Saskatchewan HISTORY

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The Saskatchewan Archives Board was established by provincial statute in 1945 under the Archives Act (RSS 1978, Ch. A-26). The board is responsible for appraising, acquiring, preserving and making accessible documentary records in all media on all aspects of the history of Saskatchewan as well as facilitating the management of the records of government institutions. Two offices, affiliated with the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina, are maintained to provide public access to a rich collection of archival materials for research and reference.

In addition, the Saskatchewan Archives Board has produced several authoritative works on the province's history and a number of reference booklets and directories to assist historical research about the province. The journal, Saskatchewan History, first issued in 1948, has earned a reputation for excellence, receiving awards in 1962 from the American Association for State and Local History and in 1970 from the Canadian Historical Association.

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Saskatchewan HISTORY

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COMING ARCHIVES ATTRACTIONS

SASKATCHEWAN ARCHIVES BOARD APPOINTS PROVINCIAL ARCHIVIST

Linda B. McIntyre has been appointed the new Provincial Archivist of Saskatchewan. The appointment took effect November 12, 2009. The Provincial Archivist is responsible for providing professional and strategic leadership and direction to all areas the Saskatchewan Archives and its operations and reports to the Saskatchewan Archives Board.

"The Board believes Ms. McIntyre has the necessary vision, knowledge and innovative skills to lead the Saskatchewan Archives forward and manage the institution in a seemingly ever-changing operating environment," commented the Chair of the Saskatchewan Archives Board, Trevor Powell.

Ms. McIntyre has been an archivist with the Saskatchewan Archives since December 1987. She recently served as Chief Archivist of the Records Processing Unit and Descriptive Standards Officer. "I am looking forward to working with the staff and Board of the Saskatchewan Archives to advance awareness of archives in the community and in government," McIntyre said.

Through the acquisition, preservation and provision of access to archival records, the Saskatchewan Archives enables the Government of Saskatchewan to fulfill its public trust in preserving the cultural resources of the Province.

SASKATCHEWAN ARCHIVES HOSTS REMEMBRANCE EVENT

On Wednesday, November 4, 2009, the Saskatchewan Archives held an event to commemorate Remembrance Day, to honour the contributions of the province's veterans from various wartime conflicts in which servicemen from Saskatchewan participated, and to recognize the role of the people of Saskatchewan who have supported the troops from the home front. Special guests read from the correspondence, diaries and reminiscences of servicemen from the Boer War, First World War, and Second World War.

The children, grandchildren and great grandchildren of Bill West attend the Remembrance event. Photographer: Darcie Khounnoraj. Photo courtesy of the Kipling Citizen.

The highlight of the event was the premiere public presentation of a recently acquired and only known extant Canadian World War II vinyl record, cut in 1944, as part of the Pepsi Cola's "The Voice of Your Man in Service" program. This item was donated to the Archives by the family of Bill West, of Langbank. A transcript of the recording was read – with some emotion – by Bill's son, Bert West, after which the record was played for the first time in public. Eric Manaigre, Regional Manager of Pepsi Cola, spoke briefly about Pepsi's wartime programs, and indicated that the Company's interest in reviving this type of programming was rejuvenated upon learning more about this unique acquisition. Pepsi also donated Pepsi Cola products for this event.

The Hon. Don Toth, Speaker of the Saskatchewan Legislature, served as Master of Ceremonies for the evening. Other guest readers included: The Hon. Delbert Kirsch, MLA for Batoche; Second World War veteran and former Regina deputy police chief, Denis Chisholm; Bruce Dawson from the Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport; and Brigadier Anthony Richardson of the 18th Battery of the 10th Field Regiment in the Royal Canadian Artillery.

GLIMPSES OF MÉTIS SOCIETY AND HISTORY IN NORTHWEST SASKATCHEWAN

By Keith Thor Carlson,
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The history of Saskatchewan, as University of Saskatchewan professor Bill Waiser has recently reminded us, is much more diverse and varied than a study of the southern grain belt alone would ever allow.[1] Where we once were comfortable seeing provincial history principally as the story of hard working immigrant settlers depicted alongside the growth of government institutions and economic enterprises, we now recognize that triumphal voices necessarily silenced other narratives. Where formerly the story of how people came to believe that 'Wheat was King' was used primarily to bolster resolve that surely one day wheat would become king again, we now appreciate more fully that the growth of the grain economy of the early twentieth century was facilitated by the demise of the earlier and equally grand bison economy - and that the latter was almost as fleeting as the former. Further, the southern herds of bison had their economic counterparts among the smaller fur bearing animals of the forested north. It was through the trapping and exporting of pelts two centuries ago that northwestern Saskatchewan became an integral node in an international commodities exchange that spanned the Atlantic world - and fueled the imaginations (while simultaneously filling the pockets) of eastern men who would come to perceive the west as a natural space for a young Canadian nation to expand into. It was from this northern fur trade context that the Métis of Northwest Saskatchewan emerged. And now, long after the buffalo and wheat have been eclipsed, the Métis remain. It is the Métis of the region anchored around the communities of La Loche, Buffalo Narrows, and Île-à-la-Crosse whose history is glimpsed through this special edition of *Saskatchewan History*.

If the Métis remain, certainly their history changes – or at least our understanding of it. That, clearly, is a central message of the five young

Teresa Carlson, Amanda Fehr, Katya MacDonald, Kevin Gambell conducting research in ILX Cemetery. Photo by Keith Thor Carlson.

historians whose work is profiled here. Whereas an earlier generation of outsiders typically interpreted Métis culture as though it consisted of the worst features of First Nations and European societies - that is to say, as though in coming together indigenous people and newcomers gained little and lost much[2] - today the ethnocentric way racism has served to marginalize and discredit the cultures and worldviews of people outside of the mainstream is clearly recognized. While many earlier historians discussed Métis society as though it was a static relic of the past, unable to find relevance in a world that was no longer dominated by the buffalo hunt and fur trade, the authors here identify the remarkable flexibility of Métis economic activity and its parallel expressions in Métis society and politics. Likewise, while much of the older Métis scholarship focused on the great men of Métis history - those figures linked to the political and military conflicts at Red River and Batoche - the authors in this volume recognize the value of also studying Métis history outside the context of the big events and big men. Perhaps more to the point, they recognize that local perspectives mediate what is regarded as big or important. Readers will find nothing resembling a "Red River myopia" within these pages.

What readers will find are thoughtful pieces of scholarship that reflect a type of historical enquiry that can only be accomplished when one is prepared to get out of the archives and spend

time in communities talking to people and getting to know them, and then reflecting deeply on the meaning of the words and stories that have been shared. Four of the five authors in this issue (Amanda Fehr, MacKinley Darlington, Kevin Gambell, and Katya MacDonald) were introduced to the Métis of Northwestern Saskatchewan in the summer of 2006 when they accompanied Prof. Brenda Macdougall and me to Île-à-la-Crosse to meet with leaders of the North West Saskatchewan Métis Council (NWSMC) and members of regional Métis communities. We had come to discuss plans for the creation of a Métis atlas. This project was part of a much larger research undertaking titled "Otipimsuak - The Free People," directed by Prof. Frank Tough at the University of Alberta, and Clement Chartier, president of the Métis National Council, in partnership with the NWSMC. Funding was provided through the federal Community University Research Alliance (CURA) programme. The Otipimsuak project aimed to create a comprehensive integrated analyses of Métis land use patterns, kinship, and the historical processes that modified use and tenure.

But in addition to engaging these big economic and political issues we also wanted to make sure that the atlas would be a book that Métis Elders could point to with pride as something that communicated their voices and perspectives accurately and respectfully to both non-Métis society and, perhaps more importantly, to the next generation of Metis youth. We wanted Métis people to know that southerners like us were interested in their history and wanted to learn about it. To that end, we asked local Métis Elders and cultural and community leaders to suggest additional historical research topics that were especially meaningful to them and that they would like to see included in the project. In answer, they pointed to their cemeteries and spoke of their respected ancestors; they highlighted the significance of spirituality and the role of the Virgin Mary in many Métis lives; and they talked about the micro histories that gave meaning to the neighbourhoods within the larger towns. While the atlas is still forthcoming and

Liam Haggarty on the lakeshore at Île-à-la-Crosse.
Photo by Clem Chartier, President, Métis National Council

work on these issues still ongoing, the articles published here build from aspects of the research and analysis that will be showcased there - they are, in effect, direct outcomes of those early conversations. As such, the authors and I are especially appreciative of the assistance, guidance, and participation of Métis community members, and especially of Dorothy Dubrule, George Malbouef, Doris Desjarlais, Liz Durocher, Marie Favel, Leon Gardiner, Philip Durocher, Don Favel, Georgina Morin, Vince Ahenakew, Tony Durocher, Don Favel, Irene Gardiner, Norma Malboeuf, Bea Mann, Colin Mann, Duane Favel, and Spud (Allen) Morin.

There was a time when scholars assumed they could visit an Aboriginal community for a few days or weeks over a summer and complete their research. Those days, thankfully, are long gone. Today Aboriginal people are no longer content to be mere "informants" in projects they have no control over. Indeed, over the past generation the balance of power has shifted so that researchers who do not commit to building and sustaining long-term relationships can expect to find their access to communities and individuals curtailed. The authors of these articles returned to the northwest often over the following months and years to do follow-up interviews and to meet new knowledge keepers who were recommended to them by earlier interviewees. They came back with follow-up questions and adjusted their research and analysis to reflect the guidance they received as community members became more familiar with both their projects and with

them, the students. Likewise, they found forums to present aspects of their research where Métis people would be able to see and comments on their findings. Some of the research, of course, has found its way into standard academic forums such as masters theses (as with Kevin Gambell and Katya MacDonald) or conference papers, but more indicative of the positive relationship established with the Métis communities was the large interpretive exhibit "Westside Stories: The Métis of Northwest Saskatchewan" that ran at the Diefenbaker Canada Centre for six months starting in the summer of 2007. In that exhibit student research and north west Métis voices were featured prominently and to high acclaim.[3]

From the university's perspectives, these kinds of long-term research alliances are especially prized. One-off projects are never as valuable as a series of projects emerging from a sustained programme of research where both academics and community intellectuals work to transition one research initiative into the next. Relationships are, therefore, key. Liam Haggarty, the fifth author in this issue of *Saskatchewan History*, is an excellent example of this. He came to the northwest in 2008 to ask new questions of information that had been gathered by Métis scholars Kathy Hodgson-Smith and Duane Favel, among others, in the context of earlier Traditional Land Use Studies. He did not merely mine the database for evidence, however. Rather, he worked with the Métis leadership to create a searchable index that would serve their purposes, and in exchange, he worked with them to identify research projects for himself that would be both intellectually stimulating and meaningful to the North West Saskatchewan Métis council. This is most appropriate since, as readers will see, his article examines the history of sharing in Métis society.

Thus, entering a doorway that had been opened through the goodwill and relationships that Fehr, Darlington, Gambell, and MacDonald, among others, had worked so hard to establish, a second round of research relationships was launched. It is all these authors, and my, sincere hope that the Métis people who made the research so fulfilling and rewarding will be pleased with the results they see here. Of course, the authors do not expect all Métis people to agree with everything written in these pages - the interpretations are the authors' alone and their academic reputations depend on their being able to bring an independent gaze to their studies. They do hope, however,

that Métis people will recognize not only the goodwill and appreciation that they feel, but that Métis readers will find the words on these pages reflecting aspects of Métis history in ways that are intelligible and meaningful to them as Métis people of the North West.

Our lead article "Métis Welfare: A History of Economic Exchange in Northwest Saskatchewan," by Liam Haggarty, invites us to re-examine the history of the fur trade and subsequent government welfare policy in light of cultural understandings of sharing. Building on the scholarship of Frank Tough and Brenda Macdougall, among others, Haggarty observes that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was the absence of a social support network, and not a lack of wealth or material goods, that signified impoverishment to Métis people. Sharing and welfare, he argues, involved newcomers plugging into an indigenous socio-econonic network (*wahkootowin*), and indigenous people being integrated into a global economy that privileged private capital accumulation and placed value on manufactured prestige items. A hybrid system emerged that synthesized these two approaches to wealth and welfare to help create a new indigeneity. In the end, Haggarty shows us not only that the history of Métis welfare and sharing in northwest Saskatchewan is far more complicated and muddied than contemporary stereotypes and existing scholarship suggest, but that the study of welfare can shed light on broader issues of Native-newcomer relations and Métis identity in Canada while helping us understand alternative ways of interpreting welfare and state-citizen relations.

Katya MacDonald's article "Community and Aboriginality in an Aboriginal Community: Relating to Histories in and of Île-à-la-Crosse" argues that place names "make reference to varied and changing ways that these places have existed in people's pasts and experiences, and in reference to definitions of both community and Aboriginality." She is particularly interested in attending to the ways that community members' and academics' analyses interact with each other to reveal the specific impacts of colonialism and the reinforcement of community-based definitions of Aboriginal identity. At its core, her article explores the questions of what makes a community a community, and what makes some communities Aboriginal communities. She recognizes that creating identity is a complex and negotiated

MacKinley Darlington plotting Virgin Mary Shrines using a GPS unit. Photo by Keith Thor Carlson

process that is played out in the everyday interactions of people. To understand this process, MacDonald explores the way historical stories are shared, and what they say about various social relationships.

Through Métis relationships with the Virgin Mary, Amanda Fehr and MacKinley Darlington challenge us to examine certain assumptions about not only the Métis of Northwest Saskatchewan, but of the iconic Christian mother figure herself. The local, they reveal, sheds light on the global, and in so doing helps us place regional Aboriginal history within the context of broader international issues and developments while at the same time seeing how the global, once released from the metropole, itself becomes in part a product of the regions that it seeks to transform. In bringing Catholicism to Northwest Saskatchewan early missionaries and French Canadian fur traders laid an important foundation stone for the region's current identity. But certain iconic Catholic figures, tenants, and symbols soon slipped beyond the control of the Church hierarchy and became indigenous. The Virgin Mary is the most prominent of these as she is, to Métis believers, as much a local force and figure as she is a Catholic one.

Kevin Gambell invites us to join him in a

close study of oral history and spatial patterns associated with Métis cemeteries. The layout of grave sites and the stories behind not only the people but the plots reveal broad historical trends and highlight the transference of power from the Catholic Oblate missionaries to the Métis people themselves. Gambell's study of the Île-à-la-Crosse cemetery's history reveals a history of place making and place breaking; where once priests enforced rules that kept certain people from being included within the sanctified grounds of the cemetery, fences have now been moved to allow those who were not baptized to be included in the hallowed grounds demarcating the resting place of ancestor's remains. Within the expanded cemetery boundaries are places marked and unmarked that those who have listened to their Elders know to be sites of relatives, clergy, and the mass burial sites of influenza victims. The cemeteries reveal history, Gambell shows, in multiple ways.

Neither individually, nor when taken as a whole, do these articles reflect a complete picture of Northwest Métis history and society. It would be presumptuous and foolish to assume that any outsider, or group of outsiders, could ever accomplish that. Rather, each article here offers insightful glimpses into the world and history of Métis people that when taken as a whole provide a window through which readers might find a starting place for further enquiry. The authors hope that what they have composed will serve as launching points not only for further dialogue between themselves and Métis people, but for between Métis people and other Saskatchewan residents as well. As such, their aim is less to present new historical facts (thought that is important) than to invite readers to reflect upon new historical interpretations and understandings that are built upon a series of sincere conversations with Métis people.

There are, in short, exciting things happening here in Saskatchewan, not the least of which involves generous Métis people in the provinces' northwest and bright eager young scholars at the University of Saskatchewan working together to reveal and better understand important features of the provinces rich and varied history.

Endnotes

1   Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History,* (Calgary, Alberta: Fifth House, 2005).
2   Marcel Giraud, *Le Metis Canadien,* (Paris: Institut d'Ethnologie, Musée Nationale d'Histoire Naturelle, 1945).
3   "Westside Stories: The Métis of Northwest Saskatchewan" Curated by M. Teresa Carlson, Brenda Macdougall, and Keith Thor Carlson, Diefenbaker Canada Centre, May 2007- November 2007.

MÉTIS WELFARE: A HISTORY OF ECONOMIC EXCHANGE IN NORTHWEST SASKATCHEWAN, 1770-1870

By Liam Haggarty

Government welfare and poverty are prominent themes in the Métis history of Northwest Saskatchewan. Beginning in the 1950s, government and academia conducted a number of studies aimed at quantifying and explaining the widespread welfare dependency that was often seen as a defining characteristic of northern Métis communities. Explanations offered by earlier scholarship, such as historian Marcel Giraud's *The Métis in the Canadian West*, cited racial mixing, specifically the degrading effect of Indian blood, as the source of Métis primitivism and inherent impoverishment.[1] Social scientists of the 1960s then posited a different theory. Rather than an innate racial defect, "social disintegration," as they called it, was "an outgrowth of the difficulties the Métis have faced and continue to face in adjusting to the demands of village life."[2] Poverty, from this perspective, is not a natural trait but a by-product of assimilation and what contemporary scholars generally refer to as modernity. To some extent, this argument is related to more recent scholarship analysing the devastating effects reserves, residential schools, unfair legislation, and other forms of colonial and state oppression have had on aboriginal people. In *'As Their Natural Resources Fail'*, for example, historical geographer Frank Tough documents the processes through which the Canadian government seized control of the lands and resources that now constitute Manitoba and rendered its indigenous peoples largely destitute.[3] To date, these post-colonial works provide the most thorough and persuasive explanation for high rates of welfare dependency among aboriginal and Métis peoples.

Absent from the majority of this scholarship, however, is a critical engagement with the complex cultural meanings and manifestations of welfare and poverty. Recent ethnohistorical scholarship has begun to focus explicitly on aboriginal groups'

The Laliberte family is one of a number of prominent Métis families whose ancestry can be traced to the early relationships forged between European traders and local aboriginal peoples Photographed circa 1900, from left to right: Victor, Marie Adel, Adolph, Margaret, and Alexander.
Saskatchewan Archives Board Photo S-B1153

complex socio-cultural structures and how these structures mediated their perceptions of and interactions with settler societies. In *Makúk: Work and Welfare in Aboriginal Non-Aboriginal Relations*, for example, historian John Lutz demonstrates that because ideas of work and labour among Lekwungen and Tsilhqot'in peoples were very different from those of non-aboriginal British Columbians, cultural misunderstanding prevailed both at the time and in the historical record.[4] Similarly, my own research in Northwest Saskatchewan and elsewhere suggests that Métis and aboriginal understandings of welfare diverge in important ways from those espoused by the state.[5] From this perspective, exploring Métis and aboriginal systems of sharing, reciprocity, wealth distribution, and social obligation seems crucial to the history of welfare in Canada, but, aside from Lutz, few historians have done so.[6] By surveying

ethnographic and historical records within a framework rooted in ethnohistory, this article tells the story of Métis welfare by engaging both Métis and Euro-Canadian conceptualisations of social welfare throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. What I find is that during this period, welfare, defined here as the sharing of food and other basic resources to members of extended socio-economic networks without the expectation of immediate reciprocation (but with the intentions of reinforcing long-term relationships), was a crucial component of the affiliations between Métis peoples and Euro-Canadians, most of whom were engaged in the fur trade. More than economic transactions, welfare payments involved the recognition and affirmation of lasting, even permanent, social compacts not only between the provider and recipient but also between their extended family networks. For the most part, these agreements were mutually beneficial with members from both sides benefiting from the economic stability they afforded. In fact, and in contrast to modern aboriginal welfare dependency, Euro-Canadians depended most heavily on these relationships for daily subsistence. At this time, it was the absence of a support network, and not a lack of wealth or material goods, that signified impoverishment.

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, federal and, later, provincial authorities began to replace fur traders within these longstanding social compacts. In the process, welfare agreements were dislocated from their cultural contexts and restructured, from a government perspective, as tools for pacification and assimilation. Although fur trade companies also had relied on aspects of these welfare systems to minimise conflict and increase trade, they, unlike the government, were eager to preserve and strengthen the broader economic relationships, which were regarded as being in their best interest. From various governments' perspectives, welfare payments increasingly came to be seen as a financial burden from which settler society was eager to divest itself. Enduring, mutually beneficial, familial relationships were thus replaced by impersonal, bureaucratic, and, in theory at least, temporary transactions, and impoverishment became synonymous with a lack of material affluence. By examining the history of economic exchange in nineteenth century Northwest Saskatchewan, this article resituates current debates about aboriginal and Métis welfare dependency within these historical and cultural contexts and challenges prevailing notions of welfare, poverty, and economics.

Extended families, or wahkootowins in Cree, often lived and worked together seasonally to ensure group prosperity and strengthen social ties. This photograph, taken by the Half-Breed Commission, shows members of the Métis-Cree wahkootowin camped at the north end of Green Lake in 1900. Saskatchewan Archives Board Photo S-B9755

INDIGENOUS SYSTEMS OF SHARING

In the Métis community of Île à la Crosse, direct trade between local aboriginal people and traders began in the last decades of the eighteenth century, but the area's Métis history begins well before that. As recent scholarship has demonstrated, ethnogenesis[7] is only one aspect of Métis culture;[8] equally important are its socio-cultural customs and institutions, many of which were learned from local indigenous groups already living in the area, and the collective identities they helped generate. Because Île à la Crosse was home to Cree peoples, as well as Dene (or

Chipewyan) peoples residing just to the north, examining Métis culture and systems of exchange requires an understanding of the Cree and, to a lesser extent, Dene structures that preceded them.

