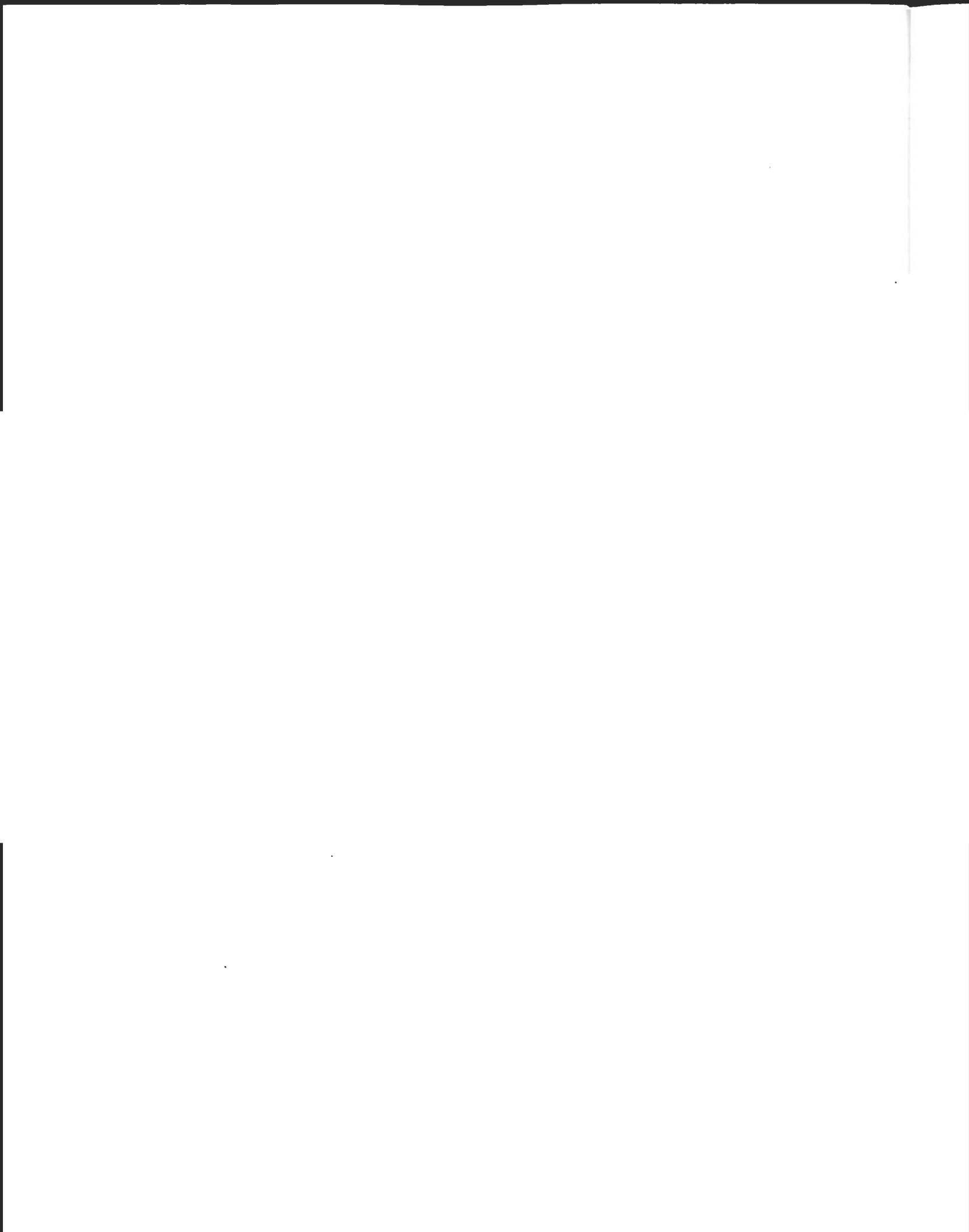
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Introduction

Historical Overview

The political, economic, and social history of present-day Canada was, for the first three hundred years after European contact, a product of the fisheries and the fur trade. Posts along the ocean shores and along the principal rivers and lakes saw European traders exchange such manufactured goods as blankets, beads, guns, tobacco, and axes for quantities of beaver, marten, and muskrat pelts supplied by Natives. Beaver was so abundant that it was treated as currency in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Canada. This far-flung and complex trading system involved a variety of Native and European groups, including the Iroquois nations of southern Ontario and northern New York, the Ojibwa of the Prairies and the Ontario Woodlands, the Mi'kmaq of Atlantic Canada, the Western Cree, the Dutch on the Hudson River, the French, Scottish, and *Canadien* traders who came from the St. Lawrence Valley, and the British traders who came from Hudson Bay but who had their financial base in Britain. The history of the fur trade is not only a story of commerce, but that of the new society created by the intermingling of fur traders and Natives.

The experience of the “historic Métis,” a term defined on page 4, is central to the current identity of the Canadian Métis peoples. It is therefore worthwhile to provide a general historical background of these buffalo-hunting mixed-bloods of the Canadian plains who have become the Canadian Métis of today. This background will help you understand the assigned readings for the course.

The Métis of Western Canada have considered themselves a nation at least since 1816 when they fought Red River colonists during the Seven Oaks Incident. Between 1812 (when the Red River settlement originated) and 1816, the North West Company—the main rival of the Hudson's Bay Company—encouraged the Métis to believe that they had Aboriginal claims to the northwest through their mothers, and that the Hudson's Bay Company had no right to grant Red River land to Lord Selkirk without first dealing with those claims through treaty. These beliefs were reinforced in 1869 and again in 1885 when the Métis of Red River and the South Saskatchewan asserted their rights as Aboriginal people. As will be seen in more detail in Unit 1, the Métis identity continues to evolve today.

The Early Fur Trade

The origins of the identity of the “historic Métis” can be traced back to the French fur traders. The government of Louis XIV (King of France from 1643 to 1715) used the fur trade system of the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes region as a tool of imperial expansion. Fur trade alliances with Natives extended French influence throughout the interior of North America.

Diplomatic and military alliances were central to the fur trade empire of the St. Lawrence. Even after the American Revolution of 1776, the new United States of America continued many of these alliances. The United States was intent on defeating the British who now controlled New France. The British sought out war chiefs like Tecumseh, who fought alongside the British generals in the War of 1812-1814 between the United States and the Canadas in hopes of preserving Aboriginal lands and rights in the northwest interior. The British wanted to keep the fur trade intact; the Americans were interested in settlement.

The success of these alliances depended on social and kinship ties between Europeans and Natives, as the British learned during the 1763 Pontiac Rebellion. After the British took over the St. Lawrence fur trade system, they attempted to control it by limiting access to arms and ammunition. In response, Pontiac, an Ottawa war chief, organized the Ottawa, Huron, Potawatomis, and Ojibwa against the British at Fort Detroit. The rebellion spread throughout the mid-west before peace was negotiated in 1765.

The mixed-blood kinship system that maintained long-term peace and commerce flourished in the area around the Great Lakes. Many children of these Native/trader marriages became brokers in their own right, acting as two-way links between the Natives and the British. When Montreal again led the trade in the 1770s, these kinship patterns permeated the North West Company and, eventually, the Western interior and Red River itself.

The Hudson's Bay Company

A second tradition, distinct from that of the St. Lawrence, emerged on the shores of Hudson Bay. In the eighteenth century, the Native women around the Bayside factories often cohabited with the Company's servants and bore their children. Although some of these children identified with their European fathers, most became part of their mother's families and formed the "Homeguard Cree," who supplied provisions to the factories near their encampments. Some signed employment contracts with the Hudson's Bay Company as boatmen, interpreters, and labourers. In rare instances, these mixed-blood offspring rose to the rank of clerk, but they were barred from advancement beyond that rank.

After Selkirk founded the Red River Colony of Scottish crofters at the junction of the Red River and the Assinboine River in 1812, and, later, after the 1821 union of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company, the discharged English-speaking mixed-blood servants of the Hudson's Bay Company had a chance to form a unique identity in the Red River Colony. Evidence reveals that they did so for a brief time. (The Red River Colony is discussed more fully in Unit 2.)

The Plains Cree

By contrast, the Plains Métis resulted from unions of Cree and, to a lesser extent, Ojibwa or Chipewyan women with the North West Company's French-Canadian *voyageurs* or Scottish traders. These Métis tended to be Roman Catholic and Cree- or French-speaking, with strong connections to the fur trading and family traditions of the Eastern fur trade. The Plains Métis inherited the traditions of the St. Lawrence trade, treaty, and kinship systems. As early as 1812-1814, the Plains Métis numbered several thousand. They lived a semi-nomadic existence, ranging across the plains, settling at such places as Buffalo Lake, Fort Carlton, Fort Edmonton, Rocky Mountain House, and, of course, Red River.

While the eighteenth-century, mixed-blood economy centred on the fur trade, the historic Métis economy of the plains focused on the buffalo hunt. The trading companies had established trading houses in the main bison regions to ensure a steady supply of dried buffalo meat, or pemmican, the staple of the nineteenth-century fur trade. The North West Company alone required 40,000 to 60,000 pounds (18,144 to 27,215 kg) of pemmican each year. In 1870, the Hudson's Bay Company required 200,000 pounds (90,718 kg) per year. That same year, the Red River Colony consumed some 8 million pounds (3,628,736 kg). Hunts were structured and orderly, involving more than one-third of the Red River population. A single afternoon in 1849 saw 1776 cows killed, yielding 1213 bales of dried meat and 33,200 pounds (15,059 kg) of fat. More than 1210 carts were involved in that hunt.

By the 1850s, a small but influential Métis merchant class had developed in Red River, and it was from this group that the community's leaders emerged. Louis Riel's father was an early member of that class and his various business enterprises were symbolic of the vitality of the Métis community. In addition to providing leadership among the Métis, this group would define the Métis political and economic agenda throughout the twentieth century. Malcolm Norris and Jim Brady, who resurrected the Métis identity during the Depression, are in this tradition. Both Norris and Brady were middle-class Métis who felt the desperation of their people.

Métis Culture

The lifestyle and sociability of the historic Métis, especially during the heyday of their classic nineteenth-century period, has generated much folklore. The Métis placed great importance on their families, their social life, and the hunt. Most lived without title to their long, narrow river lots, in wooden homes built using the Quebec post-on-sill method. With plentiful buffalo at hand, the uncertainty of agriculture held little attraction for them, and they worked for wages on the York boats on the northern rivers and on the Red River cart brigades to the Company posts in the interior and south to St. Paul.

It was also during this period that the Métis "national" or "folk" dress originated. A Métis man generally wore a blue cloth capote with brass buttons, a red and black flannel shirt that also served as a waistcoat, buff-

leather moccasins, a *l'Assomption* sash around the waist, and trousers of brown and white homespun. Women dressed more conservatively in a dark shirt or dress and moccasins, and wore a shawl for a head cover.

Definitions of the Métis

A course on the history of the Métis people must confront a serious problem—that of defining who the Métis are today. Obviously, any group excluded from being Métis today will be excluded from Métis history. Although the past provides a guide to Métis identity, current legal, emotional, and cultural definitions also exist. In 1932, the Alberta Métis Association defined as Métis “anyone with any degree of Amerindian ancestry who lives the life ordinarily associated with the Métis.” The Association later extended its definition to include anyone who considered himself or herself a Métis, and who was accepted by the community as such. Today, the Métis National Association, as a result of the inclusion of Métis in the Constitution Act, defines Métis as:

- an aboriginal people distinct from Indians and Inuit;
- descendants of the historic Métis who evolved in what is now Western Canada as a people with a common political will;
- descendants of those aboriginal peoples who have been absorbed by the historic Métis. (Boisvert and Turnbull 1985, 142)

This definition threatens to exclude many Canadian mixed-blood people. For example, a mixed-blood person in Moose Factory today could be excluded from the definition unless he or she has “been absorbed” by the descendants of the historic Métis. What “absorbed” means is not clear. Obviously, descendants of the historic Métis and mixed-blood people from areas other than the West must agree on their mutual identities, which may include a common one.

Although scholars have begun to define the various groups that make up the Métis people today, they have had difficulty in agreeing on historical terminology to identify the different groups. In Western Canada, the term Métis generally refers to people of mixed Native and European ancestry who are part of the French-speaking, Roman Catholic, Native buffalo hunters tradition—the historic Métis. What then should the mixed-blood people of English-speaking, Protestant origins be called? What about the mixed-bloods who can trace their ancestors to neither tradition, for example, the Natives of pre-Confederation Canada, particularly of the North? What about the mixed-bloods of Grand Cache, Alberta, who are of Iroquois descent?

Scholarly literature contains various names for Métis: *Bois Brule*, *Chicot*, *Half-Breed*, *Métis écossais*, *Country-born*, or *Rupertslander*. The term Métis likely first originated in eighteenth-century Quebec, and was later adopted within the Western Interior. As the term originated in Quebec and was associated with the fur trade, the North West Company and its employees and sympathizers also adopted it. As the conflict between the Hudson's

Bay Company and North West Company heated up in the early nineteenth century, people of the North West tradition increasingly adopted the term Métis. This left the mixed-blood people of the Hudson's Bay Company tradition without an easily definable identity.

George Simpson, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company from 1822 to 1860, called mixed-blood people of Protestant and English heritage "half-breeds." While half-breed was the most widely used term, and there is evidence that it was used with pride even in the 1970s in remote locations throughout northern Canada, it still has the pejorative connotation which Simpson himself imposed on it. Half-breed is not considered an acceptable term today.

During the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s, a few mixed-blood people called themselves "Countryborn," or "Rupertslander," or "Native," but none of these terms have been widely used. As English-speaking mixed-blood people assimilate into the Canadian mainstream, or, in some circumstances, with the Métis, a separate term for each group who comprise the broad mixed-blood community seems increasingly unnecessary. The term Métis is becoming inclusive. However, there is no unanimity as to who is or is not Métis. The complexities of terminology are dealt with further in an article by John Foster, "The Métis: The People and the Term," (1979, 77-86).

Today, many definitions of Métis are in use: some are imposed by provincial and federal governments, others by the Métis themselves. Equally interesting are the musings of scholars in search of inclusive definitions to clarify current circumstances. Perhaps it is most accurate to say that the definition of Métis is still evolving.

Historical Perspectives

Although individuals write history, individuals are also the products of their own cultures. Historians' writings reflect their cultures. So it is with Canadian, Western Canadian, and Métis historians. A long and complex evolution has accompanied the writing of Canadian history. Carl Berger, in *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing: 1900 to 1970*, outlines the main "schools" or groupings among Canadian historians.

However, just as the writing of history is subjective, so are attempts to assess historians' writings. This section attempts to provide a perspective on works by various historians—of the Métis and other peoples—whose views have influenced our understanding of the Métis.

Canadian Historians

Staple Thesis

Harold Adams Innis, one of the foremost Canadian economists in the early decades of the twentieth century, and Donald Creighton, Canada's leading conservative nationalist historian from the 1950s to 1970s, assert that Canada exists in its present form because of the fur trade. Fur was the single product or "staple" (like cod fish earlier in the Atlantic, or wheat later on the Prairies) that dominated national economic and social development. In Canada, this single staple—fur—not only determined the structure of settlement, transportation routes, and financial institutions, but as Innis asserts in *The Fur Trade* (1930), its exploitation created a new people, "the Métis." This did not happen in the United States.

General Native History

Olive Dickason, Canada's foremost scholar of Canada's Native peoples, in *Canada's First Nations* (1992), sees the Métis as one of Canada's First Nations. Yet in 590 pages of text, fewer than fifty are devoted to the Métis. Although Dickason's interpretations are sympathetic, they are also conventional. The Métis became a nation during the 1816 Seven Oaks Incident. The first great Métis leader was Cuthbert Grant, who was their leader in 1816; the second was Louis Riel's father, and the third was Louis Riel. Nevertheless, Dickason's book is the best in providing a sympathetic Native context to the history of the Métis people.

Historians of the Métis

The "Civilization/Savagism" Dichotomy

The single greatest work undertaken on the Western Canadian Métis is still Marcel Giraud's *The Métis in the Canadian West* (trans. by George Woodcock, 1986). Giraud was a French anthropologist who studied the Métis of Western Canada not only in archives, but in the field during the Depression. His studies were first published in limited numbers in 1945 in French. *The Métis in the Canadian West* remained a rare book until its recent reprinting and translation.

Giraud identified two separate Métis cultural streams: the St. Lawrence tradition, and the Hudson's Bay Company tradition. Giraud was caught in the "social Darwinism" of his day. The laws of selection that Charles Darwin (the nineteenth-century British scientist) applied to the evolution of the species, Giraud applied to societies and social structures. Giraud saw the Métis as personifying the struggle between the "primitive" Natives and the "civilizing influence" of the Europeans, particularly the clergy.

Emma LaRocque, in *Defeathering the Indian* (1975), has called this way of thinking the "civilization/savagism" (or "civ/sav") dichotomy. The implicit assumption is that there is a ranked order in cultures, and that

European civilization is more complex, or is of a higher order and is therefore more valuable. Giraud has fallen into this trap. He observed that civilization failed to bridle the Métis, and that their nomadism was self-perpetuating and inescapable. To Girard, the clergy and the Europeans were the only elements of "stability." Métis society, and by extension the Métis themselves, were delicately balanced between "civilization and barbarism." Implicit in Giraud's argument is an ethnocentric, European standard of measurement in which a sedentary, Christian society, organized along European lines, is superior to a nomadic non-Christian society. The "success" of a group of people is judged by the degree of assimilation to the European norm.

LaRocque's observations are particularly important in pre-1970 historical scholarship on the Métis. George Stanley, author of *The Birth of Western Canada* (1970) and *Louis Riel* (1963) (which is still the best biography of the Métis leader), is typical in concentrating on the rebellions of 1869 and 1885. (Please note: The Riel Rebellion of 1869 is also known as the Red River Resistance.) Stanley sees the Métis as a homogeneous, unified "new Nation," opposing the incursions of another new nation, Canada. Stanley defines Native people as "savage" and Métis as "indolent, thoughtless and improvident," inferior to Europeans and, therefore, inevitably to be displaced by them. "By character and upbringing the half-breeds, no less than the Indians, were unfitted to compete with the whites in the competitive individualism of white civilization, or to share with them the duties and responsibilities of citizenship. They did not want to be civilized; they only wanted to survive" (Stanley 1970, vii).

Stanley is Canada's principal proponent of the frontier thesis. Although this thesis is no longer fashionable in Canada, it continues to have supporters in the United States. Frederick Jackson Turner originated the frontier thesis in the United States in 1893. Turner argued that the American character and history were determined on the far edge of settlement, where civilization met the wilderness. There, the European and American were freed of the bondage of class and the past. "This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character" (Turner, cited in Cross 1970, 12).

The American spirit—democratic, egalitarian, and self-reliant—originated at the frontier. It was also at the frontier that "savagery and civilization," Natives and Euro-Americans, met one another. In the frontier thesis, natives are part of the "freedom" and "wilderness" of the frontier, but are also not supposed to be able to survive the new North America. It should be quite clear that, from Emma LaRocque's perspective, the frontier thesis falls into the "civilization/savagism" trap.

The civilization/savagism dichotomy can also be seen in the writings of other scholars. W. L. Morton, a leading Canadian scholar from the 1950s to the 1970s, and Margaret MacLeod, a historian with a deep affection for Red River, argued that Red River was an island of civilization in the wilderness. Morton and MacLeod implied that the Métis of the interior

who were not subject to the "civilizing" influences of Red River were "wild." Their description of the Métis mood immediately before the Seven Oaks Incident, the event that led to a cohesive Métis identity, is instructive: "The wild blood of the brûlés was boiling" (1963, 49). It took some time to "check their savagery." What is Native is "wild" and "savage," threatening, unstructured, and uncontrollable.

Equally dangerous in the "civ/sav" dichotomy is the tendency for historians who are sympathetic to the Métis cause to praise Native society according to European values. For example, these historians might praise the Métis for being freer, holding property in common, and being able to co-exist with their environment. Métis society is rarely analysed on its own terms.

Both the civilization/savagism dichotomy and praising Natives according to European values denigrate Canada's Native peoples and their place in Canadian history. Nevertheless, you may find yourself referring to the works of Stanley and Giraud at some point in your studies. Both of these historians remain helpful guides in identifying primary sources and for determining chronologies. Take note, however, of the extent to which Stanley and Girard reflect the viewpoints of their time.

Recent Writings

The readings in this course approach the history of the Métis through the eyes of various historians. This is known as a historiographical approach to the study of history. In the course materials, the "Historiographical Note" in Pannekoek's *A Snug Little Flock* (1991, 215-227) provides some guidance here. If you are particularly interested in pursuing recent writings on the Métis, you will find useful analytical essays by Jennifer Brown (1987) and by Dennis Madill (1987) listed in the supplementary reading section at the end of this introduction to the course.

Fur Trade Historians

The works included in this course are contemporary and have, for the most part, moved beyond the "civilization/savagism" trap. Most recent historians who write about the Métis are specialists in fur trade history and focus on the Métis within the context of the trade. This group includes Jennifer Brown, an anthropologist at the University of Winnipeg; John Foster, a historian at the University of Alberta; Sylvia Van Kirk, a historian at the University of Toronto; and Frits Pannekoek, a historian with the Historic Sites Service of the Province of Alberta. These historians concentrate on the fur trade origins of the Métis and emphasize the divisions of class and ethnicity within the mixed-blood community as imposed by the structure of the trade. This group tends to emphasize the split caused by different economic and cultural traditions within as well as between Native and European traditions. Irene Spry, a University of Ottawa economist, claims that whatever disunity there may have been, the

Métis usually acted as a cohesive nation. (Spry's perspectives are dealt with in Unit 2.)

Materialist Interpretations

Irene Spry tends to deal with human relationships in economic or materialist terms, as does Murray Dobbin, author of *The One-and-a-Half Men* (1981). Dobbin sees the history of the Métis people as an interplay between class and race. Unit 4 details Dobbin's interpretation. You will find his Marxist perspective shared by many Métis historians today.

Karl Marx, who wrote in the nineteenth century during the horrors of the British Industrial Revolution, believed that social relationships were key to an understanding of change. To Marx, humans were social animals who engaged in economic production and who expressed themselves through the products of their labour. As society became more complex, relationships among people who were engaged in the economic process changed. Ultimately, those relationships evolved into one in which the people who worked were exploited by the people who owned the means of production. Marx believed that this exploitation would ultimately lead to a polarization and struggle between the working class and capitalists. The outcome would be a "classless" society. This interpretation is sometimes known as "economic determinism." However, Marxist or materialist historians are less interested in analysing economies than in looking at people's social relationships within economic units.

Commissioned Histories

Commissioned histories are more common in Native and corporate history than in many other fields of Canadian history. In commissioned history, the motivation or direction for research comes from an agency or a group of people rather than from the historian. Two reasons for Native commissioned histories are clear. First, Native history has long been either overlooked or treated unsympathetically by institutions, such as National Historic Sites. Second, Natives are seeking a useable past, whether for land claims or educational purposes. Little has been done in Canada to assess the impact of these "historians for hire" on historical understanding.

Diane Payment, a historian with Parks Canada; Doug Sprague, a historian at the University of Manitoba; and Thomas Flanagan, a political scientist at the University of Calgary, have each been hired to write on the Métis community. Diane Payment was responsible for the interpretations at the Batoche National Historic Site. The Manitoba Métis Federation contracted with Doug Sprague to present their land claims case, while Thomas Flanagan was hired to research the case for the federal Department of Justice. Diane Payment was sympathetic to her subject. Similarly, both Doug Sprague and Joe Sawchuk, a contractor with both the Alberta and Manitoba Métis associations, were sympathetic to the plight of their contractors. Thomas Flanagan, in his book *Métis Lands in Manitoba* (1991), is

open about his relationship with the Department of Justice. Although you will not be reading Flanagan's entire book in this course, an article from it is included as a reading assignment in a later unit. For now, the following comments by Flanagan are worthy of reflection:

This book is a result of contract research for the Department of Justice, a situation that should cause one to reflect about the problem of scholarly objectivity. "Historians," as J. R. Miller [a University of Saskatchewan historian] has written "are going to have to think about if, and on what terms, they are going to participate in remunerative judicial jousting so as to maintain not only their own integrity, but also that of their discipline."

