

## RECOLLECTING

# THE WEST UNBOUND: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL STUDIES

Series editors: Alvin Finkel and Sarah Carter

Writing on the western halves of Canada and the United States once focused on the alienation of the peoples of these regions from residents of the eastern regions. The mythology of a homogenized West fighting for a place in the sun blunted interest in the lives of ordinary people and the social struggles that pitted some groups in the West against others, usually the elite groups that claimed to speak for the whole region on the national stage. *The West Unbound* series challenges simplistic definitions of the West and its institutions. It focuses upon the ways in which various groups of Westerners — women, workers, Aboriginal peoples, farmers, and people of various ethnic origins, among others — tried to shape the institutions and attitudes of the region. This series draws on a variety of disciplines and is intended for both university audiences and lay audiences with an interest in the American and Canadian Wests.

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# RECOLLECTING

Lives of Aboriginal Women of the  
Canadian Northwest and Borderlands

*edited by* SARAH CARTER

*and*

PATRICIA A. MCCORMACK



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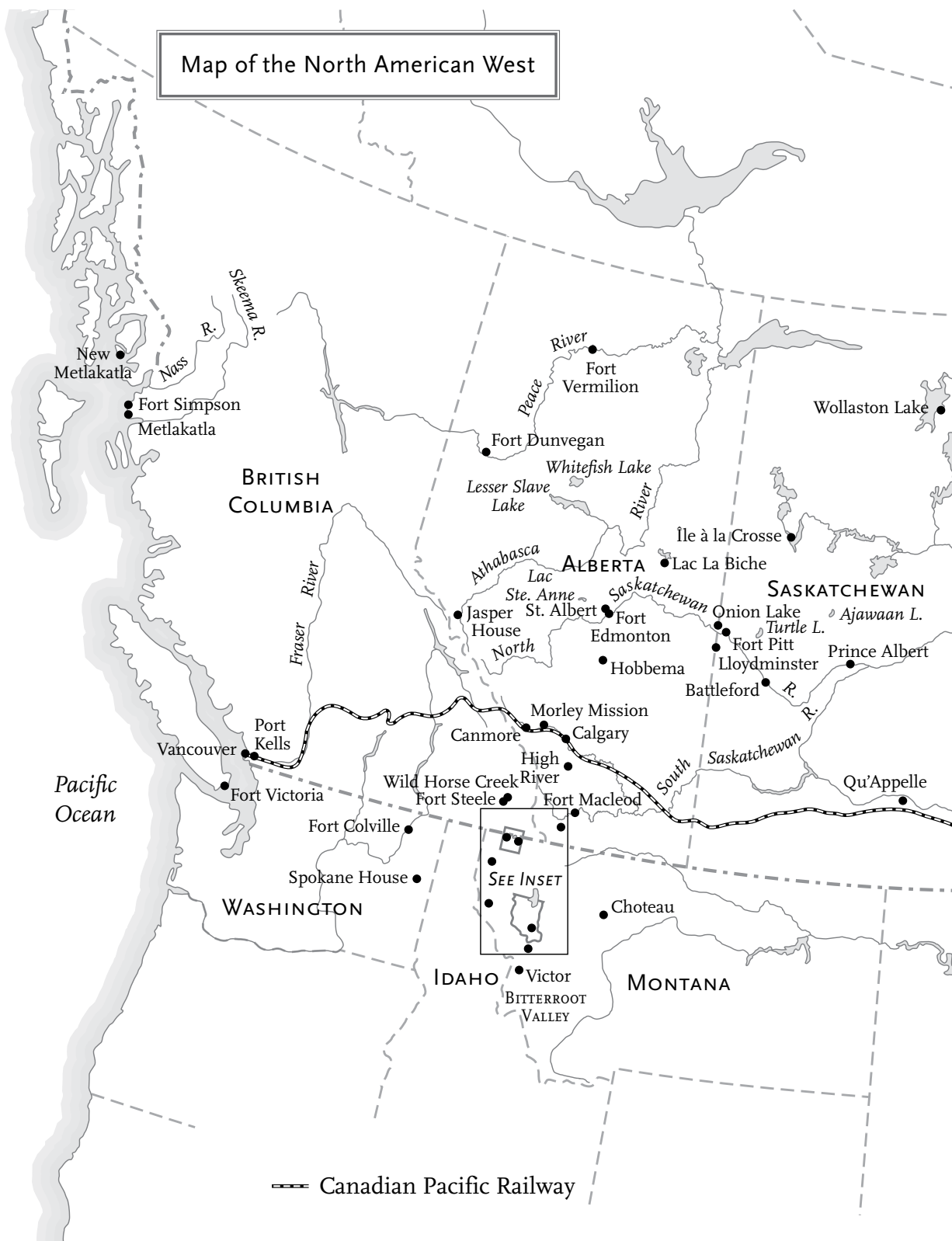
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## *Recollecting*

# Map of the North American West







## LIFELINES:

### Searching for Aboriginal Women of the Northwest and Borderlands

*Sarah Carter and Patricia A. McCormack*

In 1841, a party of twenty-three families of colonists from Red River arrived at Fort Carlton on the North Saskatchewan River. They were headed for the Oregon Territory, where they were to strengthen British claims to that disputed land. One of the colonists was an elderly Cree woman named Saskatchewan. She was accompanying her son, William Flett, and his four children. George Simpson, governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, recorded this meeting in his diary:

This venerable wanderer was a native of Saskatchewan, the name of which, in fact, she bore. She had been absent from this land of her birth for 18 years; and on catching the first glimpse of the river, from the hill near Carlton, she burst, under the influence of old recollections, into a violent flood of tears. During the two days that the party spent at the fort, she scarcely ever left the bank of the stream, appearing to regard it with as much veneration as the Hindoo regards the Ganges.<sup>1</sup>

Encountering passages such as this one in the sometimes somnolent and stuffy world of archival and documentary research is exciting, rewarding—and frustrating. They provide glimpses of emotions and bonds to place, and they breathe life into and connect us with the past. They also leave us wanting to know more. Fortunately, the work of learning more about Saskatchewan is an ongoing project of her great-great-great-grandchildren, Vernon R. Wishart and his sister Shirley Wishart. Among other things, they have discovered that Saskatchewan was sixty-six years old

when she travelled to Oregon by way of Fort Carlton, the oldest person in the party of colonists, and that she was then the widow of a fur trader, William Flett, and a mother of four grown children. She was likely called upon to make this trip by her son, William Flett Jr., a widower and father of four young children, all among the colonists. He probably needed his mother as a caregiver; perhaps she could not face being separated from her grandchildren, or maybe she just wanted to see the land of her birth one last time. When her son married a woman in the Oregon country, Saskatchewan returned to the Red River settlement, taking a perilous route, first north through the Athabasca Pass by Hudson's Bay Company pack train to Jasper House, then by boat brigade to Fort Edmonton, and out onto the prairies by cart brigade. Saskatchewan died in 1845 at the age of seventy and is buried in the cemetery at St. Peter's on the Red River.<sup>2</sup>

The story of Saskatchewan, or rather the brief glimpse we have of this woman, illustrates some of the themes and challenges that appear in many of the essays in this collection and that both motivate and constrain the authors. We know more about Saskatchewan—Mrs. Flett—than other Cree women of her generation because she appears in the documentary record, but only because something about her was sufficiently noteworthy or extraordinary that Simpson decided to write about it. It is a tantalizing portrait, but incomplete and filtered through Simpson's imperial eyes, as he compared her attachment to the Saskatchewan River to the "Hindoo" veneration of the sacred Ganges River. We do not know the reasons for her "violent flood of tears," though we can guess.<sup>3</sup> We know far more about Saskatchewan's husband, her son, and other European men employed in the Northwest, the lands they called Rupert's Land and the Oregon Territory. Yet for all that, Saskatchewan illustrates the complexity of contact zone interactions—colonial encounters in spaces where people of "disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination."<sup>4</sup> Colonial encounters constitute a "bewildering tangled field of cross-cutting social and cultural ties."<sup>5</sup>

Saskatchewan's personal history defies and complicates the tendency to reduce complex colonial encounters to a straightforward opposition between the colonizer and the colonized, an engagement or clash between two "sides." She married a labourer from Orkney, bore his children, and was immersed in and contributed to new networks of kinfolk of multiple ancestries. She sacrificed her intimate ties to her Cree family when she followed her husband to Red River when the newly reconstituted Hudson's

Bay Company was downsizing its labour force and the settlement was developing into a Métis-dominated community that would help transform not only Western Canada but contribute to the later development of the Dominion of Canada. Saskatchewan was among the colonists who went to bolster the claim of the British to the Oregon Territory, which was inhabited by its own First Nations. In short, Saskatchewan was a liminal figure. She was Cree and seemingly fiercely attached to the land and water of her birth. At the same time, she was highly mobile, travelling extensively across the Northwest, challenging notions of Aboriginal people as immobilized and frozen in particular territories.<sup>6</sup> She lived in both a Cree setting and in the intermingled world of fur trade posts, settlements, and travel routes. Apparently an ordinary woman, wife, and mother, she was drawn into the world of international trade and imperial rivalries. Saskatchewan was affected by and was the product of transatlantic and global forces, her Cree heritage, her Orcadian husband and relatives, and of course her own personality and agency. She criss-crossed the terrains of different Aboriginal groups and competing imperial powers, giving up much, but possibly gaining much too. Tears and strong emotions were undoubtedly part of her life at many other times as well, as they must have been for the other women in this book. Although direct information about her is scant, much about the course of her life, and those of the women of this volume, can be discovered by a careful reading of the documentary record.<sup>7</sup> We are fortunate indeed when we can discover for some women more to draw upon than just a paper trail, including the records of oral history and material culture. The editors of this volume wanted to find out more about women like Saskatchewan and, where possible, to look beyond the documentary record in researching their lives.

The idea for this collection first emerged when a student asked Sarah Carter if there was a Canadian equivalent to Dee Garceau-Hagen's edited collection *Portraits of Women in the American West*, assigned in Carter's class on women's and gender history on the Great Plains of the U.S. and Canada.<sup>8</sup> Students connected with the individual life stories in *Portraits of Women in the American West*, finding that they added depth and dimensions, subtleties and complexities lost in more broadly conceived investigations. The answer to this student was "no" — there is no Canadian equivalent, and the idea was hatched. Carter's initial plan was to have women of diverse backgrounds, as in the Garceau-Hagen collection, but through conversations with co-editor Patricia McCormack, and with colleagues and associates, a focus on Aboriginal women prevailed. We

sought new, unpublished work that had a biographical approach and that would be both scholarly and readable. We were willing to define biography broadly and, as a result, the articles do not all conform to standard ideas of the genre and its subjects. We also defined the region of northwestern Canada broadly, to include British Columbia and the borderlands with the United States, and we found that many of the women included in the book ranged much farther and even abroad. We gathered articles from two widely distributed email calls for papers and through contacts with colleagues and associates working in this field—historians, anthropologists, curators, and independent scholars.<sup>9</sup>

This collection contributes to and builds upon expanding scholarship on Aboriginal women in Canada in particular and in North America more generally.<sup>10</sup> Thirty years of scholarship has developed since the 1980 publication of two path-breaking books by historian Sylvia Van Kirk and anthropologist/ethnohistorian Jennifer S.H. Brown on the marriages, family lives, and work of women (and men) involved in the economy and society of the fur trade in northwestern North America.<sup>11</sup> In the language of today, Van Kirk and Brown demonstrated that the history of the Northwest needed to be understood as gendered and colonized and that it needed to be multivocal. Appearing shortly after was an important collection of essays edited by anthropologists Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine about Plains women, joining Women's Studies and Native Studies.<sup>12</sup> Recent collections of work on Aboriginal women's history in North America, and a wealth of historiographical articles, provide excellent and detailed overviews of the evolution of the field, including changing approaches, interpretations, and theories, as well as the ongoing struggles with slanted, fragmentary sources.<sup>13</sup>

As scholarship about Aboriginal women's history developed, major debates centred around the effects of the many facets of European contact on the "power and status" of Aboriginal women. An early emphasis on the overwhelmingly damaging results of colonization, on a history of decline and increasing marginality, was challenged by scholars who rejected the "declension model" and argued that Aboriginal women found imaginative and creative ways to preserve their cultures, societies, and their often complementary gender relations in the face of fur trade, missionary, and government interventions. Their "status" did not deteriorate, according to these scholars; rather women took advantage of post-contact opportunities.<sup>14</sup> Van Kirk was one of the earliest historians in the field of Western North American women's history at large to insist upon the "agency" of

women—their capacity to respond actively and creatively to new conditions with strategies and agendas of their own. They could not be reduced to simple pawns in the hands of men. An emphasis on “agency” has been a key theoretical contribution to the field.<sup>15</sup> Since the 1990s, according to Mary-Ellen Kelm and Lorna Townsend in their introduction to *In the Days of Our Grandmothers: A Reader in Aboriginal Women’s History in Canada*, scholars made three key contributions to the field: enhanced awareness of the limitations and flaws of documentary records; attention to oral history; and the use of gender as a category of analysis, including the shift in international scholarship toward seeing imperialism as a gendered phenomenon. As Kelm and Townsend suggest, these new approaches should cause “us to wonder about Canada” and the stories constructed in the past—and even today—to tell its history.<sup>16</sup>

Recent studies in the field of Aboriginal women’s history draw on international scholarship that conceptualizes imperialism and colonialism as gendered phenomena. The articles in *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada’s Colonial Past*, edited by Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale, reflect this new direction as the authors demonstrate how gender, race, sexuality, and intimacy are critical to understanding the encounters between Aboriginal people and colonizers.<sup>17</sup> Margaret D. Jacobs’s *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880–1940*, reconceptualizes the U.S. West as a settler colony through comparison with Australia, and she emphasizes the central role that gender played in these colonies.<sup>18</sup> New Zealand historian Angela Wanhalla has also contributed to our transnational understanding of Aboriginal women’s history in her recent work comparing intermarriage on the Canadian Prairies and southern New Zealand.<sup>19</sup> There is a growing awareness that national boundaries, which have confined and narrowed the research and writing of history, have obscured our understanding of Aboriginal women. Transnational and borderland approaches can dislodge historians from the yoke of the nation while not rejecting the state as an analytic category.<sup>20</sup> Aboriginal women challenged and crossed borders and boundaries, real and imagined. Finally, there is a recent focus on the labour history of Aboriginal women, which can be seen in the work of scholars such as Brenda Macdougall, Joan Sangster, Mary Jane Logan McCallum, and Robin Jarvis Brownlie.<sup>21</sup>

Biography has been and remains a popular approach to writing about Aboriginal women of the past. In explaining the biographical focus of her

edited collection *Sifters: Native American Women's Lives*, Theda Perdue wrote, "the details we can tease from historical sources about individual lives humanize Native people for a modern audience that too often regards Indians as homogenous, one-dimensional relics of the past. Biographies can, in fact, serve as sifters that both separate individual women's lives and distinguish women's experiences from those of men."<sup>22</sup> Recent biographical approaches in Canadian history include Allan Greer's *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits*, Veronica Strong-Boag and Carole Gerson's *Paddling Her Own Canoe: The Times and Texts of E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake)*, Cora Voyageur's *Firekeepers of the Twenty-First Century: First Nations Women Chiefs*, Cecilia Morgan's study of Bernice Loft and Ethel Brant Monture, Sarah Carter's work on Amelia Paget, and Patricia McCormack's study of Thanadelthur.<sup>23</sup> Biographies generally focus on extraordinary rather than ordinary women, and much attention has been paid to women icons such as Pocahontas, Molly Brant, and Sacagawea.<sup>24</sup> Thanadelthur is emerging as the Northwest's own Aboriginal woman icon; she was designated a "person of national historic significance" in 2000.<sup>25</sup> But in part, she is moving to icon status *because* we have been able to learn more about her than the "average" Aboriginal woman of her time.

Portraits are emerging however, of less well-known women, such as the oral histories of Cree women recorded and translated by Freda Ahenakew in collaboration with H.C. Wolfart, and the collective biographies and genealogical connections of families in work by Brenda Macdougall on family life and labour in the Hudson's Bay Company. Voyageur's study sheds light on women chiefs of the mid to late twentieth century.<sup>26</sup> Also moving us beyond icons is the work of Linda Peavy and Ursula Smith on Emma Rose Sansaver of northern Montana. Sansaver's parents were Saulteaux, Cree, and Métis from Canada but the lives of this family criss-crossed the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. Sansaver, a member of the world champion Fort Shaw Indian Boarding School basketball team, was caught up in a paper chase about whether she was a Canadian or American.<sup>27</sup>

Articles in this collection also draw and build on thirty years of work on women's history in the North American West.<sup>28</sup> Since the 1980s books by Van Kirk and Brown, Aboriginal women have been part of this history. By the early 1990s there were calls for greater diversity, for scholars to use Western women's histories as a vehicle to study "the three central axes of inequality: race, class, and gender" and the distribution of power in the nation. Historian Peggy Pascoe and many others called for the writing of "multicultural history," finding a way to include all the groups in

“a readable story.”<sup>29</sup> Sisterhood models, based mainly on white women’s shared experiences, that ignored or obscured differences of race, ethnicity, class, and other factors were challenged. “Women’s” history, in which an implied or assumed universality or stability of identity pertaining to “women’s experience” was questioned. Searching for “women’s experiences” to offer a “true” rendering of their lives was seen as an increasingly hopeless goal. Gender historians examined the changing patterns of differentiation between manhood and womanhood, replacing “experience” with analysis of “discourse,” the linguistic strategies that created and maintained these identities. Many of these developments were reflected in collections such as the several editions of *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women’s History*, edited by Ellen Carol Dubois and Vicki L. Ruiz, and for the West, in *Writing the Range: Race, Class, and Culture in the Women’s West*, edited by Elizabeth Jameson and Susan H. Armitage.<sup>30</sup> The most recent work reaches beyond the borders of the American West and calls for borderlands, comparative, and transnational approaches. In the 2008 collection *One Step Over the Line: Toward a History of Women in the North American West*, editors Elizabeth Jameson and Sheila McManus draw together comparative and transborder histories of women in the Canadian and U.S. West.<sup>31</sup>

For the Canadian West some of the developments in the field of women’s and gender history are represented in collections edited by Catherine A. Cavanaugh and Randi R. Warne, *Telling Tales: Essays in Western Women’s History*, *Unsettled Pasts: Reconceiving the West Through Women’s History*, edited by Sarah Carter, Pat Roome, and Char Smith, and *Contact Zones*, mentioned above. While the historiography of women’s and gender history in Western Canada has, to some extent, mirrored developments in the U.S. West, the terrain is much more sparsely settled in Canada. Aside from the topic of Aboriginal women, there has been less emphasis on the diversity of women in the history of Western Canada.<sup>32</sup> Much remains to be done to heighten awareness of the diversity of women and to apply borderlands, comparative, transnational, and post-colonial approaches. And while the field of Aboriginal women’s history in the Canadian West has grown since the work of Van Kirk and Brown, their explorations were not followed by a flood of settlers. Scholars who were not themselves Aboriginal may have been reluctant to enter the field during and following the intense debates about the appropriation of voice in the late 1980s and early 1990s when there were heated arguments across North America and beyond about who could speak for previously silenced others. The profession of history

in Canada has not been welcoming to academics of Aboriginal ancestry. While scholars such as Winona Wheeler, Sherry Farrell Racette, Cora Voyageur, and Brenda Macdougall have made significant contributions to our understanding of the lives of women in Western Canada's past, they do not work in history departments.<sup>33</sup> In her 2009 article "Indigenous Labor and Indigenous History," Mary Jane Logan McCallum examined how Aboriginal people became "marginalized and displaced in singular roles as subjects rather than producers of history."<sup>34</sup> She wrote that "currently in 2009 there is not a single tenured Aboriginal professor working in any history department in Canada."<sup>35</sup> Olive Dickason, who was forced to retire from the University of Alberta in 1996, was the last tenured Aboriginal person in a Canadian history department.<sup>36</sup>

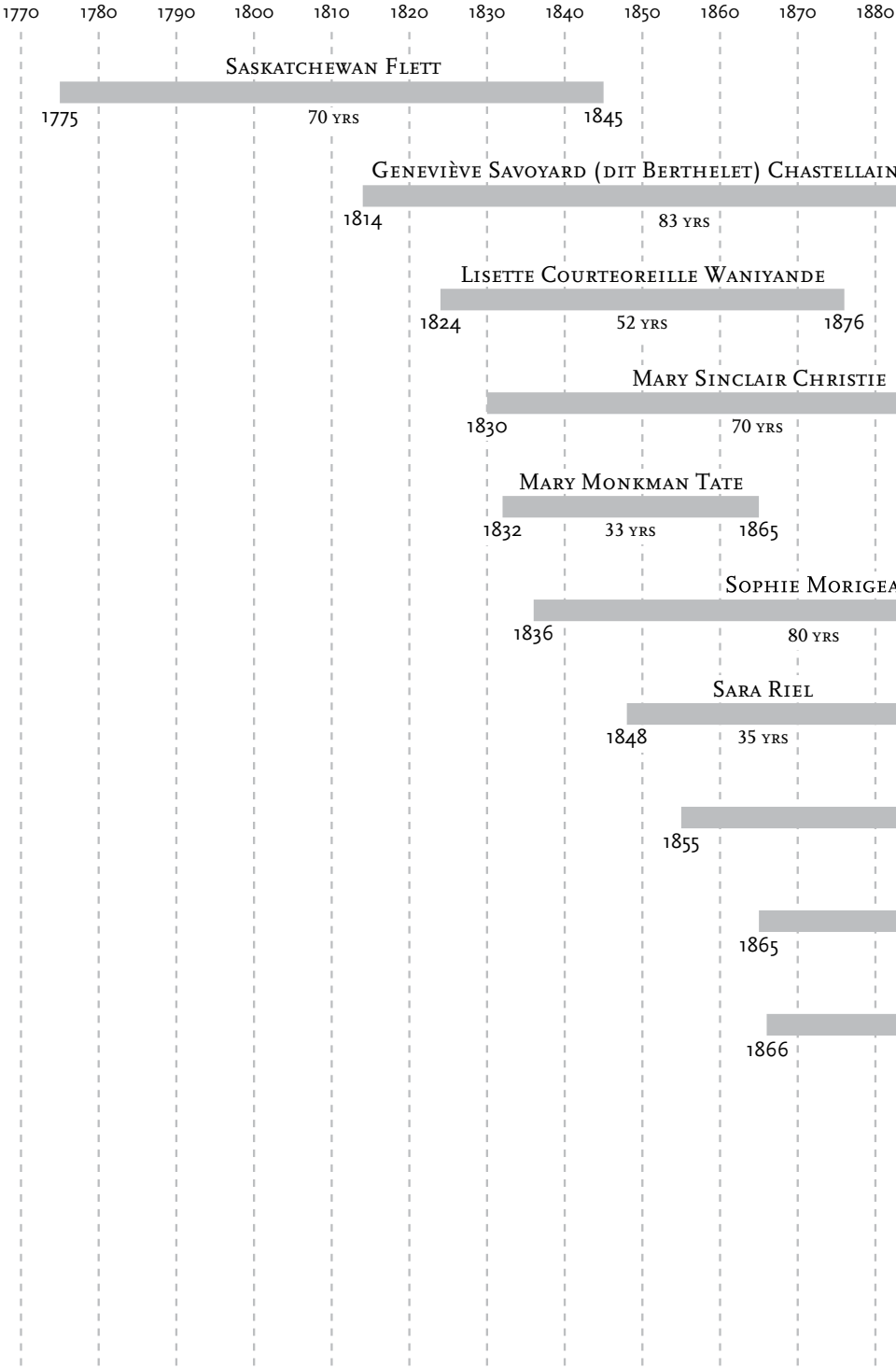
Despite the advances in this field, our knowledge of Aboriginal women of the past is limited. How Aboriginal women were represented and misrepresented in the discourses of the colonizers—reading what was said about these women by government officials, missionaries, and in the press—has been a preferred approach, refraining from any interpretations or conclusions about what it meant to be an Aboriginal woman.<sup>37</sup> These misrepresentations are generally profoundly negative. As Janice Forsyth has recently written in an assessment of First Nations women in Canadian history, 1850–1950, "our knowledge of First Nations women is really non-Native knowledge of First Nations women in western Canada. . . . If feminist scholars are willing to challenge the boundaries of traditional discourse, they must also challenge their own understanding of evidence, and of course, begin collecting oral history themselves."<sup>38</sup> An implication of Kim Anderson's work on Native womanhood is that if we persist in telling partial or distorted stories about the past, we cannot understand either the present or the future, because they are "inextricably connected."<sup>39</sup>

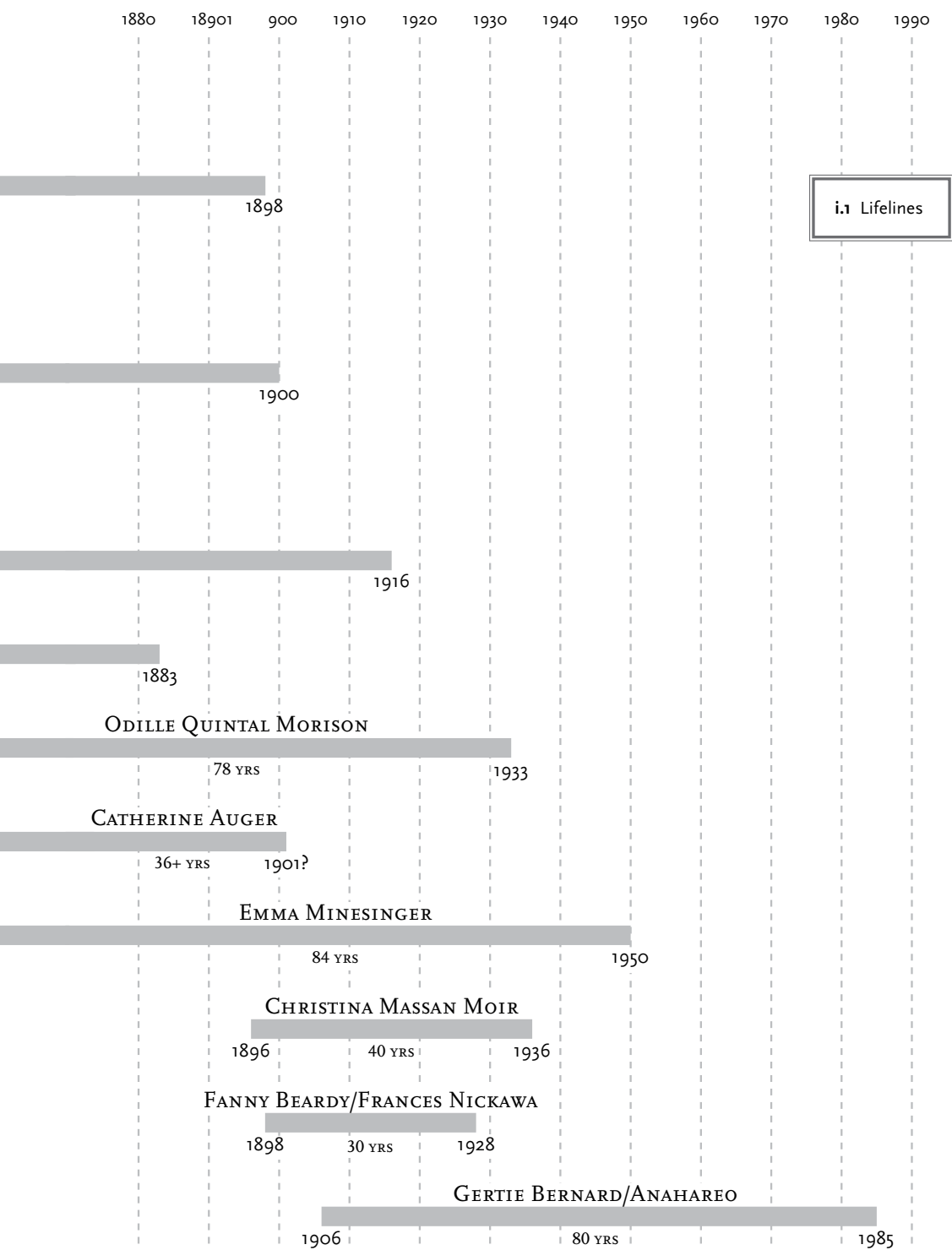
For this collection, we sought articles that challenged the boundaries, that looked beyond representations, beyond the colonial "gaze," beyond negative images. We wanted to reach beyond stereotypes and misrepresentations of nameless, faceless, undifferentiated women. We sought authors who were collecting oral histories and finding other forms of evidence including material culture, and putting these fragments to creative use. It is almost impossible to escape documentary sources in the field of history. We would know nothing of Saskatchewan without the comments of Simpson and other recorded glimpses of her life. But we sought authors who were keenly aware of the limitations of the "colonial archive." As

Joan Sangster has pointed out, the documents that ended up in archives reflected “the intellectual tenor of their times,” what people past (and present) have thought worthy of preservation. And, as a kind of circular corollary, “the act of commemoration ultimately valorized one view over the other.”<sup>40</sup> It is fair to say that Aboriginal women were rarely in the forethought of archivists until the advent of feminist history and Women’s Studies in the 1970s. The authors in this collection have all grappled with the difficulties of working with fragmentary and slanted documentary sources. But some of the women featured here wrote, co-produced, or kept their own documentary record or personal archive, although these too are not without limitations. Many of the accounts are a patchwork of threads, from archives, oral histories, personal recollections, material culture, and photographs. Several of the authors address the complexities of how life histories and other stories are recorded, told, and altered.

A common thread that links the contributions in this volume is our collective desire to unearth the stories of these women and bring them to the attention of a wide audience. Although they may be remembered within their own families and communities, they are rarely known beyond; few of them would have been considered and commemorated as “great women.” Whether as midwives, seamstresses, freighters, nuns, or public performers—and especially in their roles as mothers, wives, and homemakers—they are largely absent from written history, even when they penned letters or memoirs. The women featured here have slipped into oblivion, their contributions obscured or suppressed, and in each chapter, there is an element of recovery from loss.<sup>41</sup>

Articles in this collection highlight both individual women (see Figure I.1) and cohorts of women (midwives, nuns, and Native wives removed to Scotland), in which many are individually identified. We are aware that scholars of women’s history have concerns about biography, that it resembles the “great man” approach, singling out the exceptional and the powerful, while ignoring the everyday and the local.<sup>42</sup> But as Elizabeth Jameson and Sheila McManus wrote in their introduction to *One Step Over the Line*, “powerful insights . . . can be gained by bringing individual lives into focus.” Biographical studies “reveal something more general about women’s experiences in their particular Wests, and about histories that comprise thousands of interesting and illuminating individual stories. These individual stories, so easy to lose in the sweeping narratives the West invites, can also re-shape those narratives in small but critical ways, and re-tell them to reflect their different realities.” In her article “Writing





Women into the History of the North American Wests, One Woman at a Time,” historian Jean Barman demonstrates that a focus on the lives of individual women has led historians to question older interpretations and larger historical contexts.<sup>43</sup> Understanding the lives of women previously seen as marginal to history challenges dominant narratives, opening up opportunities for new forms of knowledge, and new ways of thinking.

Biographical approaches to the past continue to have power and appeal. A 2009 issue of the *American Historical Review* is devoted to biography.<sup>44</sup> As historian David Nasaw wrote in his introduction to a roundtable on historians and biography in this issue, “Historians are not interested in simply charting the course of individual lives, but in examining those lives in dialectical relationship to the multiple social, political, and cultural worlds they inhabit and give meaning to.”<sup>45</sup> In her article “Biography as History” historian Lois W. Banner concluded that students engage “in a personally transformative process as they reflect, through biography, on their own lives and pasts and the present in which they are living. Besides, reading biographies is fun, and writing them challenges academic historians to reach out to a public that seems to have a never-ending taste for reading about the lives of others.”<sup>46</sup> Women’s history poses particular challenges. As the editors of a special issue on critical feminist biography in the *Journal of Women’s History* Marilyn Booth and Antoinette Burton noted, women are often “partial, fitful and uneven biographical subjects.”<sup>47</sup> A comprehensive archive for many women’s lives is an elusive, even impossible quest. In writing about women who were not well-known public figures, such as the domestic servants who cooked, cleaned, and emptied bedpans in Virginia Woolf’s homes, there are “methodological, archival and epistemological challenges to any project that aims to capture them even as remotely ‘biographical’ subjects.”<sup>48</sup> Booth and Burton concluded that the critical feminist biography project “ratifies our suspicions that women’s history is literally teeming with life stories yet to be told, and that scholars of women and gender have a variety of methodological innovations to offer the genre—innovations that push the idea of ‘biography’ well past its ordinary definition as ‘life-depiction’ and may, in fact, end up transforming it out of all recognition.”<sup>49</sup>

One important strategy of scholars striving to address the inadequacies of archival collections is to turn to oral histories. Historian Winona Wheeler and anthropologist Julie Cruikshank have been at the forefront of the field of oral history in understanding Aboriginal women’s history, pointing out the challenges and constraints as well as the opportunities.<sup>50</sup>

There are long-standing traditions about some of these women in their families, communities, and even regions that have been passed down as oral narratives.<sup>51</sup> The term “oral history” has been used in multiple ways but has probably been equated most often with “the recollections of a single individual who participated in or was an observer of the events to which s/he testifies,” while oral traditions were construed as the inter-generational transmission of oral history.<sup>52</sup> When people talk about their own lives, however, they do not necessarily separate their stories into such categories and often weave broader accounts into their personal histories.<sup>53</sup> To William Schneider, who has recorded stories from both categories and struggled with how to preserve the contexts and meanings of particular narratives, “Oral history consists of those parts of oral traditions and personal narratives that get recorded. Oral history is both the act of recording and the record that is produced.”<sup>54</sup> His approach is in line with recent developments in the field of oral history. When it began over fifty years ago, oral history was considered simply a method or technique to hear from “the nonliterate and the historically disenfranchised.” By the end of the twentieth century, it had shifted to “a theory of history which maintains that the common folk and the dispossessed have a history and that this history must be written.” The very interviews that produce oral history themselves represent a form of history.<sup>55</sup> The recordings and inscribed texts have been important in helping scholars create social histories, though they do not necessarily convey the ways in which the narrators themselves made sense of their own lives. Collecting oral histories is not a simple task. All oral histories are the production of multiple factors that include the personas of the storyteller and the researcher and their respective agendas, the setting for the interview, the audience that is present, and the relationship between the teller and the researcher, which itself can be fraught with ethical dilemmas that influence the construction of each story or set of stories.

Material culture is also a central source for many of our authors. Artifacts are truly remnants from the past, unlike either oral histories or many written documents. But that does not make them simpler to use. The trick is knowing how to “read” their stories, especially when there is little or no associated information. Archaeologists also struggle with this problem and have developed methodologies and theoretical approaches in an attempt to transcend the barriers of time. Material culture specialists have focused on understanding artifact history, especially the ways in which items have been recontextualized over time, as they moved from

maker to user to others for whom the original item had new or different meanings. Despite the desire to be able to have the artifact “speak,” to let it be an independent commentator, in fact artifacts have no inherent meanings; each user invests his or her own personally and culturally appropriate meanings. For example, a pair of moccasins made by a wife for her husband typically began life as useful garments that also displayed to their larger community the wife’s sewing skills and aesthetic choices. When they were purchased by a European traveller, they became the collector’s symbol of his travels in the Northwest, perhaps displayed as a kind of “primitive art” in his house or used by his children to play dress-up. Artifacts continue to acquire new meanings if they move into a museum collection or are passed down in the family as a keepsake or heirloom. While the artifact may speak to the researcher in some ways, especially in terms of larger cultural patterns, it is more likely that its layering of meanings cannot be understood without additional research into written and oral documents to try to provide context and insight. Material culture specialists often consider themselves fortunate even to know the maker of an item from the past, especially if it was acquired without documentation; it is rare indeed to know what was in the maker’s mind.

What we do know is that women’s handiwork, especially their sewing and decorative skills, was an important aspect of the lives and labour of probably all women in this collection, a thread linking them together. Sewing for their families constituted critical domestic labour, and some women were clearly superior artists as well. All the women featured in this book did domestic labour, with the exception of Pakwâciskwew, the sole non-human woman. A woman’s competence in this domain and her artistic abilities affected her personal status. During the fur trade, all women produced more than the food, clothing, and other goods required by their families; women married to fur trade workers were commonly expected to produce similar items for use in the trade, though they were rarely if ever paid directly for their labour, which obscured this significant economic role. Their labour thus underwrote many of the labour costs of the fur trade itself. As the fur trade was supplanted by agrarian and industrial activities, some women provided much or most of the support for their families. They produced objects as a form of independent commodity production, a Northwest equivalent of “egg money.” This extra-household labour combined the domestic with the commercial and public. Yet sewing was such an everyday part of every woman’s life that it rarely warranted special commentary in the documentary record and has largely

been taken for granted.<sup>56</sup> Some of their artwork, handiwork, and clothing was purchased by collectors or acquired as gifts; other work was passed down as family heirlooms. Sometimes we are fortunate to learn how some artifacts were transmitted deliberately as mementos of adventures, family relationships, or both. Today, they are all treasures from the past. Whether craft or art, the production of these women provides an independent and vivid record, establishing, and in some cases re-establishing links to later generations and descendants. As the authors researched the women in their articles, oral histories often emerged about artifacts and their ongoing importance to both today's families and, sometimes, to the women who made them in the first place.

Family history and genealogical sources are vital for many of our authors. Viewed skeptically by academic historians until recently, family history and genealogy are gaining widespread interest, adherents, and credibility. Family history researchers constitute the vast majority of visitors to archives and the field has expanded through burgeoning online resources. Researchers adept in the sources and techniques of the family genealogist have much to teach academic historians.<sup>57</sup> There is a surprising amount and variety of such sources for Aboriginal people, including treaty pay lists, Métis scrip affidavits, parish records of marriages, deaths, and births, and Hudson's Bay Company records, which included censuses.

The women of this book defy neat categorization, thanks to their mobility, fluid identities, and occupational flexibility. Many of the women featured here travelled widely, crossing national, and later provincial boundaries, and oceans. Many had diverse ancestries and, like Saskatchewan, multiple kinship and other social ties. Their extended families were clearly important to them, and many women sought to maintain contact with parents or siblings and in-laws, occasionally relocating in order to do so. They negotiated their identities and spaces in shifting landscapes of power and privilege, ranging from the late eighteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. The stories cut a wide swath over the varied worlds of women for a daunting length of time: 210 years of history are represented here. That time span follows the history of the Northwest from the early contact period through the fur trade and into the era of new regional economies based on agrarian and industrial activities.

The earliest subject addressed in this volume is Saskatchewan, whose full story has yet to be written. The thread of her story is picked up by Susan Berry, Patricia McCormack, and Alison Brown (with her co-authors Christina Massan and Alison Grant). Susan Berry opens Part One,

“Transatlantic Connections,” with her remarkable detective work into artifacts acquired by the Scottish aristocrat the Earl of Southesk on his trip to western Canada in 1859. She identifies and traces the life histories of four women who made (or who likely made) some of the treasures he acquired. These individuals occupied different positions in fur trade society, and Berry’s exploration of their circumstances speaks to the complexity of women’s lives in the mid-nineteenth century. Shared themes also emerge: participation in an international economy, roles of kin relationships in the production and marketing of women’s work, and women’s contribution to the construction of a distinctive Métis cultural community. While the artifacts are typical of mid-nineteenth-century museum parkland collections, Berry’s research allows her to talk about material *métissage*, what Mary Louise Pratt would call “transculturation,” the joint use of multiple materials and fabrication traditions, both Indigenous and imported, that in the end *became* the local tradition for Métis and First Nations alike in the Northwest.<sup>58</sup> Understanding the earl’s collections allows us to decentre the historical focus on this Scottish adventurer in favour of a consideration of the nature of fur trade society in the mid-nineteenth century.

Patricia McCormack’s account of Native wives who moved with their Orcadian or Scottish husbands to Orkney or Lewis deals with the same broad period but reveals how fur trade society extended from the Northwest across the Atlantic into Scotland and served to link the two regions. Men from Orkney and Lewis made long journeys from their homelands to the Northwest, often living in remote interior posts. The women they married joined them in their travels, from post to post to retirement settlement, and even back to Scotland. In both the Northwest and in Orkney and Lewis, clusters of mixed-ancestry people developed and struggled to maintain some measure of connection with distant relatives they might never see again.

This story is reflected in the twentieth century account about Christina Massan Moir by Alison Brown with Christina Massan and Alison Grant. Christina Massan married Henry Moir, a Hudson’s Bay Company post manager. When Moir died, their two young sons were sent to Scotland for schooling, where they were raised by Henry’s sister and Christina’s sister-in-law, Sarah Moir. Christina sent some of her own beadwork with her sons as keepsakes, so that their mother and their Canadian roots would not be forgotten. Remarkably, Christina and Sarah maintained some contact through letters. Christina eventually remarried and started a new family. After she died in 1936, all contact ceased until Alison Brown began to

trace the story of the artifacts still in the family's possession in Scotland. This research has been the vehicle to re-establish these transatlantic ties; in 2003, Christina's beadwork became the key to reuniting her descendants on both sides of the Atlantic, including Brown's co-authors, who are descendants of Christina in Canada and in Scotland. The silences and stories of which such complicated histories are composed are often connected to issues of class, gender, and cultural background. The gifts of beadwork to the sons she never saw again can be used to think through the meanings of the boys' removal, both in terms of its impact on Christina and her family, but also within the wider context of relationships between Aboriginal women and Euro-Canadians in the early 1920s. Other families with fur trade histories in Canada and Scotland are struggling to discover their collective heritages, building on oral traditions and an increasingly available documentary record.

Part Two, "Cultural Mediators," reflects the changing circumstances that accompanied the westward expansion of Canada and the United States. The lives of women became more complex as they struggled to make a living in a changing economy and political structure. Two women who helped shape that world were Sara Riel and Odille Quintal Morison, both mixed-ancestry women involved in missionary endeavours. Sara Riel's story is told by Lesley Erickson. A sister to Métis political leader and visionary Louis Riel, Sara had her own vision, that of bringing Christianity to Aboriginal people. Raised in a strong Roman Catholic faith, she became a Grey Nun in 1868 and travelled to Île-à-la-Crosse to work in a convent and teach school, while striving to maintain some contact through correspondence with her family. The experience of Sara Riel and other mixed-ancestry nuns in the Catholic mission field opens a window to explore how gender shaped men's and women's responses to Christianity and colonialism. Sara Riel's life as an Aboriginal woman and a missionary unsettles neat cultural dichotomies—white settler versus Aboriginal, colonized versus colonizer, missionary versus missionized, male missionary versus female auxiliary—that often colour the lens through which historians view the past.

Maureen Atkinson's subject is Odille Quintal Morison, born at Fort Simpson on the Northwest Coast. Like many Aboriginal women of her generation, Morison exemplified a hybrid existence, straddling not only her combined Tsimshian/French Canadian heritage, but also the era of dramatic transition in British Columbia from a fur trade outpost to a colony and province. Atkinson sees Morison as a cultural intermediary who

blended and synthesized Tsimshian values and missionary messages. She grew up at the famous missionary site Metlakatla and was closely associated with the Reverend William Duncan. Like Sara Riel, she was literate, produced personal letters, and translated Christian sources, including the Bible. She later worked for anthropologist Franz Boas, transcribing and translating oral traditions as well as collecting artifacts that he used in the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. While her work and prestigious position with the newcomers caused some friction within the Tsimshian community, Atkinson found that Morison's letters, articles, and translations reveal her deep understanding of her matrilineal Tsimshian heritage. Riel and Morison were complex women who defy neat categorization—they were agents of Christianity who did not desert their Aboriginal heritage.

Kristin Burnett's chapter on Indigenous midwives addresses a specific dimension of the new social formation in the same world occupied by Sara Riel and Odille Quintal Morison—Indigenous midwives in the Northwest, especially the Treaty No. 7 region of southern Alberta. She has pieced together a picture of highly skilled midwives operating not only in their own communities but also in growing non-Native communities that were increasingly dominating the society of the “developing” West. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women shared experiences of pregnancy, childbirth, and illness, and Aboriginal healers and midwives often eased suffering and made the difference between life and death. Ironically, they thereby contributed to successful Euro-Canadian and Euro-American settlement in the West by helping to birth the new immigrant population, people who were already subordinating and marginalizing Aboriginal people and justifying this treatment with narratives of Aboriginal cultural and “racial” inferiority. The historical record is fragmented, and detailed accounts of these women's lives have not survived, making it difficult to tell their stories, but Burnett draws on a wide variety of sources to generate a composite picture of Aboriginal midwives who lived and worked in the Canadian West.

Part Three, “In the Borderlands,” explores Sophie Morigeau and Emma Minesinger, women whose lives straddled the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel, at a time of turbulent change as the Aboriginal world was invaded by traders, soldiers, miners, ranchers, and farmers. Their lives point to differences in the U.S. and Canadian approaches to land ownership by women and to policies directed at Aboriginal people. Sophie Morigeau's father had been a free trader during the fur trade, and while Sophie seems to have been a conventional young woman, she eventually left her husband and never

remarried. Instead, she had multiple liaisons, operated a freighting and trading business across the U.S.–Canadian boundary, survived serious physical injuries, and overall demonstrated a free spirit and a strong will. She had no children of her own but mentored girls she met during the course of her work. She filed for homesteads in the United States, which would not have been possible for her to do in Canada. Jean Barman is interested in the relationship in Sophie's life between structure and agency. She points to family fluidity, occupational flexibility, and racial ambivalence as primary structures that can explain Sophie's choices, an approach that relates to the anthropological concept of deep structure, primary values of societies that persist over time yet manifest in multiple and changing ways.

Emma Minesinger, the subject of Sarah Carter's article, lived on both sides of the Alberta–Montana border, and her life and that of her family provides rich insight into the boundary culture of the multiple ancestry people of the borderlands. Constantly on the move and haunted by poverty and tragedy until 1908 when she settled on an allotment on the Flathead Reservation, Minesinger worked as domestic servant, cook, chuck wagon driver, hunter, homesteader, and tailor, aside from her work as a wife and mother. Minesinger left her own memoir, in collaboration with her niece, and Carter's article examines this document as a unique variant of the Native American "as-told-to autobiography." Minesinger also left her own written records, cherished documents, and family photographs in the possession of her descendants, and Carter was able to learn a great deal about Emma's history from them, as well as to see samples of Emma's striking beadwork. The beadwork itself draws heavily on Plateau decorative traditions but is not restricted to those motifs. Carter learned, amazingly, that Sophie and Emma actually met each other. Given the overlapping dates of many of the other women's lives discussed in this book, it is likely that at least some of them also knew one another personally.

Part Four, "Brushes with the Spirit World," offers compelling accounts unique to volumes such as this one. Almost certainly all the women discussed in the different chapters had their own particular spiritual involvements that related to their personal situations and the kinds of agency they could muster. This part of the book features two very different accounts about encounters with a spiritual dimension but not necessarily for the better. Nathan Carlson points to the changing political and social landscape in northern Alberta in the years leading up to the negotiation of Treaty No. 8 in his unique and compelling account of a *wíhtikôw* survivor, Catherine Auger, whose husband was believed to have become a *wíhtikôw*—a highly

dangerous person with a hunger for human flesh—and was executed for the good of the community, despite her efforts to save him. Auger's story reveals a glimpse of the turmoil that accompanied the arrival of Christian missionaries in northern Alberta in the mid- to late nineteenth century, marked by competition between missionaries and Aboriginal spirituality and its practitioners, along with the climate of fear generated by white trappers who arrived in the region in the last two decades of the century and the uncertainty associated with the presence of the new North West Mounted Police in the Lesser Slave Lake region, on the eve of the treaty. We are given a picture of an "ordinary" wife in an extraordinary circumstance, who fought to lead a normal life, to protect both her husband and her children. Nathan Carlson, who is personally connected to this family, sought to provide insights into exactly what happened to Auger and her husband and how she coped after the tragic events at White Fish Lake, and he found a remarkable correspondence between written and oral documents about this incident.

The diminishment of Aboriginal spirituality that accompanied dedicated attempts by missionaries to convert Aboriginal people to Christianity is a theme that underlies Susan Gray's chapter on Pakwâciskwew (Wilderness Woman), who in northern Algonquian tradition was an other-than-human woman who could offer power to human men. While she was once considered one of the most important figures that men could encounter in dream quests, today she has almost slipped into oblivion, and if remembered at all, she is now known primarily as a dangerous rather than a beneficial entity. This shift in her image was undoubtedly influenced by missionary teachings. Pakwâciskwew was all about agency—her own—but a man who was properly trained to encounter the spiritual world could meet her to his benefit, in the same manner that he met and acquired other spiritual helpers. Through oral history and the few existing written records, Gray explores the features of Wilderness Woman, the key characteristics of narratives about her, placing these within the context of other female other-than-humans in the Cree and Anishinabe worldviews. Much can be learned about her as a role model for Anishinabe women in their relations with men, and for daily relations between men and women. Important spiritual figures such as Pakwâciskwew normally play multiple roles within their societies, although it is seldom a simple task to deconstruct such roles, especially for earlier eras.

The two chapters in Part Five, "Changing and Crafting Representations," by Jennifer S.H. Brown and Kristin Gleeson, tell the stories of two

women who tried to mediate directly between the Aboriginal world and the broader world, at a time of serious suppression of Native cultures. Jennifer Brown writes about Frances Nickawa, a performer comparable to Pauline Johnson. Nickawa's family had long-standing fur trade connections, as did many of the other women of this volume, but she was adopted by Hannah Riley, a Methodist missionary and sewing instructor. Frances grew up crocheting, sewing, singing, learning elocution, and possibly doing beadwork. When she became a public performer, she walked onto a stage provided for her by Pauline Johnson, who had died about ten years earlier. Frances herself died of tuberculosis at the young age of thirty. She addressed prejudices and stereotypes about Aboriginal people in her performances, even as she ultimately rejected life with her own Cree people.

The life of Frances Nickawa overlaps with that of Gertrude Bernard, better known as Anahareo, wife of Grey Owl, the Aboriginal persona of Englishman Archie Belaney. She was influenced by strong Algonquin and Mohawk values as well as her own stubborn determination and thirst for adventure. She forged her own identity as a trapper and prospector, though later she renounced trapping and convinced Grey Owl to do likewise, and to turn his attention to nature writing. Like Frances Nickawa, Anahareo squarely addressed stereotypes about Aboriginal women. Although today she is known primarily for her relationship with Grey Owl, he was only a small part of her long life. Much of her life was shaped by hardship, in common with many of the women discussed in this volume, but she left a personal legacy of two books and two prestigious awards: the Order of Nature from the International League for Animal Rights in 1979 and the Order of Canada in 1983.

Collectively, the women's stories told in this volume show how ordinary women coped with the vicissitudes of their lives, the triumphs but especially the sorrows and tragedies. Many women lost children, husbands, or other family members to disease or accident. Virtually all women married and had children (or expected to have them). Family connections were important to these women, yet families grew apart, and their members lost contact. The stories of these women and their families were lost too, in what Kristin Burnett has called "the discursive erasure of Aboriginal women . . . [that was] central to the construction of an imagined white settler society."<sup>59</sup> Writing their histories asks us not only to rethink the history and structure of fur trade society and the settler society that superseded it but also to challenge our myths of nation building that are so intertwined with our constructions and stereotypes of those worlds.





# PART ONE

TRANSATLANTIC CONNECTIONS



## RECOVERED IDENTITIES:

### Four Métis Artists in Nineteenth-Century Rupert's Land

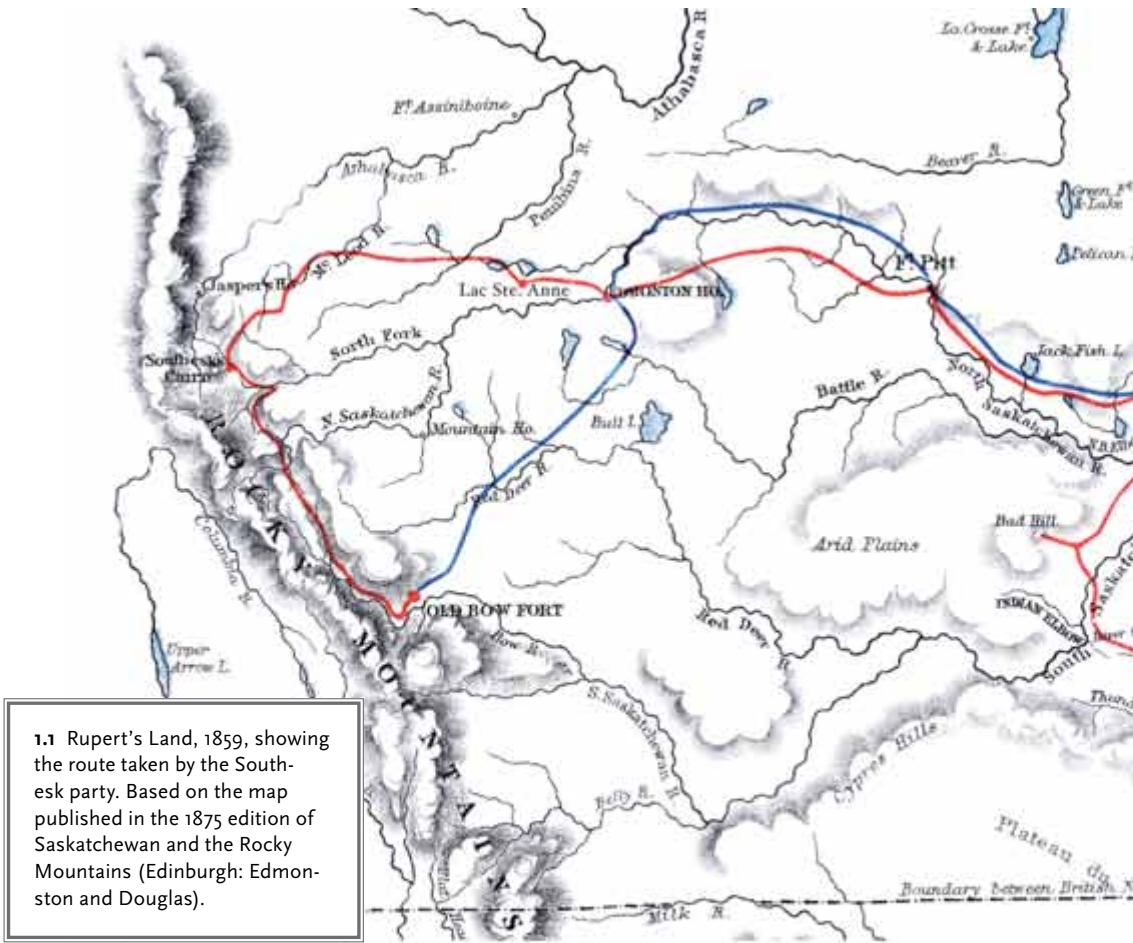
*Susan Berry*

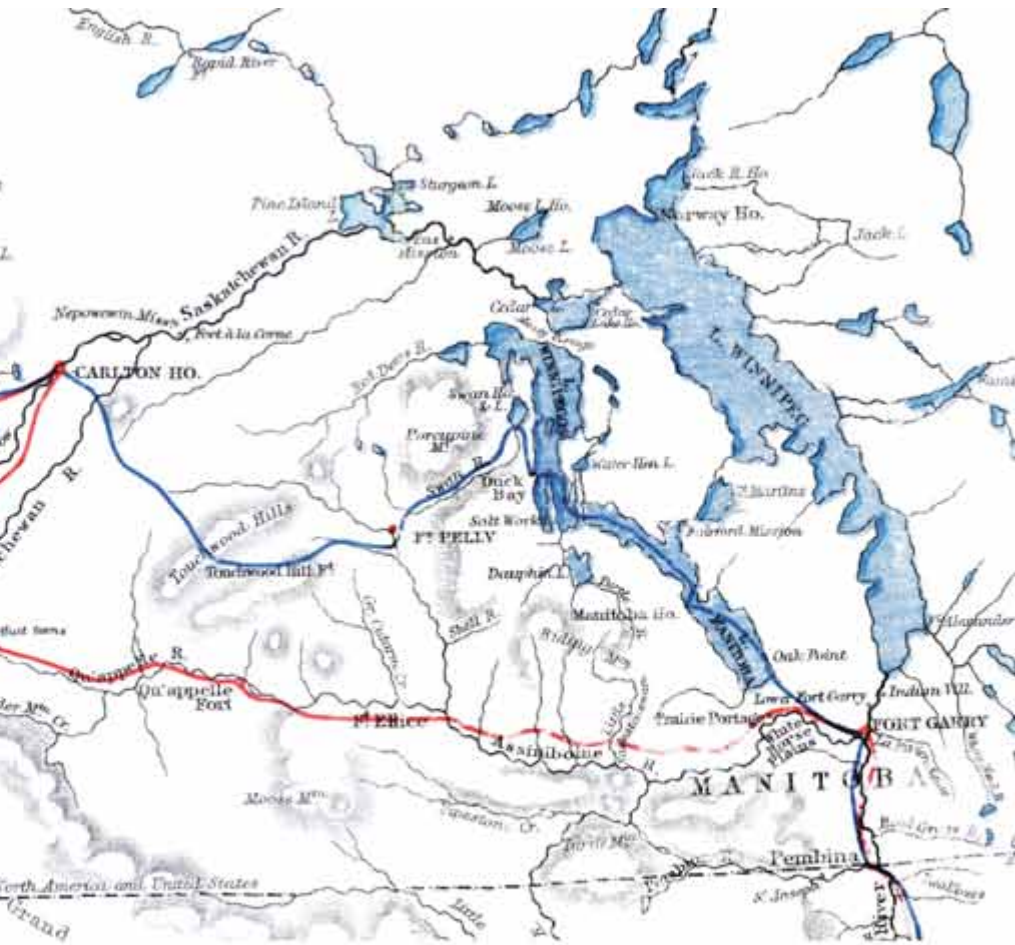
Objects, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich observes, tell stories.<sup>1</sup> The objects discussed in this paper were collected in the mid-nineteenth century by a wealthy Scottish aristocrat. His story is an intriguing one, chronicled in a travel narrative that he later published. But the objects that he collected open windows onto other, unrecorded stories—stories of artistic skill and entrepreneurial initiative, of romance and hospitality, and of loss, bereavement, and survival. They are the stories of the people who made the objects. This chapter explores four such stories. Highly personal, they speak at the same time to the complex realities of Métis women's lives in nineteenth-century Rupert's Land.

#### The Southesk Collection

In June 1859 James Carnegie, the Ninth Earl of Southesk, headed out from Fort Garry, the Hudson's Bay Company's western headquarters in the Red River Settlement, on a hunting expedition. Over the next seven months, he and his Métis guides travelled more than four thousand kilometres across the northern plains to the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains and back (see Figure 1.1).

While Southesk's primary objective was to hunt exotic big game animals, he also collected objects made by First Nations and Métis individuals. These objects included finely made garments and accessories, weaponry, and horse gear. Some were commissioned pieces, made for Southesk's personal use or as gifts for relatives back in Scotland; he obtained others through trade. Several may have been presented to the earl as gifts. Most were probably acquired at Red River or at one of the Hudson's





it includes objects of Anishinabe (Ojibwa), Blackfoot, Cree, Métis, and Nakota (Stoney) origin. The collection's age is likewise noteworthy. Not only are First Nations and Métis objects from the northern Plains dating to the 1850s relatively rare, they were created in an era of innovation. Enjoying access to a rich storehouse of home-produced materials — tanned animal hides, dyed porcupine quills, birch bark, horsehair, sinew, and natural pigments — as well as an expanding array of European trade goods, artists were experimenting with new techniques, colour palettes, and motifs. Diversity of materials and creative experimentation are both evident in the Southesk collection.

But the collection is also significant because it is supported by documentation. Southesk kept a daily journal in which he wrote about people

he met, places he visited and, in some instances, the objects that he acquired. The journal was destroyed in a fire at the Southesk estate in 1921, but the earl had published an account of his trip in 1875. *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains* incorporates many original passages from the earl's journal and includes information about some of the objects. And while it identifies only one artist by name, the narrative opens up the possibility of ascertaining others. This chapter draws on those leads to explore the stories of four Métis women who can be linked, with varying degrees of confidence, to some of the objects in the Southesk collection.

### Art, Gender, and Anonymity

Our understanding of historical First Nations and Métis art is often limited by a lack of information about individual artists. In some cases, purchasers failed to record the names of the people who had made the objects that they acquired. The subsequent passage of time and transfer of the objects to new owners ensured that this knowledge was lost. In other instances, buyers never asked the artists their names. Linguistic barriers likely contributed to the failure to secure information, but so too did a perception that embroidered garments, pouches, and gun cases were not art.

The western European practice of distinguishing between fine and applied arts, or art and craft, has much to do with this. Art, in this formulation, is meaningful creative expression; it conveys ideas and evokes emotion. Craft, on the other hand, encompasses the toolkit of everyday life; craft items are objects “whose meaning is exhausted in their utility.”<sup>2</sup> An artist's identity is an integral component of her or his work, for the work expresses the artist's singular vision. A craftsperson's name, however, is of marginal relevance because craft objects reflect a collective ethos.<sup>3</sup>

As various contemporary scholars have noted, the art–craft dichotomy is ill-suited to the study of non-Western arts. A carved pipe bowl may be sculptural in form, thereby meeting Western art criteria, yet it was made to be smoked. Viewed within its own cultural context, it is no less functional—and no more inherently beautiful—than a pair of embroidered moccasins. Each exhibits “skill, virtuosity and elaboration”; each is “an artfully made object [that] will draw and hold the eye.”<sup>4</sup> Still, discussion requires that terms be adopted. In this chapter, I follow Berlo and Phillips's lead and use the terms *art* and *artist* to refer to objects in the Southesk collection and to the individuals who created them.

The art–craft dichotomy also has acted to privilege men's forms of creative expression over women's. This is particularly evident on the northern

Plains, with its tradition of “pictorial autobiography.”<sup>5</sup> Working with hide robes and shirts, canvas tipi covers, inventory ledger books, and rock faces, male artists have painted graphic representations that memorialize significant events in their lives.<sup>6</sup> Not only have these depictions of hunting and war adventures appealed to western European sensibilities, their autobiographical dimension also prompted collectors to record the artists’ names. An unintended result has been to reinforce the anonymity of historical First Nations and Métis women artists, whose work until recently has been largely non-representational and non-biographical.

Anonymity has consequences. When individual identities are lost, so are many of the complexities that permit a nuanced view of the past. This is a particular hazard when working with the history of non-Western peoples. All-encompassing categories such as “Métis” can too easily replace individual lives with their diverse histories, experiences, motivations, and perspectives. By relying on these categories, we risk, as Ulrich puts it, “freezing people into a collective anonymity that denies either agency or the capacity to change.”<sup>7</sup>

Anonymity is troubling, too, because it obscures connections between historic and contemporary communities. These connections are important to families, who take pride in their ancestors’ accomplishments, as well as to contemporary artists whose work is informed by that of previous generations. Most fundamentally, of course, anonymity denies artists the recognition that they deserve. As Berlo and Phillips have noted, “on the Great Plains, a woman’s path to dignity, honour, and long life lay in the correct and skilled pursuit of the arts.”<sup>8</sup> Recovering the names of the women who travelled this path is a step towards restoring that dignity.

Anonymity, finally, limits whose stories are told. As long as the individuals who created the objects in the Southesk collection remain anonymous, the only personal story with which they can be linked, the only story grounded in historical time and geographical place, is Southesk’s. He is a key part of the picture, and his travels provide the thread that links these objects together. But Southesk did not make any of the objects, and the tale of a wealthy aristocrat’s collecting practices is only one of the stories that this collection has to tell. By supplementing Southesk’s narrative with evidence gleaned from other sources, including Métis scrip affidavits, Hudson’s Bay Company account books, personal correspondence and the objects themselves, I hope to recover alternative stories, stories that reveal something of the personal circumstances in which the objects were created, used, and parted with.

## Mary Monkman Tate

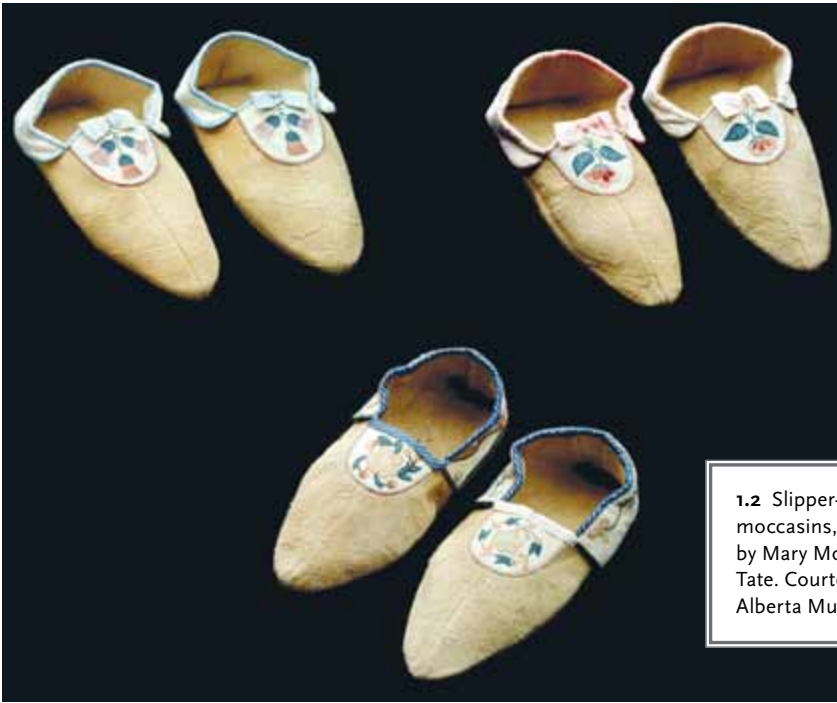
July 26th. — . . . I went to pay a visit to Mrs. Tait, who lived with her husband at the Fort . . . Mrs. Tait had been doing some sewing for me, and was now engaged in making me a few pairs of moccasins to take home on my return.

— The Earl of Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*<sup>9</sup>

“Mrs. Tait” — Mary Monkman Tate — is the sole artist whose name Southesk recorded. Southesk visited her in her home at Fort Carlton, a Hudson’s Bay Company post on the North Saskatchewan River where her husband was employed as postmaster. In her late twenties and the mother of three young girls, Mary Tate was a highly skilled needleworker. Among the moccasins she fashioned for Southesk were four pairs of slipper-style moccasins, made of lightly smoked deer hide with contrasting vamps and cuffs of fine white caribou hide (see Figure 1.2).<sup>10</sup> All are skilfully embroidered with graceful floral motifs executed in silk embroidery thread. The vamps — delicately outlined either with two tiny rows of horsehair wrapping or with fine porcupine quill stitching — are small and sit high on the foot, while the toes are long and pointed. A seam runs down the moccasins’ centre. Southesk described this style of moccasin, with its small vamps and pointed toes, as characteristic of a distinctively Saskatchewan style of dress.

Clearly, Mary Tate was in full command of her art. Her virtuoso technique employed a variety of embroidery stitches — chain, satin, blanket, buttonhole, and stem — each precisely executed. She used the silk embroidery thread’s sheen and colour palette to full advantage, creating graceful and subtly toned compositions that evoke the natural world. These variations of pink, rose, and red, complemented by shades of green, are an early example of the colour scheme that would define the Métis palette from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century.<sup>11</sup> She was equally adept, however, at working with horsehair and quills: the vamps on two pairs of moccasins feature horsehair piping around a bird quill core,<sup>12</sup> while the vamps on the remaining pairs are outlined in slender rows of piping created by wrapping porcupine quills around a bird quill core.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, her work speaks of thrift. Piecing at the heel of one of the moccasins and in the silk ribbon binding along the edge of a vamp reveals a resourceful individual who knew how to make the most of the materials at hand.<sup>14</sup>

The thistle motif on one pair of moccasins testifies to Mary Tate’s creativity. An introduced European plant, the Scotch thistle had not yet



1.2 Slipper-style moccasins, made by Mary Monkman Tate. Courtesy Royal Alberta Museum.

reached western Canada. Mary Tate would have been familiar with the plant and its bell-shaped flower, however, through representations on imported fabrics, china, and other goods. (The buttons on a fire bag in the Southesk collection, for example, feature a thistle motif.) Scottish-inspired fashions, including plaid fabrics and thistle motifs, had reached their height of popularity in the 1850s, and the thistle's significance as the national emblem of Scotland was well known.<sup>15</sup> In embroidering these graceful thistles on slippers for a Scottish aristocrat's daughter, Mary Tate simultaneously appealed to a young girl's desire to dress fashionably and to her client's national pride.

With their silk bows and delicate floral motifs, these slip-on style moccasins were doubtless intended for female members of the Carnegie family.<sup>16</sup> Women's "boudoir slippers," embroidered in colourful needlework patterns, were then in vogue in western European and Euro-American circles. Highly ornamental, "worn at home in the bedroom or at breakfast within the privacy of the family," women's slippers "returned to fashionable floors in emphatic style around 1850."<sup>17</sup> This, of course, was the European take on slippers, and probably reflected Southesk's perspective when he commissioned Mary Tate to make several pairs. In Métis circles, however,

men as well as women wore slip-on moccasins; they were a popular style of indoor footwear. The link between femininity and flowers similarly reflected western European notions of gender-appropriate dress. Southesk himself subscribed to the view that floral motifs were not manly, commenting that “the embroidering of men’s moccasins with flower patterns is not to be commended, it has a tawdry, effeminate appearance.”<sup>18</sup> Métis men, however, wore an array of garments — hats, coats, mitts, and moccasins — embroidered with floral motifs.

Mary Monkman Tate, the woman who created these elegant moccasins, was born c. 1832, probably in the Interlake region between Lakes Winnipegosis and Manitoba. Her paternal grandfather, James Monkman, had established a profitable salt manufactory along the western shore of Lake Winnipegosis as early as 1818.<sup>19</sup> Throughout what are now the Prairie Provinces, salt deposits were harvested, processed, and sold as country produce. The Monkman salt works, however, were unusually extensive. At the height of operations, they produced approximately one thousand bushels in a season. With salt commanding twelve shillings sterling a bushel in 1858, this provided a healthy complement to the other commercial activities — fishing, trapping, and trading — in which family members engaged.<sup>20</sup>

After Monkman retired to Red River in the mid-1840s, his sons John and Joseph took over the operations. I can find no record linking his eldest son, James (Mary Tate’s father), with the salt works, although he may have participated in the transport and marketing end of operations. By the early 1830s, the younger James Monkman and his family<sup>21</sup> were spending at least part of the year near Oak Point, a Métis-Saulteaux community on the southeastern shore of Lake Manitoba.<sup>22</sup> It was the transit point at which the Monkman’s salt was transferred from York boats to Red River carts before being transported to market.<sup>23</sup>

Oak Point also supported a commercial fishery that was active in the autumn and winter months. In fact, Mary Tate’s father appears to have operated one of the area’s more successful fisheries.<sup>24</sup> Like salt production, fishing was one component of a mixed economy with a strong mercantile orientation; Oak Point residents also engaged in fur trapping, small-scale farming, and freighting. This emphasis on commerce, coupled with a flexible residential pattern that accommodated the exploitation of seasonally available resources, led Nicole St-Onge to characterize Oak Point and its neighbouring community of St. Laurent as having an “enduring distinctiveness” that set them apart from bison-hunting, French Catholic communities elsewhere in Red River.<sup>25</sup>

As a member of one of the area's more affluent families, a family committed to the region's expanding exchange economy, Mary Monkman grew up in an atmosphere that encouraged entrepreneurial initiative. She appears also to have grown up in her father's Protestant faith, as attested by her baptism in St. John's Anglican Cathedral in Red River on 1 April 1835.<sup>26</sup> Her spiritual education, however, may also have embraced Cree teachings. In later years her son Albert, employed as a clerk with the Hudson's Bay Company, wrote that the kit fox was his "Helping or familiar Spirit, Household God, [or] Manitou."<sup>27</sup> This connection with the kit fox likely dated back to Tate's youth. In the Lake Winnipeg region, guardian spirits approached "adolescent boys" as they participated in vision quests; the protective spirit thus received "would be available to the recipient for his lifetime."<sup>28</sup> Albert Tate's probable participation in a vision quest while he was a teenager suggests that his parents also may have followed Cree spiritual ways.

It was likely in the Interlake country that Mary Monkman met Philip Tate, a Métis man of Swampy Cree and Orcadian descent employed by the Hudson's Bay Company as a bowsman.<sup>29</sup> The two married in St. John's in June 1852, when Mary Monkman was about twenty years old. Jane, their eldest child, was born at Lake Manitoba in 1854. The Tates left the Interlake region for the Saskatchewan country the following year, when Tate was promoted to Interpreter at Fort Carlton, and it was here that their next three children—Charlotte, Eliza, and Albert—were born.<sup>30</sup>

Fort Carlton was one of the Company's larger posts, second in size in the Saskatchewan district only to Fort Edmonton. It was in the heart of Cree territory, and Cree was the primary language spoken in the Tate home.<sup>31</sup> "The first prairie post on the Saskatchewan," Carlton operated as both a fur depot and a provisioning post and was home to "a large force of men."<sup>32</sup> The need to keep the post stocked with fresh meat and pemmican would have necessitated periodic hunting expeditions onto the plains. These were well-organized, disciplined affairs that combined elements of the Métis buffalo hunt—travel by Red River cart brigade, the use of firearms—with Cree hunting practices, including reliance on a spiritually empowered specialist with the ability to call buffalo.<sup>33</sup> Mary Tate's contributions to these expeditions would have included butchering and drying meat, preparing pemmican, cleaning hides, and cooking.

It was on one of these hunting expeditions, in fact, that Mary Tate met Southesk. In mid-July, a group of Cree and Métis hunters from Fort Carlton under Philip Tate's command encountered the Southesk party hunting

bison on the Saskatchewan plains. The hunters undoubtedly knew Southesk's guides well, and the two parties spent the next nine days camping near one another, joining in an occasional hunting foray, and socializing. The hunters' families were with them, and some of the women assisted the Southesk party, dressing the skins and heads of the trophy animals Southesk had shot, preparing "a large store of [dried] meat,"<sup>34</sup> and sewing and mending clothing. One afternoon, Philip Tate brought his daughter Jane to meet Southesk.

Several of the hunters presently came to see us. Tait himself paid me a special visit, accompanied by his eldest daughter, a very pretty child of some six years old, — a charming little girl, whose bright black eyes and pleasant smiles seemed to bring sunbeams with them to my solitary tent.<sup>35</sup>

Jane Tate may well have inspired Southesk to commission slippers for his own daughters, who were of much the same age. Perhaps the earl admired examples of Mary Tate's needlework on clothing that Jane and Philip Tate wore and sought her out to create something special for his own family.

As the Southesk moccasins suggest, Mary Tate doubtless engaged in a fair amount of sewing, both utilitarian and decorative. After its 1821 merger with the North West Company, the Hudson's Bay Company had reduced costs by eliminating tailors from its workforce. It called on employees' wives to take up the slack, declaring it "the duty of the Women at the different Posts to do all that is necessary in regard to Needle Work."<sup>36</sup> Durable hide clothing, flexible moccasins, and fur-trimmed mitts and caps generally proved better suited to the conditions of the country than clothes of European materials and manufacture. Mary Tate likely tanned and smoked her own hides, procured by her husband or through trade with Cree and Métis hunters, and processed her own sinew. Purchases recorded in Tate's name in the Edmonton account book for the period June 1859 to February 1860 include neither hides nor sewing thread.<sup>37</sup>

Certainly, Fort Carlton's position as a major stop along the Carlton Trail, the overland route linking Red River with Fort Edmonton, would have provided Mary Tate with opportunities to market her work. Unmarried company men, voyageurs, free traders, and the growing number of foreigners travelling through Rupert's Land would all have been potential clients.<sup>38</sup> Many of these men would have appreciated the high quality of Mary Tate's needlework and been tempted to purchase an example as a

memento of their time in the Northwest. Most, if not all, would have required the services of a skilled seamstress.

Needlework, then, likely brought both creative satisfaction and financial reward. Her husband's earnings would have been sufficient to support the family, but the income that Mary Tate's sewing brought in must have been welcome. It may even have provided the margin of difference that allowed the Tates to send their children to private schools—Jane to a girl's college in Hamilton,<sup>39</sup> and Albert to St. John's College Boy's School in Winnipeg. The Tate children's formal education speaks of their parents' determination to secure for them the skills they would need to succeed in a changing society.<sup>40</sup>

In 1864, the Tates moved from Carlton to Turtle Lake, near present-day Turtleford, Saskatchewan, where Tate served as postmaster at the newly established Company post. The family transferred the following year to Fort Victoria, another new post on the North Saskatchewan, where Tate had been appointed assistant clerk. One of his first assignments was to build the clerk's residence. Following his promotion to clerk in charge in 1867, this substantial log dwelling became the Tates' home. It still stands today, the oldest in situ building in Alberta. Mary Tate, however, never lived there; she died in 1865, not long after the family had arrived at the small settlement. Her daughter Jane, the child who had brought sunbeams to Southesk's "solitary tent," died not long after, in the summer of 1870, while en route home from college. She was fifteen years old.<sup>41</sup>

Three other Tate children—Charlotte, Eliza, and Charles—likewise died young; Charlotte (1875) and Eliza (1876) were both eighteen, and Charles (1870) just five.<sup>42</sup> The Tates' son Albert, however, survived. Indeed, he thrived as a student at St. John's, winning prizes in history, French, music, and bookkeeping. But his educational achievements could take him only so far in a society that increasingly limited career advancement for Métis men. After spending close to two decades with the Hudson's Bay Company in the Lesser Slave Lake and Peace River districts, working his way up to clerk in charge at Fort Dunvegan, Albert Tate quit the service in 1898 to pursue farming and freighting in the Lesser Slave Lake area.<sup>43</sup>

## Lisette Courteoreille Waniyande

Sunday, August 28th. — . . . Half-an-hour's riding brought us to a glade where three or four Iroquois and half-breed hunters were encamped with their families, and there we halted, in the hope of getting horses and other things that were required.

—The Earl of Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*<sup>44</sup>

Having secured bison, antelope, and grizzly bear trophies on the Saskatchewan plains, the Southesk party headed west towards the Rocky Mountains where they hoped to track mountain sheep and goats. Entering the mountains near present-day Cadomin, south of Jasper House, they met up with a small band of Iroquois-Métis hunters. The two groups camped together for two evenings, and Southesk traded with the hunters for fresh horses and provisions.

He also commissioned one of the women to sew him a new gun case (see Figure 1.3):

The wife of one of the hunters has made me a gun-cover of moose leather, ornamented with fringes and narrow braidings of red and black cloth, after the picturesque fashion of the country. It was the custom to keep one's gun covered, except when wanted for immediate use. This protected it from bad weather, and kept it from injury when carried across the saddle.<sup>45</sup>

Thick moose hide, strong sinew stitching, and a flap closure at the stock end secured with a plain metal button made this cover durable and water repellent. Southesk found it far superior to one made of bison hide that he'd purchased at Red River, which had been "neither strong enough for mountain work nor thick enough in continuous rain."<sup>46</sup>

Gun cases from the northern Plains are occasionally ornamented with bands of dyed porcupine quillwork or embroidered beadwork. The woman who made this case clearly did not have sufficient time to engage in elaborate decorative work. Nor is there reason to think that Southesk wanted anything more than a functional cover. Nonetheless, the artist took the time to apply decorative detailing, reinforcing the seams with red and black stroud welts<sup>47</sup> and cutting the hide at the case's muzzle end to create a tassel-like cluster of fringe. Her client evidently appreciated these "picturesque" touches.

Southesk identified one of the hunters with whom his party camped by the name "Eneas Oneanti." Oneanti traded two of his horses — "a very handsome stallion, black, flecked with grey" and "a fine old white mare" — to the earl. He proved an astute appraiser of horses, riding after Southesk to "complain of the bargain about the mare" when he found the mount for which he had exchanged her "a less good riding-horse than he had supposed" and insisting upon a superior animal in its place.<sup>48</sup> It seems certain that this individual was Ignace Waniyande,<sup>49</sup> a hunter



1.3 Gun case, possibly made by Lisette Courteoreille Waniyande. Courtesy Royal Alberta Museum.

and trapper born near Jasper House around 1822. He was the son of a Tse'khene (Sekani) woman named Marie and Ignace Nowaniouter, an Iroquois voyageur from Kahnawake who had come west with the North West Company. Listed as a voyageur in the Athabasca River department in 1804, Nowaniouter had been among an estimated seventy Iroquois men who chose to stay in the Athabasca–Peace River country as independent hunters and trappers after their contracts expired.<sup>50</sup> Given the number of families in the camp, the odds are one in three or four that Waniyande's wife, Lisette Courteoreille Waniyande, made the gun case.

Like her husband, Lisette Courteoreille was the child of freemen. She was born around 1824, most likely in the Lesser Slave Lake region of northern Alberta.<sup>51</sup> Her surname suggests that her family was of Odawa origin, probably from the region bordering the Straits of Mackinac in present-day Michigan.<sup>52</sup> North West Company trader Alexander Henry reported that a “small band of Courtes Oreilles . . . formerly from the Michilimackinac” had travelled to Lesser Slave Lake around 1792 to trap beaver.<sup>53</sup> Although he added that the Courtes Oreilles' sojourn had been brief, with most of them electing to head east to the Red River area when they found “the Beaver getting scarce,” post journal entries from Edmonton House in 1795–96 and Lac la Biche in 1799–1800 commented on the good beaver returns brought in by locally based Odawa trappers.<sup>54</sup>

Little has been written about the Odawa freemen community in the Northwest, and most of what has pertains to the first few decades after their arrival. This is likely because members of this small Anishinabe community married individuals from other communities; within a generation,

a distinct Odawa cultural identity would no longer have been perceptible to outside observers. What information can be gleaned from the historical record, however, indicates that the Odawa formed part of the larger freeman community of the Athabasca River district.<sup>55</sup> Slight as they are, these references indicate that the western Odawa were highly mobile hunters, expert in beaver trapping. Based in the Lesser Slave Lake area, they were prepared to travel great distances to harvest furs and were adept at bargaining with European traders. Contemporary fur traders' accounts suggest that they had formed small bands, likely composed of several families connected to one another through kin ties, and that the individuals in these bands came from diverse cultural backgrounds. As Trudy Nicks has noted, "the fur trade facilitated exchanges not only between European and Indian cultures, but also between different Indian tribes, which, prior to the fur trade, were widely separated by geography and cultural traditions."<sup>56</sup> As these people of diverse traditions met, interacted, and married one another, they created the foundation for "a new type of population" which, within another generation or two, would be recognized as Métis.<sup>57</sup> Such appears to have been the case for the Court Oreilles; "Lisette, age 22, the daughter of a Court Oreilles man and a Cree woman" was among the twenty-eight individuals baptized by Jesuit missionary Pierre-Jean De Smet in an Easter Sunday service at Jasper House in April 1846.<sup>58</sup>

Lisette Courteoreille, then, likely grew up a member of the first generation of Athabasca River Métis. Cree was doubtless the primary language of her childhood, although she may also have spoken French. Her marriage to Ignace Waniyande, which probably took place in the mid-1840s,<sup>59</sup> would have forged a link with another family belonging to this same broad-based community. Fur trapping would have remained a core economic activity, integrated into an annual round that included wintering horses in the prairies of the Smoky River Valley, hunting moose, elk, bighorn sheep, caribou, and mountain goat, and harvesting plants. Hunting took place year-round, and so too did the associated work of fleshing, stretching and tanning hides, drying meat, cooking, and sewing. Lisette Waniyande and her daughters would have engaged in other activities on a seasonal basis—lacing snowshoes, harvesting Saskatoon berries, making moose grease from boiled bones, and preparing pemmican.

The Southesk party encountered the Waniyande camp in late August. In describing the work underway in camp, Southesk took particular note of the children's activities. "One pretty brown pony passed us," he wrote, "carrying a little girl five or six years old, who was riding quite alone. Near

one of the tents I saw two girls, of much the same age, cleaning a beaver skin with a bone, while two others were cutting up fat with great knives.”<sup>60</sup> The Waniyandes’ daughters, six-year-old Nancy and four-year-old Marie, were doubtless among these children.

In some respects, this way of life was similar to that of local First Nations.<sup>61</sup> In other respects, however, the Waniyandes were pursuing a distinctive way of life. As specialists who used steel traps to maximize their take of beaver pelts, the Iroquois trappers of the eastern slopes had for decades brought in superior returns;<sup>62</sup> with these returns came comparative wealth and a familiarity with Euro-Canadian commercial practices. The “large herds of excellent horses” that Southesk admired were a visible measure of the Waniyandes’ wealth,<sup>63</sup> and the hard bargain that Ignace Waniyande drove with Southesk speaks of experience negotiating commercial transactions.

Five weeks after the Waniyandes’ encounter with Southesk, Ignace Waniyande visited Fort Edmonton. Using the twelve-pound note of credit that he’d received from Southesk in exchange for his “handsome stallion,” he bought a large selection of imported textiles at the post store.<sup>64</sup> The prices would have been lower than at Jasper House and the selection excellent, as the fall brigade had arrived just five days before. Waniyande’s purchases — no doubt made following consultation with Lisette — included six yards of blue cloth, ten yards of white cotton shirting, a white flannel shirt, several silk handkerchiefs, two striped blankets, six yards of white flannel, three white cloth capotes, and two sashes.<sup>65</sup> The costliest item, at one pound, four shillings and two pence, was sixteen yards of “fine dark Tartan,” likely destined for dresses or shawls for his wife and daughters. He chose good-quality materials: one of the blankets had four points, the other three, and both the flannel and tartan were “fine.” While we can’t know exactly what Lisette Waniyande made with these fabrics, the choice of materials is consistent with clothing worn by fashionably dressed Métis elsewhere in Rupert’s Land.<sup>66</sup>

Like several other freemen families of the eastern slopes, the Waniyandes formed ties with the growing Métis community at Lac Ste. Anne. The settlement west of Edmonton had been home to a small Roman Catholic mission since 1842, and the religious services it offered attracted a number of worshippers. By the 1860s, if not earlier, the family was spending a significant amount of time there. The move had probably become a permanent one by 1866 when Nancy, the eldest child, married Joseph Pepamowew at the mission.<sup>67</sup>

Lac Ste. Anne's draw for the Waniyandes likely extended beyond the religious services offered at the mission. Other freemen families with whom they had kin ties lived here, there was a small Hudson's Bay Company post, and free traders based in the community actively purchased furs, hides, and other country products. The community was a social hub, too; Chief Factor William Sinclair II described it in 1857 as "the Rendezvous for all Free men."<sup>68</sup> Trappers from the eastern slopes often spent several weeks there each summer, visiting friends and family and trading their furs at Fort Edmonton. But it was a lively place for much of the year; the week that Métis guide Peter Erasmus spent there in March 1858 was "a whirlwind of social functions" ranging from dances, sleigh rides, and toboggan slides to "a huge lunch served by the campfire [with] pots of tea."<sup>69</sup>

For Lisette Waniyande, however, the years at Lac Ste. Anne were marked by significant hardship. Burial records from the Lac Ste. Anne Catholic Mission document the deaths of thirty-one individuals between October and December 1870, the year of the smallpox epidemic; twenty-eight of the dead were younger than thirty years of age. Among them were two of the Waniyandes' children, fifteen-year-old Marie and five-year-old Louis. Nancy Waniyande's husband Joseph also died, leaving her with two small children.<sup>70</sup>

Lisette Waniyande herself died at Lac Ste. Anne in December 1876, two years after Ignace's death.<sup>71</sup> In the years that followed the surviving Waniyande children would face a daunting series of challenges. These same challenges confronted virtually all Métis communities in the Northwest—disappearance of the bison, the cession of land through the Treaty and scrip processes,<sup>72</sup> and increasingly harsh government policies directed towards Aboriginal peoples following the defeat of Louis Riel's forces in the 1885 Resistance. Hunger was a constant threat,<sup>73</sup> and attempts to feed families occasionally conflicted with the law. In June 1882, Jean Félix Callihoo, husband of Lisette Waniyande's daughter Adèle, was arrested for having shot and eaten a cow belonging to the farm instructor at the Alexander reserve. He pled guilty, "quite willing to admit that he had committed the deed . . . as he was hungry and the agent had refused to give any relief." Callihoo was sentenced to six months' hard labour at the jail in Battleford, Saskatchewan.<sup>74</sup>

Over time, members of the Waniyande family left the Edmonton area. After Adèle's death in 1887, Jean Félix Callihoo placed their two young daughters in the Grey Nuns' orphanage at St. Albert and headed north to the Peace River country, "where furs were of prime quality and survival

would be easier.”<sup>75</sup> The Waniyande’s son Pierre left Lac Ste. Anne for the Grande Prairie region along the eastern slopes of the Rockies.<sup>76</sup> Nancy, the eldest Waniyande child, made a similar move later in life. Her great-niece, Métis historian Anne Anderson, described the event. It must have taken place around 1915, when Nancy Waniyande was in her sixties. She had been widowed a second time and was finding it difficult to support her family.

Suddenly like someone dropped from the sky, she appeared at our farm gate one day with all her worldly possessions, . . . She was driving a team of horses, hitched to a wagon. . . . There were bundles, pails, boxes and all sorts of items needed to set camp. . . . In a crate were a few hens which could be eaten if fresh meat was hard to get. A cow followed behind and a two year old colt was running and kicking, having fun leading the way. . . . She talked about her plans, which was to move to Fort McMurray, trapping and hunting, the way she was taught to survive. If she didn’t like the life she would move back.<sup>77</sup>

The skills that she had learned as a small girl along the eastern slopes of the Rockies stood her in good stead; “sure enough, in two months’ time we heard she had made it.”<sup>78</sup>

## Mary Sinclair Christie

October 12th. — . . . Mr. Christie, who is now in charge, received me with the utmost kindness and hospitality . . . It is delightful to be again enjoying some of the comforts of civilization, — such as wine, well-made coffee, vegetables, cream-tarts, and other good things too many to mention.

— The Earl of Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*<sup>79</sup>

Southesk did not record the circumstances in which he acquired each object that he collected. While his journal entries make possible the identification of Mary Tate as the artist who created the children’s moccasins and of Lisette Waniyande as one of the “three or four” women who could have made his gun case, we must rely on different types of evidence to recover the identities of other artists whose work he acquired. In the absence of primary documentation, these identifications are both tentative and speculative.

1.4 Fire bag, possibly made by Mary Sinclair Christie, side A (left) and side B (right). Courtesy Royal Alberta Museum.



One of the objects on which Southesk's text is silent is the fire bag shown in Figure 1.4. Richly embroidered with glass and metallic seed beads, it is of a type often referred to today as an "octopus bag" because of the four pairs of decorative tabs that hang from its body.<sup>80</sup> Like virtually all pouches of this type, it features two distinct compositions, one on either side. *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains* includes an illustration of this fire bag accompanied by the caption, "Red River Fire-Bag." Since Southesk did not discuss the fire bag in his text, it is unclear whether he actually collected it in Red River or simply considered it an example of the type of fire bag worn by Red River residents.

Fire bags were an essential element of a Métis man's wardrobe. They held tobacco, tinder, a personal smoking pipe, and other survival gear kept at hand when travelling on the land. They also were a formal-dress accessory. English adventurers Milton and Cheadle reported that the Métis men attending a ball at Fort Carlton in 1862 "appeared in gaudy array, with beaded firebag, gay sash, blue or scarlet leggings . . . and elaborately embroidered moccasins."<sup>81</sup> Whether tucked under the folds of a sash, as was likely the case with the Southesk bag, or suspended from a shoulder strap, the fire bag was both an intimate personal item and a canvas for the decorative artist. As Sherry Farrell Racette puts it, this comparatively small element of dress "command[s] the viewer's attention through the use of colour, fine materials, intense areas of decoration and central position on the body."<sup>82</sup>

By the 1840s, if not earlier, the octopus bag had become “the most popular” style of bag in Métis communities across the northwest.<sup>83</sup> Certain conventions governed its design. The body, square-shaped with rounded upper corners, was usually constructed of black or dark blue broadcloth;<sup>84</sup> brilliantly coloured floral motifs executed in tiny seed beads stood out against this sober background. Each of the eight tabs was tipped with a fringe strung with glass beads and a woollen tassel. Slender sinew fringes strung with glass beads fell between the tabs. The bag’s edges were bound with silk or velvet ribbon and a row of white beads, sewn in a lace stitch along the outer edge. The Southesk fire bag conforms to these conventions.