In the eighteenth century, both Cree and Dene peoples were living in relatively small, highly mobile, family-based communities. According to anthropologist Regina Flannery, Cree communities consisted "mainly of the single family or very close kin in small groups bound together by blood and marriage ties"[9] and, for the most part, were patriarchal and patrilocal. Anthropologist Kerry Abel records similar small social groupings among the Dene but notes that larger groupings of several families were more common when resources permitted.[10] Thus, although daily living groups may have been composed primarily of close kin, economic networks extended to more distant relatives. Because access to local resources, such as game, fish, and berries, varied seasonally, regionally, and annually, alliances were formed between families to ensure subsistence needs were always met. A family that was particularly proficient in hunting moose, for example, might seek to align itself with a family that spent more time fishing. By increasing economic diversity, these alliances bolstered family and group resilience.

One of the most effective ways of establishing alliances was through marriages, which often were often arranged.[11] More than a union between two individuals, marriage in local Cree and Dene society joined families together and provided the new in-laws with access to one another's resource base and labour pool. In the process, the families became part of a structure of *wahkootowin*, a Cree word which, as used by Native Studies scholar Brenda Macdougall, "defined relationships, prescribed patterns of behaviour between relatives and non-relatives, and linked people and communities in a web of relationships" that also included the natural and spiritual worlds.[12] Through marriage, spouses, their parents, grandparents, children, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and cousins as well as places and deceased ancestors became part of the same economic community and, thus, were required to abide by its protocols.

A central purpose of wahkootowins, according to Macdougall, was to "ensure reciprocity, assistance, and mutual responsibility."[13] Although I generally agree with this definition, this article suggests that economic considerations were not just a feature of family exchange networks but rather a key determinant thereof, and part of a larger pattern previously identified by scholars in other aboriginal communities.[14] Networked family members were obliged to share resources with one another, especially in times of scarcity, without the expectation of immediate reciprocation. The ethnographic record indicates that this type of sharing was fundamental to Dene and Wood and Plains Cree societies. According to Abel, although formal social organisation among the Dene was limited, reciprocity trumped individual freedom when it came to accessing resources. Hunters, for example, were required to share the produce of their labour with the less capable in *wahkootowin*-like protocols.[15] As anthropologist David Mandelbaum notes, this economic generosity was a prerequisite of power in Cree society. A chief, for example, was required to give freely of his possessions, especially for the benefit of the poor, which often occurred in public venues, such as the 'Give Away Dance' (*pa·kahkus*) or the 'Sitting Up Until Morning' ceremony (*e·wapana·pthtcikehk*). Similarly, along with policing the buffalo hunt, dancing, and feasting, providing aid to the needy was a primary responsibility of the elite warrior or dancer society in Plains Cree culture; *Okihtcitaw*, the term for warrior, could identify both reckless bravery as well as generosity.[16] During his upbringing, *Ahtahkakoop*, a prominent Cree chief of the nineteenth century, was continually being told stories by elders that emphasised the importance of sharing and selflessness so as to prepare him for life as a leader.[17] Acquiring and maintaining power in Cree and Dene society was thus predicated on the accumulation and subsequent redistribution of wealth. On the other hand, hoarding, interpreted as selfishness, was considered detrimental to the collective good and was firmly chastised. As these reciprocal mercantile fur trade relationships were replaced by bureaucratic welfare agreements designed by the government to create a capitalist society of autonomous individuals, cultural tension and conflict was almost inevitable.

These early indigenous networks and systems of sharing effectively created a safety net, a form of social welfare, available to all members of the *wahkootowin*. Poor people were not those who lacked material goods or wealth but those without the family connections that made them part of a viable extended economic network. In this context,

knowledge of ancestry and family history was extremely valuable; poverty was synonymous with unconnectedness.[18]

Impoverished is exactly what fur traders were when they arrived in the Île à la Crosse area in the 1770s and 1780s – unconnected and impoverished. Although they could conduct trade with local aboriginal peoples, they were, at least initially, interpreted as outsiders with no connection to the land, its ancestors,

The Hudson's Bay Company Post, seen here from Lac Île à la Crosse in 1908, was an economic, social, and cultural landmark in Île à la Crosse for more than 150 years. Saskatchewan Archives Board Photo S-B8937

or contemporary family networks. It would not be long, however, before relationships were forged between these traders and aboriginal women, thereby transforming outsiders into insiders. For Dene and Cree peoples, their dealings with Euro-Canadians, informed by their previous encounters with various "others," signified new economic opportunities and the potential for greater economic security. Euro-Canadians approached these alliances from an equally logical, but culturally distinct, perspective that dictated its own rules for regulating economic interaction between self and other. Sometimes these systems were compatible and the results were mutually beneficial; other times they clashed, producing significant cultural miscommunications – especially with regard to social welfare.

THE FUR TRADE AND ABORIGINAL WELFARE

Just as Cree and Dene societies are crucial for understanding Métis culture, so too is the history of the fur trade, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), and their socio-cultural context. Above all, the Company, as it was known, functioned to generate profit. Chartered in 1670, it was one of England's first joint stock companies, a new economic entity designed specifically to generate wealth for its shareholders.[19] Within this emerging mercantile economy, individual freedom and self-sufficiency trumped the common good and communal cooperation, and sharing and unrequited reciprocity, especially beyond the nuclear family, was becoming increasingly less common. Charity

or welfare was considered the responsibility of churches and private organisations; only in extreme cases would the state intervene and even then it did so not out of social or legal obligation but through its own benevolence.[20] With the freedom of the individual and the market at its core, this *laissez-faire* socio-cultural system contrasted with its more communal and interventionist Cree and Dene counterparts.

But the HBC neither ignored nor dismissed aboriginal economies. People indigenous to the areas inhabited by desired fur-bearing animals could procure, process, and transport hides far more cheaply and efficiently than could European immigrants, thereby making them crucial to the Company's enterprise. In fact, because the HBC for much of its history restricted its operations to the shores of Hudson's Bay, it was entirely dependent on aboriginal people traveling to its posts. To support this arrangement and ensure friendly relations, key aspects of eastern aboriginal barter economies, as perceived and understood by Company traders and officials, were incorporated into the western fur trade.

Along with the "made beaver" system, wherein all European goods and "country produce" were valued in relation to whole beaver pelts, two of the most important aspects of aboriginal culture integrated into the trade were the gift-giving ceremony, which preceded virtually every exchange involving the HBC during its first two hundred years, and the credit system, which provided aboriginal hunters with goods in advance of their hunts on the condition that the furs they acquired would be sold back to the Company. Typically, HBC

traders in Cree territory gave gifts to affirm or renew friendships for the purposes of immediate and future trade. When a trading party arrived, the Chief Factor welcomed the Native leaders, or "captains," into his residence and provided them with elaborate "captain's outfits" and presented gifts of tobacco, pipes, brandy, prunes, bread and other foods that they, in turn, shared with other members of their party according to the precepts of *wahkootowin*. During and after negotiations, further presentations were made of food, weapons, tools, utensils, medicines, and luxury items.[21] In the fall before setting out to procure furs, captains and other hunters also received various items as credit from the HBC. In return for this act of sharing, the hunters committed to selling their furs to those posts that supplied them. As long as there remained few trade posts in Western Canada – York Factory, for example, served all the lands that have become Southern Saskatchewan and Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario – the vast majority of these debts were repaid fully and on time. Combined with the gift-giving ceremony, the credit system aimed to cultivate loyalty and solidarity among aboriginal hunters.[22] As Tough notes, the HBC accepted these "overhead or social cost[s] of production" as integral to the successful execution of the trade.[23]

For aboriginal peoples, these practices were not simply business expenses, they were symbolic acts that connected the Company to key components of aboriginal networks, both economic and social. As Abel notes, for the Dene, "a trade relationship was more than an economic agreement: it was a political and social arrangement involving reciprocal responsibilities,"[24] very reminiscent of the protocols governing Cree *wahkootowins*. In Cree communities, as noted by Arthur Ray, Jim Miller, and Frank Tough, these ceremonies helped establish and maintain respectful and lasting trading relationships both with other aboriginal groups and, later, fur trade companies.[25] Social networking was also important. In 1802, for example, aboriginal people around Grand Portage near Lake Superior "took great pity" on George Nelson, a young trader from Montreal: "One of them adopted me as his son, & told his own son, a lad of about my age, to consider me as his brother & to treat me so…". The next year, Nelson reported that another Indian tried "to give [Nelson] his daughter" in order to solidify their relationship.[26] According to Mandelbaum, gift-giving "was the socially accepted method of mollifying an aggrieved person and in this way the chief eased troublesome situations."[27] More than overhead costs of production, gift-giving and the extension of credit to fur traders were important social rituals and thus fit very comfortably within Cree and Dene understandings of what constituted proper behaviour between members of extended economic networks.

In the late eighteenth century, greater competition between European trading companies in the fur trade triggered an increase in the amount and value of gifts and credit available to aboriginal hunters as well as a renewed focus on westward expansion. This increased competition resulted from the emergence of competing firms, namely the North West Company (NWC) and the "XYZ" Company, which, rather than waiting for aboriginal middlemen to bring furs east, travelled deep into western lands to trade directly with aboriginal hunters. It quickly became clear that if the HBC was to maintain its dominance in the trade, it could no longer wait on the shores of Hudson's Bay for furs to be delivered. Instead, outposts would have to be established, especially in the northern subarctic, to ensure the supply of furs was not intercepted by the competition. The HBC also increased its gift and credit systems so as to stabilise the power and prestige of its trading captains and preserve their loyalty.[28] Thus, although *wahkootowins* and *wahkootowin*-like relationships were crucial to successful exchange relationships, they were not rigidly prescriptive. Cree and Dene peoples, particularly those with expansive socio-economic networks connecting them to multiple traders and posts, could discriminate between different relationships based on their needs and resources available at a given time. Maximising profits, therefore, was not incompatible with indigenous systems of sharing; at appropriate times, exchange networks could be mobilised to generate considerable wealth.

It was within this context of increased competition and economic opportunity that Île à la Crosse became a site of great importance for both the HBC and NWC. Strategically located near the confluence of the Canoe, Deep, and Beaver Rivers and connected to the historically significant English, now Churchill, river system, Île à la Crosse became a sort of gateway to the northwest, and an ideal location for a trading post. Additionally, Lac Île à la Crosse was rich in fish and waterfowl and the area, prone to spring flooding, was the location of large gatherings of both Cree

and Dene families. As a result, a number of successive posts were established in and around Île à la Crosse between 1770 and 1820, but due to harsh winters and inter-company competition, which regularly escalated to violence, they were often abandoned seasonally or destroyed.

During this time, fur traders and aboriginal women around Île à la Crosse entered into sexual unions. The motivations for these unions were many and today often unknowable. But regardless of their purpose, these relationships clearly benefited both parties economically. Aboriginal women afforded their families access to rare and highly valued resources and trade items while traders attached themselves to extended family networks. This connectedness was a source of great wealth for early traders, many of whom relied heavily on their wives and relatives for support. For example, in attempting to establish a Fort at Île à la Crosse, explorer and trader Peter Fidler subsisted almost exclusively on the fish caught by his Cree wife and family.[29] Economically, Fidler and others like him at this time were largely dependent on aboriginal social welfare and the socio-cultural protocols that compelled Cree and Dene peoples to share resources with their in-laws, even if they were perhaps ignorant of what was transpiring.

In the absence of local family ties, traders at Île à la Crosse relied almost exclusively on the distribution of gifts and credit to build economic relationships with local aboriginal people and thus avoid the impoverishment that came with being unconnected. As Giraud notes, aboriginal people had no obligation to share with the newcomers: "Aware how necessary the riches of their territory were to the fur traders, the tribes of the plains [and woodlands] were able to force the Hudson's Bay Company into a dependence that, in George Simpson's view, made the Indians arrogant and hard to please."[30] Euro-Canadians living in and around Île à la Crosse were thus at least occasionally dependent on aboriginal relief from the 1770s well into the nineteenth century.

This dependency was also detrimental to trade. According to Macdougall, "unconnected men - men without *wahkootowins* - were seriously disadvantaged and potentially liabilities to trade."[31] For example, on his way to re-establishing a post in the area in August 1805, William Linklater assured a group of Indians he encountered that "the English from Churchill would always supply them with the necessities if they would make themselves deserving, by giving to the traders these from their yearly hunts" and advanced them cloth, a blanket, powder, ball, and shot, tobacco, knives, brandy, and other small articles. In subsequent months, he continued to gift brandy, tobacco, and ammunitions to "obey his instructions" (that is, to try to ensure Native people's compliance and indebtedness), and even ventured to aboriginal camps to advance hunters and their relations goods totalling about 15-20 skins per person. Over the next several decades, Linklater's successors at the post continued to advance provisions and bestow gifts in order to develop close relationships with the aboriginal people there. By attempting to render aboriginal people in debt and dependent on European goods, these traders were in effect replicating the socio-cultural protocols (involving loyalty, reciprocity, and solidarity), evident in *wahkootowin* relationships.[32] And when, after the 1821 merger with the NWC, the HBC decided to remain a presence at inland posts such as Île à la Crosse, formal marriage alliances supplemented the economic affiliations traders had previously sought to establish.[33]

FROM COMPANY RELIEF TO GOVERNMENT WELFARE

Throughout the nineteenth century traders became increasingly familiar with Île à la Crosse, its resources, and local indigenous peoples. More importantly, the offspring of the area's first unions between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, whom Macdougall calls the Métis "proto-generation", were becoming adults and starting families of their own.[34] As members of families familiar with the fur trade and who already had entered into sexual relationships with traders, they helped to forge lasting relationships between aboriginal or Métis families and Company traders. More than any other factor, these personal ties facilitated trading, sharing, and all other forms of exchange much as they had in pre-contact times. The difference here was that the parties belonged not only to different groups but to distinct cultures, each with its own socio-economic protocols and expectations.

In subsequent decades, the number of children of mixed ancestry increased rapidly and a new cultural group emerged that drew on both aboriginal and European customs and practices. Rules governing social interaction and proper behaviour, for example, were heavily influenced by

Métis family in Île à la Crosse, 1908.
Saskatchewan Archives Board Photo S-B8969

Cree and, to a lesser extent, Dene antecedents,[35] and were partly responsible for the relatively peaceful integration of Métis communities into the area. According to Macdougall, the region around Île à la Crosse was gradually transformed into "a Metis homeland not only by virtue of their occupation of the territory, but through their acknowledgement of the Cree and Dene communities of which these mixed-ancestry peoples were a part, their social world based on reciprocal sharing, and respectful behaviour between family members."[36] More importantly for the purposes of this study, the economic diversity and stability offered by extended family networks in Cree society, as Spaulding notes, remained significant; individuals that lacked these ties were considered impoverished. Daily activities, on the other hand, reflected their Euro-Canadian ancestry. For example, although hunting, fishing, and gathering berries and other foodstuffs remained critically important to Métis economies, working for the post, either as an employee or

contractor, became customary, as did a more sedentary lifestyle centered on the post.[37] In the process, a new culture emerged with its own language, dress, arts, symbols, ideology, and identity. More than merely a people "in between," the Île à la Crosse Métis, Macdougall notes, came to constitute a distinct cultural group.[38]

Over time, such distinct communities became further entrenched as Métis peoples sought relationships and marriages with other community members as well as aboriginal people and Euro-Canadians. In the process, everyone, including traders themselves, became incorporated into a complex web of overlapping social and economic structures. As native studies scholar Wynona Wheeler notes,

> *Whether traders understood or fully accepted their new roles as family members is, in some respects, inconsequential - they (and their children) were regarded as family and, more importantly, were socialized as family members. Furthermore, traders necessarily acted according to the dictates of wahkootowin in the English River District in order to be profitable.[39]*

As a result, Euro-Canadians connected to a local *wahkootowin* were provided for in times of need. Even the post itself could call on additional labour and provisions – and it often did.[40] So too did the Catholic Church which, after becoming a central part of Île à la Crosse in 1846, became attached to local families through shared religion and godparentage.[41] As Giraud notes, this posed an ideological problem for both the HBC and the Catholic Church. Although both institutions wanted to instil in Métis peoples a more agrarian, sedentary lifestyle, they were dependent on the produce of Métis economic activities, namely hunting, fishing, and trapping, for much of the nineteenth century.[42]

In return for supporting the post and church, Métis families, Macdougall argues, "expected access to the Company's food resources and demanded support particularly during times of personal hardship."[43] From their perspective, it was incumbent upon the HBC to do so in accordance with their longstanding socio-economic agreements. It also made sense on a purely practical level. Due to the Company's increasingly elaborate infrastructure, transporting foodstuffs and other necessities from one region to another was done far more efficiently by the HBC than by aboriginal groups.[44] Combined with

the positive effect relief practices had on trade relationships, this compelled the Company to oblige Métis and aboriginal requests for relief. By the 1860s, the same items routinely presented as gifts and on credit were also being given regularly to widows, orphans, "old Indians", and other people not directly involved in the fur trade.[45] Sometimes, recipients were also provided with ball and shot which they could then gift to hunters in exchange for a portion of their produce.[46] In 1869, the Company extended these benefits to Île à la Crosse "pensioners", most of whom were either descendants of former Company employees, hunters no longer able to work, and/or members of powerful families.[47] Unlike Company servants and retired traders, these "freemen" were not eligible for HBC pensions. Local officials, however, seemed compelled by the tenets of *wahkootowin* to provide relief to local Métis people even if it was not approved by Company administrators, in some cases justifying freemen pensions as necessary safeguards against the establishment of rival trading companies.[48] So entrenched were the relationships between local agents and Métis peoples that agents in outlying posts, such as Île à la Crosse, continued to provide relief even after it became the legal responsibility of the Canadian State.[49] On a smaller scale, the church, at the conclusion of the Sunday service, would distribute rations of fish and potatoes to families connected with the post.[50] In effect, the Company and Church were reciprocating, at least in the eyes of the recipients, the relief afforded to them for generations by aboriginal and Métis peoples.

The social overhead costs associated with providing relief to Métis peoples, however, eventually became prohibitive for a company designed to generate profit. Beginning in 1821 with the elimination of widespread competition and continuing through the 1860s, HBC officials had endeavoured to limit expenditures on gifts and provisioning with little success; maintaining friendly relationships with local aboriginal and Métis peoples was simply too important to privilege profit over reciprocity.[51] With each passing year – especially those in which fur prices fell, the impetus for reducing these costs became stronger.[52] By the mid-1860s, Company officials and shareholders were keen to discontinue social assistance payments altogether but remained weary of abandoning its recipients, if only to protect its reputation. The Confederation of British North America in 1867 thus provided the Company the opportunity to transfer its financial, cultural, and social responsibilities for aboriginal peoples while maintaining its commercial interests in the newly formed state. In some cases, the HBC was even able to continue providing relief without paying the bill.

Eager to settle the lands west of Ontario while avoiding the cost of the Indian Wars that characterised American expansion, Prime Minister John Macdonald struck a deal with the London Committee to enlist the help of the HBC. Canada's purchase of Rupert's Land in 1870 had already extended the Dominion into the Company's former domain, but the government lacked the resources and infrastructure to assert its control over the region, as evidenced by the Red River Rebellion.[53] "It would be of advantage to us, & no doubt it would be of advantage to you," Macdonald wrote Company shareholders in June 1871, "that we should be allowed to make use of your officers & your posts for the purpose of making those payments to the Indians which will have to be made annually by the Government of Canada in order to satisfy their claims & keep them in good humour."[54] From the perspective of the HBC, this agreement allowed it to continue administering relief – which was becoming a rather lucrative enterprise – and, following the signing of the numbered treaties, annuities to aboriginal and Métis peoples without having to bear the financial burden.[55] The new Canadian system thus allowed the HBC to honour its *wahkootowin* responsibilities, including Catholic godparentage, and uphold feudalistic notions of *noblesse oblige*
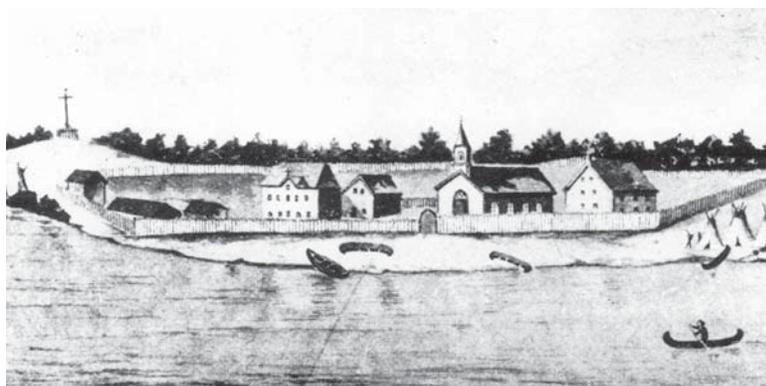
Established in 1846, the Oblate Mission at Île à la Crosse quickly became an important part of Métis spirituality and remains a prominent part of the community today. This 1860 sketch coincided with the arrival of the Sisters of Charity, or Grey Nuns, who worked as teachers and nurses, as well as missionaries. Saskatchewan Archives Board Photo R-A24431

while simultaneously generating a profit. Within ten years, the HBC was managing almost a half million dollars annually in relief payments and another quarter-million in treaty annuities.

From the government's perspective, paying annuities was often more desirable than providing relief. The costs associated with them were more predictable and they were part of an overall strategy to extinguish aboriginal title to lands and resources coveted by the new nation. However, in less agriculturally desirable areas, like the Île à la Crosse region, the federal government initially refused to negotiate treaties despite repeated requests from local aboriginal and Métis peoples who sought the economic benefits and security treaties supposedly offered. In 1904, Indian Commissioner David Laird explained the government's position, stating that "there was no particular necessity that the treaty should extend to that region. It was not a territory through which a railway was likely soon to run, nor was it frequented by miners, lumberman, fishermen, or other whites making use of the resources of its soil or waters."[56] In other words, it was cheaper in terms of both financial and social capital to offer relief in lieu of treaties.