First, it should be emphasized that the Department of Justice lawyers at all times asked only for the facts as I saw them. They wanted to know what had happened, no matter whether that was good or bad for the arguments they would have to make. It would not help them if their researchers suppressed or explained away embarrassing facts that would later emerge in court. Nonetheless, doing research for one side in a conflict may colour one's thinking in ways that are difficult or impossible to perceive. The danger is not conscious distortion of facts but unconscious selection of evidence to support a thesis fitting the needs of those who have commissioned the research.

However, all the published research on which the Manitoba Metis Federation complaint was based had been produced under similar circumstances; that is, it had been done by employees of the MMF, or by scholars working under contract or in other ways sympathetic to the Metis political movement. In this instance, work commissioned and paid for by the "other side" would not degrade a pristine situation; indeed, it might help to restore some balance to the debate.

In the end, research must stand on its own regardless of the motives for undertaking it. That is why the tedious, technical apparatus of scholarship is so important. . . . If the work is honestly and competently done, does it matter whether the motive was curiosity, desire to earn money, or adherence to a cause? (Flanagan 1991, viii-ix)

What do you think of Flanagan's comments? Does he protest too much? Is there such a concept as a scholarly ethic? Can a scholarly "bias" toward one side or another skew the conclusions? You may wish to discuss these questions with your tutor. You will also have further opportunity to reflect on them as you complete the reading assignments for the course.

Practice Exercise

Before you proceed, see if you can determine whether the following quotations have fallen into the "civilization/savagism" trap. Which are "frontierist"? These quotations are taken from both popular and scholarly literature in current use. Discuss your conclusions with your tutor.

1. "A defiant people who prided themselves on being more than the sum of their bloodlines, the Métis enjoyed the natural grace of body proportion of their Indian ancestors, yet they rejected the traditional nomadic mode of life to become guardians of their own turf. Their land, as it became an essential element in their identity, was one of the primary flashpoints between them and the newcomers."
(Peter C. Newman 1987, 158)
2. "Dumont . . . was so much the free and natural man that even in 1869 the Red River seemed over-civilized for him. He preferred the farther prairies where the buffalo hunt had still half a generation to go. The people whose leader he became in the earlier 1860s were not refugees from the Canadian penetration into the Red River colony, though later on many of these came to the Saskatchewan. They were the free hunters who had avoided the settled life of the environs of Fort Garry and who had moved constantly farther into the West as the buffalo herds were hunted out of the eastern prairies, and who would continue to do so until they followed into history the great beasts they pursued." (George Woodcock 1975, 12)
3. "The economic basis of the life of the Metis, too, had been the abundant common resources to which they had had access. Few of them understood the significance of property in land. Much of the half-breed land reserve of 565,000 hectares set aside in 1870 in Manitoba (or scrip that represented a claim to that land) slipped from the hands of its mixed-blood recipients at prices far below its market value. The mixed-bloods, having disposed of their claims, moved farther west into still unsettled lands, hoping to continue to live the wandering life they were used to and enjoyed. Civilization, settlement, and private property caught up with them. The rising of 1885 was a last despairing attempt to protect the commons on which they depended for their way of life. With those commons gone, they faced economic disaster, especially as supplementary opportunities for earning an income as tripmen were disappearing at the same time as the buffalo."
(Spry 1983, 223)

The following information may help you in your answer. Peter C. Newman, former editor of *Maclean's* magazine, is an extremely successful popularizer of Canadian history. Newman's work is based on a reading of both secondary and primary sources, and has sometimes been attacked by academic historians who regard the writing of history as a closed profession.

George Woodcock is one of Canada's pre-eminent men of letters. Woodcock's belief in anarchism (a political theory that idealizes the voluntary association of individual and groups as the principal basis of organized society) rather than government may help to explain some of his views on Gabriel Dumont. You should not, however, worry about the complexities of anarchist theory as you analyse the quotation.

Irene Spry is known for her work on nineteenth-century Western Canada. Spry was a member of the League for Social Reconstruction in the 1930s, and was a founding supporter of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, the precursor to today's New Democratic Party. Have her views been transmitted in her article? Has she fallen into the "civ/sav" trap?

Assignment for Credit

You do not need to complete an assignment for credit at this time. This Introduction and Unit 1 will be evaluated together, following completion of Unit 1. When you have completed this Introduction, please proceed to Unit 1.

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Supplementary Materials List

Supplementary reading is not required for this course, but it will add depth to your understanding of the Métis.

For a general Canadian context to the experiences of the Métis people, see Margaret Conrad, Alvin Finkel, and Cornelius Jaenen's *History of the Canadian Peoples*. Jennifer Brown's and Dennis Madill's articles offer in-depth analyses of current writings on the Métis people.

Brown, Jennifer S. H. "People of Myth, People of History: A Look at Recent Writings on the Métis." *Acadiensis* XVII (Autumn): 150-163.

Conrad, Margaret, Alvin Finkel, and Cornelius Jaenen. *History of the Canadian Peoples*. 2 vols. Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1993.

Madill, Dennis F. K. "Riel, Red River and Beyond: New Developments in Métis History." In *New Directions in American Indian History*, edited by Colin G. Calloway. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Unit 1

Métis Identity and Origins

Learning Objectives

When you have completed Unit 1, you should be able to achieve the following learning objectives.

1. Discuss the historical debates on the identity of the Métis.
2. Examine the implications to individuals of the Métis identity debate.
3. Critically assess the implications of the current debates.
4. Determine the characteristics of four distinct Métis communities: Eastern Canada, the Northern States, Red River, and the Northwestern Interior.
5. Discuss the reasons for the increasing complexity of Métis society and, therefore, the increasing complexity of the debate on Métis origins.
6. Critically assess the various debates on the ethnogenesis of the Métis.

Chronology for Unit 1

- 1497 John Cabot's first voyage to North America.
- ca. 1500 Atlantic fisheries are established.
- 1670 The granting of the Hudson's Bay Company charter.
- 1731 La Vérendrye begins his western explorations.
- 1759 The British Conquest of New France.
- 1773 Boston Tea Party.
- 1774 Hudson's Bay Company establishes its first inland post, Cumberland House.
- 1779 The first major partnership which would form the North West Company in 1783 is established.
- 1782-1784 Loyalist migrations occur.
- 1787 The Nor'Westers form the Beaver Club in Montreal.
- c.1800 The North West Company feeds approximately 1200 to 1500 Native wives and children at its posts in the interior.
- 1812 The Red River Colony is established by Lord Selkirk.
- 1816 The Seven Oaks Incident, when Métis nationalism first burst on the scene.
- 1818 The first Roman Catholic Church is established in Red River.
- 1820 McGill University opens.
- 1821 The merger of the Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company. Hundreds of redundant mixed-blood servants settle at Red River.
- 1826 George Simpson becomes governor of all Hudson's Bay Company territories.
- 1837 Rebellions occur in Upper and Lower Canada.
- 1849 The trial of William Sayer which leads to the proclamation of free trade in Western Canada and the end of the Hudson's Bay Company monopoly.

- 1859 The first steam river boat arrives at Red River.
- 1867 The Confederation of Canada.
- 1869 The first Riel Rebellion.
- 1870 The Manitoba Act allots 1.4 million acres (566,580 ha) to mixed-blood Red River families.
- 1871 The first of the numbered Indian Treaties in Western Canada is signed.
- 1873 The first distribution of Métis lands occurs.
- 1874 Fort Macleod is established by the North West Mounted Police.
- 1877 Treaty No. 7 is signed with the Blackfoot peoples.
- 1883 Riel becomes an American citizen.
- 1885 The second Riel Rebellion. Riel is hanged.
- 1896 The founding of Saint-Paul-des-Métis a private, government-supported Catholic reserve for Alberta Métis.
- 1909 The closing of Saint-Paul-des-Métis.
- 1914-1918 World War I.
- 1932 The first annual convention of L'Association des Métis d'Alberta et les Territoires au Nord-Ouest.
- 1934 The Ewing Commission is appointed by the Province of Alberta to investigate the situation of the Métis.
- 1938 Alberta Métis Settlement Betterment Act is passed.
- 1945 United Nations is formed.
- 1982 Section 35 of the Constitution Act of Canada declares the Métis to be Aboriginal peoples.

Section 1.1

Who are the Métis? The Debate

Considerable debate exists among the Métis, scholars, and government as to who is a Métis. Although the debate may seem academic, determining who is a Métis may decide the future of individuals as well as the Métis people. From the 1930s to 1950s, the term Métis usually meant those individuals who could claim both Native and white-European descent and who identified with the Métis of Red River and the earlier fur trade. In Alberta, however, there are mixed-blood people of African and Aboriginal descent who are welcomed into the Alberta Métis Association.

Governments also attempted legal definitions. The federal government defined "Indians" rigidly through the various Indian Acts. Natives who voluntarily assumed the right to vote were until 1950 excluded from the Indian Act as "enfranchised Indians." Starting in 1920, the Superintendent General was able to enfranchise anyone on the reserve whom he thought qualified and who was willing to be enfranchised, although this happened very rarely. The Superintendent General could give these people title to reserve land and a portion of band funds. Also, until 1985, under Section 12 (1)(b) of the Indian Act, Native women who married non-status men were struck from the band records. The offspring of these unions form a large part of what are known as non-status Indians. In many instances, non-status Indians and the federal government linked their identity with that of the Métis. The politics of the Métis associations representing the various interests are carefully explained in the assigned reading by Boisvert and Turnbull.

Provincial governments also complicated the situation. In 1935, as a result of the Ewing Commission hearings, the Alberta government decided that a Métis was a person of mixed white and Native blood, and who was neither a treaty nor non-treaty Indian as defined by the Indian Act. In 1940, the Alberta government further decided that in order to be Métis an individual had to be at least "one-quarter Indian." In doing so, the provincial government was attempting to limit the benefits from the 1938 Métis Betterment Act.

Only in 1982, in Section 35(1)(2) of the Constitution Act, did the federal government admit that Métis were Aboriginal peoples. This change affects the relationship of Inuit, Indians, and Métis, and the relationship of Métis, non-status, and enfranchised Indians. Boisvert and Turnbull discuss how the Constitution Act has again opened the definition to dispute. Who precisely is a Métis? In 1983, the Métis National Council separated from the Native Council of Canada over the definition. In the past, non-status Indians—those of Native ancestry who are not included in definitions in the Indian Act—were considered by some to be Métis. The Métis National Council, by focusing on the historic Métis (i.e., the Western Métis) as the

true root nationality, has worsened relations with non-status Indians and with mixed-blood people of Ontario and the Northwest Territories.

Today, scholars such as John Foster, Trudy Nicks, David Boisvert, and Keith Turnbull are beginning to offer insights into Métis identity. Their conclusions are leading many people to a more complex but perhaps more satisfactory definition. Nicks (1985) demonstrates that group identities are not fixed, but change over time in response to a variety of factors. Individuals will assume identities for cultural as well as political or legislated reasons. Nicks shows that there is debate both within the Métis community and within Canadian institutions (e.g., museums) on the Métis identity. The debate will continue to be a complex and important one. As Aboriginal rights, particularly economic rights, are claimed by the Métis, legal disputes will also occur. The outcomes of these disputes will be important to the judicial and political systems as well as to the groups directly involved in them.

Foster's article (1985) uses anthropological systems to define the Métis as a national group. He rejects any political or institutional definition. Instead, Foster suggests that groups will generally define themselves and be defined by the communities in which they participate. It should be noted that Foster's use of Frederick Barth's theories is not unique. Joe Sawchuk, in *The Métis of Manitoba* (1978), uses Barth's theories in the same way. Foster's use of the theory in his paper indicates the continuing relevance of the theories.

John Foster (1985)

Overview Questions

As you read the article by Foster, please consider the following questions.

1. How do Frederick Barth's theories on defining ethnicity help to define the Métis?
2. How does John Foster establish the boundaries for a Métis identity?

Reading Assignment

John E. Foster, "Some Questions and Perspectives on the Problem of Métis Roots." In *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, edited by Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, pp. 73-91.

Note-Taking Questions

While reading the article by Foster, jot down brief answers to the following note-taking questions.

1. Foster argues in his introduction that while the Métis are Natives, they are distinct. How are the Métis distinct according to Foster?
2. Foster applies a limited definition to the historic Métis. What is this definition? Foster extends the definition of Métis to include "those of the Hudson Bay trading system." How do you think these Métis might differ from those "individuals, frequently of mixed Indian, western European and other ancestry, who arose in the St. Lawrence Great Lakes trading system"? Has Foster defined Métis geographically, biologically, or culturally? Do you think that Foster's analysis is a useful one?
3. Foster suggests that Métis must "choose to see themselves in various collectivities distinct from their Indian neighbours, and, in some instances, distinct from members of the 'white' community." Note the subtle distinctions made in this sentence. Do you think there is validity in Foster's suggestion that Métis are always distinct from their Native neighbours, but are only in some instances distinct from the white community?
4. Foster maintains (p. 74) that Alexander Ross's examination of the buffalo hunt is unsympathetic and lacks understanding of the Métis people because he focuses too narrowly on the economics of the hunt. This is an interesting observation because Ross was the father of a very significant mixed-blood family who were ambivalent about their identity.

Foster spends some time discussing the paucity of material on the Métis. Alexander Ross's study was one of the first. What other type of evidence is there for Métis history? What does Foster think are the shortcomings of this evidence? Are there any sources he has not considered?

5. Foster discusses previous historians of the Métis people, including Marcel Giraud. You will also find an essay on Giraud in Peterson and Brown (1985). Be aware that Giraud is one of the most cited of the historians of the Métis. What does Foster mean by a "biological interpretation" of the Métis? How was Giraud's interpretation affected by cultural factors?
6. Foster thinks that Giraud's study has limited value, and prefers Frederick Barth's theories. What are Barth's theories? How does Barth suggest that ethnic groups determine their membership?
7. Foster accepts that the Métis originated at various times and in various geographic regions. What two geographic regions and time periods

does he identify? Foster also observes that each of the two geographic groups could have been further subdivided. What are the further subdivisions?

8. Foster identifies three "worlds of experiences" that might have generated a Métis identity. Can you identify them?

Commentary

Foster summarizes the conclusions of many scholars working on the ethnogenesis of a Métis identity. His most important observations offer insight on determining who is Métis. He argues, and so will many Métis, that the definition of the Métis community must come largely from within the community. You are a Métis if both you and the Métis community agree that you are. The problem, as some of the following readings will reveal, is that there are many groups who consider themselves Métis, but who may not be considered Métis by other Métis, Euro-Canadians, Natives, or governments. You may wish to discuss with your tutor some of the social, economic, and political consequences of group identification.

Trudy Nicks (1985)

The assigned reading by Trudy Nicks deals with the personal struggle of a Native woman in her transition from a Cree to a Métis identity. That struggle to find an identity is felt by an increasing number of people in Canada. Many mainstream cultural institutions (e.g., museums and libraries), which can do much to legitimize identity, refuse to recognize these struggles. As you read, critically evaluate the museum's policy on the classifying Mary's artifacts.

Overview Questions

As you read the article by Nicks, please consider the following questions.

1. How do individuals change their cultural and national identities?
2. According to Nicks, what will be the outcome of the cultural ambivalence of the Métis people?
3. What role do cultural institutions play in determining identity?

Reading Assignment

Trudy Nicks, "Mary Anne's Dilemma: The Ethnohistory of an Ambivalent Identity," in the *Reading File*.

Note-Taking Questions

While reading the article by Nicks, jot down brief answers to the following note-taking questions.

1. What was Mary's original identity?
2. What impact did her teacher have on her identity?
3. What was the importance of the vest in changing Mary's identity? (You may find Nicks's suggestion that one item could play so transformative a role unconvincing.)
4. What are the connotations of the word Métis to Nicks?
5. How critical has Red River ancestry been in Métis identity?
6. What are the most important elements in the identity of the Freeman?
7. Are all descendants of Freeman Métis?
8. What role did the 1938 Métis Betterment Act have in creating a Métis identity?
9. How has the Red River Métis identity strengthened a general Métis identity?
10. Why did Mary choose a Métis rather than a Native identity?

Commentary

This article is important because it personalizes what could easily be an impersonal topic. Mary initially identified herself as a Cree urban woman, caught in poverty and alienation. As a result of the intervention and teaching of a Euro-Canadian instructor, Mary discovered a new identity—she was Métis. This essay reinforces the ambivalence of the Métis identity. Do you think Mary assumed her new identity because it had status in the eyes of her instructor?

The Nicks article introduces certain important concepts. The article argues that most Métis find their identity rooted in the excitement of Red River. Louis Riel, the greatest of the Métis leaders, had nationalist dreams for his fellows. Riel is the tragic hero around whom folklore and a people have situated themselves. Even mixed-blood people with no link to the "historic" Red River Métis may feel an emotional link to the Red River experience.

David Boisvert and Keith Turnbull (1985)

The article by Boisvert and Turnbull is not intended to force a detailed discussion of the current politics of Métis identity. The changes in the Constitution and the changing definitions of Native membership will play a large role in determining who is Métis, and, as important, who becomes Métis. Understanding these debates will help you understand the complexities of writing Métis history today.

Scholars are attempting to come to grips with numerous questions in their continuing search for a more complete understanding of the Métis people. Some of these questions are about "cultural decision making." Why would one child from a family assume a Cree identity, and another a French-Canadian identity? Why would one member of an eighteenth-century mixed-blood family decide to stay in the Northwest and another move to the northern United States and assume an American identity? What is the role of Native women in determining identity?

Overview Questions

As you read the article by Boisvert and Turnbull, please consider the following questions.

1. What has been the impact of government regulation and law on the creation of a Métis identity? In your answer, refer to the Indian Act and to the relationship of Métis to status and non-status Indians, as well as to enfranchised Indians.
2. Who are the historic Métis? Can their past and their identity form a realistic foundation for a new Canadian Métis identity?

Reading Assignment

David Boisvert and Keith Turnbull, "Who are the Métis?" in the *Reading File*.

Note-Taking Questions

While reading the article by Boisvert and Turnbull, jot down brief answers to the following note-taking questions. There are no right or wrong answers, particularly to question 2. You should, however, be able to provide a sound argument from the evidence presented in the article for one side or other of the question.

1. Boisvert and Turnbull argue that the Métis people are Aboriginal peoples, and that their Aboriginal rights have been denied. Try to

define in your own mind what these rights are. How important are they in defining the Métis as separate nationals?

2. Section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982 defines the Métis as one of the Aboriginal groups of Canada. Has this reinforced a Métis identity or has it further confused the issue?
3. What is a non-status Indian? How have non-status Indians been identified as Métis?
4. Boisvert and Turnbull argue (p. 112) that there is no unique Métis culture. What is the basis for this observation? (You will need to keep their argument in mind when you work through Unit 5 of the course.)
5. What are the implications of arguing that the Métis evolved into a consciously distinct people only in Western Canada?
6. The authors argue that the foundations of the Métis political economy disappeared within a generation of the takeover of the Northwest by Canada. How did this happen?
7. Boisvert and Turnbull spend a great deal of the article discussing land and the relationship of the Métis to land. How critical was land to the Métis identity?
8. Boisvert and Turnbull argue (p. 136) that Métis identity came under serious attack in the 1890s with their pauperization. How did this happen? (Remember the implications of this question for Unit 3. In Unit 3, Diane Payment argues that the 1880s and 1890s allowed the Métis to re-establish themselves in Saskatchewan with some success.)
9. What are the differences between Indian and Métis land rights? What are the implications of these differences to a Métis identity? Briefly describe the differences between "enfranchised Indians" and the historic Métis, and the problems that these differences created for both. Did non-status or enfranchised Indians identify with the Métis after 1885? What are the implications of the association? Has the association changed in the last few years?
10. What are the legal implications of current federal government legislation on mixed-blood identities today?

Commentary

Boisvert and Turnbull disagree with Thomas Flanagan's arguments that the Métis are not Aboriginal peoples. Flanagan researched the federal Department of Justice case against the Manitoba Métis Federation, who were asking for significant land claims partially based on Aboriginal ancestry. Flanagan argued that the Métis were agricultural rather than

nomadic peoples, which meant that they were not Aboriginal. Do you agree with this argument?

Boisvert and Turnbull also argue that, during the Riel Rebellion, Riel had the support of most of Red River, including the English-speaking mixed-bloods. In Unit 2, Pannekoek (1991) argues that there was a serious division between the French- and English-speaking mixed-blood communities. Pannekoek also argues that Red River had serious demographic and social problems. Perhaps Boisvert and Turnbull have constructed a pre-1870 paradise for the Métis in the Canadian West. Why would Boisvert and Turnbull do this? What are the implications today for a Métis identity with a "paradise lost"?

Before Moving On . . .

Please be sure that you have answered, in point form or in essay form, the overview questions for each of the readings in this section.

Section 1.2

Origins of the Métis: Perspectives

The last twenty years have seen a considerable growth in interest in Canadian Native history. The best recent volume is by Olive Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times* (1992), which sees Métis history as a subset of Native history. More recent general histories, such as Gerald Friesen's *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (1984), treat the Métis as an interesting subset in the more general history of the Canadian West.

As noted earlier, Métis studies have developed most seriously in recent years as part of fur trade studies. Jennifer Brown's studies of fur trade families and Sylvia Van Kirk's study of Native women in the fur trade are the foundation studies for the more detailed work of historians such as Gerhard Ens, one of John Foster's students, and Diane Payment.

Equally encouraging has been a third source of research: the land claims research by the Métis community and the federal government. Most intriguing has been that of the Manitoba Métis Federation contractor Doug Sprague. He argues in several articles and in his *Canada and the Métis 1869-1885* (1988) that the federal government conspired to take land away from the Métis people. However, Thomas Flanagan argues in *Métis Lands in Manitoba* (1991) and in various other articles that the Métis were fairly treated given the circumstances of the day.

The articles to be examined in Section 1.2 reflect the Native, fur trade, and land claims interests of their authors. Olive Dickason (1985) looks at the Métis in early French Canada and on the Atlantic seaboard. Jacqueline Peterson (1985) looks at Métis origins in the Great Lake regions, and Verne Dusenberry (1985) talks about the land claims of the Métis of Montana. These readings suggest a number of separate and unique Métis identities and experiences, and that the only uniting thread that connects these groups is the ability to trace both Native and European ancestors.

Where do these studies lead? As you progress through this section, ask yourself whether the authors attempt, consciously or unconsciously, to find a single common theme among the Métis. If you think they do, try to determine what that theme might be.

Olive Patricia Dickason (1985)

Dickason's article argues that the Métis populations in the Atlantic region and in early French Canada allied themselves culturally and emotionally with either the European or Native populations. She presents various arguments to support her case. You should be able to understand these arguments, although without a great deal of additional reading you may not be able to determine their validity. Check Dickason's evidence for her arguments. Is it extensive? Do you find her examples convincing?

Overview Questions

As you read the article by Dickason, please consider the following questions.

1. What principal factors precluded a Métis identity from being formed in Eastern Canada?
2. What principal factors precipitated the formation of a Métis identity in the region known as the Old Northwest?

Reading Assignment

Olive Patricia Dickason, "From 'One Nation' in the Northeast to 'New Nation' in the Northwest: A Look at the Emergence of the Métis." In *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, edited by Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, pp. 19-36.

Note-Taking Questions

While reading the article by Dickason, jot down brief answers to the following note-taking questions.

1. Dickason argues that the development of the Métis and their spirit of "New Nation" was a product of racial intermixing and an instrument of empire. What does Dickason mean by this statement?
2. Why have historians ignored racial mixing in writing the history of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Canada? How important is the nature of the historical record in determining subject matter?
3. Why would Acadian and Quebec mixed-bloods side with Natives rather than with the Europeans? Under what circumstances did they side with the Europeans?
4. What were the special conditions on the West Coast that precluded the formation of a Métis identity there?

5. What were the differences between the Old Northwest and the Far Northwest? What impact did this have on the formation of a Métis identity?

Commentary

Dickason is persuaded that a strong Métis identity did not emerge in Eastern Canada, particularly in the St. Lawrence basin and in what are now the Atlantic provinces. She points out the ambivalence of being Métis—of being a broker people. Dickason argues that the Métis were a people who formed bridges between Natives and Europeans, and that they flourished in this capacity in a peaceful commercial environment. The persistence of the fur trade in Western Canada in the period before 1870, and in the north of Canada after 1870, was conducive to the formation of such a broker culture.

However, Dickason argues, when Europeans were at war with Natives the mixed-bloods had very little choice. They could side with the Europeans, or with the Native community, or be annihilated. There was no room for an existence in-between.