It also features a number of stylistic elements often associated with Anishinabe art. This is particularly evident on side A. The three central blooms correspond with the four-petalled rose that Coleman identified as “the most frequently used realistic floral design” in Anishinabe beadwork dating between 1830 and 1870.<sup>85</sup> Other characteristically Anishinabe features include the use of translucent beads to create major design elements, stippling (achieved through the placement of individual red beads in the medallion motif on side A and the central bloom on side B), elaborate leaf motifs,<sup>86</sup> and the depiction of leaves, buds, fruit, and blooming roses borne on a single stem. Most striking of all are the series of diamonds that run down each tab. The diamond motif is an ancient Anishinabe design element that appears in diverse media. Taken together, these elements suggest that the woman who made the fire bag may have been familiar with Anishinabe aesthetic preferences and design traditions.<sup>87</sup> If so, she may have engaged in what Cory Silverstein has termed “spiritually empowered artistry.”<sup>88</sup> By embellishing functional objects with images of flowers and berries, Anishinabe artists please the spirits of the plants on whom people depend for survival and bring a measure of spiritual protection to those who wear or use these objects.

The artist may also have been attuned to international fashion trends. Rosebuds, berries, wildflowers, and fruits belonged to a “mid-nineteenth-century Euro-American naturalistic aesthetic” that found expression in textiles, china, silver goods, and other decorative arts. A more specific symbolism may have been at play, too, given the longstanding use of the budding rose as a symbol of marriage in western European decorative arts. If so, the fire bag may well have been a gift for the artist’s sweetheart, the “W.J.C.” whose initials are embroidered in sky-blue beads on side A.<sup>89</sup>

These initials, in fact, may provide a clue to the maker’s identity. At first glance, the “C” might be assumed to stand for “Carnegie,” the Southesk

family name. If that were so, Southesk might have commissioned the fire bag as a gift for a relative. The Carnegie family tree, however, includes no “WJC”s. There is an individual with whom these initials *were* widely associated: William J. Christie, Chief Factor of the Saskatchewan District and host to Southesk during a five-day stopover at Fort Edmonton in October, while the party was returning to Fort Garry. Southesk wrote that Christie and his wife Mary “received me with the utmost kindness and hospitality,” and it does not seem far-fetched to suggest that their hospitality included the gift of the fire bag shown here.<sup>90</sup> Certainly, the initials suggest that the woman who made the fire bag could read and write. Mary Christie, unlike most women of her time and place, was literate.<sup>91</sup>

Mary Sinclair Christie was born around 1830 in the Rainy Lake region of northern Ontario, most likely at the Dalles where her father, William Sinclair II, was in charge of the Hudson’s Bay Company post. He had spent the previous six years as an inland trader in the Winnipeg River and Rainy Lake districts, and the Dalles posting was his first command.<sup>92</sup> Through her father, Mary Sinclair had familial and cultural ties with both Cree and Métis communities. Her grandmother, Nahoway Sinclair, a member of the Homeguard Cree band at Fort Churchill, appears to have raised her children in accordance with Cree values and practices. Sutherland, for example, notes that she dressed her children in hide clothing and travelled with them snugly wrapped in mossbag cradles. In 1798, when William Sinclair II was four years old, his father was appointed trader at Oxford House, in what is now northern Manitoba; it was here, in northern Cree country, that he was raised.<sup>93</sup>

By the 1830s, however, Red River had become home for the extended Sinclair family. Nahoway Sinclair had moved there in 1824, following her husband’s death, and several of her adult children also lived in the growing Métis settlement. Mary Sinclair’s uncle, James Sinclair, was a prominent Red River merchant and free trader. Another uncle, Thomas, operated a cargo freighting business between Red River and York Factory, and her aunt Mary had married John Inkster, an influential Red River magistrate, farmer, and merchant.<sup>94</sup> William Sinclair II’s promotion to chief trader in 1844 would have secured his daughter’s entrée into the upper echelons of Red River society, and these local family ties would have eased her introduction to the round of social activities—“dinner parties, balls, and dances”—enjoyed by “the grandees of Red River.” As the daughter of a company officer, Mary Sinclair may even have attended one of Red River’s private schools; her older sister, Margaret, studied at

the Red River Academy, and her cousin Harriet was enrolled at Mrs. Ingham's private school.<sup>95</sup>

These influences must have played a significant role in shaping Mary Sinclair's life. As a child, however, it is likely that her primary contacts were with members of the Anishinabe community of the Rainy Lake district.<sup>96</sup> Her father's postings between 1832 and 1845, and again from 1848 to 1854, were at Lac La Pluie (Rainy Lake House) and her mother, Mary McKay Sinclair, was a Métis woman of Anishinabe descent with roots in the region.<sup>97</sup> Mary Sinclair's earliest needlework lessons doubtless came from her mother or another maternal relative; most Métis girls began to sew at an early age, learning from kinswomen.<sup>98</sup> Purchases of silk thread, seed beads, and printed cottons recorded against William Christie's account in the Fort Edmonton account books suggest that Mary Christie was an active needleworker.<sup>99</sup> The fact that she likely learned to sew and bead from women who had been raised in an Anishinabe aesthetic tradition, while far from conclusive, fits well with the suggestion that she created the Southesk fire bag with its hints of Anishinabe design elements.

If Mary Sinclair did attend one of Red River's schools for young ladies, she would have received additional instruction in "plain" and "ornamental" needlework. In addition to courses in Mathematics, English, French, Music, Drawing, and Dancing, pupils at these academies learned to make their own clothes, to sew neatly, and to execute bead appliqué and silk embroidery on both fabric and hide.<sup>100</sup> These were essential skills for young women who would marry Company officers.

It was during a family visit to York Factory that Mary Sinclair became engaged to William Christie. The young man combined the advantages of excellent family fur trade connections—his father, Alexander Christie, served both as chief factor in charge at Fort Garry and Governor of Assiniboia—with a solid Scottish education. Although only an apprentice clerk in his mid-twenties, his career prospects showed considerable promise. Indeed, he would reach the status of chief trader in charge of the Saskatchewan district within ten years' time.<sup>101</sup> Mary Sinclair's father, in contrast, did not achieve the rank of chief trader until he was fifty.<sup>102</sup>

We can catch a glimpse of the Christies' whirlwind courtship in a letter that Letitia Hargrave, the York Factory chief factor's wife, wrote to her mother in August 1848. "[Mrs. Sinclair] with the other members of the family came here a month ago . . . They arrived on a Thursday and on the following Sunday Mr. Wm Christie asked the eldest unmarried daughter to marry him and she and her mother consented. Old Mr. Christie will

be much vexed and will, I daresay refuse his consent. They had never met nor known any thing favorable of one another until the Sinclairs came.”<sup>103</sup> Mrs. Hargrave apparently misjudged “Old Mr. Christie” (and Mary Sinclair), for the couple was married a year later at York Factory. It was a memorable occasion: the newly appointed Anglican Bishop of Rupert’s Land presided over the ceremony, and champagne was served amidst “rare merrymakings.”<sup>104</sup>

The Christie romance seems to have had staying power. Trader Henry Moberly recounted an incident in 1858 when he, Fort Pitt clerk Louis Chastellain, and Christie encountered three bison while travelling along the North Saskatchewan.

The chief factor proposed that we shoot one . . . I therefore urged my horse forward and put a ball in one of the old bulls. He ran a few paces and turned . . . Mr. Christie earnestly desired us to drive the animal to the brink of the bank so that his wife [travelling with the boat brigade below] might see him shoot it, but in spite of all we could do the bull stood his ground and we were obliged to dispatch him on the spot.<sup>105</sup>

Nine years into his marriage, Christie was still concerned with cutting a dashing figure for his wife.

As a chief trader’s wife, Mary Christie was responsible for entertaining visitors to Fort Edmonton. She seems to have performed her duties with considerable style. At Christmas 1858, she and John Palliser, commander of the British North American Exploring Expedition, co-hosted a ball. “The room was splendidly decorated,” Palliser wrote, “with swords, bayonets, flags . . . [and] a splendid wooden Lustre to hang from the ceiling [that] lighted the whole place up with candles and reflectors it was a brilliant sight.” The Expedition’s botanist, Eugene Bourgeau, described quieter evenings at the post, when “one gathers in a well-heated room, drawing near the stove, and chats of London, the hunt, or travel, while Madame Christie offers the travelers a glass of her excellent grog.”<sup>106</sup>

Southesk likewise appreciated the Christies’ hospitality. “I felt depressed,” he wrote, “almost sorrowful, on leaving Edmonton, where I had been made more than comfortable, through the constant attentions and hospitalities of my kind entertainers.”<sup>107</sup> The attentions extended beyond good coffee and cream tarts; Christie lent Southesk his “new and roomy” boat, *The Golden Era*, in which to head downstream to Fort Pitt.<sup>108</sup> Whether

the Christies' sense of hospitality prompted them to present Southesk with a beaded fire bag as a memento of his travels in Rupert's Land, however, must remain an open question. All we can say is that it does not seem far-fetched given the earl's exalted social status, Christie's own Scottish ties, and the chief factor's duty to implement Sir George Simpson's directive and "render [this distinguished guest] every assistance possible."<sup>109</sup>

Mary Christie's position of privilege insulated her from many of the hardships experienced by the other women whose lives are explored in this paper. While she suffered personal tragedy, including the death of a five-year-old daughter in 1861,<sup>110</sup> the events that so drastically altered the lives of the Tates and Waniyandes had a professional rather than personal impact on the Christie family. In 1870, for example, acting in his capacity as a newly appointed Justice of the Peace, William Christie helped Lieutenant William Butler compile statistics on the "extent of ravages" exacted by the 1869–1870 smallpox epidemic. Several years later, he served as a government Indian Commissioner for the Treaty 4 and Treaty 6 negotiations.<sup>111</sup>

This same elite status enabled the Christies to provide their children with the preparation they would need to establish themselves as independent "gentlemen." As Jennifer Brown has discussed,<sup>112</sup> by the mid-nineteenth century a growing number of senior fur trade officers were, like William Christie, retiring in eastern Canada. They hoped that their children would take advantage of expanded career opportunities in the east and build a life there as well. Schooling beyond what Red River's academies could provide was deemed crucial to the acquisition of the educational background and social connections that would allow them to make their way in British Canadian society.<sup>113</sup> For the Christie boys, this meant a classical education at The Nest, a boy's academy in Jedburgh, Scotland. But formal schooling was important for the Christie daughters, too. In a letter to Matilda Davis, proprietor of the Oakfield School in Red River, Mary Christie noted that her husband "was quite undecided as to what he would do with the girls" once they completed their course of study at the private academy. She then offered her own view that "it would be more advantageous for the girls to go either to England or Scotland for two or three years. Its true its pretty expensive, but I think it would be well to give them every advantage we can. I hope you will give Mr. Christie a hint to that effect when you see him." While she did not prevail on the issue, Margaret and Lydia did go on to attend "a very good school in Toronto."<sup>114</sup>

The Christies remained at Fort Edmonton until 1872. Christie retired that year with the rank of Chief Inspecting Factor, and the couple moved

to Brockville, Ontario, home to a number of retired fur trade officers and their families.<sup>115</sup> They later settled in Seeley's Bay, Ontario, where their son William J. Christie II had a medical practice. Mary Christie died there in February 1900.<sup>116</sup> She would have been close to seventy years old.

All but one of the Christies' children chose to stay in the Northwest. Three sons spent their entire careers with the Hudson's Bay Company — John George McTavish Christie as an accountant, James Grant Christie as a post manager, and Charles Thomas Christie as a post inspector. The fourth, William J. Christie II, worked for several years as a surgeon at the Company's post in Moose Factory before setting up practice in Seeley's Bay. The eldest Christie daughter, Margaret, and her husband Malcolm Groat, a Scot who had once worked as William Christie's steward, secured title to nine hundred acres adjacent to the Hudson's Bay Company's reserve in Edmonton. There they farmed, raised livestock, and bred horses. Lydia Christie married Donald McTavish, a future Chief Factor with the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1920, the McTavishes' daughter, Edith Rogers, became the first woman elected to the Manitoba Provincial Legislative Assembly.<sup>117</sup>

### Geneviève Savoyard dit Berthelet

November 8th. — About mid-day we took leave of Fort Pitt, and resumed our cheerless journey. We were now much better equipped for enduring the cold, having provided ourselves with a considerable stock of winter clothing . . . We were all furnished with leather mittens, of course; roomy, flannel-lined, fingerless gloves, which we carried slung round our necks, that our hands might be slipped in and out as circumstances happened to require.

— The Earl of Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*<sup>118</sup>

Southesk expedition members had originally planned to outfit themselves for winter travel at Fort Carlton. An early cold snap, however, forced a stopover at Fort Pitt, a small provisioning post along the North Saskatchewan River near present-day Lloydminster. There the clerk in charge, Louis Chastellain, helped them assemble the gear that they would need for the long trek ahead. Among the fur hats, wool capotes, and other apparel that they purchased were hide mitts, a pair for each member of the party. The pair made for Southesk (see Figure 1.5) is of caribou hide and features decorative cuffs of black stroud embellished with silk ribbon-work. The silk has lost much of its original brilliance, but sufficient traces

remain to identify the colours as dark blue, white, and red. The mitts are lined with duffle and tied together with a woollen cord that allowed the wearer to drape them around his neck. This feature was both practical and fashionable; Métis trader Louis Goulet recalled how in his youth, “it was considered stylish when you took the mitts off to let them dangle on the end of the cord.”<sup>119</sup> The mitts have been cut at the wrist edge, likely to remove fur trim damaged by insect activity during the years spent in storage at Kinnaird Castle.

These mitts pose something of a puzzle. It is clear from Southesk’s account that they were made at Fort Pitt, in the heart of Saskatchewan country, yet they conform more closely to a Red River aesthetic. Red River dress, Southesk reported, was “handsome,” if “rather sombre”; dark blue was the prevailing colour.<sup>120</sup> Stylistically, too, the ribbonwork on the cuffs points to a link with Red River and the Great Lakes country. The curvilinear design, for example, is a variation on the double curve motif often seen in Woodlands art, while the creation of pattern through the interplay of contrasting ribbons is reminiscent of Anishinabe work.<sup>121</sup> Red and black



1.5 Mitts, possibly made by Geneviève Savoyard dit Berthelet. Courtesy Royal Alberta Museum.

stroud welts along the seams match the colourful “braiding” on Southesk’s gun cover. Perhaps Southesk requested this decorative detail to pull together his own “look.”<sup>122</sup>

One plausible answer to the puzzle is that the artist who made these mitts was originally from Red River. At least one woman at the post fit this description: clerk Chastellain’s wife, Geneviève Savoyard *dit* Berthelet, had spent the first twenty years of her life there. Fort Pitt accounts for 1859 provide supporting evidence: they list purchases of “Hudson’s Bay stroud,” thread, and moose and elk skins on her husband’s account.<sup>123</sup> Certainly, Chastellain’s command of the post placed him in an excellent position to direct a commission his wife’s way.

Geneviève Savoyard was born in 1814 in the parish of St. Vital, the daughter of French-Canadian voyageur Pierre Berthelet Savoyard and his Métis wife Marguerite. In 1831, at the age of seventeen, she married Pierre LaRocque in the log cathedral at St. Boniface; the couple left for Saskatchewan country with their young sons, Pierre and Moise, three years later.<sup>124</sup> In the spring of 1837, LaRocque signed on with the Hudson’s Bay Company at Fort Carlton. Tragedy struck later that year. Entries from the Fort Pelly post journal chronicle the events:

Dec. 20th, 1837: Late at night two men arrived from Carlton with an express . . . These men set the question at rest respecting the Small Pox. It is general all over the Saskatchewan where the mortality among the Plains tribes has been very great.

Dec. 23rd: One of the Carlton men when at the point of starting found himself unable to proceed from illness which detains them for the present as I fear it is the Small Pox. Had him removed to a Separate house with his companion for an attendant who had the disease in the early part of the winter.

Dec. 24th: The Carlton man in a high fever, I have now no doubt as to the disease.

Jan. 1st, 1838: This day as usual was kept as a holiday with the exception of drinking which I have not allowed in consequence of Calamity which has now visited us. The Carlton Man continues in a dangerous state.

Jan. 5th: I am concerned to state that Pierre Le Rocque the Carlton Man died last night of the Confluent Small Pox. From the commencement the symptoms continued so unfavourable that I had little hope of his recovery. He was a Native of the Country engaged last spring at Red River.<sup>125</sup>

The Carlton journal for these same dates makes no note of LaRocque's death, nor does it relate its impact on his widow. We do know, however, that she married Louis Chastellain, a Métis steersman with the Saskatchewan boat brigade, later that year.<sup>126</sup> Sophie, their only child, was born at Carlton in 1839. The Chastellain family spent the next twenty years at various postings in the Saskatchewan district, including fifteen years (1853 to 1868) at Fort Pitt.<sup>127</sup>

The Southesk party's stopover at Fort Pitt reveals much about the ability of needleworkers such as Geneviève Savoyard to respond to their customers' needs. The women at the post had just over a day in which to outfit seven men fully for winter travel.<sup>128</sup> They had to work quickly, handle a variety of materials—furs, hides, and fabrics—and please a discerning clientele. A few items may have already been on hand, either as finished garments or component parts, but much had to be done on the spot. Indeed, an examination of Southesk's mitts strongly suggests that the cuffs, if not the mitts proper, were produced during the brief sojourn at Pitt. A seam running up the palm, or inner, side of one cuff shows where it has been pieced; the addition is narrow, only 3.4 cm wide. It seems likely that the artist would have determined that the fabric required piecing only after deciding to use it for cuffs and finding it too short for her purpose. Since the piecing seam lies under the ribbonwork, it must have been sewn before the ribbonwork was applied. The ribbonwork, in turn, has been sewn directly onto the fabric, rather than on a separate backing, and so can only have been created after the fabric had been pieced. This sequence of production steps strongly points to a scenario in which the artist made the mitts at a client's request. The creation of such elegant ribbonwork in the space of a day's time speaks of considerable skill and confidence.

Given the size of the Southesk party's work order, it seems likely that several women contributed to its completion.<sup>129</sup> Perhaps Geneviève Savoyard's daughter Sophie, now married to post interpreter John Rowland, helped her mother outfit the expedition. Her descendants remember her as an accomplished needleworker who outfitted family members in embroidered hide moccasins and other accessories.<sup>130</sup>

The Chastellains moved to the Métis community of St. Albert, north of Edmonton, in the late 1860s. They took a river lot along the Sturgeon River, and Chastellain worked as clerk in charge of a small Hudson's Bay Company trading store. After the company closed the store, he turned down the offer of a pension and took over the operation himself, becoming—apparently for the first time in his career—an independent trader.<sup>131</sup>

Trade in 1878, however, was very different than it had been just five years before. While the early 1870s had seen a boom in the bison hide trade, the once vast herds were now on the brink of collapse. In the spring of 1879, the hunt failed altogether as the animals retreated across the U.S. border.<sup>132</sup> Chastellain would have had to build his business around a trade in furs and moose or elk hides brought in by trappers and hunters working in the Lesser Slave Lake country to the north. He may even have dealt in embroidered hide clothing and dress accessories made by local women for sale to eastern markets. Geneviève Savoyard herself might have participated in this part of the enterprise. In any event, the scale of operation could not have been large; in July 1882, the *Edmonton Bulletin* reported that “L. Chastellain of St. Albert arrived from Winnipeg on the 6th with a buckboard and two carts, 33 days out.”<sup>133</sup> This two-cart operation was a far cry from the brigades of just a decade earlier, when free traders such as Moise Goulet “never had less than ten wagons, and sometimes as many as thirty, loaded with goods easily exchangeable for the products of the hunt.”<sup>134</sup>

The 1882 freighting trip to Winnipeg was probably Chastellain's last. It appears that the Chastellains, like a number of other St. Albert residents, turned to small-scale agriculture, raising garden crops and hay. They doubled the size of their river lot to 168 acres sometime around 1883; in 1885, when asked on his Métis scrip affidavit what his occupation had been, Chastellain answered “servant of the Hudson's Bay Company and farmer.”<sup>135</sup>

The St. Albert Métis did not join forces with Louis Riel in the 1885 Resistance, but they shared the concerns and frustrations of those who did. One month after an armed confrontation between Métis and government forces at Duck Lake, Saskatchewan, an event marking the opening salvo of the Resistance, the *Edmonton Bulletin* published a letter to the editor written on behalf of “the Half-Breeds of St. Albert.” Its signatories included Chastellain, John Rowland, and Rowland's son Adolphus. While reassuring the *Bulletin's* readers that the St. Albert Métis had “never thought of rebellion,” the letter called for recognition of “the rights that we have to the lands of the country.”

The government understood that the Indians had rights in this country and consequently made treaties with them but with us half-breeds what treaties have been made? What favor have they conferred on us? . . . Far from receiving favors, we have not been accorded fair play . . . Give an instance between a half-breed and a foreigner where the half-breed was not sacrificed. In many cases half-breeds who were long settled in their homes of their own have seen their lands taken from them and portioned out to newly arrived strangers . . . Do they believe we have no feelings? We feel those wrongs deeply.<sup>136</sup>

That June, the federal government extinguished Métis land claims through the scrip process. Geneviève Savoyard and Louis Chastellain sold their scrip certificates to Calgary-based merchant and rancher George Leeson. If their experience was typical of other St. Albert Métis, they received considerably less than face value for their certificates. The *Edmonton Bulletin* reported that, “a number of sales of scrip are being made, prices ranging from \$40 for a \$160 scrip, to \$80 and \$125 for a \$240.” The article appeared three days before Savoyard’s and Chastellain’s certificates were issued.<sup>137</sup>

Geneviève Savoyard died in St. Albert in February 1898, four years after her husband.<sup>138</sup> She was eighty-three years old. The family’s river lot was still intact, although it would be lost over the coming years through sales and forfeiture. In 1996, the city of St. Albert purchased a section of the old Chastellain river lot for development as a Métis heritage site. A house built in the early 1900s by Geneviève Savoyard’s granddaughter Amelia and her husband, Alfred Cunningham, has been moved there and is slated to become the site’s interpretive centrepiece.

## Conclusion

As James Clifton has noted, the biographical lens can sometimes reveal the “texture and intricacy” of historical experience more effectively than do other approaches. In so doing, it offers insight into how ordinary individuals—individuals who “are not so apparent in conventional sources”<sup>139</sup>—cope with opportunity and adversity. Mary Tate, the Iroquois hunter’s wife, and the women who outfitted Southesk at Fort Pitt all used the opportunity offered by a chance meeting with a wealthy traveller to bring in some welcome income. Even the Christies, if the fire bag was indeed theirs, took advantage of an opening to forge a relationship with

a man whose patronage might prove useful to their sons when the time came for them to attend school in Scotland.

But the objects discussed here represent more than an economic opportunity realized. Through the incorporation of personal touches, whether a favourite ribbonwork pattern or a loved one's initials embroidered in beads, the artists invested something of themselves in their work. Imaginative details, from a Scotch thistle embroidered on a Scottish aristocrat's slippers to the flash of red and black stroud along a gun case's seams, express pleasure in artistic expression. Creativity was an important component of these women's lives.

So, too, was mobility. Each woman was widely travelled; only one, Lisette Waniyande, died within a thousand kilometres of her birthplace. Such movement fostered an exchange of ideas and practices among Métis women of diverse backgrounds, encouraging both individual experimentation and the development of a shared artistic repertoire. By the time Southesk arrived in Rupert's Land, a distinctively Métis sense of aesthetics was recognizable in communities across the western half of the continent.

A biographical perspective also allows us to explore differences in individual experience. The Southesk collection, with its tight temporal provenance, provides a snapshot of a moment in time. These women's lives, however, played out over a broad sweep of history during an era of momentous changes. These changes had a profound impact on their lives, albeit in different ways. For Geneviève Savoyard, the collapse of the bison herds meant building a new life centred around farming and a small business operation. Although the family river lot was eventually lost, her descendants remained in St. Albert where they are counted among the community's founding families. For Lisette Waniyande's children, the disappearance of game animals meant hunger, an encounter with the law, and a jail term for the family's principal provider. The Waniyandes dispersed to remote parts of northern Alberta, and the branches of the family lost touch with one another.

Class distinctions played a major role in shaping how these women and their families coped with change. The Christies used their position of privilege, comparative wealth, and British connections to secure their children's entrée into the ranks of western Canada's emerging social élite. Operating without these advantages, Mary Tate's son found his career trajectory blocked by discriminatory attitudes in a society increasingly concerned with issues of race. And, at the most basic level, it cannot be

entirely coincidental that Mary Christie was the only woman among the four who did not lose a husband or child to smallpox.

The women discussed here represent four points along a broader spectrum. I have been able to sketch an outline of their lives largely because their close association with the fur trade left a documentary record to peruse. Other objects in the Southesk collection not discussed in this paper were doubtless made by women whose lives differed in significant respects. Those women were residents of the freemen communities at Red River and Lac Ste. Anne, the mothers, wives, sisters and daughters of the “Cree and Métis hunters” whom Southesk encountered at various fur trade posts, and First Nations women whose association with the fur trade was fleeting at best. Recovering their connections with the Southesk collection will require alternative approaches.<sup>140</sup>

### Acknowledgements

Germaine Conacher and Ruth McConnell contributed to the research on which this paper draws. I would also like to thank Heidi Hoflin for her reproduction of the map in Figure 1.1 and Debra Moore and staff at the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives for assistance with archival research materials. Pamela Cunningham, Andrew Keddle, Ruth McConnell, Patricia McCormack, Alison Parry, Cathy Roy, and K. Linda Tzang read earlier drafts of this paper; I thank them for their comments, advice, and encouragement.



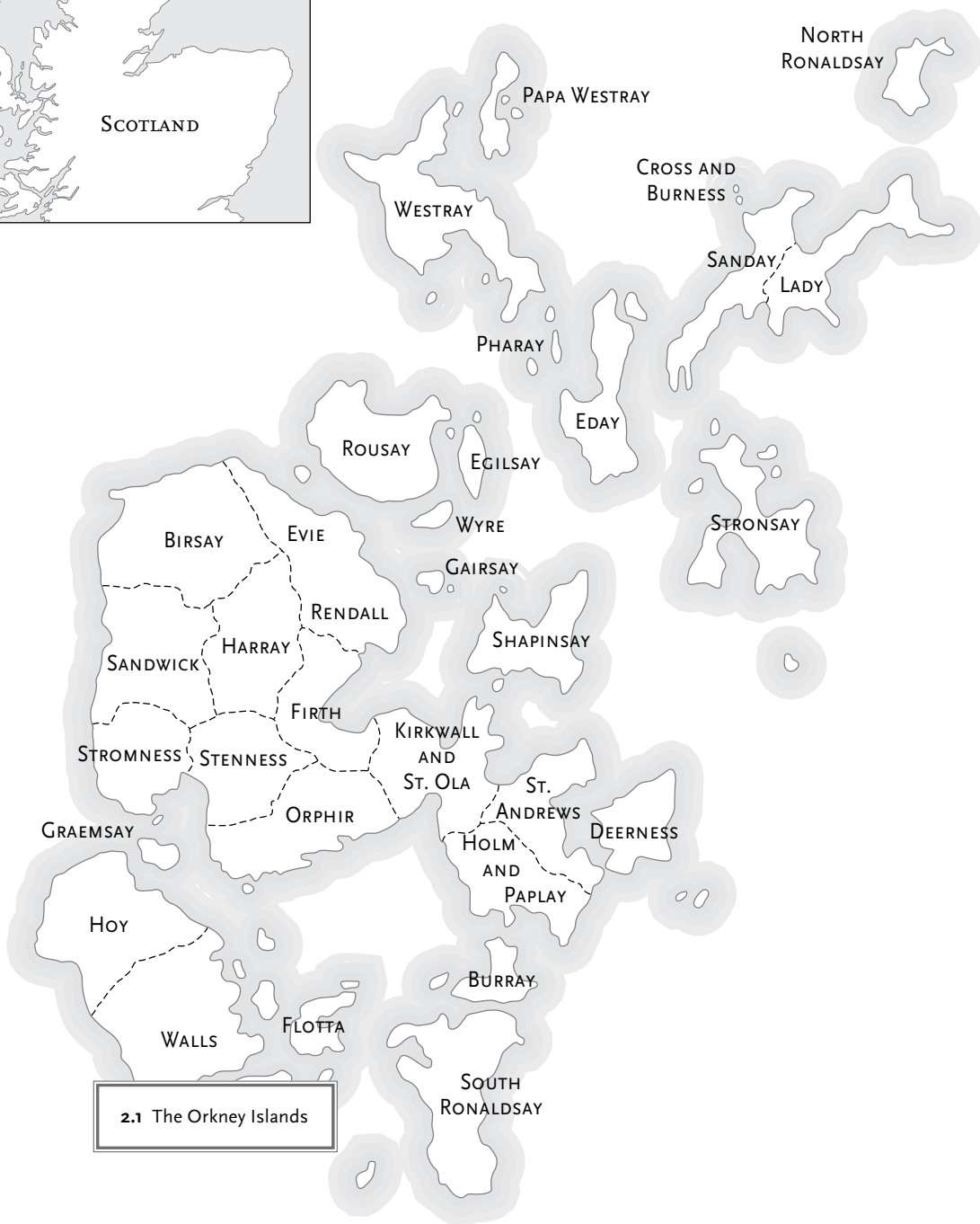
## LOST WOMEN:

### Native Wives in Orkney and Lewis

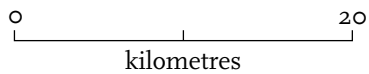
*Patricia A. McCormack*

Thanks to pioneering work by Jennifer S.H. Brown and Sylvia Van Kirk and the many other scholars who followed their lead, researchers now know a great deal about marriages between Native women of the Canadian Northwest and European men employed in the fur trade.<sup>1</sup> Such marriages were crucial to the success of the trade. They created alliances between outsider men and the various First Nations who controlled territory and resources, they brought women into trading posts as domestic partners and producers, and they contributed to the reproduction of the labour force.<sup>2</sup> Today, such marriages are usually described as “country marriages” or *mariages à la façon du pays*, and yet they were not all alike in their social meanings or trajectories.<sup>3</sup> Some men ultimately abandoned their wives or found them new husbands, others remained with them and chose to make their home in the Northwest, while still others maintained their marriages but removed their wives and/or children from the fur trade country, taking them to eastern Canada or to Britain. These marriages all involved some form of loss: to the wife and children whose husband and father returned home without them; to the distant family in Scotland or eastern Canada whose son never came home; or to the extended Native family whose daughter, son-in-law, and children left the Northwest.

This essay focuses on women and children who went with their husbands and fathers “home” either to the Orkney Islands or to the island of Lewis, two very different regions of Scotland. The Orkneys, an archipelago off the north coast of Scotland (see Figure 2.1), have a lengthy Norse history, and, to this day, residents claim a distinctive local identity as Orcadians, not Scots. From its base at Stromness, the Hudson’s Bay Company began early in the eighteenth century to recruit workers from



2.1 The Orkney Islands





Orkney for its fur trade operations. The Isle of Lewis (“the Lews”) is the westernmost island in the Outer Hebrides or Western Isles, which lie off the west coast of Scotland (see Figure 2.2).<sup>4</sup> Although it, too, was colonized by the Norse, it threw off Norse rule much earlier and developed a distinctive Gaelic and Highland Scottish tradition, which also survives today. Men and families began to emigrate from Lewis and other parts of the Scottish Highlands to North America in the eighteenth century, and many of them found their way into the Montreal-based fur trade, especially after Britain acquired New France in 1763.<sup>5</sup> By 1811, the Hudson’s Bay Company was also recruiting workers from Lewis.

Sometimes a man and his Native wife travelled with their children to Scotland as a family. At other times, children—especially boys—were sent alone for an education, though they commonly lived with their newfound Scottish relatives while they were there. It was rare for Native wives to return from Scotland to the Canadian Northwest, but it seems to have been fairly common for their children (or at least for those from Orkney) to do so. All the same, many remained with their relatives and made careers and marriages in Britain and elsewhere.

Information about these families and about what their lives must have been like has been gleaned from published and archival sources and from the study of traditional ways of life in Lewis and Orkney, as well as from oral traditions—stories about Native wives and children, which are often found embedded in broader narratives about the distinctive histories of Orkney and Lewis and their connections to the Canadian fur trade. Researching these family histories is tortuous, in that information is piecemeal and located in diverse and geographically remote sources. While oral traditions about some of these families exist, they are scant in their detail and sometimes contradictory, and can be supplemented by research into a wide range of documentary sources. In addition to Canadian and Scottish parish and census records and other documents, along with correspondence kept by family members, these sources include the very useful Hudson’s Bay Company Archives biographical sheets, passenger lists of the Hudson’s Bay Company ships, Company employee records and post journals, and Canadian Half-Breed scrip applications in the holdings of the Library and Archives Canada and related Métis databases. The Internet is increasingly helpful in tracking relationships as more and more primary documents become available online, but at the moment much legwork is still required to establish identities, develop genealogies, and corroborate family stories of all sorts. I have been able to draw upon documents that

provide information about specific family histories, but for the most part, the detailed investigations are just beginning.

### Fur Trade Marriage: An Overview

Montreal-based trading companies brought a tolerant, laissez-faire, even supportive attitude toward marriages with Native women.<sup>6</sup> When French and Iroquois *engagées*—at least some of whom came from communities in the Great Lakes area that were already distinguished by their mixed ancestry<sup>7</sup>—eventually left the formal employ of the company and became *gens libres* or “freemen,” many of them chose to remain in the Northwest with their Native wives and families.<sup>8</sup> Nicole St-Onge has speculated that not only was it too expensive for these men to move their families to Lower Canada and maintain them there but that they also forged “affective ties” with their families and wanted to remain with them.<sup>9</sup> These families contributed to the eventual development of distinctive “Half-Breed” or “Métis” identities in some parts of the Northwest. They also modelled a permanent family structure that had its roots in the fur trade communities of the Great Lakes, in which European husband and Native wife remained together and jointly raised their children.

In contrast, the Hudson’s Bay Company sought in the first century after its founding (in 1670) to prohibit such liaisons or marriages as detrimental to the financial well-being of the trade. Company officials worried that women and children living at the posts would lead to higher costs. However, they were unable to prevent such marriages, especially after they began to build inland posts, situated in the middle of Native lands, starting in 1774 with Cumberland House on the Saskatchewan River. By the late eighteenth century, there was tacit acceptance of the social reality that posts large and small were peopled not only by the traders and their employees but also by women and children.<sup>10</sup> Thus, in 1808, the Hudson’s Bay Company issued “School Instructions” and then decided to provide schoolmasters at major posts to educate resident children (although some schooling had been available since the 1790s).<sup>11</sup> To the Company’s London Committee, these families could either be a problem—if they became a charge upon the Company—or an opportunity—as a loyal and skilled resident labour force.<sup>12</sup>

These emerging family groups collectively reconstituted a form of Orkadian community but with a distinctive Native twist, enabled by the apparently common practice whereby an Orkney man would marry the daughter of another Orkney man and his Native—probably Cree—wife, and often live in the same post. Family identities become formally patrilineal, though

with the potential to be mediated by ongoing ties with their Native relatives. For example, in 1825, William Rowland, who hailed from the Orkney parish of Birsay, married Betsy Ballendine, the daughter of John Ballendine, also from Orkney, who had married a woman called Jane Cree.<sup>13</sup> The developing communities peopled by men and women with Orcadian (and also Highland Scots) and Native ancestries provided a second model in the Northwest of permanence in marriages and families. Over time, they would also contribute to a developing Canadian Scottish identity.<sup>14</sup>

Yet many Orcadian men — perhaps most — still expected to return to Britain at the end of their contracts, which were typically for three or five years' duration. They had gone to the "Nor' Wast," as it was known in Orkney, as temporary wage labourers, not as immigrants. When they first signed on, Hudson's Bay Company employees were typically "very young" and impoverished.<sup>15</sup> Twenty years was the "modal" age for Orcadian labourers, who dominated the Company's workforce during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>16</sup> In the mid-eighteenth century, the Reverend Thomas Hepburn, from the parish of Birsay, wrote that "the younger sons of most families go abroad to push [pursue] their fortune."<sup>17</sup> Nearly a century later, the Reverend James Anderson claimed that an Orcadian enlisted with the Hudson's Bay Company "to save as much as might render his future days at home, easy and comfortable."<sup>18</sup> According to Richard Glover, an Orcadian's goal was "to save money and acquire capital . . . it normally remained his intention to return home to his native isles at last."<sup>19</sup> As James Sutherland, born in Caithness but raised near St. Margaret's Hope in Orkney and a Company employee since 1797, wrote to his brother, joining the Company, even as a labourer, "meant that there was more than 'the chance of being a Slave all your life.'"<sup>20</sup>

The goal of earning enough to return home and settle down with improved economic circumstances persisted throughout the late nineteenth century. As Isaac Cowie noted in his 1913 memoir:

Small as the wages appear, they soon accumulated, for there were no ways of spending them in the wilds; and often these men, after a few years' service, returned home with savings sufficient to buy a small croft, and settle down as independent crofters and fishermen, to be envied and emulated by less fortunate neighbors. In the island of Harray [actually an Orkney parish] a number of these returned fur traders formed a large colony, known as the "Peerie (little) lairds o'Harray."<sup>21</sup>

A man newly returned after finishing his contract and with savings in his pocket could marry and establish his own household. As the Reverend Anderson noted: "The young people are usually prudent enough in entering into matrimony, and seldom take this step, until they have a tolerable prospect of the means of subsistence."<sup>22</sup>

A cautious attitude toward marriage is discernable in correspondence from William Henry Watt (b. 1830) and Alexander ("Sandy") Stewart Watt (b. 1840), brothers who joined the Hudson's Bay Company at ages sixteen and fifteen respectively, both as apprentice clerks.<sup>23</sup> Neither chose to marry while in Company service, nor did either man ultimately settle in the Northwest. In a letter to his mother, written in 1854 when he was twenty-four years old and probably into his second contract, William Watt expressed himself forcefully on the subject of marriage:

Now don't be afraid that I am going to commit myself before folk and make a fool of myself by taking a wife in this part of the country, so let me have no quizzing in your next letter, a bachelor is the best for this country, at least until he turns 30 . . . for I am not sure if any married men in this country have the smallest glimpse of conjugal happiness unless quarreling is a part of married bliss—some more some less; but none altogether free from quarrels.<sup>24</sup>

In another letter, written in January 1869 when he was stationed at Fort Pitt and on the eve of being promoted to chief trader, William Watt expressed his disdain for William Rowland, the Orkney man who, in 1825, had married the Orcadian-Cree daughter of John Ballendine. Watt considered Rowland part of the "riff raff" of the post. "I am sorry to say," he remarked, "there is one Orkney man and his half breed family that is just about the worst of the lot he is an old man called Rowland and I think from the Parish of Birsay but he has been so long among half breeds that he has got into all their superstitious notions and I suppose will die in them."<sup>25</sup> Like his brother, Sandy Watt remained a bachelor. As he wrote to his sister Annie: "I am not much of a marrying man either yet mayhap I might get soft on some lass someday or other, do you think I could find one in Stromness."<sup>26</sup> He was then twenty-nine years old, probably into his third contract, and working as a clerk at Lower Fort Garry. Of course, we should not expect that letters written to relatives at home were necessarily an accurate depiction of the realities of fur trade life. It would actually

be rather surprising if neither William nor Sandy had ever entered into a country marriage during their years in the Northwest. But, if so, both men eventually returned to Orkney unaccompanied: Sandy after 1874, when he completed his final contract and became a freeman, and William after he retired in 1877, at the age of forty-seven.<sup>27</sup> William used his earnings to build Holmlavoe, a large and prestigious house in Stromness.<sup>28</sup> After postponing marriage for so many years, William married, but Sandy did not.<sup>29</sup>

It seems that it was common for men either newly returned to Orkney or Lewis or home on furlough to marry. They might well re-enlist, however, and return to the Northwest as married men, leaving behind their “fur-trade widows.”<sup>30</sup> In 1843, Edward Cloustan, the Hudson’s Bay Company’s agent in Stromness, testified at the Poor Law Inquiry Commission for Scotland that newly hired employees were “partly married men and partly single men.” The married men were “not allowed to take out either their wives or their children,” but they sent “money by bills to their families,” thereby providing ongoing support while they were away for the lengthy contract period.<sup>31</sup> It was also common for single men to send money home to help their families.

Yet clearly not all Orcadians agreed with the Watt brothers’ view of marriage. Many men found Native partners during their long service and were surely troubled by the prospect of leaving their families behind. Indeed, some men chose to remain in the Northwest, returning to Scotland only for visits. For example, about 20 percent of the Orcadians who worked in the Saskatchewan District eventually settled permanently in the Northwest.<sup>32</sup> Orcadians at home feared this possibility. In 1867, Isaac Cowie described “groups of old wives” in Stromness lamenting the departure of the young men “who, they prophesied would meet nought but frost and cold and starvation and ‘black women’ in the wilderness and return no more to the land of their birth.”<sup>33</sup> The maligned William Rowland is one of many examples. William Watt’s opinion notwithstanding, he seems to have behaved honourably with regard both to his job and to his wife and family. He had joined the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1820 at age eighteen and married Betsy Ballendine by marriage contract in 1825, when he was twenty-three, and then in the church at Norway House in 1838. Although he never advanced to the rank of officer, he worked faithfully for the Company for over fifty years, until 1871, when he became a freeman. He died in 1875 at Fort Edmonton.<sup>34</sup> In short, Rowland chose to remain with his wife as the head of a growing family, and at Fort Edmonton he enjoyed the company of other Orcadians and Highlanders who had also chosen to

make their homes there. We cannot know whether he would have agreed with the Orcadians in Montreal who (according to James Sutherland in 1814) “bless the day they left their native country,”<sup>35</sup> but for Rowland as well as many other Orcadians and Scots, Canada and the Northwest offered great opportunities.

It is not possible to determine the percentage of Orcadians or Highlanders who stayed with their Native wives, whether in the Northwest or in Scotland, as opposed to the percentage of those who abandoned them. The decision to remain in a marriage meant that either the husband or the wife would be lost to his or her family, at a time when travel across the Atlantic was slow, uncertain, and always difficult and costly, and the mail service similarly so. It was especially unlikely that Native wives or children who settled in Scotland would be able to keep in touch with their relatives in the Northwest, many (perhaps most) of whom were not literate.

### Returning “Home” to Scotland and Orkney

By the late eighteenth century, the Hudson’s Bay Company began to allow at least some men who married in the fur trade country to take their Native wives and families back to Scotland and Orkney when they retired and to send children “home” for schooling.<sup>36</sup> By 1811, the Company was recruiting men widely with the promise that they could bring their families back to Scotland “at a very moderate expense in the Company’s Ships.”<sup>37</sup> However, the official ban on this practice was not lifted until after the 1821 amalgamation of the Hudson’s Bay Company and the North West Company.<sup>38</sup>

This opportunity was fictionalized by W. Towrie Cutt in *Carry My Bones Northwest*, (1973), a children’s book about Willie Fea, the son of a Cree woman named Ekkowloh, and William Fea.<sup>39</sup> Cutt was born in Orkney in 1898 and undoubtedly knew local stories about such families and their descendants; he may have even have known some of the people personally. I heard about Willie Fea myself when I was in Orkney. His father, William, was a real person, a Hudson’s Bay Company employee who was killed at South Branch House in 1794.<sup>40</sup> However, it is difficult to know whether the story I heard was a tradition of some antiquity or whether local people, having read Cutt’s book, had conflated the fictional story with genuine oral traditions about children sent to Orkney for schooling. Cutt, however, made it clear that his book was a work of fiction.

In Cutt’s story, trader James Tait—another Orkney employee—is taking a message home for Fea:

Not only was William sending his half-breed son, Little Willie, to his parents, but also he intended to bring his Indian wife home with him when he came in two years' time. It might help that three men had already brought Indian wives who were excellent workers home to Orkney, but Tait doubted it. Old William Fea [Willie's grandfather, who is later referred to as "Walter"] was well-known for his strong disapproval of what he called "heathen marriages."<sup>41</sup>

But before William is able to return home, he, his wife, and others are killed by Gros Ventres at South Branch House. The Company's inland officer, William Tomison, subsequently takes a special interest in the orphaned young Willie and arranges for his education in Orkney.<sup>42</sup> Willie grows "into a tall, slim, close-knit lad, swifter and more athletic than any of his companions. He was dark-complexioned, his hair jet black, and his dark brown eyes forever taking note of the tracks of birds or hares."<sup>43</sup> Although educated in Orkney, Willie has no kinsmen to bind him to the place once his grandparents die. He works as a clerk for another few years, then in 1811, he and his friends enlist with Lord Selkirk to go to the new colony at Red River.<sup>44</sup> His destiny is to return to his "mother's people." Cutt's tale resonates with stories about children sent "home" for school who subsequently worked for the Hudson's Bay Company. Its description of Willie also reflects a long-standing conviction—one that still holds currency—that people with Native ancestry are physically distinctive.

The context for fur trade families changed markedly after 1821, when the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies merged under the banner of the Hudson's Bay Company. The Company introduced a marriage contract to enforce the financial responsibilities of the husband. A contract signed by the couple was the legal equivalent of a marriage performed by a clergyman.<sup>45</sup> The Company also introduced new measures of economy, achieved largely by reducing the size of its labour force. Rather than leaving the country, many newly redundant officers and servants relocated to the growing settlement of Red River, at the location of present-day Winnipeg. Established in 1811 as an agricultural colony by Thomas Douglas, Lord Selkirk, the Red River Colony became a nucleus for what Heather Driscoll has called "British-styled settlement" by men and their families.<sup>46</sup> Isaac Cowie claimed that, after 1821, families in which the father was from Orkney or the Scottish Highlands, who would otherwise have sought to

return to Scotland, “were encouraged to resort to Red River, where in numbers they soon exceeded all Lord Selkirk’s other settlers.”<sup>47</sup> Gerhard Ens, among others, has argued that the Company “encouraged older and less able officers and servants to retire and move their mixed-blood families to Red River,” in part to provide a stable labour force.<sup>48</sup> Roderick Campbell, born in Lewis and a Company employee since 1859, wrote in his memoir that two of the distinct groups at Red River were descendants of French voyageurs who had married Indian women and descendants of Hudson’s Bay Company servants, “mostly Scotsmen from Orkney and the other islands who also had married native wives.”<sup>49</sup>

Especially once a critical population mass was reached at Red River and other settlements, the option of settling permanently at one of the posts, particularly the developing community at Red River, presented an attractive alternative to the forced separation of husbands, wives, and children and thus served to reinforce the model of a stable and enduring family structure. While Red River remained part of the fur trade orbit, it was geographically far removed from other fur trade posts and was highly Europeanized, for all its fur trade links, compared to remote posts. Families who settled at Red River may well have been lost not only to their relatives on the other side of the Atlantic but also to relatives who resided in more distant parts of the Northwest.

In the early to mid-1800s, Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Methodist missionaries established missions and schools at Red River and in other Northwest locations. Many men then had their country marriages formalized in the church and their Native wives and children baptized, and they enrolled their children in school. Formal education was especially important for the sons of officers, whose economic opportunities were declining, and schooling at Red River was superior to that available at the more remote posts.<sup>50</sup> Presumably, though, some Company employees who were *not* officers were also concerned about education for their children, given the historic emphasis on education in the Orkney Islands, the homeland of the large majority of the Company labour force.<sup>51</sup>

For reasons related at least in part to greater opportunities for education and employment, however, some men rejected the Red River option, choosing to return or relocate to eastern Canada or to Britain, along with their Native wives and children.<sup>52</sup> Attention has recently been focused on David Thompson’s life-long marriage to Charlotte Small and their lengthy residence in eastern Canada after he retired in 1812 from active fur trade service. As Jennifer Brown notes, for forty-five years, Charlotte

Small Thompson “held the family together . . . in a foreign environment.”<sup>53</sup> She lived far longer in eastern Canada than she did in the Northwest, her home for only twenty-seven years.<sup>54</sup>

Several historians — Jennifer Brown, Sylvia Van Kirk, and L.G. Thomas — have studied retired fur traders and their families who made their homes in Britain during the 1840s, especially in the vicinity of Aberdeen, in northeast Scotland.<sup>55</sup> Thomas characterizes the men as “gentlemen” and “men of substance” and argued that their Native wives struggled, not always entirely successfully, to rise to the challenge of the new, “higher-class” society into which they had been transplanted. He regarded these wives as “the victims of their husbands’ ambitions for their children.”<sup>56</sup> As we have seen, in other cases families sent their children — mainly sons — to Scotland for the better education they could acquire there, a tradition that persisted well into the twentieth century. Alison Brown writes in this volume about Tom and Ronnie Moir, the sons of Hudson’s Bay Company manager Henry Moir and his Native wife, Christina Mas-san Moir. Following the death of their father, in 1920, the two boys were sent from Churchill, Manitoba, to relatives in northeast Scotland. They left behind their mother, whom they never saw again.

It was not only the wives and children of “gentlemen” who went to Scotland after 1821, when the merger of the Hudson’s Bay Company and the North West Company ushered in a change in official policy. Families of some Company servants returned to the Orkney Islands and to the Isle of Lewis. In addition, children were sometimes sent to Orkney for schooling (although this does not seem to have occurred in Lewis, where literacy was evidently not as prized as it was in Orkney).

In some cases, men who began as Company servants rose to high-level positions and returned home as “gentlemen.” One such example is Donald Sutherland, from Clyne, a parish in northern Scotland, who joined the Company in 1795, at the age of seventeen. He returned home in 1801 but rejoined the Company the following year. From then on, he rose in the ranks from tailor to trader to chief trader. He married Sally Wapisk (White Bear?), presumably a Cree woman from the York Factory region in northeast Manitoba. They had four children: Jane, Sinclair, William, and Isabella, the youngest, born 24 January 1820. After 1814, he worked at several posts in the Winnipeg District, including Berens River. The children were baptized in 1821. According to Company records, in September 1822, Sutherland sailed to Scotland with the two younger children (both listed as under ten) on the Hudson’s Bay Company ship *Prince of*

Wales. Isabella would have been a toddler, not yet three, and yet there is no mention of Sutherland's wife, so perhaps she had died. "Mr. Donald Sutherland, Gentleman," returned on the *Prince of Wales* in June 1823 and lived at Norway House until the fall of 1824, when he left for Scotland with the other two children.<sup>57</sup> Isabella, at least, remained in Scotland; her descendants are in Australia.<sup>58</sup>

Besides William and Isabella Sutherland, other families and children travelled to Scotland on the *Prince of Wales* in 1822. Among the passengers were a man named Peter Bakie, his wife, and their two children. Two other children travelled solo: Edward Spencer and Jane Robertson.<sup>59</sup> Jane may have been the daughter of John Robertson (born c. 1786–87), whose family was from the Orkney parish of Evie, adjoining Harray. I presume that both children were being sent to Scotland for schooling.<sup>60</sup>

Two other families on the ship are of interest. One was that of James Kirkness, his wife, Jane Sinclair, and a daughter. James was born in the Orkney parish of Harray around 1774; he was twenty-three when he went to work for the Hudson's Bay Company in 1797, at an inland post in the York District. Jane Sinclair, born about 1801, married James around 1816, the year that James was promoted to trader at Jack River, also in the York District. They were married by a minister at York Factory in 1822, shortly before James retired from Company service and the family left for Orkney. The daughter who went with them may have been Amelia, who was baptized in 1826 in Sandwick, Orkney. They had two other children in Orkney: James (born in 1832) and William, both baptized in 1841 in Sandwick. James would not have been one of the "Peerie lairds" of Cowie's time, but a Peerie laird nonetheless. The parish of Sandwick is immediately west of Harray. He was possibly the same James Kirkness who farmed in Sandwick and died in 1892.<sup>61</sup>

What happened to James's two sons is unclear. Hudson Bay Company Archives records show that a James Kirkness from Birsay, the Orkney parish just north of Sandwick and Harray, hired on with the Company in 1864. James Junior would have been thirty-two at that point, so the date is about right for him to be this man. I have not yet confirmed that he and the James Kirkness from Birsay were the same person. The Company archives contain records for two men named William Kirkness. There are two likely candidates. One is William Kirkness from Sandwick, who joined the Company in 1860 but apparently deserted in 1864. The other William Kirkness worked for the Company in 1863; his biographical record notes that his uncle was William Sinclair and that "Father & grandfather had

long service with the Hudson's Bay Company."<sup>62</sup> There was also a William Kirkness who died in Birsay in 1870.<sup>63</sup>

The other family sailing to Orkney in 1822 consisted of Andrew Kirkness and his daughter, whose name may have been Mary or Catherine.<sup>64</sup> There is a Catherine Kirkness who later married Magnus Garson in Orkney and bore two sons: Peter Flett Garson, born in Birsay in 1844, and James Garson, born in 1847. Peter Flett Garson went to the Northwest in 1862, when he was eighteen, and was posted to the Mackenzie River District. James followed his brother to the Northwest in 1865, when he was nearly eighteen, and worked at Fort Carlton. In 1870, Peter Flett Garson married Jane Flett at Fort Simpson. She was the daughter of Andrew Flett, from Orphir in Orkney, and his wife, Mary, the daughter of Company employee Robert Campbell. Andrew Flett, Jane's father, may even have been related to Peter Flett Garson, her husband. He left Orkney in 1846 and may never have returned home, but young Peter would almost certainly have known of him. Peter Flett Garson went to Scotland in 1879, probably to visit relatives, but he returned to the Northwest the same year and rejoined his wife, with whom he had several more children. By 1881, they were living in the growing centre of Prince Albert, located on the North Saskatchewan River in what is now Saskatchewan.<sup>65</sup> His brother, James, later lived in Prince Albert as well. Both brothers filed for Half-Breed scrip for themselves and their children.<sup>66</sup>

A close examination of the HBC ships' logs will provide additional information of this kind. The detailed passenger lists should make it possible to identify all the wives and children who went to Scotland, except for those who left from eastern Canada. They could then be placed within the context of Scottish census entries, land records, and other sources that will reveal their subsequent histories.

My own research started on the Scottish side, in Orkney and Lewis. I visited Orkney in 1990 to conduct research with families known to be descended from former HBC employees and their Native wives. I returned to Orkney in 1992 and also went to Lewis. In both locales, I interviewed people known or believed to have Native ancestry and heard a miscellany of stories about the ancestors themselves.<sup>67</sup> While in some respects the subject of Native ancestry seems to have been a sensitive one, at least in the past, nearly everyone to whom I spoke in both Lewis and Orkney was both interested in and proud of his or her Native ancestry. As one Orcadian said to me, "We are the Orkney Métis."

## Orkney Families and Children

Hudson's Bay Company recruitment was not uniform across Orkney but concentrated on the largest island, called the "Mainland" (formerly, Pomona), and the islands to the south, especially South Ronaldsay. Not surprisingly, those are the same regions in which oral traditions still exist about families and children from the Northwest. The stories presented here were told by descendants still living in Orkney and by other elderly residents who either knew something about those families or children or, in rare instances, had been personally acquainted with them. No attempt has been made to reconcile different versions or to suggest relationships among people with the same surname.

In 1990, Mary Bichan, who was at the time the registrar for the parish of Harray, told me about a branch of her family that is descended from an Orkney man named Inkster, a Hudson's Bay Company employee whose wife was a Native woman, probably Cree or Chipewyan. Their daughter, Barbara Inkster, was born sometime in the 1780s and is referred to in local tradition as a "half-caste" or "half-Indian."<sup>68</sup> Barbara Inkster married Charles Flett, from the parish of Harray, who had gone to work for the Hudson's Bay Company. According to Company records, Flett was born about 1760 and hired on in 1790. He and Barbara had two children, William and Elizabeth, who were born in 1807 or 1808. Although according to family tradition these children were said to have been born in the Red River Colony, Charles never worked there. He was based at Churchill from 1800 to 1814, which makes it likely that his children were born there. After Charles's marriage ended, he sent the two children to Orkney to be educated, where they stayed with their aunt Jean Flett, in Evie. In 1817, Charles himself returned to Orkney, where he lived until his death in 1842.<sup>69</sup> William and Elizabeth never returned to the fur trade country; each married in Orkney. William, or "Willie Wheelie," became a wheelwright in Finstown. Elizabeth Flett was described as "fair skinned and good looking, no[t] like her brother," who was considered to be dark.<sup>70</sup> In 1832, Elizabeth married Adam Borwick, a farmer from Harray; they had numerous children. Her father, Charles Flett, almost certainly danced a reel at her wedding, drank from the Bride's Cog, and took part in other festivities that were described in detail by John Firth in his engaging *Reminiscences of an Orkney Parish*.<sup>71</sup>

Mary Bichan arranged for me to meet members of another family descended from John Spence, born in 1797, and Mary Robinson, a woman of mixed ancestry born about 1819. This man may have been John Spence



**2.3** Bella Wood and Susan Wood Johnston, of Harray. All photographs by the author, 1992.

of Sandwick, born around 1793, who appears in Hudson's Bay Company records. He signed on in 1818, working first as a labourer at York Factory and then at Berens River, and then rising to the rank of middleman when he worked at Norway House, from 1821 to 1848. If Mary, his wife, was from the Norway House area, her Native ancestry was probably Cree. The couple had three children: Andrew, born around 1833; Eliza, born 1834; and Mary, born 1840. Perhaps Mary died, because in 1848 he returned to Orkney on the *Prince Rupert* with his three children—but no wife—and settled in Harray.<sup>72</sup> The children would then have been fifteen, fourteen, and eight years old, respectively. The youngest child, Mary Spence, died in 1857, at the age of seventeen. Her older sister, Eliza, married James Johnston of Brekkan in 1876. They had two children: James Andrew Johnston in 1879 and John David Johnston in 1881. In 1990, I spoke with Jock Firth, an eighty-five-year-old resident of Harray, who described Eliza Spence Johnston as “a very peedie [small] dark woman.” Her son John was also “very black,” whereas his brother, James, was fairer in complexion. James had two children and numerous descendants, including Bella Johnston Wood and her daughter Susan Wood Johnston, who also live in Harray (see Figure 2.3).

Conflicting stories exist about a Native child in the Annal family. Marian Sinclair Scott provided a genealogy about her great-grandmother

Annal, who may have gone to Canada sometime before the 1860s and was said to have had a child by an Indian man. The child, Henrietta (or Hettie), married Alexander Smith, who brought her back to Orkney.<sup>73</sup> This story is highly unusual but not improbable. In another version, told by Sandy Annal of South Ronaldsay (see Figure 2.4), Henrietta was not a blood relative of the Annals but was instead the daughter of Elizabeth Wilson, a French Canadian woman, who later married Willie Annal, making Henrietta his stepdaughter. The Annals had additional children, and the family later returned to Orkney. Willie Annal and his wife both died while Henrietta was at school, and she tried to raise her young brothers and sisters. “She was very dark-skinned,” recalled Sandy Annal. In this version, she married Alexander Smith, but it would have been in Orkney, where the family has many descendants.

Several people from South Ronaldsay (Willie Mowatt, Sandy Annal, and Thomas Cusiter) reminisced about John Duncan and his Indian wife, Nancy, referred to at one point as his “squaw wife.” They were a poor family who lived in Fiddlers Green, in South Parish, South Ronaldsay. They had two children, although here the stories diverge and may actually be talking about different people. According to Willie Mowatt, the two children were both girls, who died, along with their mother, of scarlet fever about 1910 and were buried in the kirkyard of St. Peter’s Church. However, Thomas Cusiter (see Figure 2.5), who was born in 1913, had a different story to tell. He knew Margaret Duncan, or “Maggie.” He and Maggie were the same age and both attended school at Tomison’s Academy until they were fourteen, in 1918. He remembered Maggie’s long black hair, so long that she could sit on it. In this version, she had an older brother, William, although Cusiter said he never met him personally. This version may relate to yet another story, told by Sandy Annal, who said that when John Duncan returned from his service with the Hudson’s Bay Company, he had with him a young girl. He was bringing her home to a man who was supposed to be her father but who refused to acknowledge her. Duncan, a widower, ended up raising her and later marrying her. Perhaps Duncan had two separate families.<sup>74</sup> Annal described son William as “dark and swarthy,” but he added that this appearance could also stem from a Duncan family ancestor from India. William was a “fine fiddler” and worked as a sailor, on merchant ships. Maggie, he said, took up nursing in London.

In 1992, Sandy Annal also told me a story about Peter Sinclair, who married a woman named Mesawakie. They had a daughter, Bessie, in 1864. Peter Sinclair brought his family to South Ronaldsay, where

**2.4** Sandy Annal,  
of South Ronaldsay.



**2.5** Thomas Cusitor,  
of South Ronaldsay.



Bessie—described as “a brilliant scholar”—attended Tomison’s Academy. However, the family could not “make it work.” They left Orkney for Canada, where Bessie died of consumption.

Orkney men wanted to provide their children with schooling, which reflected both the strong tradition of literacy in Orkney and the clear advantage in employment enjoyed by men who could read and write. The best-known student may have been Alexander Kennedy Isbister, whose grandparents were Alexander Kennedy, from St. Margaret’s Hope in Orkney, and his Cree wife, Margaret Aggathas (Agatha). Their oldest daughter, Mary Kennedy, married Thomas Isbister in 1821 at Norway House. Thomas had joined the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1819, and by the time he married, he had worked his way up to the rank of clerk. Their first child and oldest son, Alexander Kennedy Isbister, was born at Cumberland House around 1822. In 1829, Alexander Kennedy sent his youngest son, Roderick, then seven years old, for schooling at St. Margaret’s Hope. Kennedy’s own two oldest sons, John and Alexander, had been there for school since 1819, at age fourteen and age eleven, respectively. Two more sons, William (age eleven) and George (age nine), were sent in 1825. All stayed at St. Margaret’s Hope, instructed by schoolmaster James Forbes.<sup>75</sup>

One young student who captured the local imagination was William “Huskie” Saunders. Born in Ungava, in the Leaf River area of northern Quebec, to Mr. and Mrs. William Saunders, he was sent to Stromness for school about 1886, at age seven. He lived with his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Saunders; “old Tom Saunders” was a local blacksmith. While Huskie was considered an indifferent student, he still passed his examinations for the four years he attended Stromness Public School and was popular with the other boys. He returned to Canada in 1889, married, and, according to a 1936 article in *The Orcadian*, “lives the free and open life of a trapper for a French company [Revillon Frères] in Ungava, where he was born.”<sup>76</sup>

George Simpson McTavish—born at Albany in 1863 to George Simpson McTavish senior, from Scotland, and a Native mother whose identity remains to be established—was also sent to Orkney for school. In 1879, he joined the Hudson’s Bay Company as an apprentice clerk, serving first at York Factory. Much later, he and his wife travelled to Europe, visited Stromness, and saw the site of his old school. *The Orcadian* reported on their visit.<sup>77</sup>

Young children who came to Orkney from the Northwest almost certainly were absorbed into the local culture of the islands, a process that historian William Thomson has called “Orknification.”<sup>78</sup> A parallel process occurred in Lewis. The subsequent histories of these children and their

own descendants are highly varied. Some joined the fur trade, while others learned a trade in Orkney or became farmers. Women married. The fact that many of the boys ended up working for the Hudson's Bay Company undoubtedly reflected the long-standing tradition of such employment as much as it did their own personal histories and connections.

It is unclear how much their formal education helped these children succeed. A set of letters from James Sutherland spoke to his belief that education in Britain did not in the long run help his own children. Even with education, he said, it was hard for them to advance because there was a surplus of clerks. He also made this observation: "I perceive that the children of this Country do the best that is brought up in this country, all the ones that have been educated in Europe acquire a kind of Pride that unfits them for the custom & habits of this Country & and the greatest part of them turn out to be blackguards or unfit to do for themselves."<sup>79</sup> Sutherland may have been referring to the acquisition of a class-consciousness that could make young men unwilling to turn to lower-class labouring jobs. Yet, in Orkney, the joint traditions of education and hard manual labour that characterized nearly everyone's life should have prevented the students from developing such a high opinion of themselves that they were "unfit to do for themselves."

### Lewis Families

The first Lewismen in the northern fur trade were those who moved to Montreal and became part of the Montreal-based trade, such as Alexander Mackenzie. The number of Scots, many of them with origins in Lewis, expanded after the English conquest of Quebec in 1760. The Hudson's Bay Company began to recruit directly in Lewis in the early 1800s, possibly in 1810, when John Mackenzie sought recruits for the Company service.<sup>80</sup> Between 1840 and 1870, Lewismen comprised a significant proportion of the Hudson's Bay Company labour force in the Northwest.<sup>81</sup> Those men signed exactly the same short-term contracts as the Orkneymen, although literature from Lewis typically describes them as "emigrants."<sup>82</sup> James Shaw Grant wrote that "tales of the Talamh Fuar (the cold country) bulk large in the island's oral tradition."<sup>83</sup> All the same, in Lewis, oral traditions concerning the fur trade emerged quite differently than did those in Orkney. When I visited in 1992, my impression was that there was widespread knowledge in Lewis about some individual fur trade families but less awareness than in Orkney about the fur trade as an institution that had played a role in the island's history. There was little public

interpretation in Lewis regarding the Canadian fur trade, especially in comparison to Orkney, where the fur trade presence and history are well represented. Instead, Lewis has a lengthy tradition of emigration that is dominated by the historical trauma of the Clearances.<sup>84</sup> Their historical knowledge is embedded within a strongly Gaelic cultural tradition that has minimized its Norse roots, despite a plethora of surviving Norse place names and surnames.<sup>85</sup>

Clusters of former fur traders, with their Native wives and children, were found in the northern end of Lewis, in the Borge region to the west and in Tolsta to the east, two regions that themselves seem to be closely linked. Many local people knew of and spoke about one or more of these families. The term *squaw wife* seems to be common parlance even today, although it does not have the pejorative meaning that it acquired in North America.

During my visit in 1992, Angus MacLennan, himself from an old Tolsta crofting family, introduced me to a poignant story about Norman Martin, who returned home to Tolsta with his wife in the mid-1800s. It is not clear whether his son, also named Norman, was born in the Northwest or in Lewis. Donald Macdonald offered another version of this story, in which Norman Martin's wife was the "half-breed" daughter of a Hudson's Bay Company factor. According to this account, Martin had been born at Melbost, part of the Borge area, in about 1826. His father was John Martin; his mother, Christina Macleod. The family moved to Tolsta in the 1830s.<sup>86</sup> After his return from the Northwest in the company of his wife, Norman Martin may have purchased croft no. 21, or perhaps he took over the croft from his father, John.<sup>87</sup> His father does not actually figure in this story, but possibly Norman returned to Lewis after his mother became a widow. Norman later travelled to Wick, on the northern Scottish coast and the centre of the herring fishery, to visit his brother, Duncan, only to drown on the way back. Although his widow stayed in the village for almost a year after that, she was unwilling to remain in Lewis permanently and wanted to return to the Northwest the following spring. Norman's mother, Christina, was distraught at her son's death and the potential loss of her grandson, and probably the loss of her daughter-in-law as well. She fled with her grandson to the sheiling, a temporary summerhouse or shelter where people stayed when they were up in the hill pasture with their sheep. After a few days, though, she returned with the child, and her daughter-in-law did go back to Canada. Their story thus involved a double loss: first to the wife's relatives, when she left to accompany her husband to Lewis, and then to the husband's relatives, when the widow and her young son returned to the Northwest.

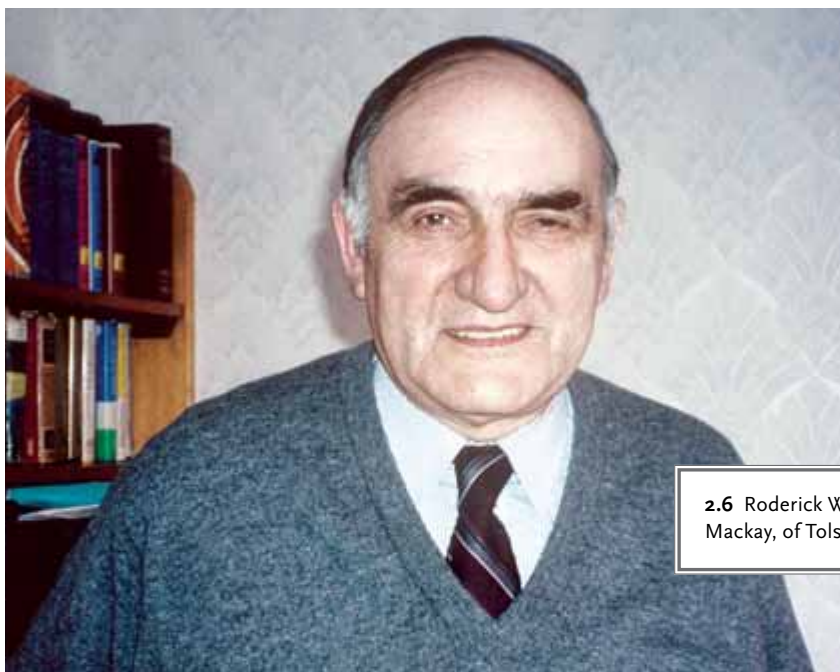
Donald Macdonald's history, *The Tolsta Townships*, adds a postscript: Norman's brother, young Duncan Martin, went to work in the fur trade himself and eventually became a factor. He decided to pay a visit to his father's land, but he died while he was on his way and was buried in Liverpool.<sup>88</sup>

Another man at Tolsta who had a Native wife was Murdo Mackay, also known as Murdo Dick (Murchadh Dick). He is listed as the owner of Tolsta croft no. 50.<sup>89</sup> His grandson Roddie Wedger (Roderick Wedger Mackay, see Figure 2.6) told me his history. Born in 1855 at Tolsta, Murdo Mackay worked for the Hudson's Bay Company as a labourer in the Rupert River District from 1873 to 1880, when he returned to Europe, presumably to Lewis. He was back with the Company in the Athabasca District as a fisherman and general servant from 1888 to 1890. In 1890, he was dismissed along with two other fishermen.<sup>90</sup> While in the Northwest, he married Maria Iserhoff, of Native descent. They had three children there: Angus, Roderick, and Chrissie, probably named for Murdo's mother, Christine. When they returned to Lewis, they lived in Stornoway. His grandmother, Maria, was a "great dressmaker" and practised this trade in Stornoway. She may have been the woman remembered in 1992 by the landlady of my Stornoway bed and breakfast as an "Indian wife" whose daughters were all "good sewers."

Donald Macdonald named Alexander Macleod (croft no. 7) and Angus Smith (croft no. 24) of Tolsta as two other men who married Native women who were sisters, although they have not yet been identified further. While it is unclear whether these men brought their wives home, there is a local tradition that three Native women were buried in the cemetery at Tolsta.

A cluster of families with Native wives also settled at Borge itself, along the northwestern coast of Lewis. Mary Ann Maciver (see Figure 2.7), who lives in Borge, is a descendant of one of these families, and she spoke proudly of her Native ancestry. Her great-grandfather John Smith went to work for the Hudson's Bay Company and married Margaret Brass, the daughter of an Orkney-Cree man named Peter Brass and his Native wife, Susan or Suzannah. Margaret's father, Peter Brass, was the son of a Peter Brass from Stromness or South Ronaldsay, who worked at York Factory from 1778 to 1798, and an unknown Cree wife, who may have been left behind when he returned to Orkney in 1798.<sup>91</sup>

The younger Peter Brass and his wife, Suzannah, had many children. Margaret was born around 1830 and received some education at the Anglican Fairford mission, east of Lake Manitoba, from the Reverend Abraham Cowley.<sup>92</sup> Cowley noted in his journal on 2 August 1846 that Peter Brass, "his wife and six of his children" had arrived at the mission from Swan



**2.6** Roderick Wedger  
Mackay, of Tolsta.



**2.7** Mary Ann Maciver  
(née Morrison), of Borve.

River, after a two-hundred-mile trip, for religious instruction and baptism. Formerly, he remarked, “they have heard the Gospel principally I believe from the Cumberland Indians,” and Suzannah Brass had been baptized by a “Wesleyan” (Methodist) and “some of the children by a Romish teacher” (a Roman Catholic priest). Their stay at Fairford mission “was the first time our visitors ever attended either school or divine service” (9 August 1846). On 15 August, Cowley wrote: “The family from Swan River have continued till now under our regular instruction. I have also bestowed particular instruction upon them relative to baptism & examined them upon the subject. Their knowledge is far less than I wish, but I am satisfied with their sincerity.” The next day, he baptized Peter Brass and his sons Thomas and William “and then married the old couple Peter and Susette Brass who had been living together many years.”

The Brass family remained at Fairford mission for about two weeks, although three of the children stayed on for additional education. The following year, on 23 May 1847, Cowley noted:

The brigade leave[s] today for Shoal River & Fort Pelly. . . . They take away with them three of our school children, viz. Margaret, Betsey, & George Brass, to their friends at Shoal River. Margaret we were desirous to part with, as she is grown a woman, but it might have been better for the others to have remained another year. They are all tolerably advanced in their learning, but none of them had reached the first class, consequently they were only reading in the New Testament. They also are able to use the Prayer Book at Divine service.

Margaret Brass later married John Smith, who came to the Northwest in 1850 from the parish of Barvas, on the west side of Lewis, to work in the fur trade. She married later than many women, in her early twenties. She was seventeen years old when she left school, and by the time her future husband arrived in the Northwest, when he was twenty-five, Margaret was already twenty. We can speculate that he must have been pleased to find such a well-connected and educated young woman for his wife. She could read and write, if in an elementary way, whereas Smith himself may not have been literate or even have spoken English: the main language of Lewis was Gaelic.<sup>93</sup> The couple had several children, including Mary (born c. 1854), John (1858), Margaret (Peggy, 1861), and Peter. John’s contract expired in 1855, and that fall he and Margaret travelled to London on

the *Prince of Wales*, with two children.<sup>94</sup> From there they went to Lewis, where they lived at 47 Borge.<sup>95</sup> Margaret Brass Smith was remembered in Lewis as a large, well-built woman who, according to Mary Ann Maciver, was “an expert needlewoman.” She seems, however, to have been forgotten by the Brass family descendants in western Canada. A handwritten list of “Grandpa Wm. Brasse’s Brothers & sisters”—the children of Peter and Suzannah’s son Peter—includes a notation: “Mrs. ? married a Scotch man & went to Scotland: name not known.”<sup>96</sup> Margaret died in 1862, after seven years in Lewis, and was buried in Borge. John Smith married again, to Janet Maclean, and had four additional children by his second wife.<sup>97</sup>

Genealogist Bill Lawson, whom I met in 1992, named a number of other families in which men brought back Native wives. Their stories will remain hints rather than narratives until they can be located in the documentary record. George Macleod married Elizabeth Boulton, “known to be a Red Indian.” Their daughter Georgina Macleod married John Macdonald, possibly in the 1870s, but they had no children; she died at Borge in 1889. Donald Macleod, born 1855, married a woman named Sophie in the Northwest. It is not clear whether they ever had children, but no record exists of any such children in Lewis. Another man, Peter More, married a Native woman, Ann, from Hudson’s Bay; their daughter Helen More (possibly spelled Moore) married Donald Morrison, who was born at Borge in 1853. Their first child, John Morrison, was born in 1881 in Canada; a daughter, Peggy, was born in 1883 in Lewis, so the family must have returned around 1882. Helen More Morrison died in 1896 in Lewis. Another man, Donald Macdonald, from Upper Shader in the Borge region, married Jane Robison, but he brought only their son back with him to Lewis. During my stay in 1992, I also spoke with Dr. Finlay Macleod, who contributed other family possibilities. He had heard about a family at Ness, in the northern end of the island, whose nickname in English is “Indian” (“Innseachadh” in Gaelic). It may be, however, that this family is actually descended from Margaret Brass Smith (whose mother was a Native woman, Suzannah) and her husband, John; the family genealogy refers to Margaret as “Innsanach.”<sup>98</sup> Members of this family were noted for their athletic abilities, which were believed to be due to the family’s Native origins. South of Borge, at Carloway, a family had two children with similar names: Murdo Innseachadh, or “Murdo son of the Indian,” and his sister, Effie Innseachadh. In short, as in Orkney, many families in the north end of Lewis could lay claim to Native ancestry.

## Life in Orkney and Lewis: Farming the Land, Living in the Stone House

Much of this essay has concerned genealogy at its most basic: who were these women and children, and what do we know about their family relationships? I end with a brief discussion of what life would have been like for them in their new homes. Although it appears that they and their descendants may have been stigmatized in some measure, at least in the past, it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to understand the extent or strength of whatever stereotypes existed and to determine whether the women themselves met with discrimination when they returned.<sup>99</sup> While the term *squaw wife* was heard occasionally in oral traditions in both Orkney and Lewis, Mary Ann Maciver provided an anecdote that challenges the highly negative connotations of the term *squaw* in North America. Her sister had told her that, when she travelled across Canada, she talked proudly about how her great-grandmother was a “squaw,” at which her Canadian listeners would grow quiet at her “indiscretion.” Clearly, Native women (and the term *squaw* in particular) were not stigmatized in Lewis in the same way as they have been over the last century and a half in Canada. Today, virtually all the descendants to whom I spoke were greatly interested in this dimension of their heritage, their “Indian blood.” They often consider themselves to be physically distinctive in some way, perhaps by possessing a darker skin tone or high cheekbones.

Arriving in the Orkney Islands or in Lewis must have been a great shock for these women, and even worse if the ship first put in at the vast city of London. They had just endured a lengthy and uncomfortable crossing of the North Atlantic; they were lucky if they or their children had not fallen ill during the voyage. Then they pulled into the large, foreign town of Stromness or Stornoway, peopled by men and women who appeared quite different from those of the fur trade country, whose style of dress differed, and who spoke a language that the women and children may not have understood.

Most of these families did not live in such urban centres but in farms or crofts in rural localities in open, windswept terrain, where trees were rare exceptions, not the rule. They owned or rented land, and they produced food and other items—not only for their own subsistence but in order to pay rent, whether with money or with agricultural products. Their lands were covered in cultivated fields, with communal pastures for cattle and sheep. Other lands contained peat, which supplied all their fuel. Families took up residence in one of the long, stone houses that were a legacy of



2.8 Blackhouse  
at Arnol, Lewis.

Norse occupation of both Lewis and Orkney (see Figure 2.8). The houses, though sometimes covered with stone shingles, were mostly thatched with straw.<sup>100</sup> In Orkney, cupboards and beds were built into the walls. In the winter, the farm animals lived in the byre, sometimes at one end of the long house, sometimes in an adjacent structure, but always in close proximity to the family. A glimpse of this life can be seen today in the Corrigan and Kirtbuster farm museums in Orkney and at the Arnol blackhouse site in Lewis.

The women and their children had to learn an entirely new way of life. They were almost certainly used to hard work and to “making do.” Now they would have learned to cut and dry peat and to cook on open hearths, using peat as fuel instead of wood. They would also have learned various handicrafts, such as weaving, that were related to the agrarian traditions of these islands. They had to learn how to care for chickens, sheep, and cattle and to do other farm chores. Grain was the dietary staple, not meat, and ale was a common drink. The fish caught by local fishermen caught were different from those of the Northwest, and they were preserved in different ways. Women raised as Roman Catholics would have had to convert to Protestantism, which dominated both regions; in Lewis, it was a fundamentalist Protestantism. Everyone attended Sunday services. If these women settled in Orkney, they would have learned the Norn variant of Scots English; in Lewis, Gaelic. There would have been a host of other cultural differences to master, including the social and political structures of their new families and communities. While Native newcomers to these islands may not have faced the same difficulties as the wives of L.G.

Thomas's "men of substance," who struggled to adapt to the conventions of an upper-class society, they may have felt just as isolated—removed to a strange country where they lived unsupported by any direct kin. It must have helped when clusters of these families developed, such as those at Borge or South Ronaldsay.

Their situation was analogous to that of war brides, fetched away to a foreign land and making the best they could of it. It speaks to the strength of their marriages that some Orkneymen, Lewismen, and other Scotsmen refused to abandon their wives and children when they returned home. It speaks to the commitment of the wives that they were willing to leave with their husbands and then to stay on in their new surroundings—or perhaps they found themselves so far from their homeland that they had little choice. These Native women and their children contributed to the complex populations of their newly adopted island communities, both genetically and culturally, just as Scots and Orcadians contributed to the Native populations of the fur trade country.

### Acknowledgements

This paper was originally delivered as part of "Negotiating Identities: Aboriginal Women's Stories of Northwestern America," a session at the American Society for Ethnohistory annual conference, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 7–10 November 2007. I first visited Orkney in 1987 in connection with the development of a major museum exhibit about Fort Chipewyan (see Provincial Museum of Alberta, *Northwind Dreaming: Fort Chipewyan, 1788–1988* [Edmonton: Provincial Museum of Alberta, 1988]). That trip, which was supported by a grant from the Canadian Museums Association, sparked my interest in Native wives and children in Scotland and led to additional research in 1990 and 1992, funded by a Wenner-Gren Foundation Grant-in-Aid awarded in 1989. I enjoyed the company of my mother, June McCormack, on these working trips, and she participated informally in the interviews. I received additional assistance from the Provincial Museum of Alberta (now the Royal Alberta Museum), where I was then the curator of ethnology. I am particularly indebted to Mr. Bryce Wilson, the museums officer in Orkney, who facilitated my research with his encyclopedic knowledge of Orkney history and people. I am also grateful to Dr. Jennifer Brown, Canada Research Chair in Aboriginal Peoples in Urban and Regional Context at the University of Winnipeg and director of the Rupert's Land Research Centre, for her enthusiastic support and encouragement of this study.

## Christina Massan's Beadwork and the Recovery of a Fur Trade Family History

*Alison K. Brown, with Christina Massan & Alison Grant*

In August 1921, Christina Moir (née Massan), an Omushkego (Swampy Cree) woman living in Churchill, Manitoba, on the western shore of Hudson Bay, put her two young sons on board a schooner headed for York Factory for the first leg of a journey that would take them to northeast Scotland. There, they would be raised by their paternal relatives, following the recent death of their father, Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) post manager, Henry Moir. According to stories circulating within the Moir family, before they said goodbye Christina gave her boys some beadwork she had made so that they would remember their Cree home and family. Once in Scotland, however, young Tom and Ronald's Omushkego heritage was rarely acknowledged and they soon lost contact with their relatives in northern Canada. Though Christina Massan's beadwork was always present in their lives, and eventually became a source of curiosity for their own children, there was seemingly little more to be said about her. Christina never saw her sons again. Time passed, the memories faded, and she became a peripheral figure for her late husband's family. As one family member observed in early 2004, "This is a sad story, but it's a closed page in the history of our family."<sup>1</sup> This was the prevailing view among the Moir family for many decades. Despite this, the beadwork that Christina Massan gave her sons to remind them of their roots has served its purpose. It has been the key to reuniting her descendants on both sides of the Atlantic and to recovering a complex family history that has been blurred for some eighty years.

The silences and stories that complicate such histories of dislocation are often connected to class, gender, and cultural background. Fur trade

marriages according to the custom of the country, and latterly Church-sanctioned unions between the mixed-blood daughters of these partnerships and incoming fur trade officers, were neither uncommon nor viewed negatively by their participants.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the European relatives and descendants of fur trade personnel with Aboriginal wives (and indeed, sometimes the men themselves) often chose to suppress their knowledge of the woman's heritage, and on occasion, the relationship itself. Considerable effort was made by the children of some of these marriages to affiliate most closely with their paternal cultural background, and this has had lasting implications for how their descendants understand their own histories.<sup>3</sup> The obscuring of fur trade family relationships was especially common in instances where, after retirement from the fur trade, the head of a family returned to Scotland, with his wife and children, or where mixed-blood children were placed with relatives in Scotland and did not return to Canada. Descendants of these families generally have less information and even fewer cultural and historical anchors available to them to trace their Aboriginal heritage than those with similarly complex genealogies living in Canada. In Scotland this is compounded by minimal understanding of Métis histories.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, stories of cross-cultural ancestral relationships and relocations can be found on both sides of the Atlantic, however incomplete and intriguing they seem to recent generations.

Along with the stories, tangible evidence of fur trade relationships is sometimes found in family homes and in museum collections: a deer hide pouch with flowers worked in brightly coloured embroidery silk; a black and white photograph of a finely-dressed young woman with dark hair and complexion in a hinged case of embossed leather; a pair of women's leggings made of a deep blue woollen cloth and decorated with beaded designs of roses and trailing foliage.<sup>5</sup> Such material traces can offer new ways for thinking about the social relationships upon which the fur trade was based, and are especially helpful for understanding the intergenerational consequences of fur trade marriages, particularly from the perspective of the women who produced these items and those who kept them, passed them on, and often continue to treasure them. Christina Massan's gifts are used here to think about the relocation of her sons to Scotland, about the impact this had on Christina and her family, and about the wider colonial context of relationships between Aboriginal people and Europeans in the 1920s. We further reflect on how Christina's story has contributed to the recent renewal of family ties and what the recovery of histories of displacement can mean to descendants of fur trade families.

Our story begins in 1998, when four pieces of Omushkego beadwork were donated to Glasgow Museums by Dr. Tom Moir, who lived locally but was about to emigrate to New Zealand. Three of these are loom-woven bands of glass seed beads with a geometric pattern of diamonds and zig-zag lines. Two form a pair and have a looped beaded fringe at each end and hook and eye fastenings (see Figure 3.1). Although described in the museum's accession records as "headbands," they were probably intended to decorate clothing, perhaps along the sleeves or across the shoulders, and were later adjusted to be worn as headgear by Dr. Moir's family. The third band has traces of black thread at each short edge, raising the possibility that they had previously been stitched together for this purpose. There is also a single garter of black, finely woven woollen cloth, brightly sewn with designs of flowers and leaves connected by white bead "ptarmigan tracks," typical of beadwork produced in northern Manitoba in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>6</sup> Seven photographs of the HBC trading posts at Churchill and York Factory taken between 1913 and 1919 and a photographic portrait of Dr. Moir's grandfather, Henry Cook Moir (1885–1920), manager at Churchill during this time, provide contextual documentation.



3.1 Loom-woven  
beadwork bands.  
Photograph ©  
Culture and Sport  
Glasgow (Museums)  
A.1998.14c+d.

Brown joined the staff Glasgow Museums in 2002 and began to research the beadwork as part of a new display for the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum.<sup>7</sup> Initial enquiries with Dr. Moir provided additional information on how the beadwork came to be in Scotland and about the people in the photographs. While growing up in Aberdeenshire, he and his sister, Alison Grant, had worn the headbands during childhood games along with other beadwork and silk embroidered items that are still cared for by family members. They were told that their grandmother, Christina Massan, had made the beadwork and that she was either “an Indian” or “French-Canadian.”<sup>8</sup> The story, as they understood it, seemed quite straightforward, though many details were missing. Their paternal grandfather, Henry Moir (see Figure 3.2), worked for the HBC and had married Christina Massan some time in the early twentieth century. Henry’s strict, Presbyterian family were unimpressed by the marriage but they tolerated it, and following his premature death in 1919, they arranged to raise his and Christina’s two young sons, Tom and Ronald. Indeed, Alison Grant had long believed that Henry Moir had requested in his will that the boys be cared for and educated in Scotland. Interviews with other Moir family members have reinforced this story.<sup>9</sup>



**3.2** Henry C. Moir,  
c. 1915. By permission  
of the Moir family.

Aged five and three, the boys left their home on the Hudson Bay, never to return to Canada. Speaking only Cree on their arrival, and missing their mother dreadfully, the adjustment to life in the small farming community of Netherley, south of Aberdeen, was extraordinarily difficult at first, but in time they settled down and continued their childhood in the care of their Aunt Sarah. On leaving school at sixteen, Tom worked briefly in the dockyards at Aberdeen and then joined the Royal Signals, eventually rising to the rank of sergeant. Ronald joined the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, and toured the world with his unit. During the Second World War, Tom served first in the Middle East and in India. He was then parachuted into France the day before D-Day, but was captured immediately and was held in Germany until the war ended. He remained in the army following the war and served in Sierra Leone. He retired from his unit after some twenty-three years, and worked first in the motor industry and then in an asbestos factory.<sup>10</sup> Ronald was also a skilled mechanic, and held an apprenticeship in a garage in Aberdeen after the war. He subsequently worked as a chauffeur and mechanic for the Earl of Southesk and as a foreman in the Invercarron works near Stonehaven. Later in life, he owned a garage in Muchalls, a coastal village close to where he had grown up.<sup>11</sup> Both men married and had families, and retained close ties to the northeast of Scotland, where a number of their relatives continue to reside.

### Building the History

Despite the gaps in the Moir family's knowledge of Tom and Ronald's background and the full circumstances surrounding their relocation, there is a rich documentary archive concerning Henry Moir and Christina Massan's life in Churchill. Clues to their story can be found in correspondence and photographs in the Moir family papers as well as in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, church records, contemporary newspapers and even in the photograph albums of other families in the northeast of Scotland with fur trade connections.<sup>12</sup> These written and visual sources, along with interviews with the Moir and Massan families, have clarified the course of events following Henry Moir's death. More importantly, they have offered opportunities for Henry and Christina's descendants to understand the historical and cultural contexts that informed the choices made by the individuals involved. Taken together they have helped to draw Christina Massan from the periphery of her family's history.

Christina Massan was born in 1896 at the Cree community of Kitchen-uhmaykoosib Inninuwig (Big Trout Lake), northern Ontario, close to

the HBC post.<sup>13</sup> The 1911 census describes her as a *half breed*, a term that over-simplifies the complexities of cultural and familial relations in north-western Canada.<sup>14</sup> She was the second of five children, and one of two daughters. Christina's father, James Massan (1864–1929), was from York Factory and served the company in the York Factory district from 1884, first as voyageur in summer and camp trader in winter and latterly as an interpreter and general servant.<sup>15</sup> Her mother, Mary Jane (née Taylor) (b. 1872), was referred to in HBC records in one instance as “the Duchess of Trout Lake,” her home community.<sup>16</sup> The Massan and Taylor families had long connections with the HBC and were considered “Hudson Bay people,” or “Homeguard” (people of mixed Cree-European ancestry) who worked for wages and lived in settlements close to the posts. Omushkego historian, Louis Bird, has commented that the distance of only two hundred miles between York Factory and Big Trout Lake meant that the two communities had strong ties, and “almost any people who were raised and came from Big Trout area were associated with York Factory. They had routes that go back and forth.”<sup>17</sup>

Christina Massan and Henry Moir, the officer in charge of the Trout Lake post, were married by the Reverend William Dick in an Anglican service on 31 January 1912.<sup>18</sup> Moir had begun his career with the HBC in 1904 as an apprentice clerk at God's Lake, northern Manitoba, and spent the subsequent years posted at Churchill, York Factory, and Big Trout Lake.<sup>19</sup> In June 1913, Henry and Christina left Big Trout Lake to travel by canoe to York Factory.<sup>20</sup> Henry had been promoted to manager at Churchill, which at that time was an outpost of York Factory, and was to begin his duties the following month. The move to Churchill was an opportunity for Henry and Christina to settle into family life. Their first child, John, had been born at Big Trout Lake in March 1913, an event described in the post journal as, “H.C. Moir, of a young hunter this morning”; their daughter, Jessie Isabella, followed in November 1914.<sup>21</sup>

Moir recorded his experiences in northern Canada in letters sent to his relatives in Scotland.<sup>22</sup> As with most correspondence between emigrants and their families back home, the letters can today be read not simply as news from the frontier, but also as tangible evidence of the efforts of HBC men to maintain connections with their families over great distances, and to reassure them that though they lived in the “wilds,” they had not abandoned the norms of “civilized” society. Because of the challenges of getting mail to and from northern trading posts, correspondence was infrequent, and as few detailed post records are available for the period after

1900, Moir's letters provide rare insights into Churchill's social, cultural, and economic history. His conversational tone and descriptions of the nature of his work and daily life indicate his close relationship with his relatives in Scotland, whom he very rarely saw. He began most letters with descriptions of the weather and then discussed the impact of the war on business affairs. Moir loved to hunt and provided many detailed reports of hunting deer and geese as well as describing his abilities as a trapper. In a letter to one of his brothers, for example, Moir bragged about his escapades: "I caught a silver fox this winter again, though it was rather late in the season and he was slightly blackened by the sun. Yours truly for luck with the Silvers, this makes three I have caught within the last four winters. Some people set traps all their life and never get one."<sup>23</sup> These stories are supported by references in post journals and in other sources that confirm Moir's reputation as a skilled trapper.<sup>24</sup>

The letters also give some sense of the everyday routine at Churchill and the efforts that were made to maintain European conventions at the post. Moir's description of the church services provides one example, but also demonstrates how differences in beliefs and practices in the United Kingdom could be replicated in fur trade communities thousands of miles away:

The Minister here is English and the Services of course are held in the English way. The people read and chant the same prayers every week, which gets a bit same after a time, especially to a Scotchman. Once a month the Minister reads the Letters and all the people say "Good Lord deliver us" for about a hundred times, before they get finished. I feel like crying, "Good Lord have mercy upon us."<sup>25</sup>

Moir also shared family news such as the births of his sons and their development. To his sister, Sarah, for example, he gave an update on his eldest son, John: "He is growing a big boy now and can talk quite a bit. He won't be three till the 16<sup>th</sup> March. That blue suit you sent him last summer fits him to a T now. He was at Church on Christmas day and looked quite a Nipper."<sup>26</sup> Like many of his contemporaries, Moir enjoyed photography, and several images of his growing family are kept by his descendants. There are occasional references in post journals to him photographing the landscape around Churchill as well as events of interest, for instance, the arrival of the S.S. *Nascopie*, the HBC supply ship.<sup>27</sup> The snapshots of his family were intended to be a record, but were also a means of including



**3.3** Left to right: Ronald Moir, Christina Moir (Massan), and Tom Moir, c. 1918. By permission of the Moir family.

the boys in the lives of their Scottish relatives. In one letter to Sarah, for example, Henry wrote that as the weather was getting a little warmer, he would “take a picture of little Tom and send it to [you] in the summer.”<sup>28</sup> For the photographs, the children wore clothing that reflected their parentage: wraparound moccasins made by their mother and Scots blue bonnets sent by their aunt (see Figure 3.3).