Unlike the aims of the HBC, which necessitated the distribution of relief in accordance with longstanding socio-economic alliances, the government's ultimate goal was western settlement and nation building. Beginning in the 1870s, co-operative relationships based on sharing and mutual reciprocity among members of extended kin networks were replaced, from the government's perspective at least, by legal contracts that made aboriginal people subordinate to the state. Over time, it was expected that aboriginal and Métis people would assimilate into Canadian society and government welfare, although a crucial component of the assimilation process, would become obsolete.[57] According to Spaulding, the gradual retreat of the HBC at this time caused "socially consequential ethnic distinctions" in Île à la Crosse to become "grossly exaggerated" and granted the local store manager "absolute authority" over Métis welfare.[58]

Closely linked to the fur trade and crucial to its success, many Métis men, like the ones pictured here circa. 1873, worked for the Hudson's Bay Company and other fur trade companies either full-time or seasonally. Some also became free traders, or "freemen," unattached to any one company or post. Saskatchewan Archives Board Photo R-B9745

Combined with the devastating effects wrought by reserves, the residential school system, unfair legislation, and other forms of colonial and state oppression,[59] this history helps contextualise and explain the dramatic increase in Métis welfare dependency over the last century and especially the past five decades.

Despite this apparent breakdown of intercultural economic relationships, sharing and other fundamental aspects of *wahkootowin* remain evident among modern Métis families in Northwest Saskatchewan. According to Richard Abbey of Meadow Lake, most sharing is done with family, friends, elders, and people who otherwise would not get anything from the hunt. Victor and Steven Lariviere, from Pinehouse and Jans Bay respectively, also share with their family, saying its part of culture and shows appreciation, especially to elders. In Canoe Lake, Richard Desjardins continues to hunt as a way to share, and Toby Lemaigre of La Loche says moose meat must be shared because selling it is bad luck. Robert Gardiner and Angel Sylvester, however, note the decline in sharing during the past 50 years or so. While Gardiner, who lives in Beauval, blames increasingly restrictive government legislation for the lack of food available to share, Sylvester believes government relief and welfare have curtailed widespread sharing.[60] Much as they did hundreds of years ago, aboriginal and Métis peoples continue to adapt to their local environments, which are

now mediated by government regulations and industrial development, and resources, which now include wage labour and social assistance, to maximise their economic stability and resilience.[61] The economic and social relationships forged in the process demonstrate the historical and contemporary significance of sharing and other forms of economic cooperation in Northwest Saskatchewan communities.

CONCLUSION

The history of Métis welfare and sharing in Northwest Saskatchewan is far more complicated and muddied than contemporary stereotypes and existing scholarship suggest. Beginning in the 1770s, fur traders and aboriginal people formed semi-permanent social compacts between extended family networks that facilitated sharing and trade and obliged all involved to care for one another's well-being. Rooted in both Euro-Canadian and aboriginal worldviews, these alliances were crucial not only to the fur trade and peaceful intercultural interaction, but also to the emergence of a unique Métis collective identity. The social safety nets they provided greatly benefited several generations of traders and other newcomers who, lacking connections to local peoples and resources, faced destitution and impoverishment. In time, as newcomers became permanent members of local communities and material affluence became an important signifier of wealth, aboriginal and Métis people depended more heavily on this early form of welfare. For the most part, the Hudson's Bay Company affirmed its social obligations and complied with requests for relief, but was also keen to transfer the burden of payment to the Canadian government regardless of the socio-cultural consequences.

As the fur trade became increasingly less profitable and Euro-Canadian settlement of the prairies intensified, these relationships were unilaterally redefined by the federal government following its purchase of Rupert's Land. Longstanding social compacts were replaced by more narrow legal agreements detached from their socio-cultural context and history. As part of broad assimilationist agendas, these new agreements aimed to subjugate First Nations and Métis peoples, alienate their lands and resources, and assimilate them into mainstream Canadian society. In the process, the meaning of ideas like welfare, impoverishment, and

family underwent significant transformations as individualism, materialism, and cash replaced interconnectedness, family networks, and sharing as signifiers of economic affluence. In fact, the very notion of economics and economic interaction underwent a fundamental reordering in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, ultimately culminating in the emergence of the welfare state after the Second World War. In order to engage and address current issues related to welfare dependency and impoverishment, it is therefore critical that the history of Métis welfare is situated within its proper historical and socio-cultural contexts.

Endnotes

1   Marcel Giraud, *The Métis in the Canadian West*, 2 vols, trans. George Woodcock (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1986).
2   Philip T. Spaulding, "The Metis of Ile-a-la-Crosse" (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1970), 16.
3   Frank Tough, *"As Their Natural Resources Fail:" Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1996).
4   John Lutz, *Makúk: Work and Welfare in Aboriginal Non-Aboriginal Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008). Other important ethnohistory works also have come out of the British Columbia context, including Keith Carlson et al., eds., *A Stó:lö Coast Salish Historical Atlas* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2001); Keith Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time: A Study of Aboriginal History and Collective Identity along the Lower Fraser River* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming); and Julie Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen?: Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005). Other important Canadian and American works include Kerry Abel, *Drum: Glimpses of Dene History* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005); Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); and John Burrows, *Recovering Canada: The Resurgence of Indigenous Law* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002). International examples of excellent ethnohistory scholarship include Robert Borofsky, *Making History: Pukapukan and Anthropological Constructions of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Florencia Mallon, *Courage Tastes of Blood: The Mapuche Community of Nicolás Ailío and the Chilean State, 1906-2001* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Renato Rosaldo, *Illongot Headhunting, 1883-1974: A Study in Society and History* (Stanford, CA : Stanford University Press, 1980); and Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).
5   I began my ongoing research in Île à la Crosse in the summer of 2008, working primary with Traditional Land Use Records. Research conducted with the Stó:lö First Nation of British Columbia's Fraser River Valley began in the spring of 2005 and provided much of the material used in my Masters Research Project and subsequent article "'I'm Going to Call it Spirit Money': A History of Social Welfare Among the Stó:lö," in Research Review, vol. 2, issue 2 http://journals.ufv.ca/rr/RR22/article-PDFs/5-haggarty.pdf. Among the Stó:lö, oral history evidence and personal anecdotes show that, until relatively recently, receiving relief or welfare from the government was not stigmatised; rather, it was simply "accepted" as part of their economic relationship.
6   The best book published to date on the history aboriginal welfare in Canada is Hugh Shewell, *'Enough to Keep Them Alive': Indian Welfare in Canada, 1873-1965* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004). Due to its focus on policy, however, aboriginal perceptions and uses of welfare are not examined. Anthropological studies of sharing, especially as part of kinship networks, are more numerous. Two prominent examples are Mark Nuttall, "Choosing Kin: Sharing and Subsistence in a Greenlandic Hunting Community," in *Dividends of Kinship: Meanings and Uses of Social Relatedness*, ed. by Peter Schweitzer (New York: Routledge, 2000) and George Wenzel, Grete Hovelsrud-Broda, and Nobuhiro Kishigami, eds., *The Social Economy of Sharing: Resources Allocation and Modern Hunter*

Gatherers (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2000). Although this research illustrates very effectively the social and economic significance of sharing within aboriginal communities and makes significant contributions to the field, the history of aboriginal welfare – that is, how these systems changed before, during, and after contact with alternative economic systems – is largely beyond its scope.

7   Ethnogenesis can be defined as the genesis of a cultural group.

8   Brenda Macdougall, "*Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan, 1776-1907*" (Ph.D. diss., University of Saskatchewan, 2005); Nicole St-Onge, *Saint-Laurent, Manitoba: Evolving Métis Identities* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2004); Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer Brown, eds., *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985).

9   Regina Flannery, "The Position of Women Among the Eastern Cree," *Primitive Man 8* (1934): 86.

10 Abel, 18-19. See also Henry Stephen Sharp, "The Kinship System of the Black Lake Chipewyan" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1973).

11 Adoption and, later, godparentage constituted other ways of establishing kin relationships. See Macdougall, "*Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan, 1776-1907*", 271, and Abel, *Drum Songs*, 20. Prisoners of war were also sometimes brought into kin relationships. See J.R. Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 8-9.

12 Macdougall, "*Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan, 1776-1907*", 5.

13 Macdougall, "*Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan, 1776-1907*", 5, 100.

14 Studies placing greater emphasis on the economic factors, and which recognize the economic motivations as determinants of social affiliations, include Beatrice Medicine's study of the Sioux system of the "reciprocity family model," (Beatrice Medicine, "American Indian Family," *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 18.4 (1981): 17-19), and, in a west coast context, Keith Carlson's study of exchange among the Stó:lõ (Keith Thor Carlson, "Stó:lÐ Exchange Dynamics," *Native Studies Review*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1997, 5-48).

15 Abel, *Drum Songs*, 42.

16 David Mandelbaum, *The Plains Cree* (New York : AMS Press, 1979), 106-7, 115-120. See also Edward Ahenakew, *Voices of the Plains Cree*, ed. Ruth Buck (Regina : Canadian Plains Research Center, 1995), 17.

17 Deanna Christensen, *Ahtahkakoop: The Epic Account of a Plains Cree Head Chief, his People, and their Vision for Survival, 1816-1896* (Shell Lake, Sask.: Ahtahkakoop Publishing , 2000), 62-5.

18 See Tom Johnson, "Without the Family We Are Nothing," in *Native Heritage: Personal Accounts by American Indians, 1790 to Present*, ed. Arlene Hirschfelder (New York: MacMillan, 1995).

19 See Arthur Ray '*Give us Good Measure': An Economic Analysis of Relations Between the Indians and the Hudson's Bay Company Before 1763* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978); and Arthur Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

20 See Maurice Bruce, *The Coming of the Welfare State* (London: B. T. Batsford, Ltd., 1967); Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* (Pantheon Books, 1971); Walter Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State: A History of Social Welfare in America* (New York: The Free Press, 1979); and David Murray, *Indian Giving: Economies of Power in Indian-White Exchanges* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000).

21 Most common among these were guns, shot, powder and other weapons, brandy, tobacco, cloth, beads, fish hooks, ice chisels, twine, scissors, thimbles. See Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA), B.89/d/1-162, Île à la Crosse Account Books, 1810-1872.

22 Arthur Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson's Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 67-68; and Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant,* 21-25, 137-138.

23 Tough, '*As Their Natural Resources Fail*', 7.

24 Abel, *Drum Songs*, 109.

25 Arthur Ray, Jim Miller, and Frank Tough, *Bounty and Benevolence: A History of the Saskatchewan Treaties* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 92-3. See also Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant,* 8-10, 286.

26 Quoted in Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant,* 21-22.

27   Mandelbaum, *The Plains Cree*, 106-7.

28 Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 195.

29 Giraud, *The Métis in the Canadian West*, vol. I: 314.

30 Giraud, Giraud, *The Métis in the Canadian West*, vol. I:16.

31 Macdougall, "*Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan, 1776-1907*", 223.

32 HBCA, B.89/a/1-35, Île à la Crosse Post Journals, 1805-1865.

33 Moreover, after the merger the HBC absorbed into its ranks most NWC employees, many of whom had already entered into country marriages with aboriginal women, thereby cementing existing connections within extended indigenous family networks.

34 Macdougall, "*Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan, 1776-1907*", 81-2.

35 Winona Stevenson [Wheeler], "'Ethnic' Assimilates 'Indigenous': A Study in Intellectual Colonialism," *Wicazo Sa Review* (1998), 39.

36 Macdougall, "*Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan, 1776-1907*", 53.

37 Spaulding, "The Metis of Île à la Crosse," 96-98.

38 Macdougall, "*Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan, 1776-1907*", 19-20.

39 Stevenson [Wheeler], "'Ethnic' Assimilates 'Indigenous,'" 39.

40 Macdougall, "*Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan, 1776-1907*", 213.

41 Ibid., 271-2.

42 Giraud, *The Métis in the Canadian West*, vol. II: 134-136.

43 Macdougall, "*Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan, 1776-1907*", 203-4, 232.

44 Ray, Miller, and Tough, *Bounty and Benevolence*, 11.

45 HBCA, B.89/d/82-162, Île à la Crosse Account Books, 1853-1872; HBCA, B.89/a/4-35, Île à la Crosse Post Journals, 1819-1865.

46 Ray, Miller, and Tough, *Bounty and Benevolence*, 13.

47 HBCA, B.89/d/159-162, Île à la Crosse Account Books, 1869-1872.

48 Macdougall, "*Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan, 1776-1907*", 175. Safeguarding against competition suggests that economic pragmatism, as well as a feudal sense of *noblesse oblige*, also contributed to ongoing relief efforts.

49 Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age*, 210-211.

50 Macdougall, "*Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan, 1776-1907*", 266.

51 Ray, Miller, and Tough, *Bounty and Benevolence*, 11-12.

52 Miller also notes the effect a new generation of bureaucrats had on Canadian Indian Policy (*Compact, Contract, Covenant*), 105.

53 Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant,* 131.

54 Quoted in Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 4-5.

55 Ray, Miller, and Tough, *Bounty and Benevolence*, 54, 74.

56 Quoted in ibid., 171-172.

57 See Shewell, '*Enough to Keep them Alive'*; Noel Dyck, *What Is The Indian "Problem": Tutelage And Resistance In Canadian Indian Administration* (St. John's, Nfld.: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, c. 1991); and Brian Titley, *Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986).

58 Philip T. Spaulding, "From the Colonial Pan into the Fire of Native Self-Determination: A Northern Saskatchewan Case," Robert Doucette fonds, Saskatchewan Archives Board, n.d. (S-A 1035, #2966), 2-3.

59 In addition to other works mentioned previously, see Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002); J. R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Agency* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990); and Helen Buckley, *From Wooden Ploughs to Welfare: Why Government Policy Failed in the Prairie Provinces* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992).

60 All interviews were conducted by members of the North West Métis Council Traditional Land Use Study team. Richard Abbey, 10 February 2006; Victor Lariviere, 4 February 2005; Steven Lariviere, 30 November 2005; Richard Desjardins, 22 July 2005; Joseph Toby Lemaigre, 11 January 2005; Robert Gardiner, 10 February 2006; and Angel Sylvester, 8 April 2005.

61 See Nuttall, "Choosing Kin: Sharing and Subsistence in a Greenlandic Hunting Community," and Wenzel, Hovelsrud-Broda, and Kishigami, eds., The Social Economy of Sharing.

By Katya MacDonald

The author, Katya MacDonald. Photo by Keith Thor Carlson.

Approaching the town of Île-à-la-Crosse, Saskatchewan, along the highway leading to the community, the first glimpse of the place is a neighbourhood of relatively new houses known locally as Snob Hill. While unofficial in the sense that it is not ensconced in town planning documents, the name, along with several other similarly humorous and descriptive ones, is an integral tool when communicating about the physical layout of Île-à-la-Crosse. The etymologies of the names – the time, circumstances, and significance of their origins, and reasons for their relevance (and by extension their histories) – draw on residents' understandings of their town's history, and they refer to ways in which people have interacted with each other, with people outside the community, and with their history; and as a result, they become expressions of local and cultural identity. Like the histories to which they refer, the origins and usage of place names in Île-à-la-Crosse do not exist in a vacuum, and so it is not necessarily clear to what extent these names are local, Métis, Aboriginal, or small-town Saskatchewan phenomena. Helping to elucidate the nature of relationships between notions of community and notions of Aboriginality[2] in Île-à-la-Crosse, events and issues to which notions of space and place allude have created physical and historical links to a defined community, and shaped the ways in which residents and outsiders have related to each other. For the purposes of this discussion, separating – even if somewhat artificially – what is communal from what is Aboriginal in Île-à-la-Crosse's history establishes meanings of events and issues that remain significant in community members' historical narratives not necessarily because their perspectives represent one side of an Aboriginal/colonial binary, but because they make reference to varied and changing ways that these places have existed in people's pasts and experiences, and in reference to definitions of both community and Aboriginality.

Aboriginal communities have come to exist through processes of community definition as well as the formation of a specific, unique identity as Aboriginal people in that place. Notions of Aboriginality and community, in their diverse definitions, are therefore interdependent, and work together to form histories and historiographies of what tends to be an all-encompassing concept of an Aboriginal community. By considering Île-à-la-Crosse's history as an Aboriginal community first in terms of people forming a community, and then as a community that has developed its own notions of Aboriginality – or more simply in terms of its community and its Aboriginality – I hope to connect and compare community members' interpretations of the town's history with outside, academic ones, to imbue these concepts with a history that has grown out of Île-à-la-Crosse's own past. Exploring local specificities in histories (that is, attending to the ways that community members' and academics' analyses interact with each other) helps to set the stage for discussion of specific impacts of colonialism and the establishment and reinforcement of community-based definitions of Aboriginality. With that in mind, then, this paper is comprised of two main parts: the first deals with Île-à-la-Crosse's history as a place of habitation and identification with a common history, while the second discusses ways that community histories have also become histories and markers of Aboriginality in Île-à-la-Crosse. For both of these components, place as experienced in the town acts as both a mnemonic device that local people use when narrating the past, and as a point of reference against which we can historicise both academics' and community members' accounts. Themes of place and place names therefore introduce the issues and diverse notions of community and Aboriginality discussed here, just as they did in my conversations with Île-à-la-Crosse residents.

Exploring community members' and academics' interpretations of community and Aboriginality in relation to one another reveals how these various accounts provide historical context for each other. Native Studies scholar Brenda Macdougall has argued that early histories of the Métis have tended to focus on these people as "hybrids torn

between the worlds of their non-Native fathers and Indian mothers, with little opportunity to create a separate, self-generating cultural identity or any lasting style of life."[3] While Métis people in Île-à-la-Crosse are indeed descendents of fur traders and local First Nations people, they have also developed unique local identities as Aboriginal people,[4] and are constitutionally acknowledged as such. Indeed, the local people who I interviewed often described community and Métis history in tandem. Thus, while the Aboriginal component to Île-à-la-Crosse's existence is what has tended to attract outside academic research and attention, this Aboriginal community has cohesion because of influences that make and sustain a community as well as its Aboriginal components. While each "category" draws on understandings of the other in order to create a cohesive definition of the whole, a community does not become a community simply by being Aboriginal, nor is it Aboriginal simply as a result of Aboriginal people living together. The nature of interactions in Île-à-la-Crosse has engaged broadly similar themes or concerns, though of course with approaches that are local and indigenous to the place where these interactions occurred. Defining and delineating a space and its significance for insiders and in response to outsiders has been a galvanising point around which community members have focused their own histories in a particular place. It has allowed them to establish themselves there, and in turn foster other focal points of communal significance. Relating collectively, with similar purpose or understanding, to political or institutional bodies from both inside and outside the town, and recalling and interpreting the roles of people, both collectively and as individuals, in shaping a common history have also acted as processes of community definition in Île-à-la-Crosse. In this way, the community dimension of Aboriginal communities is provided by community members' own histories of the development of this place, to offer breadth and depth to historiographical and ethnographic snapshots offered by academics. Through ongoing processes of using, inhabiting, and referring to significant places, residents of Île-à-la-Crosse have created and sustained their connections to a place. Don Favel described his relationship to Île-à-la-Crosse in this way: "It's really hard, it's hard to get away from your community. Like, it's so different. Like here you can come out and you can see the water and everything, and you go someplace else and

it's just...other places in Canada, you just see brick houses, you know?"[5] Relating to Île-à-la-Crosse's physical presence in people's lives has thus often translated into the formation of and identification with the place as a community.

Histories of Île-à-la-Crosse involve notions of community in both its physical and its more abstract senses; that is, a community is not only a place, but a place with which people are involved. In an Aboriginal community, this may be particularly significant in emphasising commonality, particularly when colonial markers of space do not provide this definition for either insiders or outsiders.[6] The historiography of Aboriginal communities has sometimes sought to fill this gap, creating definitions for a particular place or suggesting ways of considering the idea of community in relation to a particular historical theme. Considered on their own, these definitions act as "snapshots" of histories and communities at a particular moment. Of particular importance for Île-à-la-Crosse, the historiography of Métis issues has often considered Métis people a "culture in between," rather than an Aboriginal group with a "cultural ethos that guided decision-making."[7] In order to tease out the presence of such an ethos in the history of a community, Macdougall suggests looking inside that community to gain a sense of how people organised themselves in relation to others and the land, established a system of values, and used their local economy to perpetuate those values.[8] An examination of the recent history of vernacular place-naming and place-making in Île-à-la-Crosse is thus a way of gaining insight into to what has been established in the community as community features: assumptions of belonging or cohesion that are shaped through the history of using and inhabiting a place. (My study examines a period one century later than Macdougall's study of Métis interactions with the Hudson's Bay Company and the fur trade economy.) Community, then, is both a theme in the history of Aboriginal places and a lens through which to consider the significance of those places for the people who have shaped and interpreted their histories.

Individual moments of historical interpretation have formed part of a historical whole that is forged through community members' own understandings of their history there, and manifested through their communal interpretations of that past. Cultural, local, and temporal contexts have all shaped community as it is conveyed by the people who claim a history there. This interplay

among various layers of history and interaction has been termed by anthropologist Clifford Geertz as "the social history of the moral imagination" to refer to

> the way in which our sense of ourselves and others – ourselves amidst others – is affected not only by our traffic with our own cultural forms but to a significant extent by the characterization of forms not immediately our own by anthropologists, critics, historians, and so on, who made them, reworked and redirected, derivatively ours.[9]

Thus, understandings of communities are ultimately shaped by communities (in the various forms that they take over time) themselves, so that interpretations of those places form only a part of the definition of community and its meaning for residents. Discussion of Aboriginal communities, then, is an interpretation of community there, not (or not only) a representation of it, and as a result, community members' own observations often engage with other aspects of the historiography of these places, even if they do not do so explicitly, discussing notions of community and Aboriginality as they relate to their own experiences and histories.[10]

Exploring Dene understandings and use of space in Northwestern Saskatchewan, anthropologist Robert Jarvenpa noted in 1980 that many ethnographic studies lack a temporal perspective that helps to determine "whether or not cultural patterns are genuinely adaptive."[11] That is, historical context for the actions and values of a particular community illustrates in what ways those actions and values have become significant, or how they have been reinforced by community members over time. In particular, the idea of adaptation raised by Jarvenpa suggests that "cultural patterns" are comprised of mutable activities that respond to their antecedents and environments. Yet while historicising these patterns can illuminate the depth and context that has made them significant areas of consideration in the first place, the very concepts of community, Aboriginality, and Aboriginal communities exist largely as assumptions within Jarvenpa's study; the concepts themselves are not imbued with a history. Because histories of Aboriginal communities find their greatest significance in those very same places, community and Aboriginality can be historical actors as much as people are. Inhabitants' own histories of the development of their communities provide breadth and depth to historiographical and ethnographic snapshots.