Jacqueline Peterson (1985)

Peterson offers a different interpretation from that of Dickason. Dickason sees the mixed-blood people of early Canada as assuming either a European or a Native culture. Peterson has instead tried to trace the roots of the Métis identity that burst on the scene in Western Canada in 1816 to the Great Lakes region. Peterson agrees with Dickason, however, in describing Métis culture as a broker culture. Peterson and Dickason also agree that broker cultures function only in peacetime and that they collapse during war and conflict. If this is so, how does one explain the birth of the Métis identity in the Seven Oaks Incident? —the first Riel Rebellion (1869)? —and the second Riel Rebellion (1885)?

Overview Questions

As you read the article by Peterson, please consider the following questions.

1. What were the principal factors leading to the formation of a Métis identity in the Old Northwest? How do these factors differ from those discussed by Dickason?
2. What link does Peterson see between the Old Northwest and Red River? How important, given what you have read in Section 1.1, were these links in establishing a Canadian Métis identity?

Reading Assignment

Jacqueline Peterson, "Many Roads to Red River: Métis Genesis in the Great Lakes Region, 1680-1815." In *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, edited by Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, pp. 37-71.

Note-Taking Questions

While reading the article by Peterson, jot down brief answers to the following note-taking questions.

1. Peterson argues that the Métis seemed to burst on the scene in 1816. Where did this eruption happen? What events led to the creation of this Métis identity?
2. Peterson argues that several regional populations converged at Red River to become this new Métis nation. Where does she think we can find the roots of this new Métis nation?
3. What was life like in the mixed-blood communities of Mackinac and Detroit? What was the importance of trade and commerce in these communities?
4. How important was geography in determining the success of these communities?
5. Was growth in these communities mainly the result of natural increase or of in-migration? What was the impact of French government regulations on the mixed-blood communities?
6. Describe the social structure of these communities. How were Europeans and Natives integrated?
7. What was the impact of mobility on the mixed-blood people of the Great Lakes area?
8. What was the contribution of the northwest Métis to the formation of the identity of the mixed-bloods of Red River?

Commentary

Peterson's article is important from several perspectives. In 1982, the Métis National Association decided that Métis must be able to trace their ancestry back to Red River, or to early fur trade ancestors, or to both. Although this decision came after the Peterson article appeared, the article has obvious implications. It could be argued that Peterson is attempting to find links between all Métis peoples to ensure unity. Has she contrived to

find common historical roots? Note again that a strong mixed-blood identity did not develop in the United States, even though Peterson argues that it originated there. The Dusenberry article (1985) will help to explain why.

Verne Dusenberry (1985)

Overview Questions

The article by Dusenberry appears to be straightforward, yet it poses several complex questions that have serious implications. As you read, please consider the following questions.

1. Is the "Métis" identity a uniquely Canadian one?
2. How did the Americans treat the Métis? Were the Métis and the Indians treated differently in the United States?

Reading Assignment

Verne Dusenberry. "Waiting for a Day That Never Comes: The Dispossessed Métis of Montana." In *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, edited by Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, pp. 119-136.

Note-Taking Questions

While reading the article by Dusenberry, jot down brief answers to the following note-taking questions.

1. Why do you think that a Métis identity did not form in the United States, despite the fact that most Métis could trace their roots back to Red River and the Great Lakes?
2. What is the significance of being called a "Landless Indian of Montana" or the "Canadian Cree"? Why would American reservation-based Natives call the mixed-bloods "Cree" or "bon jours" or "bon hommes from Lac La Biche"?
3. What does Dusenberry identify as the cultural characteristics of the Métis in relation to housing, clothing, language, political structure, and economic activity?
4. How important were the Riel Rebellions in establishing the Métis populations in Montana?

5. What myths did the diaspora (uprooting) of the Red River and Saskatchewan Métis create in the United States?
6. What are the differences between the Red River Métis and the Pembina Métis? What is the difference between the Chippewa and Cree groups? How important is the difference?
7. Who was settled at Turtle Mountain?
8. Why did some mixed-blood people move to the Milk River area?
9. What impact did the treaty negotiations have on the mixed-blood people who had moved?
10. Did the American government exclude the Montana Métis from treaty because they were mixed-blood? Were the Montana Métis excluded because they were Canadian? If they had stayed at Turtle Mountain, would they have eventually been included in any land distribution?

Commentary

Several questions must be kept in mind while reading the Dusenberry article. William J. Scheick, in *The Half Blood: A Cultural Symbol in 19th Century American Fiction* (1979), argues that eighteenth-century Americans saw mixed-blood people more as agents of the French/Native menace than as allies of New England. Like the anglophone and francophone settlers of Canada's Atlantic region, Americans did not see a new mixed-blood nation as symbolizing the strength of both the Europeans and the Natives. Instead, mixed-blood peoples took on *either* Native or Euro-American identities.

The situation further west was hardly different. Dusenberry points out that there were indigenous American Métis at Pembina and around the American Great Lakes, but that these peoples associated themselves with the stronger Métis community at Red River. Nineteenth-century Métis may have themselves believed that their unique nationality applied only in British North America, particularly Rupert's Land, the land granted to the Hudson's Bay Company by their charter of 1670. Yet in 1879, in a reasonably accurate census by the American government, of an estimated 40,000 North American mixed-blood people, only 11,230 lived north of the 49th parallel. Americans considered the Métis to be Canadians whose culture was rooted in the British imperial experiences north of the 49th parallel. American governments consistently insisted that mixed-blood people were either Native or Euro-American. Furthermore, the Métis as a group were the responsibility of the British Crown.

Louis Riel's situation in the United States between 1878 and 1884 is a case in point. Riel, who led both the 1869 and 1885 Resistances against Central Canadian injustices, and who is often considered the founder of the modern-day Canadian Métis nation, became an American citizen on 16

March 1883. Always interested in the welfare of his people, in August 1880 Riel petitioned the American government for a reserve to be set aside for "half-breeds" of Montana. Riel's wording in the petition is important. He asks the government to set aside some land because the Métis cannot "compete with the majority of our fellow countrymen." Although Riel's preference was a reserve, similar to a Native reserve, he was prepared to accept Euro-American status for his people and asked for the right to homestead. Riel ultimately favoured a sedentary lifestyle like that of his "fellow" Americans. Despite Riel's pleas, the American government insisted that the "half-breeds" as a group were British subjects and were, therefore, the responsibility of Canada. If the Métis lived in the United States, they would be treated either as Natives or as immigrant settlers. The American government owed them nothing as a group.

Dusenberry indicates the impact of this American policy. By the 1960s, approximately 4000 Montana mixed-bloods were agitating for the same status given to American Natives. Mixed-blood Americans were no longer attached to the Métis nation of Canada.

The American experience poses some very important questions. Boisvert and Turnbull (1985) argue, for example, that the Canadian Métis nation is at least partly the product of government policy. Do you think the Métis nation is the result of British imperial policy? If the Canadian government had decided to negotiate treaties with the Métis as the Americans did, would there have been an 1869 or 1885?

Unit 2 attempts to answer some of the questions posed in this unit. Although the Métis in the United States never established a distinct identity, the Métis in Canada did. That identity was first established in Red River among the historic Métis.

The formation of the historic Métis raises interesting questions. Why, in the later decades of the nineteenth century, did the Métis of Red River dominate all English- and French-speaking peoples in Western Canada? Why did the English-speaking mixed-bloods disappear as an identifiable group in the 1860s? Why did some Métis identify with the white settlers, while others identified with the Native community? An account of the historic Red River population may offer some explanations.

Unit 1 has not dealt extensively with the Red River Métis for several reasons. Unit 2 is entirely devoted to the Red River Métis, whose culture has tended to form the basis of current Métis identity and nationalism. Unit 2 also deals with the development of the identity of the Métis of Red River. It discusses both English- and French-speaking Red River mixed-blood people, their rise, and their social disintegration. The contribution of Louis Riel, the most prominent Métis nationalist, is also analysed in detail.

Before Moving On . . .

Please be sure that you have answered, in point form or in essay form, the overview questions for each of the readings in this section.

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Supplementary Materials List

The supplementary readings will add depth to Unit 1. For a more general Canadian context to the experiences of the Métis people, Margaret Conrad, Alvin Finkel, Cornelius Jaenen, *History of the Canadian Peoples* is recommended.

Jennifer Brown's and Dennis Madill's articles offer an in-depth analyses of current writings on the Métis people and will assist you in pursuing studies on any Métis subject. Of particular interest is the four-part National Film Board Series, which illustrates accurately and with considerable feeling the mixed-blood experience in Western Canada through the eyes of mixed-blood women. *Ikw,e*, the first film, deals with the 1770s; *Mistress Madeleine*, the 1850s; *Places Not Our Own*, the Depression; and *The Wake*, today. Each film is fifty-seven minutes long and can be borrowed from the Athabasca University Library. All four films are sensitive reflections of modern scholarship and received support and wisdom from the Métis people. The Pocklington essay and Métis Association of Alberta volume provide a summary insight into the Alberta experience. Probably the best single sustained volume on Métis identity is Joe Sawchuk's volume on Manitoba, although it is dated in certain areas and focuses almost entirely on the Manitoba experience. Nevertheless, it does provide further insights, particularly on issues relating to identity formation. If you decide to pursue your interests further by reading this book, it is strongly advised that you read the Brown and Madill articles as well so that you can balance Sawchuk with more recent writings. Sawchuk, however, provides an excellent account of the impact of the 1982 Constitution and current federal policy on the Métis identity.

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Unit 2

The Historic Métis Nation to 1869

Learning Objectives

When you have completed Unit 2, you should be able to achieve the following learning objectives.

1. Identify the economic and social pressures inside Red River that precipitated some of its most serious problems.
2. Compare and contrast the differences in the arguments by Pannekoek and Spry about the nature of Red River society.
3. Discuss the causes of the Riel Rebellion of 1869.
4. Consider the importance of the Riel Rebellion in alienating the Métis from Canada's mainstream.

Chronology for Unit 2

- 1793 Pierre Falcon, the Métis bard, and Cuthbert Grant, the first Métis leader, are born.
- 1816 Cuthbert Grant leads the Métis at the Seven Oaks Incident, the first evidence of the flying of the Métis flag.
- 1818 First Roman Catholic missionary arrives in Red River.
- 1820 First Anglican church is established in Red River.
- 1821 Union of the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies.
- 1824 Grant leads 80 to 100 families to settle at Grantown near present-day White Horse Plains, Manitoba.
- 1830 Sir George Simpson rejects Margaret Taylor to marry his white cousin, Frances.
- 1849 Sayer trial and the announcement of free trade in Red River.
- 1850 The Ballenden scandal.
- 1854 Cuthbert Grant dies.
- 1857 Captain John Palliser explores the West on behalf of the British government.
- 1862 The International Financial Association purchases the Hudson's Bay Company.
- 1863 The Corbett trial.
- 1864 Father Lacombe establishes St. Albert mission.
- 1867 Confederation of Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia.
- 1868 Riel returns to Red River and Thomas Spence declares himself president of the Republic of Manitoba.
- 1869 The Riel Rebellion.
- 1870 The Métis wintering settlement of Buffalo Lake is founded.
- 1876 Pierre Falcon dies.

Section 2.1

The Roots of Métis Nationalism

Unit 1 identified the roots of the Métis nation along the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes, in northern parts of present-day Ontario and Quebec, in the interior of Western Canada, and, in particular, in Manitoba along the banks of the Red River and the Assiniboine River. As early as 1812-1814, the Western Canadian Métis numbered several thousand. These Métis lived a semi-nomadic existence, ranging across the plains and settling at such places as Buffalo Lake, Fort George, Fort Carlton, Fort Edmonton, Rocky Mountain House, and, of course, Red River.

Most historians discussed in Unit 1 would agree that the period in which a Métis national character was first formed started with the Seven Oaks Incident in 1816 that led to the first Riel Rebellion of 1869. Nationalism is often marked by a distinct culture, distinct symbols, and shared heroes. In 1816, after the deaths of Hudson's Bay Company Governor Semple and twenty of his men at Seven Oaks, the great Métis poet, Pierre Falcon, composed his first ballad, the "Ballad of Seven Oaks." The Métis flag "blue about 4 feet square & a figure of 8 horizontally in the middle" is supposed to have first flown at Seven Oaks.

"Nationalism" is an explosive word that conjures up images of irrationalism and the worst sentiments of secular religion. Nationalism is used to praise, condemn, and incite. There are many definitions, but it is worth quoting Edmund Burke, a conservative philosopher of the nineteenth century: "A nation is not an idea only of local extent and individual memory aggregation; but it is an idea of continuity, which extends in time as well as in numbers and in space" (Burke, cited in Russell 1966, 329). A more cynical recent definition is probably more understandable. Nationalism is symptomatic of "a society united by a common error as to its origins and a common aversion to its neighbours" (Russell 1966). A nation is probably best described as a group of people who have come to define themselves by common yet unique cultural identifiers. In the case of the Métis, there is equally importantly a strong devotion to a common land. Both land and community (as distinct from the individual) are worth defending. (For an extensive discussion of nationalism in Canada, see Russell (1966, 325-327).)

When a group of people have acquired a national identity, they often express it through distinctive arts and crafts. Although there is little Red River Métis material culture left, documentary evidence outlines its uniqueness. In his intriguing essay entitled "In Search of Métis Art" (1985, 221-229), Ted Brassier argues that the influence of the eighteenth-century French mission stations and a strong market orientation distinguished Métis art from Cree Ojibwa art. As a trading people, the Métis always earned considerable income by manufacturing clothing and horse gear.

Section 2.2

Seven Oaks Incident

A bitter struggle for control of today's Western Canada took place from the time of the formation of the Montreal-based North West Company in 1783 to its merger with the London-based Hudson's Bay Company in 1821. The last and greatest struggle, which ended at Seven Oaks, was over control of the buffalo commons of the Saskatchewan country that supplied pemmican for the whole fur trade. The North West Company successfully marshalled the Métis, who, along with the Nor'Westers, challenged the Hudson's Bay Company in that grove of oak trees on the banks of the Red River.

Given the importance of the Seven Oaks Incident, some background is useful. The Métis economy centred on the buffalo hunt. To ensure a steady supply of pemmican, the two major fur companies had established trading houses in the main bison region between the two Saskatchewan Rivers. Pemmican was made from the dried meat of the buffalo. Meat was cut and dried in strips. The strips were then pounded into flakes and, along with melted buffalo fat, put into ninety pound (40.8 kg) buffalo hide sacks. The sacks were easy to transport by canoe and across portages.

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, the North West Company required forty to sixty thousand pounds (18,144 to 27,215 kg) of pemmican each year. The demands of the Hudson's Bay Company after 1821 increased dramatically, reaching approximately one hundred thousand pounds (45,359 kg) in 1840 and about double that in 1870. The Métis also supplied much of the buffalo meat required by the Red River Colony, which would have been about two million pounds (907,184 kg) per year in 1830 and about eight million pounds (3,628,736 kg) in 1870.

The events that led to the Seven Oaks Incident began when the Hudson's Bay Company granted to one of its largest shareholders, Thomas Douglas, Fifth Earl of Selkirk, a 300,000 sq km land grant, five times the size of Scotland, right in the middle of the buffalo commons. Lord Selkirk was supposed to settle two hundred servants per year to develop an agricultural colony to supply the fur trade and provide a home for retired fur trade company employees. Selkirk's muddled venture was not explained either to the servants or officers of the Hudson's Bay Company or to the mixed-bloods of the interior. A small advance party of Irish and Scottish immigrants arrived in late August 1812, followed by a second party of eighty in late October the same year, and a third party of similar size early in July 1814—two hundred in all.

Provisions were at a premium. Miles Macdonell, Selkirk's governor, issued the now famous "Pemmican Proclamation" in January 1814, which not only forbade the "running" of the buffalo by the Métis and confiscated much of the pemmican of the North West Company, but asserted Selkirk's proprietary rights to the grant. The Nor'Westers and, particularly, the

Métis resented the Proclamation. The Métis believed that they had rights to the soil and to the freedom of the plains.

The Nor'Westers appointed Cuthbert Grant the first Captain of the Métis, and authorized him and his followers to secure the pemmican supplies for the interior trade. Grant went to a number of posts in the Assiniboine country, seizing enough pemmican to supply the trade of the North West Company. To get the pemmican to the northern brigades that were soon leaving for the interior posts, Grant had to pass through the area of present-day Winnipeg.

Governor Semple, who had headquartered Selkirk's colony and the Hudson's Bay Company government in Fort Douglas, spotted Grant as he attempted to pass the fort. Semple and more than fifty men marched to confront Grant. After some preliminary pushing and shoving, a gun fired and a fight broke out in which Semple and twenty of his men were killed. Only one of Grant's men died. There is a considerable debate over what actually happened at Seven Oaks. Did the Métis pre-meditate the killings? Were the killings the unplanned outcome of the pent-up tensions of the previous months? Alexander Ross, the father of a large mixed-blood family and the first historian of Red River, had no doubt in his mind:

As might be expected, the advocates of their party in this catastrophe strenuously denied having fired the first shot, and perhaps it will ever remain in some minds a matter of uncertainty. In the country where the murder took place, there never has been a shadow of doubt, but rather a full and clear knowledge of the fact, that the North-West party did unquestionably fire the first shot, and almost all the shots there were fired. (Ross 1856, 36-37)

Lyle Dick (1992, 91-113) proves that the killings were not planned. Dick argues convincingly, however, that it was to the advantage of the European settlers and other Canadians to call Seven Oaks a massacre. By doing so, historians have justified the European dominance in Red River and the subordination of the Métis. The word "massacre" reinforced the image of the Métis as a "barbaric" and "savage" people.

The events were the accidental result of several years of growing tension. In fact, after the killings, Cuthbert Grant arranged for the colonists to leave peacefully. However, the arrival of Lord Selkirk with his ninety-member Swiss and German de Meuron Regiment prevented the colonists from being dispersed.

Cuthbert Grant

Cuthbert Grant (c. 1793-1854), who figures so largely in the early years of the Métis nation, was of Scottish/Cree ancestry. Grant is now beginning to be acknowledged as the first of the great Métis leaders, in the tradition of Gabriel Dumont and Louis Riel.

Grant, a trader with the North West Company, was educated in Montreal. Later, Grant led his people on the buffalo hunt. After the 1821 merger of

the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company that made so many Métis redundant, Grant encouraged over 80 Métis families to settle at the village of Grantown in the parish of St. François Xavier on the White Horse Plains near the Assiniboine River. In 1828, the Hudson's Bay Company named him Warden of the Plains, an honorary appointment. Grant led the Métis peoples of the southern plains, particularly those who settled at Grantown, Pembina, and Red River. Not only was Grant leader of the White Horse Plain Buffalo Hunt, but he was the war chief, medical doctor, and, after 1835, Justice of the Peace. As war chief, Grant kept the Sioux, the principal enemy of the Métis, at bay. Cuthbert Grant's influence waned after 1849 with his refusal to become involved in the anti-Hudson's Bay Company free-trade movement. Louis Riel's father and several Métis free traders replaced Grant as leader. No other leader of Grant's stature emerged until Louis Riel returned to Red River from school in 1868.

The best book on Grant is by Margaret MacLeod and W. L. Morton, *Cuthbert Grant of Grantown* (1963). The book's contribution to the historiography of the Métis was discussed in Unit 1. Most of the book was written by MacLeod, who saw Grant as a larger-than-life folk hero. Morton had reservations about Grant and cast doubt on his leadership abilities. Morton and Grant saw him as a tool, first of the North West Company and then of the Hudson's Bay Company. Both companies used Grant to keep the Métis under control. Morton also points out that Grant is mentioned only once in Métis ballads. Morton also gives evidence of Grant's love of the bottle. Morton has set high standards indeed for his heroes.

Today, "great man" history is in disrepute and there is greater interest in the history of society as a whole. Nevertheless, Cuthbert Grant's reputation needs to be re-evaluated, particularly because of his importance in the formation of Métis national identity. Emma LaRocque has started the process by offering a positive biography in the *Canadian Encyclopedia* (1985).

The Ethnic Make-Up of the Red River Colony

After the 1821 creation of a fur trade monopoly allowed the Hudson's Bay Company to dismiss approximately half its workforce, most of the population of Red River were not Selkirk's settlers but French- and English-speaking mixed-blood peoples. The unemployed mixed-bloods of Rupert's Land were encouraged to migrate to Red River. These Métis were the foundation of Red River's culture and economy. *A Snug Little Flock* (1991) details the settlement's demographic and social history. For a flavour of the settlement, you might want to read Alexander Ross, *Red River* (1856). Unfortunately, Ross is unsympathetic to the Métis and paints them as racially and culturally inferior. Despite his overbearing Eurocentric veneer, Ross contains some of the best descriptions of the early buffalo hunt and Métis life.

Today, we tend to think that most Red River mixed-bloods were Cree and French-Canadian in ancestry, Roman Catholic in religion, and French-speaking. However, only about half of the settlement's mixed-blood

population fits this description. The other half were British and Cree in ancestry, English-speaking, and, for the most part, Protestant. Three questions continue to confound historians:

1. Why did the Cree/French-Canadian/Roman Catholic Métis identity emerge as the dominant one?
2. Why did the English-speaking mixed-blood community seem to disappear as a separate entity during the 1860s?
3. What is the impact of the disappearance of the English-speaking mixed-bloods on the interpretation of the Riel Rebellion of 1869?

Section 2.3

The Riel Rebellion of 1869

In 1869 the Hudson's Bay Company surrendered its charter in return for a payment of £300,000, some land around their posts, and one-twentieth of the fertile lands of the Prairies. People living in the Red River Settlement were not consulted. New settlers in Red River throughout the late 1850s and 1860s did not reassure the inhabitants of Red River, particularly the Métis, that they would have any group and individual rights. Riel became the Métis leader and led a resistance to the newcomers. The result was the creation of the Province of Manitoba and a land settlement. (The issue of land claims will be dealt with in Unit 5.)

The Rebellion of 1869 and its leader, Louis Riel, have been the subject of much historical writing. Central Canadian historians, both French and English, have tended to see the Riel Rebellion as continuing the contest between the French and English halves of Canada for power over the Canadian West. This is the approach of historians such as Mason Wade (1955) and Donald Creighton (1955). However, as early as 1936, some historians, particularly George F. G. Stanley in his *Birth of Western Canada* (1936) and *Louis Riel* (1963), attempted to place the Rebellion within the context of the frontier thesis. Unit 1 discussed the frontier thesis.

Stanley saw the Rebellion of 1869 as the inevitable clash between a civilized society and a primitive society. Few still accept this civilization/savagism interpretation. Morton revised Stanley's thesis in his introduction to Alexander Begg's *Red River Journal and Other Papers Relating to the Red River Resistance of 1869-70* (1956). To Morton, Red River was an island of civilization within the wilderness. He argues that the Rebellion of 1869 was an attempt on the part of Red River to secure its "ethnic and political reality" within a Canadian Protestant and anglophone expansion. However, Morton still saw the settlement itself as a delicate balance between civilization and barbarism, with the Métis personifying that balance. It was this balance that Red River was trying to preserve within Confederation. In his own way, Morton was also caught in the "civilization/savagism" trap. There are numerous other interpretations, all outlined in *A Snug Little Flock* (Pannekoek 1991).

A Snug Little Flock provides a radically different interpretation of the Rebellion of 1869. Pannekoek asserts that the causes of the Rebellion should not be sought in Ontario and Quebec, but within Red River itself. He argues that an understanding of the unique internal structure and dynamics of Red River and its mixed-blood society give a clearer although more complex interpretation of the events of 1869. Were the Red River mixed-bloods of one mind in their resistance to Canada or was the community divided? Pannekoek argues that by 1869 the English-speaking mixed-bloods had identified with the English-Protestant Canadian cause, but the French-speaking, Roman Catholic Métis had not. The racism of the

English-Protestant Canadians, as much as anything, precipitated the Rebellion of 1869. If the mixed-blood population was divided, with half siding with the new settlers, the other half not, then the frontierist interpretations of Stanley and the "island of civilization" argument offered by Morton (1956) are seriously flawed. Red River was not a single society acting as a unit. Instead, it was a complex society that was internally divided. Pannekoek asserts that the Métis had agency; that is, they were actors on the stage of history, not just passive victims reacting to external circumstances. (The term "agency" is used by historians of groups united by class, ethnicity, or gender that determine and participate in change through time. The group acts as well as is acted upon.)