Moir’s letters are filled with the kind of news about the children that their doting grandmother and aunts would have liked to hear, but there are few references to his wife. Christina is mentioned in relation to the exchange of gifts between his families at Churchill and in Scotland, but intriguingly Henry said nothing about her skills as a seamstress, even though she undoubtedly made some of the items he gave to his relatives. In one letter, he asked Sarah to send over some things for the family should there be a boat that summer, including “another grey silk dress like the one you sent three years ago. The Missus detests these hobble skirts, but I think they have gone out of fashion now.”<sup>29</sup> Christina was referred to by name only once in a letter to Henry’s parents, which he closed with “Love to all at home from Chris and the wee man. Your loving son, Henry.”<sup>30</sup>

The paucity of news about Christina in the correspondence has certainly contributed to her obscurity within the Moir family, but we can only speculate on why Henry said so little about her in these letters. There is no evidence to clarify how she was represented in any correspondence that has not survived or in conversation during Henry’s two visits home following their marriage. That said, as many of the young men who joined the HBC

from the northeast of Scotland during the early twentieth century married women from home who later joined them at their posts, Henry's choice to marry an Aboriginal woman was neither readily understood by his family, nor was it welcomed. The Moirs were extremely devout, but though they knew that Christina was Anglican, this made little difference to Henry's parents in particular, who regarded the marriage as "a disgrace."<sup>31</sup> Aware of their discomfort, it is possible that Moir kept his descriptions of family life to news of the children.

Despite the gaps, Henry Moir's letters are crucial to helping us understand the years he and his wife and children spent in Churchill, as references to them in the post journals are mostly restricted to significant events such as births or deaths. For Moir's relatives in Scotland, the letters were a treasured link to a family member whom they rarely saw, and to his children, whom they knew only through his writing and occasional photographs. Collectively they bring into focus the reality of living in what was often a challenging environment. In a letter to Sarah, for example, Henry explained how difficult it had been to secure medical attention for John, who died of Bright's Disease in 1917.<sup>32</sup> John's death was a cruel blow, but worse was to follow. At the age of five months, Jessie Moir also succumbed to illness.<sup>33</sup> Henry and Christina's suffering during this period is hard to imagine, yet with two other children to care for, Tom (b. 1916) and Ronald (b. 1918), life had to go on.

Every few years HBC officers were entitled to a period of leave. Henry Moir's furlough was postponed by the war, but in September 1919, he left Churchill to visit Scotland, while Christina, Tom, and Ronald stayed behind.<sup>34</sup> The cost of passage for his family would have been prohibitive, and Moir may have been concerned about how his parents and their neighbours would receive his wife. He was due to be away for six months, a long time for anyone to cope by themselves with two children under the age of five, and Christina had to make the best of her situation. Her days would have been spent caring for her sons and in the evenings she would have visited with friends. Social events, such as the weddings and dances that are occasionally mentioned in the post journal, would have broken up her routine. When trapping season began in the autumn, Christina took on the responsibility of setting her husband's traps and it was soon recorded in the Churchill journal that "Mrs Moir got 1 Red fox."<sup>35</sup> She would have been able to draw on the goodwill of the post staff if she needed practical support, but nonetheless, this must have been a lonely time for her.

Across the Atlantic, Henry had his own problems. There are occasional

references in the post journals to illnesses that he suffered during his time at Churchill, and he seemingly found the damp climate in Scotland difficult. Bunty Atkinson, his niece, recalls stories that the family were amused by Henry's complaints about the Scottish weather, as they were used to his descriptions of lengthy, bitterly cold winters and heavy snowfalls.<sup>36</sup> In January 1920, Moir began the journey back to Churchill. He never arrived. A report in the *Winnipeg Evening Tribune* stated that he became unwell just before setting sail from Liverpool. On his arrival in Winnipeg, the cold weather affected his kidneys and he was hospitalized for a minor operation. He contracted pneumonia shortly after leaving hospital and died in the Empire Hotel, on 15 February 1920, at the age of thirty-five. After a funeral attended by several senior figures from the HBC's Winnipeg office, he was buried in the city's Elmwood Cemetery.<sup>37</sup>

It was another six weeks before Christina learned that she was a widow. The York Factory journal of 25 February 1920 recorded that Henry Moir was expected back that day but "did not arrive" and his death was reported in the journal a month later.<sup>38</sup> It took a further nine days for the news to reach Churchill.<sup>39</sup> The temperature had dropped to -27°C, a westerly wind had been blowing hard all day, and it would have been dark by the time the boat reached the harbour at 6:30 pm on 30 March. At least one of the boys may have been asleep, and Christina was probably catching up with chores at home. The news was brought to her by William Mitchell, who managed the post in Moir's absence. He had left Churchill for York Factory several days earlier en route home to Aberdeen where he was headed on furlough. His arrival back at Churchill would have been the first clue that something was wrong.<sup>40</sup> Mitchell later described Christina's response to her husband's death in a letter to Sarah Moir:

She took it very hard indeed, and when I told her the bad news, she fell away unconscious, and we were quite a long time before we could bring her round. It has left her a changed woman already, the loss of her husband, and I am very sorry for her indeed, and most especially for the children. Poor little nippers, of course they don't fully understand their loss.

When Mitchell asked Christina about her plans, she told him she wished "to go to York, and live with her friends and relatives there."<sup>41</sup> Widowed at the age of twenty-four and with two infant children to care for, she must have felt helpless and vulnerable, and it is not surprising that she wanted to

move closer to her family, who could offer emotional and physical support.

Making provision for his family was, in fact, one of Henry Moir's last acts. As his children grew older, he must have compared the opportunities available to them in Churchill with those that they might have in Scotland. Furthermore, the loss of his two eldest children was fundamental in influencing subsequent events; he told his sister that had John "been sent to the old country the trouble would not have overtaken him."<sup>42</sup> It is not known whether Henry Moir planned to return to Scotland with his wife and children once his sons were older, or if he envisaged a promotion that would take the family out of the north, but he certainly believed that the lack of medical assistance in Churchill had contributed to his eldest children's deaths. The Moir family's oral history reveals that during his visit home in 1919 Henry told his father that if anything were to happen to him, the boys should be sent to their Scottish relatives to be raised, and indeed that this was in his will.<sup>43</sup> Like so many fur trade children before them, rather than become absorbed into their mother's kin networks, they would be placed with paternal relatives who would assume responsibility for their welfare and education.<sup>44</sup> Crucially, although Moir may have made his intentions clear to his father verbally, nowhere in his last will and testament is it stated that the boys should leave Canada. In fact, Christina Massan was named as their guardian.<sup>45</sup>

Henry Moir signed his will the day he died. According to its terms, the Royal Trust Company of Winnipeg was appointed Executor and Trustee and was directed to "realise and convert into money [the] whole Estate and to invest the proceeds."<sup>46</sup> The income derived from these investments was to be paid to Christina Massan for her upkeep and the maintenance and education of the children. Should the income have been insufficient for these costs, the trustees were empowered "to encroach upon the capital of [the] estate for that purpose." It is not at all clear how or by whom the terms of the will were represented to Christina Massan. It is almost certain, however, that she had no familiarity with legal documents, and that her knowledge of written English was unlikely to have been extensive. Moreover, given the relatively young age of her husband and his reasonable health when she had seen him last, it seems unlikely that they would have discussed how the family might be cared for in the event of his death. It is also not known when it was agreed that Tom and Ronald would be sent to their Scottish grandparents, or who suggested this solution to their mother in the first place. Similarly, there is no way of knowing if alternatives were presented and discussed with her. A letter from William Butler

of the Royal Trust Company written to Moir's father almost a year after Henry's death, refers to decisions regarding the boys' future being made only with "the express sanction of Mrs Moir." However, Butler also implied that the provisions of the will gave her little choice. Although Moir had bequeathed to his widow "a life interest in his whole estate" and, in addition, "the proceeds from his Life Insurance Policies, which amounted to £3,000," Butler observed that

there is no doubt that, with the assistance of the Hudson's Bay Company, the widow and the children could get along nicely on the revenues from the Estate and from the insurance money so long as they stayed in the north country, but the revenues from the Estate alone, which we have proposed to Mrs Moir should be paid to you or Miss Moir for the maintenance and education of the children, would be insufficient for their needs in Scotland, and we think it would be necessary to draw on the Estate's Capital Account to meet these expenses.<sup>47</sup>

Subsequent events seem to have hinged on interpretations and translations. Henry Moir's colleagues and friends at Churchill and York Factory would likely have impressed upon Christina that her husband would have wanted a good — by which they meant European — education for the boys. The schooling provided through the Anglican mission at York Factory was aimed at Cree children, and in any case, the school was only open during the summer months, when families returned to York Factory from their traplines.<sup>48</sup> Moir's will specifies that his sons should receive a "suitable education," and, had he lived, it is probable that he would have followed the lengthy fur trade tradition of sending his children to boarding school or placing them with relatives. Just as his children's future education was uppermost in Moir's thoughts when he died, so the education of First Nations children in Canada was of concern to government and church authorities. Moir died around the time that children from York Factory first began to be sent to government-funded residential schools, such as the McKay Residential School in The Pas, and Christina may have witnessed other local families being pressured to send their children away. Given their mixed heritage and their status as children of an HBC officer, however, Tom and Ronald would not have joined their contemporaries at these schools. A solution for the education of these boys would have to be found.

Regardless of how her sons' future was presented to her, Christina

Massan was undoubtedly coerced in subtle ways into sending her boys away. Though she may have resisted the decision, she also might have conceded that a “suitable education” that would allow Tom and Ronald to prosper could not be attained at York Factory. Without family in Winnipeg or in one of the growing settlements in northern Manitoba, such as The Pas, perhaps sending them to their paternal relatives was preferable to placing them in the care of complete strangers. It is also possible that she understood the separation would be temporary (albeit still lengthy).<sup>49</sup> According to William Butler of the Royal Trust Company: “The whole question of sending the boys to Scotland depends on Mrs Moir’s wishes in the matter, but we believe that she is willing to make any sacrifice which will enable the boys to take advantage of obtaining education which they would have in Scotland.”<sup>50</sup> Whatever Christina’s reservations, Moir’s own family believed it was their duty to care for the boys. The alternative, that Henry’s sons might receive what they considered to be a sub-standard education, or be raised in a household in which Cree values were prioritized over those they thought “proper,” would have been inconceivable to them.

Splitting up this family seems unimaginable today, but Scotland would not have been an easy place for an Omushkego woman in 1921. This would have been especially so for a widow who was not fluent in English and who would have struggled to establish social networks in a culturally unfamiliar environment. Though the Moirs were deeply shocked by Henry’s sudden death, having seen him so recently, and believed that taking Tom and Ronald from their mother was “cruel,” they also felt that raising them in Scotland was “the right thing” to do.<sup>51</sup> The racial climate of Aberdeenshire at this time, in which “outsiders” were often treated with suspicion, would have meant that, unlike her boys, who were the children of a beloved son and brother, Christina would have been far less welcome. There is no suggestion in any of the correspondence that has survived that Christina ever considered moving with her children to Scotland, and it is highly unlikely that she would have been given this opportunity, even had she wanted to or if her husband had provided for it. It is also possible that her own parents would have been opposed to their daughter leaving the north, though they may have found it difficult to identify a good reason why the boys should be sent to their father’s family rather than stay with them.

Christina and her sons left Churchill in August 1920 and went to Port Nelson where her brother, Norman, and his family lived.<sup>52</sup> The winter months were times of hardship, and they received rations from the HBC at York Factory in February and March 1921.<sup>53</sup> In May of that year, they

moved to Ten Shilling Creek, a sheltered settlement about three miles upriver from York Factory, where a number of families connected to the post lived.<sup>54</sup> The family does not appear again in the York Factory journal until the entry for 10 August 1921, in which it was recorded that Tom and Ronald left that day on the schooner for Churchill, where they would be “transferred to the *Nascopie* en route for Scotland” under the personal supervision of Captain George Mack.<sup>55</sup> The S.S. *Nascopie* arrived in Cardiff on 13 September, and from there the boys were met by a representative of the Moir family and taken by train to their new home in Netherley.<sup>56</sup>

### The Silences Develop

Archival evidence has helped to clarify the events that brought Tom and Ronald Moir to Scotland in 1921, but Christina Massan’s beadwork has been the catalyst for better understanding the impact of their dislocation. These carefully sewn items have operated as mediators in rebuilding historical knowledge and, most dramatically, in reconnecting family members on both sides of the Atlantic. The silences surrounding Christina Massan and her life have lessened as her descendants and other relatives have shared what they knew of her in relation to the beadwork and embroideries kept by the Moir family. At the same time as the story of Christina Massan and Henry Moir has been recast, so too has the understanding that more recent generations have of their own ancestry and their place in their family’s history.

Tom and Ronald Moir lived with their grandparents when they first arrived in Netherley, but were soon moved again to the home of their aunts, Sarah and Isabella Moir. After Isabella married, Sarah took on the responsibility of raising them. As she was unmarried and the youngest sister within a large family, she had little choice, and supported them with the money from their father’s estate supplemented with a small income from taking in lodgers. As her great niece, Alison Grant, explains:

If that was what was expected within the family, she would have been told that was what she would have to do, and she would have done it. There wasn’t a choice about these things within that family. . . . You were expected to do certain things when you were told you’d do them. So whether Aunt Sarah was just expected to do that and therefore give up her own opportunity to get married and have children of her own, I don’t know, but that was certainly what she did.<sup>57</sup>

Though caring for the boys was considered to be a duty it was also a great joy for Sarah, who treated Tom and Ronald as though they were her own sons. In turn, they regarded her as a mother figure and visited her as much as they could once they were adults with families of their own.

The Moirs were typical of many large farming families from the north-east of Scotland. Following the First World War money was tight and job prospects uncertain, and several of Sarah's twelve siblings had emigrated in the hope of a finding prosperity in the colonies. The family base, however, was very much rooted in Aberdeenshire, and Sarah's cottage was filled with gifts from relatives overseas. These included many Cree handicrafts that Henry had sent home before his death. He described some of his selections in a letter to his mother from York Factory:

The pair of gloves trimmed with marten are for David. The bead worked fire bag is for yourself. I don't know whether you will think a lot of it, but they sell in Winnipeg for twenty dollars. I paid six dollars cash at Oxford [House] for it. It is the only one I will buy so take good care of it. I am also sending three pairs [of] Ladies Gloves trimmed with ermine made of white dressed Deerskin. My three sisters can fight over them if they think they are worth while. It took 5 ermines altogether and they cost 80 cents each here, so the wee weasel is not to be despised when he is prime.<sup>58</sup>

Henry Moir's gifts were thus souvenirs of the family's travels that served as ongoing connections with relatives who were rarely seen, but they also represented cultural otherness. Beadwork bags and a walrus tusk hung on the walls of Sarah's cottage and a polar bear skin rug lay on the drawing room floor, a tangible representation of the family's links with northern Canada and a delight to children within the family for many years. Taken together with the beadwork given to Tom and Ronald by their mother, these items were mementoes (and in the case of the polar bear, trophies) of Moir's northern experiences. They were also intimately linked with the cultural heritage of the boys, which took on new meanings through their embodiment of a father who had died and a mother who was effectively lost to her sons.

Sarah's cottage was filled with beadwork but there were few stories for her to share with Tom and Ronald about their mother. Although her own parents were ashamed of Henry's choice of a bride, and apparently

spoke little of Christina for that reason, Sarah seems to have been more tolerant and put aside any prejudice she may have had in order to raise her brother's children in a secure and loving home. Despite this, she had never met Christina and would have had little real understanding of her life and personality, and likely would have found it difficult to talk to Tom and Ronald about her. The display of the beadwork, however, was a means of keeping Christina present. Moreover, though suggestions made by family members since that the boys' mixed parentage was subtly suppressed by their Scots relatives and that they were discouraged from contacting their mother, Christina made every effort to stay in touch, and in turn was sent news of her sons by Sarah Moir herself. Alison Grant's recent discovery, among her father's papers, of two letters most likely written on her grandmother's behalf, has demonstrated how unstable family histories can be. One of these was sent to Sarah in 1924 and the other to the boys in 1929.<sup>59</sup> Written several years after the boys had moved to Scotland, these letters prove that contrary to what younger generations had been led to believe, contact between the families was not severed completely and news of the boys and their homes on both sides of the Atlantic was shared.<sup>60</sup> Just as Henry had sent beadwork, letters, and photographs to his family during the long years of his HBC service, photographs of the boys (and perhaps even of Christina) were traded and gave great pleasure. Christina expressed her gratitude for photographs of her sons Sarah had sent her in 1923, stating, "I was so pleased to get their photos. Many a time I look at them, and show them to my friends."<sup>61</sup> As the years of separation grew, photographs became increasingly important, as Christina herself explained to her sons: "Will you sent me your Photograph the pictures of both of you. I would be glad to see your pictures because thats the only way I could see your faces."<sup>62</sup> The exchange of items invested with love—whether artifacts, photographs, or letters—continued to connect these two families despite the geographical distance and the growing cultural differences between them. These boys were neither abandoned nor forgotten by their mother, and neither was she forgotten by them. Instead, Christina's efforts to remain in touch with her sons gradually become obscured and contributed to the confused stories about her that circulated among her grandchildren. By the time they were growing up, Christina's identity had become even more distorted, but the beadwork on display in their great aunt Sarah's house, which in time was divided and passed onto their fathers, seemed to offer some clues. Alison Grant thought it was exotic and represented an unfamiliar world that she had not yet experienced. On a deeper level,

its presence raised intriguing questions about why her family had such things. She found it unsettling to be part of a family where “half-truths” were the norm and her grandmother’s background “was almost a secret,” where “at one stage you’d be talking about her being Cree, or being Indian, and the next minute it was, ‘No, she was French-Canadian.’”<sup>63</sup>

Alison and Tom, her brother, were curious about their grandparents’ history and often wondered if they had any relatives in Canada and what they might be like. They also knew that their father, Ronald Moir, had wanted to reconnect with the country of his birth and had wondered if he had any family in the north. As a young man, for example, he tried to join the RCMP but was unable to convince the authorities that he had been born in Canada.<sup>64</sup> Discouraged by the lack of documentation that would prove his origin, but perhaps also out of respect for the feelings of his aunt who regarded him as her own son, Ronald did not actively seek evidence of his mother’s family, and put aside his attempts to return to Canada. Aware of their father’s difficulties, Alison and Tom assumed that nothing more could be done to establish what happened to Christina. Their cousins were also curious about their family ties to Canada, and the grandmother they knew so little about, but were simply told that she was probably Cree and that she had died soon after her sons were sent away. They were also exposed to the beadwork and silk embroidery that Aunt Sarah had preserved, which emphasized the family’s northern connections. Unlike their Uncle Ronald, however, their father expressed no interest in tracing his roots as far as they know. Richard Moir has suggested that, as the eldest of the two boys, Tom Moir may have remembered more of his early childhood, and so been more traumatized by the separation from his mother. He never spoke about his parents to his children and they suspect he never recovered from their loss.<sup>65</sup>

### Making Connections

Christina Massan’s grandchildren in the United Kingdom were not alone in having questions about their past. Her descendants in Canada have also had to negotiate layers of silence surrounding their family’s history. Over the past few decades, several family members had tried to find out what happened to Tom and Ronald Moir, but the records and other clues that would help them in their search were not yet available. Improved access to archival and electronic resources has transformed the potential for genealogical research, however. The connection between the families was finally made in 2003 when Brown, who was then researching the beadwork

in Glasgow Museums, posted a message on the notice board of the Fox Lake Cree Nation website, asking for descendants of Christina Massan to contact her.<sup>66</sup> The response was immediate, and caused considerable excitement, as Christina Massan recalls:

People were phoning me and telling me that people were looking for information on Christina Massan. And I remember saying, “That’s not me. That’s my Grandmother. That was my Grandmother’s name.” And so, my daughter and my sister, Brenda, contacted [them]. The lines were hot between Scotland and New Zealand. Family connecting and pictures going back and forth.<sup>67</sup>

Brenda (née Macdonald) O’Connor has researched her family history for some twenty years, and explained that though the story of the boys being taken to Scotland was well known, she really thought it was no longer possible to find out where they were.<sup>68</sup> She also explained that Christina’s life changed immeasurably in the weeks leading up to her husband’s death and the departure of her sons, and that the choices she made during this time were not well understood even within her own extended family. Bringing together the details from the archival record with the stories that Christina’s descendants and relatives, and other long-time Churchill residents, have shared has helped them to understand the position she was in, and to reflect upon how she coped with her situation.<sup>69</sup>

In November 1920, several months before her sons left for Scotland, Christina gave birth to another son, William (Bill) Joseph Macdonald.<sup>70</sup> The child’s father was reputed to be Harold Wellesley Macdonald, who had joined the HBC in 1914 and worked as a clerk at York Factory and Churchill, where he was stationed during the period of Moir’s leave. Little is known about the nature of his relationship with Christina Massan and Bill Macdonald’s children do not know whether their grandfather was aware of Christina’s pregnancy. The journal entry that recorded Henry Moir’s death also noted that Harold Macdonald was to be sent north to “open up” Sentry Island (*Arvia’juag*) in the Hudson Bay.<sup>71</sup> He spent the summer months there, seemingly having “a rather tough time,” and later that year was transferred to Chesterfield.<sup>72</sup> It seems more than coincidence that Macdonald’s transfer and the news of his superior officer’s demise were recorded on the same day, thus the decision to move him was most likely due to concerns about the “improper” nature of his relationship with the wife of the deceased post manager.

Christina's story was picked up by her daughter, elder Dorothy Morand, a resident of Churchill for much of her life. Dorothy was only four years old when her mother died on 26 September 1936 from puerperal sudden death as a result of premature labour and septic poisoning.<sup>73</sup> Though she has few memories of Christina, Dorothy's elder sister, Nancy, and her mother's closest friend, Mary Spence, made a point of telling her about Christina as she was growing up. In particular, they told Dorothy of her mother's skills as a seamstress, stories that enrich what the Moir family know of the beadwork's history. Christina sewed not merely to provide clothing for her family, but because she enjoyed it. As Dorothy explained in a conversation regarding her mother's love of sewing:

There was this lady who used to be her friend. She used to sew together with her. Her name was Mary Spence. She's Edward Spence's wife, Mary. And she told me, she says, "Your Mum used to be my friend." She said to me in Cree, "We used to work together. We used to sew all the time," she said. Together, and her. They sewed together. Do the beadwork. Make moccasins. Make everything, like parkas, too. Anything. They used to sew; they used to sew mukluks, moccasins, socks. Well, that's all you need in York Factory. You couldn't buy those in the store. You have to sew something to wear. So, this Mary Spence told me. She says, "You know what? Your Mum was really, really a good sewer." She used to say that to me in Cree. She used to tell me. "Her and I used to sew together." She said, "We'd go to her house," or my Mum would go to her place, and they would sew together. Do the beadwork and everything. Sew. That's what she said to me. "Your Mum was always sewing."<sup>74</sup>

In 1922, Christina married Rory Gibeault, a widower from York Factory whose first wife had died during the influenza epidemic of 1918.<sup>75</sup> Gibeault worked for the HBC as a labourer and dog team driver. While he was away moving freight between York Factory, Churchill, and Gillam, Christina stayed at home raising their growing family in financial circumstances quite different to those she had known as the wife of an HBC post manager (see Figure 3.4). Despite having been left money in Henry Moir's will, Christina's descendants in Canada believe she received no financial support. The Gibeaults had six children together and also raised Rory's daughter from his first marriage, and Christina's son, Bill. With so many

**3.4** Christina Gibeault (Massan) (far right) at York Factory, c. 1925. Photograph by George Fowlie. By permission of Marjorie Medford.



children, it would have been a struggle to make ends meet, though Rory and Christina worked extremely hard to ensure their family was always well fed and cared for. Following Christina's death, Bill Macdonald, who by then was in his mid teens and ready to take on responsibility for his own welfare, left the family home and travelled by dog team to Churchill, where he lived for a time with his relatives, Simeon and Sarah Spence. He remained in Churchill for most of his life, in time marrying and raising a large family of his own.

After Christina died, the younger children were briefly looked after by foster families. Following this, the day-to-day responsibility for raising them fell to Rory and Christina's eldest daughter, Nancy, who was only eleven years old herself when her mother died. Rory Gibeault carried on working for the HBC to support his family, but as his work frequently took him away from York Factory, he had little choice but to leave the children in Nancy's care, knowing that other relatives were close by who could help her if need be. Though he no longer lived with the family, Bill Macdonald also did his best to provide for the younger children, and sent whatever he could from Churchill.

At first, Nancy spoke rarely of Christina and her previous family, but as she and her siblings grew older, she began to share her memories of the

family history and frequently speculated on what had happened to their half-brothers in Scotland: "It was always in our minds. Wherever we were sitting down we talked about it. It was never forgotten, our brothers, even though we never did see them. It was a part that was never forgotten. I'm glad my sister told me about them, that I had two half brothers, otherwise I wouldn't have known."<sup>76</sup> With few clues to help her, Nancy's own search for information on Tom and Ronald's whereabouts was a huge struggle, though she never stopped looking and was clearly troubled by not knowing her brothers' fate: "She tried to get ahold of that [information] before she died. She tried to work on it. She tried to find our two brothers, our half-brothers, but she never got nowhere with it. No one would tell her, you know, if they were still alive. So we didn't know."<sup>77</sup> Because Nancy told her siblings about Tom and Ronald Moir, and as much as she could about their mother, they remained in the minds of their family in Canada, even though they had nothing tangible to connect to them. Nancy's experiences suggested that the chances of reconnecting with the Moir boys seemed unlikely and the Massan/Macdonald/Gibeault extended family stopped actively looking. It seemed that too much time had passed.

## Conclusion

Christina Massan was never entirely forgotten, though the story of her life was obscured by circumstances over which she had little control. We will never know how much influence she had in the decision to send her boys away, but she certainly did what she could to ensure they did not forget her. Indeed, two of her sons, Bill Macdonald and Ronald Moir, named their own daughters after her.<sup>78</sup> Though some of her husband's relatives were uncomfortable with Christina and her children's Cree heritage, Sarah Moir's displays of the beadwork and her efforts to keep the lines of communication open ensured that Christina was not completely brushed aside. Despite this, the secrecy surrounding Tom and Ronald's Omushkego background and their hesitancy to search for relatives for fear of upsetting their aunt, contributed to their own children's uncertainty about their roots. Christina's children in northern Manitoba (as well as some of her grandchildren) have experienced parallel feelings that something about their past was missing. Her death at such a young age meant that they, too, were reliant on the memories of their siblings and what their elders chose to tell them about their mother and her life.

The stories and silences surrounding Christina Massan continue to shift, and as they change, her descendants agree that the process of

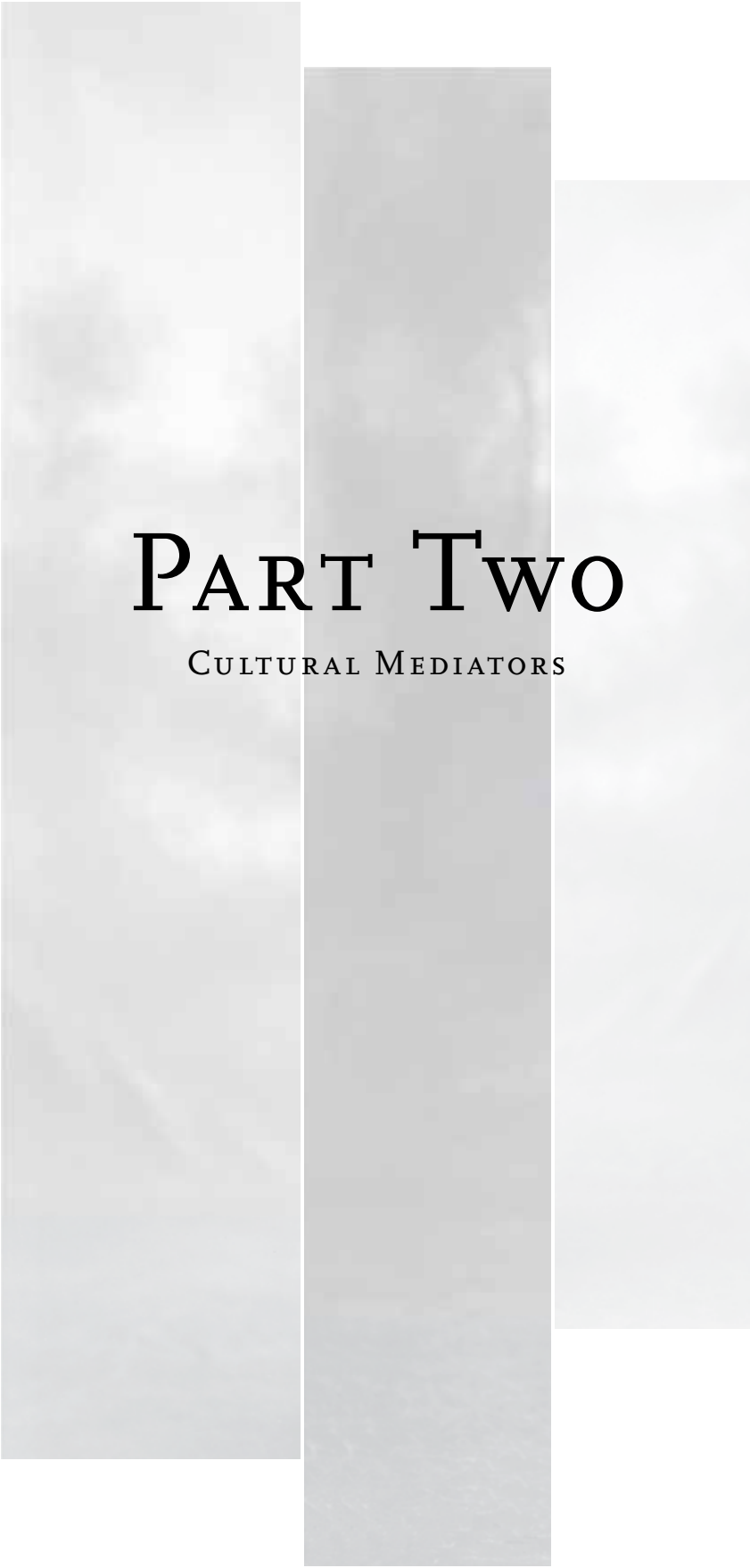
recovering her life story has helped them better understand their own history. Many of Christina's descendants in Canada had never seen any photographs of her (although Dorothy Morand has a print of herself as a child with her mother), and had no idea that some of her beadwork had survived. They talked of the excitement and emotion of seeing the photographs of Christina and Henry and their children as well as images of the beadwork and other materials associated with them. They repeatedly expressed their admiration for her needlework skills and their wish to see the actual pieces (not just photographs) and to touch and smell them too. Her granddaughter, who shares Christina's name, believes that her family is extremely fortunate that Moirs kept the beadwork safe for so long. In her view, it has become a connecting point to relatives overseas, as well as a means of furthering her understanding of her grandmother's life. An educator by profession, Christina has often witnessed the searches that many younger people undertake to try to understand their place in the world and their identity as Omushkegowak. She suggests that historic artifacts can assist with the processes of healing currently taking place within Aboriginal communities, and in her own case, learning about her grandmother has been a huge source of pride.<sup>79</sup>

Christina and Henry Moir's grandchildren have also spoken with amazement of how the beadwork was able to connect them to their grandmother's family. If it is true that Christina intended that beadwork she gave her sons would be a source of memories and a way of ensuring that the ties between them would not be severed, then her gamble paid off, though as Alison Grant has observed, not as she may have anticipated: "She must have been petrified that they would forget that [Omushkego] part of them. And although maybe it didn't work for my father and my uncle, in a way it's been the next generation on that's come back and is querying, you know, what's this about? Why have we got these beads? What's our history and who was she?"<sup>80</sup> Unlike some of the beadwork associated with this family, most similar pieces in museums and family collections cannot be linked to an identifiable maker. Though they may not have been made by women whose lives were as marked by tragedy as Christina Massan, they too have stories connected to them that can help clarify how Aboriginal people have negotiated their relationships with non-Native people. As such, further research is needed into how artifacts are, or are not, spoken of, displayed, touched, and treasured by the descendants of people that have used them, and thus how they are active agents in the creation of history.

## Acknowledgements

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# PART TWO

CULTURAL MEDIATORS



## REPOSITIONING THE MISSIONARY:

### Sara Riel, the Grey Nuns, and Aboriginal Women in Catholic Missions of the Northwest

*Lesley Erickson*

On 22 June 1871, *Le Métis*—a French-language newspaper based in St. Boniface, Manitoba, that expressed Métis viewpoints—reported that three Grey Nuns had arrived from Montreal in the company of Sister Charlebois, assistant superior-general. Only one of the sisters, the article continued, would accompany Charlebois to Île-à-la-Crosse, a mission in northern Saskatchewan for which Bishop Vital-Justin Grandin was recruiting missionaries: “Sister Riel, sister of Mr. Louis Riel, however, has been designated to accompany her. She is, believe us, the first missionary from the Métis Nation of Red River given to this Great Apostolic work, and one could not find a more dignified person. A kindly heart, keen intelligence, and inexhaustible charity distinguish this new missionary. Her departure is a sacrifice for her family and the entire population, but at the same time it is an honour and a blessing for us.”<sup>1</sup> Two months later, en route to the mission, Riel wrote her mother, “I find myself more and more happy to have been chosen, me Sara Riel, as the first Métis missionary in the North.”<sup>2</sup>

In the 1860s and 1870s, Sara Riel, like her famous brother Louis, was well known to the inhabitants of Red River. The settlement, founded at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine rivers by the Earl of Selkirk in 1811, became a multiracial society composed largely of retired fur traders and their Aboriginal families—French-speaking, Roman Catholic Métis and English-speaking, Protestant “mixed-bloods” or Country-born. Born in 1848 to Jean-Louis and Julie (née Lagimodière) Riel, members of the Métis social and political elite, Sara Riel was educated at the Sisters of Charity’s (Grey Nuns’) boarding school in St. Boniface, entered the congregation’s noviciate in September 1865, and became the first Métis Grey

Nun from Red River in March 1868.<sup>3</sup> Her life and career spanned an era when political, economic, and social power had yet to shift completely in favour of colonial institutions and culture and when fears of *métissage* had yet to overcome the colonial project.<sup>4</sup> Proficient in English, French, Cree, and Michif, Riel was deemed ideally suited to teach in the congregation's day and boarding schools at St. Norbert, St. Vital, Francis-Xavier, and Île-à-la-Crosse and to serve as a cultural mediator between male missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and Aboriginal women and between the Catholic hierarchy and Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) officials. Riel was a confidante of Alexandre-Antonin Taché, the bishop of St. Boniface, who was her spiritual advisor at Red River and fostered mixed-race nuns for a successful apostolate in the Northwest, and she corresponded with Joseph Dubuc, co-founder of *Le Métis* and member of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, until her death from tuberculosis in 1883.<sup>5</sup> Despite the importance that the Catholic hierarchy, the Métis community, and the Riel family attached to Sara Riel's accomplishments—in his poem "Le vallon Marguerite Marie," Louis Riel exclaimed, "You emulate God completely / My Grey Nun! / My missionary!"—her experiences have been overshadowed by those of her more famous brother and by the shifting preoccupations of historians.<sup>6</sup>

My first encounter with Sara Riel occurred by accident while flipping through local histories of Saskatchewan homestead districts. Communities in which the Grey Nuns had been active as teachers and nurses often mentioned Sara Riel as one of the congregation's more famous members. In the 1970s, during the first flush of the second-wave feminist movement and early forays into women's history, Mary V. Jordan had sparked some interest in Sara Riel by publishing *To Louis from Your Sister Who Loves You, Sara Riel*. But the book, which focuses on Sara Riel's letters to Louis, says little about Riel's position as a nun and missionary and instead presents her as a pale imitation of the brother with whom, Jordan argues, she shared a mystical relationship: Sara became a nun only after Louis forsook the priesthood; she became a missionary only after Louis fled Red River during the Resistance.<sup>7</sup> Political scientist Thomas Flanagan also uses aspects of Sara Riel's life and letters to explore her brother's motivations in *Louis "David" Riel: Prophet of the New World*. Flanagan likewise believes that the siblings shared a special relationship, but he argues that the strength of Sara's faith and a near-death experience in 1872—which caused her to renounce the Riel name and take that of Marguerite-Marie of Alacoque, a seventeenth-century nun and apostle of devotion to the

Sacred Heart of Jesus—influenced Louis’s decision to forgo the priesthood, change his name to David, and try to establish himself as a New World prophet. Flanagan also speculates that Louis’s desire to reform the family by sanctifying incest, polygamy, and a married clergy as central components of his new religion might have reflected unvoiced sexual feelings between the siblings.<sup>8</sup>

The desire to use aspects of Sara Riel’s life to shed light on her brother—to treat her, as Carol Hielburn observes in her assessment of the state of biographical writing in the late 1980s, as a woman celebrated as an event in the life of a great man—has obscured rather than illuminated the siblings’ relationship and Sara Riel’s position in Native-newcomers relations.<sup>9</sup> When contrasted with her brother’s life, Sara Riel’s experiences open a window to explore how gender shaped Métis men’s and women’s responses to Christianity and colonization.<sup>10</sup> As a woman who lived at various cultural crossroads, or contact zones, during a pivotal period in Canadian history and self-identified as Aboriginal and as a *true missionary*, Sara Riel also unsettles neat cultural dichotomies—white settler versus Aboriginal, colonized versus colonizer, missionary versus missionized, male missionary versus female auxiliary—that colour the lens through which historians view the past, particularly as feminist historians have increasingly abandoned early efforts to explore the experience of women “in between,” such as Sylvia Van Kirk’s *Many Tender Ties*, to explore white, colonial representations of these women. Historian Joan Sangster asks whether the reluctance among white feminist historians to use the term *experience* precludes them from interpreting “historical sources across differences to effect an empathetic engagement with the past.”<sup>11</sup> The current emphasis on nation and race and the interpretive turn in Canadian women’s history, combined with a tendency among historians of Catholic missions to render women religious as witnesses and auxiliaries to evangelization rather than as missionaries in their own right, has likewise contributed to new gaps and silences in Aboriginal women’s and missionary history.<sup>12</sup>

Unlike most Aboriginal women who encountered missionaries in the nineteenth century, Sara Riel was a prolific writer, and her family’s prominence guaranteed that her letters would be preserved. Written primarily between the late 1860s and her death, her letters reveal the intensity of her faith and her commitment to Catholic missionary endeavours. When combined with the Grey Nuns’ correspondence, community histories, necrologies, chronicles, and *circulaires mensuelles*, her letters offer an

opportunity to circumvent the male missionary gaze to explore how women religious and Aboriginal women in similar circumstances navigated the hierarchies of difference that increasingly underpinned missionary and nation-building efforts in the Canadian Northwest.<sup>13</sup>

Sara Riel was not the only mixed-race woman to become a Grey Nun: beginning in 1845, a number of Country-born women at Red River took the veil, and these women occupied an important, liminal position in the Grey Nuns' community, between Native and newcomer, and in the imperial and national mindset of members of the Catholic hierarchy who viewed the reformation of Aboriginal masculinity and femininity as a central component of their mission. In the 1840s, the bishop of St. Boniface, Joseph-Norbert Provencher, launched a two-pronged plan to extend and consolidate Catholic influence in the Northwest. The HBC had invited Wesleyan Methodist missionaries west in 1839, and Provencher believed the Company favoured his Protestant rivals. In response, he invited the missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a French order, to man and defer the cost of expansion. Pierre Aubert, a Frenchman, and Alexandre-Antonin Taché, a French Canadian, arrived at St. Boniface in August 1845.<sup>14</sup>

Provencher also began to search in earnest for a female congregation to establish a girls' school in the colony. In 1824, he wrote his superiors in Quebec, "It would please me to have a well-established school before the Protestants. They are speaking of establishing one on a grand scale."<sup>15</sup> Although two Métis women, Angelique and Marguerite Nolin, opened a girls' school five years later, the school closed within a few years.<sup>16</sup> In 1841, Provencher again wrote to his superiors, but this time he emphasized that the presence of a Catholic sisterhood would quicken the progress of civilization at Red River: "Our inhabitants' daughters do not need an advanced education. Rather, our principal goal will be to teach them to live well and to become good mothers. This process will raise the country's civilization level in accordance with the times."<sup>17</sup> Two years later, Provencher approached the Grey Nuns in Montreal. Mother Forbes-McMullen chose four sisters for the endeavour, and to honour the congregation's new status as missionaries, she had a habit of grey homespun, brown shawl, grey head covering, and green veil designed. The four sisters arrived at Red River in June 1844.<sup>18</sup>

When Taché took possession of the St. Boniface Episcopal See in 1858, the Catholic presence had expanded to four secular clergy and ten Oblate missionaries, and the Grey Nuns had opened schools at St. Boniface and St. Francis-Xavier. The hierarchy hung its aspirations for a successful

apostolate on children of the Métis merchant-trader class who had been nurtured in the faith and a sedentary lifestyle. Both Jean-Louis and Julie Riel had contemplated a religious vocation prior to marriage. Born on 7 June 1817 at Île-à-la-Crosse to Jean-Baptiste Riel, a voyageur for the North West Company, and Marguerite Boucher, a French Canadian–Dene woman, Jean-Louis returned to Lower Canada with his family in 1822. At the age of twenty-one, he served one term out west with the Hudson's Bay Company but decided to enter the Oblate order's noviciate upon his return. For reasons unknown, his vocation lasted only a few months, and he returned in 1844 to Red River, where he hoped to become a school-master. Unfortunately, his arrival coincided with that of the Grey Nuns, who took up teaching duties immediately.<sup>19</sup>

Jean-Louis's wife-to-be, Julie Lagimodière, was born in 1822 to Jean-Baptiste Lagimodière and Marie-Anne Gaboury, French Canadians who had settled in 1812 at Red River, where they became part of the merchant-trader class. The Lagimodières, like other French Canadian families, integrated with the majority Métis culture in the colony and passed its traditions on to their children. When a Winnipeg journalist interviewed Julie Riel in 1885, he described her as, and mistook her for, a *Métisse*.<sup>20</sup> Highly devoted to the Roman Catholic Church, Julie, along with Bishop Provencher, hoped that she would join a sisterhood. Her parents, however, wanted her to accept Jean-Louis's marriage proposal. She refused to do so until a vision—leaving church one day, an old man surrounded in flames cried down from the Heavens, “Disobedient child!”—convinced her to accede to her parents' wishes. She married Louis Riel Sr. in January 1844.<sup>21</sup>

Nearly forty years later, Sara Riel wrote her mother, “It is on your lap that I learned to listen to the voice of God. It is you, beloved Mama, who has made me a Sister of Charity. Your motherly voice speaking to me of God made me a true religious and a better missionary.”<sup>22</sup> Faith and the accoutrements of nineteenth-century Catholic devotionism permeated Jean-Louis and Julie's daily experiences and those of their seven living children. Religious icons and devotional aids—rosaries, crosses, portraits of the Virgin and Child, and images of the Sacred Heart of Jesus—were scattered throughout their home at the forks of the Red and Seine rivers in St. Boniface and helped them to foster their own and their children's faith and devotion.<sup>23</sup> Although Jean-Louis entered into a number of unsuccessful business ventures that strained his family's resources and increased its debts, the Riel family retained its place among the merchant-trader class. Average reading and writing skills, abstinence from excessive drinking

and socializing, a sedentary lifestyle, and a desire to see their children educated formally by the Catholic clergy distinguished the Riel family from members of the Métis hunting class at St. Francis-Xavier and Pembina.<sup>24</sup>

When Sara Riel began school, the Catholic hierarchy was in the process of developing an educational system that would reflect and enhance hierarchies of difference emerging in the Northwest. In 1853, Louis began his schooling at the Grey Nuns' day school. Bishop Taché, however, was displeased with the arrangement. In 1851 he had written to Bishop Bourget in Montreal, "The education of boys has been badly neglected among our Catholics at Red River . . . The Metis do not like to be governed by women, and this probably explains why their children do not go to school."<sup>25</sup> The Christian Brothers, an order dedicated to teaching young men, arrived in December 1854, and Louis transferred to their school. Under the brothers' tutelage, Louis received the foundations of a classical education, and Taché hoped their curriculum and example would encourage Aboriginal and mixed-race men to pursue the priesthood.<sup>26</sup>

Although an Indigenous priesthood remained but a dream, Taché's desire to foster mixed-raced nuns for a successful apostolate came to fruition. The Grey Nuns were primarily to prepare Aboriginal girls for their future role as wives and mothers to Catholic families. In July 1844, the congregation took over the school that had been started by the Nolin sisters. By 1851, Sister St. Joseph was teaching fifty students of diverse backgrounds—Métis, Country-born, Saulteaux, and Sioux—in a day school. Two years later, Sisters Curran and Pépin opened a boarding school. In 1859, Taché wrote, "It would be hard to exaggerate the work being done by this community of Grey Nuns. They have a boarding school for young ladies who receive an education quite the equal of that given to middle-class girls in the most advanced countries."<sup>27</sup> Both Provencher and Taché hoped the boarding school's pious and strict atmosphere would foster vocations among mixed-blood women.<sup>28</sup> The emphasis on piety and discipline was by design. Father Georges Belcourt had started, in 1857, to train young Métis women for a congregation that would teach the children of hunters at Pembina and St. Joseph. The order was disbanded within three years, however, when Belcourt was accused of sexual misconduct.<sup>29</sup>

The Grey Nuns were impervious to accusations of sexual impropriety, and they shared the hierarchy's belief that the Métis could be uplifted through education. Joseph Royal, superintendent of education, visited their convent school in 1871, and his report took pride of place in their chronicles: "The [students] are a testimony to their teacher who devotes herself

not only to teaching them to read and to write, but also to show them modesty; virtues that are so precious and natural in Christian women.”<sup>30</sup> That same year, Sister Charlebois commented that the mission at St. Francis Xavier, “although but six leagues distant from Saint Boniface, is nevertheless no further advanced in civilization than are our far-off missions of Saint Albert and Île-à-la-Crosse. . . . The Natives, like those of the missions just mentioned, spend the greater part of the year on the prairie hunting buffalo, and accompanied by their children.” Charlebois believed that if the congregation had more money, “numbers of children, in the absence of their parents, might be cared for; they would gladly take the entire charge of these little ones, and by this means civilize and instruct them.”<sup>31</sup>

Sara Riel attended St. Boniface Pensionnat from 1858 to 1866. In 1862 Father Ritchot, curé of St. Norbert, conducted the annual public examination and noted that the sisters taught approximately twenty charges French, English, history, mathematics, painting, and music. Riel also learned to spin, knit, sew, and embroider, to perform all the duties required to maintain a household and demonstrate domestic economy. Ritchot believed the orderliness and cleanliness of Métis households run by former students was a testimony to the Grey Nuns’ effectiveness.<sup>32</sup> Riel’s notebooks also reveal the curriculum’s intensely religious nature. Riel spent hours copying and memorizing sermons, translation exercises, stories, and geography and history lessons with overt religious themes. Like most nineteenth-century teaching orders, the Grey Nuns regarded their students’ piety, modesty, and artistic skills as being more practical and pleasing to God than academic achievement. And the convent school reflected and followed the rhythms of the sisters’ daily existence. Girls were kept isolated, they adhered to a strict code of dress, and the sisters, much like their own superiors, surveyed their behaviour as they attended to daily prayer, mass, evening chapel, sacraments, and penance in a closed environment embellished with crucifixes, statues, and paintings of saints and biblical scenes. May devotions to the Virgin Mary involved colourful pageants, devotions, and numerous prayers, and the first Friday of each month and the entire month of June were devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.<sup>33</sup>

The Grey Nuns augmented the lessons in Catholic womanhood that Sara Riel had learned at her mother’s knee. Sermons on the Holy Family portrayed Jesus, Mary, and Joseph as the perfect European, Catholic family. (The lack of daughter within the trinity tells its own story.) Joseph, the *paterfamilias*, was the ideal father and breadwinner who laboured as a carpenter to provide Mary and the infant Jesus with life’s necessities.<sup>34</sup> Mary

was the ideal woman. A sermon dictated to Sara Riel titled “La Sainte Famille” stressed Mary’s domesticity and virtue. Chaste, modest, wise, delicate, and young, “Mary was Jesus’s mother and she fulfilled her roles as Saint Joseph’s wife to the best of her abilities. She placed Joseph before her own desires, and she did nothing to displease him.”<sup>35</sup> Following Pope Pius IX’s proclamation of her Immaculate Conception in 1854, veneration of Mary, as the role model for pious and submissive womanhood, underscored the Catholic devotional revolution of the nineteenth century.<sup>36</sup>

The Grey Nuns used more subtle means to promote adherence to European gender roles among their students. They encouraged girls to look to Taché and his mother, Henriette, as father and mother figures. The congregation shared a particularly close relationship with the latter, who lived in Boucherville, Quebec. In 1861, Henriette Taché wrote to Sister LaFrance, then superior of the Grey Nuns in St. Boniface, to thank her for a letter, “Thank your students for me, my small girls, and assure them of my sincere friendship.”<sup>37</sup> Two years later, Sara Riel wrote to Henriette Taché on behalf of the boarding school students to express their love for Henriette and admiration for her son, who was like a father to them.<sup>38</sup> In a letter to a friend, Riel again expressed her esteem for the bishop and noted the happiness he fostered among her companions: “Monsignor, who deigned to honor our modest exams with his presence, addressed us with a few words of encouragement that filled us with joy. We were happy to hear our first Pastor’s voice encouraging us in the practice of goodness and the love of virtue. His Grace extolled the advantages of a Christian education. I realize I am happy to have spent the best years of my life in a house of education, living under the same roof as God.”<sup>39</sup>

Riel’s education presented her with the ultimate paradox: the Grey Nuns prepared her for marriage and motherhood, but their curriculum and example presented a competing vision of chaste, unmarried womanhood. The Grey Nuns encouraged students to venerate Mary, who was also the ideal virgin, and Riel’s notebooks are peppered with biographies of female saints—Catherine of Sienna, Theresa of Avila, Margaret Mary Alacoque—who shared common traits: wealth, beauty, social status, and chastity. The sisters also emphasized veneration of their foundress, Mother d’Youville; faith in Divine Providence; and dedication to the Folly of the Cross, a devotion that entailed imitating Christ’s sufferings. Mother d’Youville had introduced daily litanies to Divine Providence in 1770, which reinforced the sisters’ belief that Providence was their only salvation, hope, and refuge: it gave courage to the weak, guided pilgrims, and

consoled exiles.<sup>40</sup> In contrast, motherhood and homemaking must have seemed less than heroic. The Grey Nuns' curriculum supported Canon 10 of the Council of Trent's twenty-fourth session: "Virginity and celibacy are better and more blessed than the bond of matrimony."<sup>41</sup>

Riel entered the congregation's noviciate in September 1865 and became a professed nun within three years.<sup>42</sup> Louis had returned to Red River from Quebec to take up his responsibilities as *paterfamilias* to the Riel family following his father's death, and the family's financial situation had worsened. Draught and famine plagued Red River in 1865, and the Riels had planted no crops for two years. They possessed only a few head of livestock and had difficulty procuring bread. The younger siblings withdrew from school to take up work. In 1868, for instance, Marie Riel began to teach elementary school at the Grey Nuns' St. Charles convent.<sup>43</sup> Although Sara Riel's decision to take the veil could have been a strategy to alleviate her family's financial situation, her letters suggest that faith, the Grey Nuns' curriculum, and Taché's encouragement fuelled her choice.

Riel was the only Métis woman who became a Grey Nun prior to the Resistance, but a number of Country-born women preceded her and likely served as role models. In *A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Red River Resistance, 1869–70*, historian Frits Pannekoek argues that the Grey Nuns enhanced ethnosectarian divisions by catering to the Country-born population and failing to establish intimate relations with their Métis charges to reconcile them to the establishment. The Grey Nuns, he argues, regarded the Métis with disdain and segregated their children in day schools so they could focus their attention on their principal charges, children of Catholic mixed-race families who attended the boarding school. Neither Provencher nor the Grey Nuns, according to Pannekoek, were eager to foster vocations among Métis women; consequently, only girls of the best Country-born families, those who were more European than Aboriginal, took the veil. Pannekoek concludes that the Grey Nuns, like the Oblates, had little use for the secular clergy and their principal charges, the Métis hunting class at Pembina and St. Francis-Xavier.<sup>44</sup>

The hierarchy did in fact encourage the Grey Nuns to open their boarding school to attract the patronage of prominent Country-born families. But financial considerations and sectarian rivalries played a role. The Grey Nuns received no financial assistance from the Montreal motherhouse and relied on the male clergy at Red River for food, clothing, and shelter.<sup>45</sup> In 1848, Taché wrote Bishop Bourget, "If the sisters could conduct an English school they would probably attract more bourgeois children . . . With

these schools they could survive. The day or regular schools give them less than nothing."<sup>46</sup> Taché then dedicated himself to acquiring the services of an English-speaking nun from the Grey Nuns' Ottawa community to round out the boarding school's curriculum and attract the attention of respected officers of the Hudson's Bay Company. Taché feared the officers would send their daughters to Protestant schools.<sup>47</sup> The Grey Nuns embraced the Oblate's spirit of sectarian rivalry and recorded their joy at receiving daughters of well-situated Company bourgeois, such as the Rowand sisters, as students.<sup>48</sup>

The Grey Nuns moulded their curriculum to suit Catholic, Country-born students, but they also fostered close ties with Métis children, whom they viewed as the principal recipients of their mission. Individual Grey Nuns adopted a paternalistic attitude toward the Métis, but their Country-born charges experienced the same. When Marguerite Connolly, a Country-born woman, became the community's first novice in 1845, Mother Valade wrote to Mother McMullen in Montreal: "Although she means well I assure you that it is necessary for us to be patient and constant. It is no small thing to mould persons who have no idea of constraint, obedience, or the other virtues indispensable to the religious life, into nuns."<sup>49</sup> In earlier letters, Valade expressed the hope that the strict, "civilized" atmosphere of the boarding school would promote vocations among Aboriginal women, and she herself had been chosen to co-found the Red River mission because she was one-quarter Aboriginal.<sup>50</sup> The Riel family and other Métis mourned her death in 1861. Sara wrote to Louis, "Today, we can see her no more, the one who gave you the Christian education you now have."<sup>51</sup>

Provencher and Taché hoped the Grey Nuns would provide their students with an elevated education, yet many of the sisters had humble backgrounds. When Riel spoke her perpetual vows on 6 March 1868, she joined a diverse community of women who shared only their faith. In 1869, the Red River community comprised twenty-six sisters. The majority had emigrated from Quebec, but four were English Canadian and four were mixed-race. Some were connected to prominent Quebec families; others were the daughters of farmers or the working class.<sup>52</sup> And their pensionnat catered to a diverse group of young women and girls. On 9 August 1877, Marie-Josephine Nebraska, a Sioux student who became a Grey Nun a few years later, read a welcoming address to the governor general of Canada and his wife: "Your Excellencies have before you a unique assembly of young girls. I, who have the honour to address you in the name of my companions, am of the Sioux nation. On my right you have a Sauteaux,

on my left a Maskegon . . . Members from eight other nations share our good fortune, and you see in this haven of peace and charity children from eleven different nationalities.”<sup>53</sup>

The mixed-race women who attended the boarding school and took the veil were equally diverse. Marguerite Connolly, who was the daughter of Chief Factor William Connolly and a Cree woman, Miyo-Nipiy, was also Mother d’Youville’s grandniece and sister to Amelia Douglas. During her youth, she spent time in Montreal, where she studied with the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame. She returned to the West with her mother in 1840. (Her father had turned away her mother and married Julia Woolrich in 1832.) At Norway House, Marguerite learned that there was a Catholic bishop at Red River and convinced her mother to make St. Boniface their final destination. Miyo-Nipiy lived with the Grey Nuns while Marguerite attended the boarding school.<sup>54</sup> Two Métis women, Sisters Marion and Gladu, joined Connolly in the noviciate but withdrew before speaking final vows. It was not until 1862 that another mixed-race woman, Marie-Jane McDougall, became a postulant. Born at Little Slave Lake in 1844 to a Protestant Scots and a Salish woman, McDougall grew up in the Grey Nuns’ care. Father Thibault “brought her” to the nuns in 1853, and she spoke perpetual vows in May 1865. Four months later, Annie Goulet entered the order. Goulet’s father, Alexiz Goulet, had been one of the first Upper Canadians to settle at Red River; her mother, Josephette Severette, was Scots and Aboriginal. She attended the boarding school at the request of Bishop Taché and became a novitiate in 1862.<sup>55</sup>

Mixed-race nuns stirred up some controversy and resistance among the Grey Nuns. In 1862, Taché learned that some of the nuns were contemptuous of Métis novitiates. When he chastised one of the sisters for remarks she had made, she asserted in her own defence that she had only expressed the belief that “Canadian” nuns would be preferable because they had more perseverance. Taché brought the issue to the attention of the superior-general, Sister Slocombe, in Montreal; he claimed that the nuns had made remarks that alienated Métis women and deterred them from becoming nuns. Taché took action and personally conferred the veil on Goulet and McDougall when they became postulants. The ceremony, which was open to the public in the Grey Nuns’ chapel, did not have Slocombe’s approval. Slocombe later wrote Taché that she had not intended to delay the novices’ admission: the sisters at St. Boniface simply felt that mixed-race candidates should be put to the test because experience had shown that they were fickle.<sup>56</sup>

Mixed-race nuns left behind few written sources to explore why they became nuns or how they were treated, but Sara Riel's letters to friends and loved ones emphasize her faith and strong, intimate ties with other nuns and the clergy, regardless of their race. For Riel, a religious vocation was a calling from God that entailed personal sacrifice. Following her final vows, she wrote Slocombe to explain how she had felt upon receiving Mother Valade's cross: "This cross, which this good Mother made me kiss so often during the last days of her sickness, revived my shattered courage. . . . I tell myself: the ties that unite me to the heart of our beloved Mistress are the same that tie my heart to God. I want to follow in her footsteps, to renounce myself and live only for God."<sup>57</sup> Two years later, she wrote to Louis, who had fled to the United States in the aftermath of the Resistance: "What a retreat does for the heart! . . . Is it not uplifting when, in the silence and during meditation, we hear all around us this voice that alone can charm us? . . . We must love and serve the Lord with joy. We must find in religion the balm of our sorrow."<sup>58</sup>

Although Sara Riel expressed her religious vocation in terms of her faith, and although a few individual nuns expressed doubt regarding the fortitude and dedication of mixed-race nuns, Sisters Connolly, McDougall, Goulet, and Riel pursued distinguished careers. Unlike Provencher, who felt that there was little hope that mixed-race nuns would rise to the first ranks of the hierarchy, Taché, as early as 1845, singled out their linguistic abilities as an asset: "[The Grey Nuns] have five postulants: two came with us and three are Natives of the country. These three small *métisses* are charming children whose knowledge of Indian languages will allow them to render us essential services in the future."<sup>59</sup>

Sister Laurent, who arrived at St. Boniface in 1850, said the following of job appointments within the congregation: "Each of us was appointed to do that which she was best suited for."<sup>60</sup> Mixed-race nuns demonstrated a marked aptitude for teaching and administration. Connolly took up a teaching position before she spoke her final vows, whereupon she began teaching catechism at the Saulteaux lodges near Red River. She successfully converted a number of Aboriginal girls and encouraged Saulteaux students to sing hymns in their own language.<sup>61</sup> In 1874, she became matron of the boarding school students in St. Boniface and, in 1890, she was appointed superior of the St. Boniface community. She later travelled to and taught at the congregation's schools at St. Anne des Chienés and in the Qu'Appelle Valley.<sup>62</sup>

Marie-Jane McDougall likewise began her career teaching at the St.

Norbert convent school. In 1869, she co-founded St. Mary's School in Fort Garry, which offered girls an English-speaking education designed to counteract Protestant influence. Prior to her death in 1896, McDougall took charge of St. Boniface's Provencher Academy.<sup>63</sup> And Annie Goulet's career followed a similar trajectory. Following her perpetual vows, she taught at the parish school in St. Vital, and she too taught at the Oblate's residential school in the Qu'Appelle Valley, where her knowledge of *Saulteaux* and *Cree* proved indispensable.<sup>64</sup>

Sara Riel's facility for languages rendered her eminently qualified to teach at the Grey Nun's St. Norbert convent, which had been founded in 1859 and boarded fifteen students. In addition to teaching approximately sixty day-school students, Riel, whose musical talents had become evident as a student, was also placed in charge of teaching the students to chant. In 1869, however, Riel's superiors, who feared for her safety as the events of the Resistance began to unfold, recalled her to St. Boniface, where she took charge of the sacristan and taught classes in the day school. Before she left for *Île-à-la-Crosse*, Riel also spent brief periods of time teaching at St. Vital and St. Francis-Xavier.<sup>65</sup> Father Laflèche had asked the Grey Nuns to establish a school at the latter in 1850 because he feared competition from Protestant missionaries. The school catered to *Saulteaux* and *Cree* children who, according to the missionaries, were eager to see and listen to the "prayer women."

Although a few sisters expressed reservations about mixed-race nuns, the latter achieved positions of greater prestige than some of their French Canadian counterparts. Sister Laurent, for instance, did the community's laundry, and Sister Withman, who was Mother Valade's cousin, was placed in charge of sewing the clergy's cassocks and the sisters' habits.<sup>66</sup> The congregation's chronicler suggested that Riel had been upset when she returned to St. Boniface during the Resistance and learned she was to perform manual labour: "Sara Riel arrived here on the third of December suffering horribly. One supposes that she was upset because she had to do the housework."<sup>67</sup> The chronicler's comment betrayed a certain contempt, and perhaps jealousy, that contrasted with Riel's own recollection of events: "As I told you in my last letter, the annual autumn changes took place today on the 20th. My mission to St. Norbert is over. The orders place me in the day school. I must also mend and wash the community's linen—a job that occupies me continuously without fatiguing me at all."<sup>68</sup>

The Grey Nuns generally sympathized with the *Métis* cause, even though as women religious they were to refrain from overt displays of

sympathy. During the 1885 Rebellion, in which Louis Riel again played a prominent role, Mother Deschamps, superior-general of the Grey Nuns, advised sisters in the Northwest: "We must not mix up in questions of justice, of civil right and wrong. Our hearts as Sisters of Charity must be inclined to relieve whatever suffering we come across and, if we have any preference or choice of whom to serve, we must be open to the most unfortunate, the ones least favoured."<sup>69</sup> During the Resistance, the Grey Nuns privately expressed support for the Métis. In September 1868, Sara wrote Louis from St. Norbert and passed on her superior's best wishes and those of Sister Laurent, O'Brien, and Connolly, who hoped for the "perfect accomplishment of all your wishes."<sup>70</sup> As the political situation worsened, expressions of sympathy became more frequent and more public. Sister Curran, secretary to Taché, wrote the motherhouse, "Louis Riel has been chosen by God to save this country."<sup>71</sup> In October 1869, the Grey Nuns at St. Norbert (where Sara Riel was teaching), St. Vital, St. Francis-Xavier, and St. Boniface had their students pray and sing around the clock for a Métis triumph.<sup>72</sup> After Louis fled south, Sara wrote, "Truthfully, I believe it would be an insult to God if I doubted for only one second the complete success of our cause . . . Remember last winter when everything seemed over: it was God's will that you should be overthrown in order to better your success."<sup>73</sup>

The Resistance had a profound, often tragic impact on mixed-race Grey Nuns. In September 1870, two members of the Ontario Rifles and a civilian chased Elzéar Goulet, Sister Goulet's brother and a member of the court martial that had tried Thomas Scott, to Red River, where they allegedly stoned him to death. Sara Riel travelled to St. Vital to comfort Goulet, "I met my Sister Goulet at St. Vital School. I cried with her when she told me how they had judged you, my brother. She wept while reading your letter."<sup>74</sup> Taché and the Grey Nuns later used Riel's and Goulet's personal connections to ease the conciliation process following the Resistance. On 25 November 1870, two months after the new lieutenant-governor of Manitoba, Sir Adams George Archibald, had arrived at Red River and Goulet's body had been found on the banks of the river, Archibald, his daughter, and his private secretary visited the Grey Nuns. Sisters Riel and Goulet attended, and of the twenty-two nuns who assembled for the event, only the mother superior, Sara Riel, and Sister Curran spoke to the guests.<sup>75</sup>

Six months later, Sara Riel volunteered to dedicate herself to the Oblate mission at Île-à-la-Crosse. Her decision came at a time when a great deal of hostility was directed against the Riel family. Immediately following

the Resistance, Euro-Canadian settlers and General Wolseley's soldiers sought retribution for Thomas Scott's death. A mob surrounded Julie Riel's house and threatened her and her children to obtain information about Louis's whereabouts and activities. Julie withdrew her youngest girls, Octavie, Eulalie, and Henriette, from school. When Taché suggested that they return to school in September 1870, Julie did not insist that they do so because the political situation remained volatile.<sup>76</sup> The Grey Nuns' records also suggest that Sara Riel's decision was sudden. Sister Charlebois advised her superior at Montreal that she had replaced Sister Boire with Sister Riel because the latter risked losing her faith if she remained at Red River.<sup>77</sup>

Yet Riel's motives were more complex, and her letters reveal that her desire to become a missionary was far from new. She first referred to becoming a missionary after her brother fled from Red River, when she promised to protect him in the "Wound of His Sacred Heart . . . to love and pray, these are the arms with which we must fight to vanquish the conqueror."<sup>78</sup> Two months later, Sara cryptically suggested that she too would like to reap the benefits of exile.<sup>79</sup> She admitted to Louis that although she had wished for death throughout 1870, by the new year her feelings had changed: "There is a wish in my heart that naturally would be yours too . . . which catches me unawares a thousands times—to ask God for something that I leave you to guess . . . Time will tell whether my most intimate prayer for the past eight years shall at last be answered."<sup>80</sup> The Grey Nuns believed and taught their students and postulants that suffering and sacrifice would guarantee salvation; drawing inspiration from Christ, they exalted the life of a missionary, or exile, as the ultimate sacrifice.<sup>81</sup> Riel herself likened Grey Nun missionaries to Christians of the Early Church who had lived together as one family united by a common goal.<sup>82</sup>

Riel's entourage left St. Boniface on 19 June 1871 by Red River cart and reached Île-à-la-Crosse one month later. On departure day, the Grey Nuns gathered at St. Boniface to bid farewell. Sister McDougall accompanied the party to St. Francis-Xavier, and Sara Riel's cousin, Josette Lagimodière, signed a four-year contract to serve as one of two *filles engagées* (hired girls). When the party arrived at Île-à-la-Crosse, known originally as *Sa Key Ta Waow*, they discovered a well-established mission situated at a traditional rendezvous site for nearly two thousand Dene and Cree. A Hudson's Bay Company post, which served as the winter residence for the bourgeois of the English River district, sat on the west shore of Lac Île-à-la-Crosse and was surrounded by buildings that housed the Company's thirty servants,

who were largely Métis. The Catholic mission stood on a point alongside the lake and one mile to the south of the post. It was home to three Oblate priests; four Grey Nuns (the congregation had established a hospital and boarding school, École de Ste. Famille, in 1860); approximately eight hundred Cree, Dene, and Métis converts and non-Christians; and servants in the employ of the missionaries. The four Grey Nuns—Agnès, Pépin, Dandurand, and Riel—were responsible for the care of two male and three female orphans and ten male and eighteen female boarding school students.<sup>83</sup>

Aside from biannual missions and itinerant preaching journeys, mission work was confined to the Grey Nuns' labour and the performance of regular Catholic services for servants of the Company and converts, most of whom spoke only Aboriginal languages. As at Red River, the Oblates envisaged the Grey Nuns as agents of civilization to northern Aboriginal women, particularly Dene women, whom they, like many European observers, viewed as beaten beasts of burden.<sup>84</sup> Considering that the Oblate's superior in France frowned upon the Grey Nuns' presence at northern missions, Oblate priests likely manipulated representations of Dene women to justify the Grey Nuns' presence. In 1872, Bishop Vital Grandin sent a memo to all Oblate priests in the Northwest that outlined the congregation's role: "The Sisters of Charity have a special mission, a mission that we as men cannot fulfill by ourselves . . . Who is it then, that gives to the [Aboriginal] woman what she needs to be a wife, a Christian mother, an angel of peace in the family? It is the Sister of Charity's most important duty."<sup>85</sup> Grandin referred to constraints placed upon the Oblate missionary by the order's rules and regulations, which limited interactions with Aboriginal women. Aside from the elderly, priests were to refrain from all contact with the female sex—including students and Grey Nuns. When obliged to speak with women, priests were to converse where they could be seen but not heard, particularly if they discussed a private affair, such as a confession.<sup>86</sup> Sister Charlebois likewise felt it expedient to provide the Grey Nuns with rules to limit their interactions with men: "The Sisters will not go alone to the confessor to deal with affairs of their conscience except during Confession; in all other circumstances, they will always be accompanied by another Sister or by a mature child."<sup>87</sup>

Sara Riel's status as a *Métisse* and her linguistic talents meant that she was welcomed by the Grey Nuns with open arms. In January 1872, she wrote her mother, "I am beginning to believe that our Sisters spoil me—they are very good for me: I am their small, beloved sister."<sup>88</sup> Riel

became Sister Pépin's assistant in the school. Pépin had founded and taught in the boarding school at Red River, but she experienced difficulties teaching at the mission. Ignorant of Aboriginal languages, she experimented with new methods to teach Métis children who knew no European languages. Conditions in the convent and school were also inhospitable but improved during Riel's tenure. The mission was besieged by long, incessantly cold winters, short hot summers, and frequent floods and food shortages. In 1874, the lake produced few fish; unable to feed their students, the Grey Nuns asked parents to temporarily take back their children. Because of spatial constraints, Pépin, who was also matron of the boarders, slept on a pallet in the classroom while her female charges slept on the floor. Male students remained in Riel and Pépin's care from 9 am to 8 pm, when they returned to the Oblate's residence.<sup>89</sup>

The Grey Nuns' moved into a new convent in August 1874. It housed new personnel (the previous year Sisters Senay and Langelier and a *filie donnée* (a regular sister with limited privileges), Angelique Jettée, had joined the congregation and Pépin had returned to Red River) and provided separate rooms for two female Dene Elders, *filles engagées* and *données*, orphans, and boarders. The Oblates moved into the Grey Nuns' old convent, and the priests' residence became the schoolhouse, where Sisters Langelier and Riel taught thirty-two students, twenty-two of whom were girls and all were boarders.<sup>90</sup> Although she lacked textbooks, Riel established an English class. Prosper Légéard, the Oblate superior at Île-à-la-Crosse until his death in 1879, advised his superior that this service became possible only with Riel's arrival, and he believed the class would enhance the mission's position vis-à-vis the government and the HBC.<sup>91</sup> However, Riel not only had to convince the Métis of the importance of English-language instruction but also of Western-style education in general: "Here in the North our people, the Métis, do not appreciate the benefits of instruction . . . We are required to fight against the indifference and caprice of children as well as against the weakness of their parents."<sup>92</sup>

The Oblates tried to overcome what they perceived as Métis indifference by hosting external exams attended by high-ranking HBC officials. Légéard believed that important officials who could speak French impressed the Métis. In 1876, Riel hosted an exam attended by Chief Factor William McMurray and reported that "everyone had been enchanted because our children bore little resemblance to Indians."<sup>93</sup> The following year, Légéard reported that the strategy had succeeded: the Company's bourgeois and his family had attended and, for the first time, students had

demonstrated their French and English skills, terminating the exam with a rendition of “God Save the Queen.” More than forty boarders planned to attend the Grey Nuns’ school in the upcoming term, not including those children whom the nuns turned away.<sup>94</sup>

Riel’s English class, along with her annual goodwill trips to the HBC post, resulted in closer ties between the Company and the mission and gifts of tea, sugar, bread, and meat for the Grey Nuns, but it did not win over the entire Métis population.<sup>95</sup> In 1875, Riel wrote to Taché to inform him that Métis HBC servants were enraged with her and threatened to withdraw their children from school because she had “forced” their children to speak English. Riel’s superiors deemed it expedient to eliminate English from their curriculum until Bishop Grandin visited the mission.<sup>96</sup> Riel’s English class heightened pre-existing tensions between the HBC and local Métis. When the Company ceased to provide Aboriginal hunters with credit in 1872, Légéard remarked that Catholic Métis would likely continue to leave the mission because of ill treatment. Tensions still existed in 1879, when Riel reported to Taché that the new bourgeois, Ewen M. McDonald, who was a Protestant, had expressed his hostility toward Catholicism by making Catholic Métis work on holy days.<sup>97</sup>

Despite these setbacks, Riel witnessed and served the expansion of the Grey Nuns mission in the years prior to her death. By 1880, the congregation’s establishment comprised six sisters, three *filles données*, three Elders, five male and thirteen female orphans, and two foundlings. The boarding school population, however, remained small at seven male and fifteen female students. Riel did report, though, that she taught fifty-four students, the majority of whom were likely day students. That same year, the Oblates built a new school for the Grey Nuns. Laurent Le Goff, the new Oblate superior, ridiculed its size. At eighty by thirty feet, the polytechnical school also earned the derision of locals, who, le Goff reported, referred to it as a *bêtise* (folly) rather than a *bâtisse* (building).<sup>98</sup>

Despite their expansion, the Grey Nuns were desperate for funds. Riel wrote frequent letters asking for donations and even asked her aunts and uncles at Red River if they could spare vegetables and grains in 1880. Two years later, Charlebois petitioned Prime Minister Macdonald for financial aid for the northern missions—despite the fact that they fell outside of the government’s treaty obligations—and Chiefs Samuel Egan and Michael Deneyon petitioned the lieutenant-governor of Manitoba on the nuns’ behalf: “We who live here [at Île-à-la-Crosse] find it harder than those living elsewhere. At present the Sisters of Charity take care of the unfortunates,

but they are without money, therefore, our Grand Chief, if you will give them money we will be thankful.”<sup>99</sup>

The so-called unfortunates were orphans, and perhaps boarders, that the Grey Nuns housed and fed. The origins and identity of the former are unclear. In 1873, the community received a twelve-year-old Cree girl whose mother had feared she was dying and promised to give her eldest daughter to the Church if she recovered. In 1874, Riel wrote Louis that the Grey Nuns had three female orphans in their care. Two were actually Dene Elders, and the third was the daughter of a Métis man, Baptiste Sergeant, who had remarried and returned to Red River. Riel reported that the younger of the two Elders had never married because she was half-blind and mentally unwell; the other, who was “second only to Eve in age,” had been left naked on the shore by her children.<sup>100</sup> Riel disclosed that Sergeant’s first wife had given birth to four girls, all of whom were deaf-mutes. Two of the girls had rejoined their mother; the other two, according to Riel, had lived miserable lives. She informed Louis that she planned to search for one of the latter.<sup>101</sup>

As at Red River, Catholic missionaries absorbed the knowledge and talents of Aboriginal women into their mission. Marie-Rose Piwapiskus, who was daughter-in-law to Oppikakiw, a well-known storyteller, had lost her husband and never remarried at her mother’s request. Légéard convinced her to teach catechism and the writing of Cree syllabics at the nuns’ school. Isabelle Bekatta, a Dene orphan raised by the Grey Nuns, also taught at their school, and Father Le Goff relied on the knowledge of a Dene Elder known only as “Catherine” to write his Dene grammar. And at Canoe Lake, a mission near Île-à-la-Crosse initiated by a number of Cree families, a Cree widow taught the mission’s children catechism, religion, reading, and writing. Toward the end of her life, Riel formally established a lay organization, Notre Dame des Victoires, to draw students and older Aboriginal women to the Church.<sup>102</sup>

Sara Riel died of complications from tuberculosis in 1883 and her gravesite, which rests on a sandy hill overlooking Lac Île-à-la-Crosse, remains a tourist attraction in the small northern community. In the absence of historical accounts that situate her life in the broader context of Métis and missionary history, she, much like her brother, has become the subject of speculation and invention. Among Elders at Île-à-la-Crosse, for instance, rumours continue to circulate that her death at the age of thirty-five was caused by a push down a set of stairs. However, even when her experiences are placed in such a context, she and other mixed-race nuns like her

remain a bit of a mystery clouded by contradictions. Both Métis society, as it had developed by the mid-nineteenth century, and the Catholic Church structurally and symbolically institutionalized men's authority; however, as was the case for other Aboriginal women such as Kateri Tekakwitha, "Mohawk saint," and the thousands of women who became women religious or Protestant missionaries in the late nineteenth century, mixed-race women could turn Christianity and missionization attempts to their advantage to pursue distinguished careers at a time when their pivotal fur trade role as women "in between" was coming to an end.<sup>103</sup> Yet a religious vocation was not an option for all Aboriginal or mixed-blood women. Only girls who could afford or were chosen to board with the Grey Nuns and proved themselves of strong faith and character became nuns; Aboriginal women uneducated in the European manner could hope to rise no further than the ranks of the *fille données*: women accepted within the congregation with limited privileges who, more often than not, performed labour for the Grey Nuns.<sup>104</sup>

Sara Riel lived and laboured in two distinct social spaces, or contact zones, in a vast Catholic missionary field. In both places, questions of faith and class complicated encounters between Aboriginal peoples and newcomers, as did gender. When approached from the perspective of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women who occupied these spaces, neither Red River nor Île-à-la-Crosse emerges as a place where male missionaries, imbued with the spirit of ultramontane Catholicism, conquered Aboriginal cultures in the name of Christ. Instead, mixed-blood women such as Riel, French and Anglo-Canadian women such as the Grey Nuns, and Cree or Dene women such as Marie-Rose Piwapiskus — women who viewed themselves as missionaries in their own right — contributed to the development of missions and served as cultural mediators. Sometimes their encounters resulted in cooperation; sometimes, as was the case with Riel's English class, they ended in conflict and accusations of coercion. My reading of the traces is not an attempt to construct a colonialist alibi, it simply suggests that Sara Riel and other mixed-race nuns lived during an era when Euro-Canadian accommodation to and integration with Aboriginal knowledges and cultures had not yet given way to policies of assimilation and dominance, and Aboriginal women played an instrumental role in these encounters.<sup>105</sup>

## THE “ACCOMPLISHED” ODILLE QUINTAL MORISON: Tsimshian Cultural Intermediary of Metlakatla, British Columbia

*Maureen L. Atkinson*

Odille Quintal Morison (1855–1933) was born at Fort Simpson, a Hudson’s Bay Company trade centre on the north Pacific Coast of British Columbia. By the mid-nineteenth century, Fort Simpson had become the home of over twenty-five hundred Tsimshian and other First Nations, as well as several dozen Company employees of different ethnic backgrounds. Odille’s father, François Quintal, was a long-serving French Canadian employee of the Hudson’s Bay Company, and her mother, Mary, was a professional midwife of Tsimshian, Gitlaan, Gisbutwada lineage.<sup>1</sup> After Odille’s father died in 1862, Mary Quintal, who is also known as Mary Curtis and later as Mary Weah, took her two children, Odille and Peter, to live at the new Anglican mission village of Metlakatla, where they grew to adulthood.

Early in her life, Odille was recognized for possessing great intelligence, a strong character, and deep Christian commitment. Later, Odille, as a bicultural woman (French Canadian–Tsimshian), was able to move between cultures with varying degrees of fluidity and grace, depending on the time, place, and social circumstance. She contributed to greater cultural understanding as an ethnographer and interpreter for government representatives, religious authorities, and even academics. Hers was not simply a one-way communication from First Nations to White colonial authorities. Indeed, early in her life Odille was called upon to assist her Tsimshian friends and relations to make sense of rapidly changing social circumstances, sometimes as a language intermediary but also as one who contextualized the ideas of colonial society. The following analysis features two very different periods of her life—adolescence and

adulthood—that best illustrate how Odille embraced and adapted her role as cultural intermediary to meet the changing needs of the Tsimshian community and newcomers alike. The two periods also exemplify her ability to find work that meshed with her personal beliefs and goals while enhancing her own social position during times of rapid social, political, and economic change.

Few primary sources exist for Odille's early years. There are documentary references to Odille at age twelve in various missionary reports that speak to her early scholastic ability but do not provide details of her everyday life at Metlakatla. We can paint a general picture, however, of what life may have been like for her and the other young female converts who attended the mission school—some as boarders who resided in the mission house with William Duncan.

Metlakatla's origins harked back to the winter of 1857, when a young English lay missionary named William Duncan arrived at Fort Simpson. Duncan spent the first year learning the language of the Coast Tsimshian people (Sm'álgyax), and limited his missionary activities to teaching men inside the trading post. The following year Duncan began a school for local children and preached to the village chiefs outside the fort wall. After five years of working with the Tsimshian at Fort Simpson, William Duncan, along with many of his adherents, decided it was best to move from Fort Simpson and start a new community. The site selected was an ancient village site twenty-five kilometres south of the fort, across the harbour from present-day Prince Rupert. Historian Jean Barman writes that Duncan was "appalled by the detrimental consequences of Indian contact with outside traders and miners" and therefore justified the relocation to what promised to be a model Christian community.<sup>2</sup> Metlakatla was to be both self-sustaining financially and a place of moral and social harmony, replicating the values and lifestyle "of the small, self-contained villages of Duncan's home in Victorian England."<sup>3</sup>

Much has been written about Duncan and his missionary zeal: his boundless energy and clever industriousness and his autocratic dictatorial style of community rule. William Duncan, as a child of an unmarried woman, was raised by his working-class grandparents in a small English town and worked hard to overcome what he viewed as personal deficiencies. Anthropologist Jay Miller writes: "He devoted much time to reading self-help and improvement books" and embraced the "aims of Evangelical Anglicanism."<sup>4</sup> Duncan, with his Protestant work ethic and background, was a man of ingenuity with a great interest in business and

manufacturing. Even though his main purpose was to bring the Christian message to the Tsimshian, Duncan was also extremely practical and saw it as his duty to find ways for the newly converted to be able to provide for themselves in a wage economy.

Adele Perry, in a recent study, argues that Duncan as a young man had reservations about his own spiritual self-worth even before commencing his missionary career. William Duncan "despaired about his own laziness, his inattention to detail and his lapses in Christian faith. He also wrestled hard with his heterosexual desire, admonishing himself for noticing girls at church."<sup>5</sup> To the pre-adolescent Odille, Duncan was not a man to be feared but more a stern fatherly figure who took active control in all situations. At age fifteen Odille recalled: "I used to look on you as a father by the kindness you used to be to us."<sup>6</sup> Unlike the archetypal Victorian ideal of fatherhood, Duncan took a hands-on approach in everything he did, which must have seemed odd to not only his missionary peers but also to the more traditionally minded Tsimshian, to whom class and social roles mattered. Gender roles were clearly laid out in Tsimshian society, where children and all food preparation as well as allocation of foodstuffs belonged to women. From this, as historian Brian Hosmer points out, "females derived considerable influence."<sup>7</sup>

Historical debate continues over Duncan's relationship with his female boarders, including Odille's aunt Elizabeth Ryan. There is evidence that many of his fellow missionaries were gravely concerned over the perceived impropriety of a single man living with impressionable Native girls. Fellow Church Missionary Society worker William Henry Collison even wrote Duncan, questioning the paternity of a Tsimshian child and reasoned that Duncan should "address these rumours and, in doing so, restore the settler community's faith" in the missionary project.<sup>8</sup> Yet the presence of Tsimshian housekeeper Mary Rudland and the girls' daily interaction with senior female converts such as Odille's mother, Mary, and her grandmother, Lydia Ryan, must have maintained a strong cultural influence.<sup>9</sup>

The controversy centres on Odille's maternal aunt Elizabeth Ryan, an early boarder in Duncan's household who formed a relationship with Duncan's lay minister, Robert Cunningham. Elizabeth and Robert were quickly married in the fall of 1864 by the only ordained minister on the Northwest Coast, Robert Doolan, when it was clear that she was pregnant. William Duncan, who was absent from the mission on business, was outraged and disgusted by these events, and formed a deep life-long

animosity toward Robert Cunningham. The Cunninghams were hastily sent to work with Doolan at the Nass River Mission for a brief period of time, until Robert Cunningham found work with the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Simpson.

Odille had been a student at Duncan's school at Fort Simpson and was at Metlakatla for many years while her mother, Mary Quintal or Curtis, was in Victoria living with an unidentified man.<sup>10</sup> Unlike the female boarders, however, Odille and her brother Peter likely stayed with their uncle Charles Ryan and his family, which included their maternal grandmother. This most certainly was the case in the years between 1864 and 1868, when Odille was between the ages of nine and thirteen. An 1868 report lauding the successes of Metlakatla, composed by long-time Anglican minister Reverend Edward Cridge, provides a credible (albeit missionary) backdrop of the Metlakatla mission village. Of particular interest are Cridge's explanations and justifications for the female boarders' upstairs dormitory room in the residence. He found that each girl had "her own recess, and many of them prettily ornamented" with nothing in the air to "offend the most fastidious." Of course, the main purpose of the girls boarding was to protect their "usefulness and virtue" for marriage—and not to anyone other than other Native Christian men. "Such is the estimation in which this establishment is held by the Christians of the place, that a young man will scarcely look at a girl for a wife unless she has passed through it. . . . It is certainly surprising how Mr. Duncan, without female assistance, *other than that of natives*, could have so successfully carried on this branch of the work" (emphasis added).<sup>11</sup>

It is reasonable to assume that Duncan gave guidance for the general conduct and expectations of the girls, but it would have been highly inappropriate (in either culture) if he took any part in specific instructions regarding female reproductive sexuality, particularly the onset of puberty. It was enough, in terms of the missionary purpose, that Duncan "guarded" these young women—essentially warehousing them until they reached a marriageable age when they would continue to propagate the Christian message within their own families. Historian Susan Neylan writes: "The image of Tsimshian Christian women fashioned by Euro-Canadian missionaries had much in common with the portrayal of all women in the late Victorian period. Most especially, however, it was similar to the picture of working-class women drawn by the dominant middle class."<sup>12</sup> The education that these girls received was perhaps broader in both content and depth than that of their female Victorian counterparts

in later missionary residential enterprises, in which isolation from their family and Native community were a large part of the strategies of residential schools.<sup>13</sup>

The girls not only studied the conventional three Rs, but in the context of family or even wider Metlakatla dynamics the students were also exposed to lineage stories and oral narratives and Tsimshian traditional laws (*ayaawx*).<sup>14</sup> Left to the directions of their grandmothers and aunts, or Native matrons, they would have continued (even on the quiet) some of the Tsimshian cultural practices of seclusion, prescriptive diet, and celebration at the onset of menstruation.<sup>15</sup> Traditions dating back over millennia may be questioned, countered, and even reviled by missionaries, but as long as there was a memory of practices, if not also the continuation of the practices themselves (in this case by women of Metlakatla), they are not easily expunged from cultural expression.

Odille’s mother was both a midwife and healer and was considered the “mother of Metlakatla” upon her death in 1917.<sup>16</sup> Lydia Ryan, Odille’s grandmother, was noted as a “wise woman” and held a position of influence in the Gitlaan community.<sup>17</sup> As anthropologist Jay Miller explains, trade specialists included “shamans, carpenters, musicians, composers, herbalists, midwives, and astronomers.” Each of these served as advisors to house and village chiefs.<sup>18</sup> There is little chance that these women would abandon this power simply because they had accepted the principles of Christian faith and baptism. Thus, the social and cultural expectations for Odille to succeed would have been quite high, given the status of her matrilineal kin.

Language skills, both written and verbal, were an important form of power at this time in Metlakatla. According to the 1868 report by Reverend Edward Cridge, the “regular technical school” exceeded his expectations:

The progress of the scholars is remarkable. They read, write, cipher and can translate easy books into their own language and *vice versa*. They have made some progress in geography and history. And I certainly think that Mr. Duncan, in view of the special relations of this people, has done well in preferring the ordinary English to the syllabic system, as the vehicle of expressing their thoughts in writing.

Later, Cridge commented reproachfully that the boarders refused to speak English (even when capable), preferring their Tsimshian language,

Sm'álgayax. "With a *shame that is peculiarly Indian* they can be rarely be brought to *speak* in it. It is the one difficulty which, with all his influence, Mr. Duncan has not yet been able to *conquer*" (emphasis added). The girls were expressing themselves in English in the written form, using the practical applications of what the missionaries had to offer and the power of education. Yet what Cridge saw as shame is perhaps an expression of a culturally appropriate resistance of power on the part of the young women.<sup>19</sup>

Odille would have been twelve years old at this time and a student in the day school. In this same document, Cridge clearly singled out Odille and another student as examples of scholastic success and the rationale for teaching the student written English form:

I enclose two themes, written by girls in the mission under thirteen years of age, on a scriptural subject which I gave them, and in preparation of which they were entirely unaided, nor has a single correction been made, except of a pure inadvertency either in grammar or spelling. One of these girls (Omintal) is the daughter of a French Canadian half-breed, brought up entirely by her Indian mother from the age of seven years; the other is pure native. It is evident that such correspondence with Christian friends would be impractical under the syllabic system, and under that system the learners at Metlahkatlah would be debarred from a great stimulus and a real pleasure.

Although Reverend Cridge applauded the individual achievements of the two girls, he was compelled to make racial distinctions between the "half-breed" and "pure native." He also singled out Odille as the child of an unmarried "Indian" woman; we are left wondering what is the significance or implication of these remarks. Perhaps Cridge was unaware that Odille's father had died and had not abandoned his family. Or perhaps he included this information simply to magnify the achievements to bolster support for William Duncan and the school that became a model missionary project as reports of its success circulated.

Historian Gail Edwards describes how missionary tracts, letters, and reports such as Cridge's 1868 document reinforced the constructed literary figure of the missionary as cultural hero. She suggests that writers (often missionaries themselves) constructed an "'Aboriginal Other,' who could be civilized, converted, and made literate only through the unremitting toil

and personal intervention of the binary opposite, the missionary hero."<sup>20</sup> Without continued financial support from both individual donors in colonial centres, as well as institutions like the Church Missionary Society that supported Duncan financially, the Metlakatla project would most certainly fail. Cridge's report was not only a brief explaining Duncan's methods and successes but also an advertisement and appeal for continued funds. The education Odille and the other students received was the only way "Mission Indians" or "Native Christians" could overcome the imperialist perceptions of the limitations inherent in the heathen races, even after conversion.<sup>21</sup>

As ethnohistorian Ken Campbell explains, Tsimshian education was "integrated into life as whole. It was not divided into separate systems . . . . Children learned by actively participating in the life of the community . . . . Everyone had a role to play in the community and they were educated to assume those roles."<sup>22</sup> In hindsight, some may argue that Duncan's school and the whole mission project were at odds with this tradition, but the Tsimshian of this time did not all necessarily see the acquisition of new forms of knowledge as competition. These new skills were viewed with respect, and those who had the abilities claimed a certain authority and power within the community. However, this does not mean that they abandoned traditional intergenerational educational processes. The Tsimshian, like many other First Nations, desired (and even demanded) missionary educators who would provide "resources, such as literacy, that they and their children would thrive, not [those] who would turn them into subservient dependents."<sup>23</sup>

From the missionary stance, Odille was an example of the success of the mission project, yet Odille was also fulfilling a more traditional role in the community. In late May of 1869, two months before her fourteenth birthday, William Duncan drafted a letter of commendation to Odille for her years as a pupil and her conduct over that time, the draft of which survives among his papers. This letter illustrates the personable but pious nature of the relationship between Duncan and Odille. She excelled academically and got on well with others. He wrote that he could not find fault with her "general conduct at school" and hoped that God would "give [her] years to follow from the good beginning." He managed to take a small measure of credit for her success, by adding, "notwithstanding the little help . . . I have been able to teach you."<sup>24</sup>

Duncan trusted Odille so much that a year later he requested that she begin teaching some of the younger students. He could not hide the

personal connection and pride that he felt in her success after watching her grow over the years. She must “never forget to Thank God for his love like you [did as] a child.” She was to be “thankful & humble [never] proud” and always look constantly “to God for help and guidance.” The reference to her childhood suggests an intimate insight that he may not have had of other students. She had after all been one of his first students at the day school in Fort Simpson, long before the move to the new mission village.