Interpretations of Île-à-la-Crosse and its history provide one arena of comparison or elaboration of these snapshots. Provincial government sociologist Victor F. Valentine argued in 1954 that "none of the settlements [in Northwestern Saskatchewan] are communities in our sense of the term," because they lacked services such as garbage collection or mail delivery, and had "no strong political focus that is peculiarly Métis."[12] Yet Valentine made this assertion despite the fact that "Métis locals," community-based Métis governance organisations whose work concerned Métis rights and advocacy, had been in existence in the region for around two decades. Even while describing the town in assimilative or essentialising language, Valentine recognised the role of culture and of being Métis in shaping the nature of interactions in Île-à-la-Crosse, and questioned to what extent common goals or expectations for the community were necessary in fostering a common sense of belonging there. While it is not my intent here to superimpose new definitions of community over older instances of these, Valentine's desire to describe community life in Île-à-la-Crosse draws out an assortment of themes that remain salient in contemporary community members' discussion of Île-à-la-Crosse's history and their participation in it, particularly in terms of asserting links to activities that may have declining economic gain, but that retain significance in other, perhaps less concrete ways. Vince Ahenakew, for instance, noted that while the town of Île-à-la-Crosse houses Métis histories and identities, it also now acts as a hindrance to young peoples' acquisition of survival skills that previous generations had had.[13] Issues such as these arise in Valentine's report as well, so that his analyses, along with local ones like Ahenakew's, form a historiography of ideas about the significance of being Métis in this particular place.

Implied in the physical layout of Île-à-la-Crosse are ways of using the town's place names, ways of interpreting history (and to whom), understandings of what these histories impart about ideas of community, discussions of how a community is an Aboriginal place, and what "Aboriginal" means in the context of the community's particular history and understandings thereof. Contained in the etymologies of names like Snob Hill, Chinatown, and other Île-à-la-Crosse names are references to histories that have frequently dealt with issues

of Aboriginality and community. Places and their narratives also help to historicise community members' definitions of these concepts. Descriptions of community features and identities thus became a useful device around which I was able to form my interviews, and acted as a mnemonic device to help interviewees answer my questions and add information they felt was important for me to know. Discussions of names often introduced themes of community, which in turn introduced questions of how these places have come to see themselves as Aboriginal communities. Anthropologist Keith H. Basso has called these processes of encompassing histories in a physical space "place-making;" that is, drawing meaning from and instilling significance in these places through understandings of its history.[14]

Alongside physical change and growth of the community have come re-evaluation of residents' understandings of a place, and, by extension, its community and its Aboriginal features.[15] In this regard, the history of the neighbourhood of Snob Hill mirrors that of Île-à-la-Crosse as a whole, and can therefore act as a marker of the symbiosis between place-making and historical interpretation. Snob Hill is currently the largest and probably most populous area of Île-à-la-Crosse, but the apparent implications of its name no longer apply to all of its residents. Dorothy Dubrule explained how the place was named, alluding to interactions in the town that were particularly noteworthy:

> There's several versions of why it was called Snob Hill, but at the time when I was going to school, we had a principal, an Englishman, actually, who was very, very strict. I mean he'd walk into the building and everybody would go "whew," you know, he just had this sort of command. Now when you think about it he was actually quite brutal. But because he lived over there, and we sort of deemed him as being snobbish, we called it Snob Hill. That was our version as young people, and that's why it's called Snob Hill. Other people have different versions. But I stick with mine because that's the best one.[16]

Fellow Île-à-la-Crosse resident Spud Morin recalled the first Métis inhabitants of Snob Hill moving there in the 1960s,[17] and this temporal marker helps to contextualise the creation of Snob Hill's name. The town had, for the past fifteen years or so, been undergoing rapid changes in

lifestyle and living patterns, as a combination of internal and external factors led to the consolidation of seasonal residences into a more permanent, sedentary, larger town. Regulations, particularly as they applied to trapping practices, dictated more specifically how and where people could spend their time most productively, and this was sometimes at odds with people's earlier lifestyles and settlement patterns.[18] Perhaps most significantly, trapping was less and less a viable economic venture, with few other occupations to take its place.[19] Furthermore, at the same time, villages housed most of the services that inhabitants of the region made use of,[20] and so as they became more central, permanent gathering places, the ties between people and the places they made for themselves were translated into the spatial and social layout of towns like Île-à-la-Crosse. Just as in the broader region, the town itself housed family settlements and well-defined spaces of belonging on a small scale, and determining names for these places served as a way of retaining and emphasising the familiar (in all senses of the word) while adapting to new situations.

As an intentional act, naming places reflects not only what has been significant about interactions in that place, but also what those who use the names seek to emphasise about places and their histories. With an established and familiar practice of understanding the town based on social spaces and interactions, residents of Île-à-la-Crosse have recently sought to ensconce this form of community in official ways that refer explicitly to the role of individuals in the town. Alluding to changes in the town's conception of what is important to acknowledge about the community, Norma Malboeuf commented that "I think they've done that [named streets after community members] to a point; and I think, like the Lajeunesse [Avenue] is still the same, some of the French names, but some of the newer, like Peter Crescent and all of those places, I think they're developing that now...more reflective of people from the community."[21] Another Île-à-la-Crosse resident, Tony Durocher, felt that vernacular place names were not sufficiently explicit or indicative of what was important in the town; that is, he felt they did not make clear the Aboriginal aspect of the community's history:

> That came about [because] people decided to make that, the town [governance] didn't make that. [People] had good names for them, for

different areas, but the people that said those things, and like Chinatown[22] and Snob Hill, it wasn't the right thing. So I went up one day, one day I went to the town hall, and they had a meeting, and I told them we should have these signs in our area with the names, good names for – we have a new hospital, we should start having good names. I mentioned this about two years ago...They've got to keep some of the people that have passed on, some of the people that have done so much for the community.[23]

Citing the contributions of individuals in community histories reveals parallels between those individuals' activities and those that their broader community considers valuable in a communal context, and serves to illustrate how individuals internalise and interpret their community histories within their own interactions.

One theme to which histories of Île-à-la-Crosse have often secured themselves is that of the nature of interactions with insiders and outsiders to the community. By drawing explicit connections between a place and its history, residents link their individual or familial histories with community membership and belonging. Dorothy Dubrule remembered an explicit attempt in the 1970s on the part of local governance to foster what they viewed as important relationships among community members:

The mayor and council and the local housing board thought that if these families stayed closer to each other, they'd have more of a family unit, and it wouldn't be more of a breakup of the family unit, and more support for the younger people...Because it was so, when people my age were growing up, we had clusters of families, had all the support we needed from great-grandmothers down to great-cousin-aunt.[24]

Drawing links between the past and the contemporary layout of the town represented an official interpretation of the nature of community in Île-à-la-Crosse as it had been common in previous decades, and remnants of which remain in areas of the town like Bouvierville, where members of the Bouvier family have settled. While ultimately unsuccessful, this venture represented an intersection of past, present, and future ideals for the community, and it illustrated how community members' analysis of their own history translated into an expression of what they viewed as desirably Métis characteristics of Île-à-la-Crosse. Histories

Buildings of the Roman Catholic mission in Île à la Crosse in August 1963, including a convent, hospital and students' residence. StarPhoenix/Saskatchewan Archives Board Photo S-SP-B5643(9)

of community, then, are also histories of concepts of community, and are dependent on both place and place-making for providing historical context for the significance of these definitions. Since activities within communities make reference to what people in that community consider most salient in their lives and interactions, and to some extent, since these interactions involve multiple participants in them, the idea of community is indeed an exercise in creating unity or cohesion amongst a group of people, even amid their individual histories and interpretations thereof. As Jay Miller has revealed in the context of Lushootseed people in Puget Sound, diverse histories of and within communities can refer to the same roots, with the histories themselves acting as an anchor to a particular place.[25]

Île-à-la-Crosse residents' relationships with the Roman Catholic mission-run boarding school that operated in the town until the early 1970s exemplify some of the complexity in conceptions and interpretations of definitions of the community and its history. The school allowed parents some flexibility in terms of location and lifestyle during the school year, but remaining near the school caused their children to miss opportunities to learn the same survival and occupational skills their parents possessed. As a consequence, graduates had additional reasons to stay in town after completing their schooling. Furthermore, Île-à-la-Crosse was unique among Northwestern Saskatchewan communities in the settlement changes wrought by the education system. In the early 1970s, the town of Île-à-la-Crosse assumed control of its school – a political move that most Île-à-la-Crosse residents supported but that some opposed, resulting in strong feelings that, to an extent, still persist today. [26] This move allowed the school to reflect local interests more closely, but, with the closing of the boarding school, also

meant that families were tied year-round to the community in order for their children to attend school. With this development, permanence in the town was reinforced in another way, which in turn helped to accentuate interactions, and perhaps increase their significance beyond what it might have been in more diffuse relationships among people.

Indeed, Irene Gardiner noted that the town of Île-à-la-Crosse has remained stable and familiar for her, while the church, and later government, and their affiliated institutions have provided the most notable and long-standing contrasts to town life. While the Roman Catholic church and educational facilities maintained a presence in the town, their roles in the community changed over time, mirroring the similarly changing ways that people related to these institutions:

Nothing seems to be important; everything seems to be the same, except for the church. Everything else changed, but the only thing is church, and the schools. No convent, no place for the kids to stay...Once every town had its own school and everything, then people don't come here. No, they didn't come after that. But the main thing is the school and the church, that's the main thing that I can think of...That really changed the town.[27]

Church and schools acted as ecclesiastic and pedagogical anchors for northern residents, and whether these were entirely positive forces or not, they helped to focus a community of people in a single, identifiable, delineated space. As such, once the institutions themselves changed or left the region the nature of that space changed as well. This was not only a physical phenomenon, but a social and interpretive one as well, with some community members' interpretations of the church's influence in Île-à-la-Crosse sometimes at odds with others', as Don Favel noted regarding the transfer of the Île-à-la-Crosse school from the mission to local governance:

They [outside authorities or institutions] don't like people that speak out, that's one thing they don't like. They don't like us being vocal and standing up for our rights. And they don't like that. And they always seem to find a way, it's either turning half of the people on us, or, you know, there's always something going on. No different than when we took over the school, they had a standoff. They had a standoff, they stood, they said, "All church people stand on this side, because these are the devils over

here."...And that old wound is still there. It's still there, and most of it has healed, but every once in a while somebody will open that wound again. It's not completely healed or completely forgotten.[28]

The church and school, then, have provided points of reference for community members that highlight the diverse nature of changes in the town's social, physical, and historical makeup. For Île-à-la-Crosse residents, evaluating their own experiences with these institutions is a way of reconsidering significant aspects of an ever-changing community.

The way that these histories have shaped both physical and historical spaces where ideas of community emerge has taken on a variety of forms in Île-à-la-Crosse, in response to the very circumstances that have encouraged retrospection of the past in the first place. Invoking and interpreting events and interactions both at the time they occur and later, as their long-term importance emerges, community members have used these occurrences to anchor themselves to a particular place. As residents of Île-à-la-Crosse have considered the insiders, outsiders, institutions, politics, and individuals that have moved through this place and its histories, they highlight the centrality of a particular space that sits at the intersection of diverse individual pasts. It is here that ideas of community have emerged as residents provide rooted, nuanced accounts of Aboriginal people creating a space for their histories. Community histories can suggest what roles physical proximity to others of similar cultural background, local understandings of belonging, identification with a shared history, and relationships to colonial agents have had in reinforcing the Aboriginality of a community; since newcomers and community members alike have recognised, in one way or another, how these themes are linked to cultural aspects shaping definitions of place and belonging, it is not only significant that these are communities, but also that they have become specifically Aboriginal places. Regarded in light of Julie Cruikshank's assertion that "the aftermaths of colonialism are always local,"[29] and that indigeneity[30] is often framed, at least in part, in terms of a history of colonisation, the interplay between ideas of community and Aboriginality in Île-à-la-Crosse are particularly significant. Furthermore, the implication of the meaningfulness for a community of a particular locale suggests that, as Cruikshank

states, "overlapping stories emerge from early colonial encounter provide a trap door to a history of local knowledge."[31] While local knowledge itself does not necessarily represent an automatic correlation with indigenous knowledge, it can offer insight into ways that local people understand themselves as Native and as different or separate from non-Native people with whom they have interacted, not only in their early history of encounters, but on an ongoing basis. Thus, the Aboriginal aspects of Île-à-la-Crosse's past can be read as interpretive and situational, so that community members' past and present definitions of indigeneity are paired with changes in the community as well. In this way, indigeneity can act as an embodiment of local, communal histories, providing a basis for community members' presence in a place, but also for understandings of a homeland or territory.[32]

The influence of colonialism is indeed an ongoing theme in Aboriginal histories, and its presence has inspired and engendered ongoing ways of responding or adapting in new environments, often by emphasising what is and remains Aboriginal about a community. Yet at times, as anthropologist Bruce Granville Miller suggests, "indigenous peoples...make their claims to distinctiveness primarily based on culture rather than on political grounds...[which] forces them into a backward-looking primordialist stance that is at odds with the specificity of the historical conditions that created indigenousness in the first place."[33] An essentialist delineation of Aboriginality may thus serve to specify these salient historical moments, but not to contextualise them within an ongoing, not terminal, historiography of space, place, time, and culture.

Indeed, the particular history of a community in relation to others can be a tool in highlighting, in the face of assimilative pressures, Aboriginal aspects of the community's existence. Valentine argued that it would be more accurate to consider the Aboriginal population in Northwestern Saskatchewan in terms of Treaty and non-Treaty Indians than to define the Métis by virtue of their partially European ancestry, adding that in many ways, there was a "duality" in citizenship between Treaty Indian and white, with the Métis, who "have never made effective adjustments to encroaching civilization" occupying a social space somewhere in the middle.[34] This was a space that, Valentine suggested, led to a development of "group characteristics which can be described only as

being Métis."[35] Similarly, other commentary from this time period, given in response to Valentine's analysis, did not critique "Métis" as an ethnic or cultural category, but did not acknowledge Northern Saskatchewan Métis people as Aboriginal except by way of their social and familial ties to their Treaty Indian neighbours. Anthropologist P.T. Spaulding, whose PhD dissertation was a study of Île-à-la-Crosse, wrote in an undated article that after the Hudson's Bay Company had left its trading monopoly by selling Rupert's Land and introducing a money and credit system at the same time, "socially consequential ethnic distinctions" in Île-à-la-Crosse had become "grossly exaggerated," with the store manager having "absolute authority" in the town.[36]

In this analysis, Aboriginality was a social trait that grew out of a history of Native-newcomer interactions more than it was a product of a distinct history that had encountered another. In a related vein, E.N. Shannon, a conservation officer in Île-à-la-Crosse in the 1950s, the same time that Valentine was conducting his work, viewed the distinctions between Aboriginal and white (considering Métis and Treaty people as one part of the Native/newcomer binary that Valentine suggested) as largely socioeconomic ones, stating: "It is our belief that the ultimate aim is to bring about the eventual integration of the metis [sic], Indian and white with equal rights and responsibilities, [and] that these rights and responsibilities will apply the same to Northern Region as they now do to the white people in the southern portion of the province."[37] This push for equality did not consider the role of culture beyond its effects on northerners' lifestyles, and so it is perhaps unsurprising that Métis histories of Île-à-la-Crosse and the region would seek to emphasise this space as a distinctly Aboriginal and specifically Métis one.

Emphasis on the predominantly Métis component of Île-à-la-Crosse, both past and present, is a way of highlighting local specificity in histories and identities, as was communicated to Colin Mann, who moved to Île-à-la-Crosse in recent years with his wife, Bea, who grew up in the town. He commented: "When I first came here, I was stunned, and one of the first things I said was, 'Well, don't you guys have any powwows?' ...I mean, I just naturally took Métis as being Aboriginal. But they don't look at that at all. It was an insult to them to be called an Indian."[38] Métis versions of Aboriginality in Île-à-la-Crosse have thus grown

out of a sense of uniqueness, not only in terms of the local, regional, or community, but also in relation to other adjacent approaches to indigeneity, from other Aboriginal people and non-Natives alike.
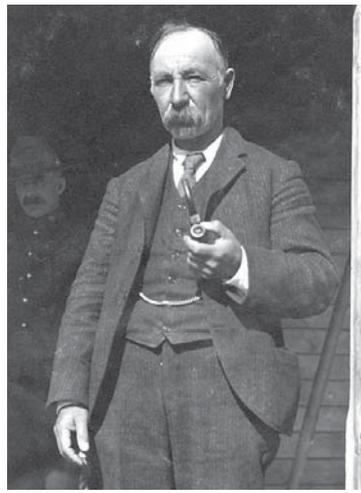
In a circular way, attending to the Métis history that many Île-à-la-Crosse residents feel roots them there also serves to link this Métis Aboriginality to a broader context of Native history and experience in the region. Bea Mann observed that

> when I was growing up, we identified with white people... now our kids identify with the African-Americans – the way they speak, even the gestures, the way they walk and talk; it just blows my mind...It's difficult to understand why they don't want to be themselves – what is wrong with our culture that you can't take pride in being Métis?[39]

Hudson's Bay Company agent, Angus McKay, at HBC post in Île à la Crosse, 1908. Saskatchewan Archives Board Photo S-B8940.

These remarks point to a long-standing interpretation of a Métis presence in Île-à-la-Crosse in relation to non-Native and perhaps remote influences that have proven engaging to Île-à-la-Crosse inhabitants, and in this environment, some regard any recognition of Aboriginal history in the community as significant. Bea Mann described

> [a particular Métis family] in the community that embraced the traditional dress and powwow music – they've taught some of the kids in their families to dance. One of the girls came in to school and she had a jingle dress and a shawl...they've embraced more the traditional Native way rather than the Métis. But at least somebody's going back and showing some pride.[40]

Taking pride in Aboriginal traditions that are outside of activities considered Métis suggests an interpretation of Métis history that acknowledges the role of First Nations people and cultures in the ethnogenesis of the Métis and in their collective relationships with non-Native institutions. Indeed, Valentine's approach to defining Northwestern Saskatchewan Aboriginal populations in terms of Treaty and Non-Treaty-takers is partially reflected in Bea Mann's remarks that "it's almost as if it's an identity crisis. You don't really know who you are, so you imitate others to try and

create yourself, instead of going back and trying to find out what was important to our ancestors."[41] Particularly in a relatively isolated community like Île-à-la-Crosse, common ancestors abound between Métis and First Nations inhabitants of the town and region, and thus on a familial level, a more generalised Aboriginal identity may be just as referential to family members' indigeneity as subscribing uniformly to a single category of Aboriginality. In this way, Métis families adopting First Nations customs is not necessarily "imitating others to try and create yourself," but is instead an acknowledgement of Aboriginal history where being Aboriginal takes on greater significance than the particular details of a specific cultural history.

In the face of outside intervention in the community, actions on the part of Île-à-la-Crosse residents have at times highlighted the Aboriginality of the town simply because outsiders approached the community with attention to its Aboriginal aspects at the forefront of their intentions. In the early 1950s, part of Valentine's government-set mandate in Île-à-la-Crosse was to facilitate the establishment of a co-op store there, and his written report on his experiences reveals some of the perceptions that Natives and newcomers had of themselves and for the Aboriginal community in question. Valentine felt that as an outsider, he was viewed with some trepidation by most community members, both Métis and white. Non-Native residents saw him as a threat to how they carried out their work as government, religious, or business officials, while many of the Métis were concerned that he had come to take away their means of making a living or to "entice" them to vote CCF.[42] This initial assessment suggests an encounter with the "other" that was focused on the community rather than the fact that it was an Aboriginal place, but Valentine's purpose was more specific: "The method I adopted was to get the Métis together in groups to appoint their own leaders, and make suggestions concerning what should be done about the things they felt were impeding their development."[43] Despite non-Native habitation, presence, and influence in Île-à-la-Crosse, Valentine saw the town as a Métis place whose concerns were specific to Métis needs.