As you read, you will become aware of several strong and opposing views on the nature of Red River mixed-blood society. Pannekoek (1991) argues that the English-speaking, Protestant mixed-bloods merged their identity with the new settlers after 1863 rather than with the Métis. In 1863, Rev. Griffiths Owen Corbett, a dynamic Anglican priest, persuaded the English-speaking mixed-bloods, who were confused over their racial and cultural heritage, that their future lay with the British Empire and Canada. In contrast, Irene Spry, who has spent much of her life studying the Canadian Prairies of the 1850s and 1860s, argues that there was no split between the two groups, but that they were always united by their common Native heritage and their opposition to outside Canadian intrusion. Spry claims that *class* not *ethnicity* divided the mixed-bloods.

The differences between the two interpretations are fundamental. Pannekoek sees a possible unity in the colony in the early nineteenth century, which deteriorated into disunity because of internal dynamics. Spry claims that although there may have been some discord, the racial ties were unbreakable. Although Spry has not attempted to interpret the Riel Rebellion of 1869, how do you think she would interpret it? Which argument offers the greater scope for analysis of the Métis society today? Which argument gives the Métis greater "agency"?

In Unit 1, materialist historians are defined as those who feel that historical change is largely caused by economics. Another type of historian accepts that historical change can also be created by introducing new ideas. Unit 1 identified Spry as a materialist (economic) historian. How important are materialist considerations to Pannekoek? How important are ideas? What new ideas does Pannekoek argue were introduced into Red River? What impact did these new ideas have on the mixed-bloods? Can these differences explain the differences in Spry's and Pannekoek's interpretations? Discuss your answer with your tutor.

Section 2.4

Historical Readings

Frits Pannekoek (1991)

Overview Questions

As you read the book by Pannekoek, please consider the following questions:

1. What role did the churches play in the linguistic, cultural, and religious divisions within Red River? Does Pannekoek exaggerate the role that religion played in nineteenth-century society?
2. What role did European women play in exacerbating social tensions within the settlement? Does Pannekoek exaggerate these tensions? Did European and mixed-blood women start these tensions or were they merely acting out roles assigned to them in a male-dominated society?
3. What are the events identified by Pannekoek as critical to the history of the Red River mixed-bloods? Are these events different from those you are familiar with? Do Pannekoek's dates offer greater insight into the history of Red River and its mixed-blood people?

Reading Assignment

Pannekoek, Frits. *A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Riel Resistance 1869-1870*. Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1991.

Note-Taking Questions

While reading the book by Pannekoek, jot down brief answers to the following note-taking questions.

Chapter 1: The Red River Setting

1. What is an extended family? How important was an extended family in determining settlement patterns in Red River?
2. What was the function of the buffalo hunt in Métis society?
3. What were the pressures on the Red River extended family by 1843?

4. What pressures on the Métis during the 1840s caused them to consider migration?
5. What challenges did the Hudson's Bay Company face in its attempt to maintain control of Red River?
6. In what way were the churches catalysts of the disintegration of Red River society?

Chapter 2: A Question of Leadership

7. Who were the leaders of Red River between 1830 and 1870? Were they effective?
8. What was the importance of the Church of England, the Presbyterian Church, and the Roman Catholic Church for Red River families?

Chapter 3: The First Years

9. Did the clergy's sense of self-importance cause tension?
10. How did the merger of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company affect Métis/church relations?
11. Was conflict inevitable between the churches and the fur trade?
12. What tactics did the "gentlemen" of the fur trade resort to when the churches threatened their power?
13. How did the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches differ in their views of the importance of "civilizing" the mixed-blood population?

Chapter 4: A Little Britain in the Wilderness

14. Did the beliefs of men such as Rev. William Cochran contribute to the disintegration of Red River? If so, in what way?
15. How did George Simpson's Europeanization of Red River affect marriage patterns? What new hostilities were created by this change?
16. Why was there an increase in gossip in the 1830s? Give some thought to gossip as a mechanism of social control.
17. How did the alliance between the Protestant clergy and the Red River elite affect the majority of the English-speaking mixed-blood population?
18. What was the relationship between the Roman Catholic clergy and the Protestant Red River elite?
19. Why could Bishop Provencher not bring the sedentary priests and the cathedral establishment closer to the Métis?

Chapter 5: Free Trade and Social Fragmentation

20. How did the free trade troubles of the 1840s serve to distance the Métis and the English-speaking mixed-bloods?
21. Why did George Simpson and Adam Thom want to end the domination of the Church of England in Red River?
22. Why were Protestant mixed-bloods unwilling to help the Métis in their struggle with the Hudson's Bay Company?
23. Why were the secular clergy in conflict with the bishop and Oblates?
24. How did Belcourt increase tensions between the Protestant and Roman Catholic clergy? How did Belcourt's actions lead to a closer unity among the Métis?

Chapter 6: A Strife of Blood

25. How did the arrival of the Right Reverend David Anderson, the Anglican bishop, and his sister affect the mixed-blood population of Red River?
26. How did the Ballenden affair contribute to tensions between whites and non-whites, mixed-bloods and the Hudson's Bay Company, Presbyterians and Anglicans, and French- and English-speaking mixed-bloods?

Chapter 7: The Rev. G. O. Corbett and an Uprising of the People

27. What impact did the rapid population growth of Red River in the 1850s have on the English-speaking mixed-bloods?
28. What were Corbett's views of Empire? How did these ideas influence the English-speaking mixed-bloods?
29. Why would English-speaking mixed-blood people see a Hudson's Bay Company conspiracy when charges were brought against Corbett?
30. What incidents of mixed-blood rebellion made the Council of Assiniboia powerless?
31. How did the upheaval affect the non-Roman Catholic churches?
32. What evidence persuaded Corbett that Red River had become Roman Catholic?
33. Why were English-speaking mixed-bloods better able to cope with the changes in Red River than the French-speaking Métis?

34. How did Corbett convince the English-speaking mixed-bloods that their future was with other Canadians and the Empire rather than with the Métis?

Chapter 8: The Halfbreeds and the Riel Protest

35. How does the author explain the absence of a Protestant counter to Riel?
36. Why was Gardiner's retreat crucial?
37. How did Riel outmanoeuvre the Protestant clergy?

Chapter 9: The Métis and the Riel Protest

38. Why did the Métis fear union with Canada?
39. Why did Pierre Delorme strongly support Riel? What suggestion did Delorme make?
40. What was the role of the Métis boatmen during the Rebellion of 1869? How important were the labour problems in the boat brigades in ensuring that Riel was able to hold Upper Fort Garry? How persuasive is the evidence that Parnekoek uses about the boatmen's role?
41. What was Riel's role in the Rebellion of 1869-1870?
42. What was Bishop Taché's role in the Rebellion of 1869?

Commentary

The traditional dates that mark major points of historical change in Red River Métis history are:

1816—the Seven Oaks Incident

1821—the union of the Hudson's Bay and North West Company

1849—the year of the Sayer trial that led to free trade in Rupert's Land

1857-1859—the years of the Canadian and British exploring expeditions which saw first real outside interest in the West

1869—the year of the Riel Rebellion.

A Snug Little Flock offers alternative critical dates. These are:

1818—the coming of the first clergy

1830—the arrival of the first European women

1851—the Ballenden case

1863—the Corbett affair

The year 1863 is a particularly important watershed to Pannekoek. He argues that in this year the English-speaking mixed-bloods determined once and for all that their future lay with the British Empire and the English Canadians, not with the Métis. English-speaking mixed bloods had resolved their identity crisis. Do you think Pannekoek's dates offer more relevant insights into the history of the Red River settlement and its mixed-blood population?

The concept of identity crisis has been used by many historians studying colonial America and Canadian maritime history. Identity crisis is well explained by Erik H. Erikson in his *Identity, Youth and Crisis* (1968). Erikson states that an identity crisis is:

now being accepted as designating a necessary turning point, a crucial moment, when development must move one way or another, marshalling resources of growth, recovery and further differentiation. This proves applicable to many situations: a crisis in individual development or in the emergence of a new élite, in the therapy of an individual or in the tensions of rapid historical change. (Erikson 1968, 16)

Pannekoek sees Corbett's struggle for Crown Colony status as the turning point, or "crisis point," for the English-speaking mixed-bloods and the Métis. This crisis divided mixed-bloods into two halves. This is not to denigrate the importance of the Riel Rebellion of 1869, but to explain why there was not a united effort by people of mixed-blood ancestry, and why the post-1869 Métis identity tended to exclude those of English-speaking, Protestant ancestry. Pannekoek sees the Riel Rebellion as a manifestation of the identity decisions that had already been made during the Corbett affair. For many English-speaking people, this crisis determined their future identity.

Most Canadian historians argue instead that the Riel Rebellion of 1869 was the critical turning point. These historians do not use the concept of a psychological identity crisis, and most do not accept that there was an identity crisis at all. Spry, for example, argues that the mixed-bloods were united by concerns of class and by a common racist oppression by Euro-Canadians. Not without evidence, Spry is convinced that Canadian bigotry and economic issues (rather than cultural issues of identity) were the principal forces affecting change.

Irene Spry (1985)

Overview Questions

As you read the article by Spry, please consider the following questions.

1. What were the links between the Métis and the English-speaking mixed-bloods in Red River before 1870?
2. What evidence does Spry use to refute Pannekoek's insistence on divisions between the French- and English-speaking mixed-bloods?

Reading Assignment

Irene M. Spry, "The Métis and Mixed-Bloods of Rupert's Land before 1870." In *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, edited by Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, pp. 95-118. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985.

Note-Taking Questions

While reading the article by Spry, jot down brief answers to the following note-taking questions.

1. Which of Pannekoek's sources does Spry find reliable and which does she find unreliable?
2. What aspects of the language of the Métis and half-breeds support Spry's argument?
3. How significant was intermarriage between Métis and other mixed-blood peoples? How important is intermarriage to Spry's argument that there were minimal tensions between the two mixed-blood groups?
4. If Spry does not accept divisions between the two mixed-blood groups, what divisions does she accept?

Commentary

Irene Spry contends that Western Canada "was born of conflict," not between Métis and English-speaking mixed-bloods, but between a people who led a wandering free life in harmony with nature, on one hand, and landed property and wealth, on the other. Spry sees the Métis as a classless and free society working in complete harmony with nature. As you will see from the work by Gerhard Ens (1988) and John Foster (1992) on the

Métis economy in Unit 3, the situation is more complex than Spry might admit. Ens and Foster argue that as early as 1850 the Métis had become commodity manufacturers, particularly of buffalo robes, for eastern capitalist markets. Both Ens and Foster argue that the Métis were divided into a merchant class and a buffalo-hunting class. The Métis worked almost entirely on the production of Plains hides for an Eastern market. In return, the Métis were paid in Eastern manufactured goods, which they had almost completely grown to rely upon.

An important question that any reader of Spry's article should consider is: Has Spry fallen into a more modern version of the "civilization/savagism" trap discussed in Unit 1? (You might want to refresh your understanding of this concept by referring to Unit 1.) After all, Spry considers the Métis unable to adjust to the new economic realities of the prairie West. In Unit 3, when reading Diane Payment (1990), keep Spry's interpretation in mind. Payment argues that the Métis of Batoche accommodated themselves reasonably well to the agricultural West.

Before Moving On . . .

Please be sure that you have answered, in point form or in essay form, the overview questions that appeared in this section.

Assignment for Credit

You do not need to complete an assignment for credit at this time. When you have completed Unit 2, please proceed immediately to Unit 3. The essay assignment at the end of Unit 3 will be sufficiently broad to include the material covered in both Unit 2 and Unit 3.

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- Dick, Lyle. "The Seven Oaks Incident and the Construction of a Historical Tradition, 1816 to 1870." In *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* (new series) 2 (1992): 91-112.
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Supplementary Materials List

You will find an exhaustive bibliographic essay in *A Snug Little Flock*. Recent work done by the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research will be of particular interest to those students who intend to become teachers and are looking for Métis classroom materials. Established in May 1980, the Institute's goal is to promote Métis culture through research and educational resource development.

Some recent writings are worth noting. If you find it necessary to place Métis history within the context of Canadian history, you will find Alvin Finkel, Cornelius Jaenen, Margaret Conrad and Veronica Strong-Boag's *History of the Canadian People* particularly up to date. If you want to place the history of the Métis of Red River within the context of Canadian Aboriginal history, you will want to consult Olive Dickason's *Canada's First Nations*. If you are interested in Red River Métis women and in the origins of Métis family structure, you will find insights in Sylvia Van Kirk's *Many Tender Ties* and Jennifer S. H. Brown's *Strangers in Blood*, although these works focus more on women and the family than on the mixed-blood experience.

There are several general histories of the pre-1870 West that you might wish to consult if you require greater detail around any particular event. A. S. Morton's monumental *A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71* has still not been surpassed. Peter C. Newman's *Caesars of the Wilderness* will, however, be a more enjoyable and readable, if less authoritative, source.

With regard to the Seven Oaks Incident, you will find useful critical guidance to other readings in Lyle Dick's article, "The Seven Oaks Incident and the Construction of a Historical Tradition, 1816 to 1870."

Brown, Jennifer S. H. *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in the Indian Country*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980.

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Unit 3

The Métis Diaspora, 1870-1890

Learning Objectives

When you have completed Unit 3, you should be able to achieve the following learning objectives.

1. Discuss the debate regarding the reasons for the migrations from Red River into the interior.
2. Analyse the causes of the second Riel Rebellion in 1885.
3. Analyse the long-term impact of the Riel Rebellions.

Chronology for Unit 3

- 1845 Louis Riel is born and is baptized at St. Boniface.
- 1858 Louis Riel goes to college in Montreal.
- 1860 Abraham Lincoln becomes President of the United States of America.
- 1868 Louis Riel returns to Red River.
- 1869 Suez Canal opens. First Riel Rebellion.
- 1870 Bismarck becomes Germany's first chancellor.
- 1870 The Buffalo Lake Settlement is founded.
- 1871 Treaty No. 1 is signed with the Saulteaux and Swampy Cree at Lower Fort Garry.
- 1873 The North-West Mounted Police are established.
- 1876 Canadian Indian Act is proclaimed, setting the pattern for the next one hundred years.
- 1879 Louis Riel joins a group of Métis in Montana.
- 1884 Riel is invited to Batoche to lead the discontent there.
- 1885 Second Riel Rebellion. Louis Riel is hanged.

Section 3.1

Growth of Métis Communities

Even before the Riel Rebellion of 1869, there were significant mixed-blood communities, each numbering several hundred, in the Western Canadian interior. Some were the result of migrations from Red River. Not all of these migrations had been politically motivated, however. For example, the grasshopper plagues of the 1860s drove the first Métis to St. Laurent on Lake Manitoba, others to the White Mud River valley, and yet others to the mouth of the Winnipeg River.

Equally important in establishing the interior Métis villages were the Freeman, or Western Métis. In 1821, the union of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company had thrown hundreds of mixed-blood employees out of work. Rather than go to Red River, many Métis chose to remain in the interior where they hunted or freighted for the Hudson's Bay Company. The Métis tended to settle on transportation routes with reliable food supplies. Rudimentary and spontaneous settlements of scattered cabins occurred at Cold Lake, Lesser Slave Lake, Lac La Biche, Beaver River, Hay Lake, Egg Lake, and at various locations on the Saskatchewan plains, particularly where trails crossed the major rivers. Common names for these settlements were Bellecourt, Gladu, and Hirondelle.

In the 1860s, some of these settlements attracted missionaries and experienced increased stability and growth. In 1865, Lac Ste. Anne was founded and, in 1866, St. Albert. Initially, none of these settlements had ties with Red River but, after the exodus following the Riel Rebellion of 1869, almost all of them attracted refugees from Red River. As missionaries and merchants came to the settlements, a new growth and stability emerged. By 1870, St. Albert and Lac Ste. Anne each had populations of about 700.

Most of these villages started out as wintering villages. This is certainly true for St. Laurent de Grandin (1870), Duck Lake (1870), and Batoche (1880). Buffalo Lake is a particularly well documented early wintering settlement located near present-day Stettler, Alberta. Founded in 1872 and lasting for approximately five years, Buffalo Lake was a hunting outpost for St. Albert and Lac La Biche. John Foster's analysis (1992) of Buffalo Lake's history reveals much about the social and economic history of all wintering settlements.

Hivernement (wintering) and *hivernant* (winterer) were terms originating with the first fur traders to stay the winter in the North-west. As time went on, *hivernants* grew to mean men who were independent of the Hudson's Bay Company, and who could survive on their own on the plains. The terms implied the ultimate in status for the Western Métis. While *hivernement* communities can be traced back to the 1840s, they reached their greatest number in the 1870s.

According to John Foster (1992), who has spent much of his life studying these settlements, particularly Buffalo Lake, such settlements flourished with the buffalo robe trade. Before 1850, buffalo robes were a little-valued by-product of the fur trade. Then markets began to develop both in eastern Canada and in the north-eastern United States. Although summer and calf robes had some value, the best robes could only be taken between mid-November and mid-March. The entire community needed to make an effort to procure enough robes to meet its needs. Between 1873 and 1878, when most *hivernement* settlements were created in Western Canada, buffalo robe prices were extremely high and a period of growth and wealth followed for these communities. It is now believed that the increase in the number of Métis wintering settlements in the 1870s was due to the economics of the buffalo robe trade, not to migrations from Red River. While some of these communities were temporary, others became the home for missionaries and for Métis merchants, such as Xavier Letendre dit Batoche, who initially profited from the trade. When the robe trade collapsed in the late 1870s, some larger settlements became more permanent. This phenomenon is still not well understood, although both Foster (1992) and Ens (1988) are convincing on this subject. Foster argues in his article that there is a strong interior Métis tradition that is distinct from that of the Red River Métis. Foster examines this tradition's economic base, the buffalo robe trade, and determines that it was this trade, not the economics and politics of Red River, that shaped the Métis communities of the interior.

Gerhard Ens (1988), a student of Foster's, points out that while there may have been a separate interior Métis tradition, many Métis of the South Saskatchewan came from Red River. Furthermore, many of these interior Métis had begun to move west well before the Riel Rebellion of 1869. These Métis were, however, not *pushed* out of Red River as Diane Payment (1990) believes, rather they were *pulled* into the Saskatchewan country by the buffalo robe trade.

Although these communities are significant in the new historical writings, they have not yet been subjected to the same scrutiny as the 1870s exodus from Red River or the events of 1885. Diane Payment's (1990) exhaustive study of Batoche, which was the focal point of the 1885 Rebellion, argues that the Métis moved westward not to escape civilization or to profit from the buffalo trade, but to escape the bigotry of the new Canadian immigrants. These Métis did not re-create a nomadic existence in the interior. Instead, they adapted well to the new economic realities and became farmers, merchants, and hunters, all with considerable success. Even after the Rebellion of 1885, the Métis continued to flourish up to 1920. Only then did real disillusionment set in.

Note that Gerhard Ens (1988) refers to historians you have not yet studied. In particular, he mentions Thomas Flanagan and Doug Sprague, both of whom have been mentioned in Unit 1. Sprague has worked for the Manitoba Métis Federation to develop their land claims, while Flanagan has worked for the federal Department of Justice. Sprague's and Flanagan's work will be dealt with more closely in Unit 4.

Be aware, however, that Sprague argues that the Métis of Red River were purposely dispossessed of their land rights and were forced by the bigotry and injustices of the Canadian settlers to move into the interior. In other words, the Métis were economic and political refugees. Although many historians are suspicious of Sprague's conspiracy theory, others are much more sympathetic to his perspective.

Flanagan, on the other hand, argues that the Métis made sensible economic decisions based on clear lifestyle and economic choices. Although the federal government may have been slow in securing the Métis their land titles, it acted in good faith. Flanagan has precipitated a great deal of debate and some historians, such as Diane Payment (1990), strongly disagree with his views.

Section 3.2

Historical Readings

Diane Payment (1990)

Overview Questions

As you read the book by Payment, please consider the following questions.

1. What was the state of Batoche on the eve of the second Riel Rebellion?
2. What was the impact of the second Riel Rebellion on Batoche? What was its impact on the interior Métis settlements?
3. How typical was the Batoche experience throughout Western Canada?

Reading Assignment

Diane Payment. *"The Free People—Otipemisiwak" Batoche, Saskatchewan 1870-1930*. Ottawa: National Historic Parks and Sites, 1990.

Note-Taking Questions

While reading the book by Payment, jot down brief answers to the following note-taking questions.

Chapter 1

1. What characteristics determined the position of individuals in the newly forming social order of Batoche and vicinity? How was Métis social stratification different from Euro-Canadian social stratification?
2. What was the role of the family in early Batoche? Outline the roles of individual family members.
3. Why did the recognizable English-speaking, mixed-blood population fade away?
4. How did "a network of very close relationships throughout the area" develop?
5. What were important staples in the diets of the Batoche Métis? How did their Native and French-Canadian heritages affect their diets?

6. Why was the French language slowly eroded in the Batoche area?
7. What is Payment's explanation for alcoholism among the Métis? What views of the Métis and Europeans are reflected by her argument?
8. Describe the relations between Métis and Natives.
9. Describe the relations between Métis and French-Canadians.

Chapter 2

10. What problems existed between missionaries and the Métis?
11. Why were the missionaries anxious to establish settlements?
12. Why did the clergy object to the Métis hunt and "trip"? Were their objections valid?
13. Why were the Métis not enthusiastic when the clergy attempted to establish schools?
14. How did Father Vegreville interpret Riel's plans?
15. How did the return of Riel affect relations between the Métis and the clergy?
16. To what did the clergy attribute Métis involvement in crime and alcohol?

Chapter 3

17. Why did some Métis move to the South Saskatchewan River area after 1869?
18. Why did the St. Laurent council lose its power?
19. Why was direct intervention in favour of the Métis in the Territories difficult? How did this affect representation for the South Saskatchewan Métis?
20. Why did the Métis have to petition the Canadian government? How did they cope with the government's failure to act?
21. How did the fall of Batoche affect the Métis cause?
22. Which political party did most Métis favour before the events of 1885? Which party after 1885? Why the switch?
23. Compare the Liberal and Conservative petitions in terms of signatures, resolutions, political point of view, and government response.

24. After two controversial elections, the Métis lost much of their power. What caused this loss of power?

Chapter 4

25. Why did the Métis adopt farming as a way of life by the 1880s?
26. What was the role of freighting at Batoche?
27. In what ways did Xavier Letendre dit Batoche and other merchants contradict the stereotypical white view of the Métis?
28. Why was the flourishing Batoche economy ruined by the turn of the century?

Commentary

You will have noticed that the second Riel Rebellion (1885) is not highlighted as part of this unit. While it is a critical juncture in the history of Canada and, more particularly, in the history of the Métis, the events of the Rebellion are not as important as the consequences. Nevertheless, it is useful to put the article by Payment in the historiographical context of the second Riel Rebellion.

Payment argues that despite the general devastation following the second Riel Rebellion, the Métis did not flee Batoche as a group. Rather, Payment argues that the period from 1885 to 1925 was one of continuing resistance and persistent adaptation to change. Settlement was consolidated, and although the traditional activities of freighting and trading decreased, the Métis had adapted to the new market-driven agricultural economy. Payment acknowledges that the transition was all too rapid, that some Métis did not succeed, and that racism of the Euro-Canadian majority worsened an already difficult situation. She admits that although the merchant class of the Métis was interested in assimilating into the Euro-Canadian mainstream, the more militant nationalists continued to resist. Payment also acknowledges that the second Riel Rebellion and the assimilationist tendencies of the clergy separated them from the Métis, but that there were critical exceptions.

Note that Payment's interpretation differs considerably from those of earlier historians. To George F. G. Stanley, in *The Birth of Western Canada* (1936), the consequences of the second Riel Rebellion were obvious. The life of the Métis people was over.

Louis Riel staked the peace of the country and the fate of his people in a gamble that held no chance of success. The métis were not only defeated; as a distinct national and political group they were annihilated. With their homes burned and looted and their property destroyed, many of the métis had no option but to seek entrance into the Indian treaties by virtue of their Indian bloods. Others migrated to the Peace River in order to escape the pressure of a merciless civilization. Those who did not join the rebels were granted the scrip

and patents which they had demanded—a procedure which admitted the justice of the métis cause and the culpability of the Federal Government for the rebellion. But as had occurred in Manitoba, the métis disposed of their scrip to eager purchasers, often at ridiculous prices, content to live for the present at the sacrifice of the future; and unable to compete with the white man as farmers or artisans, they sank in the social scale, their life, society and national spirit crushed and destroyed. (Stanley 1936, 378)

Stanley then sees 1885 as ending the Métis as a nation. The remainder of his book deals with the politics of Quebec and Ontario, not Western Canada. The Métis disappear from the pages of history.