Odille’s education at Metlakatla was as rich and diverse as it was significant, given the time and place. When we consider all the variables and look outside the two-dimensional nature of the missionary record, we recognize the importance of community and traditional cultural practices that were not fully abandoned. Rather, both sides adapted and integrated social rules, as much as Tsimshian and colonial worldviews would permit. Odille Quintal’s abilities and later responsibilities keenly reflected this rapidly changing era, and by the time she was fifteen Odille was not only teaching in the mission school but also an active community correspondent, particularly during William Duncan’s first furlough in 1870.

Three of Odille’s letters to Duncan while he was away survive. As well as detailing the comings and goings of community members and events, they reflect Odille’s connection to her family, the Tsimshian citizens, and her role as community correspondent. There is an undeniable cheerfulness (or at least enthusiasm) when Odille describes community happenings; ironically, these descriptions were always coupled with melancholic messages about how Duncan was missed by everyone. “On the Queen’s Birthday the people here were having all sorts of games but they were not so complete without you.”<sup>25</sup> Duncan’s support and approval was primary in her mind, and she took her responsibilities very seriously. Yet Duncan’s controlling nature—described as his cultivation of “emotional dependence”—is also vividly illustrated in the letters.<sup>26</sup> Although Duncan was a father figure to Odille, she also required his endorsement in her teaching abilities and her spiritual commitment. Only Duncan’s return would bring back the happiness, the community felt; it was as if Metlakatla had lost its soul. The intimacy that was exemplified by the girls who resided in the boarding home reflected for Duncan “relationships of love and respect as well as protection.”<sup>27</sup>

As each of Odille’s letters progress, they become newsier about community happenings. It is also interesting to note that they all seem to be

completed in the evening when Odille had time to reflect on the day or to add a few more lines as she waited for the steamship *Otter* to carry the outbound mail down the Coast. One revealing postscript shows just how much her skills as community scribe were in demand. She asked Duncan to forgive her bad writing, as she was in a hurry and many people were in the house "troubling" her to write for them.

Odille possessed superior literacy skills and academic abilities. Who knows what she may have achieved if she had been given the opportunity to study at high school or college? For Odille, of course, this would have been unlikely as a female of First Nations ancestry living "on the edge of empire," as scholar Adele Perry terms colonial British Columbia. One wonders why Duncan did not think of taking Odille with him to England as a symbol of his success or try to find a benefactor to support her further education. It could be that Duncan himself had received only an elementary schooling. In later years, he did not support the educational aspirations of younger converts such as Edward Marsden who went on to college in the United States after the move to New Metlakatla in Alaska in 1887. Brian Hosmer writes: "In an 1895 letter, Duncan warned Marsden against 'indulging the idea that learning, and the spread of knowledge, are the cure-all for the world's degradation, and especially important for the uplifting of the Indian race.'<sup>28</sup> Duncan knew that knowledge was a powerful tool, but he considered Christian faith a far superior method of social improvement.

In another letter to Duncan, Odille explained that her Aunt Elizabeth was visiting. Her husband, Robert Cunningham, then employed by the HBC, and Elizabeth and her two children were living at Fort Simpson. Another young Englishman by the name of Charles Fredrick Morison had joined the HBC as a clerk the year before and was also assigned to the fort. It was through the Cunninghams that Morison met Odille Quintal. Theirs was truly a mutual attraction and perhaps even love at first sight. Their daughter Vicky Morison Aldous said: "That was how Father met Mother. He and Robert Cunningham were on a return trip from up the Skeena and called at Metlakatla. They had called to take her [Odille] to [Fort] Simpson to spend the holidays. He [Charles Morison] said that he saw this beautiful girl looking up and . . . said 'I lost my heart then.'<sup>29</sup>

Odille Quintal and Charles Morison were engaged by 1871, perhaps in secret. Even though Odille herself was of mixed race, and her mother and aunt both had married non-Native men, the missionaries would certainly

**5.1** Odille Quintal  
Morison, Victoria,  
c. 1880.



had been disappointed that Odille, as a Christian role model, had married outside the Metlakatla community. As things turned out, however, both Charles and Odille Morison would become very dedicated to the mission at Metlakatla in later years, after it had been abandoned by Duncan, the church, and Indian agent authorities.

The Morisons’ marriage ceremony was conducted by a maritime clergyman of the H.M.S. *Sparrowhawk* in August of 1872 while William Duncan was away. Charles, who was twenty-eight years of age, and Odille, who had just turned seventeen, returned to Fort Simpson, where Morison was Hudson’s Bay Company manager. As with her role as cultural intermediary at Metlakatla, Odille became an integral part of the fort community. She acted as translator and interpreter for local and visiting dignitaries and hosted missionaries, travellers, and even Lord and Lady Dufferin with the surprise visit in 1876 of the Governor General and his wife. Dufferin recorded the event: “We found, on arriving [at Fort Simpson], all the men officials absent, but were received by Mrs. Morrison, of the H.B.Co., and Mrs. Crosby, the wife of the Methodist minister conducting the mission there, who conducted us over the place.”<sup>30</sup>

Odille’s mother, Mary, lived with them for a time, as well as Odille’s brother Peter Quintal. The Morison household also included three daughters—Dolly, Ilene, and Elenor—born between 1873 and 1878. Unfortunately, all three died of diphtheria before reaching the age of five. After seven years at Fort Simpson, Charles Morison went into business for himself, and the Morisons moved to Victoria in late 1879, perhaps as a fresh start, away from the sad memories at Fort Simpson (see Figure 5.1).

In the early days of Fort Victoria, mixed-race “ruling” families such as the Douglasses, Works, Todds, and McNeills were considered the social elite. As Adele Perry discusses, during the late 1850s and 1860s there was a definite social shift in colonial British Columbia away from the fur trade bourgeoisie. “Their right to rule was constantly contested by a self-styled ‘reform’ group... who had ties to the gold and merchant economy and firm belief in the colony’s potential as an agricultural, white settler society.”<sup>31</sup> Much of Anglo and American immigrant populations (including the various church and missionary factions) tried to realign the colonial structures in the newly established province to regulate Aboriginal populations and mixed-race families.

While living in Fort Simpson, the Morisons had been moderately insulated from the overt racism that had become part of mainstream society as it struggled to redefine itself as a colonial and civilized (thus superior)

social entity. Geographer Cole Harris writes about the colonial process that not only isolated Aboriginal people but also created segregated communities of various kinds, including those of Chinese and Asian descent and Whites themselves:

Boundaries became exceedingly important: the boundary of a colony (later of Canada) could be used to exclude immigrants, and, internally, boundaries could be used to separate those who were welcome because they were civilized, and those who had to be put up with because they were not. In drawing these latter boundaries, it could easily seem a moral duty, from the perspective of the civilized, to be as parsimonious as possible with the uncivilized.<sup>32</sup>

In the summer of 1882, Odille became pregnant with her fourth child. Her brother Peter Quintal had moved in with the Morisons, but after six months of an unspecified wasting illness, Peter died in the late fall of 1881. The Morisons decided to return to the North Coast, where there were more employment opportunities for Charles with entrepreneur Robert Cunningham, who was also Odille's uncle by marriage.

Although the years in Victoria may have been difficult for the Morisons, it was not an easy time for the mission at Metlakatla either. William Duncan, whose evangelical leanings had become more entrenched over the years, fought with the Anglican bishop, William Ridley, who was appointed to the newly formed diocese in 1879. Duncan and Ridley fought over everything from church property to theology but mostly over support from Native followers. The Morisons were "great warriors for the Church of England," who decidedly supported the bishop's position over "all the distortions" that their daughter Vicky later attributed to Duncan and his supporters.<sup>33</sup> Another important factor was that, unlike William Duncan, Bishop William Ridley had a female partner in the missionary venture—his wife Jane Ridley. She was extremely well regarded in the community and was a very compassionate and competent woman. In later years, Jane Ridley was remembered by Charles Morison as "a lady of rare accomplishment fitted to fill and shine in any sphere her lot might be cast."<sup>34</sup>

In March of 1883, the Morison family began to grow again as it welcomed baby Helen Miranda, who was born at Metlakatla. Odille's mother, Mary, who had married the Eagle Haida chief Weah from Masset in 1879,

also returned to Metlakatla late in 1883 after the death of her husband.<sup>35</sup> Odille's aunt, Elizabeth Ryan Cunningham, visited frequently with her two sons, but resided at the community founded by her husband in 1870, Port Essington. Between 1864 and 1885, Robert and Elizabeth had several children, yet only two boys survived past infancy. Although Robert Cunningham was a successful businessman who started several ventures, including a fish cannery and a lumber company at Port Essington, the marriage between Elizabeth and Robert was less than ideal. Rumours circulated that Robert was habitually unfaithful and abandoned Elizabeth on several occasions as he travelled the Coast on business. In the winter of 1872, Odille wrote a letter for Elizabeth addressed to William Duncan, thanking him for his kind support and forgiveness as he had nursed her through an illness during one such occasion.<sup>36</sup>

The strife and animosity between Duncan supporters and those of Bishop Ridley at Metlakatla, and also with the Methodists at Port Simpson, was most potent in the mid-1880s. Politics and religion were constant points of frustration for the Tsimshian as the provincial and federal governments ignored their claim to lands and title. Odille was most productive and had renewed confidence and purpose during this time, as there was significant demand for her skills as a cultural intermediary by religious establishments, government officials, and, later, visiting scholars. This role of intermediary may have ingratiated her into the new missionary establishment, but in some ways, it separated her from the larger Tsimshian community. Odille's marriage to a White man certainly did not help this situation, although this was not evident when Morison was in charge of the fort in the 1870s. There was no middle ground for anyone in the Metlakatla community between Duncan and Ridley, and there were new religious factions appearing at Port Simpson. It is naive and ethnocentric to view the Tsimshian community as a cohesive group pre- and post-contact. Tribal alliances and family lineage still played a huge part in the social makeup, despite all missionary attempts to impose quasi-democratic Victorian principles in the highly stratified society.

Once again, Odille became a high-profile member of the Metlakatla community because of her language expertise. One of her first assignments, and the work of which she was most proud, was a series of translations of several books from the New Testament, as well as her translation of the Anglican Prayer Book from English to Sm'álgyax. Bishop Ridley may have instigated the project, but it is obvious from most sources that the actual work was conducted by Odille alone. It is not clear if it was work

that she was contracted to do or if it was expected that she would volunteer her services. Regardless, Ridley did not recognize her efforts publicly, and this proved to be a sore spot for both Odille and Charles. Charles wrote:

It was during [Ridley's] tenure that the great translation of the Anglican Prayer Book was made into the Tsimpshean dialect, all the services excepting the Psalms being translated, also the Gospels, Epistles and Collects. This work was done by Mrs. Charles F. Morison, [Odille] long a school teacher for the C.M.S., and residing at the time in Metlakatla, it was a wonderful work and could have been accomplished by no other person, the lady in question having a perfect knowledge of both languages. She also translated a number of the hymns and short stories into the vernacular. These translations are used to this day but not in her name. It is only doing justice that it should be known who made the translations.<sup>37</sup>

Years later Odille herself would write on the back of a photograph of diocesan staff that she “was due credit for the translations of the prayer book much of the bible & many hymns into the Tsimpshean language.”<sup>38</sup> It was obviously an important matter to the Morison family, so why did the bishop not recognize or at the very least identify her by name? From what is known of Bishop William Ridley, it simply did not cross his mind that a public thank you would ever have been required. In many cases, Ridley omitted information from his letters home to England regarding all the work done by others in the diocese. As representative head of the Anglican Church in northern British Columbia, Ridley simply took credit for all work done within it. Even Reverend William Henry Collison felt compelled to mention that Ridley did not recognize his role in setting up the first Anglican mission in Hazelton.<sup>39</sup> This exchange shows that Ridley's negligence was not just reserved for women or based solely on imperial notions of race and ability. He was simply a “snobbish,” self-indulgent man who assumed that his title, class, and education trumped the work of others.<sup>40</sup>

Odille did not just translate; she was also called upon several times to act as interpreter during judicial and governmental hearings. One early occasion was during the deputation of Church Mission Society officials as they investigated the allegations that Bishop Ridley had made against William Duncan. General J.G. Touch and Reverend Blackett stayed at Metlakatla for six weeks:

We obtained the services of Mrs. Odill Morrison, a lady in full sympathy with the Society, and very competent to perform the duty, being in the habit of performing in judicial proceedings. She has assisted the Bishop in the translation of the Gospels and the Prayer-Book, and we have great pleasure in here acknowledging the readiness with which she very kindly placed her services at our disposal throughout our stay in Metlakatla.<sup>41</sup>

It is interesting that the officials not only recognized her efforts as interpreter on their behalf but also acknowledged her work with the biblical and prayer book translations.

When considering the role of translators and interpreters, it is important to note the difference between them: translators deal with written sources, while interpreters are required to communicate spoken language in real time. Translating and interpreting require native fluency in both languages. An interpreter, however, does not often have the luxury of time to resolve potential communication barriers, whereas translators may be able to refer to other sources to verify the meaning and context of a particular word or phrase.

Interpreters were considered an integral part of Tsimshian communities in pre-contact times. Anthropologist James McDonald indicates that special "foreign" language training was required, as the Tsimshian did not readily understand neighbouring First Nations languages, which often belonged to an entirely different language family. In the last 150 years, "new language skills were acquired to interact with the new nationalities encountered in the colonial period, but the need for foreign languages fit into the older pattern."<sup>42</sup>

As with all First Nations languages in what is now British Columbia, there was no written form of Sm'álgyax prior to contact. While carved symbols, images, artwork, and even geographic formations held significance and cultural meaning, a written form of the oral language did not exist. Obviously, then, the role of the translator (or one who transposes the written word) did not exist prior to arrival of the missionaries. From the 1860s onwards, interpreters who could also read and write in the language of the colonizers were highly valued.

Historian Susan Neylan has suggested that Native intermediaries wielded great power, sometimes at the expense of the missionary, as they translated complex theological and moral issues through the filters of their cultural experience. The words, gestures, and tone of the missionary were

important, but from the congregation's perspective, the role of the interpreter was equally significant, as they were seen as endowed with special abilities. "Missionaries might have been oblivious to just how much control their assistants had over the form and content of their proselytizing.... This interpreting of both the Word and the missionary for Native peoples enabled an indigenous expression of Christianity rarely acknowledged in the historical literature."<sup>43</sup>

Odille had, from early in her life, both written and conversed in English and acted as the voice of the community. It seems, however, that in the ten years she was living in Fort Simpson and Victoria, the demand for language skills had decreased in the Metlakatla community, as more people could read and write English. As well, under the bishop's direction, all missionaries on the North Coast had to be proficient in the language of the people before they were sent to preach. Perhaps Ridley was concerned about Native converts deviating from Anglican doctrine because of language interpretation. In fact, Odille, a former schoolteacher, became the language instructor for missionary newcomers. Helen Dallain, niece of the Indian agent stationed at Metlakatla, noted:

When the Missionaries came out first they were usually single men, most of them engaged to someone in the old land and the Bishop made it a rule that they must be able to preach in Tsimpshean before they could send for their bride-to-be. It was a very clever idea and a great incentive to study and Mrs. Morison was their teacher and did a lot of translating for them as she understood and spoke one language as well as the other and was always the interpreter chosen for important proceedings for both the Church and State[.] In fact I don't know how either party could have got on without her and Mr. Morison was always on hand to help out with church services.<sup>44</sup>

Odille facilitated the language requirements of the Anglican missionaries, but it is not known to what degree she may have instructed them in cultural protocols. Even if she had passed on this information, it does not mean that the newcomers, who had an energized, evangelizing Victorian agenda, would have heeded the subtleties of language let alone important Tsimshian information about territory, crests, hereditary title, and matrilineal descent or inheritance.

The bishop and his supporters could not resolve their differences with

William Duncan, who had appealed to the United States after finding no solace in Canada from the provincial or federal governments. He and over seven hundred Tsimshian made the move in early fall 1887 to their new community, New Metlakatla, located on Annette Island in Alaska. We cannot know how Odille felt about this, but surely her exposure to different theological perspectives in Fort Simpson and in Victoria would have radically altered her adolescent reliance on William Duncan. Odille was a grown woman with enough power to make up her own mind on faith matters. It is also worth noting that all of Odille's extended Tsimshian family remained, including her grandmother; her mother, Mary Weah; and her uncle Charles Ryan and his family.

It appears that Odille's affiliation with the Anglican Metlakatla community put her on the wrong side of the Methodists at Port Simpson, a congregation in which she once took an active part. In the late 1880s the missionary there, Thomas Crosby, came under fire from various levels of government for his support of First Nations land claims. In response, the Methodist Missionary Society held an inquiry with proceedings in Port Simpson. The Morisons were now members of Metlakatla, the regional Anglican and government headquarters. The Methodist Tsimshian assumed that the surveyors were biased when they hired Odille as an interpreter and that the surveyors would cheat the Port Simpson Methodists out of a large portion of the proposed reserve.

In an affidavit sworn by Crosby ally, Tsimshian Lewis Gosnell, it was recorded how the people now perceived Odille Morison as an outsider. He described how two years earlier, Indian Affairs commissioners C.F. Cornwall and J.D. Planta also "called at Metlakahtla for an interpreter, and brought her up the coast, and to all the places to which they went. They would not change her when our people protested against it. Our people wished to have our own Interpreter, but because Mrs. Morison was of the Church of England, she was kept in employ. Thus we see they prefer one Church to another."<sup>45</sup> The interpreter who acted on Gosnell's behalf was none other than Methodist missionary and former friend of the Morisons, Thomas Crosby, who referred to Odille Morison as the "Bishop's *paid* interpreter," which was meant as an insult to Odille.

It is impossible to tell how Odille was affected by this reception at Port Simpson. For someone who valued honesty and integrity, this questioning of her allegiances must have upset her a great deal. There are few records of her acting as official interpreter after this, and none in her former home of Port Simpson. Shortly after Odille found a new and invigorating

outlet for her cultural knowledge as an early language teacher and Tsimshian contact for the anthropologist Franz Boas, later recognized as “the foundational figure in professional anthropology in North America.”<sup>46</sup>

In the late spring of 1888, Boas recorded his first meeting with Odille while he visited Port Essington, on the southern shore of the Skeena River estuary. A year earlier Odille’s aunt, Elizabeth Cunningham, had drowned in a canoe accident while she and four others were crossing the treacherous body of water. The Morisons were living seasonally in the large Cunningham household at Port Essington, and Boas was pleased to stay there, where “Tsimshian was the only language spoken.”<sup>47</sup>

Boas stayed for close to ten days, and during that time Odille must have made quite an impression. Within the year Odille’s first ethnographic composition, a series of Tsimshian proverbs, appeared in the fledgling publication, *Journal of American Folklore*. This was the first literary or academic work to be produced by a Tsimshian woman—and Odille received full credit with her name and the date given as January 1889.<sup>48</sup> We do not know exactly what Odille thought about the publication, but there is correspondence to suggest that she did not feel the project was complete.

A brief note from Odille to Boas dated December 1888 was written in Charles Morison’s hand: “I am sorry to say that I have not been able to get them done yet on account of sickness in my family but will get at them as soon as possible, which will be before long.”<sup>49</sup> At that time, the term *sickness* was often used by women when discussing childbirth or pregnancy but Odille’s next child, John, was not born until 1890, so perhaps she was ill or there was sickness in the extended family. What is most interesting is that Odille felt obliged to reassure Boas, even though she was too infirm or busy to write the letter herself. She was also letting him know that her family life was her major priority, but that she was committed to balancing it with her work. Her husband, Charles Morison, was acting as her secretary and writing these letters on her behalf—although she did sign the document. Truly their marriage was a partnership, with each partner recognizing the strengths and abilities of the other without feeling threatened.

The next surviving letter to Boas, written in Odille’s own hand, was dated 22 April 1889, four months after the reported illness:

I enclose what you wanted me to do in Zimpshean, a sheet of it (No. 16) I have not done as I think you must have sent it

accidentally if not please return it and it shall be done. With kind  
regards, as usual in haste, Yours truly O. Morison  
PS, Boat just coming in and only stays a few minutes, OM.

It is impossible to figure out exactly what happened without a complete copy of all the correspondence, but brief as this note is, it suggests that Odille felt something was lacking in her work. She obviously felt time pressures. With the boat departing, it was imperative to send off what she had.

By June 1891, Franz Boas was working on the ethnography exhibits for the Chicago World's Fair. Boas was developing a reputation for detailed professionalism but also as a bit of a troublemaker. He was critical of the curatorial practice of organizing cultural artifacts by use and purpose rather than by geography, as he preferred organization by language and national context.<sup>50</sup> Boas was arguably more holistic in his approach, encouraging a wider series of questions about not only the use of objects, but also how they worked in conjunction with the philosophical and mythical context of any given group of peoples.

The prevailing attitude held by most non-Native individuals was that coast First Nations, as with all Indigenous peoples, were a dying race. As missionaries were saving souls, it was reasoned that primitive societies would be steamrolled by more advanced civilizations through the grand Victorian dream of progress. Progress, in fact, was the theme of the World's Columbian Exhibition of 1893, organized by the Illinois Institute of Technology, so the design of ethnographic exhibits and cultural displays reflected this.

In June 1891, Franz Boas sent a letter to Odille to request her expertise once again. He was "very anxious to obtain a series of traditions from the Tsimshian in the original language with translations . . . All traditions referring to ancient beliefs . . . most welcome." The best news was that Boas actually had financial resources and would pay her one hundred dollars for "a good collection of this kind."<sup>51</sup>

Boas' second request was a much larger undertaking. He wanted "a good collection of implements formerly used by the Tsimshian" and would "place 200\$ at [her] disposal for obtaining specimens all of which however ought to be accompanied by their full explanation as to their use and meaning." Both tasks required a huge commitment, and given that Odille had had another child (John in 1890) and would soon be pregnant one last time, her contributions are impressive.

With the assistance of Charles and her extended family, including Robert Cunningham, Odille procured the requested “implements,” many of which were ceremonial objects. Besides sacred artifacts such as masks, medicine bags, rattles, and items used in puberty rites, she also commissioned unique objects, such as four miniatures, each of which represented a big house belonging to the four major crests of the Tsimshian. Each model was painted with the designs of the crest, and a few even had carved totem poles and house fronts.

Boas’ wish list also included a “totem post with detailed explanation of the meaning of each figure on the same.” He indicated that again, he was “willing to pay a good price for it,” and Odille took him at his word. We do not know who carved the large pole, but we do know that it was unique among all the poles sent to Chicago. All poles were the property of the chief and a particular family lineage; it would have been a major breach of Tsimshian protocol for her to sell property that did not belong to her family. Odille must have interpreted the importance of her collection in terms of its representativeness of all Tsimshian rather than simply of one family or even village and, therefore, had a pole either carved or located to reflect this. Sixty years later Canadian ethnologist Marius Barbeau wrote that this “all clans” pole should not be considered “genuine” since it had all Tsimshian crests carved on it.<sup>52</sup>

The Tsimshian display at the 1893 fair was a small part of a much larger project. Another Aboriginal group—the Kwakwaka’wakw, located further south on the Coast—had close ties with Boas for many years and actually sent several people to the Chicago World’s Fair as performers. These live performers reconstructed a model village on the exhibition grounds. Totem poles were transported from the North Coast and set up in front of the houses facing the water. As historian Paige Raibmon clearly articulates, although “Boas hoped the exhibit would foster greater public understanding of a noble, albeit vanishing, Aboriginal culture, government agents and missionaries hoped it would illustrate the need to control, civilize, and Christianize.”<sup>53</sup>

There are two separate aspects to Odille’s ethnographic commission: there is the detailed cultural description of all material objects she collected (close to 120 separate items) and the detailed explanation of “ancient traditions.”<sup>54</sup> Although the material reveals much about Odille’s cultural knowledge, the tone and phrasing also reflect Odille’s Christian faith. At times, Odille distanced herself from Aboriginal identity with third-person perspective (e.g., “the Tzimshians”) and she interjected personal perspective

as a witness to certain events and opinions. "Though some of the Indians are nearly civilized they still keep the crest up: although in some rare instances, to which I have been an eye witness, it has been broken, causing the utmost consternation among the Indians." And again, when describing the chiefs and secret societies, she slipped in her own personal opinion:

Each trumpet belonging to one society has its own particular sound and is known by everybody. Of course the outsiders never dreamt that they were trumpets, all implicitly believed that they were voices from Heaven, and when they once joined they vowed never to reveal the secret.... Therefore, the chiefs I think were the greatest deceivers.



5.2 Charles, Odille, Vicky Morison Aldous, and grandsons, Metlakatla, c. 1918.

As is inevitable with any collector, Odille's cultural renderings were coloured by her experiences, and what she valued most of the culture—namely, traditions of hospitality, social organization, matrilineal and familial obligation, and the well-being of individuals through the crest system.

Odille Quintal Morison's contributions are numerous. Although her work for Boas and the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 may have brought her greater exposure, her translations of the selections from the New Testament and the Anglican Prayer Book may have been her greatest personal achievement—and one for which she craved recognition. Throughout her life, Odille Morison gave voice to her Tsimshian community and tried to bring understanding between the different peoples of northwestern British Columbia.

Odille and Charles both passed away in the spring of 1933, at Metlakatla. Married for more than 61 years, both supported and encouraged each other's talents. Odille's unique contributions to her Metlakatla community and larger Tsimshian Nation became obscured from her family, and particularly from the recorded history of northern British Columbia. As a woman of First Nations ancestry, she was not included in the spate of celebratory pioneer narratives of the northwestern British Columbia of the late 1950s and 1960s.<sup>55</sup> The recent interest in language and Tsimshian culture drives the present effort to reclaim her voice and other cultural intermediaries of the past. This work must continue, particularly in her home territory of the Northwest Coast of British Columbia.

### Acknowledgements

I wish to extend my thanks to members of the Tsimshian community of Metlakatla, British Columbia, many of whom are related to Odille through the Aldous family, for their encouragement and interest in the life of Odille Quintal Morison. Thanks as well to Jean Barman for her encouragement, insights, and guidance through much of this research.

## OBSCURED OBSTETRICS:

### Indigenous Midwives in Western Canada

*Kristin Burnett*

The transformation of the Prairie West, during the late nineteenth century, from an economy based on the fur and buffalo robe trades to a white settler society grounded in agriculture and respectability created new social arrangements that marginalized Aboriginal women. European Canadians denigrated the skills and knowledge of Aboriginal women; their presence in cities and towns was seen as a problem by the white community, and they were increasingly subjected to state surveillance as part of the government's effort to transform Indigenous society. However, Aboriginal women's skills and knowledge, specifically women's obstetrical expertise and experience, remained important resources in their communities, especially during this period of profound social and economic dislocation.<sup>1</sup>

European Canadians, particularly women arriving in growing numbers after the 1890s, took advantage of the obstetrical expertise of Aboriginal women. Far from traditional networks of familial support, European-Canadian women relied on local Aboriginal women to aid them as midwives, caregivers, and healers. Even the wives of Indian Agents, the North West Mounted Police (NWMP), and missionaries drew upon the therapeutic skills of Aboriginal women. Settlers' diaries, correspondence, and later reminiscences are rife with harrowing tales of Aboriginal women arriving at the last minute to save the day. Although individual stories of these women have not endured in great detail, if examined as a group, the accounts show a pattern that provides a glimpse into the lives of the Aboriginal midwives who worked in the Prairie West. Creating a composite picture of Aboriginal midwives illustrates that these women drew upon a formidable reservoir of obstetrical knowledge passed down

from generation to generation, that European-Canadian women knew how and where to find Aboriginal healers and midwives, and that Aboriginal women's therapeutic knowledge was a resource that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities relied upon. For too long has western history overlooked the place of Aboriginal women; Indigenous women were active in the new society that was being formed in western Canada and their skills were central to the reproduction of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. This article seeks to redress this neglected chapter in the narrative of western settlement.<sup>2</sup>

One of the most damaging legacies of the colonial project in western Canada has been the discursive erasure of Aboriginal women from the landscape after the 1870s.<sup>3</sup> Obscuring Indigenous women from the history of the West, and in particular western settlement, helped legitimize European-Canadian settlement and made the presence of Indigenous women seem out of place or unnatural. This effacement of Aboriginal women during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was central to the construction of an imagined white settler society premised solely upon European-Canadian values and beliefs. As Susan Armitage eloquently notes in her article "Making Connections: Gender, Race, and Place in Oregon Country" settlers brought their cultural baggage with them and as much as possible tried to "replicate old ways rather than invent new ones."<sup>4</sup> And in this emerging social framework, there was very little room for Indigenous people, especially Indigenous women.

Postcolonial and feminist scholarship has begun to redress this epistemological violence by tracing how the colonial project constructed difference and designated who belonged and did not belong in the Prairie West. In excavating the lives of Aboriginal women, we must look to often neglected or unseen practices: the intimate and the domestic. Postcolonial scholar Linda Gordon urges us to turn our "attention to relations not always visible," and thus, render intelligible those systems obscured by the processes of colonialism.<sup>5</sup> Unearthing the domestic shows us that Aboriginal women, instead of fading into the background as traditional narratives of western settlement suggest, remained at the forefront of their communities' survival and persistence. Moreover, repositioning the intimate makes visible the gendered encounters that took place between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women premised upon shared experiences of childbirth. Accounts of Aboriginal midwives placing hands on white bodies during what was a very frightening and vulnerable time in women's lives require a reimagining of the colonial project and breaking

the “code of silence around intimate matters.”<sup>6</sup> That European-Canadian settlers required the help of Aboriginal women in order to reproduce their communities and societies suggests a more complicated history of western settlement. In order to uncover the obstetrical work of Aboriginal midwives we must consult a diverse resource base and measure the silences and gaps in the records. Oral histories, field notes of anthropologists, and accounts of settlers, government officials, and missionaries reveal that Aboriginal women provided obstetrical services to their own and newcomer communities well into the twentieth century.

### European Settlement and the Creation of Reserves, Post-1870s

The 1870s and '80s were decades of dramatic transformation for the Indigenous peoples of the Prairie West. The 1870s witnessed the negotiation of numbered treaties, Aboriginal settlement on reserves, and the decline of the buffalo, nearly wiped out by 1883.<sup>7</sup> Additional pressure was placed on local resources by the growing numbers of European-Canadian settlers who began to put up fences, build cities and towns, and demarcate white space from Indigenous space. The Northwest Rebellion in 1885 produced disproportionate concern for the vulnerability of white women, and unfounded fears of another uprising led the European-Canadian community to impose restrictions on the social and economic freedom of Indigenous people and further entrenched white domination of the West with impunity.<sup>8</sup> These restrictions included the pass system and local bylaws prohibiting Indigenous women from entering or living in urban areas without the consent of the local police or magistrate.<sup>9</sup>

Settlement on reserves introduced a completely new set of limitations on Indigenous people and, accordingly, they employed innovative strategies to circumvent the state and its agents. For example, although the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) expected, and at times demanded, that Aboriginal women subscribe to European-Canadian practices and modes of domesticity, the adoption of such measures often reflected local needs rather than the wishes of the Department. Indeed, Plains women often combined Indigenous knowledge with new techniques and skills. This was the case with knitting, for instance, which was used to supplement, and in some instances replace Indigenous methods of making clothes when animal skin and buffalo hides became scarce.<sup>10</sup> To some extent, this strategy of adaptation was also apparent in the obstetrical work of Aboriginal women. Ellen Smallboy, a Cree woman, born in 1853 near James

Bay, remembered that the Indian Agent, a doctor, had taught one of the midwives on the reserve techniques that enabled her to better deal with difficult childbirths.<sup>11</sup> In other instances, physicians asked well-known Indigenous midwives to attend the obstetrical cases they could not.<sup>12</sup> Thus, prescription and practice differed dramatically as local circumstances demanded. In the harsh and isolated environment of the Prairie West, many people did not have access to physicians, and even when one was available, it was quite likely many women preferred to consult an Aboriginal midwife. Nor was obstetrics held in high esteem by the medical profession generally, and training—or the lack thereof—reflected this, thus ignoring the reality that most general practices comprised a significant number of childbirths.<sup>13</sup>

### Midwifery in Western Canada

Until recently, the history of midwifery in Canada during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has been characterized as a struggle between male European-Canadian medical professionals and female European-Canadian midwives.<sup>14</sup> This story has largely ignored the obstetrical work and expertise of women who were not white, not European-Canadian, or lived outside of Ontario. Indeed, the choices women could and did make about childbirth often corresponded to the nature of region. In isolated and underpopulated areas, such as the Prairie West, female European-Canadian settlers drew upon a variety of resources to meet their obstetrical needs. For example, women who lived in rural locales often called upon female neighbours, even if they possessed no training, when they had to. Other women relied on husbands and family members and, in some cases, women reached across boundaries of race and culture and made use of the knowledge and expertise of Indigenous women healers and midwives.

Unlike their Aboriginal counterparts, many European-Canadian women did not receive formal training and frequently knowledge was “informally transmitted; that is, it formed part of a popular birth culture, which women learned by participating at births or by giving birth themselves.”<sup>15</sup> Usually, the involvement of European-Canadian women in such popular birth cultures took place on an emergency basis. In contrast, Indigenous women who were recognized as experienced and effective midwives in their communities underwent significant apprenticeship and training, which usually began at a young age.<sup>16</sup> Understanding the patterns and rhythms of childbirth and where, when, and how to use medicinal plants required a great deal of preparation and knowledge. In the Prairie

West, Indigenous women continued to perform as healers and midwives in their communities well into the twentieth century.

The decline of midwifery was an uneven process in the West, reflecting a range of historical circumstances. For instance, while the state and certain members of the medical profession sought to restrict the work of midwives, larger developments, such as the growth of modern hospitals and advancements in medical technology and asepsis techniques, had a greater effect on the choices people made about childbirth. In the 1930s and '40s, other options arose in the Prairie West. European-Canadian women who had the financial resources and could afford to spend extended periods of time away from home turned to maternity homes.<sup>17</sup> However, in spite of such developments, for settlers trying to survive in the uncertain economy of the Prairie West, geography and financial resources remained the strongest forces determining the options available to European-Canadian women.

In western Canada, the obstetrical practices of Indigenous women were largely overlooked in their communities until after the First World War.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the war served as a watershed in popular perceptions of public health, particularly the well-being of children, and the role of the state in guaranteeing that health.<sup>19</sup> Recruitment during the war had confirmed the fears of health officials regarding the unhealthy nature of the Canadian population. This revelation, combined with a study performed by Dr. Helen MacMurchy, Chief of the Child Welfare Division for the Department of Health, revealed that maternal mortality was the leading cause of death among women; the Prairie Provinces suffered from the highest maternity mortality rates in Canada. The weight of medical experts and the persistent lobbying of women's groups across the West forced the state to address the health and well-being of mothers, and thus children, the future of the nation.

In Alberta developments in health care were slow to materialize, and left the more remote and isolated areas of the province largely unaffected. In 1919, Alberta District Nursing Services was created to meet the needs for midwifery and emergency services in rural communities.<sup>20</sup> The first Child Welfare Clinics were established in Edmonton, Calgary, Medicine Hat, Drumheller, and Vegerville in 1922.<sup>21</sup> In the summer of 1924, provincial travelling clinics were introduced in rural districts to service those communities without access to medical and dental care.<sup>22</sup> However, the recession of the early 1920s forced the provincial government to cut funding to health services and thus, for the majority of the rural European-Canadian

population, biomedical health care remained beyond their financial and physical grasp.<sup>23</sup>

On reserves, similar concerns regarding maternal and infant mortality were expressed by the DIA and their medical workers. The DIA ignored poor nutrition and poverty as part of the problem. Rather they believed that Indigenous people, and women in particular, were negligent parents and indifferent to the health of their children. The failure of Indigenous women's homes to conform to middle-class Euro-Canadian standards and the choices they made about medical treatment were evidence of this indifference. In the 1920s, Duncan Campbell Scott, the deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, made intervention in the childbirth cultures of Treaty 7 women a priority. Greater efforts were made to track expectant mothers and ensure childbirth took place either in a hospital or was attended by a physician or nurse trained in obstetrics. Nevertheless, in spite of the DIA's efforts and the interruption in the transmission of intergenerational knowledge that residential schools were having, Indigenous midwifery persisted.<sup>24</sup>

### Oral History Accounts

Oral histories can provide a window onto the midwifery work that Aboriginal women performed in their communities. One useful set of interviews was conducted in the early 1990s with Treaty 7 Elders born between 1905 and 1934. These interviews were designed to capture Elders' memories before they passed away.<sup>25</sup> The interviews concentrate on treaty and land rights and the abuse of individuals by the colonial state. In some instances, however, the interviewees discussed their births, including whether they were born in a DIA hospital or in a tent or house attended by a midwife and surrounded by female family members. In an effort to establish ownership and right of residence to the land by providing details about their births, the Elders opened a window onto more intimate matters.

Of the 200 Elders interviewed, 142 offered some details surrounding the circumstances of their birth. These interviews reveal that until 1920 the vast majority of births took place in the home in the presence of female family members.<sup>26</sup> Between 1905 and 1934, eighty-five people were born at home while fifty-seven were born at a hospital. Only six people interviewed were born at a hospital before 1920. Out of the ninety-four Treaty 7 Elders who were born between 1920 and 1934, forty-three people were born at home while forty-five who were born at a hospital under the supervision of doctor or a nurse with obstetrical training.<sup>27</sup> It is clear that

the number of non-hospital births declined after the 1920s as a result of several factors, such as disrupting the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, the efforts of the state to persuade women to give birth in hospitals, and the fact that improvements in biomedicine dramatically increased a woman's chance of surviving childbirth in a hospital setting.<sup>28</sup> There is still evidence to suggest that midwives were not entirely displaced. Indigenous women seem to have used departmental and white hospitals strategically. For instance, oral history and admission records at the Kainai (Blood) Hospital indicate that Indigenous women were more likely to use the facility during the winter than the summer.<sup>29</sup>

In partnership with the Methodist, Anglican, and Roman Catholic churches and their mission organizations, the DIA beginning in the late 1890s, established small cottage hospitals, school infirmaries, and dispensaries in Treaty 7 communities. The DIA supplied the initial land and building materials and later provided nominal annual maintenance grants. The churches were responsible for maintaining and staffing these poorly funded and attended facilities. The institutions were staffed primarily by European-Canadian women, some of whom possessed formal medical or nursing training. After 1915, the DIA increasingly took over management of these small hospitals, school infirmaries, and dispensaries.<sup>30</sup> Rundown buildings and outdated equipment made these institutions unpopular for much of the early twentieth century.

Some of the Treaty 7 interviewees offer personal descriptions of who was present when they were born. Such information is important given that birth attendants often formed long-lasting and intimate relationships with the family.<sup>31</sup> Midwives were considered members of the family and thus received titles that reflected this closeness. Agnes Red Crow, for instance, recalled that she was born at home in a tent surrounded by her grandmothers, who were there to assist her mother.<sup>32</sup> Frank Eagle Tail Feathers related that he was born at home on 3 March 1918 and that his mother had been attended by “some elderly women who were midwives.”<sup>33</sup> Allan Shade's mother had a similar experience: she was cared for by Allan's great-grandmothers, who were also midwives.<sup>34</sup>

Other reminiscences of childbirth experiences were recorded and later published by Beverly Hungry Wolf, a Kainai woman, who interviewed her grandmother, AnadaAki, during the late 1970s. AnadaAki's first childbirth experience shows the integral roles Indigenous midwives played and the critical importance of both their wealth of obstetrical knowledge and the support they provided:

I went into labour at night. I kept on with it all the next day, that night, and on through the morning. It must have been near noon when the baby was born we had our Indian doctors around, and they made brews for us.... I started to feel good and cheerful. Right after the baby was born and taken care of, my mother started to clean me. After I was cleaned she started massaging my bones back into place. I was given some broth to drink and then she laid me down to rest.... During this period of confinement the new mother was bathed and given a cleansing ceremony every four days. Her mother would wash her and then cover her up with a blanket.... To bring the mother's body back to shape in addition to massages, she was made to wear a "belt" or girdle of rawhide.<sup>35</sup>

The oral history accounts, although limited, suggest several elements about Indigenous women's obstetrical practices in their communities. First, in spite of the best efforts of the state, the presence of DIA medical facilities, and the disruptive influence of residential schools in the transmission of vital cultural knowledge, Indigenous midwives continued to provide important services to their people. Second, such detailed memories suggest not only the importance of these women, but also that they were part of a network of family relationships, whether they were biological relatives or trusted friends and advisors. Finally, the account from AnadaAki reveals a skill set designed to ensure a safe labour, to alleviate some of the pain during childbirth, and to care for the physical and emotional well-being of the mother following the birth. Furthermore, the existence of a support network within their communities indicates that Aboriginal women had a foundation of knowledge to deal with the childbirth experience.

### Anthropology

Substantial descriptions of Indigenous obstetrical practices can also be found in the field notes of Lucien and Jane Richardson Hanks, as well as Esther Goldfrank. The Hanks and Goldfrank studied the Blackfoot in 1938 and 1939 in a field school run by the well-known anthropologist Ruth Benedict. They had several informants who related the importance of Aboriginal midwives in their communities. The field notes offer several key insights into the culture of childbirth among the Plains people: the existence of a tradition of obstetrical knowledge practised by medicine women or midwives, the presence at births of female family members who shared obstetrical skills,

and the practice of an experienced woman caring for mother and child for several days following the birth and helping mothers become accustomed to new responsibilities. The story of the Hanks' informant, Mary White, revealed several of these features: "At birth mother of mother, mother in law and any near female relatives of the expectant mother are supposed to be present. A medicine woman may be called in to ease the labour. One woman holds the arms, another kneads the abdomen gently, and the third delivers the child. The mother used to be kept awake for four days, turned constantly to prevent the 'blood from clotting.'"<sup>36</sup> Jessie, Esther Goldfrank's informant, recalled the central role that Mrs. Scraping Wolf, a medicine woman, played during her first pregnancy.<sup>37</sup> Mrs. Scraping Wolf was the first person to examine Jessie and inform her that she was pregnant, she attended Jessie during the birth, and she remained with Jessie following the delivery until Jessie was comfortable nursing her son Sam. Such examples reveal that there were mechanisms within Aboriginal communities intended to help women during and after childbirth.

Goldfrank's and the Hanks' field notes also remarked on the work of Indigenous midwives and their use of medicinal plants to facilitate deliveries, although which plants were used was never recorded. According to anthropologist Diamond Jenness, medicine-women gave expectant mothers "a decoction of boiled herbs" to ease the delivery.<sup>38</sup> Likewise, Esther Goldfrank wrote that during the birth of Jessie's first child, Mrs. Scraping Wolf had rubbed a painkiller on Jessie's belly to ease her labour.<sup>39</sup> Goldfrank's field notes did not indicate what the painkiller was, in part because anthropologists were concerned with chronicling the social and cultural aspect of Plains culture and not the medicinal qualities of local plant life.

The field notes of these anthropologists seem to confirm the evidence of oral testimonies. In both we see the presence of supportive and experienced women throughout the labour, the use of medicinal plants to control or minimize pain, and the important role midwives played in helping new mothers adjust to their childcare responsibilities. The sources suggest, therefore, that Indigenous midwives were key members of the community, well known and respected, and formed long-lasting relationships with the women and families they served and treated.<sup>40</sup> The field notes also show that Aboriginal midwives used medicinal plants in their work, and undertook a period of apprenticeship and training in order to learn about these medicines. Women were trained by Elders in the proper procurement and application of medicinal plants, a set of skills proven effective over time and use.

The anthropologists whose field notes included these accounts of Indigenous women's obstetrical work failed to publish any of this material. Instead, their published works focused on tracing what they regarded as cultural change among Aboriginal communities. They were especially interested in the pace of assimilation among the tribes of southern Alberta, and wanted to know to what degree government policy was facilitating this transformation. Evidence of midwifery work may have been ignored in the anthropologists' published findings because such practices ran contrary to the narrative of assimilationist progress they were trying to produce.

### Local History

The final set of evidence comes from settlers' narratives and the personal papers and unofficial correspondence of government employees and missionaries. White women drew upon the obstetrical services of Aboriginal women for several reasons. In a sparsely settled region where most farmers were separated from their closest neighbours by miles and lived far from traditional European-Canadian support networks, Aboriginal women possessed skills and knowledge that European-Canadian women desperately needed. Given the boom and bust nature of agricultural production in the dry arid environment of the West, paying for the services of a doctor or for prolonged stays in faraway hospitals was not a viable option for most settlers. As a result, Indigenous midwives fulfilled a necessary role in the lives of women arriving and settling in western Canada at the turn of the century. Childbirth was one medical situation that a married woman was almost guaranteed to experience during her lifetime. Indeed, in a pioneer questionnaire distributed by the Saskatchewan Archives Board during the 1950s, respondents identified childbirth as the most common reason for family members being bedridden and needing the attention of a doctor during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>41</sup>

One of the earliest recorded accounts of a white woman drawing upon the services of an Aboriginal midwife was in 1808 and involved Marie-Ann, the French-Canadian wife of Jean-Baptiste Lagimodière, a voyageur. Grant MacEwan's 1975 popular history . . . *And Mighty Women Too*, written as an addendum to his earlier work *Fifty Mighty Men*, chronicles Marie-Ann's tale as part of a larger collection of stories written about white women during the settlement of the Prairie West. Following their marriage in 1807, Marie-Ann, unwilling to be left behind by Jean-Baptiste when he rejoined the North West Company's spring brigade, decided to accompany him on his trip to present-day Manitoba. The "brave and mighty" Marie-Ann gave

birth to their first child the following year at Pembina, Northwest Territories. Jean-Baptiste prepared for the birth by arranging for a local Cree woman to remain near his cabin so that she could assist his wife during labour. The midwife was the wife of an Aboriginal man with whom Jean-Baptiste trapped. During the labour, the Cree woman used herbal tea to ease Marie-Ann's pain and following the birth advised her to use a moss bag. The moss bag was attached to a cradleboard and made of leather or fabric. Moss was placed inside the bag to serve as a diaper. The story of Marie-Ann is included in MacEwan's collection of stories about trail-blazing women because she gave birth to the first "legitimate" white baby in western Canada.<sup>42</sup> Details regarding the Cree midwife are included only as they relate to Marie-Ann and no consideration is paid to the fact that this woman provided a set of skills and expertise during and after the birth that were essential to the survival and comfort of both mother and child. The Cree midwife's erasure is symbolized by her namelessness.

Western Canada remained predominantly rural and sparsely settled until after World War II. As a result, when European-Canadian women realized they were pregnant they prepared for the birth ahead of time. Whenever possible, European-Canadian women planned to be with female relatives or friends close to their due date. However, even the best-laid plans often went awry. Following her marriage in 1864, Susan Allison lived with her husband, John, on his ranch in the Similkameen Valley, British Columbia.<sup>43</sup> Susan Allison gave birth to two of her children during the late 1860s and early 1870s with the help of Indigenous midwives. Before the birth of her first child, she had planned to travel to Hope, British Columbia, to be with her mother, but was caught by surprise when the baby was born two months early. Fortunately for Susan Allison, John was able to acquire the services of Suzanne, the sister of one of the Indigenous workers on a nearby ranch. As soon as Suzanne arrived, she calmed Susan by giving her whiskey to dull the pain.<sup>44</sup> Susan Allison described her experience with Suzanne: "[she] was good to me in her way — though I thought her rather unfeeling at the time. She thought that I ought to be as strong as an Indian woman but I was not."<sup>45</sup> By characterizing Suzanne as taciturn and unsympathetic, Susan Allison highlighted Suzanne's dissimilarities in feeling and expression from European-Canadian women. In doing so, Susan maintained her racial and social distance in spite of the intimate nature of the services Suzanne provided. Susan's second birth was also attended by an Indigenous midwife.<sup>46</sup>

Nor did the plans of Elizabeth Matheson — the wife of the Anglican

missionary at Onion Lake, a Cree community fifty kilometres north of present-day Lloydminster—go smoothly when she went into labour for the first time in the early 1890s. As the birth of her first child approached, Elizabeth prepared for its arrival by asking the only other white woman in the area to attend her.<sup>47</sup> Unfortunately for Elizabeth, on the day she went into labour the woman was drunk and incapable of supervising the birth. Elizabeth grudgingly relied on a Cree woman from the reserve.

Annie Greer, a recent immigrant from Ontario, shared a similar experience. During her first winter (1893–94) in Dauphin, Manitoba, Greer, living in a log and sod hut, was by herself when she went into labour.<sup>48</sup> She gave birth to her first child with the assistance of the local midwife, Caroline, who was the wife of the chief on the neighbouring reserve. Caroline came prepared with a satchel full of herbs, roots, bark, and leaves; she saved the mother's life and refused payment for doing so.<sup>49</sup> How Caroline knew when to come remains a mystery, but her timely arrival suggests that Caroline was well known in the community and that arrangements were made prior to the departure of Greer's husband. A decade later Mary Lawrence of northern Alberta made the same choice when securing help to deliver her first child. She evidently preferred the presence of an Indigenous midwife to the only available alternative: her father-in-law.<sup>50</sup>

In some cases European-Canadian women expressed their preference for Indigenous midwives and obstetrical practices. When Mary Lawrence gave birth to her third child at Fort Vermillion at the turn of the nineteenth century, her midwife, Julie Nookum, encouraged her to give birth "as an Indian woman would have done, kneeling."<sup>51</sup> In her memoirs, Mary noted that this "[had] been the easiest of any childbirth so far. And I was convinced of the logic of this natural method over that to which white women are usually enforced that I abided by it henceforth."<sup>52</sup> Changes to birthing positions that required women to lie flat on their backs reflected doctors' preferences and actually slowed down delivery.<sup>53</sup>

Indigenous midwives living on nearby reserves made their expertise available to local settlers. Frank Lucas remembers that when his wife went into labour he called upon the services of a midwife from Hobbema to attend his wife. Another woman living in the St. Albert district was attended by an Indigenous midwife for all seven of her children.<sup>54</sup> Elizabeth Schwerdt, a recent immigrant from Germany during the late 1920s, recounted her experience with Granny Whitford, an Indigenous healer and midwife who attended the birth of all of her children. "I remember [Granny Whitford] trying to save my seven month old baby. We kept it alive

for a week, and then my little boy passed away.”<sup>55</sup> Such heroic stories are emblematic of the work Indigenous woman undertook in order to help European-Canadian women and their children survive.

In other instances, Aboriginal women were called upon because of the close ties they had developed with a community over time. A European-Canadian woman living in the Rocanville district of Saskatchewan during the late 1880s fondly remembered a Cree woman who was called whenever there was a birth in the family and acted as a general nurse for the district.<sup>56</sup> Another European-Canadian female settler warmly remembered relying on a “nice old Cree lady, Mrs. Fisher, from across the lake, who acted as both doctor and nurse for the neighbourhood.”<sup>57</sup> Although Mrs. Fisher could not speak English, the nearest doctor was at Qu’Appelle, Saskatchewan, and so whenever there was a birth, Mrs. Fisher was called. Ethel Hopps recalled that she was “brought into the world by a wonderful Cree midwife named Mrs. Plante of George Lake.”<sup>58</sup> Sometimes Indigenous midwives maintained long-term relationships with the children they helped bring into the world, much as they did in their communities. For instance, Raymond Aylesworth was born in December 1907 under the care Mrs. Jim Bangs. For the next fifteen years, Mrs. Bangs made Raymond a new pair of moccasins every year.<sup>59</sup> These examples suggest there was an informal system of health care taking place across the West where women came together around shared concerns.

Even the wives of government employees and missionaries relied on the services of Aboriginal midwives. For instance, Effie Storer, the wife of a North West Mounted Police (NWMP) officer, used the obstetrical services of an Indigenous woman when her husband was stationed at Whitefish Lake, Northwest Territories (in present-day Alberta). Storer’s daughter Irene was born on 30 March 1894 and since the closest doctor lived in Edmonton, she was forced to rely on the services of an “old medicine woman.”<sup>60</sup> The following year when her husband was transferred to Battleford, Northwest Territories (in present-day Saskatchewan), her daughter, Muriel, was born prematurely and, once again, an Indigenous midwife was called in to oversee the labour.<sup>61</sup> Although Storer’s tone clearly indicates that she would have preferred a doctor, in the absence of one she drew upon the most viable alternative: an Indigenous midwife. Perhaps Storer’s declarations were self-aggrandizing. Early settlers’ stories always seemed to draw upon several tropes: the presence of unnamed, and potentially threatening, Aboriginal people; the absence of “modern” conveniences, such as Western medicine; and the poor lonely white woman who was without the comfort of other white “women.”<sup>62</sup>

The wives of missionaries who worked to convert Indigenous people to Christianity also required the services of Indigenous midwives. For example, Mary Cecil, a Cree midwife, attended Eliza Boyd, the wife of the well-known Methodist missionary, John McDougall, and her sister-in-law Annie McDougall when they gave birth to each of their children at the Stoney reserve in the late nineteenth century. Cecil worked for the McDougalls as midwife, nurse, and servant for many years.<sup>63</sup> In a newspaper interview conducted in the late 1920s, Annie McDougall remembered Mary Cecil affectionately, saying that although she had initially feared her, “she had soon become very fond of [her] because of her kindness and faithfulness. For twenty eight years I had no better servant or friend, and the children loved her as well as any white woman.”<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of this affection, Annie never mentioned Cecil in any other forum. Were it not for the newspaper interview and the questions posed by interviewer Elizabeth Bailey Price in the late 1920s, Mary Cecil would be lost to the “condescension of posterity.”<sup>65</sup>

The wives of Indian Agents, like the wives of missionaries and the NWMP officers, also drew upon the obstetrical skills of local Aboriginal women. Similar to agricultural families, Indian Agents and their wives lived in isolated and underserviced communities. F.C. Cornish, the Indian Agent for the Tsuu T’ina from 1887 to 1890, in an unpublished collection of reminiscences recalled that his eldest son had been born while he was employed at the Tsuu T’ina reserve. Cornish wrote “in those days it was not an easy matter making provision for such an event. The nearest doctor was in Calgary. Nurses were unattainable.”<sup>66</sup> Mrs. Cornish had been able to obtain the obstetrical services of the interpreter’s wife, a Sarcee woman, who was well known as a good midwife.<sup>67</sup>

It is interesting that during a period when government employees and others were charged with resolving the “Indian problem” by, among other things, replacing Aboriginal culture and practices that the obstetrical skills and expertise of Indigenous women was drawn upon so frequently by European-Canadians. Indeed, it seems that Aboriginal women were able to circumvent the restrictions placed on their movements when their therapeutic services were required by European-Canadians, especially the wives of NWMP officers. The silence surrounding this work that has persisted into the present, and the invisibility of Indigenous women from the history of the region more generally, evokes the consolidation of European-Canadian hegemony over the West. This silence was necessary in order to blame Aboriginal women as the root of their communities’ problems

and target them for change. In order to pursue the creation of a legitimate white settler society the colonial imagination had to ensure that Indigenous women remained a “present absence.”<sup>68</sup> It is not surprising then that evidence of Aboriginal women’s midwifery and healing sits awkwardly amidst broader colonial narratives about the process of settlement and nation-building. Recognizing Aboriginal women had very important domestic and curative skills would have challenged the ideological underpinnings of the colonial project.

## Conclusion

Although none of these accounts provides detailed information regarding the work of one particular midwife, together they suggest several patterns. Aboriginal communities continued to rely on the expertise of Indigenous midwives well into the twentieth century. Indigenous midwives possessed a skill set that was premised upon training and experience. These women provided emotional support before, during, and after labour and offered their patients some pain relief. Finally, the obstetrical knowledge of Indigenous women was a resource that European Canadians used; European Canadians knew where to find Aboriginal midwives, and these women played an important role in reproducing European-Canadian communities.

Evidence of Indigenous women working as midwives among newcomers, especially for representatives of the nascent state in the Prairie West, exposes some fundamental inconsistencies of the colonial project and the creation of white settler societies. When women such as Effie Storer, Annie McDougall, and the wife of F.C. Cornish begrudgingly called upon the skills and expertise of Indigenous women, they laid bare both the realities that women faced living in western Canada and the hypocrisy of colonial claims of the fundamental superiority of European medicine and the backwardness of Indigenous culture. They also revealed how their silences had helped make Aboriginal women invisible. It is extremely important to re-examine traditional narratives of western settlement in order to unearth and acknowledge the central roles Indigenous women continued to play in the West after the 1870s.

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# PART THREE

IN THE BORDERLANDS



SOPHIE MORIGEAU:  
Free Trader, Free Woman

*Jean Barman*

Sophie Morigeau became a legend in her own time, and even more so after her death in 1916 at the age of eighty. Her exploits as a free trader and free woman figure prominently in local histories of the region extending from eastern British Columbia into Washington, Idaho, and Montana. This woman of mixed Indigenous and non-Indigenous descent<sup>1</sup> has a lake named in her honour, and archaeological digs have been conducted at the site of her nearby home outside of Eureka, Montana. She is the subject of a graduate thesis and a video documentary, incidents from her life have been included in a curriculum guide, and she is a featured figure in re-enactments at the major British Columbian tourist site of Fort Steele.<sup>2</sup> The consequence is that any consideration of Sophie's life and times must be undertaken in a spirit of collaboration. I do so here. Everyone cited in the notes is in effect a co-author.

Sophie Morigeau's negotiation of an identity so out of keeping with expectations for women of her time is central to the widespread ongoing interest in her. To understand Sophie, though, we need to begin with ourselves. We all negotiate our identities throughout our lifespans. The person we are as a child is not who we become as an adult. We make decisions concerning our ways of life that alter our identities over time to a greater or lesser degree. Changes in the broader society cause us to respond in ways that make us yet again different from who we were before. Identity negotiation is fundamental to what it means to be human.

One way to understand how and why we are the persons we are in the present day is to look back at our predecessors. By doing so, we can begin to appreciate the relationship between structure and agency that governs our

lives. The dynamics of the society in which are born and are raised at once limit and create possibilities for individual action. The ways in which we do and do not take initiative when we have the opportunity to do so have an impact, even if just a little, on that broader society. The interplay between broader social structures and personal agency is in no way foretold. The process is dynamic and continually unfolding. If we think back on our own lives, we can all remember some moment when we did the unexpected. We took charge, we exercised agency, we surprised ourselves. Structure and agency jostle up against each other in every life. The ways in which they do so reveals much about the times and also about the people living there.

The life of Sophie Morigeau offers a useful entryway for probing our own negotiation of our identities and, more generally, the relationship between structure and agency. Primary sources concerning her life are limited in number, but they are remarkably consistent and coherent in both their substance and perceptions. Despite the fact that no image of Sophie is known to have survived, these written sources are vivid and immediate.

Sophie Morigeau was a free woman making her way as a free trader on the borderlands of northwestern North America. Indeed, few women whose life stories have survived succeeded with such aplomb, living, as Sophie did, between countries and races, and among men. Contemporaries attest that Sophie Morigeau was as fearless in her business dealings as any man, and, as a woman of mixed descent, she used whichever identity was most profitable to her at a particular point in time.

Sophie Morigeau's negotiation of her identity throughout her lifespan represents a skilful intermeshing of structure and agency. Much of what appears extraordinary becomes ordinary when framed within the three overarching structures that governed her life from her earliest years—familial fluidity, occupational flexibility, and racial stereotyping. Sophie was born and grew up in circumstances in which the character of family life was not so much determined by birth as it was constructed out of individual decisions to take responsibility for oneself and others. Ways of making a living were similarly situational and pragmatic. Familial fluidity and occupational flexibility had as their backdrop a time and place in which persons in the dominant society were distinguished by their paler skin tones and took for granted that this attribute of “whiteness,” associated by them with a concept of “race” based in biological features, signified the superiority of their way of life over all others. It is the personal qualities, or agency, that Sophie Morigeau brought to bear in responding to these and other structures that to a considerable extent accounts for her continuing appeal.

## The Complexities of Sophie's Parentage

From the moment of her birth in 1836, Sophie received certain signals about desirable and undesirable attributes in herself and in other persons. These signals came through her family and through a whole range of formal and informal contacts. The earliest and most important lessons had to do with familial fluidity.

The identity of Sophie's mother we know with relative certainty, unlike that of her father. Sophie's mother, Elizabeth, who was also known as Isabella and Lisette, is said to have been born in about 1816 at the fur trade colony of Red River, in present-day Manitoba. Sophie's maternal grandfather, William Taylor, born in 1788 in the Orkney Islands, off the northern coast of Scotland, arrived at Red River in 1815 as one of the original white settlers. Sophie's maternal grandmother, Sarah, had been born in Saskatchewan to an American trader, Peter Sabiston, and a local Cree woman.<sup>3</sup> Sophie was embedded on her father's side in three kinship networks—extended families produced by trappers and traders who ranged across the large territory extending from the East Kootenays of British Columbia southeast into Montana and southwest to the trading posts of Fort Colville and Spokane House, in Washington.

Sophie's biological father was most likely Patrick Finley, making her grandfather the legendary Jacques Raphael, or Jocko, Finlay (the spelling of the family's surname changed between generations from Finlay to Finley). Jocko had a large family by several Indigenous women. Born in 1768 in Saskatchewan to a Scottish fur trader and a Chippewa woman, Jocko advanced so rapidly in the fur trade that in 1806 he was dispatched to prepare a path through the Rocky Mountains for the westward exploration of North West Company partner David Thompson.

By then Jocko Finlay had five sons, including Patrick born in 1802 near the future site of Edmonton. The Finlays travelled as a family that continued to grow in size during the half-dozen years that Jocko assisted Thompson in establishing several trading posts intended to lure the Kootenai and their Flathead neighbours to the east into collecting furs for the company.<sup>4</sup> Among the posts was Kootenai House, situated on the west side of lower Columbia Lake, south of present-day Invermere in British Columbia's Windermere Valley. Kootenai House would not survive Thompson's departure in 1812. A longer-lived post, known variously as Kootenai Falls, Kootenai Post, and Fort Kootenai, was located near present-day Libby, Montana.<sup>5</sup>

Thompson left Jocko Finlay in charge of the recently constructed Spokane House to the south. By 1821, when the Hudson's Bay Company took

over the North West Company, Jocko and his sons were free-trading in the area around Spokane. Their ability to do so was markedly assisted both by their personal ties with local women and by the close relationships they had forged with the Kootenai, the Spokane, and other Indigenous peoples during their years with Thompson.

By the time of Jocko Finlay's death in 1828, his sons and their families were consolidating themselves into a tightly knit clan, into which Sophie was likely born in 1836. For the previous half-dozen years, Patrick (also known as Pichina) and at least one of his brothers were spending much of their time trapping and doing odd jobs around the Hudson's Bay post of Jasper House, located north of the Kootenays on the Athabasca River. Patrick already had five children by a Flathead or Spokane woman when he briefly took up with Sophie's mother. On 3 October 1838, at Jasper House, eighteen-month-old Sophie was baptized by visiting Catholic priest Father Modeste Demers as the daughter of "Lisette, métisse," and "Pichina Finlay, free man." By that time, her probable father had moved on to another mixed-descent woman by whom he now had two one-year-old daughters who were baptized the same day.<sup>6</sup> Living near Fort Colville and then in the Flathead area of western Montana, Patrick Finley would have four more children by this woman before fathering another six by yet another mixed-descent fur-trade daughter.

Patrick Finley is not the only possible candidate as Sophie's father. "Among the old-timers" in the area where she grew up, her mother is said to have lived briefly with Edward Berland, who arrived in the Kootenays from Quebec in 1818 in the employ of the North West Company.<sup>7</sup> Berland subsequently alternated between working as a trapper and interpreter for the Hudson's Bay Company and earning his livelihood as a free trader in the Kootenays. Berland consolidated his links with the Finley clan by marrying Patrick Finley's niece Louisa in 1845, into which union they each brought a child. Together, they had at least three more.<sup>8</sup>

It was a third man whom Sophie publicly acknowledged as her father by using his surname. Given the fluidity of relationships that marked the time and place, François Baptiste Morigeau may have been her biological parent as well. Born about 1789 west of Montreal, he arrived in the Kootenays in 1818 or 1819, about the same time as Edward Berland, to work for the North West Company.<sup>9</sup> According to family lore, "the plodding ordered existence of the French Canadian habitant did not appeal to him."<sup>10</sup> Whereas Berland transferred to the Hudson's Bay Company when it absorbed the North West Company in 1821, Morigeau became a free trader

in the Upper Columbia area of the Kootenays.<sup>11</sup> Local historians consider him “the first white settler” to take up permanent residence in either the East or West Kootenays.<sup>12</sup>

According to his son Baptiste, born about 1840, François Morigeau’s first wife was a Swampy Cree woman who, after three years and three children, “tiring of life in the mountains and longing for the open freedom of the plains,” asked to be taken back home. François obliged and then returned west with “Elizabeth or Isabella Taylor, a person of mixed blood, of Scottish descent, whose home had been the Red River Settlement.”<sup>13</sup> Their eldest child, Alexander, was baptized, at the age of three and a half, at the same ceremony at Jasper House on 3 October 1838 at which Sophie was baptized. He was christened the child of “François Morjeau, freeman” and, like Sophie, of “Lisette, métisse.”<sup>14</sup>

The most likely explanation for Sophie’s biological parentage is that Lisette Taylor had a brief relationship with Patrick Finley while she was already living with François Morigeau, with whom she would have another eight children.<sup>15</sup> The other possibility is that the visiting priest who did the baptisms made a mistake. But, if so, then Sophie herself was never made aware of the fact, for when she wed in a Catholic ceremony in 1852, she gave her parents as “Patrick Finley and Isabelle, now the wife of François Morigeau.”<sup>16</sup> As a result of these complexities, virtually from the time she was born, Sophie Morigeau took familial fluidity as a given.

### The Young Sophie

Sophie was born into the fur trade — not the neat and tidy trade centred on established posts but rather the itinerant world of free traders. Although they might seek paid employment as the need arose, otherwise they went where the animals were and zealously guarded their right to do so. Familial fluidity was to some extent derivative of occupational flexibility. While the Catholic Church might intervene from time to time, it was chance and circumstance, as well as human desire, that determined with whom, and in what place, individuals came together and then parted ways.

The appeal of the Kootenays, where Sophie spent her first years, was directly related to the relative lack of interest in the area on the part of the Hudson’s Bay Company. It ran a seasonal trade out of Fort Kootenai, in Montana, sending someone in the fall to collect furs over the winter and then head back to its much larger post established in 1825 at Fort Colville, in northeast Washington.<sup>17</sup> Otherwise, the area was open to men such as François Morigeau and Edward Berland. In 1839 Berland took charge of the

Fort Kootenai winter trade for the Hudson's Bay Company, but Morigeau continued to trap on his own.<sup>18</sup>

Our clearest glimpse of Sophie as a child comes in September 1845, when she was nine. We see her everyday world through the eyes of Jesuit father Pierre-Jean De Smet, on his passage through the Kootenays. Four years earlier, De Smet had established a mission in the Bitter Root Valley of southwestern Montana at the behest of the local Flatheads.<sup>19</sup> An inveterate traveller, he set off along the Kootenai River, likely on foot, up the Idaho panhandle into present-day British Columbia. There, on the eastern shore of Columbia Lake, he encountered "*the Canadian!*" — which, at the time, generally referred to French Canadians. The Morigeau family used French as their first language, so communication posed no problem for the bilingual De Smet.<sup>20</sup> De Smet's lengthy description of Morigeau and his family was positively rhapsodic:

The Canadian! Into what part of the desert has he not penetrated? The monarch who rules at the source of the Columbia [River] is an honest emigrant from St. Martin, in the district of Montreal, who has resided for twenty-six years in this desert. The skins of the rein and moose deer are the materials of which his portable palace is composed; and to use his own expression, he *embarks on horseback* with his wife and seven children and *lands* wherever he pleases. . . . His sceptre is a beaver trap — his *law* a carbine. . . . Encircled by so much grandeur, undisturbed proprietor of all the sky-ward palaces, the strongholds, the very last refuge which nature has reared to preserve alive liberty in the earth — solitary lord of these majestic mountains, that elevate their icy summits even to the clouds.<sup>21</sup>

A good part of De Smet's approval had to do with the great extent to which Morigeau, like Berland, acknowledged the force of Catholicism. "Morjeau (our Canadian) does not forget his duty as a Christian," he wrote. "Each day, morning and evening, he may be seen devoutly reciting his prayers, midst his little family."<sup>22</sup> There were, however, some tasks that only a priest could perform, and it turns out Morigeau had travelled with his family in the direction De Smet was headed in the hopes of encountering him:

Many years had Morigeau ardently desired to see a priest to procure for his wife and children the signal grace of baptism. The

feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, this favor was conferred on them, and also on the children of three Indian families who accompany him on his migrations. This was a solemn day for the desert! The august sacrifice of mass was offered; Morigeau devoutly approached the holy table—at the foot of the humble altar he received the nuptial benediction; and the mother, surrounded by her children, and six little Indians, was regenerated in the holy waters of baptism. In memory of so many benefits a large cross was erected in the plain.<sup>23</sup>

Following the religious ceremonies, the Morigeaus entertained the priest royally during the few days he spent with the family. Once again, De Smet's description opens a window onto Sophie's world:

I cannot leave my good Canadian without making an honorable mention of his royal *cuisine à la sauvage*. The first dish he presented me contained two paws of a bear. . . . A roast porcupine next made its appearance, accompanied by a moose's muzzle, which had been boiling all night. The latter I found delicious. Finally the great kettle, containing a sort of hotch-potch, or salmagundi, was placed in the midst of the guests, and each one helped himself according to his taste; there was the choice back-fat of the buffalo-cow, venison, cutlets, beavers' tails, quails, rabbits, dumplings and a substantial broth.<sup>24</sup>

Occupational flexibility continued to structure Sophie's life. It may have been Morigeau's religiosity, or perhaps it was a changing economy, that explains the family's move, shortly after encountering De Smet in 1845, almost four hundred kilometres southwest to Fort Colville. The Hudson's Bay post had become a major operation, with fifteen or so men stationed there regularly to trade and to run its large farming operation. Not only that, a burgeoning community of retired fur trade families had settled nearby, and there was a flourishing Catholic mission on the bluff just above the post at Kettle Falls.<sup>25</sup> Morigeau took up a large farm, which eventually covered 640 acres, and, in son Baptiste's words, "rose to be a man of some wealth."<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps for that reason, Morigeau could afford to send Sophie to school at the Catholic mission, or so claims a local historian whose mother knew Sophie. In this version of events, Sophie spent five years there, where,

“being mostly white,” she “absorbed well the varied knowledge of courtesy, cleanliness, cooking, sewing, speech, and religion the Sisters offered” and “no doubt also found opportunity to observe the sometimes questionable trading and business tactics between red men and white at the Fort.”<sup>27</sup>

### Sophie Takes Charge

From a mission school, it was a short and all but inevitable path into marriage, and so it was for Sophie. She was married off to Jean Baptiste Chabotte, from Montreal, in a proper Catholic ceremony held on 29 September 1852. Aged twenty-four, as compared to Sophie’s sixteen years, he had joined the Hudson’s Bay Company four years earlier and only recently been transferred to Fort Colville. By the measure of the day, it was a good match. He was suitably employed, and she was a catch, for as one old-timer reminisced, “Lord, what a handsome woman Sophie Morigeau was in her young days!”<sup>28</sup>

Even in the mid-1830s, when Sophie was born, and more so by the time she became an adult, most white newcomers to North America took for granted a hierarchy of races based on physical characteristics that, very conveniently, put them on top. White folk simply assumed that they were superior to those with darker skin. While perhaps not an obvious factor until then in Sophie’s life, racial stereotyping never lurked far below the surface, and the opportunity for a mixed-descent woman such as herself to find a white husband was not to be eschewed. Of course, Sophie’s actual descent depends on who her biological father was. Her mother was three-quarters white. If Patrick Finley was her father, she was three-quarters Indigenous on her father’s side, and hence she was a genuine *métis* or, in the parlance of the day, “halfbreed.” If, as seems less likely, Edward Berland or François Morigeau was her father, she was seven-eighths white, but she was still of mixed descent.

Sophie’s future seemed set in the pattern of the day, and for a number of years it continued to be so. The ambitious Jean Baptiste Chabotte left the Hudson’s Bay Company at the end of his contract in 1853 and took up a farm not far from the Morigeau’s son Alexander. The couple had no children, but they seemed to get on until one day, sometime after 1860, the marriage was no more.<sup>29</sup>

In moving from wife to being a woman on her own, Sophie drew on the occupational flexibility she took for granted based on her childhood and youth. Her actions, which on one level were so unlike those of her

white female contemporaries, returned her to familiar ways. What she knew best was the life of the free trader, who travelled to wherever there was a profit to be made, and she became and remained a free trader for the rest of her life. Along with occupational flexibility, she was also accustomed to familial fluidity, and this too she exercised in her decision to become a free woman.

Possibly as a symbolic move, Sophie went back to her family name and was henceforth known as Sophie Morigeau. The trade-off in asserting agency was to give up the measure of respectability she had achieved through snaring a white husband and submerging her identity in his. Just as newcomers assumed that they were inherently superior to Indigenous peoples and other non-white groups, they took for granted that men were superior to women. Justifying their assumptions in Christian terms, they saw in Eve's willingness to bite the apple in the Garden of Eden proof that women had to be confined within the home in order to perform their expected role as wives and mothers. Power, be it political, economic, or domestic, lay with men. But the traditional path of submission and subordination did not suffice for Sophie.

For the rest of her life, Sophie subverted the gender divide so convenient to white males. She likely did so not only because she had the familiar structures of family fluidity and occupational flexibility on which to draw, but also because she was, quite simply, a tough woman. Because we tend not to think that women were capable of the degree of independence that Sophie achieved, we also tend to downplay their accomplishments.

### Packing in the Wild Horse Creek Gold Rush

It may have been the excitement of the Wild Horse Creek gold rush of 1864 in southeastern British Columbia that attracted Sophie away from domesticity; here was a chance for independence seemingly for the taking, and take it she did.

In the wake of the California gold rush of 1849, men searched ever further north for riches. Gold was discovered on the British Columbian mainland in 1858. The Fraser River rush attracted many thousands of miners, prompting the British government to decree that the mainland—then a British territory loosely controlled by the Hudson's Bay Company—was an official British colony, duly christened British Columbia. Over the next years, the frantic search for riches extended across a much broader area.

One such new area was Wild Horse Creek, located not far from the Kootenay River, some fifty miles north of an international boundary

established with the United States in 1846. The British government tried to contain the rush by constructing a new east-west trail across British Columbia, but many prospective miners came north from Montana to eastern British Columbia across Tobacco Plains. Some stopped along the way in Montana to try their luck along the Clark Fork and Fisher rivers or on Libby Creek.<sup>30</sup> Somewhat ironically, as it turned out, the Wild Horse Creek gold rush initially gave a boost to the Kootenay fur trade such as it had not known since David Thompson arrived half a century earlier. When the first prospectors, whose numbers included one of Jocko Finlay's sons, arrived in 1863, they took their discoveries to Fort Kootenay, which the Hudson's Bay Company had by now moved north of the border. This action gave the trading post the edge in supplying the miners who would arrive the next spring.<sup>31</sup>

A respectable young Englishman named Michael Phillipps, who had recently joined the Hudson's Bay Company, was put in charge of Fort Kootenay.<sup>32</sup> Prior to his arrival, the post was manned by John Campbell, a mixed-descent Hudson's Bay employee working out of Fort Colville who knew the Kootenai language.<sup>33</sup> On his arrival, Phillipps dispatched Campbell north to Wild Horse Creek and soon followed there himself to trade with the miners. Up to then, the Kootenay fur trade had brought in about \$7,000 a year, but, as Phillipps later recalled, on his first trip out he took in gold dust worth \$45,000—over six times that amount.<sup>34</sup> To expedite the trade with miners, Phillipps closed Fort Kootenay and opened a new post, Fort Steele, about five miles from Wild Horse Creek.<sup>35</sup>

There was every reason for Sophie Morigeau to want to join in the excitement, and she did. During the gold rush, she ran her own pack trains from Walla Walla or Colville, in Washington, or from Missoula, in Montana, to hungry miners in the Wild Horse area.<sup>36</sup> As a great-grandniece described it:

Sophie Morigeau, scorning to lead the servile life expected of a squaw, and of most women who were even half white or red, initiated her own enterprise. Undismayed that no woman, either white or red, had done such a thing before, she assembled a pack string, and ran trade goods from Missoula and Walla Walla to Fort Steele, doing business with both whites and Indians.<sup>37</sup>

Along the way, Sophie would visit her nephews who had settled among the Flatheads in southwestern Montana. "On her trips to Missoula," her

great-grandniece explained, “Sophia always stopped at their home on the Jocko River [named after Jocko Finlay, members of whose family lived nearby] about thirty miles west of Missoula.”<sup>38</sup>

The excitement of the gold rush died down at the end of the decade. At that point, the new Fort Steele was no longer needed, which led to its closure and Phillipps’s dismissal in 1870. Six decades old, the organized fur trade in the Kootenay region came to an end. It was men such as Michael Phillipps who, like the free trader François Morigeau before him, moved the area toward settlement. Even while exploiting the gold rush, Phillipps accommodated himself to Kootenai people in a fashion reminiscent of the fur traders of a generation earlier. He learned the language, he took the Tobacco Plains chief’s daughter Rowena for his wife, and, having acquired land on the British Columbian side of Tobacco Plains, he ranched and raised a family that eventually boasted a dozen children.<sup>39</sup>

### Settling Down in the Windermere Valley

With the Wild Horse gold rush winding down, Sophie returned to the world of her childhood about a hundred kilometres north in the Windermere Valley, where she established her own business. According to her great-grandniece, “after the first mining boom at Fort Steele was past, Sophie set up a trading post at Windermere.”<sup>40</sup> Sophie’s customers very likely included members of the extended family in which she was embedded. While some of them remained in the Colville area, where François Morigeau died in 1870 and Sophie’s mother in 1902, others headed to Montana, and yet others returned to British Columbia.<sup>41</sup> Whatever their precise biological relationship, Sophie was particularly close to one of her younger brothers, Baptiste, who married a Kootenai woman in 1881. A year later the couple named their first child after Sophie.<sup>42</sup>

Numerous other offspring of the fur trade intermarried. No doubt part of the reason was the familiarity fostered by their fathers having worked together; another part their shared mixed descent. Edward Berland found for a second wife one of Jocko Finlay’s granddaughters. François Morigeau’s son Alexander partnered with Jocko Finlay’s granddaughter Rosalie; Morigeau’s daughter Rosalie had a large family by Berland’s son John. The men that Berland’s daughter Lucy and Phillipps’s daughter Rowena married—John Campbell and Colin Sinclair—had first passed through the Kootenai region in 1854 as part of a mostly mixed-descent group heading west from Red River to settle near Fort Vancouver.

Clearly expecting to stay in the area, Sophie managed a feat that only a

handful of British Columbian women had so far dared, which was to claim land in her own name. The pre-emption, or homestead, records tell us that on 1 June 1872, Sophia Morigeau took up 320 acres on the southeast side of Lower Columbia Lake, about one mile north of its upper end.<sup>43</sup> For a time she carried on her trading activities from her homestead.<sup>44</sup>

### Border Crossing

Sophie Morigeau's youth preceded nation-building. The fur trade was borderless, simply because there was no border. Only in 1846 had the United States and Britain divided Sophie's home territory along the 49th parallel, but the newly established border made little difference in practice. The terrain runs north and south along valleys interspersed with mountains, isolating the corridor that is the Kootenai/Kootenay region. At its heart is Tobacco Plains, which straddles the border.

In about 1879 or 1880, Sophie moved her trading post about eighty kilometres south, across the border, to the Montana side of Tobacco Plains to take advantage of travellers using that north-south corridor.<sup>45</sup> The site, not far from Eureka, was close to the area where locals grew wheat and peas, and it saw traffic between Canadian mining communities and American settlements such as Frenchtown and Missoula, in Montana, and Colville, in Washington. Kootenai people traded furs and other items.<sup>46</sup> Sophie is said to have built herself a small cabin near the Kootenai villages.<sup>47</sup> According to a contemporary, it was made of very small logs that she had dragged in behind a horse and then mudded on the inside, with a chimney made of sticks and clay.<sup>48</sup> A few years later, Sophie lost the sight in one eye when she was hit by a branch while riding.<sup>49</sup> Thereafter she wore an eye patch or spectacles, which apparently only added to her distinctiveness.

A member of a Canadian survey party who passed through the area in 1883, when Sophie was in her mid-forties, described two old Indian women living "in the middle of a field, in a one-room store deplete of provisions," one with a single eye.<sup>50</sup> An English adventurer, Alexander Staveley Hill, who visited in September of the same year, was more effusive in his journal. Sophie's reputation had gone before her, and Hill was "looking forward to 'Sophy's' as the place on the western side of the mountains where we should get stores and directions, and generally should be set on our road." Later the same day, he tells us:

We saw two or three log huts and Indian tepes on a knoll; Dan rode up and found it to be "Sophy's." He inquired of an old

woman in green spectacles, who answered his inquiry with, “Me Sophy.” So we rode up, and found that she had plenty of stores. We bought half a sack of flour, some rice, ten pound of venison, and some butter, which last was very rancid and uneatable. We made a capital supper on the venison and rice, and tinned peaches, and turned in about nine o’clock.<sup>51</sup>

The next day the group, which had camped nearby, decided to rest, which gave Hill time to photograph “the log hut and the stores and the tepes of some Kootenai Indians who were settled near, and were employed in making Indian work, mats, and generally in hunting and making themselves useful to Sophy.”<sup>52</sup> He noted that “a Kootenai man who had lost his squaw was working for Sophy, looking after her horses and cattle, and supporting by his wages his three little children.”<sup>53</sup>

In his journal, Hill evoked Sophie as a businesswoman. He described her as “a person of very considerable energy—had three parties out prospecting mines, and possessed a good herd of cattle.”<sup>54</sup> While Hill was fishing, a companion “had been away at Sophy’s, baking the bread in her oven, and a confounded Indian dog had taken advantage of her deserted camp to run off with half our bacon and all our venison, and Sophy had most kindly given him a fowl to replace our loss.”<sup>55</sup> Sophie knew what appealed to passersby: “Our worthy friend Sophy treated our men to a good deal of whiskey.”<sup>56</sup> The next morning, when the visitors were leaving, they purchased “a good little horse from Sophy for fifty dollars for me to ride,” and “Sophy gave L. and myself a special bottle of whisky for ourselves.”<sup>57</sup> The visitors also “bought some martins’ skins, and some small ermine, and some buckskins for shirts, and a few Indian things at her store.”<sup>58</sup> Sophie knew how to do business.

At the time of the visit, as Sophie is said to have done most times, she had a man around. “Mr. Bovaris, who at that time occupied the position of husband to Sophy, had a talk to me about the Indians and their fight with the Boston men under [General Oliver Otis] Howard.”<sup>59</sup> Six years previous, the Civil War general had led army troops against the nearby Nez Perce under Chief Joseph. Hill added a postscript in his journal referring to his subsequent visit a year later: “Poor Bovaris! on my visit in this fall of 1884, I found that he had fallen a victim to the six-shooter of Sophy’s brother in a quarrel, when too much whisky had been drunk.”<sup>60</sup> Another version of this story has the luckless Bovaris killed by a new friend of Sophie’s.<sup>61</sup> According to a daughter of Michael Phillipps, “the two men competing

for Sophie's favor at about this time were both upstanding, fine-looking white men."<sup>62</sup> As a local historian has noted more generally about Sophie: "She had friends and relatives in various parts of her operating area. She seldom lacked for masculine company if she so desired and had numerous men partners over the years; some outsmarted her and some merely tried, winding up extinct."<sup>63</sup>

### Packing During Railway Construction

By now well into middle age, Sophie still could not resist the next free trading opportunity that came along. Occupational flexibility continued to structure her life. The most visible marker of changing times in the late nineteenth century was rail lines. The Canadian Pacific Railway was built in the first half of the 1880s with the goal of linking the young nation of Canada east and west. Sophie did not hesitate, in the pattern of her kinfolk during her childhood, to shift her economic activity to supply rail crews. The story is told about how, during the line's construction, Sophie arrived with a pack load of liquor for the construction camp at the junction of Golden, in eastern British Columbia, where her brother Baptiste Morigeau was then running a general store. She was warned off by local purveyors, whereupon she took her pack train over the mountains to the boomtown of Calgary to sell the liquor at a profit.<sup>64</sup>

The daughter of the storeowner in the railway town of Demersville, located not far from Kalispell, Montana, recalled how in the mid-1880s "Sophie Morigeau made many trips to Demersville with her pack string, to stock up on supplies." Indicative of the familial fluidity that structured Sophie's life, Ida Gregg soon became her travelling companion, an experience the young Ida never forgot:

I was about eleven years old at this time (about 1886) and I spent two summers with Sophie on Tobacco Plains, and travelling with her. Sophie gave me my own little cabin to live in on the Plains. We often travelled together with the pack horses over the mountain trails, forded rivers where very often the horses would have to swim, and many times we met not too friendly Indian parties—but Sophie always got her pack string home intact. Sophie was a friend to everyone and always helped the sick and needy. She had a lot of cattle, and she gave me several head for my own. She also had a cig-box full of gold coins under her mattress.<sup>65</sup>

Sophie went wherever money was to be made and packed in whatever was wanted, including a mowing machine and, on another occasion, a wagon. Later asked by some of the men how she ever got the wagon box there, Sophie is said to have responded acerbically, “Oh, [I] just cut a hole in the bottom of the box and hung ‘er over the saddle horn.”<sup>66</sup>

Ida Gregg’s sojourn with Sophie was brought to a close by yet another man. As she explained, “Sophie was married to a man named Clark; it seems to me they were married in Missoula. This Clark was very mean and selfish and it was because of him I did not live with Sophie any longer; he did not want anyone else around and I was afraid of him.”<sup>67</sup> This partner was, however, just as luckless as his predecessor A man who knew Sophie at the time recalled that her husband, Tom Clark, drowned.<sup>68</sup>

### Settling Down on Tobacco Plains

Sophie Morigeau’s railway construction coup in Calgary was likely her last big adventure. By now in her fifties, she settled down, to the extent she ever did, at her Tobacco Plains trading post. It may have been that a serious financial loss ended her packing career. Sophie told an acquaintance that she had entrusted her pack train and cash to a white man, who was supposed to buy goods for her in Missoula—but she never saw him again.<sup>69</sup> Sometime later, on 28 October 1896, Sophie filed a claim to homestead the 160 acres on which she was almost certainly already living.<sup>70</sup> A neighbour recalled that “Sophia had milk cows, good horses, and range cattle.”<sup>71</sup>

The archaeological record also attests that Sophie developed a home life. An excavation of “the trading post established by a French-Indian woman,” conducted in 1967 by researchers from the University of Montana, found a stone fireplace in the house and “a Singer sewing machine patented in the middle 1880’s.” According to the report on the excavation, Sophie “used perfume and enjoyed her liquor (or her husbands did), as old bottles indicate.”<sup>72</sup>

A number of first-hand perspectives on Sophie survive from her later years. A young Englishman, who lived with the Phillipps family just north of the border, dramatized Sophie as a colourful character in a letter he wrote home in February 1888:

I went to call on the only two ladies of Tobacco Plains . . . two half breeds. The one Sophy by name, a remarkable character, and her servant Mary. They have one eye apiece.

Sophy has just given her 13th husband notice to quit which

is promptly done, her last having refused to do so, got shot for his pains. An every day occurrence on the American side, nothing is ever said. The nearest magistrate being 100 miles away.

She was most affable and gave me the best dinner I have had for a long time. She manages the farm, puts up horses whatever husband she has on is not allowed to interfere with anything only to do what she tells him.

She goes down below 2 or 3 times a year for whisky, with which she remains tight for 2 or 3 weeks on end, until it is all gone. The Mrs. here [Rowena Phillipps] went to call on[e] day unfortunately after. . . . She got after her with a club and the Mrs. had to ride for her life we saw her coming back here at full gallop and P. thought the whole tribe of Blackfeet Indians were after her.<sup>73</sup>

Sophie entranced the Phillipps children. Susan, born in 1882, recalled how she and her brothers and sisters—in spite of their father's orders, and in spite of the disapproval of their Kootenai mother, who had seen Sophie in some of her less presentable hours—used to ride across the line to Sophie's homestead whenever they could steal away. As to the reason:

Sophie had a flock of big white geese on her little lake; and Sophie had a piece of one of her ribs hanging on the wall of her cabin with a pink bow tied around it, that she had amputated herself when it was broken and protruding after a run-away accident with a team and buggy. Sophie always had something good to eat in the house, and she always had a lot of Indian children clustered around—and she liked you, and “everybody liked Sophie.”<sup>74</sup>

Herself of mixed descent, Susan Phillipps was almost certainly aware of the racial stereotyping that structured Sophie's life and, by inference, her own. Sophie's response was, from Susan's perspective, to position herself variously depending on the circumstances:

Sophie skinned the Indians in trade, and when both Indians and whites were sharing a meal with her, she had a separate washing-up place for “those dirty Indians” and made sure that they used it. She always used to tell how “Sophie and Mis' Desrosier were the only white women on the Plains” in the early nineties. Yet

she was forever helping the Indians, and her undeclared pride of race as an Indian showed itself when she became dangerously angry with Johanna Quirk [Cuffe, a neighbour] because Johanna was seen discarding some dirty candy offered by the Kootenais to their guests at one of Father Coccola's church gatherings.<sup>75</sup>

Susan's comment that Sophie "skinned the Indians in trade" suggests that Sophie was a seasoned businesswoman. Another story about Sophie again points to her shrewdness as a trader:

"They" tell how at one time she sold a stock of buckskin needles for five dollars apiece; when her Indian customers objected that one dollar was usually the top price, she solemnly explained that the white man across the mountains who made these needles had died and pretty soon, no more needles at any price. When many people arrived to take advantage of the fine fishing on Sophie's creek, she used to levy a toll charge for the privilege of fishing there; if the fisherman refused to shell out, she would simply wade into the creek and splash up and down until all the trout were scared in hiding.<sup>76</sup>

If Sophie had a hard-nosed streak when it came to doing business, she also sought sociability. Yet, however much she might have hoped to overcome the racial stereotyping structuring her life, this was ultimately not possible. The version of Susan Phillipps's story about the "dirty" candy that her neighbour Johanna Quirk Cuffe told is revealing, since in this version it is Sophie herself, not the Kootenais, who is slighted: "I had met Sophia several times . . . when at the picnic following Mass by Father Coccala, Sophia had given me a few pieces of candy from a handful she was passing around. Not caring to eat it, I casually discarded it; however, my action was seen by Sophie, who became furious." Some weeks later Johanna anxiously spotted "Sophie riding toward the house" but soon discovered that "Sophie had brought a peace offering, a moist gunny sack half full of fresh trout for 'her friend.'" <sup>77</sup>

A major attempt at reconciliation came to Johanna Cuffe when Sophie invited her and the local teacher, Mary Harshman, to visit her on a Sunday in 1894. Johanna never forgot the memorable afternoon, whose telling underlines the racial stereotyping of the times:

We rode across the plains to Sophie's yard which was swept clean; the steps, which faced the east, were scrubbed white as was the floor of the long log house. We sat in chairs near a home-made table covered with a spotless white cloth. Sophie, who was dressed in a light dress with a white apron, talked with us a while; she mentioned knowing some of Mary's acquaintances in the Flathead. Then she excused herself and went out to her cool spring-house to bring in a huge bowl full of fine, big strawberries she had raised. She then brought out a cake, the biggest we girls had ever seen; made in a small dishpan, it was frosted with whipped cream and egg whites. There was also a pitcher of thick cream for the berries, a pitcher of milk, and home-baked bread and butter. She offered to make tea, but we declined. As we expressed appreciation for her hospitality, she was as gracious as any white lady could be.<sup>78</sup>

Structure trumped agency.