In fact, Valentine attributed the co-op's successes to having addressed these concerns; once a capable manager had been hired and trained, and the co-op began to be run independently, without Valentine's direct input, he (somewhat paternalistically) reported: "I think the Métis at Île-à-la-Crosse have already proven they can run their own affairs. The Co-op at Île-à-la-Crosse I believe was successful because it was organized around the satisfaction of a very pressing need."[44] The co-op store, then, represented a Métis presence in the community not because the concept was native to the town, but because Native involvement in it illustrated or confirmed outside perceptions of the role of Aboriginality in community affairs.[45]

In light of impositions of particular notions of indigeneity, Île-à-la-Crosse residents have also reciprocated, highlighting the community's own vision of self-sufficient Aboriginality and in so doing, depicting outsiders' interests in the town as distinct from Native ones. Not only a catalyst for community changes, the transfer of the Île-à-la-Crosse school to local governance remains a memorable event around which community members galvanised their identity as Métis people inhabiting an Aboriginal place. The process involved an assortment of organisations from outside the town, including representatives from the Associated Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan (AMNSIS), who, according to Spaulding, created the initial push in 1972 for local direction of the school.[46] Their presence added a concrete and official statement that this was an issue of Aboriginal concern. Meanwhile, Reverend Joseph Chaput, the head of the mission at the time, accused the Department of Northern Saskatchewan (DNS) of "influencing the native people with DNS biases" when they sent a letter to the Métis Society of Saskatchewan suggesting local control and inviting the MSS to participate.[47] The DNS commented to The StarPhoenix that "we want them to have local governance."[48] This was thus both, or alternately, a community and an Aboriginal issue, where debate did not exist within a strictly Native/non-Native binary, but instead included a variety of voices that all sought to foster

Statue in Île-à-la-Crosse, commemorating Treaty 10 and Scrip Commissions. The statue has the same figures (a native chief and a government representative) shaking vhands as those found on the back of the Treaty medals. Photo by Keith Thor Carlson

their own ideas for the role of Aboriginality in the town. Despite the involvement of outside interests, in Île-à-la-Crosse today, memories, interpretations, and significance of the school transfer remain expressions of local, Aboriginal autonomy.

In an environment where Aboriginality is fluid and contains multiple meanings, it is significant how these notions are conveyed; that is, in what ways the activities of Aboriginal people and communities are tied to histories with which these people identify and that they invoke to reinforce Native space and place-making. Often, the most readily apparent embodiments of histories are physical, active ones. The integral nature of Aboriginal languages in conveying history in a manner that is most accurate to the places where this history occurred is one such instance in Île-à-la-Crosse's past. In his study of the Michif language, linguist Peter Bakker observed of the language spoken in Île-à-la-Crosse that, unlike varieties of Michif spoken further south, which are well-blended mixtures of Aboriginal languages and French, Île-à-la-Crosse residents speak mainly Cree with some borrowings from French. Bakker attributed the presence of French to the influence of the Oblate mission in the community (as opposed to early French Canadian fur traders).[49] A speech variety specific to Île-à-la-Crosse highlights two levels of uniqueness, then: it is an Aboriginal language, but furthermore, it is also associated with a particular community, aspects of whose history are reflected in the language itself. Use of the language in Île-à-la-Crosse is, naturally, significant as well, since community members' relationships with the language have changed alongside changes in its usage. For many Cree/Michif speakers in Île-à-la-Crosse, of particular significance and concern is the infrequency with which younger generations speak the language. Dorothy Dubrule commented that this is

probably because parents like Louis [her husband] and I didn't teach our kids to speak – I didn't teach my children to speak the Michif language and Louis didn't teach them to speak French, so they lost out on both languages. We

chose to converse with our children in English, so that's all they heard from us...we chose to speak in English; it was easier for both of us. So I'm thinking it's much the same with everybody else.[50]

For the Dubrule family, the choice of language spoken at home was largely a matter of convenience, where languages other than English were not necessary to communicate with others in the community, and instead were more representative of family and community histories than contemporary reality. Vince Ahenakew, a teacher of Michif and principal of the high school in Île-à-la-Crosse attributed the shift to English to a corresponding shift in values:

Probably all the time [high school students are] talking English...they don't understand Cree or Michif when we speak to them; it's here and there, eh...but the ones that do know, they're kind of reluctant to speak...Something's out of whack, is what I'm going to say, what I'm trying to say, but I still try to speak to them in Cree or Michif. Hopefully that will change, once people start accepting the fact, start being proud of their language, I think they'll start bringing it back.[51]

For older and younger generations alike, Michif exists as somewhat of a historical entity, representing aspects of the past that, depending on the person or relationship at hand, may be distant and irrelevant, or meaningful and tangible. In this way, even when there is not agreement within a community on how its Aboriginality should continue to manifest itself, acknowledgement of a common history, whatever its meaning, helps to bind accompanying recognition of indigeneity to the place where it originated and developed.

In Île-à-la-Crosse, establishing an Aboriginal history of place, or of a place as Aboriginal, has sometimes gone hand in hand with heavily political and legal issues associated with land claims. While place-making through naming and other channels represent a history of Métis culture, activity, and homeland, many Métis people in Northwestern Saskatchewan desire more formalised ways as well of describing and taking charge of their space and history. Don Favel listed a series of places in Île-à-la-Crosse that have become known by their English names, but that community members once "knew all these places like that by different names, original [Cree] names that they had."[52] This historiography of place links and roots people to Île-à-la-Crosse's Métis past, but does not necessarily stand alone as the only source or provider of identity. The notion of a regional Aboriginal – and specifically Métis – identity is central to the official recognition by the Canadian legal system of Métis traditional lands around Île-à-la-Crosse, but at the same time that this component of Métis history is articulated within the courts, the process of filing a land claim also represents an act of place-making. The 1994 Northwest Saskatchewan Métis land claim stated that "the great majority" of the plaintiffs were descendents "of the citizens of the Métis Nation who resided in the Plaintiffs' Homeland prior to 1870," while others had moved to the region more recently "and have been accepted as members of that distinct cultural and political community."[53] This explicit delineation of Aboriginal space and history sought to reinforce common or collective ways of place-making there in ways that would be symbolic of a broadly recognisably Métis culture. The claim went on to argue that the Métis in Northwestern Saskatchewan had been marginalised, despite persisting in a "distinct Métis culture, collective aspirations and political organisations," as well as continuing to rely on "traditional use of resources."[54] Defining Métis-ness in this structured way was in part a legal convention and necessity for arguing the case in court, but it also represents a more general emphasis on the communal nature of place-making and identity for Northwestern Saskatchewan Métis.

At the same time, though, the collectiveness described, implied, and perhaps ascribed by the land claim did not and does not convey the complex nature of navigating between local and collective identities, even within a relatively small region. The social and geographic nearness of northern Métis communities to each other has at times entailed both overlap and tension among municipal and Métis political governing bodies. In response, Métis Nation – Saskatchewan, Métis Nation – Saskatchewan Locals of Northwestern Saskatchewan, and the North West Saskatchewan Municipalities Association signed a Partnership Agreement in 1996 that emphasised the organisations' common goals of Métis rights and self-determination; as elder Louis Morin commented in a press release, "We have long known that we serve the same people so we have to work together." The agreement also described how communities could act as "a building block for the implementation of Métis self-governance."

In this case, communities represent a smaller "unit" within a Métis whole, where, at least in the context of other, larger political bodies, local definitions of Aboriginality are shaped by these communities' affiliation with official statements of what this Aboriginality entails. An identifiably Métis history of place ensures the community's membership within these larger groups, while this more universal detailing of Métis traits affirms the legitimacy of local history through its broader roles and functions.[55]

Just as individual histories intersect at particular places to create communities and communal histories, individuals' and families' understandings of their Aboriginal pasts interact with each other, thereby expanding the scope of what Aboriginality entails, as well as its meaning on a local level. Furthermore, interactions with outsiders have prompted definitions of what has made (or should make) a community Aboriginal, as community members have responded to outside stipulations and emphasised their own. Through conduits of local histories, they have drawn diverse histories in a common place into a contemporary Aboriginal community where notions of the indigenousness of the place and its people reflect the fluidity of historical interpretation. The ways that these interpretations have originated and been employed by Aboriginal people to highlight the Aboriginality of their communities to other community members, other Aboriginal groups, or non-Native interests mirror and sometimes serve as acts of place-making that have occurred in response to changing historical circumstances. That definitions of Aboriginality and its significance are flexible is particularly important to consider, given that, especially when considering two very different communities in tandem, it can be easy to essentialise Aboriginal customs, histories, or traditions, rendering them ahistorical and "incapable of change without loss of authenticity."[56] It follows, then, that when linked to specific communities, Aboriginal histories of (and in) Aboriginal places remain authentic for the people who identify with and invoke them, since changing and ongoing interactions there require that community members continually re-evaluate the ability of these histories to communicate identities in ways that are meaningful and productive for community members and outsiders alike. Notions of community and Aboriginality have played against and grown alongside each other, drawing on similar historical sources to convey a unique local experience that both draws meaning from and adds nuance to broader, more expansive or inclusive notions of the role of Aboriginality on a larger temporal and geographical scale.

ENCOUNTERING MARY: APPARITIONS, ROADSIDE SHRINES, AND THE MÉTIS OF THE WESTSIDE

By Amanda Fehr and MacKinley Darlington

Native Spirituality teaches you
to honour what God has created,
what the creator created, the creation.
You have to understand these things
in order for you to grow.
That is what the old people
seem to understand.
A lot of our elders in our community
have a lot of respect for the Blessed Mother,
and I honour their respect.
-George Malboeuf, Île-à-la-Crosse, 2006[1]

MacKinley Darlington taking notes at a Marian shrine in Northwest Saskatchewan. Photo by Keith Thor Carlson

While encountering the Virgin Mary in Northwestern Saskatchewan might be unexpected, she has played an important role in the Métis community of Île-à-la-Crosse, or Sakitawak,[2] and the surrounding region since the establishment of the Roman Catholic mission in 1846.[3] Most recently, the relationships between Mary and the Métis have manifested themselves in accounts of Marian apparitions and the many roadside shrines dedicated to her across the northwest. It was while conducting fieldwork in 2006 that respected elder Georgina Morin originally drew our attention to the roadside shrines and apparitions, and identified them as important to the community.[4] Although to an outsider's gaze Marian apparitions and shrines may seem like marginal subjects for scholarly enquiry, such sites of encounters and prayerful contemplation are central to many community members' conceptions of themselves and the northwest. Based on oral interviews conducted during our fieldwork, this study engages Métis understandings of the Marian shrines and apparitions in an effort to depict Métis spirituality in a way that community members will recognize while challenging outsiders to re-examine assumptions about Mary, the Métis, and Northwestern Saskatchewan.

As outsiders ourselves,[5] we were surprised by the extent to which many people spoke so openly about their beliefs and experiences.[6] It soon became necessary for us to seriously consider the spiritual significance of these accounts in attempting to understand the role that Mary plays in the northwest. Questions as to whether the apparitions described by Métis people are "real" or "accurate" are beyond the scope of our study. Far more interesting and clear when speaking to members of this community is the "realness" people felt, and the clear role that apparitions and shrines are seen to play in healing and protecting individuals and the northwest. Thus, following a brief historiographical discussion, two case studies will engage with Métis experiences and understandings of their encounters with Mary. The first looks at Virgin Mary apparitions and the second at the way that apparitions and spirituality have become physically manifested through Marian shrines. Together, these case studies explore the relationship between Mary and the Métis, drawing particular attention to the themes of family, health, and the protection of the North.

Despite her prominence in Northwestern Saskatchewan Métis society, no scholarship exists on the numerous Marian shrines dedicated to the Blessed Mother or on her recent appearances in the region. The existing literature on Mary in Canada consists principally of popular descriptive works and personal devotional accounts. These works do not engage with the perspectives of Aboriginal communities and individuals or the Marian shrines and apparitions that are the focus of this study. More generally such topics seem to occupy the margins of academic scholarship and are primarily discussed in devotional literature or local histories.[7] Even when viewed through a wider lens, there is little to be found on Métis spirituality or Aboriginal religious experiences beyond the

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Still, this study draws on and relates to several broader bodies of scholarship, notably those dealing with the Christianization of Aboriginal people, general studies of the Métis in Canada, and more specific studies looking at Île-à-la-Crosse.

Native Studies scholar Brenda Macdougall is critical of studies that simply depict the Métis as "'people in between' hybrids" and that generally accept that the Métis were "naturally Christian by virtue of their mixed-ancestry."[8] She notes that while significant attention has been directed to assessing missionary attempts at conversion and Aboriginal responses,[9] little energy has been directed at examining Aboriginal notions of spirituality. Moreover, what scholarship has looked at Native Christians has tended to stress conflict between Aboriginal and Christian identities.[10] Anthropologists, for example, have studied Christianity among Aboriginal peoples primarily in terms of cultural change – a trend most evident in works on prophet movements that emphasise the role of cultural crises.[11] Building on these discussions are more recent studies of Aboriginal encounters with missionaries that focus on ideas of syncretism, or various ways that Christianity and Aboriginal belief systems have blended, sometimes resulting in the creation of new systems of belief.[12]

This study moves away from a focus on the interactions of Aboriginal people with missionaries to look at their relationships with the Virgin Mary. While in some ways concepts of syncretism are relevant to a discussion of Marian shrines and apparitions, where various beliefs and practices seem to be blended, the community members we spoke with did not see themselves as mixing two different systems. As a result, it seems inappropriate for us to apply the label of syncretism. Similarly, while community members drew attention to problems in their community, there was no evidence of a perceived cultural crisis. In fact, it was quite the reverse, as many people emphasised the recent healthy resurgence of certain cultural practices. Furthermore, explaining Métis interactions with the Virgin Mary in terms of a cultural crisis does not take seriously the religiosity of Marian shrines and apparitions nor does it recognize the significance of local interpretations.[13] By focusing on the spirituality of local interpretations of apparitions and shrines, we are able to explore individual and community perceptions of themselves, their recent history, and their places.

Our local study has benefited from and seeks to contribute to the broader body of scholarship on Métis history. Traditionally, the history of the Métis has been shaped by a fixation with "great men" such as Louis Riel and the Métis homeland of Red River. Although historian J.R. Miller has noted that the discipline has been "partially cured of Red River myopia," Brenda Macdougall has suggested that this has been replaced by a slightly broader "plains-centric focus" which typically excludes the distinct Métis culture that developed in the northern woodlands.[14] Much of the scholarship that incorporates the Métis of the Northwest has been preoccupied with the role of the church, government, fur trade companies, or Aboriginal kinship in defining these communities,[15] rather than engaging with how members of these communities have perceived their own history and community identities. Furthermore, the various bodies of scholarship that focus on either economic factors, government scrip policies, missions, or kinship do not engage with each other. They are separated by artificial boundaries that are rarely challenged and typically reinforced with the introduction of new scholarship. Most recently, Brenda Macdougall has argued that the Cree concept of extended 'family' or *wahkootowin* can be seen to define northwestern Métis communities.[16] While *wahkootowin*[17] enables us to move beyond ideas of syncretism, the community members we spoke with did not actually use the term *wahkootowin* in their discussions of Marian apparitions and shrines or even in more general discussion of their community. This omission could have been due to the nature of our questions or the fact that we only spoke English. Still, while our study is informed by and seeks to build on MacDougall's work, we hesitate to use the term *wahkootowin* as so doing could inadvertently privilege a Cree worldview in defining this local community thereby disadvantaging designations that our informants did identify. Instead we use the terms family and community, as our informants did. Our effort to engage with local understandings and experiences draws attention to the intersections of these various branches of historiography, linking scholarship on missions, *wahkootowin*, and the fur trade while demonstrating that northwestern Métis community identities cannot simply be defined in terms of work, syncretism or *wahkootowin*.

In addition to bridging various historiographies, such a focus on local perspectives draws attention to differences within the community as well

Statue of Mary at the shrine at the Narrows outside of Île-à-la-Crosse, 2006. Photo by MacKinley Darlington.

as similarities amongst community members that all stressed the importance of family and community. This is by no means an attempt to definitively define this particular community, but rather to engage with aspects of the ways that some community members see themselves and the northwest. Such a focus on local perspectives underscores that Marian shrines and apparitions, which outsiders may see as foreign, are to community members unquestionably a part of a distinct local identity. In this way our study is informed by recent scholarship in other geographic regions that has attempted to engage with local Aboriginal perspectives.[18] By shifting our scholarly gaze to engage with local perspectives and experiences we embrace the complexities of Métis history and contemporary life as we explore how some community members see themselves, Île-à-la-Crosse, the northwest, and the Virgin Mary.

APPARITIONS

On the Catholic feast of her birth, September 8, 2002, the Virgin Mary appeared on a window of a glass greenhouse at a farm just outside of Île-à-la-Crosse.[19] The owners of the farm, who belong to a very spiritual family,

arrived home from a wake to find what looked like a person glowing in their greenhouse.[20] Upon closer investigation, they discovered, on the window, an image of the Virgin[21] and the smell of roses in the greenhouse (even though there were only tomatoes in the greenhouse). They reportedly tried to wash the image off, only to observe it appear again, this time more intensely. They called friends and family members and soon there was a large crowd gathered around the image of the Virgin Mary. Doris Desjarlais, one of the visitors hoping to see the Blessed Virgin Mary, saw an outline of the Blessed Mother holding out her hands, glowing like tin reflecting the sun. She later reported that the experience healed her cancer. Others spoke of feeling Mary's presence.[22] Marie Favel, a community member who also came to see the apparition, explained that she felt a beautiful feeling and a tingling in her body that she had only felt before while on a pilgrimage to Denver.[23] Additional images later appeared on the greenhouse window, including the Last Supper, the Pope, and the face of Jesus. As a result, community members transformed the greenhouse into a shrine where to this day some community members continue to come to pray daily. This has also become a space for healing, as gospel jamborees and youth conferences have been held in the field across from the greenhouse. There are other stories of the Virgin Mary appearing in the northwest[24] and around Île-à-la-Crosse; some community members reported seeing her in dreams, others while travelling.[25] These different encounters, while personally meaningful for the individuals involved, also resonate at the community level, particularly as people have interpreted them as having helped protect members of the community from drugs, alcohol, and suicide.

Earlier accounts of encounters with the Holy Family and Virgin Mary in the northwest, recorded by scholars such as Kerry Abel and Martha McCarthy, have mostly been framed in terms of prophet movements. Although no one interviewed for this project mentioned these earlier encounters, they provide a historical context for the more recent apparitions and suggest both continuity and change over time. Following his 1859 visit to Île-à-la-Crosse, Alexandre Tache reported that a young man, claiming to be the Son of God, proclaimed "a voice revealed to him the will of God which had not been made known before to any man."[26] He also claimed to have received stigmata, although the

Anglican priest working with the Canadian Mission Society, Robert Hunt dismissed this as scrofula scars. McCarthy emphasises that this event occurred at a time of epidemics in the region, and, as a result, interest in this prophet's teachings lasted for several years, especially among his family members.[27] Similarly, in the early 1860s at La Loche, two sons of an ex-shaman (who had been baptized by the Oblates) claimed visitations by the Creator, Jesus, and Mary. However, their revelation, which an attending priest described as a mixture of "pagan" and Christian beliefs, apparently did not attract as many followers as the "Son of God" at Île-à-la-Crosse.[28] Both Abel and McCarthy discuss these "prophet movements" in terms of cultural crises. They are depicted in anthropological and psychological terms as responses to change - notably epidemics and the arrival of missionaries - rather than legitimate spiritual beliefs and experiences.[29] Our analysis of more recent apparitions provides a critique of works that discuss prophet movements solely as responses to cultural crisis. It is necessary to distinguish between a cultural crisis, which is not evident in Île-à-la-Crosse, and community crises, such as problems with drugs, alcohol and suicide, which are apparent. Taking the spiritual aspects of Marian apparitions and shrines seriously and focusing on a variety of local perspectives enables us to recognize that these phenomena are not irrational reactions to a cultural crisis.[30] Rather, many of the community members we spoke with noted that their culture has become stronger, evident in the increasing prevalence of sweat lodges and Marian apparitions. Both of these occurrences are seen to strengthen families and the community; fundamentally, providing solutions to contemporary problems. Métis interpretations of recent apparitions raise questions about how the Aboriginal people of the northwest may have perceived these events and experiences in the nineteenth century, underscoring the need for scholars discussing spiritual beliefs and practices to look at what historical anthropologist Marshall Sahlins refers to as both continuity in change, and change in continuity.[31]

While drawing attention to the benefits of shifting the scholarly gaze to focus on Métis perspectives, the earlier encounters with Mary described by Abel and McCarthy also draw attention to continuity and change in the northwest. Clearly Mary continues to play a prominent role in Île-à-la-Crosse, but significant changes have

The Shrine at the Narrows, 2006. Photo by MacKinley Darlington

occurred in the community since the nineteenth century. The parish no longer has a resident pastor (though it shares a priest with surounding communities), so laity men and women have been trained and mandated to lead Sunday services.[32] During this time, the parish has turned its focus to healing and faith.[33] Recent decades have also been a time of regaining Aboriginal spiritual beliefs, most obviously with the return of the sweat lodge. Community members engage with a variety of different religious practices and beliefs. Some have gone on, and continue to go on, pilgrimages to Patuanak, St. Laurent, and Lac Ste. Anne as well as the sites of other Marian apparitions around the world.[34] The appearance of the Virgin Mary and the creation of shrines to her in the northwest therefore provide certain community members with opportunities for direct contact with the Holy family. There is considerable agency in this, as the Catholic Church has not officially recognized these apparitions.[35] In this way, some community members are articulating their own distinct spirituality in emphasising this direct relationship with Mary that fundamentally they alone interpret. Our attempt to engage with these local perspectives provides insights to some of the ways the people of Île-à-la-Crosse define their own community, drawing attention to differences within the community as well as articulations of commonality and a shared northwestern identity.

Île-à-la-Crosse Métis leader Don Favel observed that "things happen, people explain them. If it happened to you then that's what it was."[36] This draws attention to the importance

of people's experiences and how they interpret them. In her work on Lourdes, medical historian Ruth Harris notes her "growing unease with the totalistic way the linguistic turn reduces all human experiences to language." She sees the Lourdes story as a "telling example of the imitations of such an approach by bringing to the fore the often inarticulate expressions of the body and of physical pain."[37] This is a reminder about the importance of physical experiences of Marian apparitions as well as the meanings community members have ascribed to them.