George Woodcock (1976), Canada's foremost man of letters, and the biographer of Gabriel Dumont, Riel's general in 1885, saw the second Riel Rebellion as ending an anarchic freedom of the Plains, an anarchy he much admired. (You will recall that a brief description of Woodcock's theories appeared in Unit 1.)

The Métis cause as it existed on the prairie since the early days of the century had come to an actual as well as a symbolic end—no followers were left to be led and the illusion of a Métis nation could no longer be sustained.

If it had been possible up to 1885 to think of the Métis as a new nation, this was so no longer; at most they showed an obstinate and unreasoning resistance to assimilation. But if they remained a separate people, their existence was unnoticed by others, for they did not even have the negative dignity of recognition as a separate people that the treaties had granted to the Indians. They had become a people without standing in the new world of the future, and without rights in the old world of the past, and the best they could hope to retain was the individual dignity that Gabriel Dumont never lost. (Woodcock 1976, 249)

Woodcock then, for the most part, seconds Stanley's interpretation. Gerald Friesen, in his widely read and accepted *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (1984), attempts a compromise. Friesen argues that a major theme running through the history of the West was its adaptation to a market economy. Much like Payment (1990), Friesen maintains that the Métis did persist and adapt. After the 1885 Riel Rebellion, the Métis re-established themselves on their plots and, to some degree, proved successful in the political and social life of the territory. In particular, Métis merchants had managed to negotiate the transition with some profit. Other Métis faced the serious economic loss of the old jobs associated with the fur trade, but they adapted by migrating to the northern Métis villages of Saskatchewan and Alberta.

However, Friesen also accepts both Woodcock's and Stanley's views that after 1885 Riel's dreams of a sovereign Métis nation ended. A territorial Métis empire of the northwest died with Batoche. Even so, no historians have yet assessed 1885 as a critical event that reaffirmed the Métis national identity as an Aboriginal people. It can be argued that 1885 was as important as the Seven Oaks Incident or the 1869 Riel Rebellion.

The next assigned reading, by John Foster, emphasizes the notion of a separate Métis culture in the Western Canadian interior that was, to some degree, separate from the culture at Red River. Knowledge of the interior settlements is sparse, and Foster has done much to provide helpful insights.

John Foster (1992)

Overview Questions

As you read the assigned article by Foster, please consider the following questions.

1. To what degree did the buffalo robe trade influence the Métis economy and culture?
2. How important was the buffalo robe trade in encouraging the westward migration of the Métis? Compare the experience of Buffalo Lake and Batoche.

Reading Assignment

"The Métis and the End of the Plains Buffalo in Alberta," by John E. Foster, in the *Reading File*.

Note-Taking Questions

While reading the article by Foster, jot down brief answers to the following note-taking questions.

1. To what degree were "white men" rather than Natives responsible for the extermination of the buffalo?
2. What is the difference between "cultural continuity" and "cultural change," as explained by Foster?
3. Why have historians ignored the buffalo robe trade?
4. How critical were the buffalo to the identity and existence of the *gens libres*?
5. What roles did the Blackfoot, the Hudson's Bay Company, and the railways have in the buffalo and buffalo robe trade?
6. What was the role of St. Albert in the buffalo robe trade?
7. How important was kinship in forming the Buffalo Lake settlement?

8. How did the Métis robe traders and consumers adapt to falling prices and to the extermination of the buffalo?

Commentary

It is critical to note several points in Foster's interpretation. First, he argues that the Métis did not behave in the way that so many historians have assumed. Foster attempts to prove that the Métis adapted readily to market forces and did not continue in hunting for basic sustenance. Not only did the Métis react directly to the buffalo robe markets of the Eastern seaboard, they also reacted to the prices of consumer goods. Foster sees the Métis as highly specialized producers in a market economy that was subject to violent fluctuations in the price of staples, in this case, buffalo robes. When robe prices declined, for example, the Métis hunted more to obtain the consumer goods they desired.

Foster's interpretation will likely cause controversy in the near future with the growing interest in the history of humankind's interaction with the environment. He presents a strong case, suggesting that the Métis were partly responsible for the disappearance of the buffalo. In Foster's view, the Métis were very early brought into the economy of North America, and were never completely isolated from the demands of the metropolitan areas.

Ens is also concerned with the buffalo trade. Most importantly, Ens is concerned with whether the trade acted as a "pull" to encourage Métis to move to the Plains. His article, which is the next assigned reading, sets the context for the debate on land claims, which is the crux of Unit 5.

Gerhard Ens (1988)

Overview Questions

As you read the article by Ens, please keep in mind the following overview questions.

1. What "pull factors" and "push factors" caused the Métis to migrate into the Western Canadian interior from Red River?
2. Were the "pull factors" or the "push factors" more important?

Reading Assignment

"Dispossession or Adaptation? Migration and Persistence of the Red River Métis, 1835-1890," by Gerhard Ens, in the *Reading File*.

Note-Taking Questions

While reading the article by Ens, jot down brief answers to the following note-taking questions.

1. How does Ens deal with Stanley's frontier interpretation?
2. How important were the capitalist changes to the Métis economy in the 1850s? What were these changes?
3. What were the three pillars of the Métis economy before 1849? Why would Ens call Red River's economy a "peasant agriculture"?
4. What changes after 1849 caused the Red River Métis to migrate into the interior?
5. According to Ens, why is the buffalo robe trade a "capitalist" intrusion?
6. Ens uses statistics to support his case of a declining Métis interest in agriculture. Are these numbers convincing?
7. Why did the English- and French-speaking Métis migrate at varying rates from Red River between 1870 and 1881?
8. Ens also argues that class was a major factor in determining migration. Was the merchant class more or less likely to migrate? What about the buffalo robe hunters?

Commentary

Although the Ens article is difficult to read because of its overuse of statistics, it is the basis for much new historiography, or historical reinterpretation. Ens takes issue with Doug Sprague, who you will read in Unit 5. He also differs significantly from Payment, Pannekoek, and Foster.

Pannekoek has argued in this unit that there were serious divisions between the English- and French-speaking mixed-bloods, and that these divisions were exacerbated over time by the churches and by the introduction of white women. These divisions were eventually resolved when English-speaking mixed-bloods began to identify with the new Canadian élite. To Ens, the decision by English-speaking mixed-bloods to stay in Red River rather than migrate into the interior (to places like Batoche) was largely economic, not cultural. They had determined their future to be in agriculture, not in the buffalo robe trade.

Ens also differs from Payment. While Ens and Payment both agree that the Red River Métis migrated to Batoche in large numbers from 1870 to 1882, Payment argues that the Métis largely saw farming as a viable, though difficult, future. Even in the early period, farming was complementary to

hunting, trading, and freighting. To Payment, the 1870s were transitional years from trading to agriculture. For Ens, the 1870s were years of escape from agriculture to the more profitable robe trade. Yet Payment proves that agriculture and commerce were the core of the Batoche economy. Payment's evidence seems to refute that of Ens. Many Métis were not migrating to participate in the robe trade, but to continue their agricultural and commercial pursuits. Why then did the Métis move? Interpretations have swung full circle. Perhaps the theories of racial and cultural persecution that such historians as George F. G. Stanley offered in the past are worth another look today.

Ens's greatest disagreement, however, is with Doug Sprague. Sprague presents a convincing case that the Métis migrated to the interior because they were purposely dispossessed of their land in Manitoba, and because of the overt racism of the new settlers. The debate is a heated one that involves Thomas Flanagan, who maintains that the Métis migrated into the interior, possibly because of problems in settling land claims, but most probably because of "pull" factors.

What is equally interesting about Ens is that he is a "quantifier," or demographic historian. Demographers believe that a careful statistical analysis of records such as birth registers, death registers, baptismal records, and census data will reveal a great deal about changing family structures through time, and about the impact of changing economies on family structures. Demographers often use complex statistical analysis of variance, which, if used correctly, can determine which factor was most important in, for example, changing family patterns.

Obviously, a historian must use statistics wisely to reach credible conclusions. In *A Snug Little Flock*, Pannekoek devotes an entire chapter to Red River demographic reconstruction. Sprague and Ens also use statistical methodologies. Foster and Payment eschew these techniques for more traditional analysis. What new insights does statistical history offer? What are the shortcomings of this kind of history?

Before Moving On . . .

Please be sure that you have answered, in point form or in essay form, the overview questions that appeared in this section.

Assignment for Credit

You are now ready to do Assignment 2, which will cover both Unit 2 and Unit 3. Please review Unit 2 briefly, and then turn to the *Student Manual* for detailed instructions on completing Assignment 2.

References

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- Payment, Diane. "The Free People—Otipemisiwak" *Batoche, Saskatchewan 1870-1930*. Ottawa: National Historic Parks and Sites, 1990.
- Stanley, George F. G. *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970. Originally published in 1936.
- Woodcock, George. *Gabriel Dumont*. Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1976.

Supplementary Materials List

While you are not required to do further reading in Unit 3, you may wish to note the following recent books, particularly on the events of 1885, which continue to fascinate historians of the Métis and Canada.

Thomas Flanagan's *Louis "David" Riel: Prophet of the New World* is one of the better recent biographies of Riel, although George F. G. Stanley's *Louis Riel* remains the standard against which all other writings are evaluated. The edited work by George F. G. Stanley, *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel*, is indispensable in any work on Riel and has become the touchstone for all new writing. It also contains an exhaustive bibliography of Riel materials.

Surprisingly, Stanley's *The Birth of Western Canada*, despite its defects and ethnocentrism, remains a standard work on both Riel Rebellions, 1869 and 1885. Joseph Kinsey Howard's *Strange Empire* and George Woodcock's *Gabriel Dumont* are well researched, more readable, and more sympathetic accounts.

F. Laurie Barron and James B. Waldram's *1885 and After: Native Society in Transition* is the best recent collection of essays on both Métis and Native involvement in 1885. It is a particularly good summary in that it includes most of those involved in the debates surrounding the character of 1885.

There is an increasing interest in the genealogy of the Métis people. The best introduction is Doug Sprague and R. P. Frye's edited work, *The Genealogy of the First Métis Nation*.

Barron, F. Laurie, and James B. Waldram. *1885 and After: Native Society in Transition*. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1986.

Flanagan, Thomas. *Louis "David" Riel: Prophet of the New World*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979.

Howard, Joseph Kinsey. *Strange Empire*. Toronto: Swan Publishing, 1964.

Sprague, Doug, and R. P. Frye, eds. *The Genealogy of the First Métis Nation: The Development and Dispersal of the Red River Settlement 1820-1900*. Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1983.

Stanley, George F. G. *The Birth of Western Canada*. 2d ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966.

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Stanley, George F. G., ed. *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel*. 5 vols.
Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985.

Woodcock, George. *Gabriel Dumont*. Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1976.

Unit 4

The Re-Emergence of the Métis, 1890-1950

Learning Objectives

When you have completed Unit 4, you should be able to achieve the following learning objectives.

1. Discuss the legal process that led to the marginalization of the Métis in Western Canada.
2. Discuss the events that led to the formation of the Ewing Commission and, ultimately, to establishing the Alberta Métis colonies.
3. Evaluate the contributions of Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris to the resurrection of Métis nationalism in Western Canada.

Chronology for Unit 4

- 1880 The last of the great herds of buffalo.
- 1896 The founding of St. Paul de Métis.
- 1897 Clifford Sifton becomes Minister of the Interior and the settlement boom begins.
- 1906 Edmonton has a population of 11,000.
- 1909 The collapse of St. Paul de Métis.
- 1919 Winnipeg General Strike.
- 1930 The first meeting of the Alberta Métis Federation.
- 1932 CCF hold their first meeting in Calgary.
- 1932 The Métis Association of Alberta (l'Association des Métis d'Alberta et les territoires du Nord-Ouest) is formally established.
- 1934 The Ewing Commission is established.
- 1935 Social Credit Government is elected in Alberta.
- 1938 The Métis Betterment Act is passed.
- 1944 The CCF form the government of Saskatchewan.

Section 4.1

Marginalization of the Métis

Early Part of the Twentieth Century

The situation of the Métis in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta deteriorated severely in the decades following 1900. As the West opened to European, Canadian, and American homesteaders, the mixed bloods were increasingly marginalized. Some Métis made the transition to the new life, but most of the over 25,000 Métis in the Canadian West and North did not. A successful homestead required several hundred dollars in capital, which most Métis did not have. Prejudice also weighed heavily, particularly on those who refused to accept European ways. Many Métis began to build separate lives, and, as a more traditional lifestyle could be had further north, some moved into the Peace River and Mackenzie regions, while others moved into northern Manitoba where they were free to continue fishing, hunting, and trapping. Others drifted to Montana to join their relatives who had migrated there earlier in the nineteenth century. In Montana, Métis became the landless Indians, the *bonjour* from Lac La Biche, or the Rocky Boy Indians. Initially denied Native status, the Rocky Boy Indians eventually demanded and received a marginal reservation in northern Montana.

The Métis who remained in or near the settlement belt experienced poverty and beggary. Many led a nomadic life that varied with the seasons. Some squatted on road allowances or vacant land and attempted to farm, but many freighted, hired out as farm hands to help with haying or harvest, or chopped fire wood for the winter. In the 1890s, newly passed hunting and fishing regulations made it difficult to hunt geese or partridges in the spring, or to fish in the winter.

Father Lacombe attempted to improve the situation of the Métis. In 1896 he founded a Métis colony at St. Paul de Métis, on land provided by the federal government. By 1908, more than fifty Métis families had found a refuge there. However, the Roman Catholic Church decided that the colony had failed, and opened it to French-Canadian settlement.

Nevertheless, many Métis who had moved to northern Alberta found a lifestyle that was compatible with their traditions and culture. What was central to this culture was the ability to *use* land, not necessarily to *own* land. In 1930, when all Crown lands not required by the federal government transferred to the provinces, Crown lands *used* by the Métis in northern Alberta, in particular, could be opened for settlement by the province. It was time to act. This event more than any other led to the formation of the Alberta Métis Association in 1932.

The Depression

On the eve of the Depression, the situation of the Métis was desperate. About half of Alberta's Métis population of 10,000 required some form of assistance. Some wandered aimlessly around the settlement belts and urban areas taking whatever seasonal work was available. Children had no schools, disease (particularly diphtheria and tuberculosis) was epidemic, and hunger was commonplace.

The plight of the Métis was serious enough to be of concern to the Alberta government and, in 1934, it commissioned Justice A. F. Ewing and two others to investigate. The result of the Commission and the following agitation was the 1938 Métis Betterment Act that established eight settlements in central and northern Alberta, comprising some 1.25 million acres (505,857 ha). These settlements, it could be argued, were the ultimate treatment for the "sturdy beggar." The Depression would see many solutions to poverty: a favourite was to encourage people to return to the land, where they would work for their own betterment and not be a charge to the government.

It is important to put the marginalization of the Métis into a wider context. The years from 1885 to the Depression saw the emergence of the West as we know it today. The southern Canadian Pacific Railway was completed in 1885, and it was soon followed in the north by the Canadian Northern Railway and the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. Towns such as Virden, Regina, Moose Jaw, Lethbridge, Calgary, Edmonton, and Saskatoon flourished in the wake of the railways. In 1871, the population of the Canadian West was 73,000, by 1900 it was 419,000, and by 1930 it exceeded 1.3 million. Although histories of the West emphasize agricultural settlement, in 1871, one per cent of the population was urban, increasing to 37 per cent in 1931. The benefits of these incredible decades of immigration were not the same for everyone. Native peoples did not participate in either rural or urban prosperity, even in the best years, but neither did the many Asian, American, British, Ontarian, or European immigrants.

The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF)

The politics and economics of Western Canada were strongly influenced by Eastern Canada and the mid-western United States. The frustration and powerlessness felt by quarter-section farmers and urban labourers was evident in the strong farm protest movements against Eastern domination and the strident anti-capitalist sentiments of the labour movement. While these frustrations manifested themselves in many forms, one of the most important was the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, which was first formed in Calgary in 1932 and which rose to power in Saskatchewan in 1944. An association of rural and urban socialists, the federation was intent on reforming the existing system to ensure greater equality and fairness. The federation's ideals were behind much of the thinking of Métis leaders, such as Malcom Norris. Even so, Jim Brady's radicalism went further than many "CCFers" found respectable. This attitude is apparent in Dobbin's

biography (1991) of Norris and Brady. Dobbin suggests that once the CCF achieved power in Saskatchewan in 1944, they did little to alleviate the extreme poverty of the Métis there. He argues that the CCF did not know how to include Métis aspirations for cultural independence within a socialist framework.

Section 5.2

Historical Readings

Mike Brogden (1991)

Overview Questions

As you read the article by Brogden, please consider the following questions.

1. How was the judicial system used to marginalize the Métis people in the period to 1885? —in the period following 1885?
2. What other factors in the history of the post-1885 Canadian West contributed to the marginalization of the Métis people?

Reading Assignment

Mike Brogden, "The Rise and Fall of the Western Métis in the Criminal Justice Process," in the *Reading File*.

Note-Taking Questions

While reading the article by Brogden, jot down brief answers to the following note-taking questions.

1. Brogden argues that his article has three objectives. What are they?
2. The Métis were considered economic criminals by the Hudson's Bay Company. How did the Company attempt to criminalize the Métis?
3. The Métis resisted the Hudson's Bay Company's attempt to criminalize them. How effective was their resistance?
4. How does Brogden's interpretation of the Sayer trial differ from that of Pannekoek in Unit 2?
5. Brogden argues that after 1869 the Western Métis established their own community laws. In what ways were these community laws at variance with Canadian law?
6. According to Brogden, how did the Canadian government reassert its dominance and criminalize Métis political forms? How valid do you

find Brogden's argument that there was a *Pax Métis* not a *Pax Mountie* from 1869 to 1885?

7. Brogden argues that the police used the vagrancy laws to marginalize the Métis as a class. How did they do this?
8. What are "sturdy beggars"?
9. How did the concept of the "sturdy beggar" and its associated racism reinforce authoritarian work structures?

Commentary

In her study of Batoche before 1920, Diane Payment (1990) paints a picture of a people who successfully came to grips with the new economic realities of the Western Canadian interior. Payment would not, however, deny the deplorable situation of the Western Métis in the Canadian interior. Mike Brogden (1991) offers a trenchant alternative argument, in which he presents considerable evidence in an attempt to prove that the Métis were purposely marginalized by the Euro-Canadian manipulation of the criminal justice system. "Criminality was a social artifact" used to marginalize and segregate the Métis who "hindered the thrust of eastern Canadian and European capitalism" (Brogden 1991, 39). Brogden divides Métis history into three periods: before 1869, from 1869 to 1885, and after 1885. He argues that in the first period the Hudson's Bay Company attempted to criminalize the ascendent Métis. The Métis, who felt they had the right to trade freely, were treated under the Company's monopoly as economic criminals. The Métis did not accept this treatment passively, and resisted. Brogden claims that from 1869 to 1885, particularly in the Western Plains, the Métis developed their own political system of community government. He argues that, with the defeat of Riel in 1885, the Canadian government deliberately used the justice system to criminalize Métis political structures and actions through "vagrancy" and "sturdy beggar" laws. The Métis became a marginalized class, kept in their place through the criminal justice system, and used as cheap labour in the new agriculture of the Canadian West.

As you read the article by Brogden, keep in mind the arguments made by Diane Payment in Unit 3. In contrast to Brogden, Payment points out that the Métis merchant class had some success under the Canadian legal and political system. Payment argues that upper-class Métis assimilated into Euro-Canadian culture, but that nationalist and lower-class Métis did not. Payment also argues that while Batoche had its problems, the community continued to exist with reasonable integrity until 1905. Payment maintains that crime was minimal. If there was any unusual crime, it was to be expected considering the social dislocations and disappointments of 1885. Payment does not question Canadian law, except its land statutes, and is prepared to accept Euro-Canadian concepts of criminality. Brogden does not accept Euro-Canadian legal concepts, but neither does he give Métis definitions. On the other hand, Payment deals with the role of the churches

in assimilation, while Brogen does not. What role do you think Brogen would argue the churches played in the criminalization of Métis?

Murray Dobbin (1991)

Brogen's argument provides a powerful background to Murray Dobbin's *The One-and-a-Half Men* (1991) that documents the hopelessness and despair of the Alberta and Saskatchewan Métis after 1885. Dobbin's analysis focuses almost entirely on issues of class and on the intersection of class and nationalism with Métis relations with the state.

Dobbin traces the careers of Malcom Norris (b. St. Albert 1900, d. 1967) and Jim Brady (b. 1908 Lac St. Vincent, d. 1967), two middle-class Métis from northern Alberta who were instrumental in organizing the Métis and bringing their concerns to the forefront. Throughout their lives, both Norris and Brady urged Métis communities to undertake their own economic development along co-operative lines and to minimize dependence on government. Their ideal was an empowered community that would determine its own economic and cultural future, collectively and co-operatively.

Dobbin argues that the works of Norris and Brady led to the resurrection of the Métis identity and to the creation of the first Métis homelands in northern Alberta and, later, northern Saskatchewan. Equally important, Dobbin argues convincingly that current-day political action and organization resulted from the work of Norris and Brady. The transfer of responsibility for Crown land and minerals to the Province of Alberta in 1930 caused great anxiety among Alberta's northern Métis. Many of those who had lived at St. Paul de Métis were now living on the edge of the forest reserves, and rumours held that these too would be opened to settlement. Working through their Member of Parliament and Member of the Legislative Assembly, the Métis managed to have their concerns heard by the provincial government; first by the United Farmers of Alberta government, and then by the Social Credit government.

Overview Questions

As you read the article by Dobbin, please consider the following questions.

1. How did Norris and Brady differ in their solutions to Métis marginalization?
2. Why were Norris and Brady able to rekindle Métis nationalism?

Reading Assignment

Murray Dobbin. *The One-and-a-Half Men: The Story of Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris, Métis Patriots of the Twentieth Century*. Vancouver: New Star books, 1981. Reprinted by the Gabriel Dumont Institute, Regina, 1991.

Note-Taking Questions

While reading the book by Dobbin, jot down brief answers to the following note-taking questions.

Part I: The Early Years, 1900-1932

1. What experiences shaped Malcolm Norris's ideas and convictions? How did he reconcile the Euro-Canadian and Métis traditions in his environment?
2. What experiences led to Jim Brady's involvement in socialism? What aspects of being Métis helped form his socialist ideas?

Part II: The Alberta Struggle, 1932-1943

3. What was the class structure of the north-central Albertan Métis community?
4. What prompted the Métis of northern Alberta to take action?
5. What was the Métis' first victory? What dangers were concealed within it?
6. What were the economic and social goals of the Métis constitution?
7. What did Joe Dion, Jim Brady, Malcolm Norris, and Pete Tomkins each contribute to the leadership of the Métis Association of Alberta?
8. Compare nineteenth- and twentieth-century expressions of Métis nationalism.
9. After the first signs of willingness from the government to confront the Métis issue, what were the three tasks of the Métis Association of Alberta? What obstacles were there to undertaking these tasks?
10. Why, contrary to Norris's impression, was the government delaying action? What other problem arose for the first time in the last weeks of 1933?
11. What was the condition of the Métis Association of Alberta in late 1934?

12. Why was it difficult to convince the Ewing Commission of the reality of the Métis situation?
13. How did the Ewing Commission treat the Métis Association of Alberta? How did this treatment compare with past government attitudes toward the Métis?
14. What did the Ewing Commission report recommend? Were these the recommendations that the Métis Association of Alberta had hoped for? What were the shortcomings of the report?
15. Why did Norris and Brady "throw up the sponge"?
16. What were the conditions of the 1938 land grant to the Métis?
17. How had the Métis Association of Alberta changed? How did Norris and Brady fit in after being away for several years?
18. What roles did Brady see for co-operatives in Métis development?
19. How did Brady respond to the clergy's interference in the colonies? What other problems in the colonies led to the Association's demise?

Part III: The War Years, 1943-1947

20. How did Brady's concern for the Métis show itself while he was serving in World War II?
21. Why did the Native people of Alberta accept Norris, a Métis, as an organizer? Why do you think Norris left the Indian Association of Alberta?

Part IV: The Saskatchewan Struggle, 1947-1967

22. How were the post-World War II Saskatchewan Métis different from the Alberta Métis with whom Brady and Norris had worked? What problems eventually led Brady and Norris to quit their organizational efforts?
23. Why did the CCF fail in the social development of Native and Métis people in the 1950s? How did this failure compare with the failures of past governments?
24. What impact did the Native-Métis/CCF relations have on the political situation?
25. Norris did not support social democracy. Why, then, did he support the CCF?
26. Why did Brady refuse Dion's request to help organize another Alberta association in 1952?