### Sophie's Later Years

Sophie experienced various ups and downs during her later years. According to one account, she "was pretty well fixed by the early nineties," when the very harsh winter of 1892–93 killed a hundred of her 130 head of cattle.<sup>79</sup> According to Johanna Cuffe, Sophie never had as many cattle "after the ice-crusted snows of the winter of 1892–1893, when the animals could not dig down to the grass below."<sup>80</sup>

As Sophie aged, she inevitably became more vulnerable. According to a man who was acquainted with her in her later years, Sophie had a succession of white men "living with her *and off her*." Known sometimes as her business partners, these men "broke her, and she never recovered financially."<sup>81</sup> Sophie's independence became a liability. On 28 July 1910, when Sophie was in her mid-seventies, the *Eureka Journal* reported that "'Old Sophia' was robbed of \$300 at her home near Sophia Lake last Friday. A man named Shuman, and a halfbreed woman had been staying with Sophie for a few days and it is thought they saw the old woman go" to her money's hiding place.<sup>82</sup>

Sophie's world contracted. Johanna recalled how "in those days we went sometimes to Gateway to trade, and would sometimes meet or stop to visit Sophia," but "in later years, we saw Sophie seldom, as the railroad through Eureka eliminated trips to Gateway."<sup>83</sup> When Sophie became ill

in 1915, at almost eighty years of age, she turned her remaining livestock, principally horses, over to a man whose wife then became her nurse.<sup>84</sup> On 24 August 1916, Sophie finally completed the formal acquisition of her property, which enabled her to sell it four days later.<sup>85</sup> Sophie Morigeau died on 5 October 1916 and was buried in Eureka, Montana.<sup>86</sup>

## Conclusion

Sophie Morigeau has repeatedly been characterized as extraordinary for her time. Johanna Cuffe's daughter wrote what seems a very appropriate epitaph: "Sophia Morigeau had enough strong Kootenai blood in her makeup to give her the resourcefulness and stamina her rugged life required. But she evidently decided to live her life as the white men of her day lived theirs, playing a dominant role. Hers was a colorful, zestful life, which if written in full, would outsell any modern novel."<sup>87</sup> But Sophie's life is extraordinary only insofar as we view it from the perspective of the white women and men of the dominant society, who could never quite accept her as their equal. When Sophie's way of life is framed within her upbringing, the extraordinary becomes ordinary.

The structures Sophie Morigeau knew as a child she took not as encumbrances; rather, she used them as a base for opening up possibilities. Drawing on the familial fluidity and occupational flexibility with which she had grown up, Sophie fashioned an identity for herself that appears to have fit comfortably within these structures. What she knew best was the life of the free trader, going wherever a profit was to be made, and, following her brief marriage, that was the life she took up as a free woman.

The racial hierarchy of the day was more difficult for Sophie to reconcile. According to a local history, published in 1950 and based on conversations with many persons acquainted with Sophie in her later years, she grasped her life circumstances:

Sophie was quick of wit and surely she learned fast in the missionary school. Indeed the social graces she was taught there she never forgot; she used to turn them on and off as occasion demanded. But the attitudes and actions of her father [referring to François Morigeau] and the other white men she knew spoke much louder than the words of the creeds of priests. Her mother was of the lesser race and of the subservient sex: on the whole the squaw was merely a red man's hired girl, or a white man's

commodity—no other feminine way of life was open. Sophie aspired to be white; she aspired to be free and fearless like a man; she aspired to be shrewd and propertied.<sup>88</sup>

Sophie did not permit the racial stereotyping expressed toward her by others to structure her life, to keep her, if this account be believed, from acting as she would:

To all appearances Sophie never allowed herself to become defeated—as so many are—by her mixed blood. She assumed a front that she was white, and for her patterns of living she adopted the ways of either white or Indian, whichever seemed most profitable in cash or satisfaction—the essential sanity of a savage or a sage.<sup>89</sup>

In negotiating her identity, Sophie Morigeau maximized the opportunities that existed for her within the structures into which she was born. These structures guided her life, but so did the human agency she possessed in abundance. By virtue of her birth and upbringing, she was, like all of us, enmeshed in a larger set of circumstances, but she was also a person in her own right. Early on, Sophie set her sights on living on her own without having to rely on men, however much she might enjoy their company. Recollections testify that, by virtue of being her own woman, she influenced the girls of the next generation whom she befriended. She impressed those she encountered to the extent that they wrote about her in their journals or otherwise remembered her presence in their lives.

The interplay between structure and agency that marked Sophie Morigeau's life has utility for us today. No matter how different Sophie's life was from our own, we must all find ways to negotiate the tension between the structures we inherit and our individual capacity for agency. Even Sophie herself may have been surprised from time to time by her resourcefulness, by her ability to take advantage of her circumstances. Just as she affected those around her, she continues to influence all of us who are intrigued by her. Sophie's story, as told by those who knew her and those who honour her memory, contains lessons both for our own time and for historians interested in interrogating the lives of those who lived in past times.

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the invitations to speak at the “Windows on the Past: Explorers, Trappers, and Traders of the Kootenai and Clark Fork Rivers Symposium” held at Libby, Montana, in September 2000, where I first presented my research on Sophie Morigeau, and to participate in the session titled “Negotiating Identities: Indigenous Women’s Stories from Northwestern North America” at the American Society for Ethnohistory Annual Meeting in Tulsa in November 2007, which renewed my interest in Sophie. Carol Ray and Becky Timmons have generously discussed Sophie’s life with me, and I thank them, as I do all those helping to bring this volume to fruition.



THE *Montana Memories* OF EMMA MINESINGER:  
 Windows on the Family, Work, and Boundary Culture  
 of a Borderlands Woman

*Sarah Carter*

Emma Harriet Minesinger (1866–1950) was a woman of many ancestries (Shoshone, Salish, Spanish, German) who lived in Montana and to a lesser extent Alberta during a time of dramatic, rapid, and irrevocable change.<sup>1</sup> Almost continually on the move until granted an allotment on the Flathead Reservation in Montana in 1908, she was a wife from age sixteen, and a mother who tragically lost all but one of her five children to accidents and illness. She worked as a domestic servant, homesteader and farmer, cook, hunter, buckskin tailor, beadwork artist, and gatherer of alumroot. She ran a pack train, operated a “stopping place” and café, drove a chuck wagon, and took in laundry. We rarely have insight into the lives of women such as Emma, but she left an account of her life, *Montana Memories*, in collaboration with, and written by her great-niece, Ida Pearl Smith Patterson.<sup>2</sup> Emma is remembered warmly by her descendants who cherish their memories of her, as well as her beadwork, buckskin clothing, photographs, and documents Emma herself wrote or kept to chart her life, her personal archive.<sup>3</sup>

I discovered Emma while at the K. Ross Toole Archives at the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library at the University of Montana in Missoula. I was looking for accounts about or by women who held allotments on reservations as part of my study of land distribution policies and gender on both sides of the 49th parallel. The very helpful archivist presented me with the manuscript copy of *Montana Memories* by Ida Patterson. I was intrigued by the narrative of Emma’s life for many reasons, but mainly because it provided a rare glimpse into the history of the Montana–Alberta borderlands from the perspective of an Aboriginal woman,

detailing her great variety of jobs and tasks, and how she persevered through hardships and setbacks. I was pleased to find that Emma had been a cook at the Bar U Ranch, today a National Historic Site in the Alberta foothills near High River, as we have little knowledge of the women who worked at such jobs.<sup>4</sup> Researcher Amy McKinney helped me find other sources on Emma, eventually leading me to the massive genealogical collection in the Glenbow left by Walter K. Miles (Emma's great-nephew).<sup>5</sup> But my understanding of Emma would have remained superficial if it were not for a surprise email in September 2008 from Emma's great-granddaughter Peggy Budding Ensminger of Los Angeles, California. Peggy had googled her great-grandmother and my name came up as the presenter of a paper on Emma at the American Society for Ethnohistory in 2007.<sup>6</sup> Peggy wrote, "I am very curious to know more about your research on this woman as I believe that she is my great grandmother." I learned through this remarkable and serendipitous communication, that I was in touch with Emma's only direct descendants. In her second email, Peggy wrote, "Before you finalize your manuscript I would love for you to speak with my mother [Jean Ensminger], who is 77, as she can provide some, I believe, helpful details of Emma's life. She spent a great deal of time with Emma when she and her husband, Andrew Magee, lived in California during the 1930s. My mother's grandparents lived next door to her. My mother also made many trips to visit Emma on the Flathead Reservation. I have a great deal of photos and other documents which may be of interest to you." This was every historian's dream, seldom realized. Just over two months later, my University of Alberta ethics application approved, I was off to Los Angeles to meet Jean and Peggy. Jean is the daughter of Emma's daughter Hazel, the only one of Emma's five (perhaps six) children to survive into adulthood and to have a child. Peggy is Jean's daughter. Their knowledge of Emma and her family, and their collection of her documents, photos, and beadwork are at the heart of this article, making its publication possible, and I want to thank them very warmly for sharing these and for their hospitality.

Emma's life, as represented in the publication *Montana Memories*, in her own documents, in the recollections of her descendants, and in her beadwork, is a lesson in borderlands history.<sup>7</sup> She and other family members shuttled between Canada and the U.S., their lives shaped by forces from both sides of the border. Meinsinger Creek in southern Alberta, and Minesinger Ridge and Trail in Montana record the presence of this family on both sides of the border (spellings of the name varied). The Minesingers



**8.1** The Minesinger family, c. 1894, in southern Alberta. Emma is seated second from the right, holding her son Peter. Her mother, Nellie, is in black, with beaded gauntlets. Standing at the back are Emma brothers, Henry (right), a cowhand at the Bar U, and John. The other children are Henry's. The photograph was likely taken soon after the death of James M. Minesinger (Nellie's husband and the father of Emma, Henry, and John). Emma and Nellie may be wearing black in mourning. Courtesy of Jean Ensminger.

defied tidy boundaries, categories, and notions of fixed identities, and they provide insight into the boundary culture of people of multiple ancestries of the Canadian–American borderlands. As the daughter of a man of Pennsylvania Dutch (German) ancestry, and a woman of Shoshone, Salish, and Spanish ancestry, and as the wife of two white men, first Thomas Waymack, and later Andrew Magee, Emma negotiated multiple worlds. Just as she crisscrossed the 49th parallel, Emma functioned in the economic, social, and cultural world of the new settlers at the same time as she retained a strong attachment to her Aboriginal ancestry. As an example of her shifting worlds, Emma attended school for a term at Victor, Montana, where she was able to visit her grandmother, Strong Old Woman, or Mrs. Carlos Monteray, in a nearby “Indian encampment.”<sup>8</sup> Emma inherited the oral culture of her mother’s people and she spoke Salish and some Shoshone, as well as English, which she also read and wrote.<sup>9</sup> She bridged an Aboriginal era when oral communication dominated and the text-based settler phase.

During Emma's early years in the late nineteenth century, colonial and national categories and identities were not firmly established, and there was a boundary or border culture of people who were in between or at the margins. Her family tree provides insight into the complex web of kinship of the people of multiple ancestries who lived cross-border lives.<sup>10</sup> By Emma's later years, categories and identities were more fixed and movement across the border was more circumscribed. The Aboriginal and settler worlds were more divided and distinct, and the Canadian–American divide sharper. It became useful and prudent for Emma to settle south of the 49th parallel, where divorce was not difficult, where she could obtain an allotment, and where she could live on a reservation with her non-Aboriginal husband, none of which were possible in Canada. Other Minesingers and numerous other relatives received allotments on the Flathead Reservation as “Indians” while some who stayed in Canada received Métis scrip. Now firmly an “American,” Emma and other families of the borderlands were forgotten and erased from Canadian history. With their special affection for national borders, historians mistakenly sharpened boundaries that were blurred in the past. But Emma left a record of her life and her intermingled and manifold boundary culture.

The term *boundary culture* has been used to describe the kind of collaborative Native American autobiography or personal narrative that Emma and Ida Patterson produced. These were usually solicited by Euro-American/Canadians who recorded and then edited the words of their Aboriginal “informants.” Hertha Wong has suggested that we think of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Native American autobiography as “a type of literary ‘boundary culture’ where two cultures influence each other simultaneously.”<sup>11</sup> These autobiographies, according to Wong were border encounters that changed Native American forms of oral personal narrative, but also challenged Euro-American notions of narrative. In the case of Emma's autobiography however, neat binaries of the Euro-American collector/editor and the non-literate Aboriginal informant do not fit. Ida Patterson was not an “outsider” but a family member, and also a resident of the Flathead Reservation. Like Emma, she had multiple ancestries, which in her case included Plains Métis through her great-grandmother, Marie Rose Smith, a rancher at Pincher Creek, Alberta, and a writer. Nor was Emma an “illiterate” Aboriginal informant; she read and wrote in English and even began to write her own memoirs, to be discussed later.

*Montana Memories* by Ida Patterson was first published in twenty-three issues of the *Montana Farmer-Stockman* between 15 March 1950 and 1

April 1951. This version is nearly identical to the manuscript bearing the same title in the K. Ross Toole Archives, and this is the version published in 1981 by the Salish Kootenai Community College as *Montana Memories: The Life of Emma Magee in the Rocky Mountain West*. There are other versions and complexities however, to be discussed below. Some of the “facts” and details presented in *Montana Memories* have been questioned by relatives and editors, and some of these are noted below, or in the endnotes when particularly convoluted or murky. For the purposes of providing an overview of Emma’s life however, I have opted to present the version provided by Emma and Ida, augmented by other sources when available and salient. The basic narration of the main events and people in Emma’s life in *Montana Memories* appears sound, although Ida added a great deal of flourish, context, and re-organization of her own to this framework.

The story of Emma’s life as told in *Montana Memories* begins with her birth in 1866 at her parents’ homestead, just north of Hell Gate, or present-day Missoula. Emma’s mother, Nellie, or Quick-to-See was born in 1826 in the Bitterroot Valley of Montana, the daughter of a Shoshone and Salish (Flathead) woman, Strong Old Woman, and Carlos Monteray, a Spaniard.<sup>12</sup> It is explained that Nellie and her mother were Shoshone “because it was customary to determine both the tribal and family relationship by the Mother’s blood. Therefore, since the Flathead and Spanish strain came from the male side of the family, my Grandmother and Mother were classed as Shoshone.”<sup>13</sup> The memoir establishes that as a child, Emma was exposed to a mix of Shoshone, Salish and Euro-American influences, but her mother’s influence was paramount. She learned to harvest and dry wild fruits, vegetables, and medicines. Her mother also taught Emma and her sister Mary beadwork, embroidery, sewing, knitting, and cooking. They made suits, gloves, and moccasins from buckskin. A chapter of *Montana Memories* is devoted to “fireside recollections” of her mother’s “ancient Indian lore . . . handed down from generation to generation thorough the long ages.”<sup>14</sup> Trickster tales, usually with Coyote as the main character, are characteristic of Shoshone oral tradition, and Coyote appears in one of the stories Emma recalled from her mother.<sup>15</sup>

Emma’s father was James Madison Minesinger, from Erie, Pennsylvania, and according to *Montana Memories* he was of Dutch ancestry but this is a frequent error (possibly made by Ida) when the term *Pennsylvania Dutch* is used, which refers to a particular group of immigrants from Germany. In her 1933 testimony in the matter of the estate of her mother, Emma stated that her father “was a white man of German descent.”<sup>16</sup>

According to family genealogist Walter K. Miles, James was born between 1824 and 1826, so he was about the same age as Nellie.<sup>17</sup> While it was claimed in *Montana Memories* that James was a civil engineer and a graduate of Yale, Miles found no record of this in the Yale alumni office and he also learned that Yale only granted the first degree in civil engineering in 1860, some years after James had relocated to the Montana Territory.<sup>18</sup> In 1856, he arrived in the Bitterroot valley on a cattle drive and he prospected gold, freighted and logged, and worked as a free trader. He married Nellie in 1858 in a ceremony solemnized by Father Anthony Ravalli and they continued to travel and trade before settling on the homestead north of Hell Gate.<sup>19</sup> Their oldest child was Henry followed by Mary, Emma, and twins Charles and John, who died in infancy, and John II, born thirteen years after the twins. James was a prominent citizen of the Missoula district. He was a founding member and secretary of the Masonic Lodge, and for over a decade, beginning in 1865, he was elected County Surveyor. James surveyed the original townsite of Missoula, according to Emma's obituary, which appeared under the heading "Daughter of Man Who Platted Missoula Dies."<sup>20</sup> The Minesinger home was a convenient stopping place for traders, farmers, missionaries, cowboys, and packers. *Montana Memories* mentions some of the frequent visitors who were prominent or noteworthy in Montana history, including "Calamity Jane."<sup>21</sup>

At the age of five, Emma lost the sight in her right eye while playing with her brother Henry when an arrow he aimed at a bee hit her instead. Many photographs of Emma, particularly as a young woman, show her left profile; she turned so that her right eye was not visible to the camera.<sup>22</sup> The three eldest Minesinger children were educated at Hell Gate public school where "all of the scholars . . . were white children except for us."<sup>23</sup> Unlike the other children, they went to school in moccasins and red flannel leggings and they took jerked buffalo meat for lunch. This school only operated for three months during the summer, and for some years, their father tutored them at home in the winter, although occasionally other friends took his place while he was occupied elsewhere. Emma also attended a summer term at Victor, Montana. Her brother Charles died in his early teens of Bright's disease. The youngest brother, John, attended Fort Shaw Indian Boarding School in the Sun River Valley, Montana.

In her early teens, Emma's school years ended, and she went to work as a domestic servant in Missoula with the Higgins family, and then at Grass Valley at the Latimer ranch. Her sister Mary also worked as a domestic servant but eloped at age sixteen with former Hell Gate schoolmate

Alfred Miles, of Irish ancestry. The couple first lived with his parents at Evaro, Montana. In 1881, while visiting Mary at Evaro, Emma met and hastily married a boarder at the Miles' home, Thomas Waymack, from Baltimore, who had arrived in Montana with the United States Infantry and served in the Nez Perce War. He was ten years older than Emma, "tall and blonde with a flowing mustache," a bartender in a saloon, and addicted to alcohol. *Montana Memories* makes it clear from the start that the marriage was a mistake: "The old adage reads, 'Marry in haste, and repent at leisure.' I did both. Six weeks after meeting Mr. Waymack, I was his bride. . . . As the sixteen year old wife of this arrogant ex-soldier I was to find the complexities of life increased fourfold."<sup>24</sup> Their life together was characterized by constant travel and poverty as Waymack was restless, always imagining a fortune was to be made in some new locale or at a new venture, and drinking away any gains they made. Often Emma was left alone for long periods with their children, and she always worked at a great variety of occupations to provide for her family.

Emma's brother Henry was the first of the family to head north to Canada. In 1875, he went on a trail ride to the Red River settlement (Winnipeg) where he remained, marrying a Red River Métis woman, Marie Borsow (or Bourassa) in 1878.<sup>25</sup> Henry remained in Manitoba for ten years and arrived in southern Alberta in 1885. He worked for years as a cowhand at the Bar U Ranch but he and Mary later established their own ranch near High River. Mary was a skilled midwife in the High River district and she and Henry had nine children of their own.<sup>26</sup>

Henry and family likely moved to southern Alberta because other Minesingers were there. In the early 1880s, Mary (Emma's sister) and her husband Alfred Miles moved to High River to ranch on the part of the river now known as Eden Valley. James and Nellie Minesinger (Emma's parents) also moved north. In the summer of 1882 James, "an excellent axe-man," helped construct the North-West Cattle Company ranch buildings (that became the Bar U), and the following summer he built the Quorn Ranch buildings.<sup>27</sup> The senior Minesingers settled beside daughter Mary and her husband Alfred Miles, establishing the Minesinger-Miles ranch.<sup>28</sup> Emma's husband Thomas Waymack also dreamed of making a fortune as a cattle breeder in Alberta. He and Emma set out to join the other Minesingers in 1883, but their horses were stolen by the Blackfoot near Choteau. Waymack then fell ill, and when they finally arrived in High River after some months on the road, he decided he did not want to be a "cattle king" after all and they soon left for Montana.

Taking the “old Indian trail” through the Crow’s Nest Pass that led southward into Tobacco Plains, Emma and Thomas Waymack stopped and visited with Sophie Morigeau, who ran a trading post, had a herd of cattle, and a pack horse business that often took her into British Columbia. (See Jean Barman’s article on Morigeau in this volume.) *Montana Memories* details other adventures along the way, including an incident at another trading post where Emma’s knowledge of the rules of trading and of the Salish language helped narrowly avert a confrontation with a group of Nez Perce headed for Canada. She also succeeded in talking her husband out of capturing the leader of this group to collect a government reward.

Emma gave birth to her first child, Margaret Virginia, in the winter of 1884 all alone in an isolated, dilapidated shack rented from a French Canadian trapper on Upper Flathead Lake. Waymack had a job transporting freight, but just after their daughter was born, he left for the gold mines in Idaho. Emma’s food supply quickly diminished, she ran out of fuel, and knew that she and the baby would perish if they stayed in the shack, so she walked with her infant for over two miles through bitter winds and snowdrifts to take shelter for two weeks with their nearest neighbours. When Waymack returned from Idaho, he was enthusiastic about another venture: supplying commodities by pack train to the gold camps. They moved to Thompson Falls, Montana, and purchased pack horses. Emma loaded the horses, then tied her baby on her back and rode or walked with the pack train along narrow mountain trails. With these proceeds, Waymack bought a saloon in Thompson Falls, but “ever a sot himself he was his own best customer and by spring the business was dissolved.”<sup>29</sup> He then got work in a mine while Emma cooked for him and four other miners. He soon gave this up as well and spent his time at odd jobs and drinking. A second child, a son named James Francis, was born in 1886. To provide for her growing family Emma made and sold buckskin clothes, tanning the hides herself. She hunted for meat and on one occasion got lost in the dense forest around Thompson Falls, spending a night in the forest alone until found by a search party. She also provided fuel for their home, which was a particularly difficult task in the winter of 1886–87, one of the most severe in western history. Emma started an “eating place” for freighters on the way to the Idaho camps. She sold the freighters her buckskin clothing and also did their laundry.

In the spring of 1887, Waymack left to work in the Drumlummon mine in Marysville, Montana, a booming town in the Rocky Mountains (today a ghost town). After several months, he sent the funds for Emma and the

children to join him. On the morning of the move in July, Emma left her sleeping children at dawn to walk to the neighbours on an errand. As she returned, a rider galloped toward her and asked if she had left her children at home. “‘Well,’ he hesitated an awful moment. ‘I am sorry to inform you that your house has burned to the ground.’” A fire of unknown origin had completely destroyed her home and her children had perished: “Everything I loved was gone.”<sup>30</sup> The *Missoulan* reported the deaths of the two Waymack children in the house fire on 15 July 1887, and it was also noted that the Waymacks had lost an infant earlier that year to measles.<sup>31</sup> This child (if the *Missoulan* was correct) is not mentioned in the memoir.

The Waymacks then tried their luck homesteading, in the Bitterroot Valley near Florence, Montana, where they “eked out a frugal existence” for six years. Waymack had no experience as a farmer. Emma was “a hired hand as well as a housekeeper.” Two boys were born during these years, James (Jimmy) Francis, and Peter. One financial bright light was that Emma dug and sold alumroot, found in abundance on their land. According to *Montana Memories*, Emma was in a Missoula drug store when she overheard a customer complaining of dysentery to the pharmacist. She prescribed the “Indian remedy” of alumroot tea and when this produced the desired effect, the pharmacist asked for more. With the help of several men, all of the alumroots were dug on their homestead. They were paid \$5,000 dollars for the roots, and for any claim they might have to the medicine.

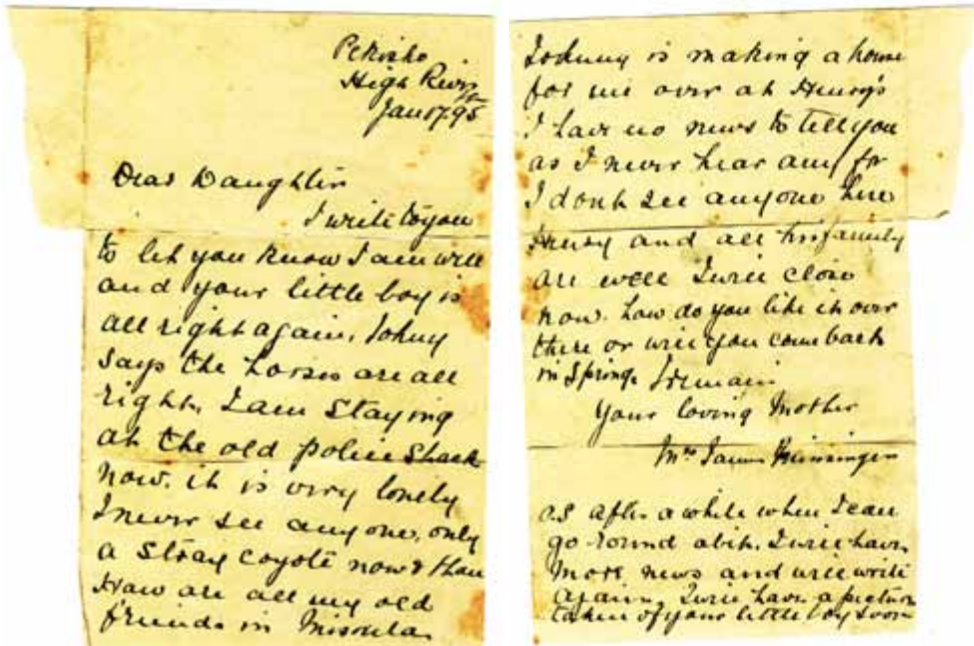
With this windfall in hand, Waymack decided to give up farming and head to Alberta once again. Emma readily agreed as her parents, sister, and brother were there. It took six weeks to make the trip first to Helena and then northward. They rented a house in High River and Waymack found work in a nearby coal mine, but once again he squandered all their money on drink. According to *Montana Memories*: “Our conjugal relationship had been strained to the utmost. My husband’s ever-increasing dissoluteness offered no hope of future felicity. So, one morning after he left for work, I hitched the team to the wagon and my children and I returned to my parental home.”<sup>32</sup> Waymack demanded custody of their eldest son, Jimmy, and Emma agreed reluctantly, as she feared for her son’s welfare. The following spring the North West Mounted Police (NWMP) found a shivering, hungry child left all alone in a camp on the Alberta prairie. Asked about his family, he could remember only his uncle Henry who worked at the Bar U and a letter was mailed to him, but he was out on the roundup and did not receive it for six weeks. The letter eventually reached Emma at her parents’ ranch.

While she contacted police, they could find no trace of her son. *Montana Memories* does not let readers learn of Jimmy's fate until a later chapter.

In May 1894, Emma's father James Minesinger died suddenly while visiting Calgary.<sup>33</sup> According to *Montana Memories*, he was on a business trip when he contracted black diphtheria and passed away the next night. "So malignant was the disease considered then, that the early morning hours saw his body conveyed from the Calgary Hotel to the cemetery. There it was quickly interred. Funeral services were not permitted, thus sparing his family the risk of exposure."<sup>34</sup> Emma's sister Mary however, an excellent horsewoman, risked flooding rivers and swollen streams to get to Calgary, but arrived only in time to view the recently made mound of her father's grave.

After leaving her husband, Emma worked as a cook at the Bar U Ranch. She remained in the High River area for a year before returning to Montana, leaving her son Peter in the care of her mother and sister (see Figure 8.1). Among the documents Emma kept is a letter from her mother dated 17 January 1895 written from Pekisko, High River, to Emma in Missoula (see Figure 8.2). Her mother was staying at "the old police shack," possibly the one on the Bar U Ranch. Nellie wrote to let Emma know that "I am well and your little boy is all right again" and that Johnny [Emma's brother] was making a home for her [Nellie] at Henry's. She closed with "how do you like it over there or will you come back in spring."<sup>35</sup> Emma likely returned to Montana in order to obtain a divorce from Waymack, as this would have been virtually impossible in Canada, where divorce was rare, expensive, and in Alberta, obtainable only through the federal Parliament.<sup>36</sup> In Montana, by contrast, divorce was easily accessible, and the divorce rate was "extraordinarily high."<sup>37</sup> Divorce cases were heard and granted by local county courts.

In Montana Emma found work once again with the Latimer Ranch at Grass Valley and there fell in love with one of the ranch hands, Andrew (Andy) D. Magee, of Scottish and Irish descent (see Figure 8.3). He was quite unlike Waymack, as he "possessed the true Scotsman's thrift. His business ventures resulted in financial profits, which accumulated to his advantage."<sup>38</sup> They went to Alberta, likely to get Emma's son Peter, and were married in Fort McLeod in September 1895. They returned to Montana first to Missoula where Andy worked in a nearby logging camp and the following year Emma and Andy worked for the Charles Allard family, well-to-do ranchers on the Flathead Reservation north of Missoula. (The Allards played an important role in the preservation of the North American



8.2 A letter to Emma from her mother, Nellie Minesinger, January 1895. It was kept in Emma's personal archive of treasured documents. Nellie would have dictated this letter. Courtesy of Jean Enslinger.



8.3 Emma and her second husband, Andy Magee, c. 1920s. Andy wears a beaded buckskin shirt, with a rose design, made by Emma. Courtesy of Jean Enslinger.

bison, acquiring and nurturing the Pablo-Allard herd, part of which was purchased by the Canadian government in 1907 for Buffalo National Park. *Montana Memories* contains a section on the history of the bison range on the Flathead Reservation.)<sup>39</sup> Emma was the Allard's housekeeper, and Andy the hired man, but at roundup time, she drove the chuck wagon and cooked for the cowhands over a campfire. In 1897, Emma and Andy were living in Ronan, Montana, also on the Flathead Reservation, where Andy cut wood and Emma worked in a café. They wanted a ranch of their own on the reservation but were denied permission by the Indian agents. Although *Montana Memories* claims that this was because Andy was not permitted to reside on the reservation ("My Flathead blood gave me the right to reside on the reserve, but not my white husband"), it was actually Emma's rights that were not recognized, according to the Bureau of Indian Affairs as officials at this time were only aware of her Shoshone background.<sup>40</sup> Instead, they purchased a ranch up the Lolo Pass, twenty miles southwest of Missoula.

In 1902, Emma learned that her son Jimmy Waymack, age fourteen, the boy left alone on the prairie by his father over seven years earlier, was in an orphan's home in Nelson, British Columbia. She was overjoyed, and sent him the money to travel by rail to Missoula. Just at that time, her son Peter fell ill with Rocky Mountain spotted fever, a lethal disease spread by ticks, and he died ten days later. Emma then welcomed her only child home, but their happiness was brief. Jimmy and Andy did not get along, and "Before the summer passed, I knew that neither Andy nor I could cope with the unruliness of my fourteen year old boy."<sup>41</sup> They sent him to an "Indian training school" in Salem, Oregon, for four years, and he then enlisted in the army. He died in 1920 while stationed in the Philippines as a result of injuries sustained by falling from a tree. The letter informing Emma of his death was also kept in her personal archive.

Returning to the Flathead Reservation in 1908, Emma claimed her right to an allotment of eighty acres. In *Montana Memories*, little explanation is given of the allotment process, and there is no hint of the controversy surrounding its application on the Flathead Reservation, which was originally set aside under the 1855 Hell Gate Treaty with the Salish, the Kootenai, and the Pend d'Oreille.<sup>42</sup> Under the 1887 Dawes Severalty Act, reservation land was divided into 80- or 160-acre units to be allotted to those who had the legal right to reside on a reservation. The remaining reservation land was then declared surplus and sold to non-Indian settlers. The allotment system was intended to eradicate "tribalism," to enhance individuality through private ownership and to open up "unused"

reservation land to outsiders. Reservation land dwindled dramatically as a result of allotment in severalty. If Emma had been married to another member of the Flathead or allied nation, she would not have been entitled to her own allotment, as her husband would have been regarded as the entitled family head. But according to U.S. federal Indian law, “an Indian woman, although married to a White man, was head of her family and . . . her children who maintained their tribal relations were entitled to allotments as members of the tribe.”<sup>43</sup> Allotment was applied to the Flathead Reservation beginning in 1904, partly in response to pressure mainly from non-Indian politicians and businessmen concerned about the loss of Montana’s population to Canada.<sup>44</sup> Opening up the reservation’s 1.4 million acres of land meant farms, businesses, and homes for thousands of new settlers. While the majority of the Aboriginal residents of the reservation did not support allotment, they had no voice in the decision-making process. Their attempts to be heard through letters and delegations to Washington were ignored.<sup>45</sup> The allotments were made and in 1910, the rest of the reservation was thrown open to outsiders.

Emma chose her allotment eight miles north of St. Ignatius in the Mission Valley on Post Creek. Other family members were among the original allottees of 1908.<sup>46</sup> Many of the Alberta Minesingers and Miles gravitated to the Flathead Reservation. Emma’s mother Nellie was granted an allotment, and had a half interest in the allotment of her second husband, Nazaire Finley, after his death in 1913. (Nellie married Finley about four years after the death of James Minesinger.) A 1913 letter to Emma from the Indian Agent at the Flathead Reservation informed her that the sale of Nazaire Finley’s allotment would provide Nellie with “sufficient funds for her support during the greater part of her lifetime,” and that Nellie could apply for a patent for her own allotment as well.<sup>47</sup> Rancher and Bar U cowhand Henry Minesinger moved his family from Alberta to the Flathead Reservation following the death of his first wife in 1900. In 1904, Henry married Eliza Finley, also a Flathead Reservation resident, and together they had seven children. According to family genealogist Walter K. Miles, all sixteen of these children received allotments.<sup>48</sup> Other family members, including two of the children of Emma’s sister Mary and her husband Alfred Miles, James Miles and Mary Samantha Miles, received Métis scrip in Canada.<sup>49</sup>

*Montana Memories* establishes that Emma’s life of hard work was not over once she had her allotment. She “assisted with the outdoor work as well as attending to my household duties. Rising at dawn, I returned to the many tasks which had been left unfinished at dusk.”<sup>50</sup> In 1909, a

daughter, Hazel Louise, was born to Emma and Andy. This was Emma's fifth child (perhaps sixth), and the first to be delivered by a doctor. Hazel was Emma's only child to survive past young adulthood, to marry, and to make Emma a grandmother. *Montana Memories* then diverts into a detailed account of Hazel's years at the Ursuline mission boarding school in St. Ignatius on the Flathead Reservation, apparently quoting Hazel directly. The final two chapters sweep through Emma's last years. She sold her allotment in 1918, just at the start of nearly a decade of dry years in Montana, and she and Andy moved to St. Ignatius where they purchased two town lots. In Emma's will, made in 1914, her allotment was valued at four thousand dollars.<sup>51</sup> She and Andy were beginning to drift apart. In her 1914 will, Emma left her allotment to her daughter Hazel, and she left one dollar each to her husband Andy and son Jimmy. Andy increasingly found "employment and interests elsewhere." When in 1922 Andy took their daughter to spend a winter with his relatives in Pennsylvania, Emma was frightened that they would not return. This is the first direct mention made of discrimination: "I spent the winter alone. The barrier of my Indian blood, I believed, forever separated me from my husband's people."<sup>52</sup>

Emma's daughter Hazel attended the Sherman Indian High School at Riverside, California, beginning her long association with that State. (Her daughter Jean remembered that her mother was very unhappy about having been sent there.) Hazel then attended business college in Spokane and was working as a stenographer in St. Ignatius when she married Henry Raymond, also of the Flathead Reservation. Raymond was in the Navy and they settled at San Pedro, California. Emma and Andy were well off enough to assist Hazel and Henry to build a home in California, and also built a house next door for themselves. Andy lived there only briefly but Emma stayed in California for five years, from 1935 to 1940. Granddaughter Jean remembers this time with great pleasure, as she lived with her grandmother, learning skills such as how to hook rugs "the Indian way," and Emma told her many Coyote stories. Emma "spoiled" her only granddaughter with toys and other presents, also making beautiful beadwork clothing for her. But according to *Montana Memories*, "nostalgia for my old friends and former home became overwhelming" and she returned to Montana, first living in her St. Ignatius home, which she then sold and lived with friends and family. For a time Emma lived with Ida Patterson, according to granddaughter Jean. In the brief final chapter called "Montana's Shifting Scene," Emma recalls and reviews the monumental changes she saw in her lifetime. Emma died in 1950 on the Flathead Reservation.

While Emma's life is presented in *Montana Memories*, the voice is seldom if ever actually hers, despite the fact that it is written in the first person. Her granddaughter Jean is adamant that it does not reflect the way Emma spoke or wrote. Emma's own undated, handwritten five-page memoir, which starts with her own birth and ends shortly after the birth of her second child James Francis, is an indication of the extent to which *Montana Memories* was a creation of Ida Patterson.<sup>53</sup> In these five pages Emma skimmed over the many topics that are dealt with in the first seventeen chapters of the manuscript that became *Montana Memories*.

One passage in Emma's own words, compared with the version presented in *Montana Memories* provides an idea of how Patterson clipped some details, added others, and altered Emma's voice. Describing her trip with Thomas Waymack in the fall of 1883 back to Montana from High River Emma wrote:

Came across the Rocky mountain range came through the Crows Nest Past on Horse back and led a pack horse most of the time and it was a rough trip no road and a dim trail my horse had to jump over trees that fell across the trail and a little snow fell at nites making the trail slippery in most places. And there was a cougher followed us most of the time early in the morning we could track him ahead of us then his track would be no more until next morning. Then there it would be again. We crossed over some high rugged mountains and saw many wild game mountain's sheep and goats deer and many small animals coyotes and wolf. And fur bearing animals. We crossed the Oldmans River forded several large rivers. Then we came to the Border line between Canada + USA. 10 days of hard traveling we were in Tobacco Plains.<sup>54</sup>

Patterson's version from *Montana Memories* trims most of these details but adds others:

This time we traveled southwest, following a trail through the Crows Nest Pass. Riding along the trail through this mountain gorge, we came upon a magnificent pair of mountain sheep horns lying directly in our path. We judged they measured nearly five feet from tip to tip. Thrust though their spiraled beauty was a long pole. Evidently two persons, the hunters perhaps, had endeavored to convey them to some distant point. We dismounted

and lingered a few moments speculating about those who no doubt wished to display this splendid trophy of their hunt. We crossed the Canadian border on an old Indian trail which led us southward into Tobacco Plains. For hundreds of years this ancient highway had thudded to the hoofs of Indian ponies bearing their riders to war and to the hunt.<sup>55</sup>

Another example is Emma's own description of her first husband and marriage: "Then I got married to a man almost a stranger to me he was a cruel inhuman person I took his abuse for eleven years."<sup>56</sup> Ida's version—"As the sixteen year old wife of this arrogant ex-soldier I was to find the complexities of life increased fourfold"—is in a very different voice.<sup>57</sup>

In Emma's own five-page narrative the term *I* is used more often when describing her many jobs, while Patterson tended to use *we*, assuming the work was most often done with a husband. For example, Emma wrote of the pack train operation at Thompson Falls, "I had 5 horses and I started a small pack train. I worked hard and packed those horses from Thompson Fall [*sic*] into Murray Idaho. Walked in mud up to my knees and packed my baby on my back. When we arrived at our destination and cargo distributed I would take the horses to the packers corell unsaddle them fed and water them while my husband collected for the cargo."<sup>58</sup> Ida's version is rather different: "Arriving in the busy town with five horses, we purchased two others. Before the summer was over we bought three more. . . . It was nightfall when we reached Murray. After disposing of our load, we went to our cabin. My husband fed and watered the pack string, while I prepared our evening meal."<sup>59</sup> If there is a pattern to Patterson's reconfiguration of Emma's life, it is to make her appear more refined, domestic, reflective and "ladylike" than is suggested in Emma's own five-page account.

Ida Patterson was an aspiring writer, and *Montana Memories* was her main creation and achievement. Born in Alberta in 1903, she was the daughter of Mary Samantha Miles, the second child and oldest daughter of Emma's sister Mary and Alfred Miles.<sup>60</sup> (As mentioned earlier, Mary Samantha Miles took Métis scrip in Canada.) Ida's father was Joseph Smith, from Pincher Creek, Alberta. Joseph's father Charles Smith was Scandinavian, and his mother Marie Rose Delorme (1861–1960) was Métis, originally from the Red River Settlement (see Figure 8.4). Although Marie Rose had seventeen children, she found time later in her life to write, publishing her memoirs "Eighty Years on the Plains," which included events in the history of the Pincher Creek district, in instalments



**8.4** Marie Rose (Delorme) Smith with her husband, Charles Smith, and their daughter Mary Ann, c. 1890s. The Smiths, who were ranchers at Pincher Creek, Alberta, were Ida Smith Patterson's grandparents. Courtesy of the Glenbow Archives, NA-2539-1.

in the *Canadian Cattleman*.<sup>61</sup> The manuscript is in Calgary's Glenbow Archives, and it is similar in many ways to Patterson's narrative of Emma's life. Emma and Marie Rose shared a great deal. They were born five years apart, lived on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border, were married at age sixteen, lost many children, and lived well into the twentieth century. Both narratives deal with the boundary culture of people of mixed ancestry who lived on both sides of the 49th parallel. Both describe lives characterized by movement and change, until Marie Rose settled on her ranch and Emma on her allotment. Hard work was a constant in both their lives and for both, knowledge from their Aboriginal ancestry permitted them to survive on the land. Both women sewed for a living and created beautiful beadwork designs.<sup>62</sup> The memoirs of both women are imbued with nostalgia, but both are candid about the difficulties of their married lives. Both could be read as political statements about identity, as the stories of their lives articulate the depth and importance of their mixed-ancestry cultural heritage, although the sense of a distinct identity seems much sharper for Marie Rose.

It is possible that Ida Patterson's grandmother, writer Marie Rose Smith, inspired her to write the life of her great aunt Emma. But Ida may not have known her grandmother Marie Rose. Ida and her family moved to Polson on the Flathead Reservation when she was a young girl, and her parents divorced in 1911. Joseph, who had been a barber in Polson, returned to Pincher Creek, Alberta, after the divorce and died in 1914. Ida's mother Mary married Dave Patterson in 1916 and they had one daughter, Grace. Ida grew up on the Flathead Reservation, attended the Ursuline School in St. Ignatius, just a few years before Hazel's years at the same institution, described at such length in *Montana Memories*.<sup>63</sup> Likely some of Ida's own memories of the school are included in the narrative. After high school, she attended business college in Spokane, like Hazel, but at the age of seventeen, she became afflicted with rheumatism, forcing her to spend much of her time sitting or lying in bed. According to her half-sister Grace Patterson McComas, Ida loved to write and she published other poems and articles.<sup>64</sup> She took notes from Emma, according to McComas, and wrote "until way into the night. Sometimes she would become so stiff she could hardly move."<sup>65</sup>

Aside from rephrasing and re-organizing Emma's memories, Ida Patterson added a great deal of context from secondary sources, providing all sorts of information about the early history of Montana, including such diverse topics as the first farmers, the Chinese workers, and the demise

of the buffalo. Passages such as this indicate Patterson's aspirations as a writer and they clearly signal that Emma's voice is altered and muted in the memoir: "At last the hushed Indian summer days came and went, but the hunting parties came no more. Over the silent, grass-grown trail only phantom Indians rode. No longer did the great plains re-echo to the pounding of thundering hoof."<sup>66</sup> In *Montana Memories* there is a great deal of detail on Alfred Miles, Patterson's own grandfather, including his adventures as a volunteer wagon train teamster during the Nez Perce War, and later how he carried the mail by pony express from Missoula to Plains, Montana.<sup>67</sup>

Another version of *Montana Memories*, entitled "In the Shadow of the Shining Mountains," dated 1946 to 1950 and written under the name Ida Pearl Smith, was located by family genealogist Walter K. Miles.<sup>68</sup> The conclusion indicates that it was written while Emma was living in California, as the Emma of this version yearns to return to the Flathead Reservation "in spite of her daughter's solicitude . . . to spend the evening of her life in the shadow of the Shining Mountains." Unlike *Montana Memories*, it is written in the third person—in Patterson's voice—describing the life of Emma. Much is the same, but there are also details that do not appear in *Montana Memories*, including the story of Emma visiting her grandmother Strong Old Woman (Mrs. Carlos Monteray) when she was living in an encampment near Victor: "The ancient grandmother, brown and wrinkled, always welcomed her young granddaughter. The old woman lived much in the past, and often talked to Emma of those bygone days. Her favorite story was of Sacajawea, the Bird Woman of Lewis and Clark fame. Strong Old Woman claimed some blood relationship to the Shoshone guide." Toward the end there is a lengthy account of a dream that Emma had while a patient in the hospital at St. Ignatius, recovering from appendicitis, that does not appear in *Montana Memories*. The devil appears to Emma and warns her about five people who wished to deceive her and rob her of her happiness. It seems that Patterson dearly wanted her great aunt to return to the Flathead Reservation. Ida Patterson died in 1954, just four years after Emma, at age fifty-two.

Without Patterson's determination to write about Emma we would likely not have more than the five pages of memoir Emma herself wrote, which she ended just at the most tragic time in her life. Patterson clearly extracted much more detail from Emma, and the result is a collaboration that is an invaluable, rare record of the life of a borderlands woman, despite the interventions and embellishments. It belongs in studies and collections of Native American women's life writing, with the understanding that, like all



8.5 A beaded bag made by Emma. Emma's beaded bags reflect Plateau designs, although not exclusively. Courtesy of Jean Enslinger.





**8.6** Another example of Emma's beaded bags. Courtesy of Jean Ensminger.





**8.7** Buckskin beaded jacket, made by Emma. The wild rose featured prominently in Emma's beadwork. Courtesy of Jean Enslinger.



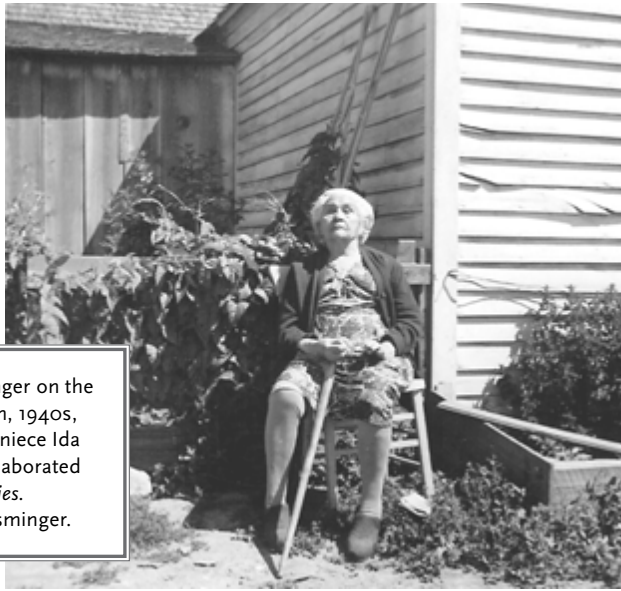
**8.8** A beaded bag for powwows and ceremonies, made by Emma. Courtesy of Jean Enslinger.



**8.9** Emma Minesinger and a friend on the Flathead Reservation, 1927. Emma is on the right, holding the beaded bag in Figure 8.6. Courtesy of Jean Enslinger.

collaborations such as this, it represents a fragment of Emma's life, and that it contains a good deal by and about Patterson as well.<sup>69</sup> *Montana Memories* however, is a unique variant of the Native American "as-told-to" autobiography. They were usually solicited, recorded, re-written, and edited by a non-Aboriginal person—an Indian agent or anthropologist. The "informant" and the "collaborator" were from two distinct cultures and the result was a "bicultural document," the "ground on which two cultures meet," "the textual equivalent of the frontier."<sup>70</sup> The "informant" must fashion herself in a foreign language for an alien dominant culture, represented by the "collaborator." But Ida Patterson did not represent an alien dominant culture, as she was part of this mixed-ancestry boundary culture, and in writing about Emma, Patterson was writing her own family history.

Another rich and enduring legacy of Emma's life is found in her striking beadwork and in the garments and moccasins that are but a small sampling of the enormous quantity she must have made during her lifetime. Emma was a worker in an industry that produced essential clothing and footwear for family members but that was also sold throughout a vast network of trading posts and camps all over the West.<sup>71</sup> According to *Montana Memories*, she learned sewing and beadwork from her mother, so the Shoshone influence may have been important, but designs, patterns, and garments altered rapidly in the late nineteenth century world as new influences were absorbed, and in response to market demands. In the photograph of the Minesinger family from the mid-1890s (see Figure 8.1), Emma's mother Nellie is wearing beaded gauntlets with geometric designs, most prominently a cross that might indicate the four directions. The gauntlets suggest a combination of an older tradition and new influences. Until about 1900 geometric designs characterized Shoshone beadwork but by the 1870s there began a turn to floral motifs that eventually predominated.<sup>72</sup> Ideas for floral patterns were acquired from all over,



**8.10** Emma Minesinger on the Flathead Reservation, 1940s, when she and great-niece Ida Smith Patterson collaborated on *Montana Memories*. Courtesy of Jean Enslinger.


including the lacework and needlepoint of Roman Catholic nuns and seed catalogues, as well as the flowers from their own environment, such as the mountain roses. Today the “Shoshone Rose” is a recognized symbol at modern powwows. Nellie’s gauntlets, with heavily embellished cuffs, reflect new influences and market demands, as these were not part of the traditional repertoire of garments. Demand for beaded gloves or gauntlets was high among settlers who regarded these as essential “cowboy” or western dress.<sup>73</sup>

Emma’s beadwork reflects a variety of influences including Salish, Shoshone, and Nez Perce.<sup>74</sup> The defining features of her work are the floral motifs, and while she created many imaginative designs, of these the rose is the most prominent (see Figures 8.5 to 8.7). The fragrant pink and prickly wild rose inhabits all of Emma’s territory, the borderlands of Montana and Alberta (and is the official floral emblem of that province), and it is found in the mountains as well as the prairies. Like Emma, the wild rose disregarded local and national borders. This is the beadwork of the borderlands. Despite the upheavals of her life, and her attachments to both the Aboriginal and settler worlds, Emma’s Aboriginal heritage remained paramount. Her beadwork, learned from her mother and passed on to her descendants, is a tangible link to this heritage.

Understanding Emma Minesinger—made possible by the co-produced narrative of her life, her own five-page memoir, the documents in

her personal archive, the memories of her descendants, and her bead-work—opens up new ways of thinking about identity, community, and nation. Emma, her extended family and other people of the borderlands defied and complicated boundaries and categories. She disturbs and haunts the unity and coherence of nationalist histories, which forget the presence and the narratives of marginalized peoples of the borderlands.<sup>75</sup> By leaving these records of her life, which constitute a powerful counter-narrative, Emma challenges and intervenes in our understanding of boundaries and borders in the history of the North American West.





# PART FOUR

THE SPIRIT WORLD



## SEARCHING FOR CATHERINE AUGER: The Forgotten Wife of the *Wíhtikôw* (*Windigo*)

*Nathan D. Carlson*

In March of 1897, from the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) outpost at Whitefish Lake (now Utikuma Lake) settlement, news of a strange occurrence rapidly travelled across the Athabasca District, shocking people both there and beyond. It had been the second of two mysterious incidents within as many years. In this second event, two people—a young woman and her adoptive mother of almost the same age<sup>1</sup>—were transported, most likely with their wrists bound and their bodies lashed to dogsleds, to the St. Bernard's Catholic Mission at Lesser Slave Lake (now Grouard) in what is now north-central Alberta. At the Mission, the two women were treated by priests and nuns who fed them, provided warmth, care, and administered prayers, and perhaps also ceremonial rites that may have resembled exorcism rituals in some respects.<sup>2</sup> In a letter written at Lesser Slave Lake on 9 March 1897, the Anglican missionary Reverend George Holmes reported that back at Whitefish Lake, just days before, a sister of the young woman had

dreamt that her brother, who died some four years [prior], came and offered her some human flesh in a bowl made of ice, to eat. Her mother & sister got sick then [sometime after her waking]. The poor Indians got round . . . nursed them & finished up by drumming over them. Gaudet, fearing I suppose a repetition of the Trout Lake affair, took the two girls into [Lesser] Slave Lake . . . and left them at the Catholic mission.<sup>3</sup>

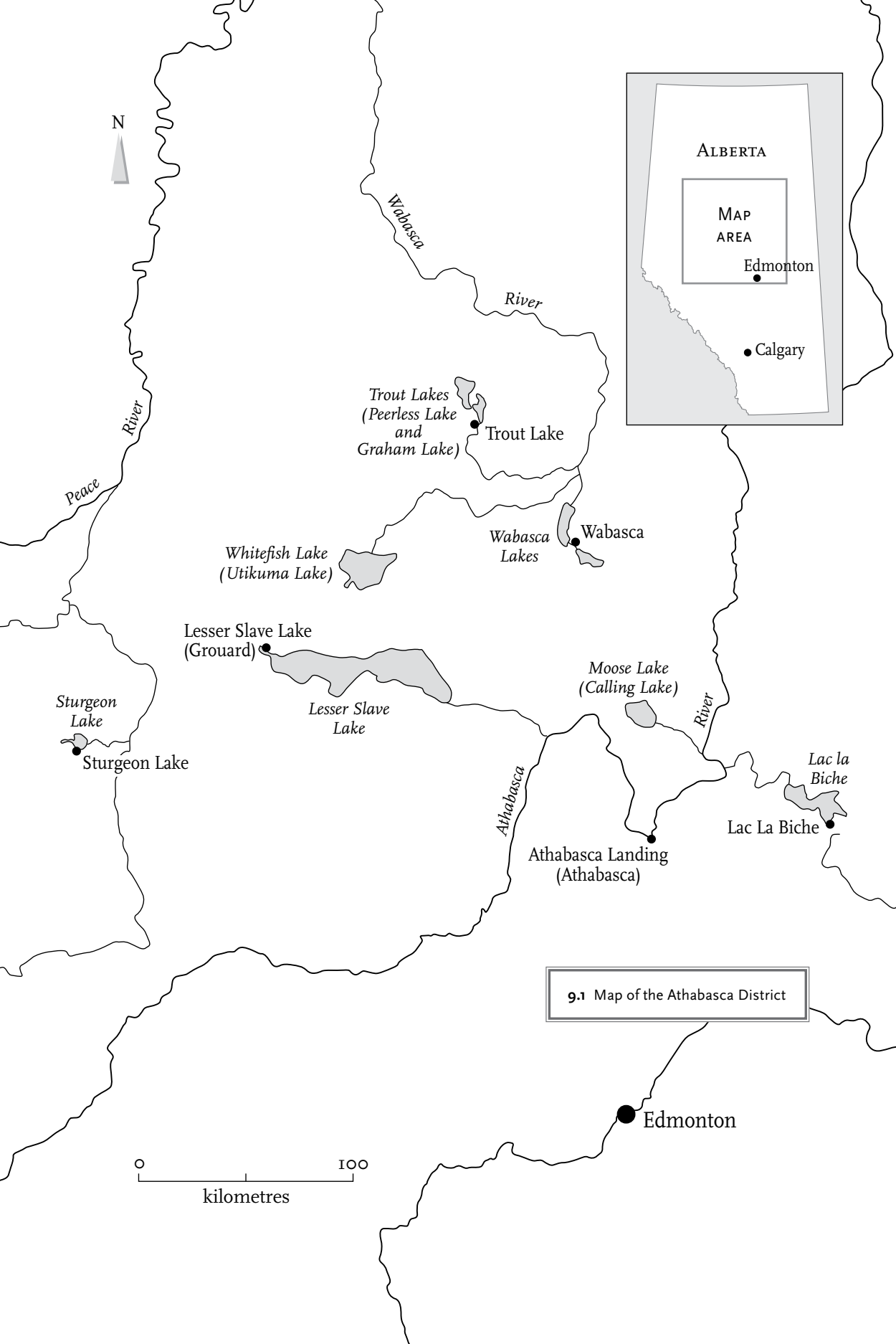
The incident at Whitefish Lake was deemed so noteworthy that an article written by an eyewitness, N. Brisette, appeared on 15 March 1897 in the *Edmonton Bulletin*:

Mr. Gaudet, a young clerk of the H.[B.]C. post and three Indians were bringing two married women to Lesser Slave lake to prevent their being killed by their relatives, as happened last winter at Trout lake. These two women were taken with a sudden sickness which the Indians call "Witikaw" or cannibal. The Indians of White Fish lake were frightened, and they have already sacrificed two dogs to save the two young women, but in vain . . . Four men watched over them for three nights. They could hardly hold them when they were taken with fits. So they resolved to bring them to Lesser Slave lake. The justice of the peace gave an order to send them to the Roman Catholic mission.<sup>4</sup>

The incident noted in the *Bulletin* was an attack of *wihtikôw* (var. *windigo*), a mysterious sickness that frightened the Cree, Saulteaux, and Métis peoples of Athabasca and many other Native groups of the Algonquian language family across the Northwest. *Wihtikôw* was regarded by the Native people as a type of supernatural or spiritual condition that compelled its sufferers to bouts of rage, insanity, and—if the condition went unchecked—homicide and cannibalism. Moreover, it was oftentimes believed that the only way to stop *wihtikôw*, if cures were unsuccessful, was to execute the sufferers by beheading them and then burning their hearts over a funeral pyre.<sup>5</sup> Fortunately, these two young women were spared this fate and sent home after they recovered, evidently days later.<sup>6</sup>

As cited in several reports, the *wihtikôw* sickness had one year earlier impinged upon the remote settlement of Trout Lake, located approximately one hundred miles to the northeast of the Whitefish Lake community. In that incident, a woman whose maternal relations hailed from Whitefish Lake witnessed the consummation of an unfathomable tragedy. It had started with a spell of mass panic and starvation back at her home residence of Wâpôskow (Wabasca), and ended with the death of her husband who had fallen prey to the *wihtikôw* condition. He was believed to be the human fulfillment of an ominous prophecy in which a *wihtikôw* "monster" would arise and devour everyone on the face of the earth in an apocalyptic cataclysm of cosmic proportions.

This wife was a woman named Catherine Auger, and it was through



undertaking the research uncovering this strange, harrowing, and fascinating story that I discovered that Catherine Auger was my ancestral relative.<sup>7</sup> During my childhood, my Métis grandmother, Marie Carlson née Beauchamp (1921–2002), used to tell me stories of the Trout Lake *wihtikôw*.<sup>8</sup> (See Figure 9.1.) At the time, I believed she was relating an unsettling superstitious fable to discourage me from wandering off alone into the bush lest the ghostly *wihtikôw* spirit—the Métis and Cree cognate of the bogeyman—come to get me. But years later, after she passed on, I discovered that not only was the Trout Lake *wihtikôw* incident based on historical fact, but moreover the events at Trout Lake were the conclusion of a very unusual true story that revealed a deep-seated fear that had generated hysteria among Indigenous people in the Athabasca District of the Northwest. In essence, it was a story that, although graphic in some of its details, communicated in a literal and metaphoric way the local Native residents' fear that their ethos, spiritual world, and, in many regards, way of life was essentially coming to an end through the advent of Euro-Canadian customs and institutions.

Because Catherine Auger was my ancestral relative—and, more importantly, because she remains nameless and faceless in the surviving historical documentation on the Trout Lake story simply as “the wife”—I chose to make known her proper name, and represent her as the central figure in this story. Countless Native women have been left out of the historical record because of the misogyny and sexism of pre-feminist, male-dominated ideologies. This essay, therefore, is intended to evoke Catherine Auger's memory by piecing together all the clues we have about her life in an effort to ensure she is remembered. It is my hope that you will come to understand her strength, compassion for her husband, resiliency, and spiritual fortitude—in short, her ability to stay alive in the face of one of the most trying times imaginable and to skillfully adapt to the presence of new and foreign circumstances and peoples. I hope you will know and understand the strength of this woman and her will to continue on in the midst of tragedy and cultural change, and to ultimately come to terms with a rapidly transforming world.

The Trout Lake incident is perhaps the most thoroughly documented *wihtikôw* story. Moreover, it is apparently unique, insofar as it is currently the only known *wihtikôw* case study in the literature on the subject that can be placed within a meaningful socio-historical context. Not only do many documents describe the details of this strange and harrowing event, but these rich and varied sources also corroborate each other. Together

they allow us to gain a fuller sense of the historical milieu that catalyzed the chain of events culminating in the *wihtikôw* incident at Trout Lake in 1896. There are records by Roman Catholic and Anglican missionaries, unique and detailed first-hand eyewitness attestations by a Euro-Canadian fur trader, census documents, “half-breed” or Métis scrip applications, newspaper coverage, stories preserved in oral tradition by Cree and Métis peoples across the Athabasca District, and perhaps even more sources yet undiscovered. No other known case of *wihtikôw* has such a range of surviving information associated with it. These multiple sources allow the pieces of this amazing story to come together and shed light on the life of Catherine Auger, one of the central characters in this story who, unfortunately, had been anonymous — until now.

Catherine Auger was born on 2 July 1865, the “illegitimate”<sup>9</sup> daughter of John Auger and Marie Anne Lechasseur, a woman from Whitefish Lake. “Half-breed” (Métis) scrip applications for land or money filed in the Athabasca District suggest that there was a tradition of intermarriage between the Auger and Lechasseur families.<sup>10</sup> Records are contradictory with respect to Catherine Auger’s birthplace. A 1901 census document noted that she was born at Bear Lake,<sup>11</sup> near Lac La Biche, where many people from the Auger clan had settled. An earlier document from 1899 states her birthplace at Wâpôskow,<sup>12</sup> where she lived almost all her life except for the brief interlude during which she endured the torturous weeks while her husband’s body and identity slowly succumbed to *wihtikôw*.

Although there are few surviving or apparent details about who Catherine was, it is known that she had a husband in 1879, perhaps at Bear Lake, and that they had one child whose name has not survived. The man’s name is illegible on the document he is mentioned in,<sup>13</sup> and we know nothing of him other than his “Indian” (as opposed to Euro-Canadian) identity. According to the same document, their child died while still in infancy.<sup>14</sup> It is uncertain what happened to her husband; he may have died or perhaps the couple’s sorrow over the lost child was too trying for them to remain together. In 1885, Catherine Auger remarried at Wâpôskow. Her new husband was a man named Felix Auger, or Napanin, as he was called by his relatives.<sup>15</sup> Although we know little of Felix either, the *Edmonton Bulletin* reported that he was “a fairly intelligent man, about 35 years of age [born ca. 1861], and lived in a house like a half-breed, and provided well for his wife and children.”<sup>16</sup> While there is no indication of his occupation, he was almost certainly employed in the fur trade, either as a labourer or through hunting, fishing, and/or trapping,<sup>17</sup> or some combination thereof.

We may infer that Felix was a well-liked and resourceful man, and these may have been some of the qualities that led Catherine Auger to love and care for him and have children with him. Catherine, in her turn, must have worked hard tending to the children, undertaking the laborious work of tanning hides, smoking meat preserves, and making clothes and possibly the beautiful beadwork that was the artistic hallmark of the Native women of the Northwest.<sup>18</sup>

By the year 1895, the year that the *wihtikôw* story truly begins, the Augers already had three children: Pierre (or Adam Peter), born two years after their marriage; Jean (born in 1890); and François, born in 1895. But records indicate that Catherine was soon pregnant again with another child, due in early 1896. Felix's apparent success in his endeavours and the fact that he was respected by the traders suggest that he was well within his means to provide for these four children.

While Catherine was pregnant with this last child, she and her husband welcomed the arrival of an unusual White man, someone unlike the Euro-Canadians the Augers would likely have been in contact with previously through the fur trade. This man was an Anglican Missionary known as the Reverend Charles Weaver, who arrived at Wâpôskow in or around 1895, to announce his intention of building a full-scale mission and buildings in which to convert the Native people to Christianity and school their children in Euro-Canadian fashion.<sup>19</sup> Although the motives for the Auger family's acceptance of this man of the cloth are unknown, it is inferred that their willingness to embrace Christianity may have been due to the influence of relatives who likely had been in contact with the Church years before, perhaps at the Lac la Biche mission,<sup>20</sup> an area where many of the Augers had settled prior to spreading across present-day Alberta, and where many of them remain today. Regardless of the reasons, Anglican records reveal that Catherine and Felix did receive Weaver into their lives and had expressed their intent to have their two eldest children schooled at the Christian mission upon its completion.<sup>21</sup>

But Weaver's plans to build a mission and lead the Native people to the purported "light" and "love" of the gospel came with a price. As was the case with many missionaries, Weaver seems to have been rather intolerant to the local residents' Indigenous religious beliefs and ceremonial rites. Therefore, in a symbolic declaration of his perceived supremacy of Christianity over heathenism, Weaver uprooted an effigy of significant religious and social importance to the Wâpôskow people. St. John's Mission, as it would come to be known, was built on the site where the effigy formerly

stood. Richard Young, the Anglican Bishop of the Athabasca District, explained this in a letter written to the “Evangelical Fathers” of the Church Missionary Society in early 1896:

It is an interesting fact that on the head-land on which . . . [the St. John’s] mission now stands, in clearing the bush, Mr. Weaver found one of their heathen “munetokans” or idols; a stump of poplar carved into the rough semblance of a head & shoulders, painted with red ochre, and with three black horizontal stripes on the breast. I brought the interesting relic back with me to the [Athabasca] Landing.<sup>22</sup>

This effigy, referred to in the Cree language as a *Manitôhkân* (lit: ‘fake spirit’, or a representation of a spirit)<sup>23</sup> was, according to the description given above, likely instrumental in the *pâhkak* (skeleton) ceremony, described in 1823 by Lac la Ronge fur trader George Nelson as a rite in which food, gifts, and hide bags full of animal fat were placed before the idol and songs sung to placate the “skeletons.”<sup>24</sup> Many Cree and Métis people lived in uneasy fear of these *pâhkak*/skeletons, which they believed were the angry spirits of people who had died of starvation. If the holy people at Wâpôskow performed the ceremonies properly and with care, then the spirits would ensure that game animals and food would be obtainable for the people—an important consideration for a culture that existed in a subarctic environment that could, at times, be unforgiving and uncharitable. If food could not be found, then famine and starvation would set in, and those who succumbed would in turn become *pâhkak*/skeletons themselves. Others, driven mad by hunger or desperation, would believe themselves forced to violate the most serious cultural taboo known to the people at Wâpôskow—starvation cannibalism.<sup>25</sup> It was considered better to die than succumb to such an act, for people believed that if a person ever tasted human flesh, they would become *wîhtikôwak* (windigos)—malevolent and unstoppable monsters who would devour their own children and families, forever cursed to live a ruinous existence of exile amongst the marshes and lonely forests; preying upon humans in an attempt to satisfy their unending hunger.<sup>26</sup> *Wîhtikôwak* were believed to be so hungry they would mindlessly chew off their own lips, leaving a scowling and grotesque grimace that would harshly display their loss of human identity.<sup>27</sup>

As is clear from the above information, Weaver’s removal of the poplar stump effigy had potentially dire spiritual, social, and economic

ramifications based on the cosmology of the Wâpôskow people, and his actions would not come without consequences. Nevertheless, it is clear from Bishop Young's writings in the same 1896 letter that the "heathenism" that existed at Wâpôskow would not be tolerated and would have to be (literally) uprooted: "Wapaskaw is a stronghold of heathen darkness & superstition & . . . in planting a mission there we have chosen a spot that sorely needs the comforting, humanizing, and enlightening power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."<sup>28</sup>

We cannot know what Catherine Auger's emotional reaction was to the removal of the effigy, whether it was fear, indifference, or ambivalence. But her acceptance of Weaver's religion, coupled with her ongoing trust in her husband's ability to provide well for her and her children despite whatever negative consequences might come (such as famine), suggest the latter reaction, or at the very least that she was tolerant of this intrusion upon her community. The removal of the effigy had initiated a series of events that began what can be described as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

By November of 1895, the Anglican missionaries at Athabasca Landing, where the Anglican district headquarters were located, caught wind of an alarming prophetic movement that had emerged from this religious and social milieu. Although no direct connection can be established between the removal of the effigy and this religious movement, the evidence presented below suggests that Christian proselytization had been somehow implicated in the formation of the movement, at the very least. Bishop Young's letter journal to the Church Missionary Society in early 1896 included the following:

We had heard last November at the [Athabasca] Landing of a Soto [Saulteaux] Indian who was practicing medicine with the usual accompaniments of drumming and pretended [communication] with the spirits at one of these lakes called Moose Lake. *He foretold that a Wetegoo would arise who would destroy every one who did not join his religion & come & place themselves under his protection. Many families appear to have done so.* He created a general terror & uneasiness [in this country]. The hunters dare not to go out to their hunting grounds with their families. The Indians have a great terror of these so called Wetigoos, or cannibals. They believe that after eating human flesh their heart becomes a lump of ice and no one alive is safe from them. Absurd as all this sounds to us it is a real terror to the untutored Indian.<sup>29</sup> (emphasis added)

The removal of the effigy, followed by the arrival of news of this terrifying prophecy, sent the community and much of the district into a terrified panic that ultimately resulted in an exodus and a potentially lethal bout of starvation. Although it remains unclear just how many people fled to Moose Lake (now known as Calling Lake) to seek protection from the “apocalyptic” *wihtikôw*, the above account suggests that the numbers were significant. What is clear is that not everyone at Wâpôskow or other communities left.

Whether on account of news of the removal of the effigy or the declaration of the “*wihtikôw* prophet,” many Native residents became so convinced that a terror was approaching that they were subsumed by their own fear to the point that they were unable to gather food, as Bishop Young noted in his letter journal. Similarly, according to the Catholic Oblate Missionaries, “Father [Jean-Marie] Dupé left Grouard in 1895 to visit Wabasca Lake. He had heard that the Indians were dying of hunger. It was true: the men were too afraid to leave their cabins to go hunting or fishing because of their fear of witigos.”<sup>30</sup> The dual enterprises of the fur trade and the Christianization of the Native peoples at Wâpôskow had been notably impaired; most of the residents there had either barricaded themselves in their homes or had journeyed to Moose Lake to join the holy *wihtikôw* prophet and escape the impending apocalypse.

Despite uncertainty regarding the numbers of people who fled or remained behind, one thing is apparent: Catherine Auger and her husband seem to have been unafraid of starvation or of the apocalyptic prophecy. As numerous sources attest, Catherine and her husband decided neither to barricade themselves in their home nor flee to Moose Lake to join the *wihtikôw* prophecy movement. Rather, they set out on a trip to Trout Lake to visit Catherine’s father-in-law, Baptiste Auger, during a winter that was “changeable and at times severe at Wapisca, and the snow . . . about two and a half feet deep.”<sup>31</sup> Catherine Auger’s baby was nearly full term, and they travelled with their two youngest children, Jean and François. Although we can only speculate about the motives for this journey, undertaken at a time when both the environmental and spiritual climates were highly unstable and severe, it is possible that Catherine wanted to give birth away from Wâpôskow and at Trout Lake, the place where both her and her husband’s extended families hailed from. But perhaps Catherine also wanted to flee not the impending “apocalypse” but the rampant fear and destitution of terrified and emaciated people and the self-inflicted starvation that perhaps seemed irrational to a Christian convert who put every trust in her husband (and her God) to feed her and her children.

**9.2** Trout Post, c. 1870.  
Courtesy of the Provincial  
Archives of Alberta.



Trout Lake today is located in a heavily wooded region surrounded by muskeg, spruce, willow, tamarack, and thick poplars in every direction, and surrounded by lakes and expanses of hilly, sublime terrain. The journey made with dogsleds required at least three days to traverse the distance separating the Trout Lake outpost from the north Wâpôskow Lake, where the Augers most likely resided in their “half-breed” cabin. Because of the inclement weather, it is likely that the Catherine brought along a canvas tent and possibly a portable tin stove to ensure that she and her family remained warm. Her uneventful night on the first leg of the journey attests to her ingenuity and ability to survive in harsh conditions, some that modern Western urban dwellers would find difficult to endure. The lack of difficulty also suggests that nothing out of the ordinary was happening.

But this was not so on the second night of the trip. Catherine’s husband was in good health at the time and nothing so far had seemed unusual, according to the account she delivered to the *Edmonton Bulletin* via John McLeod (a resident of Wâpôskow and friend of the family):

On the second night out he acted strangely, saying that some strange animals were about to attack him. During the remainder of the trip he acted strangely at intervals, and at such times the woman for her own safety induced him to go ahead. They reached . . . Trout Lake safely, and was [sic] there for twenty days, his fits of insanity becoming more frequent.<sup>32</sup>

Catherine's eyewitness testimony of her husband's strange turn of behaviour is further substantiated by an account she evidently gave to the Reverend George Holmes. Holmes delivered her report to Bishop Young, who quoted it in his letter written to the Church Missionary Society in the aftermath of the Trout Lake tragedy sometime in early 1896:

Shadowy terrors . . . amid the silence and solitudes of the woods beset them on every side . . . [A] Wapuskaw [family] started . . . for Trout Lake in January. The account of what happened Mr. Holmes had from the wife[:]. *At [our] last camp before reaching Trout Lake, [my] husband who appeared quite well & ate his supper, suddenly said to [me] "See look at that!" "It is coming to me!" He cowered under his blanket and from that moment was a lunatic. He told [me] that one of the children looked to him like a spring moose & he wanted to kill and eat it. [I] sat up all night not daring to lie down lest he should kill the children or [me] . . . Fancy the poor woman alone in the solitude of those dreary woods this all that terrible night! . . . Next day [I] proposed that he should go ahead while [I] drove the dogs. He consented for awhile & then suddenly stopped, saying that something stopped him & could not let him go on. [I] had then to go ahead.*<sup>33</sup>

Whatever had transpired, and for whatever reason, the Auger family arrived, exhausted, and terrified, at Trout Lake on 3 January 1896. Although it is presumed, based on surviving documentation in the *Edmonton Bulletin*, that Catherine drove the dogs and travelled with her children directly to the cabin of her father-in-law, Baptiste Auger, the documentation also suggests that Felix Auger, either through his own volition, or upon the request of his wife (who was evidently frightened by her husband's strange behaviour), ventured off away from her, and ended up at one of the buildings of the Hudson's Bay Company trading outpost at Trout Lake.<sup>34</sup> (See Figure 9.2.) There he met Francis Work Beatton, an Orkney Scot clerk who managed the trade outpost during the year of 1896.<sup>35</sup> Beatton, sensing something unusual was happening, began recording his impressions of Felix Auger, whom he called Napanin. These journal entries survive today as perhaps the most graphic and perplexing first-hand accounts written by a Euro-Canadian person that attests to the reality of the *wīhtikōw* condition:

Trout Lake January 3rd 1896. Man arrived here today from Wapuskow Lake who seemed to me to be crazy. I saw him coming and went to meet him at the door. As soon as he came in he told us . . . that last night he camped about 15 miles from here. I know the place, it is about that distance. He told us that after he had made camp, [he] was about to lie down. He was not asleep he said, but he saw the devil come to him, and from that he was crazy. He said that he must eat his child there. But his wife took away the child. She then took hold of him and he told her to try and pray for him and perhaps God would spare him to see this place. He said it was told him that he must eat them. He told us all what he saw and did. He said his son appeared to him like a young moose and he wanted to eat him. I did not listen to all he had to say as I thought he was starving and I was busy getting him something to eat, but he ate very little. He seemed to be getting a little better, and then he told us that he knew someone put medicine on him, and that was the reason he was going to be a cannibal. Then he began to cry at the thought of it. The man's name is Napanin. The man's father lives here at the end of the lake. The Indians are all terribly frightened. All the Indians think some one had done something to him with medicine. Yakwemoo is a Great medicine man, and that is why they put him here. The same night they were singing over him and the drums were beating. I expect they will try to drum the devil out of him. I hear that he told the Indians that he had to kill and eat them. He says he sees the devil often since then.<sup>36</sup>

According to Beaton's account, Baptiste Auger's brother, François, was present at the time that Catherine's husband appeared at the trading post. At this juncture in the surviving narrative there is very little information about Catherine herself; what her emotional responses were to her husband, whether she visited him or attempted to administer aid, or where she stayed during the course of the ordeal.<sup>37</sup> Catherine might well have felt a combination of guilt, terror, and shame, for the residents of Trout Lake knew of the *wihtikôw* prophecy and, according to Bishop Young, they believed it was coming true right in their midst: "people left their homes & crowded into two small buildings in one of which the supposed Wetigoo was placed. They all thought that he was the cannibal the Soto Indian had been prophesying would arise. They appear to have been in a state of abject terror. He was with them nineteen days."<sup>38</sup>

During the course of those nineteen days, several attempts were made to cure Napanin of his *wihtikôw* condition through a combination of prayer; singing, drumming, and shamanic rites,<sup>39</sup> and treatments in the Indian sweat lodge.<sup>40</sup> According to one Cree eyewitness account, Napanin was forced to or coerced into drinking a dose of bear grease while it was still boiling, a medicinal cure that was supposed to cause the ice lodged in the victim's chest (believed to be the primary source of the *wihtikôw* sickness) to be coughed up or expelled.<sup>41</sup> Evidently, none of these treatments worked, and as the days passed, Napanin slipped further and further into madness. Catherine Auger must have felt both terrified and helpless as she watched or heard descriptions of her husband's loss of human identity to the *wihtikôw* sickness. Again, the most vivid and compelling account of his deterioration is contained in the diary of Francis Beatton, who held a vigil over Napanin, documented the ordeal in his journal, and himself administered treatments to Napanin:

Jan. 6. I went to see the sick man today. He is a pitiful looking devil. They had him with about 6 blankets & still he was nearly freezing. I can do nothing for him. Sunday 12. I went to see him today. He looks worse than ever. I gave him a dose of castor oil. He says his heart is freezing. He is always saying that he is going to be a cannibal. The Indians are terribly frightened. He told them that two men would arrive from Lesser Slave Lake in a few days, that is[,] the devil told him so. Jan 15. The two men arrived as the crazy Indian said. After they start back said he you must look out for me for I think I shall kill some of you. He wants them to kill him all the time before he gets worse. Jan 19. The sick man's father came to see me today. He said his son was getting worse. He said he thought they would have to kill him or he would kill them all. I pity the old man, he was very frightened, and he was crying most of the time he was in here. I believe they will finish him yet. Jan 20. Francois came here and asked me if I would read some prayers for the sick man. I went with him. I found a great change come over him. He looked very crazy & I asked him if he knew me & he said yes. I read a few prayers out of the prayer book. He seemed to be getting worse all the time. He does not look like a human being. He seems to be terribly swollen in the body and face. I do not know how this will end. The sight of him is enough to frighten any person. The

poor Indians slept very little here for the last 19 days. Since he arrived they have been watching him all the time. Jan 20. I am going to go & sit with the crazy man tonight & see how he is.<sup>42</sup>

At this point in Beaton's narrative it becomes clear that Napanin was threatening to grow violent. Realizing that nothing could be done to save him from this utterly terrifying condition, those watching over him, including his own father, finally acknowledged that they had no choice but to kill him:

Jan 21. Francois came for me last night & I went with him. I told him we ought to take some ropes with us and tie him if we could. The man seemed to be getting worse. He told them to kill him or he would kill us all. The Indians are terribly frightened. When I told them that we would tie him, they said it was no use as no ropes could hold a Cannibal. The sound of him was terrible. He was calling like a wild bull. We tied him with the ropes & I left them to come & get more rope, but could not find any that was of use. I went back again about 3 am in the morning. When I got back the lines were breaking that was on his arms. The Indians asked me what we should do. They said that when he got up he would kill us all. I told them if they was to do anything to do it as I had no more lines to tie him with. The father of the sick man got up & told his brother that he saw that they could do nothing for his son. He was getting worse all the time and was too strong for us. He said what was true; that we could do nothing with him and that he could kill us all. He told them "I give him to you to do what you want to do with him." Only he said "I do not want to see them hit him" & went out. Now the [medicine man] Yakwemoo was the only man they thought could kill him. But Yakwemoo did not want to do it. He wanted me to do it. I told him that I would not do it. . . . At last Yakwemoo said "You all want me to do this. I will try.["] He then took the axe. I went to the door. . . . I seemed terribly frightened. I came back again . . . he had already struck him on the head once with an axe. He struck him again and the man was going to rise. Yakwemoo said that he would yet get up, that he could not kill him. I told him to try & put him out of suffering. He hit him again & the man did not move. . . . I do believe that he would have killed them at

last as I know they were all too frightened to defend themselves, they would have sat & looked at him. They did not have the heart to get up & try & hold him or help to tie him up. I had no ropes only cod lines and that was what I tied him with.<sup>43</sup>

During this harrowing ordeal, there is virtually nothing to suggest what Catherine was doing during these long and frightful days and nights. One can only surmise that she was terrified, confused, and utterly depressed by the realization that all she had invested in the previous years with her husband—her home, her marriage, the raising of children, and her safety and protection—was all rapidly disappearing as her husband grew progressively sicker and more insane, to the point where he threatened to kill and devour the people at Trout Lake. But Catherine's love for her husband must have been stronger than her fear of him and the panic produced by a world that had suddenly turned upside down for her. We know this because of the one action Catherine was described as performing at the end of her husband's life. If this act was in accordance with everything else she did, thought, and said, then Catherine must have been staunchly defending her husband's reputation—despite the mass panic resulting from the widespread belief that Napanin was the apocalyptic cannibal of the *wihtikôw* prophecy—and doing everything in her power to help him. According to the *Edmonton Bulletin*, she put herself in harm's way in one final attempt to save his life:

His wife . . . said that he did not become dangerous, but other persons said that he was violent and dangerous at intervals. On the day of his death he was tied hands and feet, face down, in one of the houses. His wife did not know that he was to be killed and went to a neighbor's house with her baby. After a while suspecting something, she returned to the house where her husband was. The door was attempted to be shut against her, but she placed her foot between the door and the jam and held the door open so that she heard the blow of an axe and saw blood on the floor. She was shoved away and the door shut. Four men were in the house at the time with her husband.<sup>44</sup>

Catherine Auger, it appears, did not believe that her husband was a threat to the people at Trout Lake and did not believe that his execution was warranted, despite his own requests to be killed, his own admissions that he



**9.3** A woodpile near the Trout Lake *wíhtikôw* grave. Photograph by the author, April 2005.

wanted to kill and eat people, and his grotesque and inhuman appearance as he writhed violently on the floor in spastic, homicidal fits.

Catherine Auger was too late, and her desperate attempt to save her husband had only allowed her to witness his execution with an axe by the medicine man known as Joseph Yakwemoo. Despite his death, the ordeal was not over yet. According to Émile Grouard, the Catholic Bishop of the Athabasca District, another medicine man known as Perfumed Bow believed the *wíhtikôw* was going to resurrect and devour them all, for they had not removed and burned his heart of ice, the source of his supernatural power, on a funeral pyre.<sup>45</sup> Accordingly, as we know from Holmes, the residents at Trout Lake hurriedly busied themselves with the task of piling rows of wooden logs and large tree trunks over his grave, to pin him under the ground and ensure that if he did come back to life, he would be trapped, at least for a time.<sup>46</sup> (See Figure 9.3.) After this feat was accomplished, the residents of Trout Lake abandoned their homes and again barricaded themselves in the two main buildings, waiting for deliverance from the terror of the *wíhtikôw*. We can imagine that Catherine, in her turn, must have been even more devastated: not only was her husband dead and now lying under a huge log pile—decapitated, with his head buried some distance away<sup>47</sup>—but the birth of their child was just days away.

Finally, after what must have seemed like an eternity, the residents of Trout Lake were liberated from their fear by the arrival of Bishop Émile Grouard and the Reverend Holmes, who had probably been sent for during the ordeal but had appeared (either together or separately) too late, sometime around 25 January 1896.<sup>48</sup> Grouard noted in a letter that on his arrival, the Native people “began to breathe a little freely,” but he chastised

the residents, telling them that their superstitious fears had caused a horrific tragedy, that Napanin could have been brought to Wâpôskow, whence he would have been sent to Athabasca Landing and then to Edmonton to be treated. The residents, in their own defense, apparently replied that “it is easy to speak so, but it is not easy to do so.” Nevertheless, Grouard spoke on the residents’ behalf, writing that the “poor people acted all in self defence, and [that] the deceased would have done mischief, if he had not been prevented.”<sup>49</sup> In view of Napanin’s alarming behaviour—behaviour that seemed to confirm the words of the *wîhtikôw* prophet—and the strange physiological changes that made his appearance inhuman and terrifying even to a White onlooker, it is understandable why a panic arose and why the Trout Lake residents chose to kill a man that seemed to them a monster. Whether or not his execution was justified, the ordeal of the Trout Lake people was over.<sup>50</sup>

But this was not so for Catherine Auger. Evidently, Catherine wanted nothing more than to flee Trout Lake and escape the terror, and presumably the shame, she must have felt there. The Reverend Holmes, after hand-copying Beaton’s journal, honoured her request and travelled with her back to Wâpôskow. However, further trials were to hound Catherine. Holmes’s report, as recorded by Bishop Young in his letter journal to the Church Missionary Society early in 1896 stated:

The poor woman with her two children insisted to return to Wapaskaw under Mr. Holme’s [*sic*] care. [illegible], her own dogs, Mr. H lending her one of his [blankets?] to keep the children from freezing; on reaching camp that night they found that both her legs were badly frozen above the knees & they had to leave her & her children at an Indian’s house which they reached the following evening.<sup>51</sup>

Despite the frostbite, Catherine finally arrived back at Wâpôskow, where she completed what may have been the purpose of the journey that had gone so horribly wrong at Trout Lake: Catherine’s water broke and she went into labour immediately upon her return to Wâpôskow. She gave birth to her last known son, Édouard Auger, sometime between 25 and 29 January 1896.<sup>52</sup>

We have no record of the reaction to Catherine’s arrival back at Wâpôskow, whether on the whole she was greeted with fear and disgust or instead with compassion. But it is clear that the residents of Wâpôskow

associated her husband with the *wihtikôw* scare. According to the Reverend Charles Weaver, in a letter written at Wâpôskow on 11 August 1896 to Hayter Reed, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, the Wâpôskow residents believed that the *wihtikôw* that had arisen and been executed at Trout Lake had indeed been the consummation of the prophecy: "An old Medicine Man made the . . . trouble at first by saying a cannibal would come and when this poor man was taken sick at Trout Lake they immediately said the prophecy came true: and a little while since a young man in Wapuskow said it had come true as they had killed him [the *wihtikôw*] at Trout Lake."<sup>53</sup> We can infer from this that, however else Catherine may have been perceived by her peers at Wâpôskow, she would forever afterwards be regarded as the widowed wife of a *wihtikôw*. From the same letter it is evident that the fear of *wihtikôwak* still persisted for some time.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, weeks after Felix Auger's execution, his brother, Samuel (Dominique) Auger became troubled by dreams of his deceased sibling, and was driven from his home by his common-law wife Nancy, Catherine's sister. Samuel Auger was apprehended two years later by the North West Mounted Police and alleged (by himself and the residents of Wâpôskow) to be suffering from the *wihtikôw* condition.<sup>55</sup>

Two years after the ordeal at Trout Lake, the arrival of the Christian missionaries was followed by the appearance of large numbers of other White people passing through the territory on their way to the Klondike Gold Rush in the Yukon Territory. In response, the Treaty No. 8 was signed at Lesser Slave Lake on 21 June 1899 and in the late summer and fall of the same year at Wâpôskow. The "White Man" and "the Native" were to be friends "as long as the sun shined and the rivers flowed."<sup>56</sup> People of European background who before had comprised small fur-trade communities or had been infrequent visitors to the region would shortly begin to arrive in large numbers, there to stay.

During the treaty negotiations, the Native peoples were offered the choice of accepting inclusion in a collective treaty, as "Indians," or by applying for individual allotments of so-called half-breed scrip notes, which were redeemable for land or money.<sup>57</sup> Catherine Auger, still a widow, likely would have needed such money to support her four children on her own, and applied on 14 August 1899 for scrip as a half-breed, or Métis. Her application for scrip is the only known piece of historical documentation that directly tells us anything of this woman's name or life. It is the one document that describes her, indirectly, as the wife of the *wihtikôw* and provides insight on her true opinion about the events that had transpired

at Trout Lake three and a half years prior. Describing herself as the widow of Felix Auger, she stated: “I had a . . . husband Felix Auger was married to him in 1885 at Lac Wapaskaw. He was murdered in Lac la Triete [Trout Lake] in 1896.”<sup>58</sup> Her use of *murdered* indicates that in Catherine’s eyes, her husband had been taken from her wrongly. Perhaps she felt he had been killed by people who had been driven to commit such an act by succumbing to the fear of a spiritual world that she herself had abandoned.

In early 1899, just months before Catherine’s scrip application was recorded, another *wihtikôw*-related killing had been committed at the Bald Hills near Lesser Slave Lake. A man known as Louison Moostoos had been beheaded after exhibiting the same alarming behaviour that Felix Auger had: bodily swelling and violent, threatening fits. It was to be the last *wihtikôw* execution in what is now the Province of Alberta.<sup>59</sup> Through the actions of the missionaries, police, and settlers who began pouring into the Athabasca territory at the turn of the twentieth century, many of the Native lifeways and beliefs began to be systematically dismantled and partially forgotten. The concept of the *wihtikôw* was among these, and this monster of northern Algonquian and northern Métis belief metaphorically trudged off into the subarctic forests, grew weak, and died. Afterwards, people afflicted with the *wihtikôw* sickness were variously taken to mental asylums, prisons, and hospitals.<sup>60</sup> Eventually, references to these strange incidents disappeared from the historical record. Accounts of *wihtikôw* gradually became unverified stories that are spoken about today in closed-knit circles or are regarded unsympathetically by some as nothing more than rumour.<sup>61</sup>



**9.4** Marie and Édouard Beauchamp. Courtesy Library and Archives Canada (RG 15, Vol. 1416, Reel C-14956, “Auger, Catherine”).

Many years later, I was told a story exactly like that described above. Little did I know as a child that my grandmother's folktale—a tragic story that would recall the spirit of a woman who had endured the trial of the *wihtikôw* and survived—invoked the memory of my own ancestors. Catherine Auger is mentioned one last time in a census taken at Wâpôskow in 1901.<sup>62</sup> She was still a widow. There is no further mention of this woman in any historical documentation known to me. Perhaps she left Wâpôskow because of her reputation as the widow of a *wihtikôw*. Perhaps she took the memory of her husband's life and tragic death to an unknown or unmarked grave. Whatever else happened during the course of her life, Catherine Auger was a woman who witnessed the foretold arrival of "flesh eaters"; literally, in the form of her own husband, who proclaimed himself a cannibal, and metaphorically, in the form of people who symbolically consumed of the blood and body of a Jewish prophet each Sunday. She had beheld the arrival of cannibals.

### Acknowledgements

This essay is dedicated to the memory of three important Métis people. The first is Catherine Auger, née Auger (1865–?), a woman that is now given her proper place in her own story, and whose life and times I hope I have accurately described. Second, it is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother, Marie Anne Marguerite Carlson, née Beauchamp (1921–2002), who gave me the priceless gift of the extraordinary story that originally prompted my research. Lastly, this article is dedicated to Bernard Cardinal (1924–2008), who shared his warm hospitality and many amazing stories, and guided me, in June 2008, to the location of Napanin's grave. Although Bernard is gone, this kind old man's stories and quick wit will not be forgotten.

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## PAKWÂCISKWEW:

## A Reacquaintance with Wilderness Woman

*Susan Elaine Gray*

Pakwâciskwew, the Wilderness Woman, as she is known in English, is one of the few female other-than-human beings in Northern Algonquian cosmologies.<sup>1</sup> Once considered by these Aboriginal peoples an important figure encountered by men on their dream quests, today she has slipped almost into oblivion. She appears briefly, if at all, in published work and apparently only a few elders remember her stories. But there are still those alive today who have heard her sing. She is sometimes associated with a distinctive flower scent. And some stories tell of men who felt the sting of her powers when they have been unprepared to deal with her.

From the earliest years, young Northern Algonquian boys (and sometimes girls) were oriented, by their parents, grandparents, and other elders, to the idea that, in their teen years, they would embark on at least one vision quest. Fundamental to these worldviews was the idea that natural phenomena and characters in Northern Algonquian cosmologies (other-than-human beings) had a very real existence. Many of these entities were patrons of important human institutions, such as the *wabano* (medicine lodge). These vision quests—where young men fasted and retreated into the bush in isolation to dream—were the traditional occasions upon which dream blessings from spiritual beings were granted. (Women did not often undertake the same vision quests, although they were often encouraged to search for visions while sequestered in their menstrual huts—isolated dwellings into which girls and women were ushered during their menses, a time when they were possessed of too much power to be around others.) The collective term for the spiritual entities discussed here is *bawaaganag* (spirit or dream helpers—also

referred to by early scholars such as A. Irving Hallowell as *pawaganak*). Overall, the *bawaaganag* were benevolent and, through dream revelations, they helped human beings to accomplish things they could never do without assistance (such as being able to hunt extraordinarily well, attain exceptional ability as healers, communicate with other spiritual beings, or have other great powers). If a *bawaagan* appeared to a young man during his dream fast, that being would bless him and usually act as his guardian spirit and helper throughout his life. Some boys were visited in their dreams only once and by one *bawaagan*. Others continued to dream and receive more *bawaaganag*—these boys would grow up to be talented and powerful shamans. And still others dreamed of nothing (a sure sign that they were doomed to mere bare-bones survival in their lifetimes). These fasts were important events, and training began early in the life of a child. They involved making children comfortable with enduring physical deprivation and facing fears. There were serious consequences for visitations from spiritual beings before a boy was prepared, just as there were great blessings awaiting those young people who were strong enough to walk together with these beings. Improper behaviour on the part of a human could cause the *bawaaganag* to turn on them in anger, so it was very important never to cause offence. Pakwâciskew was a classic example of this.<sup>2</sup>

An examination of oral histories and the few existing written records relating to her help to trace her features, the key attributes of her narratives, and her defining characteristics, and places these narratives within the context of other other-than-humans in Northern Algonquian worldviews. Her rediscovery and reintegration within these worldviews demonstrate that she is, in fact, essential to a well-rounded view of these cosmologies. This examination discusses the Wilderness Woman within the context of other powerful Northern Algonquian female personages, both human and other-than-human, and attempts a positive and sophisticated approach to interpreting this complex being.