Unlike Harris' discussion of Lourdes, most Métis community members interviewed emphasised healing and families rather than pain and suffering. Mary is seen as responding to current fears about drugs, alcohol and suicides in the community - health concerns that could be seen as related to lingering effects of the colonial relationship. The Virgin and her message are, therefore, understood by the community as a solution. According to elder Georgina Morin, Mary would not speak until the young people in the community stopped using drugs and alcohol,[38] and when she did speak, her message emphasised family and prayer. At 10:30 p.m. on August 22, 2003, the Virgin Mary spoke to six children at the greenhouse shrine. Wearing a white dress with blue and white pearls on the veil, she reportedly said, "I'm looking at your family," and told them to "love all your family and pray with your family."[39] The Métis of Île-à-la-Crosse have interpreted both the reason for Mary's appearance and the meaning of her messages as a call to strengthen their families and community; something they see as essential to protecting Île-à-la-Crosse and the northwest from outside dangers. These interpretations provide insight into recent individual and community concerns regarding health, while demonstrating some innovative responses to current challenges such as calls to strengthen and protect families, communities, and the northwest.

Factors like gender influence individuals' encounters with Mary and the meaning that they ascribed to them. Born in Beauval and raised by her Catholic grandparents, Marie Favel emphasised the strength of her own faith, noting that she had once thought about becoming a nun.[40] Twenty years ago, she was supposed to go on pilgrimage to Medjugorje, Bosnia, with several other community members but an opening for a surgery she had been waiting for prevented her from participating in the pilgrimage. Instead, she bought a scarf that the other ladies could take with them and leave at the shrine overnight. When the scarf was brought back to Île-à-la-Crosse, Marie gave it to her daughter-in-law who was having problems conceiving. She told her to tie the scarf around her waist, say the rosary, and ask Mary for help. A month later her daughter-in-law was pregnant with her first child. This account highlights the importance of health and family in encounters with Mary, but in its attention to gender emphasises the significance of difference within the community of Île-à-la-Crosse. According to Marie, "When you are a woman, you want to take your problems to a woman."[41]

One of the primary reasons for moving away from a focus on simple syncretism is the need to draw attention to the variety of ways that the Métis of the northwest described their spirituality and the Marian apparitions and shrines. In response to questions about Marian apparitions, some community members chose to discuss the sweat lodge and its role in strengthening their faith.[42] Several people explained that they had been learning how to do sweats and bringing the practice back into the community, even helping neighbouring First Nations communities to set up sweat lodges.[43] In this way, the recent past becomes a time of cultural revival, even in the wake of community crises. Marie Favel has participated in workshops on Aboriginal spirituality, and underscored the significance of getting back into the sweat lodge, an experience that was "a real eye opener" for her. She explains,

I became stronger in my faith when I started going to the sweat lodge, we had a medicine man come in one time and he did a ceremony … He used blueberries as an offering… It just clicked in my mind with the mass, the priest offers the wine and its made from grapes and these were blueberries, so it connected for me, and my faith became stronger. It just made me feel good about myself and what I believed in. So going back to church, I always remember when the priest offers the sacrifices with the wine - it connects with that feeling.[44]

In addition to strengthening her own faith, Marie Favel sees the sweat lodge as a place of healing. She works with young girls in the sweat lodge, a place for discussion and sharing to make them feel good about themselves as women.[45] This return to the sweat lodge and emphasis on strengthening faith underscores that this is not a community undergoing a crisis of culture, challenging

scholarship that conflates such crises with cultural disintegration. Furthermore, the variety of forms this cultural revival is seen to take is significant as it includes both a return to the sweat lodge as well as Marian apparitions and shrines. Although outsiders might view sweat lodges and Marian apparitions as external elements to this Métis community or contradictory practices, they are both in fact local expressions of individual and community identity, drawing attention to the variety of forms such expressions take.

Sweat lodge leader Don Favel (Marie Favel's brother-in-law) draws attention to existing tensions between some community members and particular priests, and the authority of personal spiritual experiences. To him, the sweat lodge is a place where people talk and pray if someone needs help.[46] Don shared some very personal stories about spiritual encounters that he had originally shared with friends in a sweat. He brought up the problem of suicides in the community and the inability of the priest, who he regarded as viewing suicide purely in terms of sin, to deal with it. When Don's son killed himself, the priest told Don that his son would go to hell. However, Don later saw an apparition of his son as a shepherd crossing the road, and when he turned he saw that his son had angel wings.[47] Such a vision carried more authority than the words of the priest, and offered comfort and closure that the priest was unable to provide. It also hints at a difference, for some, between the formal structure of the Church and Catholic belief systems as understood within a more local context. While not a vision of Mary, this experience relates directly to the themes of healing and family discussed here, while drawing attention to issues of agency and authority located in such personal experiences. There are similarities in the agency and comfort that Don derived from his experience and others' encounters with Mary. Finally, this account draws attention to the variety of spiritual beliefs and experiences within the community of Île-à-la-Crosse and the northwest, highlighting the importance of engaging with some of these local perspectives.

Clearly other experiences with Mary (and spiritual experiences in general) shaped how individuals interpreted the apparition of Mary at the farm. These individual experiences are very personal yet also link to the themes of family, health, and community protection. Leon Gardiner saw the Virgin Mary appear out of a cloud in August 1992 at the Beauval forks. According to

Gardiner, who was struggling with drugs and alcohol at the time, Mary asked him to pray and help young people in the community who were dealing with similar problems. Although he did not initially accept her message, he continued to think of her and had other experiences of Marian apparitions, eventually causing him to change his life. In 2001, he went to Buffalo Narrows to see a statue of the Virgin Mary that had started to weep. He said, "she looked at me clear face and she started talking...told me I needed to help the kids, needed to help the children." After this encounter, he found that his hand was in a solid fist that he could not immediately open. When he was finally able to open it he found on his palm a blue image of Mary. According to Gardiner, "she took me by the hand...the Blessed Mother is so powerful." Gardiner emphasized Mary's role as a mother, noting that she called him "my boy," similar to his own mother.[48] It is in this role as a mother that Mary can most clearly be seen to fit within local values of family and community (concepts that are often seen as interchangeable). Following her wishes, Gardiner now works as a counsellor and is involved in youth programmes to help the community deal with alcohol, drugs, and suicide. To him, the apparition of Mary at the farm is a part of his own personal mission, and can be seen to grant authority to his role and work in the community. A movement away from ideas of syncretism or cultural crisis draws needed attention to specific personal experiences and interpretations.

It is important to note that there were community members who did not personally experience the Marian appearances and also some who were rather critical of the apparitions. For example, Bea and Colin Mann felt that Roman Catholicism had subjugated Métis culture. They saw their community as having an "identity crisis," explaining that because people do not really know who they are, they "imitate others."[49] In some ways, this interpretation fits with earlier scholarly discussions of prophet movements centring on cultural crisis. Though we are suggesting here that scholars need to recognize that community problems and crises do not equal a crisis in culture, it is important not to simply dismiss the Manns' observation as they provide an important example of the multitude of what are at times contradictory spiritual beliefs and experiences in this small northwestern community.

Clearly, there are a variety of spiritual

expressions and beliefs within this community. But this does not mean that community feelings can be easily divided into camps where there are those who are critical of the apparitions while others claim to have experienced the Blessed Mother and see her as integral to the healing process. Indeed, the Manns and others who have not experienced the Virgin Mary's appearances still view other people's belief in, and enthusiasm over, Mary's supposed appearances as positive because they have brought communities and families together.[50] In this way, even those who are sceptical of the apparitions recognize Mary's role in healing and strengthening family and community. Norma Malboeuf, who has not seen or felt the Virgin's presence, still noted that it was a significant and positive event for the community.[51] The apparitions have clearly affected the community - private places have been transformed into public spaces as apparitions become physically manifested in the form of shrines and in so doing spaces for community healing have been created.

ROADSIDE SHRINES

With the creation of a shrine, a Marian apparition can be remembered and celebrated long after her actual appearance. Apparitions have acted as stimulus for shrines in Northwestern Saskatchewan; however, there are several types of Marian shrines in the northwest, both private and public, that are distinguished further by their location on the landscape. Shrines can be located in people's homes or yards; at religious institutions or spiritual locations, and can take both shrine or grotto form.[52] They can also be found in cemeteries, placed at or near headstones, and along the roadside. Although all types hold significance, it is the latter, the Virgin Mary roadside shrine, that Georgina Morin identified as the most important in the community. As such, they became the focus of our research.

Although Virgin Mary roadside shrines are created by individuals and families for a variety of personal reasons and are used for devotion to the Blessed Mother, they also transform patches along the highway into communal places that are used for contemplation and healing, and more generally to protect the Métis of Northwestern Saskatchewan. These roadside shrines epitomise the complexities of both Métis history and contemporary life in the northwest. While on the surface they may appear to be infusing traditional spirituality with symbols of Catholicism first brought to the area by agents of colonialism, Virgin Mary roadside shrines are neither tools of assimilation nor resistance. Rather, they are a testament to the ongoing efforts made by the Métis to bring family and community together and to make sense of their past in order to protect their culture and community from recent internal and external threats. They reflect the ability of the Métis to find ways of being indigenous in a rapidly changing world where symbols outsiders may regard as introduced to the region by colonial forces are in fact profoundly local expressions of identity.

The Virgin Mary roadside shrines of Northwestern Saskatchewan are not unlike Marian shrines found around the world. Some of the most recognisable shrines and grottos in the world, at places like Lourdes, Fatima, and Medjugorje, were created in part to commemorate Marian apparitions with physical manifestations designed to preserve the legacy of the site while communicating the integrity of the visitation. Countless pilgrims frequent these shrines every year in the hopes that the combination of their faith and these spiritually potent places will produce the healing they long for. Roadside shrines in Northwestern Saskatchewan, unlike their popular European counterparts, are rarely built at the location of an apparition. Rather

Various items, including Medjugorje souvenir water, coins and artificial flowers, enhancing a northern roadside shrine. Photo by MacKinley Darlington

apparitions provide motivation to build a roadside shrine at the location of one's choosing.[53] In this way, Virgin Mary roadside shrines in Northwestern Saskatchewan are more similar to the phenomenon of the outdoor shrines visible in New Mexico.

In *Living Shrines: Home Altars of New Mexico,* Marie Romero Cash uncovers diverse, and often personal, motivations for building outdoor shrines. Driven by his devotion to a statue brought to Santa Fe with the early settlers, many of whom were his relatives, Ray Herrera built an outdoor shrine to house the symbol of his history and devotion.[54] In a subsequent case highlighted by Romero, as a tribute to all youngsters whose lives had been lost to drunk drivers, local teenagers hauled rocks to construct a shrine to house the statue bought by a family who had lost their daughter in one such incident.[55] Although in Northwestern Saskatchewan it is the shrine itself that appears to hold the meaning and not necessarily the statue that it houses, the diversity in personal motivation is akin to these New Mexican outdoor shrines. There are instances in the northwest in which roadside shrines were erected to memorialise deadly car accidents, while others are constructed to capture the impact of an apparition, and some are built with the memory of a loved one in mind. Most often, however, there are multiple stimulants that unite to inspire the building of a roadside shrine.

The Virgin Mary roadside shrine at the Narrows perhaps began the phenomenon of the roadside shrine in Northwestern Saskatchewan. Originally inspired by a Marian apparition, its location at the Narrows, near Île-à-la-Crosse, was chosen after years of consideration. It was not until the passing of a loved one that the final motivation for erecting the shrine and selecting the location was received. Like so many others in the northwest, the roadside shrine at the Narrows began in a more simple form than what it is today. As it evolved from a place created by individual motivation to a public space, the community took to beautifying and upgrading it. As George Malboeuf, who helped erect the shrine at the Narrows, explains: "The community went in; different people go in to beautify the shrine. People put rosary in, people put flowers in- they upgrade it...Some people they'll go pray and they take a lawn mower, some other people take flowers. They have a lot of respect for the Mother of Christ."[56]

Since its creation, the shrine at the Narrows has been the starting place for the annual Easter pilgrimage to the Île-à-la-Crosse grotto. Built in 1944, the grotto in Île-à-la-Crosse overlooks the lake and is not far from the original mission site. Its creation was a community effort as members were encouraged to bring a rock to be included in the construction.[57] The grotto has undergone several additions and the community similarly attends to its upkeep. In late July, during the pilgrimage to Lac Ste. Anne, the grotto acts as a surrogate for community members unable to make the trek to Alberta and is used simultaneously for Mass, while the lake acts as a substitute for Lac Ste. Anne's healing waters. During this Easter pilgrimage, the Stations of the Cross are enacted and the rosary is recited while participants walk from the shrine at the Narrows into Île-à-la-Crosse and onto the grotto. Liz Durocher describes,

> People walk that trek and they recite the rosary and carry the cross. That is not only in Île-à-la-Crosse, you see that all over, in these northern communities especially in here around this area- we are talking about Green Lake, Beauval, Buffalo Narrows and then further up that way towards La Loche, Turnor Lake, Dillon.[58]

Spiritual-based activities are gaining popularity throughout Northwestern Saskatchewan and Virgin Mary roadside shrines have been incorporated as part of this community-based strengthening. Spirituality has been, and is being embraced by the Métis community as a way to protect the valued interpersonal associations of family and community.

Just as the reasons for erecting a shrine vary, so too do the form and appearance of each shrine. There are two noticeably consistent elements in all of the Virgin Mary roadside shrines in Northwestern Saskatchewan: their visibility from the roadway[59] and the presence of a Marian statue. Additional elements are added to shrines by their architects and, more frequently, by visitors from the community. Some shrines have supplementary Catholic paraphernalia as well as elements considered to hold significance with traditional Aboriginal spirituality. Some of the additional elements included an image of Pope John Paul II; vials of water from Medjugorje and from Lourdes, tobacco, small drums, and prayer cloths. The most common addition made to virtually all roadside shrines are artificial flowers, favoured both for their aestheticism and longevity.

In the summer of 2006, all but one of the Métis communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan, Descharme Lake, were visited by members of the research team. During this time we encountered twenty-five occurrences of Virgin Mary roadside shrines. Even during the four months of fieldwork, roadside shrines in the northwest were changing. While forest fire destroyed a small shrine near Île-à-la-Crosse, other shrines were evolving in appearance and in meaning as they transformed from private places to public spaces. As George Malboeuf illustrated, the community guides this transformation beginning with the beautification of the shrine. In 2006, the shrine at Pinehouse had not yet been 'beautified' by the community. It was relatively stark compared to the more established and complex shrines in the area. It was only beginning its journey to become a communal space and a recognisable symbol of the Northwestern Saskatchewan Métis.

Virgin Mary roadside shrines are most often located at or near the entrances to town sites, and have come to symbolize protection both for the community and those travelling out from it. For many travellers, especially when leaving the region, the roadside shrines are places to stop and

Shrine paraphernalia, artificial flowers and Lourdes water. Photo by MacKinley Darlington

pray and ask the Blessed Virgin Mary to ensure a safe journey, or as quick reminders to say a prayer while continuing on the drive. Roadside shrines are also described as spiritual pillars of protection for the community against drugs, alcohol, and suicide, which are typically associated with the south. As one community member explained, "the reason to have shrines is to put faith in Mary to protect the North..."[60] Factors considered to be from outside the community pose the greatest danger and the strategic location of the Virgin Mary roadside shrine provides a barrier against such threats. Even shrines commemorating fatal accidents have been embraced by the community as icons of protection. As such, what might appear to outsiders as decidedly Roman Catholic-looking shrines are in fact symbols of local Métis cultural identity that serve as both reminders of what has happened and symbols of hope for the future.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

Much can be gleaned about the community of Île-à-la-Crosse and the surrounding region from a discussion of Marian shrines and apparitions. These encounters between Mary and the Métis provide insights into Métis conceptions of themselves and the northwest. Community members consistently emphasised that the primary role of the apparitions and shrines was to bring families and communities together and to protect them. Such interpretations of these phenomena underscore the creativity and innovation of the Métis in articulating and responding to challenges such as alcohol, drugs, and suicide. Furthermore, our exploration of apparitions and shrines draws attention to the broader issues of agency, authority, continuity, and change. There is considerable agency in how individuals explain Mary's presence, interpret her message, and the various ways they have chosen to act in response; authority is seen to reside within these personal and communal relationships with Mary; and there is continuity and change in community members' articulations of distinct northwestern identities, apparent in their attention to the need to protect the north from external influences such as drugs and alcohol. Fundamentally, these case studies call our attention to the significance of the northwest and Île-à-la-Crosse as a spiritual place that cannot be understood simply in economical or political terms. In their focus on a variety of local perspectives and some of the ways that the Métis

of Île-à-la-Crosse see their own community, these case studies challenge the artificial boundaries between different elements of the historiography, offering a more complex portrait of this northwestern community.

This study complicates a broader historiography that has primarily focused on missions and prophet movements in the nineteenth century, underscoring the need for scholars to take Aboriginal spiritual experiences and beliefs seriously - including those that do not conform to their expectations. In this way, it is important to move beyond outsider ideas of syncretism to engage with the perspectives of community members. Taking the religiosity of local interpretations seriously allows a deeper consideration of how the Métis of the northwest have perceived and experienced their world. For example, while some people emphasized the importance of the sweat lodge and offering tobacco, others considered themselves strictly Roman Catholic – all considered themselves Métis and part of a unique northern community. Gender and personal experiences further affected various individual experiences and interpretations of these phenomena. Still, both believers and non-believers noted the role of these experiences in bringing together families and communities. Moving away from a dichotomy of assimilation or resistance, this study recognizes Marian apparitions and roadside shrines as testaments to ongoing efforts of the Métis to bring family and community together and in so doing to make sense of their past to protect their culture and community in the present and future.

Finally, our local study raises broader issues about the differing ways that insiders and outsiders look at change. This is most evident in the difference between scholarly studies that predominantly view the relationships between Mary and Aboriginal people in terms of cultural crises or syncretism, and community perspectives that stress respect, Aboriginal agency, and cultural revival in these phenomena. There is still a need for scholars to shift their gaze to engage with Aboriginal perspectives of phenomena that Aboriginal people have identified as important. In this preliminary effort, the significance of the Métis in transforming the northwest is apparent as they interpreted apparitions, made them physically manifest in the form of shrines, and created spaces for community healing. Most significantly however, shifting our scholarly gaze requires

The shrine at Pinehouse waiting to be "beautified".
Photo by MacKinley Darlington

that we respect the sincerity of Métis spirituality in its many forms. It is the idea of respect, as emphasised by community members themselves, that best connects the apparitions and roadside shrines in the northwest while preserving various individual interpretations. It is the respect for this variation that helps unite these differences into an overarching Northwest Saskatchewan Métis spirituality. In this way, variations in experiences and interpretations of the apparitions, and in the design, symbolism, and function of roadside shrines represent what it is to be a member of this Northwestern Saskatchewan Métis community. When viewed from the perspective of community members, the Blessed Mother warrants respect for her role in bringing families and communities together, healing, and protecting the Northwestern Saskatchewan community to which she belongs.

Endnotes

1   George Malboeuf, Interviewed by MacKinley Darlington and Kevin Gambell, Digitally Recorded, Île-à-la-Crosse SK, 9 August 2006.
2   *Sakitawak*, meaning where the rivers meet, is the Cree name for Île-à-la-Crosse. Some community members we spoke with preferred this term.
3   Native studies scholar Brenda Macdougall notes that Catholicism was prevalent in Île-à-la-Crosse even before the arrival of the missionaries. Oblates La Flèche and Taché from St. Boniface established the Mission at Île-à-la-Crosse. Brenda Macdougall, "Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Métis Communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan, 1776-1907" (PhD Dissertation, University of Saskatchewan, 2005). For a detailed discussion of the establishment of the mission at Île-à-la-Crosse see Barbara Benoit, "Mission at Île-à-la-Crosse," *The Beaver*, (1980) p. 40- 50; A more general account of the Oblates in the northwest is R. J. A. Huel, Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis, (University of Alberta Press: Edmonton, 1996). The centrality of Mary, the patron saint of Île-à-la-Crosse, is evident in the Grotto of the Immaculate Conception that was built in 1944, housing statues of Our Lady of Lourdes and Bernadette, as well as a large statue of St. Anne and a young Mary. Joseph Lozinsky and Heather A. Leier, Mary as Mother: the Pilgrimage Shrines to the Blessed Virgin Mary in

Saskatchewan (Muenster Saskatchewan: St Peter's Press, 1987).

4   We worked as student researchers for the *Otipimsuak – The Free People: Métis Land and Society in Northwest Saskatchewan* CURA funded atlas project. Amanda studied Marian apparitions and MacKinley researched the roadside shrines. Due to the related nature of these projects many of our interviews were conducted together.

5   Neither of us are Catholic, northerners or Métis. It is important to note that while we were not converted to Catholicism, we were moved by the stories shared with us.

6   This paper is based on semi-structured interviews that we conducted with community members during four research trips to Île-à-la-Crosse and surrounding region in the summer of 2006. During our first trip we met with political leaders who suggested potential interviewees for our topics. These contacts often suggested other people for us to speak to. We also made some of our own contacts from participating in community events around the centenary of Treaty 10 and Métis scrip, and attending church service. We would like to thank those community members who welcomed us to the northwest and shared their stories and insights with us. We have acknowledged specific individuals by name where permission to do so has been granted.