27. What is Dobbin's view of the role of the churches and the Hudson's Bay Company in the history of Métis empowerment in northern Saskatchewan?
28. What role did the provincial bureaucracy play in the problems of the northern Saskatchewan Métis? Does Dobbin provide ample evidence for his allegations?
29. Why, in the end, did both Norris and Brady fail to precipitate grassroots political action in northern Saskatchewan?
30. How were the 1937-1947 and 1964 Métis political situations different?

Commentary

Dobbin's account is the best sustained work on twentieth-century Métis leaders. Dobbin, himself a socialist, is a keen observer of the inequities of the capitalist system and the lives of its marginalized people. Of particular importance in understanding Brady and Norris are Dobbin's observations about the relationship of race and class. Dobbin argues convincingly that race and class were central issues for both Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris.

In a socialist analysis of the past, history is assumed to be a struggle between groups that are united by economic interests—particularly capitalists and labour. To some socialist historians, it seems obvious that the impoverished and exploited Métis should therefore be united with their equally exploited Euro-Canadian brothers and sisters. Issues of race have no acceptable place in their world. Dobbin argues repeatedly that both Norris and Brady were caught in the contradiction of being Métis and being socialists. In the end, nationalism and culture were the main unifying issues for the Métis, not class.

To many Euro-Canadians of the 1920s and 1930s, race and class were synonymous. The Ewing Commission made that view quite apparent. Justice Ewing believed that urban Métis who had economically assimilated into the Euro-Canadian culture were *not* Métis. A Métis who occupied "a responsible position" was *not* a Métis. A Métis lived on the margin of society. For the Ewing Commission, then, most Métis of Red River ancestry were not "real" Métis. Most of the poorest people were former treaty Indians who had left the reserve, or were mixed bloods excluded from treaty. This analysis raises the question of whether the Ewing Commission would have considered Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris to be Métis.

Another major theme of Dobbin, and of Brady and Norris as well, is the colonialism of the Alberta and even the Saskatchewan CCF governments' policies. "Colonialism" has various meanings in the social sciences. To understand the meaning of colonialism, you also need to understand the associated word, "imperialism." Edward W. Said, a professor at Columbia University and the author of *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) offers a reasonable definition:

"Imperialism" means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory; "colonialism," which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory. . . .

Neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people *require* and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination. (Said 1993, 9)

Above all, colonization is economic and political exploitation. Through power relationships, a dominant group from the metropolis determines the economic and political structures of the colonized indigenous peoples. An excellent book about colonialism is Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1965). Although Memmi deals with Algeria, his book made a great impact throughout the Western world when it was first published. In fact, Memmi's book even offers insights into colonialism in Canada, particularly the relationship between the "colonizer" (the Euro-Canadian bureaucrats, clergy, and merchants) and the "colonized" (the Métis). No doubt it found its way into Jim Brady's library. Memmi points out the inevitable destructive relationship between the privileged colonizer and the oppressed and exploited colonized. Jean-Paul Sartre, in his introduction to the 1965 edition, makes the following trenchant observations:

Colonialism denies human rights to human beings whom it has subdued by violence, and keeps them by force in a state of misery and ignorance . . . a subhuman condition. Racism is ingrained in actions, institutions, and in the nature of the colonialist methods of production and exchange. Political and social regulations reinforce one another. Since the native is subhuman . . . he has no rights, he is abandoned without protection to inhuman forces—brought in with the colonialist praxis, engendered every moment by the colonialist apparatus, and sustained by relations of production that define two sorts of individuals—one for whom privilege and humanity are one, who becomes a human being through exercising his rights; and the other, for whom a denial of rights sanctions misery, chronic hunger, ignorance, or, in general, "subhumanity." (Sartre, as quoted in Memmi 1965, xxiv)

These powerful words were accepted within the rhetoric of the colonized, and are still in use today.

Malcolm Norris was employed by the Saskatchewan government to work among the Métis communities in northern Saskatchewan. Dobbin's book (1991) suggests that Norris became an instrument of government policy. By accepting employment as the principal agent of the Saskatchewan government, did Norris become one of the colonizers? Dobbin suggests that the split between Brady and Norris may have been over this point. Note Brady's insistence on independence from government. He saw himself as one of the colonized, not one of the colonizers.

Theories of colonization, which have only been briefly discussed here, lead Native leaders to certain conclusions. What conclusions did Brady and Norris reach? How did their conclusions differ? How would Brady and Norris have reacted to solutions of assimilation, self-government, or

isolationism? How would the CCF administration have reacted to these solutions? It is clear from Dobbin that both Norris and Brady were widely read and were familiar with theories of colonialism. Norris and Brady both had a desire to escape the racism and exploitation of colonialism, which is why neither saw reserves as locations where the Métis could be "trained" to European standards. Instead, Norris and Brady saw the Métis land as a way for the Métis to form their own co-operative society, independent of the Euro-Canadian colonizers.

Biographical authors tend to take the side of their subjects. Most of these authors are uncritical, and Dobbin falls into this trap. Ask yourself whether Dobbin adequately explains, for example, why Brady and Norris abandoned the fledgling Métis Association of Alberta after 1938, or why Norris abandoned the Indian Association of Alberta. How does Dobbin account for the growing distance between Norris and Brady during their Saskatchewan years? Are Dobbin's answers adequate, and does he maintain a critical perspective?

Dobbin's interpretation of Brady and Norris as catalysts for the revived Métis nationalism of the twentieth century has gained momentum in recent years. Emma LaRocque recognizes both Brady and Norris as instrumental in her biographies in the *Canadian Encyclopedia* (1985). Mainstream historians have, however, been more conservative. Olive Dickason, in her *Canada's First Nations* (1992), devotes only four pages to the Alberta and Saskatchewan Métis in the early twentieth century. Brady and Norris are mentioned once and then only as radicals responsible for changing the structure and name of the Métis Association of Alberta in 1940. Dickason sees Joe Dion, the first president of the Alberta Métis Association, and a Treaty Indian of mixed-blood ancestry as the main Métis leader. The main reference book for Western Canadian history, Gerald Friesen's *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (1984) makes no mention of either Brady or Norris. This omission demonstrates the continued intellectual marginalization of the Métis people in Canadian historiography. To these historians, the Métis remain a nineteenth-century people with nineteenth-century heroes (i.e., Louis Riel). Yet there is little doubt that the works of Brady and Norris contributed greatly to the revival of Métis identity and nationalism.

Before Moving On . . .

Please be sure that you have answered, in point form or in essay form, the overview questions that appeared in this section.

Assignment for Credit

You do not need to complete an assignment for credit at this time. When you have completed Unit 4, please proceed immediately to Unit 5. The essay assignment at the end of Unit 5 will be sufficiently broad to include material covered in both Unit 4 and Unit 5.

References

- Brogden, Mike. "The Rise and Fall of the Western Métis in the Criminal Justice Process." In *The Struggle for Recognition: Canadian Justice and the Métis Nation*, edited by Samuel W. Corrigan and Lawrence J. Barkwell, pp. 39-61. Winnipeg: Pemmican publications, 1991.
- Dickason, Olive Patricia. *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992.
- Dobbin, Murray. *The One-and-a-Half Men: The Story of Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris, Métis Patriots of the Twentieth Century*. Vancouver: New Star books, 1981. Reprinted by the Gabriel Dumont Institute, Regina, 1991.
- Friesen, Gerald. *The Canadian Prairies: A History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984.
- LaRocque, Emma. Entries in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Edited by James H. Marsh. Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers.
- Memmi, Albert. *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. Translated by Howard Greenfield. Introduction by Jean-Paul Sartre. Boston: Beacon Press, 1965.
- Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1993.

Supplementary Materials List

There is not a great deal of supplementary reading on Métis history from 1885 to the Depression. A volume that deserves mention is A.-H. de Tremaudan's *History of the Métis Nation in Western Canada* (1936), which was translated in 1982 by Elizabeth Maguet as *Hold High Your Heads*. Tremaudan contains much of the material collected by the Union Nationale Métisse St.-Joseph de Manitoba, founded by Riel and his supporters to preserve the memory of 1869 and 1885. Tremaudan's highly charged history is evidence that, at least in Manitoba, Métis nationalism was very much alive in the 1930s.

Julia Harrison's *Métis People between Two Worlds* attempts a well-illustrated summary, but the book contains too many inaccuracies to be considered reliable. A detailed history of the Métis settlement at St. Paul in the old missionary style is E. O. Drouin's *Joyau Dans La Plaine*. Some of the best sources remain untapped—Métis elders. Both Diane Payment and Murray Dobbin have consulted elders and have as a consequence managed new and in-depth interpretations. Possibly one of the best books that reveals the soul of the Métis in the post-Depression period is Maria Campbell's *Half Breed*. A growing body of dissertation literature is emerging, particularly at the University of Alberta, and a wide variety of reports have been commissioned by the provincial Métis associations. Some of these reports will be mentioned in Unit 5. Joe Sawchuk, Patricia Sawchuk, and Theresa Ferguson's *Métis Land Rights in Alberta A Political History* remains among the best.

Campbell, Maria. *Half Breed*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973.

de Tremaudan, A.-H. *History of the Métis Nation in Western Canada*. 1936, translated in 1982 by Elizabeth Maguet as *Hold High Your Heads*. Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1982.

Drouin, E. O. *Joyau dans la plaine*. Edmonton: College Saint-Jean, 1964.

Harrison, Julia. *Métis People between Two Worlds*. Calgary: The Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1985.

The Métis Association of Alberta, and Joe Sawchuk, Patricia Sawchuk, and Theresa Ferguson. *Métis Land Rights in Alberta: A Political History*. Edmonton: The Métis Association of Alberta, 1981.

Unit 5

Land Claims

Learning Objectives

When you have completed Unit 5, you should be able to achieve the following learning objectives.

1. Detail the evolution of and differences between Métis and Indian rights and land claims.
2. Discuss the concept and history of scrip.
3. Analyse the debates between Thomas Flanagan and Doug Sprague on Métis land claims.

Chronology for Unit 5

- 1763 Royal Proclamation announces British control over the Indian Territory.
- 1870 Manitoba Act Sections 31-33 is passed.
- 1875 Adhesion of Métis to Treaty No. 3.
- 1876 Allocation of land grants to Métis begins under Section 31 of the Manitoba Act.
- 1879 Dominion Lands Act is first amended to provide scrip for the Métis in the North-West Territories.
- 1880 Final allotment of Section 31 lands made on 31 December.
- 1885 First scrip commission meets in the North-West Territories.
- 1888 St. Catharine's Milling Company decision is made by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.
- 1896 St. Paul de Métis is established and the Laurier government is elected.
- 1905 Alberta and Saskatchewan become provinces.
- 1908 St. Paul de Métis winds up.
- 1921 The last scrip commission hearings are held.
- 1934 Ewing Commission is appointed.
- 1938 The Métis Population Betterment Act is passed by Alberta.
- 1981 Métis are recognized as an Aboriginal people.
- 1989 Limited self-government is granted to Alberta Métis settlements.

Section 5.1

Historical Background

Introduction

Much of Métis poverty and loss of identity was rooted in landlessness. The troubles in Manitoba in 1869, in the North-West Territories in 1885, and in Alberta in the 1930s all had their origins in land. The legal relationship of the Métis to the land is linked to their standing as Aboriginal peoples, and will determine their cultural well-being as a nation and their economic well-being as individuals. Unit 5 deals with several differing approaches to land and Aboriginal status. The excerpt from *Métis Land Rights in Alberta: A Political History* (1981) deals with issues of Aboriginal title and scrip from a Métis perspective. This reading defines scrip, the differences between money scrip and land scrip, and the role of speculators in distributing scrip. The reading also looks at how the federal government treats First Nations and Métis people. First Nations peoples have always been seen as groups—as peoples. However, the federal government has always dealt with the Métis as individuals, and has viewed Métis claims as being derived from and subordinate to Indian claims. The assigned readings for Unit 5 point to the implications of this treatment.

Native Land Claims

Before reading the assigned material, it is useful to look at the background to Native land claims in Canada. While there is considerable legal precedence on Native land claims, these precedents first became the subject of wider discussion during Canada's national debates in the 1960s. Land claims were being discussed and debated publicly for the first time. A good summary is available in Dickason (1992, 339-365).

Aboriginal rights were defined by Euro-Canadians, not by the First Nations, who did not and do not accept British legal definitions of land and resources. Natives maintain that they cannot alienate the rights to land and resources that were given to them by the Creator; they can only share their use. Euro-Canadians argue, in legal discussions of Aboriginal rights, that Native title is not absolute but is a set of special legal rights acknowledged by the Crown. Aboriginal title is not the same as sovereignty. Only a state is sovereign and, some legal experts argue, North American Indians were not organized as a state. They also argue that Aboriginal title cannot be considered as fee simple because neither sedentary nor nomadic bands ever organized land this way. (Fee simple is the type of title held by most Canadian property owners.)

The courts have instead come to accept that Aboriginal title is an encumbrance on the title held by the Crown. The Crown must extinguish

this encumbrance before alienating any further land. In 1763, the Crown also decided that Aboriginal title could only be surrendered to the Crown, not to a private individual.

The courts also came to use the concept of "usufruct," a term you will find in the readings and which describes the Aboriginal title. This concept held that individuals or groups could have the rights to the "fruits" of the property without owning it in the European sense. The holder of "usufruct" rights enjoyed the fruits of the property during his or her life, but could not dispose of these rights. Aboriginal rights were a claim on property that had to be extinguished by the Crown through treaty or other means before issuing any other title (e.g., through the Dominion Lands Act).

Basis of Métis Rights

If the Métis had Aboriginal rights in Manitoba, on what basis did they have them? Was it because the Métis were Aboriginals with "usufructuary rights" or because they were a nation that inhabited the territories before Canada acquired them? If the former is the case, then why were these usufructuary rights not dealt with the same way as for other Aboriginal peoples? If the latter is the case, then the Selkirk settlers could make similar claims. In the end, the Canadian government chose a path somewhere in-between. The government recognized that the Métis had rights flowing from their Aboriginal ancestry, but ruled that these rights had no collectivity. The Métis would not be dealt with as a nation.

Riel never agreed with this solution. He was trained in a Quebec seminary during the 1850s and 1860s when nationalism was redrawing the map of Europe. Riel argued that the Métis were a nation and should be dealt with as such. The rights of the Métis could not be extinguished on an individual basis, but only through state-to-state negotiation (Flanagan 1983, 247-262).

Legal Precedents

As Métis Aboriginal claims may depend on the cases fought by Native groups, it is useful to consider some of the legal precedents that have shaped court rulings in the past one hundred years. The most important reference point in Euro-Canadian law is the Royal Proclamation of 1763, issued by King George III to preserve peace among his new French-Canadian subjects, his subjects in the thirteen colonies, and the Amerindians. The Proclamation appeared after the Pontiac Rebellion, which had given the British a real fright. The Proclamation reflected a desire to appease Amerindian worries that American settlers would dispossess them. In order to prevent land speculation, the Proclamation dictated that Native land could only be transferred to the Crown, and that the Crown could either dispose of or hold such land. The Proclamation was to apply only to the Indian Territory; beyond the western boundaries of Quebec, and beyond the Appalachian Mountains. The Proclamation

specifically excluded the territories of the Hudson's Bay Company, and did not appear to apply to the Native peoples or the Métis of the Canadian Plains or the North. Although several court hearings have suggested that the Proclamation might apply, others cast doubt on its applicability. With few exceptions, Canadian courts have consistently reinforced the general direction set by the Proclamation—that its principles applied generally even if the legislation itself did not.

The first major court case to occur after Confederation that affected Native peoples was *St. Catharine's Milling v. the Queen* (1885-1889). This complex case involved a federal-provincial dispute over jurisdictions. The question was whether the federal government or the provincial government had the right to regulate a certain piece of property. Central to this dispute was the right of the federal government to alienate Native land. The case eventually went to the highest court of appeal, which in 1887 (and until 1949) was the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council of Great Britain. The Judicial Committee accepted that the Crown (the federal government) "has all along had a present proprietary estate in land, upon which the Indian title is a mere burden" (Dickason 1992, 342). This reading of Native rights reinforced the assumptions behind the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and lasted well into the twentieth century. The courts were, however, more liberal with "hunting and fishing rights" since these were deemed "usufructuary."

The division of power between the federal and provincial governments by the British North America Act of 1867 affected Native rights. The provinces, including the Prairie provinces after 1930, had jurisdiction over land, mines, minerals, and royalties. The federal government was responsible for "Indians and lands reserved for Indians." The opportunities for mischief by feuding federal and provincial governments were great. It might have been easier for the federal government to advocate Aboriginal rights, except in the West and northwest, where until 1930 the federal government managed all land and resources, and more difficult for the provinces, which sometimes had the most to concede. Whatever the disputes, until very recently the *St. Catharine's Milling* decision was the most important precedent cited and disputed in Native rights cases.

In 1980, there was real change with the court case *Baker Lake v. the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development*. The court found for the Baker Lake community of the Northwest Territories, and determined that four criteria had to be met for Aboriginal title to be valid. First, the Natives had to prove that their ancestors occupied the territory when the British assumed sovereignty. Second, they had to prove that they were members of an organized society. Third, they had to prove individual ancestry to the land in question. Fourth, they had to prove their group to be the exclusive occupant. Many people saw these criteria as a major step forward in acknowledging Aboriginal rights. In 1991, however, another major case seemed to question this earlier decision. In his summary, Justice Allan McEachern rejected the claim of Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en to their traditional land in northern British Columbia. McEachern argued that all Native rights were subordinate to the rights of the Crown. There seemed to

be little progress since the St. Catharine's Milling decision (Dickason 1992, 354).

Western Métis

Manitoba Métis

Today, the Métis people argue that their Aboriginal heritage has given them an inextinguishable right to land. The first mention in Euro-Canadian documents of the Métis having Aboriginal rights was in Section 31 of the Manitoba Act of 1870, which states:

And whereas, it is expedient, towards the extinguishment of the Indian Title to the lands in the Province, to appropriate a portion of such ungranted lands, to the extent of one million four hundred thousand acres thereof, for the benefit of the families of the half-breed residents. (Cited in Flanagan 1991, 2)

The 1.4 million acres (566,560 ha) were not awarded as a block to the Métis, although this was briefly considered. Rather, the land initially went to the children of "half-breed" heads of households. Later, in 1873, the heads of families were included. The land grants were made in 240-acre (97 ha) parcels, with each claimant receiving title to property without any restrictions on future sale. The first titles were issued in 1877 and the last in 1919.

To avoid the time delays and problems of surveying land and isolating large blocks of land, the government decided to issue scrip, a document much like a bank note worth \$20 or \$160. Scrip would purchase 160 acres (65 ha) of Dominion lands in Manitoba, valued at the time at \$1 per acre. The first scrip was issued in 1876 and the last in 1907. There were administrative delays in issuing land patents to the children or scrip to their parents. Most scrip holders sold their interests to speculators at below value.

North-West Territories

The situation in the North-West Territories was equally complex and was subject to incredible delays. The motives of the federal government in acknowledging Métis claims in the North-West Territories have often been questioned. Did the government understand the implications of acknowledging Native rights, or did it feel that a land grant was an inexpensive way to secure peace in the North-West Territories?

Despite the occasional slip in the negotiations surrounding Treaty No. 3, for example, the Métis of the North-West were not included in the Indian treaties. The Métis saw themselves as a nation and did not want to enter into treaty. Where Métis did take treaty, they could leave and get individual title, as many did. The federal government settled the Métis' Aboriginal interests, not by treaty, which would have made them wards of the federal government, but by giving them scrip to get clear title to land. This was done by an amendment to the Dominion Land Act in 1879. This

amendment and its interpretation was critical to the land issue in the North-West in the decades that followed.

To satisfy claims existing in connection with the extinguishment of the Indian title, preferred by half-breeds resident in the North-West Territories outside of the limits of Manitoba, on the fifteenth day of July, one thousand eight hundred and seventy, by granting land to such persons, to such extent and on such terms and conditions, as may be deemed expedient. (Quoted in Taylor 1983, 162)

The provisions had to be implemented, but the federal government acted slowly, with much bureaucratic thoroughness. The government had two processes: one for extinguishing title in the North-West, and a second to secure title for individuals already settled on river-front lots in areas such as Batoche. The government allocated 40 acres (16.19 ha) to families already settled on river-front lots, and then investigated each family to determine eligibility for scrip. The investigations and land registry fees were so costly that many individual claimants became frustrated and sold their entitlements at the earliest opportunity.

From 1870 onward then, the federal government chose to deal with the Métis in both Manitoba and the North-West Territories as individuals. Métis participated in Indian treaties to a limited extent, but even then amendments to the Indian Act of 1876 in 1880 and 1884 allowed Métis to withdraw. Section 31 of the Manitoba Act clearly articulated federal government policy that was eventually also adopted for the North-West Territories. There would be no negotiated settlements with the Métis, only unilateral legislative or executive action through orders-in-council. The North-West Territories (after 1905, the Northwest Territories) scrip commissions from 1885 to 1921, whose job was to determine eligibility for scrip in the North-West Territories, did not negotiate terms with the Métis, as did the treaty commissions with Native people. These scrip commissions only examined the eligibility of claimants. Treaties acknowledged perpetual obligations; scrip acknowledged no such obligations. Scrip may have served the settlement process well, but the consensus today is that it did not serve the interests of the Métis. Many Métis in the North-West Territories had no interest in agriculture and no access to capital. These Métis sold their entitlements to speculators and moved further north, away from the tyranny of the law and the pressures of the new settlement.

Alberta Métis

In Alberta, numerous factors coincided to cause the government concern about its Métis population: the failure of scrip to benefit the Métis, the Depression, the transfer of Crown lands to the Province, and the agitation of Joe Dion of Cold Lake. In response, the government of Alberta commissioned Justice Ewing to investigate the condition of the Métis of Alberta. Ewing's report recommended the legislation that became the basis for the Métis Betterment Act of 1938. The Act established a series of group settlements for the Métis, which were intended as a welfare scheme. The government did not see their establishment as originating from any Aboriginal rights, however. It was hoped that as the Métis became

successful the settlements could be broken up into individual farms, but this never happened. At best, the settlements served as Métis homelands. They were governed by settlement associations which did not have the powers of local government or corporations, and which could not enter into financial arrangements. All local laws had to be approved by the responsible provincial minister. Title to land in the settlements was under "Certificates of Occupancy" that could be cancelled by the province at any time. In 1989, the eight settlements comprising 539,446 hectares moved to self-government. In the 1989 Métis agreement with the Alberta government, the settlements gained full title to their land, with the exception of mineral rights. The settlements and the province were also to co-manage the surface and subsurface resources. Provisions for self-government were weak, however, giving the settlements little more than the powers of rural municipalities. The settlements also negotiated a financial compensation package that could be worth \$140 million by 2007.

Section 5.2

The Debate

Considerable debate occurs among scholars today concerning the nature of Métis "Aboriginal" claims. Do the Métis have the same claim to Aboriginal title as do Indians or Inuit? There are several views. Thomas Flanagan concludes that Métis rights are subordinate to those of Natives and the Inuit. Métis rights flow from Indian claims. Flanagan limits even these unique rights to Western Canada and to the old North-West Territories (1870-1905). No Métis rights exist in the rest of Canada. Flanagan's strongest arguments are marshalled in his *Métis Lands in Manitoba* (1991), in which he maintains that when Manitoba entered Confederation, the Métis were British subjects with full civil and political rights. Unlike Indians, they could own land, enter into contracts, vote, and hold public office. Flanagan argues that the Canadian government consciously respected that status when it gave Métis scrip to extinguish whatever Aboriginal title to land they may have had. Scrip was private property, to do with as the Métis wished (Flanagan 1991, 232).

Doug Sprague, whose work was discussed in Unit 1, and Joe Sawchuk, a historian for the Alberta and Manitoba Métis federations, disagree with Flanagan on several points. Sawchuk points out that the concept of Aboriginal title is a European one that has been accepted by Métis and Natives only because it is useful in the new society, not because it is rooted in Native tradition. Sawchuk's analysis also calls Flanagan's conclusions into question. Sawchuk notes that the Métis were included in the treaty process in Ontario, particularly Treaty No. 3. The real differences between Flanagan and Sawchuk are in their interpretations of the Manitoba Act. Sawchuk sees Section 31 as acknowledging Native title; Flanagan sees it as a political expedient. However, Flanagan notes that Riel wanted to have the Métis dealt with by the federal government as a nation, not as individuals. Sawchuk comes closer to Flanagan in his careful outline of how the Métis became increasingly subordinate to the Native treaty process. Aboriginal title had to be extinguished first, and only then could the Métis be offered Crown land to extinguish whatever rights they might have.