Cree scholar and storyteller Louis Bird is from Peawanuk, Ontario. He grew up in the community of Winisk, amid the legends and stories of his people, the Omushkego (Swampy) Crees. Bird explains that Pakwâciskew was “fearsome and beautiful at the same time. . . . Physically, the way they described her, they say she was the most beautiful woman there was—an indescribably beautiful woman. She could travel, she could take you wherever you wanted to go, and she could show you things that you had never seen. And she could bring very beautiful blissful joy—you

could be so happy with her. It's like nothing in this world that you had ever experienced. They say it was more than sexual pleasure—it was an indescribable pleasure. Besides being beautiful, she smelled good. So that's a little description about this woman."<sup>3</sup>

The Sandy Lake Crees told a story of her counterpart, Bo-kwatch-ikway, which surfaces in Chief Thomas Fiddler's *Legends from the Forest*, edited by James R. Stevens.<sup>4</sup> Here, too, she is a "gorgeous woman who would have a man's child immediately after he made love to her."<sup>5</sup>

Yet the Wilderness Woman had another side. As Maureen Matthews says in her CBC documentary "Mother Earth," although "you know she's around when the air fills with the scent of beautiful blossoms," and she was more beautiful than any mortal woman, she was "jealous and sometimes sexually aggressive. Her presence explains deaths on the trapline."<sup>6</sup>

As Louis Bird explains, "She could exist in a person's mind if he developed this during his dream quest. Only those who ventured into that [particular] dream quest could have her. When you prepared to be a *mitew* [shaman], many things were offered to you, as a young person. . . . Here is a short explanation from an old man. I asked him, 'What is this Wilderness Woman? Did she actually exist?' And he says, 'Actually she came to the mind of a person who was practicing to have that vision—they could visualize her after awhile. In the wilderness during the summer time, before you saw her, you could smell the beautiful fragrance of flowers. And then she materialized there where there's beautiful flowers—that's where she appeared to you. And she led you to enjoy that fantasy world where she lived.' To the people who experienced her, it was something irresistible."<sup>7</sup>

The art of gaining what Louis Bird calls "mindpower" through dreams was a multiphased process that might take years of training and careful supervision. Children as young as age five would begin to work closely under the guidance of an elder to obtain dreams—conquering fears, learning how to go into a half-sleep to summon visions of animals and win their trust. "Once he could communicate with things like animals, he was on his way. . . . Every animal that he was afraid of he had to summon during these dream quests. . . . By the end of five years he would be comfortable with them all."<sup>8</sup> In the same way, a boy learned to deal with the elements—the wind, water, fire—all things that could hold danger. An example involved dealing with thunderstorms. Bird says,

People tried to form it in their mind as a being—and this form was called a thunderbird. . . . But it depended on the individual

how much and in what way he could use these powerful forces through his dream quest, or how much he would be able to avoid its dangers. . . . You were trying to create the dream, to contact things by your mind, so you could understand. The person who methodically developed this in his dream quests could not be overcome by anything.<sup>9</sup>

The key to receiving blessings, and not troubles, from Pakwâiskwew lay in a man's strength and training. If he was not trained to acquire sufficient mental acuity, or if he dreamed her when he was too old, she could take over his mind, causing him to spend less and less time feeding his family and being a part of the real world. Insanity could ensue, and families could starve. Louis Bird says,

It was a risk to acquire the vision of her on your own—you had to have the guidance of an experienced elder who knew about this thing. If you did it on your own, or if you were too old—over twenty—it was not advisable for you to try to gain much of this thing. Aiming to get to the Wilderness Woman was very dangerous because it required a lot of fasting and many denials of this physical world. You even had to deny yourself your friends. Then you had to get out to the bush for a long time, go through the other regular procedures, and then go to the level where you could reach that point—where you could encounter the Wilderness Woman. If you were alone, you could get the wrong method of contacting this thing in your mind, and the Wilderness Woman became dangerous—over-possessive of you—and you began to lose your mind. You forgot the actual material world. She became the key person in your life, and you forgot about your friends, and your wife, and your children—you just wanted to be in the bush all the time. And every time you were in your home, when you were trying to provide for your family, she would come to you, she would be there. She would come and demand that you go to her. And that's where it was dangerous because, if you refused, she threatened you, and you got scared."<sup>10</sup>

A similar pattern appears in Rae's account of Bo-kwatch-ikway. Man Always Sitting was married. He began leaving his wife for longer and longer periods—one day, then two, then three and four days at a time.

One day his suspicious and curious wife happened upon her husband in a canoe with “a beautiful woman all dressed in red clothes.” The wife turned away and when she looked again, the two were in the channel beside her. The two females confronted each other briefly and “in the wink of an eye,” Bo-kwatch-ikway was gone, her paddle floating in the water. Man Always Sitting told his wife that he and Bo-kwatch-ikway had three children and then, in Rae’s words, he “just quit travelling with Bo-kwatch-ikway after that. Bo-kwatch-ikway was always jealous of a man who got married.” Interestingly, Rae corroborates the idea that this personage did not necessarily bring harm or insanity to every man who encountered her. “My father said he travelled with Bo-kwatch-ikway but they never had any children. He already had two wives and he didn’t want three!”<sup>11</sup>

While Louis Bird describes Pakwâciskwew with gentleness, smiling at her memory when he smells narcissus blooms, and talking of the marvels that she could offer a strong and properly trained man, Stan Cuthand, another Cree scholar, missionary, and educator, is somewhat more astringent:

Pakwâciskwew is a woman in the wilds. Pakwâci means a ‘wild animal,’ not in the sense of ‘wild women’ in today’s world, but wild in the sense that she lives by herself in the forest. There was an Alex Halkett, who used to work north of the La Ronge trap line. He stayed there all winter by himself, and I said, ‘You shouldn’t stay by yourself.’ He says, ‘At night, I could hear a woman singing.’ And I say, ‘That’s a very bad sign. You should have somebody with you.’ ‘Every night,’ he said, ‘I could hear this woman singing.’ And I said, ‘Did you see her?’ He said, ‘No.’ So one winter, he was crossing a stream, and he fell through the ice, and his matches were wet, so he wrapped himself in a blanket and died there, froze to death. That was a bad sign to hear this woman singing. They call it *ê-amacisot*. *Ê-amacisot* means that you hear the spirits, which means sometimes death. So that’s the story of Pakwâciskwew.<sup>12</sup>

The Wilderness Woman appears in anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell’s unpublished paper, “Disease and Its Causes.”<sup>13</sup> Hallowell was writing in the 1940s of the Ojibwe people who lived along the Berens River in Manitoba. He called her, Wild Woman, Pigwadijikwe, and wrote, “This being

is said to be anthropomorphic in form but to dwell between earth and sky. She has yellow hair, rosy cheeks and is very pretty. Usually men who dream of her never desire to take a wife. She is frightfully jealous and if they do venture to marry it is believed that their wives will sicken and die and the same fate will befall their children.” Hallowell’s description of the Wild Woman as a blonde is interesting and reflects a contemporary perspective that his Ojibwe informants offered Hallowell. When I asked Louis Bird about her hair colour, however, he gently corrected this somewhat narrow description. “Well, of course, her hair was any colour a man wished it — dreamed it — to be.”<sup>14</sup> Hallowell discussed one of his informants’ bachelor status and the conclusions drawn by his neighbours as an explanation. “As a young man one of my informants used to trap alone. People teased him about this saying that he must have Pigwadjiikwe for a wife. He resented this very much and claimed that he never dreamed of this pawagan. Thus, the belief in Pigwadjiikwe affords an explanation of solitary hunting and trapping on the part of individuals which is a departure from customary practices.”<sup>15</sup>

Robert Brightman also collected some contemporary perspectives of Pakwâciskwew when he raised the question of stories about her from Cree men living at Pukatawagan.<sup>16</sup> The following is a transcript of one story from Brightman’s research notes. The discussion embodies elements of Hallowell’s explanation of solitary hunting and trapping on the part of men and explanation of bachelorhood.

Pakwatiskwiiw . . . Pakwaciskwiiw

Oh, yeah, yeah. You dream about a woman, ah?

I heard that, I seen the guy, too.

He was always living alone.

He had this woman.

He lives with that woman.

Well, when a[nother] guy come in, that woman she takes off.

Anyway this guy was fasting with his brother.

He was always alone, this guy.

“Hey, I’ll go with you trapping.” [B. speaking].

No, the guy didn’t want him [as a partner].

But he [B] said to him, “You gotta learn me how to trap.

You’re always alone.”

“Oh,” he said, “okay.”

[At winter trapping camp]  
Anyway all the time his brother [the solitary] would wake him up.  
“C’mon, let’s go. Get up.”  
Always had his plate cooked already.

So . . . they stayed there about a month.  
One night he [the brother] woke up.  
Oh this was [early?] just in the morning, yeah?  
Before he usually . . .  
The woman gets up . . . and come and cook in the house.  
He heard stove noise [cooking], all that . . .  
“My brother’s up early.”  
He seen a woman cooking.

“Ah,” he said [to himself], “I didn’t wake . . . I didn’t know them . . .  
Somebody came in last night [to the camp] with a family.”  
He went back to bed.  
Ah, he fall asleep again, and his brother got him up.  
“C’mon get up, let’s go.”

He got up and the meal was all ready, every morning like that.  
Got up.  
He didn’t say a word.  
He didn’t see anybody inside, to sleep.  
“Ah, shit, they’re gone already?”  
They came in late last night, [but] they’re up, they’re gone.”

So he went out and piss.  
Check where the dogs were tied up.  
The dogs [theirs] were tied up.”  
There’s no sign of [supposed visitors’] dogs tied up.  
Anyway . . . after daylight he went and check again.  
No sign of anything.  
Tobaggan or anything.

Well it’s only after that the guy said, “I’ll take you home.  
You’ve seen my woman is not cooking for us anymore.  
I got to take you home.”

*The implication here is that on some subsequent occasion the woman failed to appear, thus prompting the dreamer to get rid of his intrusive y[ounger] B[rother].<sup>17</sup>*

Louis Bird has, in his own life, experienced the damage that can be wrought by allowing the Wilderness Woman to run rampant:

My great uncle got hurt from the idea of the Wilderness Woman. He did that. He went against the rule. He was told not to follow the old traditional practices because he was already a Christian—he was baptized in a Catholic Church. But when he was young there were many people who were involved in this traditional practice and he was fascinated by it. So he went against the will of his grandfather and parents and tried to condition himself—he was aiming to reach the point where he could get the Wilderness Woman experience. He was not yet a married person. So he managed to get to that stage by himself, without the precautionary measures. And then the time came when he got to be married and had children—that meant a lot of home activities to support his wife and family. But very often he has gone into the bush for long periods, without bringing food home, and he got in trouble with his wife. She says, “How come you’re always in the bush and you don’t bring home the food? You know your kids are now starving.” He didn’t want to say that there was a person out there, because she wouldn’t believe that. And that’s when his wife forced him to stay home with her and look after his children. Apparently the Wilderness Woman came for him—she went to his home and spoke to him from outside his tipi. And he had to make an excuse to run outside so he could see her and try to hush her away. He would tell her, “Wait, wait—I first have to do this thing in my home, for my family.” And then the Wilderness Woman says, “If you want me, you deny them. You come with me to the wilderness and never mind this other stuff.” And that’s where the trouble began. So he was trying to satisfy his real family and the Wilderness Woman—but he didn’t know how to satisfy both. That’s where he began to lose his mind—to go crazy. One time I saw him myself. We were sitting on the shore of the river with other children, my cousins and my sister, just on top of the riverbank. We were playing, and

the old people were coming in a canoe. Then all of a sudden the old man, who was in the front of the boat, began to paddle away from the shore. And he says, "Wilderness Woman! There she is! Wilderness Woman!" And he really went crazy. And the old lady was mad. She says, "What do you mean? These are your grandchildren!" That's what I mean when I say it was dangerous. He was trying to get away from her then, and he had a big struggle to try to make her disappear from his mind. So what he did was, he turned to Christianity. He prayed more deeply, and all that, and he managed to get away from that, so he was alright. He died as a normal elder.<sup>18</sup>

An interesting clue we have regarding Pakwâciskwew lies in Louis Bird's discussion about people dreaming of humans themselves "to understand their potential benefits and dangers . . . And if a man tried to understand this, he tried to make it into the form of a woman. And that was a very dangerous thing to do. Many men who were about to be fully grown dreamed this stuff because their bodies felt desire and they wanted to know what this was about. So they dreamed about that menstrual blood, and they dreamed it in the form of a woman—the most beautiful woman. And if they won that woman's love, they thought they had acquired something. But this dream could be very negative and destructive."<sup>19</sup> Just as Algonquian men dreamed to understand and conquer the mysteries and dangers of nature, personifying animals, birds, fish, and the elements in order to form relationships and friendships, so too did they dream about women. Menstruating women were, of course, seen to have enormous power within Cree and Ojibwe worldviews.

Aside from being a malevolent force, Pakwâciskwew seems to have been important for teaching young men to develop their own strengths and understandings—around women, relationships, puberty, and their own sexuality. She can be equated with any of the other (potentially dangerous) forces of nature that men needed to conquer in order to survive. Certainly, too, the idea of other-than-human beings offering both blessings and harm to individuals is prevalent in Cree and Ojibwa lore. An example of this is the Trickster, Wisakaychak, the other-than-human culture hero who could bless or curse Aboriginal people.<sup>20</sup>

When I discussed parallels between Pakwâciskwew and other female spirit beings with my friend, Robert Brightman, a much more malevolent being immediately came to his mind. He connected the lethal erotic

aspects of the Wilderness Woman mythology to the cosmology around the beautiful, sexual, but highly malevolent underwater panthers, the *misipisiwak*, which Brightman describes as “malignant feline beings with horns and long tails.”<sup>21</sup> The *misipisiwak*, who dwell near rapids, were motivated by jealousy. Appearing to men in dreams, in the form of beautiful women, they offered “blessings” (namely excellent hunting skills or medicine power). If the man accepted these gifts, his wife and children would successively die through illness or accident. Men were cautioned never to dream of these panthers, although sometimes they came in disguise, making the acceptance of gifts inadvertent. Unlike Pakwâciskwew, these beings could present themselves to both men and women (appearing in the latter case disguised as handsome men). First-person accounts of *misipisiwak* dream experiences are rare in the written ethnographic record.<sup>22</sup> However, stories about them are much more prevalent in the written records than those about the Wilderness Woman.

Hallowell also compared the Wild Woman to the *misipisiwak*. In the tales he was told by his informants along the Berens River, she was lethal. Hallowell noted a story about an “old man at Poplar River who used to trap by himself year after year. He would leave in October and not return until Christmas. Then he would go off again and not come back until after open water (May). He had four wives but not one of them lived more than two years. All his children died, too. Everyone said that this was because he had dreamed of Pigwadjiikwe and that she would not give him up.”<sup>23</sup> Hallowell concluded that the association of Pigwadjiikwe with bachelorhood (underscored by jealous deaths of wives and children), “parallels the belief in *mīcīpījiu*.”<sup>24</sup>

William Berens, Hallowell’s informant, interpreter, friend, and mentor told Hallowell about an unsettling dream experience he, as a young man, had of the Great Lynx. The experience was upsetting to the point that he was extremely reluctant to enter into marriage, because he did not want his wife and children to die.

There is a lion that lives in the water — micipijiu [mishibizhiw].  
Cubs [were] seen one time playing near the rapids of that name.  
[It] may have something to do with bossing the fish. [It’s] bad to  
dream of, especially for a female. [She’ll] live to be a bad woman,  
should a girl dream of this creature.

W.B. dreamed of [it] before he was married (several times). Means illness. After marriage, once when [his] boy was sick, [he] dreamed of the lion. Went to see a man who told him just what the dream was without W.B. relating it. [The man] said he would try to help. The next night, W.B. dreamed he had a big fight with this creature, but it left no marks on him, not even a scratch, and he conquered. [He] told the man, who said everything would be OK now. The boy got better.<sup>25</sup>

While these other-than-humans provide context for Pakwâciskwew, she remains a unique entity. Unlike the *misipisiwak*, she did not always wreak havoc on the lives of men. With proper guidance and conditioning, men were free to enjoy her blessings while living full and satisfying lives with their families. Louis Bird is clear that once a man had amassed sufficient mindpower and knew exactly how to dream this woman safely, she could offer him delightful experiences.<sup>26</sup> Although Hallowell was clear about her potential for malevolence, he also conveyed that the term *pawagan* was used by the Berens River Ojibwe people who described her to him.<sup>27</sup> She falls squarely within Aboriginal perspectives around the art of developing mind power through dreaming in order to conquer fears and master challenges. She also falls squarely within the ways that Cree and Ojibwe peoples viewed human women. Women were considered to have great powers and the power and danger of a menstruating woman was so great that there were taboos placed around her. She was forbidden to make physical contact with food, or even step over food that lay on the ground, or with hunters, as this would destroy the hunt.<sup>28</sup> It was as imperative for young boys to learn about women and sexuality as it was for them to learn about environmental challenges, if they were to lead safe and good lives.

Historical records reveal fascinating human and other-than-human female personages, some with great power. A fascinating example is a dream that the Ojibwa leader William Berens had as a young man. He told anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell about the experience, saying that he had been having a poor hunt when he lay down to sleep and dreamed of a long trail running north. In his dream, he followed this path until he saw two beautiful women dressed in white. One was setting a table for him and he walked towards her. As she explained to him that the food on the table was for him he awoke and, despite the fact that he had just set many steel traps that would ensure that his walk was dangerous, he began travelling north. When he reached a deadfall, he found a fisher. He said to Hallowell, “It was a female. I knew what my dream meant

then." A female creature had provided food for him both in his dream and in reality.<sup>29</sup>

On another occasion in the 1930s, Berens told Hallowell a powerful, mystical experience he had, once again, with a beautiful female being—this time, an angel who visited him in the middle of the night. Although she frightened him badly at the time, he knew that she was there to warn him that something very important was going on. The next day, by sheer fluke, he was offered a ride by dogsled to Berens River and, although he had no food prepared and was not ready for the trip, he seized the opportunity because of his encounter with the angel, who had prepared his mind to be open to possibilities. Once he arrived in Berens River, he found that his sister was extremely ill and had been asking for him for many days. Although she died ten days later, William was able to spend valuable time with her.<sup>30</sup>

Another experience of William Berens provides an excellent example of a beautiful woman causing mayhem. He told Hallowell that he was bewitched—taken over by a spell in which he fell in love with a young woman. Berens encountered the young woman while working on a surveying job up the Berens River and he became instantly smitten by her "light skin and flashing black eyes." William was too shy to talk to her, but the next morning, as he was leaving, the woman reached out and touched him. That night, in a dream, he saw her walking towards him on the water, asking him to go and meet her. In a crazed state, Berens rushed out of the tent and called for a boat. Although he tried to get leave from his boss the next day, his request was denied, and it was then that he realized his vest was gone. Hallowell recorded, "Where it got to he never knew. Was sure he had it on when he started. Whole thing was the result of a love charm as he could not stop thinking about the girl for several days. Put into effect when she touched him. Must have had medicine in her hand."<sup>31</sup>

Walter Green, an elder living at Berens River, described to me a dream he had that, once again, reflects the idea of a beautiful and powerful female being. In this case, Walter, at the time a young boy who desperately wanted to learn to play the organ, dreamed of a female angel. It was clear, as he described the encounter to me, that this dream was one of the most powerful events of his life, for it was in this dream that Walter learned to play the organ. He explained,

Boy, I used to wish I could play [the organ]. . . . But one night when I was sleeping I had a dream. Somebody came to me—like

an angel, you know—a lady. So she took me and grabbed my hand and said, ‘Come on over this way.’ Her face was just beautiful and there were flowers all around her. So she took me out and we came to a great big building like marble, you know? And she took me into that building. We walked for a long way and, while we were walking, she turned to one room and said, ‘This is the place.’ And I looked around and saw an organ—a pipe organ. So she said, ‘Is this what you want to play?’ I said, ‘Yes, very much.’ And then she sat down and I sat down beside her and first she played Jesus Loves Me—do you know that song? Then she played it twice. Then she said, ‘Okay, you play.’ So I sat down and I played for a long time. That’s how I learned. When I was fourteen, I played the organ in the church, prayer meetings, wakes.<sup>32</sup>

Of course there are many stories of the power of human women—medicine women, *wihtikôw* killers, helpers of men who were experiencing danger, bringers of havoc. As Louis Bird explains, “There were some women who were very good shamans . . . because they were gifted to be medicine women—they were gifted to be healers. . . . To be seers, to develop intuition. . . . There are extraordinary stories about women in the past—our women, our ancestors, our great-great-grandmothers . . . women could feel things ahead of time—they could see and have visions. They didn’t go out on dream quests like men did because they already had it gifted to them. They were very accurate when they described what was going to happen.”<sup>33</sup>

Finally, there are tales of female animal personages encountered by men in the bush. Tales such as *Clothed-In-Fur* present narratives of these encounters and relationships. In the Ojibwe story, *Clothed-In-Fur*, a handsome man, disgusted by the advances of the Foolish Maidens, flees them (with great difficulty) and, on this journey, meets a woman. Although this woman, who feeds him a delicious meal of beaver, is in human form, *Clothed-In-Fur* soon realizes that she is, in fact, a wolf. Throughout the story, the pattern repeats—the man meets and marries women who feed him beaver and subsequently reveal that they are animals of various species. Finally, *Clothed-In-Fur* marries a woman who is a beaver, and he lives with her and her beaver family.<sup>34</sup>

Regrettably, Pakwâciskwew has all but vanished from Cree and Ojibwa cosmologies, along with many other aspects of *mitew* and traditional avenues to power. Through the art of dreaming, young men were faced

with the tasks of conquering their fears and developing partnerships with many fearsome beings in the natural and the spirit world. This entity, like so many of these forces, had the potential to make life wonderful or to create a living hell for a man, depending upon his training, abilities, and strength of mind. Yet today all that remains among most of the people who still know about her is predominantly negative and dangerous. Perhaps this can be related to the increasing presence of missionaries, many of whom will have influenced Aboriginal perspectives by their patriarchal attitudes towards women. Within the historical record women's voices are silent on the subject Pakwâciskwew. Many of the anthropologists who worked with Northern Algonquian people were men and this would have been a strong barrier to women coming forward with stories—especially stories of a sexual nature. Hallowell, doing his fieldwork among Ojibwe communities along the Berens River in the 1930s and 1940s, was very cognizant of this problem. For this reason, in the summer of 1934 he went to some lengths to bring a female graduate student, Dorothy Spencer, with him, hoping that she would be able to interact with the women somewhat more intimately and openly than he and collect some of their stories. Unfortunately, however, because the woman who was to interpret for her had moved away, Spencer was only able to collect a handful of stories.<sup>35</sup>

At the same time, Christian missionaries might have influenced the dichotomy of perceptions of Pakwâciskwew. Within Euro-Christianity, there are myriad examples of beautiful and sexual women leading men to ruin. Rudely juxtaposed to the European idea of the angel in the house lay the enticing whore. This mindset may well have caused a gradual shift towards more overwhelmingly negative views of this personage (certainly missionaries will have been uncomfortable with the idea of dreaming about menstrual blood in order to create meaning and understanding around sexual feelings). I remember the day I mentioned Pakwâciskwew to someone who was acquainted with her. What contrast there was between the gentleness and humour in Louis Bird's tone when he spoke of her, and the hardness and judgement in this person's voice when she said, "Oh, Susan—she's just a slut!" What is clear, however, is that this female other-than-human had a vital role in the lives of young men and that a substantial understanding of Cree and Ojibwe cosmologies certainly requires an acquaintance with her.

Northern Algonquian people recognized the spiritual power of women in all spheres of life—in what Europeans would refer to as the secular

and the sacred (categories that blended within Aboriginal worldviews). The knowledge, training, and respect required for encounters with this other-than-human female being has implications for ways that Cree and Ojibwa men viewed their relationships with human women.





# PART FIVE

CHALLENGING AND CRAFTING  
REPRESENTATIONS



## FRANCES NICKAWA:

## “A Gifted Interpreter of the Poetry of Her Race”

*Jennifer S.H. Brown*

For just under one decade, from 1919 until her death in December 1928, Frances Nickawa, a young Cree woman from northern Manitoba, had a remarkable performance career that took her across Canada and to England, Scotland, and Australia.<sup>1</sup> In contrast to her famous predecessor, Pauline Johnson, of Mohawk-English descent, on whom she modelled her stage performances, Nickawa is almost unknown. But her story has its own distinctive elements and offers some interesting contrasts with that of Johnson. It is also striking for the way that it came to be told and remembered.

## Gathering Up the Broken Threads

Frances Nickawa came to my attention because her life and career led a Toronto minister to write her biography soon after her death. Like Nickawa, the Reverend E. Ryerson Young spent his early childhood at the Cree Methodist mission of Rossville, near Norway House, Manitoba. He was born there in 1869, the eldest son of Methodist missionary and author Egerton R. Young and his wife, Elizabeth, and he spent his first four years at Rossville and then lived at Berens River, Manitoba, where his father served from 1874 to 1876.<sup>2</sup> E. Ryerson Young also became a Methodist minister, in Ontario, and a writer, although a less prolific one than his father.<sup>3</sup>

Before Frances Nickawa rose to prominence, Young had already taken great interest in Pauline Johnson and her career. In an obituary essay following Johnson's death in 1913, he wrote of the power of her poetic works and presentations.<sup>4</sup> In Toronto in the 1920s, he doubtless heard Nickawa perform, probably several times, in concerts and recitals that she gave in support of the Methodist (later United) Church and missions. Seeing her

as a youthful heir to Johnson, he was much moved by her and her work, and by her untimely death at the end of 1928. Soon afterwards, he wrote that Nickawa “often spoke of writing her own life story” but with the “startling suddenness” of her death, “the promised story was never written.” So he himself “began to gather up the broken threads from all available sources.”<sup>5</sup> In January 1929, he wrote to Miss Hannah Tindall Riley, the woman who had adopted Nickawa as a child, inquiring what biographical materials she had and might share. Riley replied that she would be glad to help and to answer any questions he might have.<sup>6</sup> Their correspondence over the next two years ran to about twenty-five letters, which, along with other materials he gathered from many sources, made it possible for Young to write Nickawa’s biography. His efforts to publish it failed, however, and when he died in 1962, the typescript and related papers passed into the hands of his son, the Reverend H. Egerton Young, my father’s first cousin.<sup>7</sup> He, in turn, knowing my interests, shared them with me.<sup>8</sup>

E. Ryerson Young’s childhood at Norway House left a strong impact that would have drawn him to the story of Frances Nickawa. Some years before the Nickawa manuscript came to light, I had written about a memoir of his that had also come down through the family. When Young was old and blind, he wrote a manuscript that recorded his warm memories of a Cree nurse or nanny whom the family called Little Mary, who brought him up as a Cree child to an amazing extent. Cree was almost his first language, and her teaching and caregiving were quite different in style from the discipline that his parents considered proper. The culture shock he experienced on leaving the North for a small southern Ontario town and school and his exposure to prejudice—being called “Indian” by schoolmates who saw him as different—were engraved in his mind for life.<sup>9</sup> For Young, then, the story of Frances Nickawa had great power both because of her church attachment and because his childhood experience paralleled hers in certain ways. Both were uprooted from the North at about the same age, although about thirty years apart, and were transplanted into foreign and often unfriendly environments where any appearance of “Indian-ness” was all too likely to provoke prejudice and bad treatment.

As Young began to write about Nickawa, he gathered a good many published items that already celebrated her career and achievements. In Canada in the 1920s, some writers and publications countered the racism of the times by drawing attention to success stories such as hers, while still framing the issue in terms of race. In 1926, for example, a new Montreal periodical called the *Young Canada Quarterly* published an



11.1 Frances Nickawa on the left, at Norway House, Manitoba: *Frances Nickawa 4yrs*, Young Family Fonds, 94.094P/15. Courtesy of The United Church Archives, Toronto.

issue emphasizing “racial tolerance.” Celebrating the accomplishments of “some of the most outstanding racial types that are to be found in our Dominion’s ‘melting pot,’” its lead column expressed the hope that “our presentation of these different racial groups may help to promote among young Canadians mutual respect and appreciation.” Among them, the writer added, “the Indian comes first in our treatment of Canadian national types.” Accordingly, the *Quarterly* featured on the next page an article on Frances Nickawa, grouping her with two other Aboriginal individuals it found especially noteworthy:

During the last forty years there have appeared three outstanding and popular members of the Indian race in Canada — Dr. Oronhyatekha, Supreme Chief Ranger of the Independent Order of Foresters, gifted as a leader and organizer; Miss Pauline Johnston [sic], the public entertainer and poetess, and Miss Frances Nickawa, the elocutionist and singer.

The article continued that Nickawa, the only one of the three who was still living, had “the promise of many years of life,” owing to “her youth and splendid physique.”<sup>10</sup> In fact, her life was considerably shorter than those of the other two, and her name forgotten more quickly. The first of the trio, Oronhyatekha (1841–1907), was a Mohawk from the Six Nations Reserve near Brantford, Ontario. Trudy Nicks has traced his distinctive career, not only with the Foresters but also as an eclectic collector of artifacts, Indian and other, and as one who both fulfilled and challenged the racial stereotypes of his time.<sup>11</sup>

E. Pauline Johnson (1861–1913) has tended, much more than the other two, to gain in fame in the century since her death. She also, in an almost literal sense, set the stage for Nickawa as her successor and so holds a place in this story, although they evidently never met. Like Oronhyatekha, she grew up on Six Nations territory. Her father, George Johnson, was a Mohawk translator for a clergyman on the Six Nations Reserve near Brantford and was descended from an important Mohawk family. Her paternal great-grandfather (1758–1843) was Tekahionwake (Double Wampum) or Jacob Johnson, a surname that doubtless honoured Sir William Johnson, British superintendent of Indian affairs, who was a close friend of the Mohawks in the mid-1700s. Her mother, Emily Howells, was English-born and married George Johnson in 1853. Pauline was largely schooled at home. An avid reader, she was immersed in English literature through her mother’s influence and in Mohawk stories and traditions learned from her father and grandfather. She first took up writing poetry with hopes of publication. In 1892, she turned to giving recitals and stage performances and had a hugely successful career. Afflicted by cancer in 1910, she returned to writing, and died in Vancouver in March 1913. She never married and had a difficult personal life.<sup>12</sup> But the legacy of her performance art had immense importance for Nickawa’s career.

### From Fanny Beardy to Frances Nickawa at Norway House

Frances Nickawa began life in circumstances very different from Johnson’s, in a subarctic Cree community in Manitoba. She was born Fanny Beardy, probably in July 1898, at or near York Factory on Hudson Bay, which had been a major Hudson’s Bay Company post for over two centuries.<sup>13</sup> Her people, historically known as Homeguard Cree in the HBC fur trade, had traded at that post for generations. After 1875, however, York Factory lost importance as a transport and trading centre, as railroads and other more southern travel routes became dominant. By the 1890s,

fur-bearing animals in the area also were in serious decline.<sup>14</sup> Around the time of Frances's birth, the Beardys and many other Cree people moved inland to Split Lake and other settlements, where missionaries encouraged their followers to settle within reach of their churches and schools. At Split Lake on 2 April 1899, Cree Methodist minister Edward Paupanekis baptized a child named Fanny Beardy, daughter of "Jack and Betsie Beardy," in St. John's [Anglican] Church.<sup>15</sup> Her father died at Split Lake, probably sometime in 1900.<sup>16</sup>

Fanny's life changed dramatically in 1901, when she was a little over three years old. The matron at the Methodist-run Norway House residential school, Miss Charlotte Yeomans, "wanted to adopt a little Indian girl." Fanny's widowed mother, probably facing hard times, gave her consent to the Reverend Charles George Fox, Anglican missionary at Split Lake, to bring Fanny to Norway House that October, which he did (see Figure 11.1). By then, however, Miss Yeomans had adopted another girl whose mother had died.<sup>17</sup> Hannah Riley, the sewing teacher at the school, chanced to meet Fanny on her arrival. Riley, then in her mid-forties, had come to Canada from England some years before and had joined the school staff in 1900.<sup>18</sup> As Riley recalled, Frances "seemed to take a fancy to me and came and took hold of my hand and was quite content to walk up to the School with me and from that hour she always loved and trusted me." Riley had not wanted "the responsibility of adopting a child," but, as she wrote to Young, "I prayed about it and felt that God wanted me to take Frances and He gave me faith to take her and I have always felt thankful that I did. She was always a bright merry child and very affectionate."<sup>19</sup>

On 25 December 1901, at Split Lake, the Anglican minister Fox, Frances's mother "Betsey Beardy," and Split Lake Chief William Kitchekesik signed an adoption agreement giving Fanny to Hannah Riley to be her daughter. In January 1902, Riley registered Fanny at the school as "Frances," with the surname, "Nickawa"—her mother's family name. In this, Riley was following the advice of Dr. Lilian B. Yeomans, the school principal, who thought that "Beardy" sounded like an English nickname and that Nickawa, being an Indian name, was more suitable.<sup>20</sup> Frances, an observant child, soon noticed, as Riley wrote, "that I could not understand Cree so she started at once to try and talk English and seldom talked Cree even in the playground where [the children] were allowed to."<sup>21</sup>

In September 1902, Hannah Riley brought Frances to Winnipeg for the annual General Conference of the Methodist Church. Frances, aged four, was a hit. She read the Second Psalm in English and sang a hymn in Cree



11.2 Frances Nickawa,  
early performance years:  
*Sweet Heart* (1924), Young  
Family Fonds, 94.094P/1.  
Courtesy of The United  
Church Archives, Toronto.

for a large Sunday afternoon gathering in Grace Church. Her self-possession and clear voice much impressed the audience, and Riley was told that everyone in that huge church could hear her distinctly. Riley also added a dramatic touch, a mid-program change of costume that foreshadowed the approach that Frances would adopt for her adult performances. When Frances read the psalm, she “wore a white muslin dress just like a little white girl. . . . Then [before singing the Cree hymn], she came back into the vestry and changed into a faded print dress reaching down to her ankles [and] a little black shawl over her head and moccasins on her feet.”<sup>22</sup>

In June 1907, Hannah Riley moved to a position as sewing teacher at the Alexandra Orphanage in Vancouver. Frances entered public school where, for the first time, she experienced racial prejudice. Riley wrote to E. Ryerson Young: “She certainly had a hard time sometimes, one child telling another ‘not to play with Frances, she is only an Indian.’” In his biography, Young added: “Bravely she would say, ‘I’m Indian; I’m Cree to the core, and I’m proud of it.’ But her sensitive spirit was constantly harried by ignorant, brutal snobs.”<sup>23</sup>

### Vancouver and Elocution Lessons

Riley left the orphanage in 1910, and she and Frances moved to Port Kells, British Columbia. Neither was in good health. Frances had endured several hospital stays and leg operations resulting from a fall off a swing at Norway House and subsequent complications.<sup>24</sup> But she evidently recovered her health and mobility. When she was fifteen, she and “Auntie,” as she called Riley, moved to South Vancouver. There she began to take lessons in a field that was to give direction to the rest of her life. For two years, she studied elocution with a lady teacher (unnamed), paying for them by selling crochet work, at which “she was very clever.” In 1914, she entered an elocution contest held by the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union. Riley recalled that “some of those who were in the contest said they did not want to be seen on the platform with an Indian girl.” But the contestants went ahead, and Frances won the silver medal.<sup>25</sup>

Frances then studied for three years with Harold Nelson Shaw, who had already enjoyed success across Canada as an actor and a teacher of elocution. She paid for her lessons with sewing, by helping out (answering his phone when he was busy, for example), and by walking and bathing his dog, Buster.<sup>26</sup> In 1916, “she tried for the [Women’s Christian Temperance Union] Gold Medal . . . and won by a very large majority.”<sup>27</sup> As Riley wrote to Young, “Frances was very independent and managed to earn all her

elocution lessons.” Of Shaw’s teaching method, she wrote that he “helped her a great deal, he would often give her something to read and tell her to give him the substance of it in her own words. She certainly had the talent of putting her thoughts into words.”<sup>28</sup> Nickawa herself later told an Australian interviewer, “I had a wonderfully kind and patient teacher. He did not force upon me his ideas of how I should recite my poems, but he would tell me, when I had not pleased him, to go out into the woods and watch the wild things of Nature until I lost myself and found real inspiration. . . . Sometimes I would have to wait and wait, and then all at once the idea would float into my mind apparently from nowhere.”<sup>29</sup>

Shaw was keenly supportive of her abilities, seeing her as a successor to the much-mourned Pauline Johnson. In a testimonial written in about 1919 and attached to some of her later publicity, he stated that Nickawa, who had been his pupil “for the past three years,” possessed “remarkable ability and a fine voice. . . . She is at home in all phases of recitation, but is unusually gifted in the interpretation of the legends and character portrayals of the Indian race, especially those of the late Pauline Johnson. In these I consider her without a peer.”<sup>30</sup>

### First Performances, 1919 to 1921

In January 1919, Nickawa gave her first solo performance at the Sixth Avenue Methodist Church in Vancouver, and in June she performed at the British Columbia Methodist Conference in Westminster, so successfully that many ministers asked her to visit their churches.<sup>31</sup> In November 1919, she went on a three-month tour with “Auntie,” travelling by train from Vancouver to Winnipeg to give a total of eighteen concerts. The *Winnipeg Free Press* and the *Winnipeg Tribune* both described her program at Grace Methodist Church in that city. She appeared first in a white dress, reciting with “great versatility” pieces by English authors, which ranged from humorous to dramatic. Then she “donned Indian dress,” presenting “a very picturesque figure in the graceful savage costume with its buckskin fringe and strings of gay beads,” to recite from Pauline Johnson’s works, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s *Hiawatha*, and others.<sup>32</sup> Already, Nickawa’s modelling of her performances on Johnson’s was evident (see Figure 11.2).

But Johnson and Nickawa presented a contrast in both their apparel and their texts. In 1892, Johnson, for her “Indian poems,” had begun “trying to get an Indian dress to recite in.” Johnson herself wrote a great many of the works she presented on stage, but she found that securing a suitable costume was “beset with difficulties on all hands.” She ended

up with an eclectic mix of elements—for example, a bear claw necklace given to her by the author Ernest Thompson Seton and items inspired by popular images of Hiawatha's wife, Minnehaha.<sup>33</sup> Nickawa, however, while she never composed original poetry (though perhaps she might have if she had lived longer), had the ability to create her own accessories for her performances. Having a sewing teacher as an adoptive mother, and possessing considerable handiwork skills, she created and assembled apparel that was grounded in Cree traditions. It is unclear whether she herself did beadwork, but through mission contacts she at least secured and incorporated Cree beadwork done by others. When asked one time about her dresses, she said she tried to make them an artistic expression of her background: "My costumes and chaps are of doe-skin. My heavy necklace is made of walrus tusks and beads. The belt and armlets are Cree beadwork. These decorations are held by the Crees to be the greatest 'wampum'—or Indian wealth."<sup>34</sup> In another respect, too, she diverged from Johnson's stage practice. Whereas Johnson appeared in "buckskin" in the first part of a performance and then changed to evening dress for the latter part,<sup>35</sup> Nickawa reversed that order (as in her Winnipeg childhood performance), a move that probably enhanced her dramatic effectiveness.

From September 1920 onward, Nickawa and her Auntie Riley toured for months at a time. On 24 March 1921, they reached Toronto, where Nickawa won great acclaim for her recitals and the events and roles that she dramatized from various works. Sometimes she played the role of Nokomis, Hiawatha's aged grandmother. In the Avenue Theatre, a woman sitting next to Hannah Riley said of Nickawa's performance: "That's no young girl, that's a real old woman." Writing to Young, Riley added: "Of course she was dressed as an old Indian woman and had white powder on her black hair to make it look grey—but the way she got up from her seat and bent over and hobbled along it was hard to believe she was not eighty—and the way she soothed and petted Min[n]ehaha was pathetic."<sup>36</sup> E.M. Sheldrick, music editor of the *Christian Guardian*, heralded her as "a second Pauline Johnson" and "the embodiment of the Indian of the yesterdays": "A pure-blooded Cree of fine presence, she possesses a beautiful speaking voice, which she uses with superb artistry."<sup>37</sup> (Indeed, Nickawa was often described as full-blooded, in implicit contrast to Pauline Johnson, whose mixed ancestry and appearance led some to raise issues around her identity. Nickawa, according to Young, affirmed: "There is not one drop of white blood in my veins. I am an Indian and proud of it.")

In Ontario, Nickawa, like Johnson before her, had her portrait painted

by J.W.L. Forster. His large oil painting was a romantic image; as he described it, he portrayed his subject “in native dress . . . among her beloved pines and free woodlands whose breath she inhales; she listens with rapture to the bird notes and tree voices of which her vivid interpretations to her audiences is a happily recurring memory.”<sup>38</sup>

Nickawa also earned the endorsement of the deputy superintendent of Indian affairs in Ottawa. Although the typed letter of 27 May 1921, addressed “To Whom It May Concern,” bore no signature, it came from the office of the head of Indian Affairs at that time, Duncan Campbell Scott. It read:

I have pleasure in introducing Miss Nickawa and her guardian, Miss H.L. Riley, for whom I would bespeak your courtesy and attention. Miss Nickawa is a talented Indian girl of the Cree Nation, who has been giving a series of successful recitals throughout Canada. Miss Nickawa has obtained excellent press notices wherever she has appeared, and is worthy of sympathetic consideration.<sup>39</sup>

The timing of the endorsement deserves note. As Scott’s biographer, Brian Titley, observed, 1921 and 1922 “were the peak years for prosecution for violations of Section 149” (federal legislation against Indian ceremonies), both on the prairies and on the west coast, where the potlatch was subjected to repression. Scott hoped at the time that his Indian agents “would endeavour to substitute reasonable amusements for this senseless drumming and dancing.”<sup>40</sup> Such performances as Nickawa’s, whether on or off the reserve, certainly qualified for him as “reasonable amusements,” blessed, furthermore, by the strength of her church ties and her seeming assimilation into mainstream society.

### To England and Back, 1921 to 1922

On 28 July 1921, carrying a strong testimonial from the Toronto Conference of the Canadian Methodist Church, Nickawa and Riley sailed for England, where they spent the next year. At first, a shortage of London engagements led Nickawa to consider commercial theatre offers. But the Reverend S.D. Chown, general superintendent of the Methodist Church in Canada, arranged for her to perform at a large ecumenical conference, and invitations began to flood in. Recitals at churches and at the Canadian Club in London drew enthusiastic crowds.<sup>41</sup> As ever, Nickawa’s “Indian” pieces were especially popular; but one episode that she recounted to the

Reverend Arthur Barner showed how powerful her non-Native presentations could be. In Liverpool, she gave a Sunday afternoon recital to “a Men’s own gathering at City Mission.” Her selection was the crucifixion scene from *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ*, by Lew Wallace, whose best-selling novel, first published in 1880, also became a hugely popular stage play that ran internationally from 1899 to 1921. As Barner recorded:

The auditorium was filled by men. Evidently Frances became oblivious to all around as she entered wholeheartedly into the story for to quote her own words: “I was lost to my audience. I did not even see the people shortly after I started to speak. But when I was finished I awoke to the fact that there did not seem to be a man in the audience who was not using his handkerchief.”<sup>42</sup>

When she returned to Canada in September 1922, her growing fame had preceded her.<sup>43</sup> In constant demand, she began giving several concerts a week. In February 1923, the periodical *Saturday Night* featured this “Gifted Interpreter of Her Race,” commending the “exceptional platform success” of this “fullblooded Cree Indian . . . an original Canadian.”<sup>44</sup> Her tours helped to fund church missions and needs and provided a modest if erratic income. Riley said in one letter that Nickawa “asked half of the gross proceeds and we paid our own expenses. Her share varied from \$4—to \$300 per concert.” The rest went for church work. The Reverend Arthur Barner later listed the support she gave to several projects that interested her, such as purchasing a “moving picture machine” for the Morley Mission in Alberta and making contributions for the purchase of books and for church-building.<sup>45</sup> Nickawa’s focus on support for churches and missions represented a contrast to the secular orientation of Pauline Johnson towards the commercial stage. In an essay published the month after her death, Barner summed up her perspective. As her reputation grew, “Certain theatrical interests in this country, and in England, made her very attractive offers if she would go on the stage.” She answered consistently, “Everything I have and am I owe to Auntie and the Christian Church. I shall remain true to them.”<sup>46</sup>

### A Summer Trip Home, 1923

Nickawa returned only once to her homeland. Arthur Barner, who planned the trip, wrote that she “had a great longing to visit the north land which she had not seen since she was six years of age.” In June 1923, she travelled

up Lake Winnipeg on the steamer *Wolverine*, with Methodist missionaries Levi Atkinson, S.D. Gaudin, and R.T. Chapin and their families, who were returning to their stations after their annual conference. She visited Norway House, Oxford House, and Cross Lake.<sup>47</sup> Atkinson wrote for Young a detailed account of the first part of that trip and Nickawa's reactions to it. At Berens River, she was struck by the poverty she saw and exclaimed to him: "Really, are these my people? Are these the conditions under which they must live?"<sup>48</sup> As she approached Norway House, she recognized many old familiar landmarks, as she wrote in her memoir of the trip. The wooden school she had attended had burned down and had been replaced, "but the burning did not burn the memories of childhood's happy days making snow dolls by cutting a figure out of the hard crust of snow, tunnelling houses when the snow had drifted 11 to 13 feet." For Nickawa on her return, "The atmosphere of the whole place radiated love."<sup>49</sup>

At Oxford House, Nickawa was impressed by the Atkinsons' joy at "coming back home" to their mission station: "What is it that makes these people of the cultured world glad to be back? I stood in awe of something I as yet could not fathom." The next morning, Sunday, the little church was full. "When I saw the Missionary up in his pulpit talking to my people about God then the truth dawned upon me. It was there they were doing their Master[']s work and therefore it was home, teaching these children of nature the love of Christ."<sup>50</sup>

At Oxford House, Nickawa also met some of her Cree relatives, including David Curly-head, her mother's brother, and his wife Sally. Atkinson wrote: "The meeting of Frances and her old uncle was beautiful indeed and two or three times daily, during the two weeks she spent with us, she would run over to her uncle's and talk with them by the sign language; for she did not speak Cree nor they English."<sup>51</sup> Other relatives surfaced as well, as local people traced the intricate family ties by which she was connected to them. In Cree communities, kinship is a principal means of establishing identity and making connections, especially with newcomers or persons long absent, and Frances Nickawa was drawn into extensive networks of relatives she had scarcely known. As she wrote to a Toronto friend, Lillian Taggart: "Oh, I'm coming into a lot of relations. Aunts, uncles, cousins—galore, and half-relations, my—oh my! They all kissed me, dear me; it's too much—all at once."

In the same letter, however, she realized that she could not come back to their life, and her sometimes romantic thoughts were tempered: "I am really among my own people, and now I wish no more to live as they live;

no, but I would like to help them to help themselves. Oh, to think that's how I might have been, the poorest among them too! How I thank Auntie, oh, so much. The teepees are so small, mud houses are not so bad, but so many live in them, three or four families."<sup>52</sup> On the same day, Nickawa wrote to Riley: "My Own Auntie: I do long to see you. Oh, what I do thank you for; the life you have saved me from. I can't imagine how they live. Oh, the dirt and squalor is almost unbelievable." But she took great delight in her canoe travels, in meeting the people, and in the music and enthusiasm at the church services. As she wrote at Oxford House: "The people come out and there is a wonderfully full house at every service. I sang tonight and played on my big fiddle."<sup>53</sup> Everywhere, her singing made a tremendous impression.

Nickawa's next journey took her to Cross Lake, and she was there when the annual treaty payments were made. C.G. Honnor, son-in-law of the Reverend S.D. Gaudin, wrote an account of the trip and her eager participation in the events: "She entered into the spirit of 'Treaty,' which is the Indian 'Fair-day.' She organised races for the children, scrambled a great quantity of candies amongst everybody and livened things up considerably, particularly when she astonished us all by her daring trip on the river in a birch canoe."<sup>54</sup> Then, on Sunday, baptismal and communion services were held. Arthur Barner described the scene:

The church was crowded to the doors. We had asked Frances to sing one of her Gospel songs. She responded with "He Lifted Me." The attention was perfect though many of the people, especially the seniors, did not understand the English language. When the service was over two old men followed us into the Mission House requesting Rev. S.D. Gaudin to interpret their words to me which were as follows: "We did not know a word she said but as she sang she lifted us above the Earth." Such was the spiritual power with which she inspired the songs she sang.<sup>55</sup>

As Barner also said to Young: "She had been out many years in a strange world, and she had become estranged from her native tongue. . . . Humanly speaking, the course of events had tended to create a separation between [her] and the people whose features and blood she inherited. But . . . 'she came, she saw, she conquered.' A people, whose custom it is to hold the newcomer at arm's length, opened their arms wide at first sight, to receive this visitor."<sup>56</sup>

Nickawa herself also reflected on her experience in a passage written during or just after her trip:

Two wonderful months. To me it was not just a holiday and a rest, it was finding myself and a strengthening of ideals for my life work, a sort of finding of one[']s self [in] which the Divine God out of doors brings everything to the top, our innermost thoughts are laid bare at nature's bidding. I did not realize when leaving Selkirk what a blessing I should receive going back to the great North Land, the land of my birth, to a people who had not seen me since the age of seven. . . . My life as a child came back slowly at first then with a bound and a rush like a tornado uprooting all the works of civilization. Where can your civilization fit in now? How does it make you feel toward your own people? It was like the tide rushing in on the sands of my life and washing away all signs of civilization that were not founded on Christ, that remained and stronger grew.<sup>57</sup>

In late September 1923, after returning from her trip, Nickawa suffered a serious breakdown and spent a month in hospital in Winnipeg; later she travelled to Vancouver where she endured bed rest through Christmas time. Hannah Riley recalled that "she lost her memory so badly that she could not remember two lines of any of her recitations (at that time she knew seventy) we both thought her concert work was ended." Then, in early January, "her memory came back suddenly as good as ever and she could say any of her pieces."<sup>58</sup> Her biographer, Young, later wondered to Riley whether the summer trip to the north was the cause of the trauma, but Riley, on reflection, thought that it was not: "The Dr in Winnipeg said [Nickawa] would have been much worse if she had not had that trip and she did so enjoy it, the trouble was she had worked too hard the last winter in Ontario, most of that winter she was on the platform every day of the week except Saturday and she had so much spirit it was almost impossible to know when she was tired."<sup>59</sup>

### Australia, 1924 to 1925

Following a seemingly complete recovery, Nickawa again began to give concerts. On 7 March 1924, after a farewell concert in Vancouver, she and Riley sailed for Australia to undertake a tour of several months. Arriving on 1 April, they had a rocky start in Sydney. Riley wrote: "The Emigration

Agent passed me, but when he looked at Frances he said, ‘You are one of a dark skinned race I cannot pass you.’ Riley replied, “You let Italians in for concert work and Miss Nickawa has come to give concerts.” He then asked, “What company does she belong to?” Riley replied that “we were just a company of two,” and “he said he was afraid he could not manage it and the head man was out of town.” He finally found a way to let them in if Riley would sign a paper taking responsibility for Nickawa for the next three months, and they agreed to leave by that date. So, when their time was up, they went to see the head of the immigration office. He recognized Nickawa right away: “Why this is the young lady I heard sing at Church last Sunday night and my wife played for her.” He said they’d enjoyed her Monday concert too. “As a boy,” he went on, “I always took a great interest in American Indians and you can certainly stay in Australia as long as you like.”<sup>60</sup>

As it turned out, Riley and Nickawa did stay much longer than intended, until early July 1925, enjoying great success and warm hospitality. Among various laudatory reviews and tributes, Nickawa received a letter of thanks from the officials of the Methodist Home Missions, Victoria, for “the services you have rendered in connection with our Jubilee appeal for Home Missions. . . . Your happy personality and the high quality of your entertainments have won the admiration of all. Your recitals . . . have deeply moved the hearts of the people whilst your concerts have captivated the large audiences that have been attracted by your unique gifts.”<sup>61</sup>

Rounding the globe to the west, Nickawa and Riley reached England in early August 1925 and were then caught up in a further round of performances.<sup>62</sup> They were back in Ontario in December 1925. An interviewer from the *Toronto Star* wrote on 23 December 1925: “Frances Nickawa, full-blooded Cree from the shores of Hudson’s Bay, has gratified a wish by returning to her native Canada in time for Christmas.”<sup>63</sup> Again they were much in demand; Riley’s records listed fifty-seven engagements between 24 March and 31 May 1926, which took them from Gananoque on the St. Lawrence to Toronto to Windsor and Detroit.<sup>64</sup> The *Young Canada Quarterly* wrote of her that spring: “For naturalness of manner, vigor and charm of personality, dramatic power and beauty of interpretation, as well as captivating humor, she has few equals. . . . As an entertainer she occupies a place all her own through her attractive repertoire of Indian legends and folk lore.”<sup>65</sup>

### Marriage, Renewal, and Loss, 1926 to 1928

In the summer of 1926, Nickawa met businessman Arthur Russell Mark, probably through her performances or church connections. They were married in Victoria on 29 January 1927 and made their home together with “Auntie Riley” in Vancouver.<sup>66</sup> Nickawa’s travels, however, soon began again. Arthur Barner, who visited them in this period, wrote of how she carried on with her career after her marriage:

Frances was devoted to her work. She felt she had a mission. Even after domestic love invaded her life she was determined to pursue her profession. Her husband, whose understanding of her was wonderful and whose sympathy and devotion to her were admirable, — much against his own judgment but to satisfy her pleadings, gave up his position in the business world in order to be her agent and to care for her on her journeys.



**11.3** *Frances Nickawa (Mrs. A. Russell Mark), Mr. Mark and “Auntie” Riley, Young Family Fonds, 94.094P/7. Courtesy of The United Church Archives, Toronto.*

The couple went on successful tours across British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon, and then across Canada. A review of a performance that Nickawa gave in Calgary on 5 May 1927 suggested that she was increasingly finding her own voice as she spoke to Canadian audiences. During an interlude in her dramatic recital before a “huge audience” in Central United Church, she said, in a “voice that vibrated with intense passion”:

We are the real Canadians and we will some day make you proud of us, if you will only have patience and try to understand. . . . ‘Tis true my people are not always what they ought to be. But have you ever realized that in one short century they were made to throw aside all their traditions, their love of the wild and the free air, and take the long, uneven road of civilization, sometimes led by people who did not care. Have patience! Do not expect us in one short century to accomplish what you, with centuries of the same traditions, have accomplished.

At the same time, however, she engaged her audience with a glimpse of personal life that they doubtless found more memorable. Announcements of Nickawa’s marriage, the reviewer wrote, “had been published throughout the Dominion. . . . The women present were fairly dying of curiosity to have a glimpse of the fortunate young man.” She obliged them. “The auditorium fairly rang with applause as Miss Nickawa brought her husband from behind the scenes to share in her final applause. Quaintly she advised the young girls present to take a ‘long time to think it over,’ as she had done, before making the great decision.”<sup>67</sup> Her success in maintaining her reputation, first as a respectable young woman in the care of her loving “Auntie” and then as the new wife of a respectable businessman, stood in contrast to the romances and entanglements with white men that coloured Pauline Johnson’s life and career and contributed to the depth of feeling that Johnson expressed in, for example, her short story, “A Red Girl’s Reasoning.”<sup>68</sup> Issues of racial mixing and intermarriage did not appear to surface in Nickawa’s admittedly much shorter life, and there is no clue that she ever tested the limits of female propriety.

Nickawa reclaimed her popularity as her new manager arranged her performances. But her renewed touring took a serious toll. As Barner later wrote to Young, “It did not take long to prove to her that her enthusiasm far exceeded her physical strength. Her health commenced perceptibly to fail. I visited them once in Ottawa [probably in May 1928] and I was

constrained to urge her to return to the B.C. Coast and rest. This was done at a great effort of self control on her part but when I visited the happy home in Vancouver I found Frances giving herself just as freely and enthusiastically to domestic affairs.”<sup>69</sup>

Nickawa was briefly hospitalized in Ottawa in May 1928 and returned home weak and ailing. Financial issues must have been compelling. In July, she wrote from Vancouver directly to Duncan Campbell Scott, deputy superintendent general of Indian Affairs inquiring about treaty monies owing to her: “Up until my marriage, I was a member of the Split Lake Band of Indians and have never received any treaty payments. As I understand that that band came into treaty in 1908 [by its adhesion to Treaty 5], it would appear that I am entitled to annuity since that date.” She went on to say that she owed the Civic Hospital, Ottawa, eighty-one dollars for treatment there and asked that the bill be “paid from any treaty monies to which I am entitled.” She added: “I should be glad if you will pay this account and remit the balance to me.” An Indian Affairs official followed up by writing on 20 July 1928 to the Norway House Indian agent for information on her birth date and her father and also to inquire why she was not admitted to treaty in 1908. The letter may in effect have answered that question itself, as it noted that Miss Riley had adopted Nickawa “before treaty was made with these Indians.” No further communication has been found.<sup>70</sup> Indian Affairs likely dismissed the question on two counts: Nickawa had been adopted out before Split Lake entered into treaty and she had married a non-Native, thereby losing any claim to Indian status she might have had under the Indian Act of the period, and had done so by the time that her hospital expense was incurred.

After a long illness, Nickawa died on 31 December 1928.<sup>71</sup> Her early death was greatly mourned; as Young wrote, “the light that was in her went out with startling suddenness.”<sup>72</sup> Barner and Riley both spoke, however, of her happiness in her marriage and during her last months. Barner told Young, “I never saw in my extensive travels, three people more happily situated together than Mr and Mrs A. Russell-Mark and Auntie Riley were. This continued to the end of her earthly journey.”<sup>73</sup> In December 1928, about three weeks before Nickawa died, Riley and Mark had a photograph taken that showed the three of them closely seated in apparent mutual affection in front of their Vancouver home (see Figure 11.3).<sup>74</sup> Riley wrote to Young that “we three spent two happy years together.” Her good relations with Mark continued; when he took a new position in Calgary in late September 1929, she moved there with him.<sup>75</sup> Neither Riley nor Barner

named Nickawa's specific illness. On her death certificate, however, her doctor wrote that he had attended her from 14 June 1928 onward for pulmonary tuberculosis, which she had had for eight months.<sup>76</sup>

### Concluding Thoughts

The story of France Nickawa forms a dramatic sequel to that of Pauline Johnson, offering intriguing comparisons and contrasts. Yet Nickawa also stands apart as a Canadian Aboriginal woman who followed her own path through the 1920s. Her stage persona overlapped with Johnson's in its style, dress, and "Indian-ness" and in its cultivation of much of the same literature. But the differences were also striking. As a creative author in her own right, Johnson was most commonly described as a "poetess" during her lifetime. But soon after her death, as Veronica Strong-Boag and Carole Gerson observe, descriptions of her as Indian princess "totally eclipsed" the use of the term "poetess" and helped to sidetrack any consideration of her writings as genuine contributions to Canadian literature.<sup>77</sup> In turn, however, while the youthful Nickawa relied on the texts of Johnson and others rather than creating her own, she succeeded in part because she was able to embody so effectively the imagery that audiences craved at the time—that of the romantic Indian princess and maiden.

Nickawa faced endless public demands to fulfill those images and also to play to her audiences' thirst for an idealized Native past. As the Brampton, Ontario, *Conservator* said of one of her performances: "Ancient Canada spoke to Modern Canada and Modern Canada heard, wondered and applauded."<sup>78</sup> Yet she also began to emulate Pauline Johnson in using her stage platform and her personal appeal to urge audiences to understand the wrongs her people had suffered. She included in her repertoire some of Johnson's strongest poems, among them "A Cry from an Indian Wife" and "The Cattle Thief." As her Calgary performance of 5 May 1927 showed, she could also speak out strongly herself to her audiences: "We are the real Canadians." Some of her words, like Pauline Johnson's, had a sharp sting for audiences in the critiques of whites that they set forth.

But then Nickawa would relieve the sting by turning the plight of Aboriginal people into poetry, just as Johnson often did. Nickawa's Calgary performance shows how she managed it. After she had delivered her manifesto on "the real Canadians," the review enthused: "It was a delightful evening . . . as the youthful dramatist . . . swept her audience over wind-blown plains, moaning pines, taught them the song of the crooning winds, and with that elemental instinct that so truly belongs to

her race, interpreted the little animals of the wood, the squirrel, the rabbit and the birds. With a dramatic power . . . Miss Nickawa gave several of Pauline Johnson's poems as only an Indian maiden could give them." Back to nature the reviewer went, conveying the image of a young, virginal female, exotic, picturesque, and romantic.<sup>79</sup> Nickawa could play the child of nature and the Indian princess in doeskin dress and feathers and beads to the hilt, and she threw herself into those roles with immense enthusiasm. Yet there are clues that she also intended her performances to convey a serious message that she likely would have articulated further if she had lived longer. In Pauline Johnson, Strong-Boag and Gerson find a "contradictory figure" who reinforced and disturbed colonial authority, while rendering into poetry "the plight of the loser."<sup>80</sup> To a lesser extent, Nickawa too, in her vivid performances of Johnson's poems of resistance, could be described in these terms and partook of a similar ambivalence and ambiguity, well expressed in both women's recitals of Johnson's poem "A Cry from an Indian Wife."

A constant theme in Nickawa's career was her focus on using her performances to raise funds for Methodist missions, churches, and aid; as already noted, she shunned the commercial stage. Whereas Johnson grew up Anglican and then manifested at least a "public alienation" from the Church of England,<sup>81</sup> Nickawa's commitment to the Methodist Church (the United Church of Canada, as of 1925) was steadfast. Any political critique that she offered was not directed at the church, which she saw as a genuine source of help and support to her people. In our times, ninety years later, her stance may seem quaint or naïve. But the women who shaped her early life—her widowed mother and Hannah Riley and Lilian Yeomans at Norway House—set her on a path that, in combination with her great talent and ability, led to remarkable success and recognition. As the church was foundational for them, so it became for her. Then came the alchemy of her transformative studies in elocution with Harold Nelson Shaw and her almost immediate opportunities to showcase her talents to warm and welcoming church communities across Canada and in Britain and Australia.

And (to ask a question that always arises these days) what of her identity? She was Cree, and she was Indian, even if Indian Affairs officials would not put her on their lists. Yes, she had lost her language, aside from the few words she relearned in the summer of 1923, and many would have described her as assimilated or, in anthropologists' terms, acculturated. And so she was. But that was far from the whole story. She used

her performances not only to support the church but also to present and maintain an Indian identity that was not simply made up or theatrical or a matter of costuming. Both she and Johnson taught their audiences about the integrity and persistence of Indian identity, even as they made such a notion non-threatening, palatable, and even appealing, and they put tremendous energy into creating and negotiating that identity with their audiences. In the public view, Nickawa and Johnson were both successful, skilled performers who enraptured their listeners with poetry and song. Nickawa had a further advantage as a “full-blooded Indian” whose church ties assured respectability. Touring with “Auntie” Riley as adoptive mother and guardian, and then with her devoted husband, she never faced the issues with managers and other men that bedeviled Johnson’s life.

Still, Nickawa remains a complex figure. She was a Cree Indian who succeeded in mainstream society to the point of being a poster girl for assimilation and Christian conversion. She believed in and spoke for missions and Christianity and the benefits they brought. But, especially after 1923, she also saw the problems that her people faced, and that she personally had escaped, and she must have wondered if the church in fact could solve them all. The most disconcerting challenge that she faced in thinking about these issues may have come during the two months she spent in her homeland in the summer of 1923. She wrote warmly of her sojourn in the North and immensely enjoyed all the people she met, including her long-lost Cree relatives. But she was also made vividly aware of their poverty and hardships. She saw too how disconnected she had become, losing her language and her family ties and growing accustomed to a lifestyle so different that she could never return. The experience appeared to reinforce her commitment to the career she had chosen. When she recovered her health in the winter of 1923–24, she continued doing what she did best with renewed dedication, receiving great acclaim on her tours to Australia, England, and back to Canada. From her perspective, the best course was to raise more funds to support the work of the churches in the North as agencies that cared about and tried their utmost to care for her people. Maybe she was still an idealist, but there was no doubt about her commitment. And we can only speculate about how her career and outlook would have evolved, had she lived a longer life.

The poems of Pauline Johnson gave Nickawa a framework for thinking about these issues, as well as a vehicle for posing questions and alternative viewpoints to her audiences in an approachable way that may have prompted at least some of them to reflect on the issues she alluded to. And

finally, she provided lessons and food for thought to some of the church ministers who got to know her—E. Ryerson Young, Arthur Barner, and others—and she moved one of them to write a biography that recorded her compelling story. Eight decades later, I have written her story rather differently, and my own versions have evolved with further study. But that process, too, becomes part of her ongoing history as we continue to explore her life and the changing ways in which it may be interpreted. Her story belongs in this book, both for its intrinsic interest and power and for what it tells us about the varied situations, choices, and constraints facing Aboriginal women of her period and the many ways that they responded to these challenges.

## Epilogue

The story of Frances Nickawa survived mainly because of the hard work of E. Ryerson Young and the devoted collaboration of Hannah Riley, supplemented by the voices and records of Methodist churchmen, reviewers of Nickawa's many performances, and a variety of other sources. Yet one voice is missing among the records found to date—that of Nickawa's husband, Arthur Russell Mark. We know him through his actions: his marriage, his giving up of a business position to manage Nickawa's performances, and his subsequent care and attention to Hannah Riley over the next three years. But no words or writings of his appear in the materials that Young collected or in later records, even though he lived to the age of ninety-two. There are some reasons for this zone of silence, at least from 1934 on, as I eventually learned.

In May 2005, I presented a talk on Frances Nickawa to an Aboriginal conference, the annual Honekwe Regional Gathering, in Thompson, Manitoba. The conference theme was the recovery of family histories, so, in hopes that I might meet some people who knew about my subject, I called my paper, "Bringing Back Relatives: The Trail of Frances Nickawa." Indeed, I got a few clues, as her Cree family names are well known in northern Manitoba.

But then, a few weeks later, I received a message from a nephew of Arthur Russell Mark, Warren McFadyen. He had been doing family genealogy and was startled to discover that when Mark remarried in 1934 in Victoria, his marriage licence listed him as widower. He then managed to locate the record of Mark and Nickawa's marriage. Wondering who this first wife was, he traced her family name to Split Lake, Manitoba, whereupon people there who knew of my work referred him to me. I was able

to share with him what I had learned about Nickawa, and he provided me with further information on Mark's life.

Neither he nor Mark's only child, a daughter by his second marriage, had ever heard of Mark's first marriage. Mark's second marriage ended in divorce in 1946. He married again in about 1947, and his third marriage lasted until his death in Florida in 1987. If his two later wives knew about his first marriage to an Indian, they never revealed the fact.<sup>82</sup> An outside observer might wonder whether Mark suppressed information about his marriage to Nickawa to protect his own standing, given the racism of the time. But his daughter thinks it more likely that neither her own mother nor Mark's third wife would have been sympathetic to hearing of an Indian marriage in his past. Recalling the unhappiness of his second marriage, she believes that Mark must have loved Frances Nickawa dearly<sup>83</sup> and that he was not able to share his loss in later years because his spouses would not have wanted to know about it.

The family's discovery of Mark's past has generated ripples that have led them to different perspectives on their history and has added as well to my understandings. The family story doubtless also helps to explain why further records and mementoes of Nickawa's life and career, such as her stage regalia and the documents that E. Ryerson Young copied from Hannah Riley and then returned to her, seem not to have survived. As usual in history, we must make do with what we have. Enough material remains to bring Frances Nickawa's life to light, and deduction and informed judgment help to make up for what has been lost. Meanwhile, her story takes on new resonance in its own right as she joins the many other Aboriginal women who have been "missing in action" in our history books and are now being found again.



## BLAZING HER OWN TRAIL: Anahareo's Rejection of Euro-Canadian Stereotypes

*Kristin L. Gleeson*

The world first came to know Anahareo in 1935, when Grey Owl, the controversial British conservationist who promoted his message under the guise of an Aboriginal identity, published *Pilgrims of the Wild*. The book was a plea to save the disappearing wilderness, couched in the story of the rescue and nurture of two beaver kits. The figure of Anahareo and her relationship with Grey Owl were key elements in the book's attraction, especially in Britain. In the book, Grey Owl described Anahareo as "no butterfly, in spite of her modernistic ideas," a woman who could "swing an axe as well as she could a lip-stick."<sup>1</sup> The image he paints — of a strong, independent-minded Aboriginal woman with a foot in both worlds — captures the essence of Anahareo, who struggled throughout her life to break free of prevailing stereotypes.

These stereotypical images, which had evolved over several centuries of European contact, included, on the one hand, the sexually immoral squaw who lived at the edge of town and whose existence posed a threat to civilization's progress and, on the other, the impeccably mannered Indian Princess, from whom non-Aboriginals might safely claim descent and who remained aloof in a woodland paradise. The squaw images in particular were grounded in the principle of ranked racial types. In this view, any Aboriginal woman who exhibited behaviour unlike that of Euro-Canadian women was equated with a prostitute. Appropriate Euro-Canadian clothing and comportment were also markers of civilization. Operating under such standards, Aboriginal women — whose behaviour, dress, and body language would not always coincide with Euro-Canadian standards — were constantly suspect.<sup>2</sup> Anahareo chose to either openly reject or quietly



**12.1** Anahareo, Camp Wabikon, c. 1925.  
Courtesy of Katherine Swartile.

ignore these prevailing images; her personality and interests compelled her to take on an identity for herself, both in public and private, as an intrepid, resourceful, and self-reliant woman who could manage on her own in the wilderness and yet was no stranger to the customs and trappings of modern civilization.

From the time of her birth, in 1906, in the small town of Mattawa, Ontario, Gertrude Bernard, whom the world would later know as Anahareo, was confronted by the negative images attaching to Aboriginal women.<sup>3</sup> Mattawa, a town of nearly two thousand, was racially divided, with the Euro-Canadian families and most of the businesses, churches, and schools, as well as the hospital, located in one of two areas, Mattawan and Rosemount, while Aboriginal and mixed-race families were consigned to an area with the derogatory name of Squaw Valley (today simply called “the Valley”).<sup>4</sup> The town was heavily influenced by the Catholic Church, which, together with the Euro-Canadian community, exerted pressure on the Squaw Valley inhabitants to conform to Euro-Canadian standards of behaviour and dress.<sup>5</sup>

Religious observance was one of the key factors of social compliance for the residents of Squaw Valley—burdened as they were by the name of their community, with its obvious overtones of loose sexual morals—and their economic stability depended on their ability to conform to mainstream values. Aboriginal people still practised some of their traditional skills, but in a context marginally acceptable to Euro-Canadians, with the men guiding and trapping and the women doing beadwork and fashioning leather goods. For the most part, however, Aboriginal people served as labourers for the town and the surrounding area.<sup>6</sup>

Although Gertie’s father, Mathew, was Mohawk and Algonquin, and her mother, Mary, was Algonquin, they lived on the outskirts of Mattawan at Boom Creek, but through their relatives in Squaw Valley they were firmly ensconced in this Catholic Aboriginal community and thus open to all its influences. Mathew, a former riverman and guide, earned his living as a carpenter and relied on the goodwill of the Euro-Canadian community to secure work.<sup>7</sup> After his wife’s death, when Gertie was only four, Mathew placed Gertie in his mother’s care and placed his three remaining children among other relatives.<sup>8</sup> Catherine Papineau Bernard, “Big Grandma,” was a respected member of the community who combined a strong Catholic faith with a fierce pride in her heritage and the knowledge and crafts of her people.<sup>9</sup> A healer and herbalist, Catherine taught Gertie some of her skills, as well as the significance of Aboriginal traditions, but she also

emphasized the importance of the Catholic faith. Under her instruction, Gertie became aware not only of the expected standards of behaviour but also of the negative labels readily assigned to anyone who did not meet these expectations. Gertie later recalled that, as a grown woman, whenever she knew she was doing something wrong, she could still hear her grandmother voicing her disapproval.<sup>10</sup>

When Gertie was about eleven, her grandmother became too frail to care for her, and an aunt and her family moved in with them, disrupting the pair's close relationship. Gertie disliked her new life, filled as it was with chores, rules, and school. She avoided all of them and spent most of her time on her own in the woods. When she did attend school, she found little to like and even paid a girlfriend thirty-five cents to do her arithmetic homework. Eventually, her father brought the family under one roof again, but Gertie continued to avoid school to wander in the woods or play sports with the boys, as her sense of isolation and disaffection from those in her community grew.<sup>11</sup>

In the fishbowl atmosphere of the town, such behaviour in any adolescent girl on the verge of womanhood threatened the established Euro-Canadian bounds of propriety and would inevitably provoke disapproval. Through her actions, Gertie unwittingly endangered not only her own moral credibility but that of her family and community, in light of the ease with which Euro-Canadians made negative judgements about young Aboriginal girls who did not conform.<sup>12</sup> Gertie nonetheless refused to comply with expected standards of behaviour, despite pressure from both her family and the Aboriginal community, and remained determined to make her own choices.

In 1925, at the age of nineteen, Gertie took a job at Camp Wabikon, one of the Lake Temagami resorts, in northeastern Ontario, opened a decade or so before to provide wilderness vacations to wealthy urbanites. Working as a waitress, Gertie encountered a new, somewhat more positive stereotype of Aboriginal women: that of the Indian Princess.<sup>13</sup> Gertie had become a beautiful young woman with bobbed hair who, dressed in riding breeches and a shirt, appeared the picture of modern womanhood (see Figure 12.1). Vacationers from places such as New York, their heads full of romanticized images modelled on historical figures such as Pocahontas, might have been prepared to be well disposed towards Aboriginal women. But they would have found little to recognize in Gertie to match the images familiar from poems such as Longfellow's *Hiawatha* or the illustrations and paintings of artists such as N.C. Wyeth, whose work

showed Aboriginal women in long braids and fringed buckskin dresses. These images of women who represented the pure and pristine wilderness and seemed untouched by the corruptions of industrialization held enormous appeal to vacationers seeking a wilderness experience.

Despite Gertie's manner and modern dress, a wealthy New York doctor, who met her while vacationing at Camp Wabikon, seemed determined to cast her in the role of the Indian Princess. He offered to pay for Gertie's education at any college or convent school of her choice.<sup>14</sup> His offer was not without its patronizing aspects, what with its underlying implications of her need to improve herself by assimilating into mainstream culture. Yet Gertie was aware that it constituted an opportunity and corresponded with her father about it. He was much in favour of the idea, and, between them, they settled on a Roman Catholic boarding school in Toronto. The doctor initiated the arrangements, and, while the application proceeded, Gertie remained at the camp to work out the remainder of the summer season, somewhat uneasy about the idea of returning to school.<sup>15</sup>

Sometime before the summer's end, thirty-six-year-old Archie Belaney arrived to take up a post as a guide. In 1906, at the age of sixteen, Archie had come to the wilderness from Hastings, England, and had quickly grown enthralled with life in the bush. In the following years, during which he spent time with both Euro-Canadian and Aboriginals, he acquired the skills and knowledge necessary to surviving in the bush and became adept at trapping, guiding, and fire ranging. He lived at first in the Temagami area, especially on Bear Island, with the Ojibwe band, and in 1910 married one of its members, Angele Egwuna. The following year, the couple had a daughter, Agnes. But adventure called, and Archie moved on to the Biscotasing area, in the region north of Sudbury, where he spent three years trapping in the winter and fire ranging in the summers. Just before the outbreak of the First World War, he invited a young Métis woman, Marie Gerard, into the bush for the winter season. The following November he enlisted and was shipped overseas. While he was back in England, he was briefly married to a childhood acquaintance, Constance Holmes — an illegal marriage, in light of his earlier union with Angele, which was later declared invalid. After the war, Archie returned to Canada and found that Marie had given birth to a son but had died of tuberculosis shortly afterward.<sup>16</sup>

War had not dealt kindly with Archie both physically and emotionally. Besides exposure to mustard gas, which weakened his lungs, he had suffered a crippling wound to the foot. Back in Biscotasing, he recuperated



**12.2** Anahareo,  
c. 1927. Courtesy of  
Katherine Swartile.

slowly and morosely, taking to drink and wild brawling. But gradually he recovered enough strength to go back into the bush and spent the next few years living with an Ojibwe family, the Espaniels, trapping and hunting, until 1925 found him back in Temagami, working as a guide for the summer.<sup>17</sup>

Ironically, Gertie's attraction to Archie was based on her own self-confessed perception of him as a stereotypical image, along the lines of Jesse James or Robin Hood. For Archie, Gertie's appeal lay not in any vision of an Indian Princess or in a desire to rehabilitate her or save her from an immoral existence but in her spirit, determination, and beauty. Shortly

after they met, Gertie returned home to Mattawa, but Archie soon followed for a visit fresh from his new trapline near Forsythe in Northern Quebec. He subsequently launched a two-week letter-writing campaign, describing his wilderness life in the hopes of winning her over.<sup>18</sup>

The campaign ultimately succeeded. A few months later, in February 1926, when Gertie learned that her entrance to the convent school was to be delayed, she accepted an invitation to visit Archie.<sup>19</sup> Gertie's father was working miles away, so she walked the twenty-two-kilometre round trip to ask his permission, the longest distance she had ever hiked. Mathew's regard for his daughter was such that, despite the prospect of a long journey and the risk to his daughter's reputation, he allowed her to persuade him to agree to a one-week visit.<sup>20</sup> It was a decision that would once again bring Gertie up against the negative images of Aboriginal women but would ultimately provide her with a pathway to become a person that could challenge that imagery.

After a thirty-eight-hour train journey, Gertie arrived at Forsythe. After spending several days there with Archie, socializing with the town's few inhabitants, she told Archie it was time for her to return home. Archie persuaded her to remain longer so that he could show her his traplines and his home in the bush. Gertie wrote to her father to explain her plans and then donned snowshoes and made the seventy-kilometre trek to Archie's cabin. It was her first time in the bush, and she arrived at the cabin exhausted but unbeaten.<sup>21</sup>

The challenges and excitement she discovered there, combined with Archie's need to check his traps, kept Gertie in the bush for two full months. The two lived in separate shacks that his friends had helped him build some weeks before. When she finally returned to Forsythe to take the train back to Mattawa, she found several letters from her father waiting for her. He chastised her for her behaviour and expressed concern over her lost reputation, though he also assured her she would always have a place at home, should she choose not to marry Archie.<sup>22</sup> If Gertie had any doubts about the grounds for her father's concern, they were abruptly dispelled a short while later when she sought out a priest for Easter confession, in Senterre, a town near Forsythe. When he realized she was the woman who had spent two months in the bush with a man, he berated her severely. Angry, she turned her back on her faith and returned to the bush with Archie. During a visit with Archie to Doucet, a small town near Forsythe, a few months later, after he had completed his spring hunt, Gertie again felt the consequences of her decision. In the course of an evening

entertainment, the women she encountered were distinctly cool, and nobody asked her to dance.

Going into the bush with Archie, no matter how innocent as an action or in its intent, blatantly contravened all the rules of Euro-Canadian propriety and seemed aptly to illustrate the qualities of the “promiscuous squaw.” In the past, Aboriginal women had lived with trappers and other single Euro-Canadian men on the frontier and in the bush, without benefit of legal marriage, but as the population of Euro-Canadian women in frontier communities grew, these Aboriginal women were increasingly marginalized and derided. “Squaw women” were seen as corrupt and bound to lure others into sin; they were fit only to be shunned, despite Aboriginal customs and beliefs that regarded cohabitation as a perfectly legitimate form of marriage.<sup>23</sup> Gertie’s father, in condemning her behaviour, recognized what its consequences would be, although he still loved and accepted her. But, for Gertie, it was not a matter of deliberately asserting her right to live in the manner of her ancestors but of pursuing an adventure without any serious consideration of the negative image it would create, no matter how unfair. When Gertie experienced the reaction of her community to her behaviour, it upset her badly. Shortly after being shunned at the evening entertainment, she took a bottle of liquor to her room, got drunk, and brandished a gun when Archie tried to reason with her.<sup>24</sup> This behaviour no doubt did little to help her image.

Ultimately, Gertie rejected other people’s perceptions of her as a woman guilty of a sexual transgression and decided to abandon her faith, her old life, and her plans for an education and return to the bush with Archie. While in Doucet, the Lac-Simon band of Algonquins asked Archie to mediate for them in a court dispute. After Archie argued successfully on their behalf, he and Gertie accepted the band’s invitation to a celebration. It was during the feast that Archie and Gertie decided to mark their union as a couple and asked the chief to give them a marriage blessing. It was a ceremony not recognized by Euro-Canadian law, under which Archie was still married to Angele, but it was binding and real to Archie and Gertie.<sup>25</sup>

Over the next few years, while living in the wilderness of Ontario and later Quebec, at Gertie’s insistence, Archie taught her everything about bush living. Whether through direct confrontation or passive resistance, Gertie employed all manner of strategies to learn the necessary skills, sometimes endangering herself or Archie in the process.<sup>26</sup> Ignorance did not daunt her; she worked to achieve her goals, occasionally learning the hard way, in her determination to equal (and perhaps even surpass)

Archie's skills and to earn her own livelihood. Although Archie knew Gertie was no subservient squaw or Indian Princess when he took her into the bush, he was not entirely prepared for her stubborn independence. Both possessed volatile tempers and held strong opinions, which did not always make for a harmonious relationship, however based it may have been in equality. They worked without stop in the bush when it was necessary and relaxed with friends when the occasion presented itself, drinking hard and sharing stories well into the night.<sup>27</sup>

Over the course of these years, Gertie's identity as a resourceful, self-reliant woman of the bush who was still at ease with modern ways emerged ever more strongly. She made clothes fashioned out of buckskin, canvas, and cloth for herself and Archie. She always dressed in breeches, she fringed her buckskin jackets and vests, and eventually she added lace-up prospector boots to her gear (see Figure 12.2). She portaged canoes, carried packs using tumplines, and built fires and pitched tents like any other skilled bushman. She was an expert with the canoe, able to negotiate rapids and shallows with ease. But she kept her hair fashionably bobbed, she liked to wear makeup on occasion, and she could hold a cigarette in a manner Bette Davis would have admired.

It was in trapping that her sensibilities finally overcame her desire to achieve emotional and economic independence. After discovering a painfully mangled animal in her trap a few times, Gertie could no longer suppress the revulsion she felt at the brutality trapping entailed and decided to quit, thereby adding another facet to her image: a compassionate defence of animals. It was not an easy decision, and since the two were economically dependent upon trapping, Archie continued to work his lines.

At the end of the season, Gertie accompanied Archie on his final round, to collect the traps. While checking one trap, they discovered two orphaned beaver kits, whom they rescued and Gertie then insisted on raising.<sup>28</sup> Undaunted by her lack of knowledge about the needs of beaver kits, Gertie, with Archie's help, spent much time and energy devising methods to feed them and to manage their undomesticated habits, while at the same time thoroughly enjoying their mischievous and playful behaviour. The kits won Archie over eventually, and in the fall of 1928, the two of them decided to transport the two young beavers several hundred kilometres east to Cabano, by Lake Temiscouata, and start a beaver colony, under the mistaken impression it was a wilderness still remote enough to provide a trapping income. But the wilderness was disappearing, the trapping was poor, and falling fur prices meant little money.<sup>29</sup>

In the fall of 1928, they moved 30 kilometres north to Lake Touladi to a camp that was equally disastrous. The traps remained empty, the beavers disappeared, and Archie fell ill.<sup>30</sup> Archie recovered and the beavers were replaced with two more, but one died a short while later. The financial pressures increased, so in the spring of 1929, the pair moved to the resort community of Metis Beach, at the foot of the Gaspé Peninsula, thinking that Archie could work as a guide. But life at the resort was too leisurely to require a bush guide, so Gertie, desperate for funds, answered an ad for a Swedish maid. The woman who placed the ad found Gertie unsuitable for the job, but she was interested in Gertie's description of an article that Archie had written about the wilderness, published in the well-known English magazine *Country Life*. It prompted the woman to engage Archie to speak at a local hall, which became one of many engagements he had that summer, which temporarily solved their financial problems.<sup>31</sup> Gertie understood that this was not a permanent solution, however, and seized the chance to accompany one of her father's old Algonquin friends, Dave Pelon, to a prospecting site in northern Quebec, at Opemiska Lake, while Archie remained behind in Cabano to look after their beaver, Jelly Roll, and write a book that *Country Life* had requested to follow up the article.<sup>32</sup>

Prospecting had never been a uniquely male province in North America. In the nineteenth century, hundreds of women prospectors migrated to places such as California, Alaska, and Nevada. By the turn of the century, the number of prospectors had dwindled, although it increased again slightly during the Depression years. A handful of women prospectors found fortunes, and numerous others made a profit, sometimes a substantial one. Like Gertie, the women who prospected tended to reject popular constructs of appropriate feminine behaviour and to be attracted to adventure and the challenge of rugged conditions. However, Aboriginal women's experiences with prospecting were generally rather grim. Whether they worked alone or with their spouse, their efforts were less likely to produce results, partly because Aboriginal people were frequently hired as cheap labour for Euro-North Americans, performing tasks such as panning or digging. They were also apt to be exploited by other prospectors and lawyers because they lacked legal expertise or were simply illiterate.<sup>33</sup> But Gertie was more than eager to challenge any male who might object to the presence of a female prospector, and she was able to prove herself the exception to past Aboriginal experience. Although she never made a fortune, she eventually succeeded in filing and selling claims at a profit.

In the company of Dave Pelon, Gertie took the train to Oskelaneo, in

central Quebec, and then paddled for three weeks up to Lac Doré, a mining camp roughly a hundred kilometres north from Opemiska Lake. From Lac Doré, the pair flew to the site, only to find that the area had been staked a mere twenty-eight days before. Disheartened, they returned to Lac Doré, where winter's arrival and lack of plane fare trapped them.<sup>34</sup> Refusing Dave's offer to support her with the hunting job he had secured to supply food for one of the companies, Gertie established herself in a shack and attempted once again to trap, only to remove all the traps a day later. Then she decided to toboggan down to Oskelaneo and work her way back to Cabano, but the staff of the Chibougamau Prospectors Ltd Drilling Company were so appalled at her plan that they offered her a job on the site running dogsleds to haul wood for the stoves and freight from incoming planes.<sup>35</sup>

Generally, mining camps tended to be freewheeling and tolerant. As one female prospector put it, "any woman would feel as safe among miners as at her own fireside," adding that "if a woman complains of her treatment from any of the boys she has only herself to blame."<sup>36</sup> It was the communities outside the mining camp that tended to reject women prospectors, especially in working-class and pioneer areas, where women would hold their skirts aside when a female prospector passed by them.<sup>37</sup> The men at the Lac Doré mining camp were protective of Gertie and treated her with respect. She passed the time with them, drinking and playing cards. In December of 1929, news of the recent stock crash reached the camp, and the drilling company was put up for sale. Left with only two weeks' wages in her pocket and no promise of the rest owed her, Gertie earned her way as caretaker and was later hired by the company's new owners to haul the drilling equipment to another site. By June, she had made enough for her plane fare and returned to Cabano.<sup>38</sup>

In Cabano, Gertie found Jelly Roll with a companion, Rawhide, and Archie deeply immersed in his writing. His decision to write the book would change both their lives dramatically but would also prompt him to begin forging a public identity as a person of Aboriginal descent. Archie had claimed for many years that his mother was Apache, and even Gertie understood this to be his background.<sup>39</sup> He had a deep wish to be identified with a people he liked and admired, and his chiselled features, long hair, and the Hudson's Bay belt and moccasins he wore seemed to confirm his story. But as his writings gained recognition and he became a public figure, someone who spoke about saving the beaver and the wilderness, Archie deliberately chose to assume an Aboriginal identity in the desire to ensure that his message would be heard. Gertie, who remained ignorant

of Archie's real origins until after his death, helped him make his clothes, later beading them for him in elaborate patterns. She watched him braid his hair and wrap it in leather ties and begin to formally adopt the name Grey Owl—a loose translation of an Ojibwe name, Washaquonasin (white beak owl), given him when he was with Angele. Though his image was of his own making, it was Gertie who fashioned the clothes that gave authenticity to that image. When she asked him why he needed to dress as an Aboriginal, he told her he would do anything if it made people listen to what he had to say.<sup>40</sup>

Immersed in his writing in the cabin, Archie proved poor company to the energetic, adventurous Gertie once she returned from her sojourn at the mining camp. He hardly spoke and was happy to remain at his table, writing all night and sleeping during the day. In the meanwhile, the articles Grey Owl had already written for the Canadian Forestry Association's magazine, *Forest and Outdoors*, about his and Gertie's efforts to save the beaver and preserve the wilderness had attracted the attention of James Harkin, the first commissioner of the National Parks Branch. Harkin arranged to make a film—*Beaver People*—about Grey Owl, Gertie, and the beavers, and a film crew accordingly arrived in Cabano. After five months of otherwise unbroken isolation, however, Gertie had had enough. She travelled to Montreal and approached the former foreman of the Chibougamau Drilling Company about the possibility of another job up north. He had nothing to offer her but suggested she try to find work at Montebello, an exclusive new resort in the Ottawa Valley. There, Gertie took a position on the staff running dog teams through scenic countryside and assisting with other winter sports.<sup>41</sup>

At the end of January 1931, Archie asked Gertie to come to Montreal to offer moral support while he presented a lecture to the Canadian Forestry Association and to show the film *Beaver People*. Gertie was able to calm his nerves and provide the encouragement he needed to face the crowd, meet people prominent in Montreal society, and give interviews to the media. The event was a great success, and, in view of all the media attention, Archie's self-proclaimed identity as a person of mixed Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal parentage became established in the eyes of the public.<sup>42</sup>

The film's debut and Grey Owl's accompanying speech raised Grey Owl's profile significantly. Recognizing Grey Owl's public relations value, the parks commissioner, James Harkin, offered to support his efforts. Harkin was thoroughly sympathetic to Grey Owl's goals, but he also knew that the federal government would be more likely grant money to

Canada's national parks if they were potentially profitable. Harkin felt that Grey Owl would draw in visitors, a prediction that proved true.<sup>43</sup> In the spring, the Department of Interior, under which the Parks Branch operated, offered Grey Owl and Gertie a place at Manitoba's Riding Mountain National Park, where they could rear their two beavers and promote the park's role in wildlife preservation.<sup>44</sup> But Gertie's mind was still taken up with prospecting and the hopes of a strike. En route to the park, Gertie laced up her leather boots and headed off in her canoe to Elk Lake country, in northern Ontario, a likely prospecting site she had heard about at Montebello. She set up camp, but a short while later lightening struck and burned her camp to the ground, leaving her only her canoe and the clothes she wore.<sup>45</sup>

She wired Archie and met him in Winnipeg. While she was there, she was interviewed by a reporter from the *Manitoba Free Press*. It was as "Mrs. Grey Owl" that she came to the paper's attention. Grey Owl's reputation as an advocate for wilderness preservation was growing, and his project to save the beavers was gaining popularity. His newfound celebrity, combined with the pair's striking appearance and Gertie's recent adventures as a prospector, made her worthy of a story. Although reporters occasionally viewed women prospectors as unwelcome intruders in a man's world, for the most part they tended to write about them as curiosities, in language that contained an awkward mix of sexism and admiration.<sup>46</sup> The reporter from the *Manitoba Free Press* viewed Gertie no differently. In his article, which appeared in the women's section, he described Gertie as a thoroughly modern woman, an intrepid adventurer, and a person who combined the graces of civilization with the charm of the wilds. He reported that Gertie was descended from a long line of Mohawk warriors and, besides noting her commitment to saving the beavers, wrote that she expressed her hope that civilization's latest gifts would benefit "the redskin" and bring back "the freedom he has lost."<sup>47</sup> The article also explained that when the urge to write came upon Grey Owl, "Mrs. Grey Owl packs her kit, puts away the ways of domesticity and turns again into Paharomen Nahareo (Flaming Leaf), the name under which she trod the wilds with her father and brothers."<sup>48</sup>

Elements of the Indian Princess appear in the reporter's account, although the picture he paints is more complex. With her knowledge of the wilds, her noble Mohawk ancestry, and her ability to transform herself into Flaming Leaf, Gertie was clearly associated with the pristine wilderness. At the same time, her domestic role, her knowledge of civilized ways, and

her modern attitudes increased her acceptability to a Euro-Canadian audience. If she comes across as a curiosity, it is as an admirable one.