7   Specific to the province of Saskatchewan is Lozinsky and Leier, *Mary as Mother*. More generally for a Canadian context, see Joan Skogan, *Mary of Canada: The Virgin Mary in Canadian Culture, Spirituality, History, and Geography*, (Banff: Banff Centre Press, 2003). The apparitions have received ample coverage in newspapers and on Ourladyweb.com. Similarly the history of some northern Marian shrines (including the Grotto at Île-à-la-Crosse) is included on the Western Development Museum's centenary website (with the assistance of the Our Lady of the Prairies Foundation). http://www.wdmprairiegamble.com/story/display_story.php?mode=&search _keyword=&story_types=1,1,1,1,1,1,1&story_topics=1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1, 1&story_time_frames=1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1&story_id=215. There is, of course, a much broader body of literature on Mary and Mariology in the Catholic world, though much of this work is devotional rather than historical in nature. While there are some clear parallels between the apparitions and shrines in Northwestern Saskatchewan and the occurrence of these phenomena in other parts of the world, the focus here is on local interpretations of local phenomena. Two broader studies that have informed our interpretation are Ruth Harris, *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age*, (New York: Viking, 1999); and, Marie Romero Cash, *Living Shrines: Home Alters of New Mexico*, (Sante Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1998).

8   Macdougall, "Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation," p. 60.

9   Studies in this genre include, "The Religious History of St John the Baptist Parish, Île-à-la-Crosse, 150 years," Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas, 1996; Benoit, "Mission at Île-à-la-Crosse"; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis; From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth: Oblate Missions to the Dene, 1847-1921*, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1995).

10   For example, James Treat ed., *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada* (New York: Routledge, 1996). In this collection, authors tended to generalize about Native and Western spirituality, losing sight of differences within Aboriginal groups and similarities in the experiences and beliefs of Native and non-Native Christians. Opposition between Christianity and Tribal religions is even more prevalent in Vine Deloria Jr.'s *God is Red,* (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1973).

11   See anthropologist Anthony Wallace's discussion of Handsome Lake and anthropologist Homer Barnett's analysis of the Shaker Church. Both of these works pay attention to cultural exchange in terms of innovation (the idea that concepts from one culture can be adopted and adapted to fit into another's framework) and revitalization. In some ways, these works have been ignored by modern scholars, who have been quick to dismiss Christian influences as merely the *effects* of colonialism; providing little space for discussing the interactions between Christianity and Aboriginal religious beliefs, or how Aboriginal beliefs themselves may have been influenced by changes. Both Barnett and Wallace see prophet movements as responses to cultural crisis or trauma and social disorder and do not seem to take the spiritual/religious elements of these "cults" seriously. While it is not necessary that anthropologists believe everything that their informants believe, such a dismissal of the sincerity of the religious aspects of these movements prevents deeper engagement with Aboriginal beliefs making them seem artificial. See Homer Barnett, *Indian Shakers: A Messianic Cult of the Pacific Northwest* (Carbondale Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1957); Anthony Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca,* (New York: Knopf, 1970).

12   Of direct relevance to this study, anthropologist Robert Jarvenpa

has looked at the emerging pilgrimage of the Dene community of Patuanak. Jarvenpa, "The Development of Pilgrimage in an inter-cultural frontier," in *Culture and the Anthropological Tradition* (New York: University Press of America, 1990). Likewise, anthropologist Kerry Abel looks at how the Dene people have maintained their sense of cultural distinctiveness in the face of the overwhelming cultural, economic and political pressures of newcomers. She suggests that the adoption of a new religious vocabulary and new forms of religious practice did not always signal changes in Dene beliefs. Abel, *Drum Songs: Glimpses of Dene History* (Kingston: McGill Queens University Press, second edition 2007, first edition 1993). Historian Martha McCarthy disagrees with this aspect of Abel's analysis, and argues that the Dene accepted Catholicism on their own terms, in conformity with their own cultural and spiritual understandings. Both Abel and McCarthy focus on Aboriginal reactions to missionaries and see the Métis as middlemen auxiliaries for the missionaries. Slightly farther afield, historian Susan Neylan has more recently looked at how the Tsimshian in nineteenth century B.C. were active in shaping forms of Christianity. She questions why the acceptance of Christianity by Native North Americans is seen to automatically replace/preclude Native forms of spirituality, and attempts to provide a more "nuanced understanding of Christianization" where various forms of religious expression are not seen as "less pure" than the original. Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity*, (Kingston: McGill Queens University Press, 2002).

13   Our critique echoes those by Reynaldo lleto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1979); and Martha Kaplan, *Neither Cargo Nor Cult: Ritual Politics and the Colonial Imagination in Fiji.* Duke University Press: Durham and London, 1995. These studies mark a significant shift from earlier studies of cultural interaction and change, especially those on prophet movements, as they engage with local cultures and perspectives to make sense of the past.

14   J.R. Miller, "From Riel to the Métis," in *Reflections on Native Newcomer Relations: Selected Essays*, (Toronto, U of T Press, 2004), p. 54; Brenda Macdougall, "Wahkootowin: Family and Cultural Identity in Northwestern Saskatchewan Métis Communities," *The Canadian Historical Review 87, 3* (2006): p. 439.

15   For studies focusing on Métis scrip see Frank Tough, "Economic Aspects of Aboriginal Title in Northern Manitoba: Treaty 5 Adhesions and Métis Scrip," *Manitoba History* 15 (1988); Tough, "'the claims of the half-breeds…have finally been closed': A Study of Treaty Ten and Treaty Five Adhesion Scrip," in *For Seven generations: An Information Legacy of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, CD-ROM, (Ottawa: Libraxus, 1997); Frank Tough, "Métis Scrip Commissions, 1885-1924," in *Saskatchewan Atlas*, ed. Ka-iu Fung, (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1999). For studies stressing the economic aspects of Métis identity and their role in the fur trade, see Robert Jarvenpa and Hetty Jo Brumbach, "Occupational Status, Ethnicity, and Ecology: Métis Cree Adaptations in a Canadian Trading Frontier," Human *Ecology* 13, 3 (1985): p. 314 no.4; Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), reprint 1998; Arthur Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1990). Earlier social histories that drew attention to the role of women and families in the fur trade are Jennifer Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country,* 2nd Edition (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 1996); Sylvia Van Kirk, *'Many TenderTies': Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980.)

16   See Macdougall, *"Socio-cultural Development and Identity,"*; Macdougall, "Wahkootowin." Macdougall notes that the Dene have a term with a similar meaning, *etoline*, to express their social structure based on family.

17   *Wahkootowin* is a Cree term that was used to "express the sense that family was the foundational relationship for pursuing any economic, political, social, or cultural activities and alliances." Brenda Macdougall, "Wahkootowin: Family and Cultural Identity in Northwestern Saskatchewan Métis Communities," *Canadian Historical Review* 87, 3 (September 2006), p. 433.

18   Our approach has benefited from several important works (looking at different regions) that take Aboriginal understandings of the past seriously and make them the focus of their studies. This scholarship recognizes that there is no single Native viewpoint, drawing attention to difference within communities and similarities between them. In particular, our study has been informed by historical anthropologist Marshall Sahlins' attention to local cultures in interpreting the past. Sahlins draws attention to both change in continuity and continuity in change in his push for scholarship to move away from dichotomies (Native versus newcomer, colonizer versus colonized and other dichotomies such as private and public or political and personal).

Marshall Sahlins, *With Apologies to Thucydides: Understanding History as Culture and Vice Versa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Marshall Sahlins, "The Return of the Event, Again; With Reflections on the Beginnings of the Great Fijian War of 1843 to 1855 between the Kingdoms of Bau and Rewa," in *Clio in Oceania: Towards a Historical Anthropology,* ed. Aletta Biersack (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990). Other recent scholarship that takes local Indigenous perspectives seriously recognizes that new elements might be incorporated into a society and over time come to reflect the identity of that community. Specific works that have influenced our study include Keith Thor Carlson, "Toward an Indigenous Historiography: Events, Migrations, and the Formation of Post-Contact Coast Salish Collective Identities," in *Be of Good Mind: Essays on the Coast Salish,* ed. Bruce Granville Miller (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); Keith Thor Carlson, "Innovation, Tradition, Colonialism and Aboriginal Fishing Conflicts in the Lower Fraser Canyon," in *New Histories for Old: Changing Perspectives on Canada's Native Pasts,* ed. Ted Binnema and Susan Neylan, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); Kaplan, Martha. *Neither Cargo Nor Cult,* Peter Iverson, *When Indians Became Cowboys: Native Peoples and Cattle Ranching in the American West.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994.

19 One of the limits of this work is that we were unable to interview the owners of the farm where Mary appeared. As a result, we have relied on interviews with other community members and newspaper articles (that include quotes from the owners of the farm). More generally, the interviews that we conducted during four research trips provide glimpses of the meaning of these events to the community, but not necessarily the entire picture.

20 See *Noemi LoPinto,* "There's Something about Mary," *Leader Post,* Regina, Sask.: Sep 3, 2005. p. G.1.Fro. B; Macdougall also notes historic links between the Bouvier Family and the mission. Macdougall, *"Socio-cultural Development and Identity," p.* 13.

21 We should note here that the image of Mary as described by community members and evident in the shrines is European (a white woman wearing blue and white), unlike the Mohawk virgin saint or the Virgin of Guadalupe.

22 Doris Desjarlais, Interview by MacKinley Darlington and Amanda Fehr, Digitally recorded, Île-à-la-Crosse SK, 19 June 2006; Liz Durocher, Interview by MacKinley Darlington and Amanda Fehr, Digitally recorded, Île-à-la-Crosse SK, 19 June 2006; Interview with community member by MacKinley Darlington and Amanda Fehr, Île-à-la-Crosse SK, 8 August 2006.

23 Marie Favel, Interview by Jodie Crew, MacKinley Darlington, and Amanda Fehr, Digitally recorded, Île-à-la-Crosse, 21 June 2006.

24 Since appearing in Île-à-la-Crosse, apparitions of the Virgin Mary have been reported in Métis and Aboriginal communities across Northwestern Saskatchewan including the communities of Canoe Lake, La Loche, Buffalo Narrows, Beauval, Meadow Lake, and Patuanak. "Mary's image reportedly seen on glass panes," *Calgary Herald,* Calgary, Alta.: Dec 7, 2002. p. OS.11; "Virgin Mary image draws a crowd," *Calgary Herald.* Calgary, Alta.: Sep 13, 2002. p. A.4

25 Leon Gardiner, Interview by MacKinley Darlington and Amanda Fehr, Digitally recorded, Île-à-la-Crosse SK, 8 August 2006; George Malboeuf, Interview, 2006; Philip Durocher, Interview by Amanda Fehr, Île-à-la-Crosse SK, 20 June 2006.

26 McCarthy, "The Missions of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate to the Athapaskans 1846-1870: Theory, Structure, and Method," (PhD Dissertation, University of Manitoba, 1981), pp. 309-313, as cited in Abel, *Drum Songs,* p. 129. This discussion is based on the Journal of CMS Missionary Robert Hunt, June 1859, as well as Oblate correspondence.

27 McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth.*

28 Abel, *Drum Songs,* p. 129.

29 As McCarthy notes, it is significant, given the emphasis placed by Oblate preachers of Catholicism on contemporary apparitions in France, that the Christianity presented to the Dene (and arguably people of the northwest in general) emphasised miracles. McCarthy does not tie this to scholarship on Lourdes. McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth,* pp. 149-150. While prophet movements in Canada are deemed as responses to cultural crisis, this is not how scholars have interpreted apparitions in Europe (such as those at Lourdes). There has been little dialogue between these two areas of scholarship, though a preliminary effort has been made here. For a discussion of the apparitions at Lourdes that has informed this work, see Harris, *Lourdes.*

30 Again, our approach here parallels Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution, 1979;* and Kaplan, *Neither Cargo Nor Cult,* 1995.

31 This observation relates to a broader need for scholars to consider the dialectic relationship between continuity and change. See, Marshall Sahlins, *With Apologies to Thucydides,* 2006; "The Return of the Event, Again," 1990.

32 It is significant that this is Post Vatican II - which "renounced

acculturation in favour of more universal Catholicism comprised of local churches." The church now focuses on the process of inculturation and the local church. Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis,* p. 284-285; See also, "Religious History of St John the Baptist Parish." These changes were further evident in the community led services at St. John the Baptist Church in Île-à-la-Crosse, where the rosary and prayers were said and hymns were sung in Cree, Michif, and English.

33 "Religious History of St John the Baptist Parish."

34 The special relationships between Mary and the Métis of the Northwest relate to other Marian apparitions around the world. Notably there are links through pilgrimages and travelling statutes between Île-à-la-Crosse and Marian apparitions at Lourdes, Fatima, Medjugorje, and Cap-de-la-Madeline (Trois-Rivieres Quebec).

35 Apparitions are specific kinds of visions of a person/being not normally within the perceptual range that appears to an individual. Sometimes people see an actual being or luminous rays. Apparitions often carry a message.

36 Don Favel, Interview by Amanda Fehr, digitally recorded, Île-à-la-Crosse, 20 June 2006.

37 Ruth Harris, *Lourdes,* p. xvii.

38 Georgina Morin, Interview by MacKinley Darlington and Amanda Fehr, Île-à-la-Crosse, SK., 8 August 2006. Mrs. Morin was one of several community members who made the pilgrimage to Medjugorje Bosnia-Hercegovina, where starting in 1981 six children (at the time aged 10-20) reported almost daily appearances of the Madonna.

39 Liz Durocher typed ten points of what the Virgin Mary said and did on this date. Several community members had this list in their homes. The information included here is taken from that list, copy in authors' possession. There are some clear similarities here with other Marian apparitions around the world, such as at Lourdes and Medjugorje where the Virgin gave her message to children.

40 Marie Favel, Interview, 21 June 2006.

41 Ibid.

42 It is important to note the variety of spiritual experiences and practices of community members. Some were very adamant about practicing Roman Catholicism and emphasised that they did not participate in sweats. While the return to sweats is clearly important to many, the entire community is not involved in this practice.

43 Marie Favel, Interview, 21 June 2006; Don Favel, Interview, 20 June 2006.

44 Marie Favel, Interview, 21 June 2006.

45 Ibid.

46 Don Favel, Interview, 20 June 2006; Philip Durocher, Interview, 20 June 2006.

47 Don Favel, Interview, 20 June 2006.

48 Leon Gardiner, Interview, 8 August 2006.

49 This critique is similar to a more detailed one made by Isidore Campbell, a chief at the Meadow Lake tribal council. Campbell explained "I think it's safe to say the whole northwest of Saskatchewan have all seen the movie Our Lady of Fatima. ...I think everybody is looking for that kind of apparition, a beautiful lady glowing in the dark. We're willing to believe in anything, but people don't realize we completely lost our culture and beliefs, and we're adopting the white mans' religion to suit our needs." See LoPinto, "There's Something about Mary."

50 Bea and Colin Mann, Interview by Katya MacDonald and Kevin Gambell, Digitally recorded, Île-à-la-Crosse SK, 8 August 2006.

51 Norma Malboeuf, Interview by MacKinley Darlington and Amanda Fehr, Digitally recorded, Île-à-la-Crosse SK, 7 August 2006.

52 A grotto is a natural or artificial structure that closely resembles a cave. In Northwestern Saskatchewan, these structures are most often man-made and at least partially enclosed. As with the grotto in Île-à-la-Crosse only the alter is made of stone but as the structure is roofed, a similar sensation is accomplished and the community has taken to calling it a grotto.

53 As identified above, shrines can be erected at the site of an apparition in the northwest. However, these shrines fit into the landscape differently than do the roadside shrines identified by Georgina Morin.

54 Cash, *Living Shrines,* p. 8.

55 Cash, *Living Shrines,* 16.

56 George Malboeuf Interview, August 9, 2006.

57 Lozinsky and Leier, *Mary as Mother,* p.14.

58 Liz Durocher, Interview, 19 June 2006.

59 Although visible from the roadway, many shrines blend so well with their surroundings that they can easily be missed. Countless u-turns were made as members of the research team kept a watchful eye and several side roads were re-visited as tips of potential shrine sites were collected from members of the community.

60 Interview with community member, 8 August 2006.

THE ÎLE-À-LA-CROSSE CEMETERY: A REGIONAL APPROACH

By Kevin Gambell

Laid to rest within the partitioned-off clerical section of the Île-à-la-Crosse cemetery is Sister Marguerite Riel, Louis Riel's eldest sister, a member of the Grey Nuns who worked in the community until her unfortunate drowning in the lake in 1883. The granite gravestone indicating her burial site is still in excellent condition. Local Métis are familiar with the burial site and the stories associated with it. These people, after noting her burial, tell the story of how during the Northwest Rebellion riders were sent north towards Île-à-la-Crosse. Fearing Louis Riel might have been seeking retribution for his sister's untimely death, residents and Oblates retreated to a nearby island until the political storm had passed. Oblate and historian Gaston Carrière wrote this same story in his early history of the hamlet.1 The community's response to this particular aspect of the rebellion tells a story that contrasts with the dominant and better known Red River/Batoche-focused narrative. The stories also demonstrate the insight that spatial analysis can bring to a region's history, for while Marguerite Riel was a member of the local Métis community she was also, as the fence around the clergy's graves attests, part of a another community as well. An analysis of Île-à-la-Crosse's cemetery as revealed through oral histories and spatial layout informs the historical record of the region.

This analysis of space is cautiously inspired by the French philosopher, Michel Foucault's, discussion of space and control. Foucault found that "disciplinary space tends to be divided into as many sections as there are bodies... each individual has his own place; and each place its individual."2 Although Foucault was explaining the control of criminal subjects, his *Discipline & Punish* has provided the foundation to explore how space is used to control individuals at many different levels. Recently, spatial approaches have been used to explain the colonial relationship between colonists and indigenous peoples.

Canadian historical geograher Cole Harris has used this technique to analyse the changes in Aboriginal space in British Columbia.3 However, spatial history research has yet to be applied to North American Métis communities – Aboriginal peoples whose land rights have recently come to the forefront of Canadian politics.

Ethnoarchaeologists Lynn Gamble, Phillip Walker, and Glenn Russell, who studied a Chumash First Nations cemetery in present day California, highlighted the need to expand their methodological approach, noting that beyond the discipline of archaeology "new approaches to mortuary analysis are needed that emphasize the many ways in which ideology and ritual behaviour can transform social reality."4 Because cemeteries are a present-day physical manifestation of a people's historical recollection, studying gravesites enables scholars to understand how space is used to bridge a people's past memory to their present social conception. Studying how these spaces reflect aspects of local Métis history cemeteries in Northwest Saskatchewan present opportunities for understanding local identifying devices.

This article examines trends among cemeteries of Northwestern Saskatchewan Métis, then focuses on the cemetery of Île-à-la-Crosse. Analysing a variety of cemeteries helps to develop an understanding of how cemeteries represent larger traits unique to the Métis in Northwest Saskatchewan. A case study of Île-à-la-Crosse offers the opportunity to reveal how micro spaces have been historically managed by resident Oblates, while also showing how socio-political changes have alternately affected the control of space in the Métis cemetery.

Because of the way they are organized, graveyards lend themselves particularly well to spatial analysis. Regulations dictate the specific usage of space allotted to each individual – often for eternity. Generally, each individual is given a burial space ten feet long, four feet across, and six feet deep. Graves are organised within family clusters that represent the dominant lineages and

Grave of Marguerite Riel, Île-à-la-Crosse cemetery. Photo by Kevin Gambell

familial relationships of the community. These clusters will ultimately reflect family stories and structure delineating family memories of grandparents, fathers and mothers, daughters and sons, all geographically and spatially arranged to fit into their specified space.

Oral histories for this project were gathered as part of a larger Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) project aimed at producing a Métis Atlas of Northwest Saskatchewan.5 This study relies on the interviews that I conducted, along with other researchers, contributing to the University of Saskatchewan's work on the CURA project. Many of these interviews are general in nature, meant to reflect history on the variety of topics investigated by the University of Saskatchewan research students. Community members primarily identified topics as areas of local interest, and the cemetery is no exception. Although some of these interviews do not go into detail regarding the Île-à-la-Crosse cemetery, they do highlight specific stories related to the cemetery and generally complement each other. This qualitative research approach seeks to understand relationships and stories regarding the cemetery, while also placing the site and the associated oral histories at the centre of several other broad historical topics. In order to develop an understanding of the cemetery's position within the community, interviews were conducted directly in the cemetery. Recording oral histories in the Île-à-la-Crosse cemetery provided an effective way of capturing respondents' reactions to tangible mnemonic devices that recalled aspects of history as manifested within the cemeteries. These interviews helped develop an understanding of the community's cemetery. Indeed, community members were able to identify people buried in the cemetery where inscriptions had long since faded.

Cemetery spaces were mapped, and oral histories collected in order to contextualize the spaces and stories of community history. Stories of death were represented in the cemetery, as the cemetery portrays aspects of the local history. Catholic icons, predominantly Marion, and artificial flowers were observed alongside dream catchers and Cree syllabic epitaphs. Oral histories tell of diseases and reveal that certain unmarked

Syllabics on a headstone in the Île-à-la-Crosse cemetery. Photo by Kevin Gambell

cemetery features such as sunken graves are in fact storied places.

Discussing the past in the present necessitates an understanding of the bias of memory. French historian Pierre Nora's 1997 three-volume tome, *Realms of Memory*, explores memory and how it affects and changes the writing and perception of history. Antoine Prost, contributor to the series, argues in his chapter "Monuments to the Dead" that war cemeteries and memorials were made up of "an intricate system of signs" whose significance changes from generation to generation.6 The meaning and contemporary perception of commemorative objects such as war memorials and cemeteries are rooted in the present; what initial meaning is carved into them will inevitably be adjusted by generations of visitors. Through bridging the past with the present, anthropologists and historians now discuss cemeteries as spaces where the interaction between the living and the deceased is ever changing. English historian Stephen Heathorn, discussing the collective memory paradigms advanced by Nora, concluded that "the act of remembering is seen as a complex social and cultural construct in which particular locations/objects…come to be associated with particular ideas about the past.7 Importing this idea of identity association via tangible objects and spaces, such as gravesites, is useful in the case of a spatial and oral history analysis of the Île-à-la-Crosse cemetery. Identifying how memorialisation is cast in the cemeteries within their historical context, as compared to how the tangible remnants are actually remembered, helps reveal aspects of how history has been used as a method of identity building in the respective cemeteries.