While there is a significant debate between Flanagan and Sawchuk over the nature of Métis rights, the real debate is between Sprague and Flanagan over Métis lands in Manitoba. In this unit you will read summary articles by Flanagan and Sprague. However, their full cases are presented in Flanagan's *Métis Lands in Manitoba* (1991) and Sprague's *Canada and the Métis, 1869-1885* (1988).

Section 5.3

Historical Readings

Doug Sprague (1980)

Overview Questions

As you read the article by Sprague, please consider the following questions.

1. What evidence is there for a conspiracy on the part of the federal government to deny the Métis their rights under the Manitoba Act?
2. How persuasive are Sprague's arguments that the federal government's amendments to the Manitoba Act were *ultra vires*?

Reading Assignment

"The Manitoba Land Question, 1870-1882," by Doug Sprague, in the *Reading File*.

Note-Taking Questions

While reading the article by Sprague, jot down brief answers to the following note-taking questions.

1. Sprague argues that the "introduction of the Manitoba Act was duplicitous." Why does he say this?
2. Sprague maintains that the Métis were deliberately "dispossessed" and "dispersed." What evidence does he provide to support his argument?
3. Sections 31 and 32 of the Manitoba Act were critical to the Métis. How did Lieutenant Governor Archibald intend to implement these provisions? Why were Archibald's suggestions rejected?
4. According to Sprague, how did the Department of Justice really control public lands? What impact did this control have?
5. Why does Sprague argue that Section 6 of the 1871 British North America Act precluded changes to Section 31 or 32?

6. Sprague claims that there were several delays to awarding land provided under Section 31 and 32 of the Manitoba Act. What were these delays?
7. What were the differences among the rights of the Métis heads of families, Métis children, and the Selkirk settlers?
8. Sprague gives a great deal of attention to the role of race and class in the eventual distribution of lands. What is his evidence?

Commentary

Not all historians agree with Sprague. Flanagan argues that the federal government generally fulfilled, and in some ways over-fulfilled, the land provisions of the Manitoba Act. According to Flanagan, all 1.4 million acres (566,560 ha) of Section 31 lands were distributed. The federal government discouraged speculation and, when the land was exhausted, it even offered Métis \$240 in scrip. Flanagan agrees that there was confusion in distributing land to Métis heads of household and children, but points out that this delay increased the value of the land as surrounding areas were settled. Flanagan also provides evidence that Métis families generally did extremely well, particularly with the lands allotted to Métis children.

Flanagan accuses Sprague of being guilty of the historical crime of "animism" or "anthropomorphism." Flanagan believes that Sprague ascribes anthropomorphic (or human) qualities to the federal government as a whole. Rather than ascribing failure to the actions of a single individual, Sprague blames an entire government. The federal government assumes "human dimensions" and acts as a human being might. Sprague consequently sees a government conspiracy. Flanagan argues that there was neither an overall conspiracy nor a single government mind set. Métis lands were handled by a number of bureaucrats, who often worked in isolation from each other. Each official responded to unique circumstances (Flanagan 1991, 231).

Flanagan admits, as does Sprague, that the question of the Manitoba lands really centres on whether the Métis could make informed choices on whether to stay or sell. Sprague maintains that many of the Métis left because of racial prejudice and the pressure of speculators. Flanagan argues that the federal government was caught. Since the Métis did not want to be treated paternalistically, the government issued land either in money scrip or land scrip, an act that, in turn, opened the door to speculation. Flanagan claims that the Métis made individual decisions based on what was best for them economically at the time the scrip was issued.

Thomas Flanagan (1990)

Overview Questions

As you read the article by Flanagan, please consider the following questions.

1. Why does Flanagan argue that Métis Aboriginal rights were acknowledged because of expediency rather than legal precedent?
2. To what degree did the Manitoba precedent determine the outcome of Métis claims in the North-West Territories?

Reading Assignment

"The History of Métis Aboriginal Rights: Politics, Principle, and Policy,"
by Thomas Flanagan, in the *Reading File*.

Note-Taking Questions

While reading the article by Flanagan, jot down brief answers to the following note-taking questions.

1. According to Flanagan, there is no legal definition of Métis Aboriginal rights. What evidence does he provide?
2. Flanagan argues that the present situation is the result of the interplay between political expediency and legal principle. Why would the Métis reject this analysis?
3. Where is the first statutory recognition of Métis distinctiveness?
4. Were the limits on this recognition based on legal principle or political expediency?
5. Why does Flanagan argue that the scrip issued to heads of households in 1874 was a "curious combination of principle and political pragmatism"?
6. How was the Manitoba precedent translated into action in the North-West Territories in 1879 and 1885?
7. Why did it take Macdonald so long to settle Métis land issues in the North-West Territories?
8. Flanagan emphasizes the ineligibility of the Métis in the North-West Territories born after 15 July 1870. Why is this date so important?

9. How was the assignment of scrip related to Indian treaty?
10. What is the importance of Treaty No. 8 in settling Métis rights?
11. Why were Métis land rights not recognized outside the three Prairie provinces and the North-West Territories?
12. Does Flanagan think the federal government was negligent in its administration of Métis Aboriginal land claims? Explain.

Commentary

Flanagan has carefully traced the origins of Métis Aboriginal claims from the Manitoba Act (1870) through the Dominion Lands Act (1872) and its various amendments. He believes that the Métis received the compensation that the federal government, which was motivated by "political expediency," thought adequate.

Historians acknowledge that two questions remain concerning Métis land claims. First, have Métis Aboriginal rights been extinguished through scrip? Second, was scrip properly managed, or are there still obligations on the part of the federal government? Flanagan maintains that the federal government has not yet acknowledged that there is a unique Métis entitlement. Whatever the Métis acquire must be based on rights that flow from their Native ancestry. Flanagan further observes that the 1982 Constitution entrenched Métis Aboriginal rights, but that entrenchment is problematic because there is no well-articulated body of precedent or practice to give meaning to the legal abstraction. Flanagan argues that we simply do not know legally what Métis Aboriginal rights might be.

Sprague and Sawchuk reject Flanagan's assertion that there is no precedent for Métis rights. In 1968 the Manitoba Métis Federation began to investigate their land claims under Section 31 of the Manitoba Act. The federation's historians, D. Bruce Sealy and Emile Pelletier, concluded that if the Métis did not properly receive the lands promised under Section 31, Aboriginal title had not been extinguished. In 1978-79, the federation retained Doug Sprague to investigate the issue further. Sprague claimed that a conspiracy on the part of the federal government denied the Métis their claims. If Sprague is correct, then the courts should review the whole issue of Métis Aboriginal rights and their extinguishment.

While you may agree or disagree with either Flanagan or Sprague, you should be aware that the extremes articulated by these historians will likely be the basis for any arguments before the courts. Of particular importance is Flanagan's section, "Who, Where, What, How, and Why," in which he mentions all the critical issues that would determine legal precedence. Those who argue for entrenching Métis Aboriginal rights by legal precedent point out that the Manitoba Act recognized Métis collective rights even as it extinguished them by direct dealings with individuals. In addition, these rights were recognized in the negotiations for Treaty No. 3

in 1875. It can also be argued that Riel's provisional government negotiated for the Métis as a group, not as individuals. Even the 1899 Dominion Lands Act recognized that Métis had Aboriginal rights. However, Flanagan does make an important point: the federal government never recognized that the Métis had any rights as a nation. For the federal government, Métis Aboriginal rights were derived from their Native ancestry, not from their status as a nation. The debate will no doubt continue and may some day be resolved in the Canadian courts.

The Metis Association of Alberta et al. (1981)

Introduction

Between 1885 and 1921, the thirteen North-West Scrip Commissions allowed 14,113 claims, amounting to a total of \$2,885,157 in money scrip and 1,161,612 acres (470.088 ha) in land scrip. If the Manitoba scrip is included, there were 24,326 claims, amounting to 2,609,772 acres (1,056,138 ha) in land scrip and \$3,633,217 in money scrip. Much of the debate today in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and the Northwest Territories centres on money scrip and land scrip. Most land scrip was sold to speculators soon after being issued. Sawchuk explains why. Originally, many explanations for this sale of scrip were racially based, but Sawchuk's more careful and plausible rationale would be accepted by most scholars today.

The critical issue concerning scrip is that the Métis were dealt with as individuals by federal policy, not as a group with vested rights. Sympathizers with the Métis cause, particularly Sprague, have argued that the federal government and other supporters of rapid settlement favoured scrip in order to ensure its quick sale to speculators who would then sell the land for maximum profit. Sawchuk points out that managing scrip was an expensive burden on the Métis, and one that they could not afford.

Overview Questions

1. How was scrip allocated?
2. What is the difference between money scrip and land scrip?
3. Why was the scrip system a speculator's dream come true?

Reading Assignment

Excerpt from "Métis Land Rights in Alberta: A Political History," by The Métis Association of Alberta, and Joe Sawchuk, Patricia Sawchuk, and Theresa Ferguson, in the *Reading File*.

Note-Taking Questions

While reading the article by The Métis Association of Alberta et al., jot down brief answers to the following note-taking questions.

1. Compare and contrast Spanish, French, and English approaches to defining and extinguishing Aboriginal title.

2. According to the Métis Association et al., what was the importance of the Proclamation of 1763 in defining Aboriginal title?
3. Why did Aboriginal rights re-surface in the 1960s?
4. What is the impact of including Métis as Aboriginal people in the 22 April 1981 constitutional package?
5. According to the Métis Association et al., what are the differences between Métis rights and Aboriginal rights?
6. How did Riel articulate Métis rights, both collectively and individually? Why were Métis rights dealt with individually while Aboriginal rights were dealt with collectively?
7. What is the importance of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 for the Prairie Métis?
8. Why do the Métis Association et al. assert that it would be better for Métis land claims to be settled out of court?
9. What is scrip?
10. What kinds of scrip were issued? What is the difference between money scrip and land scrip?
11. How was each type of scrip viewed by speculators?
12. What were the regulations governing the use of land scrip?
13. Between 1871 and 1925, over 120 orders-in-council relating to scrip were issued. Even more important, scrip commissions often provided "clarifications." The article lists eleven of the most important of these clarifications. What were they?
14. How could Métis dispose of land scrip? What is meant by assigning scrip?
15. How would scrip have been advantageous to the settlement of the West?
16. The assigned reading gives seven reasons why the Métis sold land. What are these reasons?
17. What were the responsibilities of the Half Breed Commissions between 1885 and 1921?
18. What were the shortcomings of the scrip distribution system?
19. What in the system encouraged speculation? To what extent was the government to blame for encouraging speculation?

20. Why does the article argue that scrip denied the Métis nationhood?
21. Why were prosecutions for scrip fraud so infrequent?

Commentary

In the conclusion to their book, *The Métis Association of Alberta et al.* argue that there are three categories of Métis claims that will have to be settled by the courts. First, inadequate consideration of individual money scrip and land scrip rights will have to be dealt with both on a group and an individual basis. Second, the Métis can and should argue that their Aboriginal rights were not compensated for by scrip. Equally important, ending their Aboriginal rights was *imposed* by order-in-council and statute, not by negotiation. Third, the Métis can be construed to be Indians under the terms of the British North America Act (even though the Métis are excluded under the Indian Act) and are consequently entitled to the same treatment as the Indians.

The authors further maintain that Métis rights were recognized by the Manitoba Act and by the various Dominion Lands Acts. The rights recognized under these acts were never fully extinguished. They also argue that the human and national rights of the Métis were violated. The Canadian government refused to recognize the political and national identity of the Métis in 1870. As a nation, the Métis had the right to negotiate directly with the federal government. Extinguishing individual rights does not extinguish national rights. In addition, scrip was designed to benefit the speculator, not the Métis. The federal government allowed speculators to advertise in Dominion Land Offices, changed the rules to benefit speculators, and refused to investigate illegalities seriously. The federal government was guilty of a breach of trust.

The Canadian government's position is best put forward by Flanagan. He argues that scrip did end Aboriginal title. Although there may have been difficulties with the system, in the end, it was reasonably fair. The federal government's view was clearly stated by Jean Chretien when he was Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada in 1981: "The courts have consistently held that Parliament has the unfettered authority to extinguish Aboriginal rights on whatever basis it chooses to do so" (*Métis Association of Alberta et al.* 1981, 246).

Before Moving On . . .

Please be sure that you have answered, in point form or in essay form, the overview questions that appeared in this section.

Assignment for Credit

You are now ready to do Assignment 3, which will cover both Unit 4 and Unit 5. Please review Unit 4 briefly, and then turn to the *Student Manual* for detailed instructions on completing Assignment 3.

References

- Dickason, Olive Patricia. *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992.
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Supplementary Materials List

There is a rich literature on Métis scrip and land rights and on the Alberta experience of the Métis people. The books by Dickason, Flanagan, and Sprague have already been mentioned. Sprague's *The Genealogy of the First Métis Nation* is one of the first books to pull together much of the Manitoba material that has been used by those trying to trace their mixed-blood roots to Red River.

For those wishing to know more about Riel's view of Aboriginal rights, consult Thomas Flanagan's article "Louis Riel and Aboriginal Rights" in Ian Getty and Antoine S. Lussier, eds. *As Long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows*. Flanagan argues that although Riel had a concept of nation, he did not have articulated views on Aboriginal rights, nor did he agree with unilateral claims of British sovereignty. J. R. Miller's *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens* is one of the best books on the subject. It contains little on the Métis, but does provide context that is helpful.

Students will find the special issue of *Canadian Ethnic Studies* XVII, no. 1 (1985) very useful. It was edited by Thomas Flanagan and John Foster and dealt with the state of Métis scholarship, particularly on rights issues to that time. The essay by Ken Hatt on the Ewing Commission provides an intriguing explanation of the impact of racism on decision making. *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* vol. 3, no. 21, 1983 edited by Antoine S. Lussier, deals with the Métis since 1870. It also has some interesting observations by Ken Hatt, who is an expert in scrip and scrip commissions. The article by John Leonard Taylor, "An Historical Introduction to Métis Claims," in the same volume is a good general introduction to the subject. F. Laurie Barron and James B. Waldram, *1885 and After: Native Society in Transition* is also a useful compilation and offers more on the debates between Flanagan and his detractors. Particularly interesting is Ken Hatt's "The North-West Rebellion Scrip Commissions, 1885-1889" and Flanagan's following rebuttal "Comment on Ken Hatt, The North-West Rebellion Scrip Commissions, 1885-1889."

If you want to know more about the Alberta Métis settlements today, consult T. C. Pocklington's *The Government and Politics of the Alberta Métis Settlements*. It is particularly strong on contemporary issues facing the Alberta Métis.

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Unit 6

Les Métisses in the Canadian West

Learning Objectives

When you have completed Unit 6, you should be able to achieve the following learning objectives.

1. Discuss the role of women in forming mixed-blood communities and a Métis identity.
2. Discuss the roles of churches, education, and racism in contributing to the changing role of Métis women.

Chronology for Unit 6

- 1774 Several unnamed Native women guide Samuel Hearne in his Saskatchewan ventures.
- 1815 Sally, the daughter of an Okanagan Chief, marries Alexander Ross.
- 1818 First Roman Catholic missionary arrives in Red River.
- 1820 First Anglican missionary arrives in Red River.
- 1821 Betsey Sinclair forms a union with George Simpson.
- 1822 Julie Lagimodière, Riel's mother, is born.
- 1825 Margaret Taylor becomes George Simpson's country wife.
- 1830 Frances Simpson marries her first cousin, George Simpson, who had "turned off" Margaret Taylor earlier.
- 1838 Mary Agathas Cocking is married by clergy to her husband of thirty-five years, William Hemmings Cook.
- 1845 Sisters of Charity arrive at St. Boniface to open schools and a hospital.
- 1850 Sarah Ballenden affair splits Red River along racial lines.
- 1869 Mrs. Bannatyne beats Charles Mair for his unkind remarks about mixed-blood women.

Section 6.1

Historical Views of Métis Women

Until recently, women have been neglected in the writing of Canadian and Canadian Aboriginal history. Today, however, entire journals are devoted to women's studies, and mainstream journals also publish a considerable number of articles relating to women's history. Although women's history is a wide-ranging field that embodies diverse methodologies, its central thesis is that gender roles are the product of social developments, not of biology. Women's history concentrates on changes in women's position over time within particular societies and compares gender roles between different societies. Eleanor Leacock (1980, 25-41) argues, for example, that Montagnais women had great power and status at the time of contact with Europeans, but that their role was significantly reduced after this contact. On the other hand, the historian of the Métis, Marcel Giraud (1985), argues that the status of Cree women improved after contact.

Although victimization of women within homes and workplaces is of concern in most studies, historians increasingly emphasize women's social agency; that is, the role women have played in shaping their position as individuals and as women collectively in different societies. While women are no longer marginalized in Canadian historical writing, Métis women are just beginning to be the subject of careful investigation. For an insight into the state of Canadian women's history, see Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman (1991), which is listed in the Supplementary Materials List at the end of this unit. The introduction and bibliography of this book are excellent.

Little mention of Métis women has been made in the studies of the two Riel Rebellions, or in the studies of Métis society. Marcel Giraud (1986, 254-264), writing in the 1930s, has the most extensive early coverage. Following the "civilization\savagism" dichotomy, Girard describes the life of Native women as difficult. Women's tasks were hard and never-ending: skinning animals, setting camp, folding tents, and carrying and dragging baggage. Girard generally believes that Native people were "uncivilized" and that fur traders were "civilized." Furthermore, this "civilization" was evident in the role of women. To Giraud, the lot of Native women living with Euro-Canadians was privileged. He quotes a Native chief to Daniel Harmon, an early fur trader, as proof: "My wish is to have my daughter with the white people for she will be treated better by them than by her own relatives" (Girard 1986). Giraud also mentions a situation observed at Fort Chipewyan. There, the husband, his wife alongside, was carrying the huge bundle of moss for the baby's diapering, something that would never have happened in Chipewyan society.

Giraud also argues that in the freedom of the interior, "civilization" was compromised and that the men of both the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company sometimes abused women. Giraud only

grudgingly accepts that some lasting relationships did exist. This theory was not disproved until Sylvia Van Kirk wrote "*Many Tender Ties*": *Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870* (1980), demonstrating that European-Native marriages were generally stable and were not always based on economic exploitation.

Historians such as W. L. Morton and G. F. G. Stanley also subconsciously accepted that men created and controlled the world of women. Stanley devotes a single page to women in *The Birth of Western Canada* (1966). Women are seen as passive partners in exploitative and unstable relationships that only occasionally lasted more than a few years. Women are only dealt with because they shared in the procreation of the Métis nation. Consider the example of Julie Lagimodière, who is mentioned often but only because she was Louis Riel's mother.

A few early recollections by mixed-blood women appear in the pioneer history book tradition. The best of these was by W. J. Healy, *Women of Red River: Being a Book Written from the Recollections of Women Surviving from the Red River Era* (1923). Even so, most women who participated in Healy's book were silent on their mixed-blood heritage. These women saw themselves as early Canadian or British pioneers. Soeur de Moissac, a Grey Nun with a scholarly interest in Red River, undertook her Master's thesis (1945) on the religious women of Red River, but her order cloistered few Métis women before 1870 and the thesis was limited in the questions it asked.

Although other historians have written about individual Métis women, they did not analyse these Métis women in the context of their gender but as women who had succeeded in a world controlled by men. An excellent essay on the state of studies on Native North American women is Deborah Welch's "American Indian Women: Reaching Beyond the Myth" in Colin G. Calloway (1988, 31-48). Welch acknowledges that little has been written on North American mixed-blood women. This is in part due to the failure of the United States to recognize the unique Aboriginal and national status of the Métis people.

Generally, these historians worked within a context in which men created the issues that were important to history. Issues such as child-rearing, gender, aging, or patterns of life were therefore not addressed. The impact of the industrial colonization of the Canadian West on women and, more importantly, on Native women, was simply not an issue.

Take a moment to reflect briefly on Brogden's article on criminalization from Unit 2, and on Dobbin's article from Unit 4. Do these two historians consider Métis women as agents of historical change? Do they consider the impact of the new wage economy on Métis women? If, at the end of Unit 7, you still have difficulty with these questions, please be sure to discuss them with your tutor.

More Recent Historical Studies

Only in the 1970s with the work of Sylvia Van Kirk and Jennifer Brown did the history of mixed-blood women and mixed-blood families become a legitimate focus of historical scholarship. Van Kirk's *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870* (1980) and Brown's *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (1980) were published just as fur trade studies, Native studies, and women's studies were gaining international scholarly attention.

While neither Van Kirk (1980) nor Brown (1980) focuses exclusively on Métis women, they do include Métis women in their studies. Brown explores the transition from what were essentially European male and Native female marriages in the period before 1800 to European male and mixed-blood female marriages in the period afterward. Brown is particularly interested in determining whether differences existed between the cultural traditions of the servants of the Hudson's Bay Company (British) and those of the North West Company (French-Canadian). Brown argues that there were subtle but important differences. Both the Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company societies were increasingly endogamous; that is, men married women who were the daughters or relatives of other fur traders. The Hudson's Bay Company encouraged a more structured relationship between its men and their mixed-blood wives. Hudson's Bay Company families tended to stay together and to see their future in Red River, not in Britain or the rest of Canada. If returning to Red River was not possible, Hudson's Bay Company men tended to provide allowances for the wives and children they left behind. North West Company men, on the other hand, tended to see their future in Montreal, and typically left their mixed-blood wives in the interior. Instead of leaving them allowances, North West Company men ensured that another male at the post would assume responsibility for their families.

Brown's most important point, other than her analysis of fur trade marriages and the emergence of the Métis people, is her discussion of the role of women in forging a distinctive identity. Brown argues that some Métis men attached "special importance to their maternal ancestry" (1980, 219). Brown implies that women were vital in forming a unique Métis identity and society:

Lacking upward mobility, these mixed-blood descendants of the fur trade joined a common cause that emphasized their maternal descent, in contradistinction to the dominantly patrilineal and patrifocal familial structures that, with their orientation toward the "civilized world," had guided many of their peers toward higher social standing as whites and gentlemen. Their matrilineal orientation showed consistency with the relative weakness of many older North Westers' fur trade family ties; and it was surely, at least in part, a consequence of those traders' frequent tendency not to assume an active paternal role. (Brown 1980, 219-220)

Although Brown's study is important, it has one major shortcoming. The study concentrates on the fur trade élite—those who could write or who were important enough to be written about. Brown's observations may r

be true of the entire Métis population. The article by Brown (1983), the first assigned reading for this unit, is derived from the work she did for her book. The article explores the great importance of women in forming the Métis identity in the Canadian West.

Van Kirk researched "*Many Tender Ties*" (1980) at the same time that Brown made her observations on Métis women. A paragraph in a letter from James Douglas, a West Coast fur trader, to James Hargrave upon Hargrave's marriage to a white woman intrigued Van Kirk. Douglas wrote: "There is a strange revolution in the manners of the country; Indian wives were at one time the vogue, the half-breed supplanted these, and now we have the lovely tender exotic torn from its parent bed to pine and languish in the desert" (quoted in Van Kirk 1980, 1). This observation spurred Van Kirk to study the transition from Indian, to mixed-blood, and then to white wives.

Of real interest to Van Kirk is the fate of the mixed-blood female offspring of these "country marriages." She argues that the arrival of European women in the 1830s threatened to displace the mixed-blood women's social and economic roles. Van Kirk focuses on the racism white women introduced into the fur trade and argues that this racism, which was most obvious in Red River, denigrated the position of upper-class, mixed-blood women.

Van Kirk spends much time on the Ballenden case. Sarah Ballenden, the wife of a senior Red River fur trader, was socially ruined by several British women because she was mixed-blood. You may want to refresh your knowledge of this case by reading the chapter on the Ballenden case in an earlier assigned reading, *A Snug Little Flock*. The problem with these works by Pannekoek, Brown, and Van Kirk is that they all concentrate on elite women, about whom information is most readily available. Pannekoek and Van Kirk assume that the racist calamities experienced by the female elite were probably also experienced by the lower orders. No hard evidence is available on this issue, although, as you will see in the readings by Payment and Kermoal, the evidence suggests that racism spared no one.