Keenly aware of the prevailing perceptions of Aboriginal women, it seems both Grey Owl and Gertie began around this time to craft a new, and deliberately positive, image for Gertie. The portrait that emerged implied neither sexual transgression nor assimilation. Gertie was now a devoted wife, “Mrs. Grey Owl,” and yet also a creature of the wilderness, Paharomen Nahareo. The name, newly coined, was one whose roots lay in Gertie’s memories of stories about her ancestors. Given Archie’s decision to refashion his own identity, in part by calling himself Grey Owl, it would seem that he, and quite possibly Gertie as well, felt that someone who aspired to represent the wilderness should have a name befitting that role. Grey Owl understood the urban public’s sympathy to an idealized wilderness, and he was so committed to his message about the need to preserve that wilderness that he was prepared to do whatever he could to promote it. Gertie supported his goals and was willing to be known as Nahareo, with its romantic, old-fashioned undertones, but she changed nothing of her views, appearance, personality, or activities that reflected a more modern image.<sup>49</sup>

Gertie and Grey Owl spent the spring and summer of 1931 at Riding Mountain. Jelly Roll had added four kits to the family, but by summer’s end it was evident that the persistent drought had lowered the water to a level that threatened the beavers’ survival. The Dominion Parks Branch subsequently moved them to Ajawaan Lake, in Saskatchewan’s newly opened Prince Albert National Park, where they would again be part of the department’s plan to develop the parks as tourist sites, as the growing number of cars and new roads opened up previously remote areas to increasing numbers of people.<sup>50</sup> In the early 1930s, the Parks Branch quickly established the park’s base site at Waskesiu, 160 kilometres from the town of Prince Albert, with the help of labourers from Depression-era work camps. The workers constructed tennis courts and other recreational facilities. But across the water, on the other side of Ajawaan Lake, Grey Owl and Gertie made their home in a simple cabin, christened “Beaver Lodge,” much as they had before at Riding Mountain.<sup>51</sup> The cabin became a favourite destination for visitors, many of whom would be greeted in person by Grey Owl, the beavers, and Gertie. In 1936 alone, six hundred people made the trek to Beaver Lodge, and fan mail arrived by the bundle.<sup>52</sup> Gertie, Grey Owl, and the beavers had become public figures, symbols of the wilderness.

That winter at Beaver Lodge, Grey Owl decided to write a book about their experiences with the beavers, while Gertie, who was still determined to be a successful prospector, took a correspondence course in mineralogy. Just before spring, she discovered that what had seemed to be a persistent illness was not tuberculosis as she had feared, but pregnancy, and in August 1932, in the town of Prince Albert, she gave birth to a daughter, Shirley Dawn.<sup>53</sup> Gertie returned to Ajawaan Lake with Dawn and spent the autumn and winter with Grey Owl, returning to Prince Albert with Dawn in the spring. There, in September, she received a cable about a prospecting site in the Swayze region of northern Ontario. Unable to resist, Gertie headed east, leaving Dawn with friends, but after only five days in the drenching rain, and missing her daughter, she returned to Prince Albert.<sup>54</sup>

Before she left, an article titled “Indian Squaw Turns from Kitchen Duties to Gold Prospecting” appeared on the front page of *The Christian Science Monitor*. The reporter, who referred to Gertie as Nahareo, emphasized that she was a modern, independent woman who was “much more at home packing and paddling” than “standing beside a kitchen range.” As the first woman prospector in the Swayze area, he wrote, “a tomahawk will be her only weapon as she goes it alone, with five hundred pounds of goods and equipment in addition to her canoe.”<sup>55</sup> Despite the use of *squaw* in the headline, the reporter steered away from the negative imagery associated with the word. In the article, Gertie remains something of a curiosity, but one whose Indian Princess attributes have largely disappeared. With her tomahawk, her canoe, and her Mohawk name, she still calls to mind images of the pristine wilderness, but on the whole her characteristics are much more masculine: she is capable and strong, a woman who can carry out the arduous tasks necessary to prospecting. The masculine imagery was also visible in the *Calgary Herald* article, “Grey Owl’s Wife Leaves Alone in Search for Gold,” that appeared a day later. It also described a woman with independent, modern sensibilities who could perform feats that would try “the courage of the sturdiest men.”<sup>56</sup>

Less than a month after Gertie’s return from her aborted trip to Ontario, she received a letter from a fellow prospector urging her to stake out claims in the Arctic at Great Bear Lake. Once again unable to resist the lure of adventure and a possible strike, but lacking the \$5,000 she would need, she showed Grey Owl the letter at Ajawaan. He agreed to buy her a train ticket to Toronto so that she could approach three miners she knew, who might be willing to sponsor her. The only one of the three that she managed to locate strongly disapproved of anyone venturing into such

difficult, barren territory, especially a woman on her own. Undaunted, Gertie used her “eating money” to journey to Buffalo to see a man she had met in Elk Lake country on a holiday canoe trip. But he also refused to finance a trip to Great Bear Lake. The thought that he could “be responsible for sending a girl there,” he said, “would drive [me] nuts.”<sup>57</sup> Disappointed, Gertie returned to Prince Albert and then, with Dawn, on to Beaver Lodge, where Grey Owl was still hard at work on his book, *Pilgrims of the Wild*.

Gertie and Dawn returned to friends in Prince Albert when their needs interfered with Archie’s writing habits. With Archie writing at night and sleeping in the day, chores were difficult for Gertie and keeping an active, noisy baby quiet was impossible. There, in Prince Albert, dreams of striking it rich still plagued Gertie, who still craved adventure, though Archie’s patience was thinning. Despite Grey Owl’s certain disapproval, in the spring of 1934 she headed up to God’s Lake in sub-Arctic Manitoba, charging her equipment, canoe, and supplies to Grey Owl’s store account.<sup>58</sup> Before she left, she was interviewed by a reporter from the *Canadian Press*. Referring to her alternately as Mrs. Grey Owl and as Nahareo, he emphasized her fearlessness in the face of outdoor hardships and her physical strength, as well as describing the rugged clothing she wore and the route she hoped to take.<sup>59</sup> In this article, Gertie seems even less of a quirky curiosity. The writer does not remark on the uniqueness of her actions; he simply describes a capable, strong woman, no stranger to the bush, embarking on a prospecting trip.

Gertie launched her canoe from Waskesiu Lake in Prince Albert National Park, paddled the 72 kilometres of shallow rapids to Montreal Lake, and then paddled another 128-kilometre stretch to Lac la Ronge, where she received a letter from Grey Owl filled with a combination of disapproval, envy, and admiration.<sup>60</sup> Gertie decided to pursue a lead from some people she met and paddled to the edge of the Barren Lands, five days’ travel north of Wollaston Lake, in northeastern Saskatchewan, on what turned out to be a wild goose chase for gold. Following the disappointment, she accepted a Cree family’s invitation to join them at nearby Reindeer Lake, on the Manitoba border. She headed home afterwards when she discovered that it was too late in the season for God’s Lake. From Pelican Narrows she sent word to Grey Owl in hopes that he might send her money to return by train. At the railroad town of Flin Flon, she received her reply: he was short of funds and still upset with her, so she was on her own.<sup>61</sup>

Hurt and angry, Gertie resolved that she would not return to Beaver Lodge without an invitation. Instead, she went back up to Amisk Lake near



**12.3** Anahareo, c. 1935.  
Courtesy of Katherine  
Swartile.

Flin Flon and staked some claims. After weeks of effort, Gertie filed her claims and then paddled down the Sturgeon River toward a town in the hopes of finding work, fighting rain and wind, but ill health forced her to stop at the home of an old woodsman she knew.<sup>62</sup> By Christmas she had recovered enough to take a trip into a nearby town with the woodsman. There she found news of Dawn from Grey Owl, along with guarded words and a little money, but no invitation home. She sold her canoe and passed a depressing Christmas drinking too much. Her funds still low, Gertie eventually secured a temporary position, until June, serving as the companion to a miner's wife. When the job finished, Gertie sold her claims and went prospecting again until finally, in August 1935, she received word from Grey Owl asking her to return to help him prepare for his book tour in England.<sup>63</sup>

*Pilgrims of the Wild* had been published and was already becoming popular. Under the name Anahareo, a modified version of Nahareo, Gertie played a prominent role in the book. In Anahareo, Grey Owl created an image of Gertie that emphasized her self-reliance and her affinity with nature. She was someone who could move between two worlds: modern society and the natural surroundings of her ancestors. While the image clearly played on the fascination of urban dwellers with figures who represented the disappearing wilderness, the public at this time and in

this context could allow Anahareo to be portrayed as a strong, independent person who could make solo journeys into the bush but was also in many ways sophisticated. This image of Anahareo was already visible in the Parks Branch film, *Beaver People* and the subsequent films they made, which showed her with the beavers, paddling a canoe, and walking in the bush, elegant in her bobbed hair, fringed buckskin jacket, and breeches (see Figure 12.3).<sup>64</sup> The figure of Anahareo that emerges in the book is essentially a more fully realized version of this image and of the one that she and Grey Owl had presented earlier to reporters, and it was widely accepted. As the book's popularity increased, so did Anahareo's fame, so much so that it led Grey Owl's British publisher, Lovat Dickson, to comment that "especially on the British side of the Atlantic Anahareo is even more thought of than Grey Owl."<sup>65</sup>

Gertie arrived back at Beaver Lodge in time to bead Grey Owl's buckskin outfit and assist him in his other preparations and then to look after the beavers while he toured. In December, a newspaper article appeared about Anahareo. Though the reporter mentioned her prospecting exploits, she was described in understated and dignified language as a woman who, together with her husband, had "made a study of the animal adopted as Canada's national emblem and now threatened with extinction." She was also presented as a woman with ambitions for herself and for Aboriginal people. Besides noting that she hoped to write a play about herself and Grey Owl, the article talked about her dreams of rehabilitating her own people and her "plans to create a standard of Indian values that will give her people a place in the economic sun."<sup>66</sup>

In the spring of 1936, Grey Owl returned from his trip to England to find Dawn in the hospital, ill with pneumonia, and Anahareo extremely distraught. Dawn eventually recovered, but Grey Owl and Anahareo, though fused in the public's eye, had drifted too far apart. At the end of September, Anahareo and Grey Owl parted permanently.<sup>67</sup> The couple's relationship had undergone many changes and much strain since the two first met. Grey Owl's devotion to his books meant that he spent long hours at night focused entirely on his writing, while problems with his health—his damaged lungs and injured foot—increasingly ruled out long trips into the bush. Anahareo found such a confined existence difficult to endure, and so she sought a life further afield in adventurous treks on her own. As Grey Owl's fame drew him into a public role, something from which Anahareo shied away, the two found little to keep them together.

It was not long before Anahareo realized that her decision to leave

Grey Owl had implications that extended beyond herself, Grey Owl, and Dawn. Grey Owl and Anahareo had become public figures whose popularity rested on her and Grey Owl being a twosome. She understood that officials from the National Parks Branch, who depended on the couple to draw visitors and maintain government support, were very upset about their separation, which had yet to become public. Grey Owl, meanwhile, was quietly scouting around for another companion, someone who could appear with him in an upcoming documentary film he had planned, support him in his deteriorating health, and help him prepare for his second tour to England the following fall. To complicate matters further, Anahareo was pregnant.<sup>68</sup>

Aware that her pregnancy and her split from Grey Owl had the potential to provoke unwelcome attention from the media and that a reconciliation with Grey Owl was impossible, Anahareo made her way to the busy town of Calgary, where she identified herself only as Mrs. Gertrude Bernard. She took a room and in June gave birth to a daughter, whom she named Anne. Desperate for money, she travelled to Banff a week later, taking her infant daughter with her, in hopes of finding a job as an experienced canoe guide. But the terrain was largely unsuitable for canoes, and jobs were scarce. She eventually found work paddling canoes for tourists along the short stretch of the Bow River, but the job finished after a short season. Later, in an effort to pay off the overdue rent on her room in Calgary, she approached the Canadian Pacific Railway's film department and offered to shoot the rapids of the Bow River for \$50 while a crew filmed her feat. The Bow River was under the authority of the National Parks Branch, which meant that the CPR film company needed its permission for the stunt. Permission was refused on safety grounds, but no doubt the Parks Branch also had fears that Anahareo's split with Grey Owl would become public during such an event. Unable to put her skills to use to earn money, Anahareo went back to Calgary, fully aware of the difficulties in which her public image had now placed her.<sup>69</sup>

Prior to Anahareo's return to Calgary, Betty Somervell, an English friend she had met through Grey Owl and with whom she had corresponded frequently, felt concerned that she had heard nothing from Anahareo over the summer. Betty met the Reverend J.M. Roe from Calgary, who was attending the coronation in London. She asked him to check on Anahareo, giving him the name Gertrude Bernard. Back in Calgary, the Reverend Roe eventually located Anahareo and took her in. She remained there until Grey Owl's marriage to Yvonne Perrier, or "Silver Moon,"

became public. At that point, Anahareo was persuaded to move with her baby to Saskatoon, ostensibly to improve her chances of employment. But in Saskatoon her prospects were no better. Desperate, she sat on a bridge with Anne by her side and contemplated suicide. But then she changed her mind and instead boldly appealed to the local mayor for assistance.<sup>70</sup> He contacted Wilna Moore, a teacher and the daughter of a minister, who knew the Reverend Roe. When Wilna wrote to Roe to ask what he knew about Anahareo, he explained to her about “the difficulties and temptations to which a woman of Indian birth may succumb more easily than her sheltered white sisters.” He was sure, he said, that “back in her native environment, among the creatures of the wilds, with whom she had such affinity,” Anahareo “could become an even greater national figure than her more publicized mate.”<sup>71</sup>

In her present situation, with a child, without Grey Owl by her side, Anahareo’s public image as a “modern” Aboriginal woman, at once a devoted wife and a free spirit, could no longer be sustained. Instead, in both the reactions of those around her and the nature of the assistance she received, Anahareo was once again vulnerable to the familiar stereotype of Aboriginal women as sexually promiscuous. In addition, Anahareo faced potential legal penalties. Canadian society’s growing compulsion to regulate Aboriginal women’s sexuality and moral conduct, through a combination of government policy, law enforcement, and church intervention, had produced legislation that enabled the police to arrest Aboriginal single mothers who had no visible means of support.<sup>72</sup> Though Anahareo was not arrested, Wilna Moore arranged to have her daughter Anne placed in Saskatoon’s Bethany Home, a Salvation Army residence for unwed mothers to give birth, while Anahareo remained under Wilna Moore’s watchful eye. Anne stayed at the home until she was three, when Anahareo agreed to allow a young, childless Anglo-Canadian couple to take Anne to live with them in Calgary.<sup>73</sup> Although the Reverend Roe, the mayor of Saskatoon, and Wilna Moore all appeared sympathetic to Anahareo’s unfortunate situation, their judgements and actions were clearly grounded in notions of moral and racial superiority.

Anahareo was still in Saskatoon in April 1938 when a radio broadcast issued an appeal for her to come to her daughter Dawn, in Prince Albert, where Grey Owl was dying. Anahareo rushed to Prince Albert, but Grey Owl died the morning following her arrival, before she was able to see him. Following his death, Anahareo was caught up in the frenzy in the press over his background after a newspaper released an account from

Angele about Grey Owl's real ancestry and marital history.<sup>74</sup> Amid the uproar that filled the papers with speculative revelations and interviews with people connected with Grey Owl, Anahareo, who was staying in Prince Albert, came under scrutiny, as did Yvonne Perrier. Articles appeared suggesting that while Grey Owl was touring England with Perrier, Anahareo was forced to earn a living in a "gambling and drinking hall."<sup>75</sup> This allegation in particular was a source of great concern to Grey Owl's publishers—Hugh Eayrs, of Macmillan, in Toronto, and Lovat Dickson, in London—who were frantically trying to salvage Grey Owl's reputation and the economic future of his works. Dickson said he intended to sue papers that printed libellous accounts of Grey Owl's relationship with Anahareo or with Perrier, and he requested statements from them both. Only Perrier eventually sent one.<sup>76</sup> Perrier then launched an assault on Anahareo by requesting that the publishers delete all references to or photos of Anahareo from Grey Owl's forthcoming anthology, *Tales of an Empty Cabin*, as well as from Dickson's tribute to Grey Owl, *The Green Leaf*. Dickson complied with her wishes as far as his own work was concerned, but he asked her to reconsider her request regarding the anthology since Anahareo was an inseparable part of these stories.<sup>77</sup>

Later that year, Betty Somervell financed a trip for Anahareo to England, where she encouraged her to write a book about her life with Grey Owl.<sup>78</sup> When Anahareo returned to Prince Albert in mid-September, she seized the opportunity to defend Grey Owl's image and her own and wrote their story. Lovat Dickson instructed her to refrain from mentioning Grey Owl's background.<sup>79</sup> Consequently, when *My Life with Grey Owl* was released published two years later, in 1940, Anahareo was not happy with it, and she subsequently took to checking the book out of libraries and removing the first chapter. She recognized that she had, in some degree, surrendered control over Grey Owl's image and her own by giving in to the publisher's concerns.<sup>80</sup> The uproar after Grey Owl's death had still not subsided to the point where she could make much headway in recovering the positive image they had once enjoyed.

In the winter of 1938, on her way to Saskatchewan's Christopher Lake to stay with some friends, Anahareo met the handsome but poor Eric von Moltke Huitfeldt, a count who had emigrated from Sweden ten years before. The two married the following December.<sup>81</sup> A few years later, in 1942, Anahareo gave birth to a daughter, Katherine, just after Eric was sent overseas to serve in the war. Living in Saskatoon with Katherine and Dawn, Anahareo was able to establish a private life once again, but as her

hard-won public image disappeared (and with children as well), so too did her ability to earn an income from prospecting and guiding, where her fame might have secured sponsors or jobs.

Anahareo was also still occasionally under siege from the patronizing friendship of Wilna Moore, the woman who had helped her find a home for Anne. Wilna advised Anahareo about various possible sources of income, encouraged her to modify her lifestyle and especially to refrain from drinking, and generally promoted the standards and values of her own Anglo-Canadian religious background. Anahareo valued her friendship but was rarely guided by her advice.<sup>82</sup> Later, when Anahareo moved to Canmore, Alberta, with Eric and their daughter, Katherine, Wilna visited her from time to time to discuss projects pertaining to Grey Owl and his life story. Anahareo was determined to make a film about Grey Owl's life and work in an effort to salvage his reputation.<sup>83</sup> Wilna encouraged this idea but modified it to suit her own purposes. Beginning about 1950, with the help of her sister, Wilna compiled into a manuscript a series of stories gleaned from Anahareo, Grey Owl's books, his letters, and visits with his cronies, with an emphasis on the sensational element. At the end of 1952, she sent the manuscript, along with some of his letters, off to Macmillan Publishers, with a note stating that she hoped to approach Rank Film Corporation with the idea of making a film based on the book. She also told them later she might consider Anahareo to play herself in the film. After some deliberation, Macmillan rejected it. Not only was the writing poor, but they were also unconvinced of the truth of some of the narrative.<sup>84</sup>

Anahareo also worked with her oldest daughter, Dawn — now a grown woman living in Prince Albert — to promote a more positive image of Grey Owl. Though Anahareo's financial situation prevented her from visiting Dawn very often, they frequently wrote to each other. Anahareo's daughter Anne, however, had grown up as part of an Anglo-Canadian family in the Calgary area, without ever knowing who her real mother was. In 1953, at the age of sixteen, Anne learned by accident that she had Aboriginal blood and that Anahareo was her biological mother, and so she travelled to Canmore to meet her. As she walked down the street after arriving, she saw a woman on a bicycle whom she mistook for Chinese. Only later did she discover that the woman was her mother.<sup>85</sup> Although Anahareo continued to dress in her breeches, shirt, and boots, she was no longer a public figure, no longer someone who represented the unspoiled wilderness for the Euro-Canadian population; she was just someone who, in a small western Canadian town, could be mistaken for Chinese.

In the fall of 1953, not long after her meeting with Anne, the difficulties Anahareo had been experiencing in her marriage since Eric's return from the war worsened. Eric had been suffering from post-traumatic stress, and his heavy drinking and periodic unemployment had put great strain on the relationship. Finally, Anahareo felt compelled to take Katherine and return home to her family in Mattawa. It was the first time she had seen them in nearly thirty years.<sup>86</sup> Though the couple reconciled after a year, finances were still tight. Three years later, when a work accident immobilized Eric and confined him to a chair, he began to drink heavily again. Anahareo remained with him for a few more years, until Katherine left home to work and Dawn, who was going through a divorce, requested her mother's help, and Anahareo moved in with her. Eric died four years later.<sup>87</sup>

In the meantime, Anahareo was still determined to promote a positive image of herself and Grey Owl. In 1959, an agent contacted her about a possible film option on her book, *My Life with Grey Owl*. She wrote to the agent and warned him that she would want to spend time with the screenwriter to make sure the film depicted her accurately. In the past, she explained, "the usual portrayal of myself has been that of a sweet gentle Indian maiden—whispering to the leaves—swaying with the breeze, tra la."<sup>88</sup> While nothing like those terms had been used directly to describe Anahareo herself, they did reflect the images of Aboriginal women in film. Though Anahareo eagerly pursued the offer, nothing came of it. Unwilling to relinquish the film idea, Anahareo, now in her fifties, moved with Wilna Moore to Toronto and worked as a housekeeper while trying to secure a commitment to her film project, but again with no success. From Toronto, Anahareo went to Los Angeles, where she took another housekeeping job and attempted to gain the attention of Disney or some other producer. But Disney would not accept outside proposals, and no other producer was interested. Returning to Canada and settling in British Columbia, she continued to correspond with various producers in the United States and Canada, but she never received a film offer.<sup>89</sup> Still immersed in Hollywood stereotypes, neither the film industry nor its audiences were interested in her conservation message or in the image of an articulate, independent Aboriginal woman who was as skilled in the bush as any man. The closest Hollywood managed to come to that image was Donna Reed's laughable portrayal of Sacajawea in *The Far Horizons* (1955), a romantic adventure drama about the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Dawn, who was keenly aware of the negative reaction to her father's work that had set in after his death, also worked tirelessly to rehabilitate

his reputation and in 1967 nearly succeeded in securing an exhibit about him at the Montreal Expo.<sup>90</sup> Although the public had begun to recognize Grey Owl as a pioneer in wilderness preservation, there was still the occasional newspaper or magazine article that emphasized the sensational image of him as a bigamist and fraud. It was after reading one such article and throwing it across the room in disgust that Anahareo decided once again to challenge these lingering images with her own truth.<sup>91</sup> Over the course of several years, Anahareo worked on *Devil in Deerskins*, in which she portrayed herself as the feisty, intelligent, accomplished bush woman she was. Media attention—in the form of interviews, reviews, and a television program on Grey Owl—grew with the book's publication in 1972, but Anahareo's struggles to erase old negative images still met with resistance. Despite her book's popularity, some journalists described Anahareo as sexually promiscuous, a label she apparently laughed off.<sup>92</sup> But while *Devil in Deerskins* apparently climbed to number four on the Canadian bestseller list, Lovat Dickson's own *Wilderness Man: The Strange Story of Grey Owl* was the book that generated film possibilities, and Georgean Short was the person the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development commissioned to write Grey Owl's story.<sup>93</sup>

Even if the public's reaction to her book was somewhat mixed, writing *Devil in Deerskins* led Anahareo to resume an active role in promoting animal protection. In 1972, she joined the Association for the Protection of Fur-Bearing Animals, working with Ken Connibear, whom she had met many years before through Grey Owl. Under the auspices of the organization, she began campaigning against the leg-hold trap, working tirelessly to write letters, staffing exhibits, travelling with a documentary film she introduced and spoke about, and giving interviews. Though the issue of banning the leg-hold trap was controversial, the media took an interest in her views, finally presenting her in a positive light, as an intelligent, articulate spokesperson for animal rights.<sup>94</sup>

All the same, there were times when Anahareo was still confronted by negative images of herself. In October 1975, sixty-nine-year-old Anahareo was invited to watch a rehearsal of the play *Life and Times of Grey Owl*, which drew on the material in her book. During the rehearsal, Anahareo noticed that the actress playing her was sitting in a dress with her legs apart, and so she strode up onto the stage and closed the woman's legs. She knew she would never sit like that if she wore a dress, something she rarely did. Despite her efforts at correction, during the play's debut in Toronto, she left at the intermission because she found the play such

a distortion of herself and Grey Owl in appearance, manners, and spirit. When interviewed later by Toronto's *Native Times*, she expressed her disgust over the play, adding, further on in the article, that she felt very strongly about the "negative image which white people have of Indians." In this period of the 1970s, when Aboriginal people finally felt able to respond in strong language about the years of struggle, Anahareo spoke out. She went on to say: "They took our land, broke our treaties and have developed sophisticated weapons to kill each other off and unfortunately take us with them. We can never win."<sup>95</sup> The article, titled "A Mohawk—A Legend in Her Time," was a celebration of Anahareo and all that she had accomplished. It was a far cry from the perception of Gertie as a squaw who spent two months in the bush with a man.

Tangible evidence of Anahareo's new image emerged again in 1979, when she was honoured with the prestigious Order of Nature by the International League for Animal Rights, an award previously given only to Albert Schweitzer. The award prompted her to continue her public role as an advocate for animal rights. The following year, at the age of seventy-four, she joined the campaign against poisoning wolves.<sup>96</sup> This campaign met with considerable opposition, especially in rural areas, but Anahareo continued her efforts, sending out letters and speaking to the media as she increasingly emerged as a serious spokesperson. Such was the impact of Anahareo's work that in 1983 she was inducted into the Order of Canada, a tribute that reflected the public esteem she had earned. She died only two years later, just after her eightieth birthday.



## NOTES

### Lifelines: Searching for Aboriginal Women of the Northwest

1. Quoted in Vernon R. Wishart, *What Lies Behind the Picture? A Personal Journey into Cree Ancestry* (Red Deer: Central Alberta Historical Society, 2006), 82. See also Vernon R. Wishart, "Saskatchewan and William Flett: Their Lives and Service in Present Day Alberta," *Alberta History* 57, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 10–14; and Shirley A. Wishart, "Circles Within Circles: The Linkage of Hudson's Bay Company Fur Trade Families in Rupert's Land," Rupert's Land Colloquium, Edmonton, Alberta, 1994.
2. Wishart, *What Lies Behind the Picture?* 98. The Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA) biographical sheet on William Flett Sr., born in the parish of Firth in the Orkney Islands, provides additional information about Saskatchewan. She and William Flett evidently became a couple, or married after the custom of the country, while he was working inland, probably in the Saskatchewan River District. They left for Red River settlement in 1823, when he retired; he died the same year. She then lived at Red River with her daughter Elizabeth (Betsy) and son-in-law Robert Rowland. In 1825 she was baptized Isabella (an Orkney name).
3. The anecdote is reminiscent of the joy felt in 1805 by Sacagawea, who wept profusely when she was reunited with her Shoshone brother: Nicholas Biddle, *The Journals of Lewis and Clark*, ed. Bernard DeVoto (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), 203. The great interest today in Sacagawea's story reflects the desire by scholars and the general public to know more about the women of the West, but she was not a major figure in the Lewis and Clark journals. She has emerged as a female equivalent to the "great men" of the Western historical tradition.
4. The term *contact zone* is from Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 6. See also *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past*, ed. Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005).

5. Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 6.
6. Jon E. Wilson, “Agency, Narrative and Resistance” in *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives*, ed. Sarah Stockwell (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 245–68. Wilson discusses how the idea of the “native” in Western scholarship implies physical immobility as opposed to the “colonialists, missionaries, and observers who arrive from another place” (260).
7. An early paper by Sylvia Van Kirk discussed how we can find the traces of women’s lives in accounts written entirely by men: “Women in Between: Indian Women in Fur Trade Society,” *Historical Papers* (1977): 31–46; Jean Barman, “Writing Women into the History of the North American Wests, One Woman at a Time,” in *One Step over the Line: Toward a History of Women in the North American Wests*, eds. Elizabeth Jameson and Sheila McManus (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008), 99–127. A good example of the depth of knowledge that can result from painstaking, detailed inquiry is Raymond M. Beaumont’s article, “Origins and Influences: The Family Ties of the Reverend Henry Budd,” *Prairie Forum* 17, no. 2 (1992): 167–200.
8. Dee Garceau-Hagen, ed., *Portraits of Women in the American West* (New York: Routledge, 2005).
9. The initial call for papers was coordinated with the development of a double session on “Women of the Canadian and Transborder West” at the 2007 annual meeting of the American Society for Ethnohistory in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Participants in the session whose papers are included in this volume included Jean Barman, Susan Berry, Jennifer S.H. Brown, Sarah Carter, and Patricia McCormack. A sixth paper by Cora Voyageur, “The Difficult was Easy—The Impossible Took a Little Longer: Canada’s First Female Indian Chief,” was not included in this volume only because it lacked a western focus. The session was received enthusiastically and followed by a second call for papers, which produced the additional articles included in this book.
10. Both current and former terminologies present difficulties for the authors. Canada’s *Constitution Act, 1982* recognizes *Indian*, *Métis*, and *Inuit*, although today *First Nations* has become common parlance, largely replacing *Indian* in contemporary discourse. Individual First Nations prefer to be known by their specific names, although those too have evolved over many years and have complex histories of their own. *Indian* and *Native American* are both commonly used in the United States. *Aboriginal* and *Native* are used interchangeably in this introduction for Indigenous people or people of European-Indigenous ancestry when they self-identify as being of mixed ancestry.
11. Sylvia Van Kirk, “*Many Tender Ties*”: *Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1678–1870* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer Publishing, 1980); Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of

British Columbia Press, 1980). Both authors have many other related publications. For an example directly related to this volume, see Van Kirk's recent article "A Transborder Family in the Pacific North West," in *One Step Over the Line*, 81–93.

12. Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine, eds., *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983).

13. See Nancy Shoemaker, ed., introduction to *Negotiators of Change: Historical Perspectives on Native American Women* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 1–25; Mary-Ellen Kelm and Lorna Townsend, eds., *In the Days of Our Grandmothers: A Reader in Aboriginal Women's History in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006); Pickles and Rutherford, eds., *Contact Zones*; Rebecca Kugel and Lucy Eldersveld Murphy, eds., *Native Women's History in Eastern North America Before 1900: A Guide to Research and Writing* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007); Jo-Ann Fiske, "By, For or About? Shifting Directions in the Representation of Aboriginal Women," *Atlantis: A Women's Studies Journal* 21, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2000): 11–27; Janice Forsyth, "After the Fur Trade: First Nations Women in Canadian History, 1850–1950," *Atlantis: A Women's Studies Journal* 29, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2005): 72–78; Gunlög Fur, "'Some Women are Wiser Than Some Men': Gender and Native American History," in *Clearing a Path: Theorizing the Past in Native American Studies*, ed. Nancy Shoemaker (New York: Routledge: 2002), 75–106. Betty Bell, "Gender in Native North America" in *A Companion to American Indian History*, ed. Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 307–20; Glenda Riley, "The Historiography of American Indian and Other Western Women," in *Rethinking American Indian History*, ed. Donald Lee Fixico (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997): 43–65; Theda Perdue, "Writing the Ethnohistory of Native Women," in *Rethinking American Indian History*, 73–87.

14. This debate is best summarized in Shoemaker, introduction to *Negotiators of Change*, 1–25. For a discussion of the "declension" model, see Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700–1835* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 7, 10, 63.

15. For a summary of recent debates about the concept of "agency" see Wilson, "Agency, Narrative and Resistance."

16. Kelm and Townsend, 8.

17. Pickles and Rutherford, *Contact Zones*. See also Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1997); Elizabeth Vibert, *Traders' Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounter on the Columbia Plateau* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997); Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race and The Making of British Columbia 1849–1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press and University of Alberta Press, 2008). For overviews of this field internationally see Angela Woollacott, *Gender*

and *Empire* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Philippa Levine, ed., *Gender and Empire* The Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

18. Margaret D. Jacobs, *White Mothers to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880–1940* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

19. Angela Wanhalla, “Women ‘Living Across the Line’: Intermarriage on the Canadian Prairies and in Southern New Zealand, 1870–1900,” *Ethnohistory* 55, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 29–49.

20. See Sarah Carter, “Transnational Perspectives on the History of Great Plains Women: Gender, Race, Nations and the Forty-Ninth Parallel,” *The American Review of Canadian Studies* 33, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 565–96; Joan Sangster, “Archiving Feminist Histories: Women, the ‘Nation’ and Metanarratives in Canadian Historical Writing,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 29 (2006): 255–64; Adele Perry, “Nation, Empire and the Writing of History in Canada in English,” in *Contesting Clío’s Craft: New Directions in Canadian History* eds. Christopher Dummitt and Michael Dawson (London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, 2009), 123–40; Sheila McManus, *The Line Which Separates: Race, Gender and the Making of the Alberta–Montana Borderlands* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2005).

21. Joan Sangster, “Making a Fur Coat: Women, the Labouring Body, and Working-Class History,” *International Review of Social History* 52 (2007): 241–70; Brenda Macdougall, “‘The Comforts of Married Life’: Métis Family Life, Labour and the Hudson’s Bay Company,” *Labour/Le Travail* 61 (Spring 2008): 9–39; Robin Jarvis Brownlie, “‘Living the Same as the White People’: Mohawk and Anishinabe Women’s Labour in Southern Ontario, 1920–1940,” *Labour/Le Travail* 61 (Spring 2008): 41–68; Mary Jane Logan McCallum, “Labour, Modernity and the Canadian State: A History of Aboriginal Women and Work in the Mid-Twentieth Century” (PhD dissertation, University of Manitoba, 2008). The conference “Women at Work: Transnational Histories of Indigenous Women’s Labour in the Modern Era,” was held at Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario, Aug. 14–16, 2008.

22. Theda Perdue, ed., *Sifters*, 5. Anthropologist and ethnohistorian James Clifton calls biography a method that we can use “to improve and to intensify understanding of a variety of social and cultural processes . . . in the long history of changing relationships between the diverse peoples of North America.” James A. Clifton, *Being and Becoming Indian: Biographical Studies of North American Frontiers* (Chicago: Dorsey Press, 1989), ix. See also Garceau-Hagen, ed., *Portraits of Women in the American West*.

23. Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Veronica Strong-Boag and Carole Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe: The Times and Texts of E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000); Cora Voyageur, *Firekeepers of the*

*Twenty-First Century: First Nations Women Chiefs* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008); Cecilia Morgan, "Performing for Imperial Eyes: Bernice Loft and Ethel Brant Monture, Ontario, 1930s–60s," in *Contact Zones*, 67–89; Amelia Paget, *People of the Plains*, introduction by Sarah Carter (1909: rpt. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2005); Patricia McCormack, "The Many Faces of Thanadelthur: Documents, Stories and Images," in *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*, 2nd ed., eds. Jennifer S.H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2003), 329–64.

24. See for example the following in *Sifters*: Helen C. Rountree, "Pocahontas: The Hostage Who Became Famous," 14–28; James Taylor Carson, "Molly Brant: From Clan Mother to Loyalist Chief," 48–59; and Donna Barbie, "Sacagawea: The Making of a Myth," 60–76. See also Sally Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

25. McCormack, "The Many Faces of Thanadelthur," 330–31.

26. Freda Ahenakew and H.C. Wolfart., *Kohkominawak otacimowiniwawa: Our Grandmothers' Lives As told in Their Own Words: Told by Glecia Bear, Irene Calliou, Janet Feitz, Minnie Fraser, Alpha Lafond, Rosa Longneck, Mary Wells*. (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1992); Ahenakew and Wolfart, *Kwayask e-ki-pe-kiskinowap-ahitihick: Their Example Showed Me the Way: A Cree Woman's Life Shaped by Two Cultures*, told by Emma Minde (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1997); Brenda Macdougall, "'The Comforts of Married Life'"; and Macdougall, "Wahkootowin: Family and Cultural Identity," *Canadian Historical Review* 87, no. 3 (September 2006): 431–62. See also Melanie Niemi-Bohun, "Colonial Categories and Familial Responses to Treaty and Scrip Policy: The 'Edmonton and District Stragglers,' 1870–88," *Canadian Historical Review* 90, no. 1 (March 2009): 71–79.

27. Linda Peavy and Ursula Smith, "Unlikely Champion: Emma Rose Sansaver, 1884–1925," in *Portraits of Women in the American West: 179–208*. See also Peavy and Smith, *Full Court Quest: The Girls From Fort Shaw Indian School Basketball Team, Champions of the World* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008).

28. For recent reflections on this scholarship see Susan Armitage, "Turner's Ghost: A Personal Retrospective on Western Women's History," in *The Practice of U.S. Women's History: Narratives, Intersections and Dialogues*, eds. S. Jay Kleinberg, Eileen Boris, and Vicki L. Ruiz (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 126–45; and Susan Armitage, "Are We There Yet?: Some Thoughts on the Current State of Western Women's History," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 59, no. 3 (Autumn 2009): 70–73.

29. Peggy Pascoe, "Western Women at the Cultural Crossroads," in Patricia Nelson Limerick, et. al., *Trails: Toward a New Western History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 52.

30. Ellen Carol Dubois and Vicki L. Ruiz, eds., *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Elizabeth Jameson

and Susan H. Armitage, eds., *Writing the Range: Race, Class and Culture in the Women's West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997).

31. Jameson and McManus, eds., *One Step Over the Line*.

32. Notable exceptions include the work of Frances Swyripa. See her book *Wedded to the Cause: Ukrainian-Canadian Women and Ethnic Identity, 1891–1991* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

33. See for example Winona Wheeler, "Colonialism and First Nations Women in Canada," in *Scratching the Surface: Canadian Anti-Racist, Feminist Thought*, eds. Enakshi Dua and Angela Robertson (Toronto: Women's Press, 1999); Sherry Farrell Racette, "Sewing for a Living: The Commodification of Métis Women's Artistic Production" in Pickles and Rutherford, *Contact Zones*: 17–46; and Cora Voyageur, *Firekeepers of the Twenty-First Century*.

34. Mary Jane Logan McCallum, "Indigenous Labor and Indigenous History," *American Indian Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 524.

35. *Ibid.*, 528.

36. Among Olive Dickason's many publications is *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992).

37. Sangster, "Archiving Feminist Histories."

38. Forsyth, 76.

39. Kim Anderson, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood* (Toronto: Second Story Press, 2000).

40. Sangster, "Archiving Feminist Histories" 256.

41. The personal impact of such loss is depicted in Christine Welsh's evocative film, *Women in the Shadows*, directed by Norma Bailey (Ottawa: National Film Board of Canada, 1991), which is about her search to discover her own Cree and Métis ancestors. The film is a good example of what Mary Louise Pratt calls an autoethnographic text. See Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 7.

42. Armitage, "Turner's Ghost: A Personal Retrospective on Western Women's History" 138.

43. Jean Barman, "Writing Women into the History of the North American Wests, One Woman at a Time." in *One Step Over the Line*, 100.

44. *American Historical Review* 114, no. 3 (June 2009).

45. David Nasaw, Introduction, "AHR Roundtable: Historians and Biography," in *ibid.*, 574.

46. Lois W. Banner, "AHR Roundtable: Biography as History," in *ibid.*, 585–86.

47. Marilyn Booth and Antoinette Burton, eds., “Editors’ Note: Critical Feminist Biography,” *Journal of Women’s History* 21, no. 3 (2009): 10.
48. Ibid., 11. See Alison Light, *Mrs. Woolf and the Servants* (London: Penguin Books, 2007). In *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2008), author Annette Gordon-Reed does a remarkable job of piecing together the life of Sally Hemings (Thomas Jefferson’s slave and mother of several of his children) and other Hemings from the smallest fragments. She notes that the Thomas Jefferson family correspondence was likely culled by family members anxious to erase mention of any possible connection between Jefferson and Hemings.
49. Booth and Burton, 11–12.
50. See for example Winona Wheeler, “Reflections on the Social Relations of Indigenous Oral History,” in *Walking a Tightrope: Aboriginal People and Their Representations*, ed. David T. McNab (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005), 189–214; Julie Cruikshank, *Life Lived Like A Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Elders* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1990); Julie Cruikshank, *Reading Voices: Oral and Written Interpretation of the Yukon’s Past* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1991).
51. In *Life Lived Like a Story*, Julie Cruikshank showed how three Yukon women used widely-known traditional stories in personal ways that related to themes in their own lives.
52. Gary Y. Ikohiro, “Oral History and the Writing of Ethnic History” in *Oral History; An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, 2nd ed., eds. David K. Dunaway and Willa K. Baum (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1996), 204.
53. For an example of the complexity of this process, see Julie Cruikshank, *Life Lived Like a Story*.
54. William Schneider, . . . so they understand . . . *Cultural Issues in Oral History* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2002), 62. A useful discussion of this duality is found in Cruikshank, *Reading Voices*, 141–45.
55. David K. Dunaway, “Introduction: The Interdisciplinarity of Oral History,” in *Oral History*, 2nd ed., 8; Ikohiro, “Oral History and the Writing of Ethnic History,” 209.
56. For example, Dr. O.C. Edwards acquired many moccasins and other items when he travelled to the north as part of the Treaty No. 8 commissions in 1900 and 1901. While he kept a detailed diary about his travels in 1900, in only one place does he mention a gift he was given. Ironically, those moccasins do not seem to be among the artifacts currently part of the O.C. Edwards collection at the University of Alberta. David Leonard and Beverly Whalen, eds., *On the North Trail. The Treaty 8 Diary of O.C. Edwards* (Calgary, AB: Historical Society of Alberta, 1998). See also Patricia A. Roome, “‘From One Whose Home is Among the Indians’: Henrietta Muir Edwards and Aboriginal Peoples,” in *Unsettled Pasts*, 47–78.

57. See for example the award-winning work of Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004).

58. Pratt actually defines transculturation more narrowly, as the way in which “subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture.” See Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 6. But transculturation need not be a one-way process.

59. Kristin Burnett, “Obscured Obstetrics: Indigenous Midwives in Western Canada,” this volume, [page 157].

## (1) Recovered Identities:

### Four Métis Artists in Nineteenth-Century Rupert's Land

1. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), 6.
2. Arthur C. Danto, "Artifact and Art" in *ART/Artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections*, ed. Susan Vogel (New York: Center for African Art and Preston Verlag, 1988), 31.
3. Sherry Errington suggests that the craftsperson's anonymity may be an asset, a "badge of authenticity." If an object is not attributed to a particular individual, her argument goes, it can more readily stand as an "authentic" representation of the work of an entire cultural group. See Sherry Errington, *The Death of Authentic Primitive Art and Other Tales of Progress* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 155.
4. Janet Berlo and Ruth Phillips discuss how western European definitions of art fail to take into account qualities that, from a First Nations perspective, are as intrinsic a part of an object's value as are its formal attributes. These may include "soundness of construction, ritual correctness in the gathering of raw materials, or powers that inhere because of the object's original conception in a dream experience" or use in ceremony. See Janet C. Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, *Native North American Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 7–9. Errington, meanwhile (above, 103), argues that art is itself an unstable social construct, "a set of historically specific ideas and practices that have shifted meanings in the course of the centuries." As those meanings shift, so do appraisals of what constitutes art. Considerations such as these reveal the fundamental futility of attempts to apply Western European categories of classification to non-Western arts.
5. Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 126.
6. See L. James Dempsey, *Blackfoot War Art: Pictographs of the Reservation Period, 1880–2000* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007); Arni Brownstone, *War Paint: Blackfoot and Sarcee Painted Buffalo Robes in the Royal Ontario Museum* (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1993); Joseph D. and George P. Horse Capture, *Beauty, Honor, and Tradition: The Legacy of Plains Indian Shirts* (Minneapolis: The Minneapolis Institute of Arts and the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 2001); Cecile Black Boy, *Painted Tipis by Contemporary Plains Indian Artists* (Anadarko, OK: Oklahoma Indian Arts and Crafts Cooperative, 1973); Janet Catherine Berlo, ed., *Plains Indian Drawings, 1865–1935: Pages from a Visual History* (New York: Harry N. Abrams in Association with the American Federation of the Arts and the Drawing Center, 1996); Valerie Robertson, *Reclaiming History: Ledger Drawings by the Assiniboine Artist Hongoeyeesa* (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1993); James D. Keyser and Michael A. Klassen, *Plains Indian Rock Art* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2001).

7. Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun*, 20.

8. Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 116.

9. The Earl of Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains: A Diary and Narrative of Travel, Sport, and Adventure, During a Journey through the Hudson's Bay Company's Territories, in 1859 and 1860* (Edmonton: M. G. Hurtig Ltd., 1969), 131.

10. When offered at auction, the Southesk collection included seven pairs of moccasins. Two were men's, perhaps among those presented to the earl by Fort Carlton factor Richard Hardisty; Southesk wrote that Hardisty had given him "three beautifully finished" pairs for his personal use upon learning that he had "none that fitted" (above, 132). Given the reference to "a few pairs of moccasins," it is logical to conclude that three of the remaining five pairs, clearly the work of a single artist, were those that Mary Tate made for Southesk to take home. One of these "pairs," however, includes two mismatched moccasins. Despite some superficial similarities, numerous differences suggest that they originally belonged to two distinct pairs (see note below), bringing the total number of moccasin pairs that Mary Tate made to four. The final two sets of moccasins in the collection employ different construction techniques and do not appear to have been made by the same artist.

The two moccasins shown in the foreground of Figure 1.2 are mismatched, suggesting that they originally belonged to separate pairs that have lost their mates over the years. The vamp motifs are of unequal size, the central rose motif has five petals on one moccasin and six on the other, the treatment of the stems and buds encircling the central rose differ, one cuff is bound with green silk ribbon and the other with black, and the embroidery motifs on the two cuffs are entirely different. None of the other pairs of moccasins has any of these inconsistent features. More significant still is the discrepancy in the porcupine quill wrapping along the vamps' seams. One moccasin has two rows of wrapping, the inner light blue and the outer red. The positions of the red and blue rows are reversed on the other slipper, and a third row of undyed quill wrapping has been added. Quill wrapping is a finishing touch, applied after a slipper's vamps and body have been sewn together. Even had time pressures or a shortage of materials forced Mary Tate to use mismatched vamps and cuffs already on hand to complete Southesk's order, it is difficult to imagine that she would have introduced additional inconsistencies by reversing the colours' order and painstakingly sewing an extra row of quill wrapping in a different colour.

11. See Sherry Farrell Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together: Clothing, Decorative Arts and the Expression of Métis and Half Breed Identity" (PhD dissertation, University of Manitoba, 2004).

12. Bill Holm describes this technique as comparatively rare and, on the Northern Plains at least, largely confined to rosettes on men's shirts and blanket strips. He notes that the American painter George Catlin collected a pair of moccasins with vamps outlined in quill-wrapped horsehair piping in 1832, during his travels along the upper Missouri River. See Bill Holm, "Quill-Wrapped Horsehair: Two Rare

Quilling Techniques,” *Studies in American Indian Art: A Memorial Tribute to Norman Feder*, ed. Christian F. Feest (Altenstadt: European Review of Native American Studies, 2001).

13. I am grateful to Margot Brunn, Lucie Heins, and Melissa-Jo Moses for their assistance in analyzing the construction techniques and materials used in creating these moccasins.

14. Piecing was an accepted garment construction technique, widely employed when working with hides. Even so, Mary Tate carefully centred the insert in the middle of the heel, where it was least visible.

15. See Phyllis Tortora and Keith Eubank, *A Survey of Historic Costume* (New York: Fairchild Publications, 1989) and Jonathan Faiers, *Tartan* (Oxford: Berg, 2008).

16. The likeliest candidates are Southesk’s two eldest daughters, ten-year-old Arabella and eight-year-old Constance, his sister, Lady Charlotte Carnegie, and Lady Susan Murray, the woman whom he would marry in November 1860. While Southesk had four children, the size of the two larger moccasins indicates that they were made for adult women. Measuring 22 cm in length, they correspond to a contemporary size five woman’s shoe.

17. Nancy Rexford (149) shows several pairs that closely resemble the Tate moccasins in shape and overall appearance; see Nancy Rexford, “The Perils of Choice: Women’s Footwear in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Shoes: A History from Sandals to Sneakers*, ed. Giorgio Riello and Peter McNeil (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 138–59.

18. Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*, 233.

19. Originally from Whitby, Yorkshire, James Monkman signed on with the Hudson’s Bay Company as a seaman on the *Prince of Wales*. After working as a sailor and brig’s mate with the company for close to two decades (1793–1811), he became an assistant trader, initially at Severn post in the York district and then at Island Lake. He left the company’s employ in 1816 and moved with his wife Mary, a Cree woman from the Severn House area, and their children to the Red River Settlement. Initial production at the Monkman salt works got underway within a couple of years. Mary Monkman’s father, also named James, was James and Mary Monkman’s eldest child. See Hudson’s Bay Company Archives/Provincial Archives of Manitoba (hereafter referred to as HBCA), Biographical Sheet for James Monkman; Glenbow Archives, C.D. Denney Papers, fonds M7144 (hereafter referred to as Denney Papers), file 145,000 (Monkman).

20. Henry Youle Hind, *Narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857 and of the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition of 1858*, Vol. 2 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 45, offers a contemporary description of the Monkman salt works.

21. The Monkman family genealogy is exceptionally confusing. My reading of the

available documents suggests that Mary Monkman's father was married twice, first (1829) to Nancy Chaboyer and later (mid- to late 1840s) to Marguerite Richard. If this is correct, Nancy Chaboyer was Mary Monkman Tate's mother. The Chaboyer name is well established in the Lake Manitoba region; Nicole St-Onge describes the Chaboyers as a "traditional Freeman famil[y]" with links to the Saulteaux (Anishinabe) community at Baie St-Paul. See Nicole St-Onge, *Saint-Laurent, Manitoba: Evolving Métis Identities, 1850–1914* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2004), 104. See also Red River Settlement Index and Register of Baptisms, 1820–1841, HBCA E.4/1a folio 119d (hereafter referred to as Red River Index); Library and Archives Canada RG15, Department of the Interior, Métis Scrip Records (hereafter referred to as LAC), Series D-II-8-a, vol. 1322, Charles Monkman, Marguerite Monkman, William Monkman; Denney Papers, file 145,000 (Monkman); and Warren Sinclair Papers, Glenbow Archives, fonds M8736, files 521 (Monkman, James & Mary, Swampy Cree) & 522 (Monkman, James & Nancy Chaboyer).

22. The Saulteaux are a division of the larger Anishinabe, or Ojibwa, nation. Mary Tate's older brother Joseph, who was baptized in 1834, is reported to have been born "at Lake Manitoba." Denney Papers, file 145,000 (Monkman).

23. Processed salt was packed into birch bark rogans and shipped by York boat to Oak Point, on the eastern shores of Lake Manitoba. There, it was transferred to Red River carts and transported to the Red River Settlement as well as diverse points north and west. The Monkman salt works ceased commercial operations in 1876. See Virginia Petch, *The Salt-Makers of Manitoba: A Study of the Use of the Natural Saline Deposits* (MA thesis, University of Manitoba, 1990).

24. In early January 1860, on the final leg of their return journey to Fort Garry, the Southesk party spent the night in the home of "Mr. James Monkman, an English half breed, who has a small farm, and a fishery which produces the finest white-fish of the district." The home, located along the eastern shore of Lake Manitoba north of Oak Point, was "built of massive logs plastered with mud, and lighted by firmly fixed parchment windows." Since her older brother James had died in 1850 and her grandfather James (who was not Métis) had moved to Red River, the chances are excellent that this James Monkman was Mary Tate's father. Perhaps she lived in this house before her marriage to Philip Tate. See Southesk (346) for an account of the Southesk party's stopover at the Monkman home and Denney Papers, file 145,000 (Monkman) for information on the Monkman family genealogy. The HBCA Biographical Sheet for James Monkman provides dates for key events in the elder James Monkman's life, while D. N. Sprague and R.P. Frye, *The Genealogy of the First Métis Nation* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1983), Table 2, present land grant and Hudson's Bay Company census data that establish the elder Monkman's residence in the Red River Settlement in 1835.

25. St-Onge, *St. Laurent, Manitoba*, 3.

26. See Red River Index.

27. Dunvegan Post Journal, 1895–1900, HBCA B.56/a/16 (hereafter referred to as Dunvegan Post Journal).
28. Jack H. Steinbring, “Saulteaux of Lake Winnipeg,” *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 6, ed. June Helm (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1981), 251. Fur trader George Nelson, writing in 1823, noted that Cree and Saulteaux men usually sought spiritual guidance through visions or dreams when they were “between 17 and 20 years old”; see Jennifer S.H. Brown and Robert Brightman, “*The Orders of the Dreamed*”: *George Nelson on Cree and Northern Ojibwa Religion and Myth, 1823* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988), 34. Anthropologist David Mandelbaum reported that Plains Cree boys received such visions when they “approached puberty”; see David G. Mandelbaum, *The Plains Cree: An Ethnographic, Historical, and Comparative Study*, 2 pts in 1 vol., *Canadian Plains Studies* 9 (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina, 1979), 159. Nelson wrote of northern Cree and Anishinabe people in the region around Lac la Ronge, in what is now northern Saskatchewan, while Mandelbaum’s findings reflected information he received from Plains Cree Elders in the Battleford area of west-central Saskatchewan in the 1930s. It is impossible to say which spiritual tradition had the greatest influence on Albert Tate, given the diverse cultural backgrounds of his parents and of the people with whom he grew up. These backgrounds include Swampy Cree, Saulteaux, and Plains Cree as well as Métis, English, and Orcadian.
29. Tate’s father, William, was a Métis man of Orcadian descent; his mother, Mary Bear, was Cree. LAC Series D-II-8-b, vol. 1332, Philip Tate (hereafter referred to as LAC Tate); HBCA Biographical Sheet for Philip Tate.

An article published when Tate was an elderly man stated that he had been sent “to establish a post for the company on Lake Winnipeg” in the late 1840s. His employment status, however, initially as a labourer and then, from 1851 to 1855, as a bowsman, suggests that while he may have been attached to one of the regional posts, he had not been in command. See Denney Papers, file 101,000 (Tate).
30. The younger Tate children make a brief appearance in Southesk’s travel narrative. The earl and members of his party entertained themselves during their Fort Carlton stopover by putting one of the post’s dogs to work, “making him draw things backwards and forwards in a small cart which Tait’s children were in the habit of playing with. One of the little ones cried to see her cart going away, so we put her into it and made her happy again.” See Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*, 132.
31. In an entry in the post journal for Fort Dunvegan, where he was clerk in charge from 1892 to 1898, Albert Tate wrote that “when a child” Cree was “our own native tongue.” See HBCA Biographical Sheet for Albert Tate; Dunvegan Post Journal.
32. Henry John Moberly with William Bleasdel Cameron, *When Fur Was King* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1929), 23.
33. Describing a hunt out of Carlton led by Philip Tate, Southesk noted that

“a half-breed, who had a wonderful power—magical, some thought it—of guiding buffalo in any direction that he pleased, was driving, or rather leading, a great band of bulls and cows to the very tents.” Years later, Albert Tate recalled another hunting expedition led by his father, this one out of Fort Victoria. It took place in the winter of 1867–68 and it, too, incorporated Plains Cree hunting technology. At the behest of the hunt’s Cree participants, the hunters constructed a pound, or *pee-tee-quahan*, and drive lanes down which the runners drove the bison. See Southesk, 104 and Albert Tate, “A Winter Buffalo Hunt,” *Alberta Historical Review* 6 (1958): 25–26.

34. Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*, 100.

35. *Ibid.*, 104.

36. Farrell Racette, “Sewing Ourselves Together,” 228.

37. Edmonton Account Book, 1859–60, HBCA B.60/d/132–133 (hereafter referred to as Edmonton Account Book).

38. Carlton factor Richard Hardisty’s ledger sheet in the Edmonton Account Book shows a transfer of sixteen pounds credited to Philip Tate. Hardisty was single, and it is possible that some of this sum represents payment for sewing that Mary Tate had done for him.

While often identified as the first tourist in the Canadian Rockies, Southesk was not the first European traveller to have visited Fort Carlton. Christian missionaries, gold prospectors headed for the Fraser River, sport hunters, and members of the British North American Exploring Expedition (better known as the Palliser Expedition) had all spent time at the post. More foreign travellers, like the English adventurers Milton and Cheadle, would follow in the months to come. In addition, Henry Moberly reported that the boat brigades headed for the Saskatchewan and Athabasca districts typically spent an extra day at Carlton rearranging their cargoes. Like Southesk, some of the voyageurs may have visited the Carlton store, “that comprehensive place where everything required for the Indians or the Company’s employees is procurable . . . — clothing, ammunition, blankets . . . and hundreds of miscellaneous unexpected things, all stowed away in an inviting orderly disorder.” It is certainly possible that garments or accessories sewn by Mary Tate were among the clothing and “unexpected things” available here. See Moberly, with William Bleasdel Cameron, *When Fur Was King*, 21, for a discussion of the boat brigades and Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*, 131, for a description of the store at Fort Carlton.

39. The school that Jane Tate attended was probably Hamilton Wesleyan Female College. The Tate family was living at the time at Fort Victoria, a settlement along the North Saskatchewan River east of Edmonton where Rev. George McDougall had established a Wesleyan Methodist mission. Jane’s younger sisters may also have attended Hamilton College. We only know of Jane Tate’s educational experience because the scrip affidavit that her father filed in her name noted that she

had died while returning home from college. See LAC Tate <http://www.collection-scanada.ca/db/gad/inv/015j1e.htm>.

40. Philip Tate had himself attended St. John's, known at the time as the Red River Academy. His facility with English, French and mathematics, as well as the social skills and connections that he would have acquired there, doubtless contributed to his successful career with the Company. Tate was second in charge at Carlton when the Southesk party came through, and he spent the last twelve years of his professional life as clerk in charge, first at Fort Victoria and later at the Carlton sales shop and the post at Battleford. See Denney Papers file 101,000, "About Old-timers," *Saskatchewan Herald*, April 12, 1905; HBCA Biographical Sheet for Philip Tate.

41. Philip Tate remarried twice, first to Eliza Steinhauer, who died in 1869, and then in 1871 to Ann Fraser, daughter of HBC trader and famed piper Colin Fraser. See HBCA Biographical Sheet for Philip Tate and LAC Tate.

42. Jane and Charles both died in 1870, the year a devastating smallpox epidemic struck the Northwest. It is highly likely that one or both were among the thousands whose lives it claimed. Scrip affidavits that Philip Tate filed in their names state that Jane died "after July 15" and Charles "in the Fall of 1870, the year of the smallpox." See LAC Tate.

43. His transfer that summer to the remote posting of Sturgeon Lake had proven the final straw; Tate recognized the move for the demotion that it was. "Yours truly has been shunted to Sturgeon Lake" reads his terse entry, dated June 19, 1898, in the *Dunvegan Post Journal*. Journal entries over the previous months document various points of disagreement between Tate and his employer. Foremost among these was the Company's failure to act on his recommendations. Remarking on the success enjoyed — at the Company's expense — by free traders who stocked the goods that local First Nations preferred, Tate asked sarcastically, "Why didn't I remedy this? Yes, say I, why don't I get in what the Indians want to pay for. I guess, the reason I don't do so is simply because I am not considered fit to know or judge correctly the wants of my customers." Other passages, however, voice hope that his expertise and years of service would eventually result in promotion to officer rank. "Like the canoe-man who makes his influence felt from shore to shore each time he dips his paddle, to urge his canoe forward, in like manner, surely, we can expand the limits of our present modest horizon," Tate wrote on 1 January 1896. But it was not to be. The Company's reluctance to grant Tate a leave of absence for medical treatment in 1897 angered him, and matters were made worse by the attempt of the Officer in Charge of the Lesser Slave Lake District that spring to "make out a case against me . . . about importing liquor under false pretences" (*Dunvegan Post Journal*, 1895–1900, HBCA B.56/a/16). See also Judy Larmour, *The Hudson's Bay Company Factor's House, Dunvegan: A Material History, 1877–1900*, unpublished manuscript, Edmonton, Alberta Culture, Historic Sites Service, 1987, 38.

44. Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*, 180.

45. Ibid., 181.

46. Ibid.

47. Cory Silverstein notes that the combination of red and dark blue or black cloth was “very common in Anishnaabe fur trade fashions.” This observation fits well with the suggestion that the woman who made the gun case had Anishinabe familial connections. See Cory Carole Silverstein, “Clothed Encounters: The Power of Dress in Relations between Anishnaabe and British Peoples in the Great Lakes Region, 1760–2000” (PhD dissertation, McMaster University, 2000), 206.

48. Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*, 184.

49. I would like to thank Mike Dillon for suggesting the Oneanti-Waniyande connection. Waniyande’s name was doubtless a challenging one for Southesk, who seems to have spelled it as he heard it pronounced. Jack Frisch earlier reached this same conclusion regarding the identity of “Eneas Oneanti.” During a visit to the community of Wanyandie Flats, a hamlet tucked into the upper Smoky River country north of Grande Cache, he was disappointed to find that none of the residents knew of Ignace Waniyande. This likely was because the Waniyandes of this settlement are descended from Ignace Waniyande’s brother, Jean Baptiste. Ignace Waniyande and his family left the Jasper area in the early 1860s and, while the brothers may have kept in touch, the connection seems to have been broken in subsequent generations. See Jack A. Frisch, “Some Ethnological and Ethnohistoric Notes on the Iroquois in Alberta,” *Man in the Northeast* 12 (1976): 51–64. Richard Wourinen, “Vincent Wanyandie: An Iroquois Patriarch,” *Legends of Grande Cache and the Yellowhead*, ed. J. Deenik, R. Guest, and R. Wuorinen (Grande Cache, AB: Grande Cache Historical Society, 2002), 65–66 discusses Waniyande family members in the Grande Cache area.

50. L. R. Masson lists Nowaniouter as a voyageur with the Athabasca River department in 1804. Whether this was his first year of employment in the fur trade, however, is unclear. He may have initially signed on a few years earlier, during the height of competition between the North West and XY (or New Northwest) Companies. Nicole St-Onge reports that at least 350 Iroquois men, most from Kahnawake, signed contracts with the North West Company between 1798 and 1804; many of these men were sent to fur-rich districts like the Athabasca where they spent the winters hunting and trapping for the NWC. Subsequent amalgamation of the two enterprises in 1804 initiated a reduction in the workforce, achieved in large part through the release of many employees including, as Trudy Nicks notes, “many of the Iroquois.” Nicks’ analysis of records from the Lesser Slave Lake and Peace River regions identified sixty-eight Iroquois servants, *engagés*, and freemen who were active in area in the years 1818–21. L.R. Masson, *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest: Récits de Voyages, Lettres et Rapports Inédits Relatifs au Nord-Ouest Canadien*, vol. 1 (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1960), 396; Nicole St-Onge, “Early Forefathers to the Athabasca Métis: Long-Term North West Company Employees,” in *The Long Journey of a Forgotten People: Métis Identities and Family Histories*, ed. Ute Lischke and David

T. McNab (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), 109–61; Trudy Nicks, “The Iroquois and the Fur Trade in Western Canada,” in *Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference*, ed. Carol M. Judd and Arthur J. Ray (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 85–101.

51. In a letter to Catholic missionary Jean-Baptiste Thibault dated 8 May 1846, Jesuit missionary Pierre-Jean De Smet identified twenty-seven individuals whom he had baptized at an Easter Sunday service held at Jasper House. Among them was “Lisette, âge 22, fille d’un Court-Oreille et d’une crise.” If the age he recorded is correct, this would make Lisette Courteoreille’s year of birth either 1823 or 1824. See Provincial Archives of Alberta (hereafter referred to as PAA), Missionnaires Oblats—Missionary Oblates, Province Grandin Province fonds, accession PR1971.220, Box 30, File 1180, Copie d’une lettre du père De Smet au père Thibault (notes généalogiques), Jésuites, Relations avec les diocèses, archidiocèses, vicariats, et autres communautés religieuses féminines et masculines, 1846. See also LAC Series D-II-8-c, vol. 1370, Adam Waniyande.

52. François Malhiot reported that “the Ottawa acquired the name of Court Oreilles some time in the eighteenth century” (171). They had by that time been involved in the Great Lakes fur trade for several generations, not only as trappers but as food provisioners, canoe makers and producers of snowshoes, garments, and other essentials of country life. Feest and Feest note that “small bands of changing composition [from the Arbre Croche and Saginaw regions of northern Michigan] became engaged in fur hunting around Lake Winnipeg and even up to Lake Athapasca until the 1820s” (777). François Victor Malhiot, “A Wisconsin Fur-Trader’s Journal, 1804–05,” *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, vol. 19, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1910), 163–233; Johanna E. Feest and Christian F. Feest, “Ottawa,” in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 15, ed. Bruce Trigger (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 772–86.

53. Alexander Henry, *The Journal of Alexander Henry the Younger, 1799–1814*, ed. Barry M. Gough (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1992), 329–30. Writing from Cumberland House in August 1795, Hudson’s Bay Company trader William Tomison recorded that, “seven Michelemaccana Indians arrived in a canoe, well-armed: these with many more came to the Red River last autumn with the New Company of adventurers [competitors of the HBC and NWC] which brought in 16 canoes well loaded.” He noted that one of those canoes had gone up the Saskatchewan River. Three more canoes of “Maccana Indians” came through ten days later, along with “sixteen canoes from other quarters.” Alice Johnson suggests that the “Maccana Indians” were Potawatomi from the west side of Lake Huron, but it seems likelier that they were Courtes Oreilles/Odawa. She identifies two Montreal-based trading outfits, Forsyth, Richardson & Co. and Grant, Campion & Co., as candidates for Tomison’s “New Company of adventurers.” See Alice Johnson, ed., *Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence* (London: The Hudson’s Bay Record Society, 1967), 4–6, 19–42.

54. Henry, *Journal of Alexander Henry the Younger*, 330. See also Johnson, ed., *Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence*, lxx.

55. In October 1799, for example, writing from Greenwich House on Lac la Biche, HBC trader Peter Fidler noted that his North West Company rival Angus Shaw had built a new trading house at the mouth of the Lesser Slave Lake River, “where nearly all the Ottaways, which is 11 and 5 Bungees [Saulteaux] are to winter.” A decade later, in July 1810, fur trader Alexander Henry advanced credit to five young Saulteaux and Courtes Oreilles who had stopped by Fort Augustus (later Fort Edmonton) on their way “to the Columbia to hunt beaver.” He described them as “stragglings vagabonds” from Lac la Biche and commented that they were “very hard to deal with.” The following February, Henry travelled for several days with a party of five trappers—“say two Nepisangués, one Court Orielle, and two half Indians by Cree women”—headed to Kootenae House on the Columbia River via Howse Pass. He noted that they were “familiar with the route.” In 1821–22, Lesser Slave Lake postmaster William Connelly described the freemen of the region as “Canadians, Half-breeds, Iroquois, Sauteux, Courteoreilles and Nipisingues.” See Johnson, ed., *Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence*, 217; Henry, *Journal of Alexander Henry the Younger*, 457, 514; Nicks, “The Iroquois and the Fur Trade in Western Canada,” 100.

56. *Ibid.*, 92.

57. Records from the 1885 and 1900 North-West scrip commissions show that during the opening decades of the nineteenth century, individuals with the Courteoreille surname married people named Nippesangue and Desjarlais, individuals who were like themselves the children of freemen with eastern (in this case, Nipissing and Saulteaux) roots. Scrip records also document marriages of individuals named Courteoreille with First Nations men and women; see LAC Series D-II-8-b, vol. 1328, Nancy Ignace; vol. 1330, Michel Nippesangue, Emilia Nipissing. Trudy Nicks, “Iroquois Fur Trappers and Their Descendants in Alberta,” *Origins of the Alberta Métis: Land Claims Research Project 1978–79* (Edmonton: Métis Association of Alberta, 1979), 17–34 considers the formation and growth of this distinctive Métis population. The quoted passage appears on (21).

58. The reference to Lisette Courteoreille’s baptism appears in the letter written by De Smet to Thibault, cited in note 56 above. The letter notes that, “Ignace, age 24, son of Ignace l’Iroquois and a chicanée [Sekani] woman,” was baptized at the same time. I would like to thank Diane Lamoureux, archivist with the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, for bringing this document to my attention.

59. De Smet formally married Lisette Courteoreille and Ignace Waniyande during the same Easter service in which the two were baptized. Their relationship, however, was doubtless of longer standing.

60. Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*, 182.

61. Palliser Expedition geologist James Hector, e.g., described the “Iroquois half-breeds” whom he met in January 1859 as “tent[ing] about like Indians, trading

the skins and furs they procure at Jasper House. There are only about 30 tents of them, and they all talk the Cree language besides their own, and have latterly inter-married a good deal with the Cree half-breeds of Lac St. Ann's." Irene M. Spry, ed., *The Papers of the Palliser Expedition, 1857–1860* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1968), 367.

62. In October 1827, e.g., Jasper House postmaster Michel Klyne noted that Iroquois trappers had brought in some 380 beavers, more than twice as many as any other group who traded at the post. He added that, "if the Iroquois leave this place the return will be very little" (Jasper House Post Journal, 1827–28, HBCA B.94/a/1).

63. These horses also were critical to their hunting and trapping success, enabling them to travel across a challenging landscape and to pack out the products of their hunt.

64. Waniyande may have combined his visit to Fort Edmonton with some short-term freighting work for the Company. The post journal entry for 30 September 1859 records that "Louis Tacara [an Iroquois-Métis man who had worked as a guide for James Hector] with an other man arrived from Jaspers House with 11 of the Cos. horses for the J.H. Outfit." The following day—the same day that Ignace Waniyande made his purchases—the "Jaspers House Outfit . . . was sent off. 18 horses well loaded left for that place." If Waniyande was not the "other man" who had brought down the Company's horses, he must at least have travelled back to Jasper House with this small freighting party. See Edmonton Post Journal, 1858–60, HBCA B.60/a/30, folio 70d.

65. Both men and women wore garments sewn from blue woollen fabric, most likely stroud. Southesk observed that the men in the Waniyande camp "dressed either in the usual fringed leather hunting-shirts, or in blue cloth capotes"; the wife of another Iroquois hunter whom the party had met several days before wore a dress of "dark blue cloth." Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*, 182, 176. Sherry Farrell Racette, meanwhile, reports that white blanket coats were known as "hunting capotes" because the colour offered hunters camouflage during the winter. Farrell Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together," 82. The Edmonton Account Book contains a complete record of Waniyande's purchases. Textiles accounted for the bulk of the materials he acquired; Waniyande limited his non-textile purchases to a single rein bridle, percussion caps, and a pound of black pepper.

66. In 1867 Isaac Cowie described free trader Donald Sinclair, "a smart, good-looking . . . dude of that day," as being fashionably dressed in "a new navy blue cloth capote with double rows of flat gilt buttons in front; trousers of the same material, over which of the same cloth were leggings reaching half-way up the thigh . . . a broad, vari-colored L'Assomption belt . . . [and] a fancy colored flannel shirt of the "Crimean" variety of the time—with a big black silk handkerchief tied in a sailor's knot around his neck." A decade earlier, Hind expedition photographer Humphrey Hime photographed Letitia Bird of Red River wearing a dress with a tartan print. Sherry Farrell Racette has shown that this "hybrid style of dress" was

popular among Métis men and women across Rupert's Land. See Isaac Cowie, *The Company of Adventurers: A Narrative of Seven Years in the Service of the Hudson's Bay Company During 1867–1874 on the Great Buffalo Plains, with Historical and Biographical Notes and Comments* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1913), 233–34; Richard J. Huyda, *Camera in the Interior: 1858* (Toronto: The Coach House Press, 1975), plate 37; Farrell Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together," 63.

67. Scrip affidavits for three of the four youngest Waniyande children identify Lac Ste. Anne as their place of birth; only Adam, born in 1863, had been "born at Fort Jasper down the Mountains." See LAC Series D-II-8-b, vol. 1328, Nancy Ignace, Adèle Ignace; Series D-II-8-c, vol. 1370, Adam Waniyande, Pierre Waniyande. For a record of Nancy Waniyande's marriage, see PAA, Missionnaires Oblats-Missionary Oblates, Province Grandin Province fonds, *Lac Ste. Anne—Registré des Baptêmes, Mariages et Sépultures, janvier 1860–janvier 1903*, Accession PR2001.1180, Box 3, Item 21.

68. William Sinclair to the Governor in Chief, Chief Factors, and Chief Traders, 15 May 1857, Northern Department Correspondence, HBCA D.5/43.

69. Peter Erasmus, *Buffalo Days and Nights* (Calgary: Fifth House Ltd., 1999), 62–63.

70. *Lac Ste. Anne Mission Deaths (Cemetery), Lac Ste. Anne: Burials transcribed as of 1994* (Edmonton: Alberta Genealogical Society, n.d.) reports the dates of Marie and Louis Waniyande's deaths as 1 October and 13 October 1870, respectively. The scrip affidavit that Nancy Waniyande filed in 1885 stated that Joseph Pepamowew had died on 29 August 1870. See LAC Series D-II-8-b, vol. 1326, Courtoreille Pepamowew.

71. LAC Series D-II-8-c, vol. 1342, Nancy Courteoreille.

72. Three adult Waniyande children (Nancy, Adèle, and Adam) entered treaty as members of the Michel Band, a Lac Ste. Anne band composed primarily of people of Iroquois descent, in 1878. The move entitled them to receive payments issued each year to Status Indians. As Melanie Ann Niemi has shown, annuity payments were an important source of financial assistance during a time of extreme hardship. Once Métis scrip and occasional rations became available in 1885, the Waniyandes withdrew from treaty and applied for and received scrip. Other factors may have contributed to this decision. Like First Nations across the prairies, Michel Band members were pushed by federal Indian policy to become full-time farmers, and their freedom of movement was constrained by the requirement that individuals receive a written pass from an Indian agent in order to travel off reserve. By withdrawing from treaty, the Waniyande children achieved a legal status that allowed them to pursue the hunting and trapping way of life in which they had been raised. See Melanie Ann Niemi, "The Edmonton and District Stragglers: Gendered Strategies of Treaty and Scrip, 1876–1886" (MA thesis, University of Northern British Columbia, 2005); LAC Series D-II-8-b, vol. 1328, Nancy Ignace, Adèle Ignace, and LAC Series D-II-8-c, vol. 1370, Adam Waniyande. Curiously, Nancy

Waniyande's application for scrip on behalf of her mother, made before the 1900 Commission, was denied on the grounds that had Lisette Waniyande really been Métis, the family would have applied for scrip in her name back in 1885. See LAC Series D-II-8-c, vol. 1342, Nancy Courteoreille.

73. Times were particularly difficult in the 1880s, when the dearth of game animals approached crisis proportions and government farming initiatives were unable to produce adequate food supplies. A front-page article in the 3 June 1882 edition of the *Edmonton Bulletin*, e.g., reported that "the [Indian] Agent finds it impossible to secure sufficient seed for the Indians this spring."

74. "Local," *Edmonton Bulletin*, 15 April 1882 (3) and "Court," *Edmonton Bulletin*, 24 June 1882 (1).

75. Anne Anderson, *The First Métis: A New Nation* (Edmonton: UVISCO Press, 1985), 169.

76. See LAC Series D-II-8-a, vol. 1328, Pierre Ignace.

77. Anderson, *The First Métis*, 314.

78. *Ibid.*, 315.

79. Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*, 268.

80. Kate C. Duncan, "The Evolution of Two Algonquian Bag Forms," in *Out of the North: The Subarctic Collection of the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology*, ed. Barbara A. Hail and Kate C. Duncan (Bristol, R.I.: Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, 1989), 86–95, traces the octopus bag back to eighteenth-century double-tabbed bags from the upper Great Lakes region. As Ruth B. Phillips has shown in her study *Patterns of Power: The Jasper Grant Collection and Great Lakes Indian Art of the Early Nineteenth Century* (Kleinburg, Ontario: The McMichael Canadian Collection, 1984), those bags, made of black-dyed hide and embroidered with quillwork motifs, were associated with Anishinabe spiritual life. While the octopus bag of the mid-nineteenth century did not necessarily have these same associations, it retained several features of the earlier pouches, including the dark field, tabs, and intertab fringes.

81. Viscount Milton and W.B. Cheadle, *The North-West Passage by Land* (Toronto: Coles Publishing Company, 1970), 70.

82. Farrell Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together," 141.

83. Duncan, "The Evolution of Two Algonquian Bag Forms," 91. See also Farrell Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together," 132ff, for an in-depth discussion of nineteenth-century fire bags collected in western Canada, including the one discussed in this paper. Laura Peers, "'Many Tender Ties': The Shifting Contexts and Meanings of the S BLACK Bag," *World Archaeology* 31, no. 2 (1999): 288–302, explores the varied contexts of use and meaning associated with an octopus bag in the collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum at the University of Oxford.

84. Cory Willmott, "From Stroud to Strouds: The Hidden History of a British Fur Trade Textile," *Textile History* 36, no. 2 (2005): 196–234, explains that, in the context of the nineteenth-century North American fur trade, "broadcloth" referred to a medium-to-fine quality woollen fabric with a slight nap. It was a higher-quality fabric than stroud, the other staple cloth of the fur trade, and costlier. Elsewhere, writing as Cory Silverstein, she reports that the "substantial majority of cloth traded to Anishnaabek" in the early nineteenth century was dark blue broadcloth and suggests that the cloth's "aesthetic function" was an important component of its popularity; dark blue provided an effective ground for "bright colors and decorations" in porcupine quills or beads. See Silverstein, "Clothed Encounters," 197–99. She also proposes that blue broadcloth took on spiritual significance in some contexts, noting that the Anishinabe term for dark blue broadcloth, "manitowegin," translates literally as "the dressed skin of a manito," or spirit (195). The term conveys the sacred quality attributed to dark blue, which represents "the power of the manito that dwell at thresholds of twilight skies" (203). Set in a field of dark blue broadcloth, glass and metal beads shine with the luminosity of "the sun, moon and stars" (244). Viewed from this perspective, the Southesk fire bag can be read as embodying spiritual as well as sentimental meaning.

85. Sister Bernard Coleman, *Decorative Designs of the Ojibwa of Northern Minnesota* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1947), 7.

86. Coleman (107) identifies oak and maple as the leaf motifs most frequently found in Anishinabe beadwork dating to 1830–1870; certainly, the three-lobed leaves on side A of the Southesk fire bag bear a distinct resemblance to oak leaves. Carrie Lyford, meanwhile, notes that nineteenth-century Anishinabe artists often used two distinct shades of green in depicting a leaf, the darker green forming the leaf's body, and a lighter shade the veins. See Carrie A. Lyford, *Ojibwa Crafts (Chippewa)* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1943). In the Southesk fire bag, the leaves' bodies are built up with dark green and maroon beads, while the veins are outlined in light green beads.

87. It is important to bear in mind that the incorporation of design features often associated with Anishinabe work does not necessarily mean that the fire bag was made by a woman of Anishinabe descent. Rupert's Land at the middle of the nineteenth century was a place of intense cultural exchange where people from diverse backgrounds shared ideas about art, as well as many other topics. Furthermore, as Berlo and Phillips (130) note, Métis work itself "derived from Saulteaux, Cree, Assiniboine, and Ojibwa techniques." I believe that the woman who made the fire bag was Métis; whether apparent Anishinabe influences in her work derive from guidance by Anishinabe relatives or are better attributed to the incorporation of Anishinabe design elements in mid-nineteenth century Métis art is an open question. Considerations such as these make it risky to assign cultural affiliation to an object solely based on its appearance and further underscore the value of identifying individual makers by name.

88. Cory Carole Silverstein, “Gifts of Nokomis: Spiritual Power in the Arts of Ojibwa and Cree Women” (MA thesis, York University, 1995), 23.

89. Ruth B. Phillips, “Nuns, Ladies, and the ‘Queen of the Huron’: Appropriating the Savage in Nineteenth-Century Huron Tourist Art,” in *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, ed. Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 33–50, considers how First Nations artists appealed to a western European aesthetic that valued “picturesque” depictions of the natural world in creating decorative art objects sold at Niagara Falls and other mid-nineteenth century tourist sites (46). For the historical association of the rose with marriage in western European cultures, see Ulrich.

90. Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*, 268. I would like to thank Germaine Conacher for suggesting the William J. Christie connection. An additional feature adds credence to the proposition that the bag had originally been Christie’s. Four horn buttons sewn on the upper corners feature an embossed image of the Scotch thistle. The motif would have been appropriate for a man with close sentimental ties with Scotland. While Christie was Métis, born at Fort Albany on Hudson’s Bay, he had attended school in Aberdeen and would later send his own sons to a private Scottish academy. Christie’s parents, furthermore, had retired to Edinburgh in 1849, and the Christie sons referred to Scotland as “home” in their private correspondence. Indeed, when Christie’s daughter Margaret applied for Métis scrip in 1885, she identified her mother as a “Halfbreed” but her father as a “Scotchman.” Cowie, 164–65 and Irene Spry, “Christie, William Joseph,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, 2000, <http://www.biographi.ca/index-e.html> (accessed 22 August 2010), provides biographical information on William J. Christie. The reference to Scotland as home comes from a letter that Christie’s older brother Alexander, also educated in Scotland, wrote to his daughter; see Alexander Christie to Emma Christie, 29 June 1868, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Matilda Davis Papers, P2342–43, c. 1812–1873: Correspondence/Christie, 1862–68, file 16 (hereafter referred to as Christie Correspondence). See LAC Series D-II-8-b, vol. 1328, Margaret Groat for Margaret Christie Groat’s scrip affidavit.

91. Other female members of Christie’s family, of course, might also have made the fire bag. Candidates include his mother, Anne Thomas Christie, and his daughters. However, the senior Mrs. Christie had retired with her husband to Scotland in 1849; it seems unlikely that she would have made a fire bag—especially one stitched with sinew—to send back to Canada. Christie’s eldest daughter Margaret, meanwhile, would only have been eight years old in 1859. While she may have mastered the basics of sewing by then, it is hard to believe that she could have produced work of such complexity. There is, moreover, as Peers discusses, a tradition of Métis women making fire bags for their sweethearts (see note 83). Taken as a whole, these considerations point to Mary Sinclair Christie as the likeliest member of the Christie family to have created the fire bag.

92. The son of former Chief Factor William Sinclair and Nahoway, his Cree-Métis wife, William Sinclair II worked his way up through the HBC ranks from an initial appointment as apprentice at Oxford House in 1808. Promoted to Chief Trader in 1844 and Chief Factor in 1850, his rise was slow. The prejudice that limited the career prospects of country-born employees doubtless played a significant role in this, but he seems also to have been held back by his lack of a classical education. While his brothers James and Colin had been sent to school in the Orkneys, William's formal instruction had been limited to the classroom at Oxford House. George Simpson's uncharitable assessment of Sinclair in his private Character Book as "[d]eficient in education — A good shot and tolerably active but possesses little judgement . . . — Manages the business of a small outpost but moderately well" suggests as much. As Spry notes, Simpson later revised his views after Sinclair had proven himself adept at handling the command at Lac La Pluie (Rainy River district), praising him as "an active intelligent officer" with "excellent management" abilities. See Irene Spry, "Sinclair, William," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, 2000, <http://www.biographi.ca/index-e.html> (accessed 22 August 2010). Simpson's assessment of Sinclair and other Company employees appears in R. Harvey Fleming, ed., *Minutes of Council Northern Department of Rupert Land, 1821–31* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1940), 457–58.

Her father's experience likely resonated with Mary Sinclair. Father and daughter appear to have been close, as Mary Sinclair cared for William Sinclair in the final months of his life, and her private correspondence reveals her concern that her own children receive the best education possible. See Christie Correspondence, Mary Christie to Matilda Davis, 4 April 1868.

93. Donna G. Sutherland, "The Kokum Puzzle: Finding and Fitting the Pieces," in *The Long Journey of a Forgotten People: Métis Identities and Family Histories*, ed. Ute Lischke and David T. McNab (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), 305–28 offers a biographical portrait of Nahoway Sinclair. Information about the Sinclair family's postings during William Sinclair II's childhood can be gleaned from the HBCA Biographical Sheet for William Sinclair I.

94. As one of Red River's most prominent families, the Sinclairs have received attention from a number of authors. Helpful sources include Virginia Barter (Parker), "Searching for the Silver Fox: A Fur-Trade Family History," in *The Long Journey of a Forgotten People*, ed. Lischke and McNab, 247–303; William J. Healy, *Women of Red River: Being a Book Written from the Recollections of Women Surviving from the Red River Era* (Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1977); D. Geneva Lent, *West of the Mountains: James Sinclair and the Hudson's Bay Company* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963); and Gregg Shilliday, ed., *Manitoba 125—A History, Vol. 1: Rupert's Land to Riel* (Winnipeg: Great Plains Publications, 1993).

95. Margaret Arnett Macleod, ed., *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1947), 218. Hargrave, wife of York Factory Chief Factor James Hargrave, took great interest in the Red River social scene, and it is she who noted

that Margaret Sinclair had attended the Academy (206). Mary L. Kennedy, "Pioneer Women Played Their Part," Manitoba History Scrapbook, n.d., Manitoba Legislative Library, Winnipeg, M9:84a & b, brings together recollections of former students who, like Harriet Sinclair, had enrolled in one of Red River's private schools for young women.

96. Efforts to establish firm dates for Anishinabe settlement of the Rainy Lake region are fraught with difficulties. Her review of the evidence, however, led Laura Peers to conclude that "people identified as Ojibwa began to occupy Rainy Lake, Lake of the Woods, and much of what is now northern Ontario" between 1730 and the mid-1760s. See Laura Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780 to 1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994), 5.

97. Mary McKay Sinclair was the daughter of fur trader and one-time North West Company partner Alexander McKay and Marguerite Waddens (sometimes spelled Wadin). She was born sometime between 1793 and 1802, probably near Lac la Loche in what is now northwestern Saskatchewan; McKay served in the Upper English River department during those years. The family subsequently lived at Kaministiquia (Fort William) and Lake Winnipeg. Mary McKay's maternal grandparents (Mary Sinclair Christie's great-grandparents) were Swiss fur trader Jean-Étienne Waddens and a First Nations woman whose name has not been recorded. Waddens was active in the Rainy Lake and Lake Winnipeg regions in the early- to mid-1770s, when Marguerite was most likely born, and the probability is high that his wife was an Anishinabe woman from this area. George Simpson's description of Mary McKay Sinclair's brother, Thomas McKay, as a "half breed of the Saulteaux Tribe," supports this suggestion. See Jean Morrison, "Alexander MacKay," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, 2000, <http://www.biographi.ca/index-e.html> (accessed 22 August 2010); T.C. Elliott, "Marguerite Wadin McKay McLaughlin," *The Oregon Historical Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (1935): 338–47; E.E. Rich, *McLoughlin's Fort Vancouver Letters, Third Series, 1844–46* (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society/The Champlain Society, 1944), 348. Fleming provides information on William Sinclair II's postings.

98. Marie Rose Delorme and her sisters, for example, learned to sew and bead "sitting on small logs at their mother's feet." Sewing expertise was similarly valued in Anishinabe culture, where "girls are urged to do work of such quality that it will excite admiration and envy." See Jock Carpenter, *Fifty Dollar Bride: Marie Rose Smith, a chronicle of Métis Life in the 19<sup>th</sup> century* (Sidney, BC: Gray's Publishing, 1977), 22; Ruth Landes, *The Ojibwa Woman: Male and Female Cycles among the Ojibwa Indians of Western Ontario* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1971), 19.

99. Edmonton Account Book.

100. See Kennedy for information on the Academy's curriculum.

101. Spry, "Christie, William Joseph," reviews Christie's biographical data.

102. See Spry, "Sinclair, William" and note 102 above.

103. Macleod, *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 232.
104. Ibid., cxxvi.
105. Moberly with William Bleasdel Cameron, *When Fur Was King*, 93–94.
106. Irene M. Spry, *The Palliser Expedition: The Dramatic Story of Western Canadian Exploration 1857–1860* (Saskatoon: Fifth House Ltd., 1995), 192. Bourgeau's comments appear in Spry, *The Papers of the Palliser Expedition*, lxxxix.
107. Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*, 273.
108. Shortly after setting out from Edmonton, an early cold snap trapped the boat in ice and the party was forced to stash it along the river's banks. Two of the men went ahead to Pitt by foot and returned with horses for the rest of the party.
109. Letter from Sir George Simpson to Richard Hardisty, 3 June 1859. Simpson-Outward Correspondence Book, 1858–59, HBCA D.4/78 folio 7.
110. Denney Papers, file 331,000 (Christie).
111. In October 1870 Butler accepted an assignment from Adams Archibald, Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba and the North-West Territories, to travel "along the line of the Saskatchewan" to inspect and report on "the whole question of the existing state of affairs in that territory." Butler's report singled Christie out for special thanks for having provided "information of much value regarding statistics connected with his district." W. F. Butler, *The Great Lone Land: A Narrative of Travel and Adventure in the West of America* (Teddington, Middlesex: Echo Library, 2006), 194–97. Christie's subsequent appointment as a Treaty commissioner, however, did not sit well with some communities in the Northwest. Métis guide and interpreter Peter Erasmus reported that "there was a growing resentment among various native people that men from the Hudson's Bay Company, such as Christie, should be called into consultation with the big chief while the Indians and half-breeds, those chiefly concerned, would be ignored completely." Erasmus, *Buffalo Days and Nights*, 227–28.
112. See Jennifer S.H. Brown, "Ultimate Respectability: Fur-Trade Children in the 'Civilized World,'" *The Beaver*, Outfit 308, 4 (1978): 48–55.
113. In a letter to her former teacher, Matilda Davis, written while touring Britain with her parents, the Christies' teenaged daughter Lydia offered insight into family members' perceptions of class and race in the Northwest during the years following Rupert's Land's incorporation into the Canadian state. After remarking that, "I should like very much to take a trip to Red River just to see all the old friends again," she expressed concern over some of the "great changes" that the settlement was experiencing. "I heard from Papa that a good many Canadians have gone to Red River. What a shame of theirs to look down on the Natives of Canada. It cannot be the higher class that do so." While sensitive to the growing discrimination to which the settlement's First Nations and Métis residents were subjected, her remark suggests that her own identity lay with that "higher class" whose

members were too well-mannered to engage in public acts of disrespect. See Christie Correspondence, Lydia Christie to Matilda Davis, 30 June 1873.

114. For information about the Christie sons, see Christie Correspondence, Mary Millar to Matilda Davis, n.d. Mary Christie wrote of her hopes for her daughters' education in a letter to Matilda Davis, 4 April 1868. The information about the girls' eventual enrolment at an academy in Toronto appears in a letter from their uncle, Alexander Christie, to his daughter Emma Christie, 19 June 1868.

115. Spry, "Christie, William Joseph"; Brown.

116. Denney Papers, file 331,000 (Christie).

117. Spry, "Christie, William Joseph" and Anonymous, "The Christie Family and H.B.C.," *The Beaver* 3, no. 10 (August 1923): 417–19 present information about the Christie sons and their careers. Denney Papers, file 106,000 (Groat) provides some insight into Margaret Christie Groat's married life. The Margaret Konantz fonds, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections, holds archival and photographic material related to Lydia Christie McTavish's descendants. Margaret Rogers Konantz, Manitoba's first elected female Member of Parliament, was Lydia McTavish's granddaughter.

118. Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*, 292.

119. Guillaume Charette, *Vanishing Spaces: Memoirs of a Prairie Métis* (Winnipeg: Editions Bois-Brulés, 1976), 49.

120. Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*, 171.

121. Working with a pair of ribbons in contrasting colours, the artist secured a length of ribbon to the fabric's surface, cut out a pattern along its upper edge, tucked the edges underneath, and stitched them in place. She then placed a second length of ribbon over the first and repeated the process. As she folded back the upper ribbon, the pattern emerged. The artist may have guided her work with a cutout pattern of paper or birchbark. Ruth B. Phillips, "Like a Star, I Shine: Northern Woodlands Artistic Traditions," in *The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987), 51–92, terms this interdependence of foreground and background elements "the aesthetic of positive and negative space" (91) and argues that it is a key design component of many Woodlands textiles and carvings. Coleman, *Decorative Designs of the Ojibwa of Northern Minnesota*, 6–7, discusses motifs used in historic Anishinabe embroidery and appliqué.