Not many histories have been written about Saskatchewan's Churchill River. Only recently has scholarly attention begun to focus on the region. Most early histories of the Île-à-la-Crosse region reflected traditional economic and religious methodologies. Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) records and Oblates of the Mary Immaculate (OMI) registers and journals were once the dominant sources used in the historical evaluation of the region. Religious history, using parish and missionary journals, provided readers

a triumphalist narrative to the development of the Churchill River system: missionaries spreading the word of God to Aboriginals and Métis and winning a bitter battle against the geographical elements. Economic history of the region is similar, explaining the perseverance of the HBC against economic rivals in the sub-arctic environment.8 Both of these approaches examined the history of Aboriginals and Métis only in terms of their relationship to the church and the HBC, but did not develop an understanding of Métis cultural attributes outside the realm of western religious and economic values. This paper overcomes these blind spots by developing an understanding of Métis values that hinges on oral histories and spatial information. Taken together, oral histories and a mapping of the cemetery provide voices of local Métis.

These voices focus on concerns about the loss of history as the site's wooden crosses decay and gravestones erode. Many of the mission cemeteries in Northwest Saskatchewan are almost two hundred years old and can no longer accommodate more burials. They show their age: most gravestones are illegible due to erosion, while other markers have disappeared forever, leaving few signs as to their original existence. Local Île-à-la-Crosse resident Dorothy Dubrule explains: "There are a lot of unmarked graves... a lot of people are older now and don't remember where their family is buried... a lot of the graves are unmarked and we'll never know who they are."9 An understanding that history is manifested in these cemeteries prevails in interviews, and concerns the stories associated with the cemeteries might be lost are omnipresent.10

Although each cemetery in Northwest Saskatchewan has its own unique characteristics, they also share many similarities. All the sites were former missions, predominantly established in the mid-nineteenth century, and the missionary influence is prevalent. These sites were strictly managed by the resident Oblate priests. Older epitaphs are written in French, the language of instruction in the area until the 1960s.

Like most cemeteries, family clustering dominates all Northwest Saskatchewan cemeteries. But many original plots can no longer accommodate further burials, and the expansion of older cemeteries into adjacent lots complicates the linkages with traditional family plots. To an outsider's eyes the web of relationships displayed in a cemetery are initially difficult to appreciate,

but within the community Métis families remember these relationships, and their oral histories provide an intricate knowledge of inter-community connections. The spatial pattern of the graves reflects the social kinship of *wahkootowin* among Northwest Saskatchewan Métis – an indigenous system of family connection that Native Studies scholar Brenda MacDougall discusses in her recent dissertation "Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Métis Communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan."11

In addition to spatial elements, the individual tombstones provide insight into community histories and identities. These material remains are certainly not entirely representative of the overall history of the region, but do provide glimpses into aspects of the region's history. Early tombstones of the region reflect the linguistic complications surrounding the creation of textual Cree and Dene languages in the early and mid-twentieth century. Many early tombstones are written predominately in French, though some are written in English, Cree and Dene. Some unique headstones are inscribed with early syllabic texts, not only reflecting the prevalence of Cree and Dene languages in the region, but also the changes and difficulties of inscribing these languages over time.

Other material memorialisations prevalent in these cemeteries include small and familial shrines and sometimes grottos. Small shrines are often attached to trees in the sites, overlooking the entire gravesite (whether previously a Catholic controlled site or not). Many families maintain small shrines within their family plots as well. Along with floral arrangements, most of the newer graves are adorned with Catholic accoutrements, such as Blessed Virgin Mary statuettes, bottles of holy water, or rosaries. Being a holy place, many aspects of these same features were also located in the Île-à-la-Crosse gravesite.12

In the 1990s after the federal government began addressing its failure to recognize Aboriginal veterans service, as compared to non-natives, many Northwest Saskatchewan Métis communities began to re-celebrate their contribution to Canada's armed forces. Many old veteran gravesites were replaced with plaques, and some added cemetery sections devoted solely to their community's veterans. In Beauval the community built a small park adjacent to their new cemetery (the original having been shared with the local Birch Narrows First Nation) to

honour all of its veterans and their contribution to Canada's causes. In Buffalo Narrows, veterans' graves are marked individually. Together, these memorialisations suggest Métis pride in contributing to Canada's sacrifices during the great wars.

Like Beauval's first cemetery, some Métis graves are included in First Nations Reserve land, having being buried there before treaties were signed, evidence of the, at times, blurred line between Treaty First Nations and Métis identity. In towns like Dillon, Canoe Narrows and Beauval, First Nations and Métis, treaty and non-treaty, still share the same cemetery. Such sharing highlight the inadequacies of government definitions of who is First Nation and who is Métis.13

While cemeteries do not necessarily have markers that clearly differentiate Cree from Dene or First Nation from Métis, certain other signifiers of identity are easy to discern. Catholic affiliation via shrines to the Virgin Mary as well as Canadian nationhood in terms of veteran memorialisation, are represented in most of these cemeteries, while family clustering highlights the importance of extended family kinship, or *wahkootowin.*

The Île-à-la-Crosse gravesite shares many of the same characteristics of its neighbouring cemeteries. Within a fenced 80 metre by 80 metre enclosure are family clusters that represent the genealogical history of the community. Graves are generally aligned parallel to the square grid, evidence of an organisational authority throughout the cemetery's history. Although the site is like many other Catholic cemeteries, it is also unique, embodying the local history of its residents.

After Cumberland House, Île-à-la-Crosse is Saskatchewan's second oldest settlement. The Métis community was created after the Hudson Bay Company founded a fort along the English (aka Churchill) River in 1799, followed shortly thereafter by the Northwest Company. For fifty years the HBC fort was the only edifice straddling the Aubichon arm waterway, but it served as the nucleus of a Métis community. Fathers LaFleche and Taché reinforced this trend when in 1846 they founded a mission on the present site. A cohesive community grew quickly as the HBC provided economic opportunities and the local clergy administered the seven sacraments to their expanding flock. The chapel and eventually its rectory, residential school, male and female boarding houses, hospital, and cemetery, would become an important social and economic node along the Churchill river system. The Île-à-la-Crosse mission was an Oblate gateway for missionaries and fur traders alike, before they headed over La Loche's Methye portage and into Alberta's Athabaskan River system, and for a few, into the Yukon's Mackenzie River system. Because of its position along Canada's early northwest transportation system, the riverine mission became an important beachhead for the Oblates. Here the Oblate hoped to facilitate the safe transition of local indigenous people from supposedly polytheist nomads to settled Christian agriculturalists. "The Oblates expected great things from the Métis," explains Raymond Huel of *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis.* They offered the first glimpse of hope, partially settled and devout Catholics, "the first born of the faith in the west."14

Foucault was one to note that "for centuries, the religious orders had been masters of discipline: they were the specialists of time, the great technicians of rhythm and regular activities."15 After 1846 the Roman Catholic Church would come to dominate the theological landscape of northwest region of Saskatchewan and beyond; for more then a century after its inception the mission in Île-à-la-Crosse would claim a monopoly and authority of Métis space and social identity in the region.

The Île-à-la-Crosse gravesite was chosen the same year the mission was founded and was administered by the residing clergy. Like the surveyors that came after them, the priests enclosed a square grid of land where predominately parallel plots were allotted to families. Unlike communities in the south of the province where the provincial and federal governments had a more active role, the community of Île-à-la-Crosse was left predominantly in the care of the resident Oblates who, subsequently, had a monopoly on community and cemetery control. Métis and Oblate cemetery burial ideologies would sometimes conflict with each other, and these affronts became heated topics in the community. Like all Catholic gravesites, the blessed grounds of Île-à-la-Crosse cemetery were reserved exclusively for baptized members of the Catholic community. Stillborn children along with notorious drinkers, for example, were excluded from the gravesite, and compelled to find their final resting place outside the church's blessed jurisdiction. In a community where kinship ties dominate, exclusive burial practices developed into legitimate concerns

with the church's practices. Dorothy Dubrule remembers when "they had a little section in the cemetery closed off with a fence and that's where they would bury the little babies or people who were not practicing the Catholic faith."16 The unbaptized Métis infants may have been separated from the blessed grounds by a fence, but Protestant émigrés were totally separated from the mission property; their cemetery came to be located across the bay. This doctrinal separation caused

A grave in the Île-à-la-Crosse cemetery, adorned with a Blessed Virgin Mary statuette. Photo by Keith Thor Carlson

further division in the community, especially after some Métis people came to affiliate with Protestant denominations. Here, HBC traders, Scandinavian fishermen, Protestant Métis, and other non-Catholics were laid to rest away from the central Catholic community. The problematic division highlights the Oblate's efforts to put Catholic affiliation above *wahkootowin* ties. These differences and separations are not only remembered today, but because families have become accustomed to using separate burial grounds, the two cemeteries remain separated, and will likely remain so well into the future.

Particularly unique to the area are the trees planted on what was once a bare peninsula. To reinforce their enclosed cemetery environment, the resident clergy planted rows of pines imported from the mission's St. Boniface headquarters. These trees are not indigenous to the landscape and, now fully grown, the trees mark the mission's former property along right angles, while also standing out against the surrounding flora.

Unlike other cemeteries, the Île-à-la-Crosse mission cemetery, being the principal mission in the diocese, holds the remains of Catholic clergy. Surrounded by the laity burials, the clergy plot seems oddly situated, straddling the hill within the overall old section of the cemetery. In contrast to the predominantly eroded epitaphs of the Métis community burials, the deceased OMI and Grey Nun granite headstones of the same eras remain legible and in good repair. This historic laity-clerical separation speaks volumes today regarding past divisions within the community between the Catholic Church and Métis community. Contained and rigidly organised, the clerical section stands in stark contrast to the shifting eroded cement

headstone and wooden crosses marking adjacent Métis graves.

Many of the contentious Aboriginal issues we are aware of today are also present in Île-à-la-Crosse. Most cases of death due to disease went undocumented in Île-à-la-Crosse; it is difficult to reconstruct these rates because most pre-mission family gravesites have long since been abandoned. However, within the church's graveyard many community members have noted unmarked areas of distinctly sunken ground where many epidemic mass burials are located. By gathering oral testimony and referencing HBC documents it is possible to reconstruct that the last epidemic, measles, had blitzed through the area in the winter of 1937. George Malbouef, local resident, remembers some of these stories. "That's an epidemic there, see, 1-2-3-4-5 people buried there, that's a family."17

During the 1960s and 70s Canada was witness to a rising Aboriginal politicization; Île-à-la-Crosse was no exception. Tired of paternalistic didacticism, local residents managed to gain control of their school board in the 1970s. After the Catholic Church enacted the reforms of Vatican II (1963-65), the Church relinquished control of its assets to the local Métis governmental chapter: the mission, the hospital, the boarding houses, teacherages, and gravesite. Today, those Métis involved in the take-over look at this transitional period as an era of particular pride.

Having gained control of their land, the local autonomous Métis hamlet expanded the original gravesite to consolidate all graves, including the previous section of un-baptized infants. Revitalizing the gravesite, residents erected crosses to replace dilapidated markers, as well as marking certain known mass graves. Families were finally free to choose and bury whomever, wherever. Inclusive, not exclusive, spatial organisation now holds within the local cemetery.

North of town, at Mackay Point, Île-à-la-Crosse's second formal cemetery still bears witness to its founding as a non-Catholic space. Families who were first buried there because they were not welcome at the Oblate cemetery continue to inter their relatives there today. Alongside these

Métis burial sites are the markers and remains of seven Norwegian fishermen who drowned in Lac Île-à-la-Crosse in the 1930s, an era when doctrinal separation was paramount. Together with Marguerite Riel's grave at the main Catholic cemetery, these sites are a reminder of the early dangers of the riverine transportation network that linked Île-à-la-Crosse with other communities in the Northwest. Interestingly, although this site was initially founded to be distinct from the Catholic gravesite, it now shares many of the latter's characteristics. Colourful artificial flower arrangements, Virgin Mary shrines, and rosaries are all apparent within the Mackay Point site.

Île-à-la-Crosse gravesite. Photo by Kevin Gambell

The transition from subjected peoples to autonomous local governance is not simply about gaining control, but also about continuation. Once the region's principal actor, the Church now plays a much-diminished role in the governance of Métis people. While the Church dominated and defined many aspects of Métis social life for more than a century, it now makes no formal attempt to control the community. Nonetheless, in Île-à-la-Crosse and Northwest Saskatchewan, many people harbour grievances against past clerical actions: the residential school system, imposed French Catholic education, and ecclesiastic monopoly. But many are also quick to defend the Church. Elders respect its historically charitable role, and many laud the Catholic faith as an integral part of their belief system. With such a mixed perspectives, most residents seem to defer judgement, respecting each other's beliefs.

These issues continue to play out within the town's gravesite. In the cemetery, the clergy section is still physicaly separated above the rest of the site by a small fence, the only partitioned area in the cemetery. The granite headstones and maintained fence are evidence of the respect paid to the Church by the faithful, but its segregation also speaks of the divisional attitudes towards the Church's historical role within the community. In non- Métis cemeteries, family clusters are a familiar way of burying the dead; but rigid lines of graves are not the norm in Métis burial sites. Here, family burials meet at odd angles and are literally clustered together, unlike the separated, square, linear burial pattern of the Oblate section. The Île-à-la-Crosse cemeteries, not unlike other cemeteries in Saskatchewan, are reflective of local family history. Unique stories of a community history are held in these cemeteries, which offer a local look into how the present conceptualizes the past and are physical manifestations of how the past is remembered today.

Endnotes

1   Carrière Gaston OMI. "The Oblates and the Northwest: 1845-61," *The Canadian Catholic Historical Association Study Sessions* (1970), p. 37.
2   Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir,* (Saint-Amand: Gallimard, 1975), p. 232-233.
3   Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change,* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), p. xiv.
4   Lynn H. Gamble; Phillip L. Walker; Glenn S. Russell, "An Integrative Approach to Mortuary Analysis: Social and Symbolic Dimensions of Chumash Burial Practices," *American Antiquity,* Vol. 66, no. 2 (Apr., 2001), p. 186.
5   Community-University Research Association. *The Métis People and Lands of the West Side: An Atlas,* (tba). Social Studies and Humanities Research Council funded study of Northwest Métis.
6   Antoine Prost, "Monuments to the Dead," in *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past, Vol II.* P. Nora, ed., translated by A. Goldhammer. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 309-310
7   Stephen Heathorn, "The Mnemonic Turn in the Cultural Historiography of Britain's Great War," *Historical Journal,* Vol 48, 4 (2005), p. 1111.
8   Examples of economic and triumphalist perspectives of the history of Northwestern Saskatchewan include, but are not limited to, Crean, Frank J. P. New Northwest Exploration: Report of Exploration, Seasons of 1908 and 1909. Ottawa: Department of Interior, 1910; Barbara Benoit, "Mission at Ile a la Crosse." *Beaver,* Winter (1990), p. 40-50; Gaston Carriére, OMI. "The Oblates and the Northwest, 1845-1861." *The Canadian Catholic Historical Association Study Sessions* (1970), p. 35-66.
9   Dorothy Dubrule Interview, June 19, 2007
10 As the inaugural Canadian National Conference on Aboriginal Cemeteries (September 20-21, 2009) demonstrates, many Aboriginal communities are concerned with preserving the history that lies in their cemeteries.
11 Brenda Macdougall "Wahkootowin: Family and Cultural Identity in Northwestern Saskatchewan Métis Communities," *Canadian Historical Review* vol. 87, no. 3 (September 2006), p. 431-462.
12 Robert W. Jarvenpa, anthropologist at the State University of New York (Albany), has written a number of articles based on archaeological and oral history research among the Dene, Woodlands Cree, and Métis in the area. Dr. Jarvenpa has researched pilgrimages, local Catholic miracles, and the prevalence of Ste. Mary shrines and phenomenon in the region. "The Development of Pilgrimage in an Inter-Cultural Frontier." *Culture and the Anthropological Tradition.* New York: University Press of America, 1990. pp. 177-203.
13   After Bill C-31 was enacted in 1985 some local Métis were able to adopt First Nation's identity as per the regulations of the federal government – but such rights do not necessarily transfer to subsequent generations.
14   Raymond Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996), p. 15.
15   Foucault, *Surveiller et punir,* p. 175.
16   Dorothy Dubrule Interview, June 19, 2007
17   George Malbouef Interview, June 21, 2007.

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Continued from Page 28

20 Dorothy Dubrule, interview with Jon Anuik, Kevin Gambell and Katya MacDonald, 26 May 2008, Île-à-la-Crosse, SK.
21 Norma Malboeuf, interview with Kevin Gambell and Katya MacDonald, 26 May 2008, Île-à-la-Crosse, SK.
22 Chinatown was so named in reference to its dense population and crowded streets when the area was first populated. See Spud Morin interview.
23 Tony Durocher, interview with Kevin Gambell and Katya MacDonald, 25 May 2008, Île-à-la-Crosse, SK.
24 Dorothy Dubrule, interview with Jon Anuik, Kevin Gambell and Katya MacDonald, 26 May 2008, Île-à-la-Crosse, SK.
25 See Jay Miller's description of Lushootseed longhouses as anchors for wide-reaching familial and community interactions. Jay Miller, *Lushootseed Culture and the Shamanic Odyssey: An Anchored Radiance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 146.
26 Don Favel, interview with Kevin Gambell and Katya MacDonald, 25 May 2008, Île-à-la-Crosse, SK.
27 Irene Gardiner, interview with Jon Anuik, Kevin Gambell, and Katya MacDonald, 27 May 2008, Île-à-la-Crosse, SK.
28 Don Favel, interview with Kevin Gambell and Katya MacDonald, 25 May 2008, Île-à-la-Crosse, SK.
29 Cruikshank, 9.
30 In a national or global context, the term "indigeneity" can take on an array of political definitions and implications, as discussed by Bruce Granville Miller and Chadwick Allen, both cited in this article. In the more limited context of Île-à-la-Crosse, however, I use the term largely synonymously with Aboriginality. On a local or individual level, Aboriginality is in some ways a practical outcome or expression of broader implications of indigeneity.
31 Cruikshank, 20.
32 This idea mirrors Chadwick Allen's reading of the 1975 World Conference of Indigenous Peoples' (WCIP) definition of indigeneity as narrative – an interpretive process – rather than a list of criteria to be met. See Chadwick Allen, "Blood as Narrative/Narrative as Blood: Declaring a Fourth World," in *Narrative* 6 (1998): 237.
33 Bruce Granville Miller, *Invisible Indigenes: The Politics of Nonrecognition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 61.
34 Valentine, 2-3.
35 Ibid., 18.
36 P.T. Spaulding, "From the Colonial Pan into the Fire of Native Self-Determination: A Northern Saskatchewan Case," Robert Doucette fonds, Saskatchewan Archives Board, n.d. (S-A 1035, #2966), 2-3.
37 E.N. Shannon, "Métis problem in Northern Saskatchewan," Robert Doucette fonds, SAB, 1957 (S-A 1035, #2737).
38 Colin Mann, interview with Kevin Gambell and Katya MacDonald, 8 August 2006, Île-à-la-Crosse, SK.
39 Bea Mann, interview with Kevin Gambell and Katya MacDonald, 8 August 2006, Île-à-la-Crosse, SK.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Victor F. Valentine, "The Fort Black Co-operative Store: A Social Experiment Among the Ile A La Crosse Métis," Robert Doucette fonds, SAB, 1957 (S-A 1035, #500), 1.
43 Ibid., 4.
44 Ibid., 14.
45 This is particularly noteworthy in the case of the Île-à-la-Crosse co-op, since not all outside analyses held Valentine's confident perspective. Spaulding took the eventual failure of the store as an indication that "natives were not ready for this kind of responsibility," and that government efforts had failed because they threatened the status quo: "the authority of whites to decide what was best for the natives and because they ran counter to conservative native practices." While Valentine saw a Métis desire for change in the community, Spaulding instead understood a resistance to change on the part of the community as a whole, Native and non-Native alike. See Spaulding, 5-6.
46 Spaulding, 7.
47 Vernon Greenshields, "Racial Overtones in Native School Board Issue," reprinted from the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* (16 February 1973), in The Northian 10 (1974): 18.
48 Ibid., 19.
49 Peter Bakker, *A Language of Our Own: The Genesis of Michif, the Mixed Cree-French Language of the Canadian Métis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 147.
50 Dorothy Dubrule, interview with Jon Anuik, Kevin Gambell and Katya MacDonald, 26 May 2008, Île-à-la-Crosse, SK.
51 Vince Ahenakew, interview with Katya MacDonald, 18 June 2006, Île-à-la-Crosse, SK.
52 Don Favel, interview with Kevin Gambell and Katya MacDonald, 25 May 2008, Île-à-la-Crosse, SK.
53 "Northwest Saskatchewan Métis Land Claim," Robert Doucette fonds, SAB, 1994 (S-A 1035, #247), 14.
54 Ibid., 19.
55 See "MNS & North West Municipalities protocol agreement (1995)," Robert Doucette fonds, SAB, 1995-1996 (S-A 1035, #226).
56 Andrea Laforet, "Narratives of the Treaty Table: Cultural Property and the Negotiation of Tradition," in *Questions of Tradition*, ed. Mark Salber Phillips and Gordon Schochet (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 36.
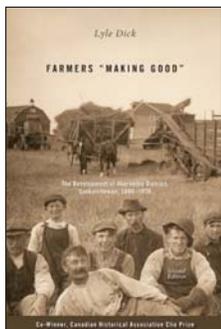
One
Province,
Countless
Stories

Saskatchewan
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