The assigned article by Van Kirk deals with the psychological impact of racism, particularly its differing impacts on the sons and daughters of Alexander Ross. When reading the article, remember that the Rosses were atypical. They were one of very few mixed-blood families within their Presbyterian parish. As a schoolmaster, Ross was also well placed to instill his vision of the family, women, and the church in his children. Ross worried about what he saw as the racially produced frailties of his children, and he placed considerable pressure on them to succeed in his cultural environment. Yet the psychological tensions of the children, and their ambivalent attitude toward their Okanagan mother, may well have been felt by other mixed-bloods. As you read the article, note the different impact that Ross's teachings had on his daughters compared to his sons.

The final assigned articles by Payment and Kermoal focus exclusively on Métis women. Both articles concentrate on the Riel Rebellion of 1869 and/or 1885 as flash-points for the study of Métis women.

Section 6.2

Historical Readings

Jennifer S. H. Brown (1983)

Brown's article argues that women were critical in forming the identity of the Métis people. This important article will be used as a reference point to evaluate other reading assignments in this unit. You will want to think about Brown's article with additional care, as it is considered in historians' terms to be a "think piece"; that is, Brown has little specific evidence for her supposition. However, after several decades of careful thought and exposure to the documents, Brown believes that certain patterns emerge that could be supported by further research. Younger scholars may take up Brown's challenge and investigate her questions more carefully. Give careful thought to Brown's insights and test them against your readings. Some of the comments on the Payment, Van Kirk, and Kermoal articles will help you in this task.

Overview Questions

As you read the article by Brown, please consider the following questions.

1. What role did women play in determining Métis identity?
2. What further research needs to be done to firm up Brown's tentative conclusions?

Reading Assignment

"Women as Centre and Symbol in the Emergence of Métis Communities,"
by Jennifer S. H. Brown, in the *Reading File*.

Note-Taking Questions

While reading the article by Brown, jot down brief answers to the following note-taking questions.

1. Why does Brown suggest that women's studies could provide an important insight into Métis history?
2. What questions do the works of Charles Bishop and Shepard Krech II raise about Métis social organization?

3. What questions does Sylvia Van Kirk's work raise about the role of women in Métis society?
4. According to Brown, what are the implications of "matrilocal" to Métis society?
5. What evidence does Brown provide to show that Métis social organization might have been dominated by semi-autonomous, female-headed units?
6. What additional research would Brown do, and what questions would she ask to prove her theories?

Commentary

Brown observes that the daughters born to European fur traders and their Indian wives were more likely to marry and stay in the West than were the sons born to these couples. The sons tended to go to England or Montreal to be educated. Brown then notes that anthropologists have observed that some Native groups were matrilocal, meaning that a newly married couple lived with the wife's relations for a period of time, usually early in the marriage. Brown then asks the critical question: Did Métis women maintain the matrilocal tendency of their mothers in their own marriages?

Next, Brown notes that historians have argued that Indian women were critical to the economic success of the fur trade. Women prepared furs, netted snowshoes, foraged, and secured small game. She wonders whether these skills were transmitted to female Métis children, and whether these skills gave Métis women a sense of continuity with their past and a unique role within Métis society—a role not shared by the men.

Brown observes that fur traders practised what she calls "patrifocality"; meaning that fathers tended to select sons over daughters for education and acculturation into their European heritage. Daughters were usually left in the interior, possibly with their mother's family. Brown asks another critical question: How important were the daughters who stayed behind in maintaining family and trade connections? When sons returned to the interior, did their mothers and sisters provide the contacts for them to assume their fathers' previous role as successful traders? What impact did the absence of fathers and young men have on family structures and on the role of women in the family and in society?

Brown admits that she does not have answers to most of these questions, and that much more research is required. Did many more women than men remain in the North-West Territories? Did women dominate family groups in the North-West Territories? Did mothers and sisters sustain the Métis culture while fathers and sons went off to concentrate on their European roots? Some evidence suggests that women did sustain Métis culture. Brown uses an observation by Riel to hint at the critical importance of women in sustaining the Métis identity:

It is true that our savage origin is humble, but it is meet that we honor our mothers as well as our fathers. Why should we concern ourselves about what degree of mixture we possess of European or Indian blood? If we have ever so little of either gratitude or filial love, should we not be proud to say, "We are Métis!"? (Brown 1980, 219).

Sylvia Van Kirk (1985)

The Rosses were one of the most prominent British-Native families of Red River. Alexander Ross was Red River's first historian. His *The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress, and Present State with Some Account of The Native Races and Its General History to the Present Day* (1856) is one of the few sustained contemporary accounts of the Red River Métis. Ross did not have a confident view of his mixed-blood neighbours or his mixed-blood children. He describes both in less than flattering terms:

While enjoying a sort of licentious freedom, they are generous, warm-hearted, and brave, and left to themselves, quiet and orderly. They are, unhappily, as unsteady as the wind in all their habits, fickle in their dispositions, credulous in their faith, and clannish in their affections. In a word, of all people they are the easiest led astray and made the dupes of designing men. (Ross 1856, 242)

Ross came to Canada from Scotland in 1804, and married an Okanagan chief's younger daughter, Sally. They had a total of twelve children and, in order to best bring up their children, moved to Red River. Alexander Ross and his children were among Red River's leading citizens. Sally Ross, however, remains a shadowy figure in the historical documents and seems not to have taken her place among the fur trade élite, although some Native women did so.

Van Kirk noticed in her research that these children, particularly the sons, had a difficult time adapting to the changes that swept Red River in the later 1850s and 1860s as Canada's interest in the settlement grew and as Canadians began to migrate there. According to Van Kirk, the crisis of race seems to have had less impact on the daughters than on the sons. Four of Ross's daughters married European men. Van Kirk argues that these marriages showed the allegiance of the Rosses to the Canadian promise of progress and prosperity. Most of the children died relatively young of varying diseases, and Van Kirk wonders whether the psychological pressures placed on them by their father contributed to their early deaths.

Several questions need to be kept in mind as you read the article by Van Kirk. Does she incorrectly minimize the influence of Sally Ross? Is she correct in her assessment of the importance of the mother in mixed-blood families? Is Brown incorrect in her assessment? Were the Anglican clergy, who ministered to the Presbyterians in the absence of a clergyman of their own, more influential than Sally Ross in instilling views on the role of women in the family?

Overview Questions

As you read the article by Van Kirk, please consider the following questions.

1. What was the role of racism in the psychological despair of the Ross children?
2. What was the role of gender in determining the degree of their despair?

Reading Assignment

“ ‘What If Mama Is An Indian?’: The Cultural Ambivalence of the Alexander Ross Family,” by Sylvia Van Kirk. In *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, edited by Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, pp. 207-217.

Note-Taking Questions

While reading the article by Van Kirk, jot down brief answers to the following note-taking questions.

1. What does Van Kirk claim that Alexander Ross wanted for his family?
2. How did Ross go about achieving his objectives? How did Ross’s objectives differ for his sons and his daughters? What were the roles of religion and education in his plans?
3. How did the marriages of his daughters reflect Ross’s prejudices and cultural affiliations? Compare the marriages of Ross’s daughters with those of his sons.
4. What were the ambivalent feelings of Ross’s children toward their mother?
5. Van Kirk argues that there were fewer stresses on Ross’s daughters than on his sons. What is her evidence for this? Is this evidence adequate?

Commentary

Van Kirk’s article poses certain questions about the role of women. She suggests that the father dominated the cultural direction of the Ross family. Using the considerable evidence that is available on the sons, Van Kirk argues that their mother’s influence was marginal. Yet Van Kirk notes that the Ross children spoke their mother’s language and that the daughters

knew the material culture traditions of their mother. Although Sally Ross may have been silent in public, her role as a nurturer may have had as great an impact on her children as did her husband's role as patriarch. Did Sally Ross make a complete transition from a culture in which women's roles were equal or parallel to those of men, to one in which she had a subordinate role in the home? Does Van Kirk assume that the Ross household was dominated by the father's European culture and that the mother's culture was subordinate, possibly because Van Kirk inadvertently accepts a patriarchal society? If Van Kirk had explored Sally Ross's background more closely, would she have painted a different picture? Van Kirk's observation that the psychological tensions imposed by the pull of two races and two cultures led to the destruction of the Ross children suggests that the mother's role was instrumental in forming the children's identity. If such were not the case, the psychological pressures of the father would not have been as devastating.

Recall from the reading by Brown that the mother may have been dominant in creating a mixed-blood culture, particularly through her daughters. Was the situation described by Brown present in the Ross family? Brown maintains that sons were favoured and were often sent away, leaving women and daughters to nurture the culture. James Ross attended the University of Toronto, and his brother, William, was favoured as the successor to his father's political offices. The Ross family letters, located in the Province of Manitoba Archives, suggest that the Ross women may have been instrumental in keeping the family together during the long periods of illness and separation.

When considering whether the Ross family fits Brown's model, take care not to assume that the Rosses were typical of the average mixed-blood or Red River family. They lived in Kildonan parish, and had as their neighbours and social peers Lord Selkirk's settlers, who were clannish in the extreme and who were zealous adherents to their Presbyterian faith. These settlers kept to themselves, rarely married outside their community, and evidence reveals very few instances of marriages to mixed-bloods. Perhaps an understanding of the Rosses is not to be found in the pull between their Canadian and Native heritages, but in an understanding of the dynamics of the parish of Kildonan. The Rosses were one of the few mixed-blood families in the Presbyterian Church and this was remarked upon more than once. Yet Van Kirk is silent on these community dynamics and the impact they may have had on Sally Ross and her daughters.

What Van Kirk has attempted is psycho-history; that is, she uses current psychological methodologies to interpret past experiences. Psycho-history is a difficult kind of history to write because evidence is often indirect or circumstantial. Nevertheless, it often offers suggestive insights that might lead historians in new directions.

Nathalie Kermoal (1995)

Two events that reinforced the national identity of the Métis people are the Riel Rebellions of 1869 and 1885. If Brown is correct in emphasizing the importance of Métis women in forming and preserving a Métis identity, then examining the role of women in the events of 1869 and 1885 should be particularly instructive. Keep several points in mind while reading Kermoal's article. Why have previous accounts of 1869 and 1885 excluded women? You have read Pannekoek's and Payment's interpretations of 1869 and 1885 in Units 2 and 4. Have these authors consciously excluded women from their interpretations? What impact does this exclusion have on their interpretations? Scholars in women's history have pointed out that some historians tend to examine major historical events that may have been generated by males and then ask "What was the woman's role in the event?" Is a study of the role of women in the Riel Rebellions of 1869 or 1885 a relevant question? Were other issues relating to work, reproduction, or family more important? You might wish to reflect on these questions as you read.

Overview Questions

As you read the article by Kermoal, please consider the following questions.

1. What was the role of women in the Riel Rebellion of 1869?
2. Assess the predicament of women in a conquered society.

Reading Assignment

"The Role and Suffering of Métis Women during the 1869 Resistance and the 1885 Rebellion," by Nathalie Kermoal, in the *Reading File*.

Note-Taking Questions

While reading the article by Kermoal, jot down brief answers to the following note-taking questions.

1. Why has so little been written on the history of Native women?
2. How do traditional historians view Métis women?
3. Kermoal looks at Métis women in 1869 and 1885. Do you think that looking at the history of Métis women through these flashpoints is valid?

4. Kermoal states that the Métis on the hunt lived a life of poverty, marked by a joy of life and abundant hospitality. Has Kermoal fallen into the "civilization/savagism" trap discussed in Unit 1? Is Kermoal stereotyping the Métis?
5. How important was Charles Mair's insult to Mrs. Bannatyne in forming the attitude of Métis women toward the new Ontarians?
6. According to evidence provided by Kermoal, drunken surveyors forced Métis women and children from their beds and made them dance in their night clothes. How important is this evidence to Kermoal's conclusions?
7. What was the role of Métis women during the siege of Upper Fort Garry?
8. What violent incidents toward women occurred after the Ontarians dispersed Riel's men? What is the nature of the evidence? How reliable is it according to Kermoal? What is the position of women in conquered societies?
9. How did Métis women support the Riel Rebellion of 1885? How did this support differ from that offered during the Riel Rebellion of 1869?
10. What was the impact of the battle of Batoche on Métis women and their families?

Commentary

Kermoal sees Métis women as passive participants in the Riel Rebellion of 1869. Their role was a private, family one of keeping the family intact and providing domestic support for the political or public activities of their men. Does Kermoal's analysis take this slant unconsciously because of her own assumptions or because Métis society on the eve of the Rebellion of 1869 was patriarchal and hierarchical, with women subordinate to men in matters of politics and war?

If Kermoal had accepted some of Brown's assumptions on the importance of women in forming Métis identity and in preserving Métis community she might have seen Métis women as more than passive. Instead, Kermoal concentrates on the role of Métis women as homemakers and victims. She reinforces this view of Métis women as passive participants and victims by suggesting, despite sparse evidence, that they may have been raped during the Rebellion. Kermoal may well be correct, but concentrating on this issue reinforces the interpretation of Métis women as victims rather than as agents participating in change. Kermoal does observe that, in 1885, Métis women were prepared to assume a more dominant role, possibly even taking up arms, although they do not appear to have done so.

Kermoal argues that Métis women are still seeking their rightful place within the history of the Métis nation, a history written by men from a male perspective. By examining Métis women's place in the Riel Rebellions, which were largely male-dominated events, Kermoal does little more than place women on the male historical stage. Are the Rebellions of 1869 and 1885 even relevant to the history of Métis women? Are there more important turning points in Métis women's history? Are the events that changed Métis women into subordinate domestics (after being dominant figures in preserving and creating Métis identity, according to Brown) more critical? Are the events of the 1851 Ballenden scandal that clearly defined the racial boundaries of women's roles in the settlement more relevant? Is the transition from economic partner to economic dependant more important? Kermoal also seems to ignore the role of the churches in redefining the status of Métis women in their society. Diane Payment points out that the earlier, more dominant role of Métis women may well have been suppressed as the Roman Catholic clergy attempted to impose their views of women on Métis society.

Given Payment's observations, of which Kermoal was aware as you can see from her footnotes, Kermoal could have asked additional questions. Did the important role played by the clergy in the Riel Rebellion of 1869 have any influence on the subordinate role played by Métis women? Kermoal uses evidence from Riel, who was well trained in Quebec seminaries, to suggest that Métis women were preyed upon by Canadians. This may well be the case, but Riel also held a certain view of women, and he may have concentrated on one impact of the Canadians' arrival because of his belief in the frailties of women as taught by the Roman Catholic Church and because of his own ideals of Victorian womanhood. The assigned reading by Payment may offer insights into these questions.

Diane Payment (forthcoming)

You will recall Diane Payment's *"The Free People—Otipemisiwak"* (1990) from Unit 3. Although the book deals with Métis women, the material is scattered and there is no single, articulated view such as you find in the article assigned here. Here, Payment clearly outlines the role of the Roman Catholic Church in the subordination of women. Bishop Provencher, the Roman Catholic Bishop for much of Red River's history, along with most Euro-Canadian men, believed and taught that Métis women were abused in their Native environments and needed protection. At the same time, Red River men saw women as stabilizing influences that were critical to the success of the family. As this kind of patriarchy became dominant, Payment argues that women expressed their views less openly and were less likely to contradict their husbands, at least publicly. Nevertheless, Métis women continued to assume an influential and not entirely subordinate role in their society, despite the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church:

According to the teachings of the Church, the mother or wife had to submit to her husband. Such popular terms as "creature" or "the woman" suggested

that they had a lower status, but in most families the mother was roughly equal to the father. She was responsible for the children's education and for running the household. Even though the structure was clearly patriarchal, in practice the mother exercised some authority in the home, and children gained their independence when they came of age or left home. (Payment 1990, 39)

Payment suggests that the Cree and Ojibwa kept their culture until around 1900. She is persuaded, however, that the racist bigotry of the Victorian age caused the Métis to deny the heritage of their grandmothers. Are you persuaded by Payment's arguments?

Payment credits the persistence and survival of Batoche as a Métis community to Métis women and men equally. She makes particularly interesting observations about the role of women in securing compensation for losses incurred during the Riel Resistances and, later, in securing scrip. Can we apply Brown's observations on the role of Métis women in determining Métis identity? Did the Métis women at Batoche play a greater role in maintaining Métis culture because their menfolk were absent, either because they had to work for wages in the urbanizing West or because they were fleeing the consequences of rebellion?

Overview Questions

As you read the article by Payment, please consider the following questions.

1. Compare Kermoal's and Payment's treatments of the Riel Rebellion of 1885.
2. What was the role of women in reconstructing Batoche society?

Reading Assignment

"'La Vie en Rose?' Métis Women at Batoche, 1870-1920," by Diane Payment, in the *Reading File*.

Note-Taking Questions

While reading the article by Payment, jot down brief answers to the following note-taking questions.

1. Why is it difficult to find out what happened to Métis women between 1870 and 1920?
2. What does Payment mean by "la vie en rose"?
3. Why was life for women not "la vie en rose"?

4. Why were the Cree Saulteaux origins of the Métis rejected?
5. How did the missionaries change the role of Métis women?
6. What evidence suggests that the European ideal of femininity became increasingly the norm among Red River women in the later nineteenth century?
7. What were the differences in the status of English-speaking and French-speaking mixed-blood women in Red River?
8. How did female kinship ties influence migrations from Red River to Batoche?
9. What was the role of female Métis elders in community decision making?
10. What cultural influences dominated Riel's attitude toward women?
11. Did Native or French-Canadian attitudes toward women dominate at Batoche?
12. What was the role of the churches at Batoche in determining women's roles in society?
13. Why does Payment find the attitude of the churches "ambivalent and contradictory"?
14. What was the role of women in the 1885 Riel Rebellion?
15. What was the role of women in reconstructing the Batoche community?

Commentary

Significant differences are found among the works of Van Kirk, Payment, and Kermoal. Payment claims that Van Kirk's analysis has ignored the critical factor of class. Many English-speaking, Protestant, mixed-blood women and some well-placed French-speaking, mixed-blood women married well, particularly to businessmen. These marriages placed Métis and other mixed-blood women in a more socially prominent and, in most cases, more European environment. The cultural factors of elite women were different from those of the lower orders. Payment warns against drawing all conclusions from the examination of elite families.

Kermoal tends to see women as subordinate and as suffering within the confines of a world controlled by men. She sees little change in women's status between 1869 and 1885. Payment, on the other hand, concludes that the role of women changed dramatically. First, Payment emphasizes the growing influence of the Roman Catholic Church, which encouraged the subordination of women. Payment points out that the Roman Catholic

Church saw the family as a patriarchy in which women had the nurturing, child-rearing, and domestic roles. Van Kirk did not emphasize the role of the clergy in her article on the Ross family, although the Anglican clergy held similar views on the subordinate role of women and on the "benefits" of a patriarchal society.

Second, Payment stresses Métis endogamy, at least until 1900. She suggests that intermarriage reinforced a strong role for women in Métis society. Third, Payment suggests that after 1885 there was a growing "sisterhood" among Métis women. They experienced their struggles as a group, met with one another socially, and supported each other through their trials. According to Payment, Métis women believed they were equal to men, even if Euro-Canadians did not.

Payment has not followed through on all of her own suggestions, however. She indicates, for example, that most Batoche marriages were fragile and did not last. Did these marriages fail because the custom of marriage "à la façon du pays," which allowed fur traders to "turn off" their wives to another trader was still common? Was it because Métis women preferred the independence taught by their mothers and rejected a church-influenced patriarchy? This theory fits with Brown's argument that Métis women kept the culture and nurtured the family connections during long absences by their husbands.

Before Moving On . . .

Please be sure that you have answered, in point form or in essay form, the overview questions that appeared in this section.

Section 6.3

Summary

Several points are worth making about Métis history, particularly Métis women's history. First and foremost, the Métis are a colonized people. In general, European colonization has resulted in the subordination of indigenous peoples, and the even greater subordination and marginalization of women. Indigenous peoples have, of course, been participants in and have shaped the society that is the product of colonization. The best essay on the subject of colonization as it relates to Native women is the introduction by Mona Etienne and Eleanor Leacock to their edited work, *Women and Colonization Anthropological Perspectives* (1980, 1-24). Etienne and Leacock point out three important traps that are frequently encountered in women's cross-cultural Aboriginal studies. These traps also apply to the study of Métis women.

Trap 1: Aboriginal women's history is static

It is generally assumed that the history of women before European contact is static and is uniform across groups. The period before European contact is usually referred to as the "traditional" period. Although earlier writings assumed that "traditional" meant inferior to "modern," the reverse assumption is increasingly true today. The term "traditional" now often assumes gender equality or at least *greater* gender equality, and "modern" implies a gender hierarchy dominated by males. Brown suggests, for example, that Métis society was matriarchal *because* of its traditional roots. Anthropological research suggests there is no one traditional model of male-female relationships. Some Native societies gave women a great deal of power, but others oppressed them as much as or more than most European societies.

Payment adds the perspective of time to her observations by suggesting that if Métis society was patriarchal, it was only for a short time when the influence of the Roman Catholic Church was at its height. Furthermore, class affected women's influence on society. Were women more dominant in the lower classes where the influences of the Roman Catholic Church and white patriarchal males were less pronounced?

Trap 2: Women's private roles are subordinate to men's public roles in history

A general impression left by Van Kirk, Kermoal, and, to a lesser extent, Payment, is that men had a "public" role and women a "private" role. This dichotomy suggests a subordinated role for women in Métis society because private roles are often assumed to be less important than public ones. In both Kermoal's and Payment's analyses of the role of women in the 1885 Riel Rebellion, women were involved in a supportive role that derived from their "private" domestic lives. Kermoal might have examined

further the impact of the Riel Rebellions on male and female roles within the family. Payment argues that women may have been more dominant in their families after the 1885 Riel Rebellion simply because they were the only ones who could sustain the family emotionally and physically.

In addition, as industrial capitalism made its mark on the West, new roles emerged based on the division of labour. Men engaged in the wage economy as tripmen, farm hands, or trappers, and women narrowed their duties to child-rearing and the home. As capitalism strengthened its grip on the Canadian Plains and the Métis, did it reinforce or diminish the position of women within Métis society? Increasing racism, marginalization of the Métis people, and a still-dominant Roman Catholic Church left women trapped within an inextricable dilemma. As men left their families to find work in an unsympathetic and often racist urban world, did Métis society maintain some stability through rediscovering its tradition of matrilocality? Was this tendency at variance with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church on the subordination of women and with capitalist society's tendency to value male labour more highly? What were the resulting psychological tensions?

Trap 3: Presentism

A certain degree of presentism is found in all of the readings; that is, the readings are concerned with today's issues rather than with those facing the historic Métis woman. The readings all deal with the issue of "subordination" or gender equality and inequality. When historians are concerned with a single issue they tend to collect evidence from the archives solely on that issue. Brown, Van Kirk, Payment, and Kermoal are all concerned with gender relationships and, in the case of Brown and Payment, how these relationships changed through time. But were these issues paramount to Métis women?

Métis women's history is still in its infancy and has many themes that need to be explored. Insights can, however, be gleaned by the contemporary writings of Métis women. Among the best is Maria Campbell's extremely powerful *Halfbreed* (1973). This autobiography is an intensely personal story of Campbell's struggle against prejudice and poverty, and her ultimate discovery of herself. Campbell was not accepted by Euro-Canadian society because she was Métis. As a poor Métis woman with little education, she survived as a prostitute and, sometimes, as a waitress. Campbell suffered abuse from numerous men, though it is unclear whether she suffered most as a Native woman in a white-dominated society or as a poor woman in a generally patriarchal society. (For an excellent study of *Halfbreed*, see Gretchen M. Bataille and Kathleen Mullen Sands, *American Indian Women Telling Their Lives* (1984, 115-126).)

Campbell initially rejected her Native heritage because of the contempt of Euro-Canadians. She was saved by finally understanding the message of her great-grandmother, Cheechum. Cheechum was the guiding force throughout Campbell's life, and she provided the dignity and understanding that Campbell eventually needed to find pride in herself and her culture. It is worth observing (and Jennifer Brown would not be

surprised), that Campbell's grandmother was the holder and transmitter of tradition and dignity.

Assignment for Credit

When you have completed Unit 6, contact your tutor to discuss the learning objectives for this unit. Please refer to the *Student Manual* for more information on the evaluation activity for Unit 6.

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Supplementary Materials List

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Campbell, Maria. *Halfbreed*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973.

Etienne, Mona, and Eleanor Leacock, eds. *Women and Colonization: Anthropological Perspectives*. New York: Praeger, 1980.

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