122. A pair of moccasins, likewise made for Southesk's personal use, features these same welts.

123. Edmonton Account Book.

124. LAC Series D-II-8-b, vol. 1331 (Savoyard).

125. Fort Pelly Post Journal, 1837–38, HBCA B.159/a/17.

126. LAC, Savoyard.
127. HBCA Biographical Sheet for Louis Chastellain-A.
128. Southesk's journal entry for 7 November reported that "we found it necessary to remain for this entire day getting winter clothing" (Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*, 285).
129. Southesk, *ibid.*, 285, noted that twenty-five men were employed at Fort Pitt that fall. Many probably had families living at the post.
130. Pamela Cunningham, personal communication, 2006.
131. The scrip affidavits that Geneviève Savoyard and Louis Chastellain filed provide a rough timetable for their move to St. Albert; see LAC Geneviève Savoyard and LAC, Series D-II-8-b, vol. 1326, Louis Chastellain. The HBCA Biographical Sheet for Louis Chastellain-A traces Chastellain's career with the Hudson's Bay Company.
132. See J. E. Foster, "The Métis and the End of the Plains Buffalo in Alberta," *Alberta* 3, no. 1 (1992): 61–77.
133. "Local," *Edmonton Bulletin*, 15 July 1882 (3).
134. Charette, *Vanishing Spaces*, 15.
135. Len Clark and Associates, *St. Albert Métis Heritage Site, River Lot 24: Interpretive Plan and Guideline Document*, unpublished report on file with the Musée Heritage Museum, St. Albert, 2000 traces the history of the Chastellain river lot from the Chastellains' arrival in St. Albert through to the present. See also Chastellain's scrip affidavit, LAC Series D-II-8-b, vol. 1326, Louis Chastellain.
136. "To the Editor of the Bulletin," *Edmonton Bulletin*, 25 April 1885 (3).
137. "Local," *Edmonton Bulletin*, 6 June 1885. Information regarding the issuance of certificates to the Chastellains and their subsequent sale to Leeson can be found in LAC Geneviève Savoyard; LAC Louis Chastellain, and George K. Leeson to the Minister of the Interior, LAC Series D-II-3, vol. 179, file HB 1230.
138. Anonymous, *St. Albert Parish Cemetery NW04–054–25 W4* (Edmonton: Alberta Genealogical Society, n.d.).
139. James A. Clifton, preface in *Being and Becoming Indian: Biographical Studies of North American Frontiers*, ed. James A. Clifton (Chicago: Dorsey Press, 1989), ix–xiii; Jacki Thompson Rand, "Primary Sources: Indian Goods and the History of American Colonialism and the 19th-Century Reservation," in *Clearing a Path: Theorizing the Past in Native American Studies*, ed. Nancy Shoemaker (New York: Routledge, 2002), 137–57.
140. Joane Cardinal-Schubert explores one such approach in her painting, *When We Saw Our Grandmother's Dress*. This portrait of a Kainai dress in the Southesk collection considers the multiple meanings that the dress—and its acquisition, preservation, and display—have for contemporary Kainai people.

## (2) Lost Women: Native Wives in Orkney and Lewis

1. I use the term *Native* to reflect the broader spectrum of contemporary Aboriginal identities; it includes Métis. Throughout the essay, I have made an effort to employ both current and earlier terms judiciously, respecting former usages when they correspond to the archival record and/or oral tradition.

The *Northwest* is a broadly descriptive term for lands north and west of Lake Superior that were the heartland of Canada's northern and western fur trade. The Hudson's Bay Company was originally licensed to trade in Rupert's Land, which included all the lands draining into Hudson Bay. It later acquired trading rights in more distant regions. In 1870, after the Dominion of Canada purchased the Hudson's Bay Company interests and began to expand westward, all lands not in Rupert's Land, British Columbia, or the new (and much smaller) Province of Manitoba were named the North-Western Territory, which has continued to evolve linguistically and spatially. For a useful summary, see Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, "History of the Name of the Northwest Territories: The Evolution of the Northwest Territories," Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, <http://pwnhc.learnnet.nt.ca/research/nwtname>.

2. See especially Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980); and Sylvia Van Kirk, "Many Tender Ties": *Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670–1870* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer Publishing, 1980).

3. See Jennifer S.H. Brown, "Partial Truths: A Closer Look at Fur Trade Marriage," in *From Rupert's Land to Canada*, ed. Theodore Binnema, Gerhard J. Ens, and R.C. Macleod (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001), 59–80.

4. Technically, Lewis is not an independent island but the northern two-thirds of the largest of the Western Hebrides. The southern third is the Isle of Harris, home of the famous Harris tweed.

5. Much has been written about Scots emigration to Canada and elsewhere, both by commentators of the day, such as Samuel Johnson and James Boswell, who travelled to Scotland in 1773, and by modern scholars interested in patterns of migration and how Scots settlers shaped the settlement patterns of other lands, including Canada. For the former, see R.W. Chapman, ed., *Johnson and Boswell: A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland and the Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970 [1924]); for the latter, see, for example, Lucille H. Campey, *An Unstoppable Force: The Scottish Exodus to Canada* (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2008); Catherine Kerrigan, ed., *The Immigrant Experience: Proceedings of a Conference Held at the University of Guelph, June 1989* (Guelph, ON: University of Guelph, 1992); and Charlotte Erickson, *Invisible Immigrants: The Adaptation of English and Scottish Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972). During my trip to Scotland in 1992, I heard a tour guide in the West Highlands call Canada "Scotland's colony." This and much other information is drawn from the three research trips I made to Scotland in 1987, 1990, and 1992.

6. According to Glyndwr Williams, however, in 1806 the wintering partners of the North West Company forbade country marriages with Indian women, though not with women of mixed-ancestry ("The Hudson's Bay Company and the Fur Trade," *The Beaver*, outfit 314, vol. 63, no. 2 [1983]: 72). It seems unlikely, however, that company officers were able to enforce this provision.

7. In contemporary sources, these people are often called "mixed-blood" or "half-breed," terms that employ a racial idiom to represent a growing social distinctiveness. However, not all mixed-ancestry children became "Métis." Their identities may have been multiple and fluid, despite names that are French in origin.

8. See, for example, Jacqueline Peterson, "Many Roads to Red River: Métis Genesis in the Great Lakes Region, 1680–1815," in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, ed. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S.H. Brown (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 37–71; Trudy Nicks, "The Iroquois in Western Canada," in *Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference*, ed. Carol M. Judd and Arthur J. Ray (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 85–101; Trudy Nicks and Kenneth Morgan, "Grande Cache: The Historic Development of an Indigenous Alberta Métis Population," in *The New Peoples*, ed. Peterson and Brown, 163–81; Heather Devine, "Les Desjarlais," in *From Rupert's Land to Canada*, ed. Binnema, Ens, and Macleod, 129–58; Martha Harroun Foster, *We Know Who We Are: Métis Identity in a Montana Community* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006); Patricia A. McCormack, *Fort Chipewyan and the Shaping of Canadian History, 1788–1920s: "We like to be free in this country"* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010); Nicole St-Onge, "Early Forefathers to the Athabasca Métis: Long-term North West Company Employees," in *The Long Journey of a Forgotten People*, ed. Ute Lischke and David T. McNab (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2007), 109–61; and Jan Grabowski and Nicole St-Onge, "Montreal Iroquois *engagés* in the Western Fur Trade, 1800–1821," in *From Rupert's Land to Canada*, ed. Binnema, Ens, and Macleod, 23–58.

But if some men stayed on in the Northwest with their Native wives and families, this seemingly positive state of affairs is complicated by instances in which *engagés* behaved badly toward Native people in general and Native women in particular. For example, according to a contemporary source, during the late eighteenth century at Fort Chipewyan, North West Company employees were known to have taken Chipewyan women from their families by force, sometimes to settle debts incurred by their husbands or fathers (Malchom Ross, in *Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor, 1774–92*, ed. J.B. Tyrrell [Toronto: Champlain Society, 1934], 446n1, 449). That speaks of rape and forced marriage. Yet the lengthy development of a mixed-ancestry population at Fort Chipewyan indicates that at least some of those men chose to remain in the region with their new families.

9. St-Onge, "Early Forefathers to the Athabasca Métis," 126–28.

10. See, for example, Williams, "The Hudson's Bay Company and the Fur Trade," 71.

11. Hudson's Bay Company Archives (hereafter HBCA), biographical sheets,

“Cunningham,” <http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical.html>. In the nineteenth century, these marriages would also be with the children of Scots/Highlanders and then with the children of mixed-ancestry French-Native families.

12. See Jennifer S.H. Brown, “‘A colony of very useful hands,’” *The Beaver*, outfit 307, vol. 56, no. 4 (1977): 39–45.

13. Letter from William Harper, Albany Fort, to William Watt, Breckness, Skail, 5 September 1808, Orkney Archives, D31/35/3/2; Brown, “‘A colony of very useful hands’”; and Heather Rollason Driscoll, “‘A most important chain of connection’: Marriage in the Hudson’s Bay Company,” in *From Rupert’s Land to Canada*, ed. Binnema, Ens, and Macleod, 81–107.

14. The Orcadian identity that was so distinctive during the fur trade era has not persisted in Canada.

15. In the 1790s, an agricultural labourer received £2 to £4 as a yearly wage, compared to the £6 he could make as an entry wage with the Hudson’s Bay Company as a labourer (see William P.L. Thomson, “Sober and Tractable? The Hudson’s Bay Men in their Orkney Context,” *Scottish Local History* 28 [1993]: 23). J. Storer Clouston, among others, has written about how the odal, or freehold properties, that were part of Orkney’s Norse heritage were “split up into small farms whose owners shrank into impecunious working farmers.” This process of decline began in the seventeenth century (see William P.L. Thomson, *History of Orkney* [Edinburgh: The Mercat Press, 1987], 188). Daniel Gorrie has called this a process of “feudalising” that “reduced the inhabitants to a state bordering on serfdom.” See J. Storer Clouston, “Orkney and the Hudson’s Bay Company,” part 2, *The Beaver*, outfit 267, vol. 16, no. 4 (1937): 39, and Daniel Gorrie, *Summers and Winters in the Orkneys* (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1869 [1868]), 288. Industries such as kelp-making and straw-plaiting were boom-and-bust operations that could not guarantee a satisfactory long-term livelihood. For useful summaries of Orkney history and culture, see Thomson, *History of Orkney*, and Alexander Fenton, *The Northern Isles: Orkney and Shetland* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1978).

16. John Nicks, “Orkneymen in the HBC, 1780–1821,” in *Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference*, ed. Judd and Ray, 112. See also Clouston, “Orkney and the Hudson’s Bay Company,” and Philip Goldring, *Papers on the Labour System of the Hudson’s Bay Company, 1821–1900*, vol. 3, Parks Canada Manuscript Report Series no. 299 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1982), 64.

17. Thomas Hepburn, *A Letter to a Gentleman from His Friend in Orkney, Containing the True Causes of the Poverty of That Country* (London, 1760), 17.

18. The Reverend James Anderson, “Parish of Orkney,” in *The Statistical Account of the Orkney Islands* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1842), 26.

19. Richard Glover, introduction to *Cumberland and Hudson House Journals, 1775–82*, ed. E.E. Rich, with A.M. Johnson, Hudson’s Bay Record Society, vol. 14 (London: Hudson’s Bay Record Society, 1951), xxvi.

20. Ernest W. Marwick, “Chief Factor James Sutherland and His Orkney Correspondence,” *The Beaver* outfit 297, vol. 46, no. 3 (1966): 45. The term *slave* seems to have been in common parlance in Orkney from the eighteenth century. Writing in 1775, James Fea explained that the neglect of trade in Orkney had led to “misery, beggary, despondency, and thieving,” with the result that some people were “obliged, from mere necessity, to enter into the service of those who take advantage of their necessitous condition, to make Slaves (I use their own expression) of them for one part of the year” (*The Present State of the Orkney Islands considered with an Account of their Advantageous Situation, and Conveniences for Trade; the Improvements They are Capable of &c.* [Edinburgh: Holy-Rood House, 1775], 4) For another perspective, see George Eunson, *The Ancient and Present State of Orkney* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Printed for the Author, 1788), 57–58. Eunson considered the Iceland fishery one such exploitative industry, although not, apparently, employment with the Hudson’s Bay Company, which, in his view, afforded frugal workers an adequate financial stake. According to Eunson, returned fur traders who acquired farms “lived comfortably the Remainder of their days” (61). At the same time, earning a livelihood from farming, which was difficult enough in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, may have become more difficult in the nineteenth century because of changes in the agricultural and land-holding systems. See, for example, later chapters in Thomson, *History of Orkney*.

21. Isaac Cowie, *The Company of Adventurers* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1913), 62–63.

22. Anderson, “Parish of Orkney,” 20.

23. HBCA, biographical sheets, “Watt, William Henry,” and “Watt, Alexander Stewart (fl. 1855–1894).” Note that, at the time of this writing, the online link to the record for William is mistakenly titled “Watt, William Thomson (1898–1968) (fl. 1920–1958).” The record itself is correct, however.

24. Letter from William Watt to his mother, 15 June 1854. The letter is in a collection of the papers of Alexander Stewart Watt and William Henry Watt (hereafter “Watt papers”), in the possession of Alice King, of Holmlavoe, Stromness, Orkney.

25. Letter from William Watt, written at Fort Pitt, to his mother, 16 January 1869, Watt papers. As regards the “superstitious notions” that Watt ascribes to Native peoples, Orcadians in fact had their own rich oral traditions, in which selkies (seals) and mermaids interacted with humans, and there were trows, or little people, who lived in the hills. Rowland and other Orcadians would have brought these beliefs with them to the Northwest, where they undoubtedly resonated with the parallels in the Aboriginal traditions they learned from their wives, in-laws, and fellow workers. Calling attention to similarities among oral traditions of Aboriginal people and French-Canadian *voyageurs*, Carolyn Podruchny has argued that these similarities were points of “cultural conjunction” that constituted “a form of *métissage* outside of the practice of marriage and the birth of métis generations” (“Werewolves and Windigos: Narratives of Cannibal Monsters in French-Canadian Voyageur Oral

Tradition," *Ethnohistory* 51, no. 4 [2004]: 678). On Orcadian folk tradition, see, for example, John Firth, *Reminiscences of an Orkney Parish* (Stromness: Orkney Natural History Society, 1974 [1920]); Ernest W. Marwick, *The Folklore of Orkney and Scotland* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1975); and Tom Muir, *Mermaid Bride and Other Orkney Folk Tales* (Kirkwall: Orcadian Ltd., 1998).

26. Sandy Watt to his sister Annie, 19 April 1869, Watt papers.

27. HBCA, biographical sheets, "Watt, William Henry," and "Watt, Alexander Stewart."

28. Obituary for William Henry Watt, Watt papers; oral information (August–September 1990).

29. As I was told during a visit to the Orkneys in May 1987, William brought back elaborate beaded items as souvenirs of his many years with the fur trade. They were kept in the family, most lately by his descendant Alice King. See Bryce Wilson, *Sea Haven: Kirkwall* (Orkney: The Orkney Press, 1992), 33.

30. That did not prevent some of these married men from also taking country wives, but not with the intention of staying with them permanently. One such man was James Thomson of Lewis, who returned home in 1876 and married Isabella Maciver in 1877. He re-enlisted with the Company in 1878 and at some point thereafter entered into a relationship with a Chipewyan woman named Louise Encore at Fort Chipewyan. I learned about Thomson in interviews with Bill Lawson, in Harris, and Nancy Maclean, in Lewis, April and May 1992, and wrote about them in "James and Isabella Thomson: A Lewis Family in the Canadian Fur Trade," a paper presented at the Rupert's Land Colloquium, Edmonton, 25–27 May 1994. See also Anonymous, *Tong: The Story of a Lewis Village* (Stornoway: Stornoway Gazette, 1984); HBCA, biographical sheets, "Thomson, James (d. 1929) (fl. 1868–1885)"; Fort Chipewyan post journal, HBCA B.39/a/53, reel no. 1M999; and Library and Archives Canada (LAC), RG 15, Department of the Interior, Series D-11-1, vol. 1369, "Thompson, Caroline" (from an application for Half-breed scrip, contained in the volume indicated).

31. Poor Law Inquiry Commission for Scotland, Minutes of Evidence taken before the Poor Law Inquiry Commission for Scotland, 1843.

32. See Cheryl Ann Purdey, "Orkneymen to Rupert's Landers: Orkney Workers in the Saskatchewan District, 1795–1830" (unpublished MA thesis, Department of History, University of Alberta, 2010).

33. Cowie, *The Company of Adventurers*, 69. Over a century later, in 1990 and again in 1992, I heard references in Orkney to "black Indians," referring to a somewhat darker or swarthy skin color.

34. HBCA, biographical sheets, "Rowland, William (B) (b. ca. 1802 d. 1875) (fl. 1820–1871)."

35. Marwick, "Chief Factor James Sutherland and His Orkney Correspondence," 46.

36. One example is James Bird, who in 1798 asked permission to return to England with his son, James Jr. (also known as Jimmy Jock): see Alice M. Johnson, ed., *Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence, 1795–1802* (Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1967), 140n3, and HBCA, biographical sheets, "Bird, James Sr. (ca. 1773–1856) (fl. 1788–1824)" and "Bird, James Jr. (ca. 1800–1892) (fl. 1809–1951)." After Bird was persuaded to extend his contract, he was notified by William Tomison that the Honourable Company had granted permission to Bird "to send your son to England" (Johnson, ed., *Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence*, lxxxiii), although it appears that, in the end, neither Bird nor his son left the Northwest. James Bird Sr. had many more children with his Cree wife, Elizabeth Montour, and James Jr. joined the Hudson's Bay Company as an apprentice clerk in 1809 and made his career in the fur trade.

37. Advertisement, *Inverness Journal and Northern Advertiser*, 12 April 1811. If they chose to stay in the Northwest, they were promised that "one hundred acres of good land will be given to each in perpetual feu," an attractive offer that evidently anticipated a successful Selkirk Settlement.

38. See Cowie, *The Company of Adventurers*, 63; Van Kirk, "Many Tender Ties," 140–41.

39. W. Towrie Cutt, *Carry My Bones Northwest* (London: André Deutsch Limited, 1973).

40. Ernest W. Marwick, "William Tomison: Pioneer of the Fur Trade," *Alberta Historical Review* 10, no. 4 (1962): 1–7. See also Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, rev. ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1964 [1956]), 153, 234; and Johnson, *Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence*, 75n3.

41. W. Towrie Cutt, *Carry My Bones Northwest*, 17. Later in the book, "Old William" Fea becomes "Walter" Fea.

42. While I was in Orkney in 1990, I heard two different stories about Governor William Tomison, as he is known there. In one, he brought back a "half-caste son" who died in Orkney and was buried in the kirkyard at Burwick. The other was told by a family who believes that its ancestors include Tomison's son by a Native wife, although there seems to be no supporting genealogical evidence. Yet another version is that of Orkney historian Ernest W. Marwick, according to whom Tomison had a Native wife but left her in the care of a colleague named Tait when he returned to Orkney for three years. Marwick did not suggest that Tomison had children with her, although he claimed that Tait himself fathered "three lusty youngsters" ("William Tomison," 7). In *Carry My Bones Northwest*, Cutt mentioned the tradition that Willie Fea was actually Tomison's son, but he dismissed it as unlikely.

43. Cutt, *Carry My Bones Northwest*, 46.

44. *Ibid.*, 61. That Willie enlists with Selkirk is an odd plot development in that there was historically such a strong association between Orcadian men and the HBC, not the Selkirk settlement.

45. Van Kirk, "Many Tender Ties," 117.

46. Rollason Driscoll, “‘A most important chain of connection,’” 82.
47. Cowie, *The Company of Adventurers*, 63–64.
48. Gerhard J. Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Metis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 10.
49. Roderick Campbell, *The Father of St. Kilda* (London: W.R. Russell and Co., 1901), 116, 117. The other two groups he named were the Swampy Crees and the colonists from Sutherland, Kildonan, and Selkirk (117).
50. See Brown, “‘A colony of very useful hands.’”
51. See, for example, *New Statistical Account of Scotland*, vol. 15: *Sutherland, Caithness, Orkney, Shetland*; and Nicks, “Orkneymen in the HBC, 1780–1821.” Former Hudson’s Bay Company men Magnus Twatt, James Tait, and William Tomison all used some of their earnings to endow schools in the parishes of Orphir (Twatt and Tait) and South Ronalday (Tomison), both locations of significant Company hire (Thomson, *History of Orkney*, 239; Anderson, “Parish of Orkney,” 24; and Nicks, “Orkneymen in the HBC, 1780–1821”). By 1841, every parish had a “Parochial School,” and there were also church-operated schools (Thomson, *History of Orkney*, 238).
52. Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 177. It is intriguing that James Sutherland chose *not* to settle in the east, fearing that he would have to abandon his children to do so: see Marwick, “Chief Factor James Douglas,” 46.
53. Jennifer S.H. Brown, “Charlotte Small (1785–1857),” submission report to Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, 2007, no. 2007-13, 2. I am grateful to Marie-Claude Queenton, communications officer of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, for supplying me with Jennifer Brown’s report. For additional discussion, see Brown, “Seeking Charlotte Small Thompson: Identities in Motion, *Rupert’s Land Newsletter*, nos. 24–25 (2008): 14–18. Ironically, Thompson’s opportunities diminished in the east; his old age was one of impoverishment.
54. On 11 April 2008, at the recommendation of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, the Minister of the Environment officially designated Charlotte Small Thompson a “National Historic Person.” In its deliberations, the board remarked on the Thompsons’ “unusually long and stable cross-cultural marriage,” in which Charlotte Thompson lived “first in the Northwest, then in a foreign environment, remote from her homeland, through many difficult years” (minutes of the July 2007 meeting Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, also kindly supplied to me by Marie-Claude Queenton). Although many of the details of Charlotte Thompson’s life remain unknown, she is emblematic of other Aboriginal women whose husbands and life stories are less well known.
55. See Jennifer S.H. Brown, “Ultimate Respectability: Fur-Trade Children in the ‘Civilized World,’” *The Beaver*, outfit 308, vol. 57, no. 3 (1977): 4–10 (part 1) and no. 4 (1977): 48–55 (part 2), as well as *Strangers in Blood*, chap. 8, and “‘A colony of very

useful hands””; Sylvia Van Kirk, “*Many Tender Ties*,” 141–42; and L.G. Thomas, “Fur Traders in Retirement,” *The Beaver* outfit 310, vol. 59, no. 3 (1979): 14–21.

56. Thomas, “Fur Traders in Retirement,” 18.

57. HBCA, biographical sheets, “Sutherland, Donald (1778–1872) (fl.1795–1822).” Scottish records list a Donald Sutherland, also from the parish of Clyne, who died in 1817 (“Scotland’s People,” records available at <http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk>), possibly fur trader Sutherland’s father.

58. Raymond Sherritt-Beaumont, personal communication, 6 February 1992. Sherritt-Beaumont has conducted research into the families (including Sutherland and his two younger children) who left for Scotland in September 1822 on the Hudson’s Bay Company ship *Prince of Wales*. On 6 February 1992, he generously shared his research materials with me, which he supplemented by additional information sent 19 May 2009. The discussion of these families to follow relies on his information and draws as well on Hudson’s Bay Company biographical sheets, Half-Breed scrip summaries, and the 1901 Canada Census. Unfortunately, I have not yet been able to conduct additional research in Orkney about these families or about Sutherland.

59. Raymond Sherritt-Beaumont, personal communication, 6 February 1992.

60. *The Statistical Account of the Orkney Islands* (also known as the Old Statistical Account) for 1795–98 records that a school was operated in Evie by the Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge. For Jane’s father, see HBCA, biographical sheets, “Robertson, John (C) (b. ca. 1786–1787) (fl. 1804 or 1805–1828).”

61. HBCA, biographical sheets, “Kirkness, James (ca. 1774–1843)”; “Scotland’s People” (<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk>).

62. HBCA, biographical sheets, “Kirkness, James ‘a’ (fl. 1864–1883),” “Kirkness, William ‘A’ (fl. 1860–1864),” and “Kirkness, William (fl. 1863).”

63. “Scotland’s People” (<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk>).

64. Raymond Sherritt-Beaumont believes that the daughter’s name may have been Mary, after her mother, Andrew Kirkness’s wife Mary, a sister to the “White Governor.” Andrew Kirkness evidently deserted his wife when he left for Orkney, leaving her behind with three younger children (personal communication, 19 May 2009).

65. In the 1901 Canada census, Peter Flett Garson’s address is given as Domremy, Saskatchewan, a town not far south of Prince Albert. Roderick Campbell credited the origin of Prince Albert to a mission established in 1865 by the Presbyterian minister James Nisbet, which attracted many Scots and Scots “half-breed” families from Red River (*The Father of St. Kilda*, 200). According to Harold Innis, it was railway construction after 1885 that led Prince Albert to overtake Fort Carlton as an economic center (*The Fur Trade in Canada*, 344). Henry J. Moberly called it “quite

a town” in 1886 (“Reminiscences of a Hudson’s Bay Company Factor,” *The Beaver*, vol. 3, no. 1 [1922]: 15).

66. See LAC, RG 15, Vol. 1348, Reel C-14971, “Peter Flett Garson”; Vol. 1248, Reel C-14971, “James Garson.”

67. In Orkney, I was directed to these families by Bryce Wilson, the museums officer with the Orkney Islands Council and an historian with a keen interest in Hudson’s Bay history. In Lewis, I was assisted in multiple ways by Angus MacLennan and Richard Langhorn, both with the Museum of the Western Isles; by genealogist Bill Lawson, the director of *Co Leis Thu?* Genealogical Research Service for the Western Isles of Scotland; and by authors Finlay MacLeod and James Shaw Grant. Many other people in both regions were generous with their time and information.

Despite the contemporary and somewhat unhappy trend toward anonymity as a default mode for social scientists, it is not possible to strive to maintain the anonymity of the sources identified in this essay, not it is even especially desirable. All people who were interviewed agreed willingly to share their stories, either as members of families descended from Native members or as knowledgeable residents, and I was never asked to conceal any information (although I have of course exercised some discretion in what I have chosen to include). The social and genealogical histories of these families are directly related to individuals both past and present and in some instances are a matter of public knowledge and even of publication. Family stories cannot be presented in general terms without robbing the narratives of their historical significance. I gratefully acknowledge the contributions of family members and others who not only shared their stories but who anticipated learning more about their own family’s history as I pursued my research.

68. When I carried out my research in the early 1990s, the Canadian expression “First Nations” had not penetrated Scottish discourse; “Indian” still dominated local references. “Red Indian” can also still be heard in Britain, to distinguish North American Native people from the people of India.

69. HBCA, biographical sheets, “Flett, Charles (b. ca. 1760) (fl. 1790–1817)”; Mary Bichan, personal communication to author, 1990,

70. Letter from Mary L. (Lizzie/Elizabeth) Firth, Rowamo(?), Finstown, to Mr. and Mrs. Charles Borwick, Caperhouse, Harray, 7 January 1952, in the possession of Mary Bichan. Mary Firth had heard stories from her grandfather Adam Borwick about his half-Native wife, Elizabeth (Mary’s grandmother). Mary Bichan also showed me a second document verifying the reading of the banns for the marriage of Elizabeth’s brother, William Flett, to Christina Flett (evidently William’s cousin) in 1832. As parish registrar, Mary recorded births, deaths, and baptisms and kept the registry books, as well as maintaining a keen interest in genealogy. I am grateful to her for the information she shared about her very interesting family history.

71. Firth, *Reminiscences of an Orkney Parish*, chap. 11, “Courtship and Marriage.”

72. HBCA, biographical sheets, “Spence, John 3rd or (b) (b. ca. 1793 (fl. 1818–1848).”
73. Jennifer Brown raised the possibility that this woman was born in the Northwest: there were Annals who worked in the fur trade (personal communication, 28 March 2009).
74. The HBCA list of contracts contains two John Duncans both from South Ronaldsay. One was a boat builder and signed his contract in 1855. The other, a labourer, signed in 1877. The latter is the person more likely to have returned with little money.
75. Alexander Kennedy’s statement, prepared by James Forbes, schoolmaster, 23 February 1833, HBCA A.36/8.
76. Orkney Archives, Jason G. Marwick, “‘Huskie’ Saunders’s School Days in Stromness,” *The Orcadian*, 5 March 1936, 5; oral information from Mary Bichan, 1990.
77. *The Orcadian*, “Schoolboy Days in Stromness,” 24 September 1936, 7, Orkney Archives.
78. William P.L. Thomson, “Pict, Norse, Celt, and Lowland Scot—A Thousand Years in the Melting Pot,” in *The People of Orkney*, ed. R.J. Berry and H.N. Firth (Kirkwall, Orkney: Orkney Press, 1986), 219.
79. Letter from James Sutherland, Red River Colony, 8 August 1831, to John Sutherland, Ernest Walker Marwick (EWM) Papers D.31/23/1, Orkney Archives. See also letters from James Sutherland to John Sutherland, 7 August 1838 and 10 August 1840; and L.G. Thomas, “Fur Traders in Retirement,” 19.
80. John Macleod, Chief Trader of the Hudson Bay Company, Letters, acc. no. 971.011, LAC (photostat copies and transcript in Stornoway Library, Lewis); J.M. Bumsted, “The Affair at Stornoway, 1811,” *The Beaver* outfit 312, vol. 61, no. 4 (Spring 1982): 52–58.
81. Philip Goldring, “Lewis and the Hudson’s Bay Company in the Nineteenth Century,” *Scottish Studies* 24 (1980): 23–42.
82. It may be that the long history of emigration from the island made men from Lewis more likely than Orcadians to contemplate staying in Canada, although many did return. Philip Goldring described their labour as mostly “a stable kind of migratory employment” (*ibid.*, 37).
83. James Shaw Grant, *Discovering Lewis and Harris* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1987), 75.
84. See, for example, Malcolm MacLean and Christopher Carrell, *As an Fhearann: From the Land* (Stornoway: An Lanntair Gallery, 1986).
85. See also R. Andrew McDonald, *The Kingdom of the Isles: Scotland’s Western Seaboard, c.1100–c.1336* (East Lothian, Scotland: Tuckwell Press, 1997); James Shaw

Grant, *The Gaelic Vikings* (Edinburgh: James Thin, 1984) and *Discovering Lewis and Harris*; and W.C. Mackenzie, *The Book of the Lews: The Story of a Hebridean Isle* (Paisley, Scotland: Alexander Gardner, 1919), 3–11.

86. During my visit in 1992, Bill Lawson provided me with dates for the Martin family. Christina Macleod Martin died in 1864, so the story described here had to have happened before that date. See also Donald Macdonald, *The Tolsta Townships* (Tolsta, Lewis: Tolsta Community Association, 1984), 29–33.

87. For Norman's croft number, see the North Tolsta Historical Society's website. Through a link on the "Emigrants from Tolsta—Canada" page ([http://www.tolsta.info/emigrants\\_canada.htm](http://www.tolsta.info/emigrants_canada.htm)), the website lists a number of "Hudson Bay Employees," along with their croft numbers and Gaelic names.

88. MacDonald, *The Tolsta Townships*, 33.

89. North Tolsta Historical Society, [http://www.tolsta.info/emigrants\\_canada.htm](http://www.tolsta.info/emigrants_canada.htm).

90. HBCA, biographical sheets, "McKay, Murdoch (fl. 1873–1890)." One of the other men was Donald Mackay, perhaps a relative. Donald Mackay owned croft no. 2 at Tolsta. See North Tolsta Historical Society, [http://www.tolsta.info/emigrants\\_canada.htm](http://www.tolsta.info/emigrants_canada.htm).

91. HBCA, biographical sheets, "Brass, Peter (b. ca 1758–1762) (fl. 1787–1798)." There were many possible fates for Native wives beside abandonment. Peter Brass may have found another husband for his wife when he left, she may have chosen to leave him, or she may have died, not an unlikely occurrence. It may or may not be possible to identify her fate from reading the various records associated with York Factory for that period. The HBCA biographical sheets identify the younger Peter Brass as "Peter Brass (Senior)," born in 1794 in Hudson's Bay and married to "Susan Roy or Comtois." This Peter Brass was stationed mostly in the Swan River District, from 1814 to 1840. He became a freeman between 1840 and 1841. The dates and locations match the Peter Brass who showed up at the Fairford mission in 1846 with his family.

92. F.A. Peake, "Abraham Cowley," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online* (2000). <http://www.biographi.ca>, retrieved 19 March 2009. Margaret was one of several children, but she was the only one to leave the Northwest for Scotland. Spencer Field, a descendant of Margaret's brother William, told me that her brothers and sisters have descendants who still live in western Canada (personal communication, 17 March 2009). Some of them applied for Half-Breed scrip; others entered into treaty. Margaret herself died too soon to have been eligible for scrip. So far, I have not identified any mixed-ancestry people who went to Scotland and then applied for scrip from there. Mr. Field very kindly supplied me with documents related to his family history and gave me permission to use them. They include portions of the journal kept by the Reverend Cowley at Fairford mission, both the original copy from microfilm and Field's transcription, and his transcrip-

tion of HBCA documents relating to John Smith and his return to Scotland with his wife, Margaret.

93. Concern for education in Lewis increased substantially in the nineteenth century. By 1825 there were nineteen schools (nine in Gaelic), and by 1866 there were forty-eight schools. Yet a quarter of the population still could not read, even in Gaelic, and a large majority (86 percent) could not write: Mackenzie, *The Book of Lews*, 183. John Smith's Gaelic name was mac Phadruig ic Mhurchaidh (genealogy compiled in 2000 by Iain Morrison, personal communication from Spencer Field, 17 March 2009).

94. HBCA C.1/846, regarding the Ships' Logs files, this one to the *Prince of Wales II*.

95. Family genealogy compiled in 2000 by Iain Morrison, personal communication from Spencer Field, 17 March 2009. According to genealogist Bill Lawson, the family appeared in the 1861 Borne census.

96. Copy of an Application for Half-breed scrip by William Brass, from LAC, RG 15, Vol. 555, file no. 167215, in the possession of Spencer Field.

97. Email posting on ancestry.com by the Smiths of Fivepenny Borne, Barvas, 11 August 2000; family genealogy compiled in 2000 by Iain Morrison, personal communication from Spencer Field, 17 March 2009.

98. Family genealogy compiled in 2000 by Iain Morrison, personal communication from Spencer Field, 17 March 2009. John and Margaret Smith's son John, who was born in 1858 (after his parents arrived in Lewis), married Mary Macdonald, a Lewis woman, and they had many children. Their daughter Isabelle married Malcolm Morrison, a first cousin to John Morrison, the son of Donald Morrison and Helen More Morrison, who was, like Margaret Brass Smith, of mixed ancestry. The two genealogies are particularly interesting because of the history of Native wives and children in many of the families.

99. According to Philip Goldring, "suspicion and occasional hostility often faced children sent from the HBC territories to be educated in Northern Scotland; their fur clothing . . . brought derision from other children who threw stones at them and shouted 'Go home, you Eskimos'" (*Papers on the Labour System of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 3:83). Unfortunately, he did not include information about his source, and we are left to guess how widespread such sentiments were and whether they were directed as well at children living with their Scottish fathers and Native wives.

100. As I learned in 1992, in Lewis it was considered a measure of the local poverty that people recycled the straw thatch to fertilize their fields after it had been well smoked by the peat fires used in the house for heat and cooking.

### (3) Christina Massan's Beadwork and the Recovery of a Fur Trade Family History

1. Bunty Atkinson, interview with Alison Brown, 19 April 2004.
2. For analyses of fur trade family relationships, see Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980); Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670–1870* (Winnipeg: Watson Dwyer, 1980); Heather Rollason Driscoll, “‘A Most Important Chain of Connection’: Marriage in the Hudson’s Bay Company,” in *From Rupert’s Land to Canada*, ed. Theodore Binnema, Gerhard J. Ens, and R.C. MacLeod (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001).
3. For discussions of the suppression and recovery of Aboriginal ancestry, see Christina Welsh, “Women in the Shadows: Reclaiming a Métis Heritage,” in *New Contexts of Canadian Criticism*, ed. Ajay Heble, Donna Palmatier Penee, and J.R. Struthers (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1997); David T. McNab, “Hiding in ‘Plane’ View: Aboriginal Identities and a Fur-Trade Company Family through Seven Generations,” in *Hidden in Plain Sight: Contributions of Aboriginal People to Canadian Identity and Culture*, ed. David R. Newhouse, Cora J. Voyageur, and Dan Beavon (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Vernon R. Wishart, *What Lies Behind the Picture?: A Personal Journey into Cree Ancestry* (Red Deer: Central Alberta Historical Society, 2006).
4. Note that in Orkney and Shetland there is much more familiarity with ancestral ties between Orkneymen and Shetlanders and their Aboriginal wives. See Pat McCormack, this volume.
5. These heirlooms and the stories connected to them of fur trade ancestors with Aboriginal wives were discussed by their owners in interviews with Brown as part of *Material Histories: Scots and Aboriginal People in the Fur Trade*, a project run by the Department of Anthropology at the University of Aberdeen, <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/materialhistories>.
6. Comparative examples of beadwork similar to that owned by the Moir family and in Glasgow Museums are illustrated in Barbara Hail and Kate C. Duncan. *Out of the North: The Subarctic Collection of the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, Brown University* (Bristol: Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, 1989). See especially page 186 for a discussion of a panel bag that is virtually identical in design to two in the Moir Family Collection. In addition, see Beth Carter, Quyen Hoang, Gerald T. Conaty, and Frederick R. McDonald, *Honouring Tradition: Reframing Native Art* (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 2008), 74–75, for an illustration of an embroidered hunting shirt, identified as Métis, of the same style as one described in a letter written by Henry Moir to his mother on 16 December 1913. The shirt he describes has been kept as an heirloom at his request by the Moir Family.

7. The beadwork was included in *Patterns of Change*, one of the inaugural displays in Kelvingrove, which opened in 2006 following a major refurbishment. Other items from the Moir Family Collection have since been displayed in the *Material Histories of the Fur Trade* exhibition, held in 2008 at Marischal Museum, University of Aberdeen, and can be viewed on the project website: <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/materialhistories/>.
8. Alison Grant, interview with Alison Brown, 12 March 2006.
9. Ibid.; Atkinson, interview with Brown, 19 April 2004.
10. Richard Moir, interview with Alison Brown, 7 August 2008.
11. Tom Moir, email communication to Alison Brown, 29 July 2008.
12. For example, a photograph of Christina Massan taken at York Factory around 1925 has been located in an album belonging to an Aberdeenshire woman whose father worked for the HBC during the 1920s.
13. Diocese of Keewatin Archives, Trout Lake Baptisms Register, no. 198. For historical context regarding Omushkegowak and the fur trade, see *Voices from Hudson Bay: Cree Stories from York Factory*, ed. Flora Beardy and Robert Coutts (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996); 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); Victor P. Lytwyn, *Muskekowuck Athinuwick: Original People of the Great Swamp Land* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2002).
14. 1911 Census of Canada. Fort Churchill, Hudson Bay, p. 1. Available online at <http://www.automatedgenealogy.com/census11/>.
15. Hudson's Bay Company Archives (hereafter HBCA), RG3/41/A#3, Fur Trade Servants Records, folio 373.
16. HBCA, B.220/a/48, Trout Lake Journal, 15 February 1911.
17. Louis Bird, "Grand Sophia's Near-Death Experience," in *Telling Our Stories: Omushkego Legends and Histories from Hudson Bay*, ed. Jennifer S.H. Brown, Paul W. DePasquale, and Mark F. Ruml (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2005), 216.
18. Diocese of Keewatin Archives, Trout Lake Mission Register, 1855–1918, 31 January 1912, no. 292. See also HBCA, B.220/a/48, Trout Lake Journal, 31 January 1912.
19. HBCA, RG3/40a/2, Fur Trade Servants Records, folio 402.
20. HBCA, B.220/a/48, Trout Lake Journal, 28 June 1913.
21. HBCA, B.220/a/48, Trout Lake Journal, 16 March 1913; Diocese of Keewatin Archives, Trout Lake Baptisms Register, no. 1523; HBCA, B. 42/a/201, Churchill Journal, 4 November 1914.

22. The surviving letters cover the period from 1912–18. There are none from Moir's first eight years in the fur trade.
23. Moir Family Papers (hereafter MFP), H.C. Moir to J. Moir, 5 May 1918.
24. Philip Godsell, *Arctic Trader: The Account of Twenty Years with the Hudson's Bay Company* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1932), 29–30. See also HBCA, E93/14, Transcript of an interview with John Gregg, folio 143. In this 1959 interview, Gregg refers to "Harry Moir" having "the best fur record" at Trout Lake.
25. MFP, H.C. Moir to Mrs. Moir, 13 December 1916.
26. MFP, H.C. Moir to S. Moir, 11 January 1916.
27. E.g. HBCA, RG3/20f/5, Report from Churchill Post Manager, 12 November 1913; HBCA, B.42/a/201, Churchill Journal, 7 March 1915.
28. MFP, H.C. Moir to S. Moir, 11 March 1918.
29. MFP, H.C. Moir to S. Moir, 11 January 1916.
30. MFP, H.C. Moir to G. Moir, 7 April 1918.
31. Atkinson, interview with Brown, 19 April 2004.
32. MFP, H.C. Moir to S. Moir, 11 March 1918. Archives of Ontario, MS 217, Diocese of Keewatin, VIII York Factory—(g) Deaths 1864–1929.
33. HBCA, B.42/a/201, Churchill Journal, 25 April 1915. Before the brief references to Jessie were located in the HBC records Moir's descendants were unaware that Henry and Christina had a daughter as well as three sons.
34. HBCA, B. 239/a/190, York Factory Journal, 3 September 1919.
35. HBCA, B.42/a/204, Churchill Journal, 6 November 1919.
36. Atkinson, interview with Brown, 19 April 2004.
37. Anon., "Harry Moir is Pneumonia Victim," *Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, 17 February 1920, 6.
38. HBCA, B. 239/a/190, York Factory Journal, 25 February 1920; HBCA, B. 239/a/190, York Factory Journal, 22 March 1920.
39. HBCA, B.42/a/205, Churchill Journal, 30 March 1920.
40. Following his colleague's death, Mitchell delayed his vacation for several months to oversee the post. A close friend of Henry Moir, Mitchell may have acted as an intermediary between Christina and Moir's family and the executors of his will.
41. MFP, W.R. Mitchell to S. Moir, 14 April 1920.
42. MFP, H.C. Moir to S. Moir, 11 March 1918.

43. Atkinson, interview with Brown, 19 April 2004; Grant, interview with Brown, 12 March 2006.
44. On the fur trade practice of “placing” children with relatives, see Jennifer S.H. Brown, “Ultimate Respectability: Fur-trade Children in the ‘Civilized World,’” *The Beaver Outfit* 308, Winter 1977:4–10 (Part 1) and Spring 1978:48–57 (Part 2).
45. Provincial Archives of Manitoba. Will of Henry Cook Moir, 15 February 1920. M634 Court of Queen’s Bench Probate Division, Dauphin, App. no. 563, Book 2, folio 77.
46. Ibid.
47. MFP, W. Butler, Royal Trust Company, Winnipeg, to G. Moir, 24 January 1921.
48. Beardy and Coutts, 139.
49. The story within the Gibeault Family is that Christina was told that the boys would visit her when their schooling was complete, but these plans were abandoned after her death. Dorothy Morand, interview with Alison Brown, 9 July 2006.
50. MFP, W. Butler, Royal Trust Company, Winnipeg, to G. Moir, 24 January 1921.
51. Atkinson, interview with Brown, 19 April 2004.
52. HBCA, B. 42/a/205, Churchill Journal, 15 August 1920.
53. HBCA, B. 239/a/190, York Factory Journal, 3 February 1921; BCA, B. 239/a/190, York Factory Journal, 1 March 1921.
54. HBCA, B. 239/a/190, York Factory Journal, 3 May 1921.
55. HBCA, B. 239/a/190, York Factory Journal, 10 August 1921.
56. MFP, copy of letter from G.O. Vale, Royal Trust Company, Winnipeg, to R. Parsons, HBC, Labrador District Office, 26 May 1921. See also telegram from Royal Trust Company to S. Moir, 12 September 1921.
57. Grant, interview with Brown, 12 March 2006.
58. MFP, H.C. Moir to Mrs Moir, 13 December 1916.
59. These two letters are written in a different hand. The tone of the earlier letter is more formal and the grammar is more correct than the letter written in 1929.
60. Indeed, Tom and Ronald Moir knew that their mother had remarried, and though no letter containing this news has been located to date, Christina’s letter of 20 January 1924 was signed “Christina Gibeault.” T. Moir, email communication to Brown, 29 July 2008.
61. MFP, C. Gibeault to S. Moir, 20 January 1924.
62. MFP, C. Massan to T. and R. Moir, 30 November 1929.

63. Grant, interview with Brown, 12 March 2006.
64. Ronald Moir was eventually granted a Canadian passport.
65. Richard Moir, interview with Alison Brown, 30 July 2007.
66. <http://www.foxlakecreenation.com>
67. Christina Massan, interview with Alison Brown, 14 July 2006.
68. Brenda (Macdonald) O'Connor, interview with Alison Brown, 14 July 2006.
69. We note that the elders who have generously shared their knowledge with us are bilingual. Cree is their first language and was spoken within the home, and they received tuition in English at mission schools, either at York Factory or outside of the community. Fur trade life was demanding, and sometimes required children to be away from school with their parents. As well as this, the inconsistent provision of English language tuition within the schools has meant that many did not have the opportunity to complete their formal schooling and prefer to express themselves in Cree. Some of the discussions that inform this chapter were in Cree, with Christina Massan [author] translating; in other cases, the elders spoke in English. We ask that readers bear this point in mind.
70. Diocese of Keewatin Archives, York Factory Baptisms Registers, 1921, no. 64.
71. HBCA, Fur Trade Servants Records, RG3/40/a/1, folio 428; HBCA B.42/a/205, Churchill Journal, 30 March 1920. Macdonald was from Halifax, Nova Scotia, and retired to Winnipeg in 1925 after eleven years of service with the HBC.
72. HBCA B.42/a/205, Churchill Journal, 23 August 1920.
73. Diocese of Keewatin Archives, York Factory Burial Register, no. 376.
74. Morand, interview with Brown, 9 July 2006.
75. Diocese of Keewatin Archives, York Factory Marriage Register, 26 January 1922, no. 269. Christina signed her name in syllabics as “Calastina Malia Massan.”
76. Dorothy Morand, personal communication by telephone to Brown, 16 February 2007.
77. Morand, interview with Brown, 9 July 2006.
78. Two of Christina Massan's granddaughters have co-authored this paper. Alison Christine Grant is the daughter of Ronald Moir, and Christina Massan is Bill Macdonald's daughter. Her own granddaughter is named Khrystyna Massan.
79. Massan, interview with Brown, 14 July 2006.
80. Grant, interview with Brown, 12 March 2006.

#### (4) Repositioning the Missionary:

##### Sara Riel, the Grey Nuns, and Aboriginal Women in Catholic Missions of the Northwest

1. “Depart de Mgr. Grandin,” *Le Métis*, 22 June 1871, 2. Unless stated otherwise, all translations are the author’s own.
2. Sara Riel to Julie Riel, 10 August 1871. Unless stated otherwise, all letters from Sara Riel are from the Riel papers, Provincial Archives of Manitoba (PAM).
3. Robert Gosman, *The Riel and Lagimodière Families in Métis Society, 1840–1860* (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1977 [1975]), 4; Personal files, Grey Nuns’ Archives, St. Boniface (GNASB). This collection is now housed at the Grey Nuns’ Archives, Montreal.
4. Catherine A. Cavanaugh, “‘No Place for a Woman’: Engendering Western Canadian Settlement,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 28 (Winter 1997), 501. On fears of *métissage*, see Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 110.
5. For Taché’s vision, see Raymond J.A. Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface: The “Good Fight” and the Illusive Vision* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2003), particularly 94–96.
6. “Le vallon Marguerite Marie,” in George F.G. Stanley, Raymond J.A. Huel, Gilles Martel, Thomas Flanagan, and Glenn Campbell, eds., *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985), December 1878, A4–006.
7. Mary V. Jordan, *To Louis from Your Sister Who Loves You, Sara Riel* (Toronto: Griffin House, 1974) and *De ta sœur, Sara Riel* (St. Boniface: Éditions des Plaines, 1980).
8. Thomas Flanagan, *Louis “David” Riel: Prophet of the New World*, rev. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996 [1979]), 92–94.
9. Carolyn G. Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman’s Life* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1988), 21.
10. See, Lesley A. Erickson, “‘Bury Our Sorrows in the Sacred Heart’: Gender and the Métis Response to Colonialism—The Case of Sara and Louis Riel, 1848–83,” in *Unsettled Pasts: Reconceiving the West through Women’s History*, ed. Sarah Carter, Lesley Erickson, Patricia Roome, and Char Smith (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005), 17–46.
11. Joan Sangster, “Archiving Feminist Histories: Women, the ‘Nation’ and Meta-narratives in Canadian Historical Writing,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 29, no. 3 (2006): 260. See Sylvia Van Kirk, *“Many Tender Ties”: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670–1870* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980).

12. On women religious as auxiliaries, see Mary McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth (The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate)* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1995) and Raymond J.A. Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis: The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Western Canada, 1845–1945* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1995).
13. On the myth of silence in historical writing on Aboriginal women in Canada, see Mary-Ellen Kelm and Lorna Townsend, “In the Days of Our Grandmothers: Introduction,” in *In the Days of Our Grandmothers: A Reader in Aboriginal Women's History in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 3–25. On the silences that continue to mark historical treatments of Aboriginal women based on documents produced by male observers or colonial agents, see Janice Forsyth, “After the Fur Trade: First Nations Women in Canadian History, 1850–1950,” in “Indigenous Women: The State of Our Nations,” special issue, *Atlantis: A Women's Study Journal* 29, no. 2 (2005): 69–78. For a discussion of “cultural crossroads” as an interpretive framework for western history, see Peggy Pascoe, “Western Women at the Cultural Crossroads,” in *Trails: Towards a New Western History*, ed. Patricia Nelson Limerick, Clyde A. Milner II, and Charles E. Rankin (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1991), 40–58.
14. Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 14–17; Robert Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on the Northwest* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1995), 9–11.
15. Quoted in G. Dugas, “Établissement des Sœurs de Charité à la Rivière Rouge,” *Revue Canadienne* (1891): 720.
16. Donald Chaput, “The ‘Misses Nolin’ of Red River,” *The Beaver Outfit* 306 (Winter 1975): 14–17.
17. J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 8 August 1841, quoted in Diane Payment, “‘La vie en rose’: Métis Women at Batoche, 1870–1920,” in *Women of the First Nations: Power, Wisdom, Strength*, ed. Christine Miller and Patricia Chuchryk (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1996), 22.
18. George Barclay, “Grey Nuns in the Far North,” *The Beaver Outfit* 297 (Winter 1966): 15–18.
19. Flanagan, *Louis “David” Riel*, 3; Gosman, *Riel and Lagimodière Families*, 79–85.
20. Payment, “La vie en rose,” 2.
21. Flanagan, *Louis “David” Riel*, 3–4.
22. Sara Riel to Julie Riel, 6 March 1882.
23. Sarah Carter, “The Woman’s Sphere: Domestic Life at Riel House and Dalnavert,” *Manitoba History* 11 (1986): 57.
24. Gosman, *Riel and Lagimodière Families*, 6–59.

25. A.-A. Taché to I. Bourget, 22 May 1851, quoted and translated in George F.G. Stanley, *Louis Riel* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1963), 20.
26. Ronald P. Zimmer, “Early Oblate Attempts for Indian and Metis Priests in Canada,” *Études Oblates* (October–December 1973): 277–78.
27. Quoted in Estelle Mitchell, *The Grey Nuns of Montreal and the Red River Settlement, 1844–1984* (Montreal: Éditions du Méridien, 1987), 75.
28. Elizabeth de Moissac, “The Grey Nuns in Red River: Education Institutions, 1844–1974,” unpublished manuscript, trans. Hedwidge Neuman, p. 9, GNASB; Chronicles, 31 December 1860, GNASB.
29. Sherry Farrelle Racette, “Sewing for a Living: The Commodification of Métis Women’s Artistic Production,” in *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada’s Colonial Past*, ed. Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005), 21.
30. Chronicles, 1871, GNASB.
31. Sister Charlebois, *Notes and Sketches Collected from a Voyage in the North-West by a Sister of Charity of Montreal for the furtherance of a Charitable Object* (Montreal: Callahan, Book and Job Printer, 1875), 7.
32. Chronicles, 1 August 1862, GNASB; Sara Riel to Octavie, Eulalie, and Henriette Riel, 13 October 1870 and 29 January 1871.
33. See Aileen Mary Brewer, *Nuns and the Education of American Catholic Women, 1860–1920* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1987), 34–84.
34. Sara Riel, notebook, 1861–63, pp. 274–75, PAM, Riel papers.
35. Ibid.
36. Marta Danylewycz, *Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood, and Spinsterhood in Quebec* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987), 39–41.
37. Henriette Taché to Hedwidge Lafrance, 1861, Chronicles, GNASB.
38. Sara Riel to Henriette Taché, 31 December 1863, Taché papers, Archbishop’s Archives, St. Boniface (AASB), no. 1465.
39. Sara Riel to Azoline (?), 12 October 1862, notebook.
40. Mitchell, *Grey Nuns of Montreal and the Red River Settlement*, 20.
41. Brewer, *Nuns and the Education of American Catholic Women*, 93–98.
42. Personal files, GNASB.
43. Diane Payment, *Riel Family: Home and Lifestyle at St. Vital, 1860–1910*, report no. 379 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1980), 71–72.

44. Frits Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Red River Resistance, 1869–1870* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer Publishing, 1991), 106, 108–10.
45. Mitchell, *Grey Nuns of Montreal and the Red River Settlement*, 9.
46. Quoted in Elizabeth de Moissac, “La femme de l’Ouest: Leur rôle dans la histoire” (MA thesis, University of Ottawa, 1945), 63.
47. De Moissac, “Grey Nuns in Red River,” 2–8; Luc Dauphinais, *Histoire de Saint-Boniface*, vol. 1 (St. Boniface: Les Éditions du Blé, 1991), 194–95.
48. Chronicles, 1853 and July 1859, GNASB.
49. Valade to McMullen, July 1845, Correspondence, doc. 17 and 18, GNASB.
50. See Valade to McMullen, 28 December 1844, Correspondence, doc. 2, GNASB; Mitchell, *Grey Nuns of Montreal and the Red River Settlement*, 11.
51. Jordan, *To Louis from Your Sister Who Loves You*, 8.
52. Chronicles, vol. 3, 1869–83, GNASB; Personal files, GNASB.
53. Quoted in Penny Petrone, ed., *First People, First Voices* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 111–15.
54. Personal files, GNASB; Mitchell, *Grey Nuns of Montreal and the Red River Settlement*, 37; Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 188–89.
55. Personal files, GNASB; de Moissac, “Grey Nuns in Red River: Educational Institutions,” 10; Mitchell, *Grey Nuns of Montreal and the Red River Settlement*, 77.
56. See Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché*, 94–96.
57. Sara Riel to J. Slocombe, 15 March 1868, Correspondence, GNASB.
58. Sara Riel to Louis Riel, 25 November 1870.
59. A.-A. Taché to Henriette Taché, 26 December 1845, quoted in Dom Benoit, *Vie de Mgr. Taché*, vol. 1 (Montreal: Librairie Beauchemin, 1904), 95–96.
60. Quoted and interviewed in W.J. Healey, *Women of Red River* (Winnipeg: Women’s Canadian Club, 1923), 111.
61. Chronicles, February 1869, GNASB; Mitchell, *Grey Nuns of Montreal and the Red River Settlement*, 40, 42–44.
62. Personal files, GNASB; de Moissac, “Grey Nuns in Red River: Educational Institutions, 1844–1974,” 9, 82.
63. Personal files, GNASB.
64. De Moissac, “Grey Nuns in Red River, 10.

65. Irene Drouin, "La Qualité de l'esprit de Sara Riel," *La Liberté*, November 1985; Anonymous, "Connaissez-vous Sara Riel, sœur de Louis Riel?" typescript, revised by Gilberte Guibord, GNASB. On the St. Norbert convent, see Anonymous, *Couvent de Saint-Norbert, 1858–1988* (St. Boniface: n.p., 1958); Mary Guichon, *Développement des œuvres des Sœurs Grises au Manitoba depuis leur fondation à Saint Boniface* (St. Boniface: Maison Provinciale de Sœur Grises, 1944), 16–18.
66. Chronicles, February 1869, GNASB.
67. Ibid., December 1869.
68. Sara Riel to Louis Riel, 21 September 1870.
69. Mitchell, *Grey Nuns of Montreal and the Red River Settlement*, 139.
70. Sara Riel to Louis Riel, 7 September 1868.
71. Quoted in Elizabeth de Moissac, "Les Sœurs Grises et les événements de 1869–70," *La Société Canadienne d'Histoire de l'Église Catholique, Sessions D'étude* (1970): 215.
72. Sara Riel to Julie Riel, 18 October 1869; Rossel Vien, "Sara Riel, témoin de son temps," unpublished paper presented to the St. Boniface Historical Society, 9 February 1968, 4.
73. Sara Riel to Louis Riel, 21 September 1870.
74. Jordan, *To Louis from Your Sister Who Loves You*, 27.
75. Sara Riel to Louis Riel, 25 November 1870.
76. Natalie Kermoal, "Les rôles et les souffrances des femmes métisses lors de la Résistance de 1870 et de la Rébellion de 1885," *Prairie Forum* 19 (Fall 1994): 157–58; Sara Riel to Louis Riel, 21 September 1870.
77. Personal files, GNASB; Charlebois to Slocombe, 9 June 1871, GNASB.
78. Jordan, *To Louis from Your Sister Who Loves You*, 23.
79. Ibid., 25.
80. Ibid.
81. Annals, vol. 3, 1862–63, p. 102, GNASB.
82. Sara Riel to Joseph Dubuc, January 1881.
83. Sara Riel to Joseph Dubuc, 3 January 1872; "Mission Observes Centennial," *Star Phoenix*, 21 June 1946; Thomas Fawcett, "Exploratory Survey of Athabasca and Churchill Rivers," Annual Report, Department of the Interior, 1888, Part II, CSP 1889, paper no. 151, p. 77, Saskatchewan Archives Board; William McMurray, "Remarks Regarding the HBC Posts in the Upper English River, 10 January 1873,

Île-à-la-Crosse, Correspondence, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, B/89/b4; Chronicles, Ste. Famille Convent, Île-à-la-Crosse, 1872, and "Île-a-la-Crosse: Historique, 1860–1892," Annals, 1882, Grey Nuns' Archives, Province of Alberta and Saskatchewan, Edmonton (GNAAS).

84. See Alexandre-Antonin Taché, "Letter from Bishop Alexandre Taché to His Mother, Concerning His Life with the Chipewyan Nation," *Prairie Forum* 3 (Fall 1978): 141. See, for instance, Heather Rollason, "Some Comments upon the Marked Differences in the Representations of Chipewyan Women in Samuel Hearne's Field Notes and His Published Journal," in *Earth, Water, Air and Fire: Studies in Canadian Ethnohistory*, ed. David McNab (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1998), 263–74.

85. V.J. Grandin, circular letter, 14 April 1872, Oblate papers, Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton.

86. Oblates of Mary Immaculate, *Règles et constitutions*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Typographie A. Hennuyer, 1877), 65.

87. Chronicles, 30 August 1871, GNAAS.

88. Sara Riel to Julie Riel, 12 January 1872.

89. Sara Riel to the Riel Family, 11 August 1873; Sara Riel to Eulalie Riel, 10 January 1874; Sara Riel to Joseph Dubuc, 3 January 1872.

90. Chronicles, 26 August 1873, GNAAS; Sara Riel to Joseph Dubuc, 14 January 1875.

91. Légéard to Martinet, 10 November 1873, *Missions* 15 (1877): 323.

92. Sara Riel to Louis Riel, 6 August 1874.

93. Sara Riel to the Riel Family, 24 June 1876.

94. Légéard to Martinet, 10 November 1873, *Missions* 15 (1877): 323.

95. Chronicles, 17 October 1874, GNAAS; Sara Riel to A.-A. Taché, 20 January 1876, AASB.

96. Sara Riel to A.-A. Taché, 17 May 1875, AASB.

97. Légéard to Martinet, 10 November 1873, *Missions* 15 (1877): 537; Sara Riel to A.-A. Taché, 1879, AASB.

98. Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 69.

99. Sara Riel to her aunts and uncles, 2 August 1880; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 12; "Petition of the Indians of Île-à-la-Crosse to John Christian Schultz, 28 July 1883," John Christian Schultz correspondence, PAM, trans. Vital Grandin.

100. Sara Riel to Louis Riel, 6 August 1874.

101. Chronicles, 27 September 1873, GNAAS; Sara Riel to Louis Riel, 6 August 1874.
102. Robert Longpré, *Ile-a-la-Crosse, 1776–1976* (Île-à-la-Crosse: Ile-a-la-Crosse Bi-Centennial Committee, 1977), 26; Chronicles, 17 January 1874, GNAAS; Germaine Lesage, *Capitale d'une solitude* (Ottawa: Éditions des Études Oblates, 1946); Légéard to Martinet, *Missions*, 10 November 1873; Sara Riel to A.-A. Taché, 12 July 1880.
103. See Danylewycz, *Taking the Veil*, passim; Nancy Shoemaker, "Kateri Tekakwitha's Tortuous Path to Sainthood," in *Negotiators of Change: Historical Perspectives on Native American Women*, ed. Nancy Shoemaker (New York: Routledge, 1995), 49–71.
104. Mitchell, *The Grey Nuns of Montreal*, 83.
105. See Robin Brownlie and Mary-Ellen Kelm, "Desperately Seeking Absolution: Native Agency as Colonialist Alibi," *Canadian Historical Review* 75, no. 4 (1994): 643–56. For a recent exploration of integration and accommodation in Canadian history, see John Ralston Saul, *A Fair Country: Telling Truths about Canada* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2008).

## **(5) The “Accomplished” Odille Quintal Morison: Tsimshian Cultural Intermediary of Metlakatla, British Columbia**

1. Although there has been a recent change in the spelling of the group affiliation of this First Nation, I chose to use the former standardized spelling of *Tsimshian* for clarification only.
2. Jean Barman, *The West beyond West: A History of British Columbia*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 168.
3. Brian Hosmer, *American Indians in the Marketplace: Persistence and Innovation among the Menominees and Metlakatlans, 1870–1920* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1999), 14.
4. Jay Miller, *Tsimshian Culture: A Light Through the Ages* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 137.
5. Adele Perry, “The Autocracy of Love and the Legitimacy of Empire: Intimacy, Power and Scandal in Nineteenth-Century Metlakatlah,” *Gender and History* 16 (August 2004): 271.
6. Letter, dated 12 June 1870, Aldous Family Collection.
7. Hosmer, *American Indians in the Marketplace*, 119.
8. Perry, “The Autocracy of Love,” 271.
9. Researchers are limited by the lack of references in the missionary record regarding the importance and influence of these matrilineal role models of the mission village and the role of women in these communities in general. See Peter Murray, *The Devil and Mr. Duncan* (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1985), 112.
10. It is impossible to track Mary Curtis’ various movements other than the few primary references in Odille’s letters. The reference to Mary Quintal/Curtis’ “husband” was made by former HBC factor William McNeill in a letter to Duncan dated March 1867. The letter actually concerned the behaviour of his own spouse and Nisga’a chieftess, Neshaki (Martha McNeill). Duncan’s correspondence is available on microfilm at the University of British Columbia Library.
11. Edward Cridge, *Sketch of The Rise and Progress of Metlakatlah in the Diocese of British Columbia* (London: Church Missionary Society, 1868), 11–12.
12. Susan Neylan, *The Heavens Are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2003), 108.

13. Ibid. See Neylan's discussion on Native teachers and Tsimshian criticism of missionary workers on pages 230–32.
14. "Ayaawx (laws) form the foundation of social organization of the Ts'msyen [Tsimshian]. Ayaawx are the ancient rules that govern how the culture is organized and ensure its cultural continuity today. Ayaawx anchor the present to the past and ensure future generations preserve the integrity of the culture by following the laws and customs of the people." Ken Campbell, *Persistence and Change: A History of Ts'ymsyen Nation* (Prince Rupert, BC: Tsimshian Nation and School District 52, 2005), 35.
15. See Campbell, *Persistence and Change*, 58.
16. See the obituary of "Mary Wiah," *Prince Rupert Evening Empire*, 27 December 1917.
17. Ken Campbell, email to author, fall 2004.
18. Miller, *Tsimshian Culture*, 19.
19. See Neylan, *The Heavens Are Changing*, 106–9.
20. Gail Edwards, "'The Picturesqueness of His Accent and Speech: Methodist Missionary Narratives and William Henry Pierce's Autobiography,'" in *Canadian Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples: Representing Religion at Home and Abroad*, ed. Alvyn Austin and Jamie Scott (Toronto: University Toronto Press, 2005), 67–68.
21. See Neylan, *The Heavens Are Changing*, 77–104.
22. Campbell, *Persistence and Change*, 66.
23. Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 31.
24. William Duncan to Odeal Quintall, University of British Columbia Library, microfilm. The transcription of this copy has proved to be difficult as many words are crossed out and impossible to be accurately read. Duncan wrote this working draft and the final letter, which was likely presented to Odille. The original copy of the final letter did not survive.
25. Odille Morison to William Duncan, 12 June 1870.
26. Jean Barman, email to author, November 2007.
27. Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849–1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 273.
28. Hosmer, *American Indians in the Marketplace*, 214.

29. Vicky (Morison) Aldous-Sims, interview with Imbert Orchard, Imbert Orchard Collection, British Columbia Archives (recorded Winter 1962), BC Archives, T0311:0001–4.
30. Jan Hare and Jean Barman, eds., *Good Intentions Gone Awry* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006), 115.
31. Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 16.
32. Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographic Change in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000), 268.
33. Vicky (Morison) Aldous-Sims, interview.
34. Charles F. Morison, *Reminiscences of British Columbia from 1862, by a Pioneer of the Northwest Coast*, 1919, unpublished manuscript, BC Archives, 81.
35. A detailed description of the Weah's [*sic*] death and the missionary responses to it appear in A.E. Harrison, *The Hydah Mission Queen Charlotte Island: An Account of the Mission and the People With a Descriptive Letter from Rev. Charles Harrison* (London: Church Missionary Society, 1885). Harrison describes how his wife was recovering from the birth of a baby girl and how none of the women would attend her while they were looking after and then mourning Weah in October 1883. Given Mary Weah's profession as a midwife, it is interesting to see how First Nations protocols (as Weah's spouse) took precedence over the birth of a White child. The newborn girl also died, much to the anger and grief of missionary Harrison.
36. Although this letter is not signed by Odille, the handwriting is clearly hers. For a detailed discussion of this correspondence, see chap. 5 in *One-Sided Conversations: Chapters in the Life of Odille Morison*, by Maureen Louise Atkinson, MAIS major project, Athabasca University, 2008 (available online through AU library website).
37. Morison, *Reminiscences of British Columbia*, 78.
38. Courtesy of Archives of the Diocese of Caledonia (p-994–018–19–166).
39. William Henry Collison, *In the Wake of the War Canoe*, ed. Charles Lillard (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1981), 208n88. (Original publication date was 1915.)
40. Vicky Morison was very careful not to say anything negative about the Ridleys but did mention that her brother had called Bishop Ridley a snob. Vicky (Morison) Aldous-Sims, interview, winter 1962.
41. General Touch and Reverend W.R. Blackett, *Report of the Deputation to Metlakatla* (London: Church Missionary Society, 1886), 3.
42. James McDonald, *People of the Robin* (Edmonton: CCI Press, 2003), 14–15.

43. Neylan, *The Heavens Are Changing*, 142–43.
44. Helen Dallain, *What I Remember*. The BC Centennial Anthology Committee 1958 (fonds), BC Archives, CR-2080.
45. “Affidavit of Lewis Gosnell,” in *Letter From the Methodist Missionary Society to the Superintendent of Indian Affairs respecting the British Columbia Troubles* (Toronto: Methodist Church Missionary Society, 1889), 50.
46. Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 8.
47. Ronald Rohner, *The Ethnography of Franz Boas: Letters and Diaries of Franz Boas Written on the Northwest Coast from 1886 to 1931* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 93.
48. Original *Proverbs* document appears in Campbell, *Persistence and Change*, 66–69. Please note this version includes revisions and further suggestions made by Tsimshian informant William Beynon in consultation with elders after Odille’s death in 1933.
49. Letter of Odille Morrison to Franz Boas, 8 December 1888, Boas Papers, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.
50. Douglas Cole, *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Artifacts*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 114–16.
51. Letter of Franz Boas to Mrs. O. Morison, 27 June 1891, Aldous Family Collection. Only one page of this document survives.
52. Marius Barbeau, *Totem Poles According to Location*, vol. 2 (Ottawa: Department of Resource Development, National Museum of Civilization, 1950), 460–61.
53. Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 45.
54. After a detailed search, I contacted the Chicago Field Museum in 2004 to see if they had any documentary material available. I was sent a copy of the fonds (Accession 60) by Field Museum researcher Isobobel Tovar. The “all clans” totem pole was sold in the mid-1930s and then donated in the early 1960s to a YMCA camp in northeast Minnesota, where it still stands.
55. See Jean Barman and Linda Hale, *British Columbia Local Histories: A Bibliography*. (Victoria: BC Heritage Trust, 1991). For more recent discussions on British Columbia narratives and constructed identities, see Mia Reimers, “BC at it Most Sparkling, Colourful Best”: Post-war Province Building through Centennial Celebrations, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Victoria, 2007, pp. 126–134.

## **(6) Obscured Obstetrics: Indigenous Midwives in Western Canada**

1. For examples of cultural persistence and resistance during this period see: Sarah Carter, "First Nations Women and Colonization on the Canadian Prairies, 1870s–1920s," in *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History*, 4th ed., ed. Veronica Strong-Boag et al. (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2002), 135–48, and Kristin Burnett, "The Healing Work and Nursing Care of Aboriginal Women, Female Medical Missionaries, Nursing Sisters, Public Health Nurses, and Female Attendants in Southern Alberta First Nations Communities, 1880–1930" (PhD diss., York University, 2006).
2. This paper, in large part, focuses on the Treaty 7 area and Alberta because of the richness of the sources, and the health care work of Indigenous and non-Indigenous women in Treaty 7 communities was the focus of my doctoral dissertation.
3. Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2005), 9.
4. Susan Armitage, "Making Connections: Gender, Race, and Place in Oregon Country," in *One Step Over the Line: Toward a History of Women in the North American Wests*, ed. Elizabeth Jameson and Sheila McManus (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008), 67.
5. Linda Gordon, "Internal Colonialism and Gender," in *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, ed. Ann Laura Stoler (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 429–31.
6. Ann Laura Stoler, "Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies," in *Haunted by Empire*, 35.
7. Andrew Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 159.
8. Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 126.
9. Sarah Carter, "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion: Constructing the Indian Woman in the Early Settlement Era in Western Canada." *Great Plains Quarterly* 14 (Summer 1993): 187–88.
10. For examples of this see John Lutz, "Gender and Work in Lekwammen Families," in *Gendered Pasts: Historical Essays in Femininity and Masculinity in Canada*, ed. Kathryn McPherson et al. (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1999), 91–104; and Carter, "First Nations Women and Colonization on the Prairie," 141.
11. Regina Flannery, *Ellen Smallboy: Glimpses of a Cree Woman's Life* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 51.

12. M.K. Lux, Assiniboine field notes, Kay Thompson interview, January 1998. Cited in Maureen Lux, *Medicine That Walks: Disease, Medicine, and Canadian Plains Native People, 1880–1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 95–96.
13. Veronica Strong-Boag and Kathryn McPherson, “The Confinement of Women: Childbirth and Hospitalization in Vancouver, 1919–1930,” *BC Studies*, no. 69–70 (Spring/Summer 1986): 147.
14. For an example see Lesley Biggs, “The Case of the Missing Midwives: A History of Midwifery in Ontario from 1795–1900,” *Ontario History* 65, no. 1 (1983): 21–35.
15. Lesley Biggs, “Rethinking the History of Midwifery in Canada,” in *Reconceiving Midwifery*, ed. Ivy Lynn Bourgeault et al. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), 20–21.
16. Dena Carroll and Cecilia Benoit, “Aboriginal Midwifery in Canada: Merging Traditional Practices and Modern Science,” in *Reconceiving Midwifery*, 266; Ivy Lynn Bourgeault, *Push: The Struggle for Midwifery in Ontario* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007), 43–44.
17. For a history of maternity homes in Saskatchewan, see: Laurel Halladay “We’ll See You Next Year: Maternity Homes in the First Half of the Twentieth Century” (MA thesis, Carleton University, 1996). Second-generation maternity homes in the West were different from their first generation counterparts, which were designed to reform and contain the immorality of unwed mothers. In the Prairie West maternity homes operated in areas where the population remained too low to justify the establishment of a hospital. Near the end of their pregnancy, women would travel to the homes in order to be attended by someone knowledgeable about childbirth. After the birth women stayed in the home to recuperate; stays could last anywhere from three to eight weeks.
18. Burnett, “The Healing Work and Nursing Care of Aboriginal Women,” 222–52.
19. Cynthia Comacchio, *Nations are Built of Babies: Saving Ontario’s Mothers and Children, 1900–1945* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 14.
20. Sharon Richardson, “Frontier Health Care: Alberta’s District and Municipal Nursing Services, 1919 to 1976,” *Alberta History* 46, no. 1 (Winter 1998): 3.
21. Irene Steward, *These Were Our Yesterdays: A History of District Nursing in Alberta* (Calgary: Friesen Printers, 1979), 11.
22. Sharon Richardson, “Alberta’s Provincial Travelling Clinic, 1924–42,” *CBHM/BCHM*, 19 (2002): 90.
23. Nanci Langford, “Childbirth on the Canadian Prairies, 1880–1930,” in *Telling Tales: Essays in Western Women’s History*, ed. Catherine Cavanaugh and Randi Warne (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000), 147–73.

24. Burnett, "The Healing Work and Nursing Care of Aboriginal Women," 222–52.
25. Treaty 7 Elders and Tribal Council et al., *The True Spirit and Original Intent of Treaty 7* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996).
26. Flora Zaharia, and Leo Fox, eds., *Kitomahkitapiiminnooniksi: Stories from Our Elders*. 3 Vols. (Edmonton: Donahue House, 1995).
27. Ibid.
28. Wendy Mitchinson, *Giving Birth in Canada, 1900–1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 280–97.
29. Library and Archives of Canada (LAC) RG10/1540, Blood Hospital Monthly Reports, October 1923 to November 1924. Glenbow Archives (GA), Lucien M. and Jane Richardson Hanks fonds, M8458 box 3 file 64, 1.
30. Kristin Burnett, "Building the System: Churches, Missionary Organizations, the Federal State, and Health Care in Southern Alberta Treaty 7 Communities, 1890–1931," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 41, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 18–41.
31. Carroll and Benoit, "Aboriginal Midwifery in Canada," 265–71.
32. Agnes Red Crow, *Kitomahkitapiiminnooniksi*, 1:102.
33. Frank Eagle Tail Feathers, *Kitomahkitapiiminnooniksi*, 2:15.
34. Allan Shade, *Kitomahkitapiiminnooniksi*, 2:53.
35. Beverly Hungry Wolf, *The Ways of My Grandmothers* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1980), 191–94.
36. GA, Lucien M. and Jane Richardson Hanks fonds, M8458, box 3: file 64, 175.
37. GA, Esther Goldfrank fonds, M243, 43.
38. Diamond Jenness, *The Sarcee Indians of Alberta* (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1938), 26.
39. GA, Esther Goldfrank fonds, m243, 43.
40. Carroll, "Aboriginal Midwifery in Canada," 265–71.
41. Saskatchewan Archives Board (SAB), X.2, Pioneer Questionnaire, file 8, health, Mrs. Priscilla Spencer 1878; Esther Maud Goldsmith, 1884; and Robert Digid, 1902.
42. Grant MacEwan, . . . *And Mighty Women Too: Stories of Notable Western Canadian Women*. (Saskatoon: Western Producer Books, 1975), 1–6.
43. Stephen Hume, *Lilies and Fireweed: Frontier Women of British Columbia* (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 2004), 73–76.

44. Margaret Ormsby, ed., *A Pioneer Gentlewoman in British Columbia: The Recollections of Susan Allison* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1976), 28.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., 60.
47. Ruth Matheson Buck, *The Doctor Rode Side-Saddle* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), 58.
48. Emmy Preston, ed., *Pioneers of Grandview District* (Steinbach, MB: Carillon Press, 1976), 103.
49. Ibid., 102–3.
50. Langford, “Childbirth on the Canadian Prairies,” 156.
51. The Fort Vermilion Agricultural and Marilee Toews, eds., *Wilderness Outpost: The Fort Vermilion Memoir of Mary B. Lawrence, 1898–1907* (Calgary: Alberta Historical Society, 2008), 159.
52. Ibid.
53. Mitchinson, *Giving Birth in Canada*, 185.
54. St. Albert Historical Society, *The Black Robe’s Vision: A History of St. Albert and District*, vol. 1 (St. Albert: St. Albert Historical Society, 1985), 206.
55. Cleardale History Book Committee, *The Clear Vision: A History of the Cleardale Area* (Cleardale: Cleardale History Book Committee, n.d.), 261.
56. SAB, X.2, Pioneer Questionnaire, file 8, health, Mrs. Jane Victoria Carmichael, born 1887, Rocanville, Saskatchewan.
57. SAB, R-176, I#22, Regina Women’s Canadian Club Convention 1924: Essays on Pioneer Days.
58. Colinton History Book Club, *Colinton and Districts: Yesterday and Today* (Colinton: Colinton History Book Club, 1980), 199.
59. Goodridge Social and Agricultural Society, *Harvest of Memories: A History of the Districts of Beaverton, Goodridge, Larkin, Maloy, Truman, and White Rat* (Goodridge: Goodridge Social and Agricultural Society, 1999), 213.
60. SAB, Effie Storer Papers, unpublished manuscript, “The Story of My Life, 1868–1940,” 10.
61. Ibid., 11.
62. Sheila McManus, *The Line Which Separates: Race, Gender, and the Making of the Alberta-Montana Borderlands* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2005). See also Carter, *Capturing Women*.

63. Elizabeth Bailey Price, "Pioneers of the Foothills," *Maclean's Magazine*, 1 July 1927, 85. Annie McDougall, "Pioneer Life in the 1870s," *Alberta History*, 46, no. 2 (1998): 26.

64. Price, "Pioneers of the Foothills," 85.

65. E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin Books, 1963), 12.

66. GA, F.C. Cornish papers, M266, recollections and papers as a pioneer Indian Agent, 13.

67. Ibid.

68. Smith, *Conquest*, 9.

## (7) Sophie Morigeau: Free Trader, Free Woman

1. No most appropriate terminology exists to describe persons of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous descent. The words *halfbreed*, *miscegenation*, and *hybrid* have biological as well as socially negative connotations. The terms *Métis* and *métis*, originating in the fur trade, have acquired legal and ethnogenesis connotations limiting their relevance to particular historical, geographical, and cultural settings; see Jean Barman and Mike Evans, “Reflections on Being, and Becoming, Métis in British Columbia,” *BC Studies: The British Columbian Quarterly* 161 (Spring 2009): 59–91.

2. Carol Ray, “Sophie Morigeau: Trading Across the Boundaries” (MA thesis, University of Wyoming, 2001); *Crossing Boundaries: The Story of Sophie Morigeau*, video available from KSKC Public Television, Salish Kootenai College, Pablo, Montana, <http://kskctv.skc.edu/?q=node/6> (accessed 1 August 2010); Carol Ray and Becky Timmons, *Explorers, Trappers, and Traders of the Inland Northwest: Curriculum Guide Grades 6–12* (n.p.: Northern Region, Kootenai National Forest, and the Seattle District, Corps of Engineers, 2000); and <http://www.fortsteele.ca/heritage/dailylife/Visionaries/Business%20Women/sophiemorigeau.asp> (accessed 1 August 2010).

3. Genealogical information is taken principally from David C. Courchane, *Jocko’s People: The Descendants of James Finlay and His Son, Jacques Raphael Finley*, part 8 (privately printed and courtesy of the author, 1997). The Cree heritage of Sophie’s mother is attested by son Baptiste Morigeau, who described himself in the 1901 Canadian manuscript census as a “Cree French breed” (see Census of Canada, 1901, Yale and Cariboo, D6–North East Kootenay, Windermere, household 39).

4. For convenience, I use the American spelling, Kootenai, to refer to the Kootenai/Kootenay peoples living on both sides of the international boundary. Other spellings follow contemporary usage.

5. Olga Weydemeyer Johnson, *Flathead and Kootenay: The Rivers, the Tribes and the Region’s Traders* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1969), 173, 184–86; Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder, and William L. Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, rev. ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 44. Other posts established by Thompson included Kullyspell House, near the mouth of the Clark Fork River in present-day Idaho, and Flathead House, also known as Saleesh House, on the Clark Fork River south of Libby, Montana.

6. Harriet Duncan Munnick, *Catholic Church Records of the Pacific Northwest: Vancouver*, vol. 1 (St. Paul: French Prairie Press, 1972), 11, B105.

7. John Campbell cited in Johnson, *Flathead and Kootenay*, 234, 275; Olga Weydemeyer Johnson, *The Story of the Tobacco Plains Country: The Autobiography of a Community* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Publishers for the Pioneers of the Tobacco Plains Country, 1950), 41.

8. Bruce McIntyre Watson, *Lives Lived West of the Divide: A Biographical Dictionary of Fur Traders Working West of the Rockies, 1793–1858* (Kelowna, BC: Centre for Social, Spatial, and Economic Justice; University of British Columbia, 2010), 1:373–74.
9. Basil G. Hamilton, “Baptiste Morigeau,” 1928, typescript in Windermere Valley Museum Archives, Invermere, BC, incorporated into “Passing of Aged Pioneer Recalls Early History of District,” *Kimberley Courier*, 21 January 1932.
10. Clara Graham, *This Was the Kootenay* (Vancouver: Evergreen Press, 1965), 62.
11. Johnson, *Flathead and Kootenay*, 275.
12. Graham, *This Was the Kootenay*, 62; Winnifred Ariel Weir, *Tales of the Windermere* (Invermere: The author, 1980), 16.
13. Hamilton, “Baptiste Morigeau.”
14. Munnick, *Catholic Church Records of the Pacific Northwest: Vancouver*, vol. 1, 11, B101.
15. Morigeau family tree, Windermere Valley Museum Archives, Invermere.
16. St. Paul’s and St. Regis Mission Marriage Records, 1848, Jesuit Archives, Gonzaga University, M24, 1852.
17. Johnson, *Flathead and Kootenay*, 228–30; see also “Reports from Kootenai Region,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives, A.64/26, nos. 1 (1820) to 56 (1871), typescripts in Fort Steele Archives, ms. 53.
18. Report 28, 1853, Chief Factors Peter Skeen Ogden and Dugald Mactavish to Sir George Simpson, Vancouver, 25 November 1853, in “Reports from Kootenai Region.”
19. Johnson, *Flathead and Kootenay*, 270; Malone, Roeder, and Lang, *Montana*, 62.
20. On the use of the French language, see the 1901 Canadian manuscript census, Yale and Cariboo, D6—North East Kootenay, Windermere, household 39, where Sophie’s younger brother Baptiste Morigeau listed his first language as French; see also Hamilton, “Baptiste Morigeau,” on how, in old age, Baptiste Morigeau had “just a sufficient accent in his words to stamp him as one of French Canadian origin.”
21. Letter of 9 September 1845, in Pierre-Jean De Smet, *Life, Letters and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean De Smet, S.J., 1807–1878*, vol. 2, ed. Hiram Martin Chittenden and Alfred Talbot Richardson (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1905), 498. Italics in original.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., 499.
24. Ibid., italics in original.

25. Marie Cuffe Shea, *Early Flathead and Tobacco Plains: A Narrative History of Northwestern Montana* (Eureka, MT: The author, 1977), 98; also Jean Barman and Bruce Watson, "Fort Colville's Fur Trade Families and the Dynamics of Indigenous Racial Intermixture in the Pacific Northwest," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 90, no. 3 (1999): 140–53.
26. Hamilton, "Baptiste Morigeau."
27. Shea, *Early Flathead and Tobacco Plains*, 98.
28. Charles McLean, quoted in Johnson, *Tobacco Plains Country*, 43.
29. The couple was still living together at the time of the 1860 United States census.
30. Johnson, *Flathead and Kootenay*, 318.
31. Naomi Miller, "Michael Philipps: Prominent Kootenai Citizen," in *The Forgotten Side of the Border: British Columbia's Elk Valley and Crowsnest Pass*, ed. Wayne Norton and Naomi Miller (Kamloops: Plateau Press, 1998), 29–30.
32. "Reports from Kootenai Region," no. 37; John Campbell to C.N. Kessler, Lillooet, 6 October 1918, Montana Historical Society Archives, small collection 512.
33. John Campbell to Charles Kessler, Lillooet, 12 May 1918. Montana Historical Society Archives, small collection 512.
34. Dave Kay, "\$45,000 Shipped by Pack Train," *Cranbrook Courier*, 22 June 1977.
35. John V. Campbell to Charles N. Kessler, Lillooet, 6 October 1918, Montana Historical Society Archives, small collection 512.
36. Shea, *Early Flathead and Tobacco Plains*, 99.
37. Mary Lozar, quoted in Johnson, *Tobacco Plains Country*, 44.
38. Mary Lozar, quoted in *ibid.*
39. F.W. Laing, *Colonial Farm Settlers on the Mainland of British Columbia, 1858–1871* (Victoria: n.p., 1939), 499.
40. Mary Lozar, quoted in Johnson, *Tobacco Plains Country*, 44.
41. Morigeau family tree, Windermere Valley Museum Archives; Shea, *Early Flathead and Tobacco Plains*, 98.
42. Hamilton, "Baptiste Morigeau"; Morigeau family tree.
43. Hamilton, "Baptiste Morigeau."
44. Shea, *Early Flathead and Tobacco Plains*, 100.
45. Mary Lozar, quoted in Johnson, *Tobacco Plains Country*, 44.

46. Shea, *Early Flathead and Tobacco Plains*, 99–100.
47. Johnson, *Tobacco Plains Country*, 46.
48. Frank Leonard, quoted in Johnson, *Tobacco Plains Country*, 45.
49. Shea, *Early Flathead and Tobacco Plains*, 100.
50. George Mercer Dawson, quoted in Johnson, *Tobacco Plains Country*, 45.
51. Entry for 20 September 1883, in Alexander Staveley Hill, *From Home to Home: Autumn Wanderings in the Northwest, in the Years 1881, 1882, 1883, 1884* (New York: O. Judd, 1885), 353.
52. Entry for 21 September 1883, in *ibid.*, 354–55.
53. *Ibid.*, 355.
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Ibid.*, 356.
56. *Ibid.*, 357.
57. Entry for 22 September 1883, in *ibid.*, 357.
58. *Ibid.*, 357–58.
59. Entry for 21 September 1883, in *ibid.*, 355.
60. *Ibid.*, 357.
61. Johnson, *Tobacco Plains Country*, 45.
62. Susan Phillipps McGuire, quoted in *ibid.*, 46.
63. Shea, *Early Flathead and Tobacco Plains*, 99.
64. Johnson, *Tobacco Plains Country*, 45.
65. Ida Gregg Berry, quoted in Johnson, *Tobacco Plains Country*, 46.
66. Sophie Morigeau, quoted in *ibid.*, 48.
67. Ida Gregg Berry, quoted second hand in *ibid.*, 46.
68. Charles N. Edwards, quoted in *ibid.*, 47.
69. Addie Brock, quoted in *ibid.*, 46.
70. Ray, “Sophie Morigeau,” 15.
71. Johanna Quirk Cuffe, quoted in Shea, *Early Flathead and Tobacco Plains*, 101.
72. Shea, *Early Flathead and Tobacco Plains*, 100.

73. Frederick Norbury to Coni, Tobacco Plains, 10 February 1888, British Columbia Archives, ms. 877. Italics signify underlining in the original.
74. Susan Phillipps McGuire, quoted in Johnson, *Tobacco Plains Country*, 47.
75. Susan Phillipps McGuire, quoted in *ibid.*
76. Johnson, *Tobacco Plains Country*, 47.
77. Johanna Quirk Cuffe, quoted in Shea, *Early Flathead and Tobacco Plains*, 101.
78. Johanna Quirk Cuffe, quoted in *ibid.*, 100–101.
79. Johnson, *Tobacco Plains Country*, 48.
80. Johanna Quirk Cuffe, quoted in Shea, *Early Flathead and Tobacco Plains*, 101.
81. Charles N. Edwards, quoted in Johnson, *Tobacco Plains Country*, 48.
82. *Eureka Journal*, 23 July 1910, quoted in Shea, *Early Flathead and Tobacco Plains*, 101.
83. Johanna Quirk Cuffe, quoted in Shea, *Early Flathead and Tobacco Plains*, 101, and in Johnson, *Tobacco Plains Country*, 49.
84. Johanna Quirk Cuffe, quoted in Johnson, *Tobacco Plains Country*, 49.
85. Ray, “Sophie Morigeau,” 15.
86. Shea, *Early Flathead and Tobacco Plains*, 101.
87. *Ibid.*, 102.
88. Johnson, *Tobacco Plains Country*, 43–44.
89. *Ibid.*, 48.

## **(8) The *Montana Memories* of Emma Minesinger: Windows on the Family, Work, and Boundary Culture of a Borderlands Woman**

1. To avoid potential confusion, I have opted to use the name Emma *Minesinger* in this article, rather than using her two married last names, Waymack and Magee. I have chosen to use “Emma” throughout because the article deals with other Minesingers.

2. Ida S. Patterson, *Montana Memories: The Life of Emma Magee in the Rocky Mountain West, 1866–1950* (Pablo: Salish Kootenai Community College, 1981.) The book was published as no. 1 of the Flathead Reservation Heritage Series, edited by Robert Bigart and Clarence Woodcock. The manuscript copy of this book with the same title is in the Ida S. Patterson file, Mss 226, K. Ross Toole Archives/Special Collections, Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library, The University of Montana, Missoula. Quotations are taken from the published version.

3. Interview with Emma Minesinger’s granddaughter Jean Raymond Ensminger and great-granddaughter Peggy Budding Ensminger, 29 November 2008, Los Angeles California. I am very grateful to both for sharing their memories, knowledge and family heirlooms.

4. See Simon Evans, *The Bar U: Canadian Ranching History* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004).

5. Thanks to Amy McKinney (PhD student, University of Calgary) for her research on this topic and also thanks to Delia Hagen (PhD student, University of California at Berkeley). The Walter K. Miles collection is in the Glenbow Archives, Calgary.

6. “Women of the Canadian and Transborder West,” session held at the American Society for Ethnohistory, Tulsa, Oklahoma, October 2007.

7. Sheila McManus’s work on the Alberta-Montana borderlands provides important context for understanding Emma Minesinger and family. See Sheila McManus, *The Line Which Separates: Race, Gender and the Making of the Alberta-Montana Borderlands* (Lincoln/Edmonton: University of Nebraska Press/University of Alberta Press, 2005); and “‘Their Own Country’: Race, Gender, Landscape and Colonization around the Forty-ninth Parallel, 1862–1900,” in S. Evans, ed., *The Borderlands of the American and Canadian Wests: Essays on the Regional History of the 49th Parallel* (Lincoln/Calgary: University of Nebraska Press/University of Calgary Press, 2006).

8. Typed copy of the manuscript “In the Shadow of the Shining Mountains,” by Ida Pearl Smith (Patterson), appendix 189 of vol. 8, “My Genealogy” by Walter K. Miles, Walter K. Miles Genealogical Collection, Glenbow Archives.

9. According to *Montana Memories*, Nellie “understood but never learned to speak Salish. Father spoke it fluently, but always spoke to us children in English. So, it

was from the Indians themselves, whose camp we frequently visited and whose children were our playmates, that we learned to speak their low guttural tongue.” Patterson, *Montana Memories*, 45.

10. See the Miles Collection, Glenbow Archives.

11. Hertha Wong, *Sending My Heart Back Across the Years: Tradition and Innovation in Native American Autobiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 89.

12. Family genealogist Walter K. Miles had doubts about some of these details. He could find no record of a “Carlos Monteray” and doubted that a Spaniard or Mexican would have been in that part of the West in the 1820s. Yet Miles wrote that he believed Nellie was part Spanish “because I heard about it all my life.” See extract of letter, Walter Miles to Mike Graham, 17 March 1966, biographical vertical file, Minesinger, James Madison and Nellie, Montana Historical Society Archives. Miles also received correspondence from the Flathead Agency, 3 March 1966, which stated that according to 1905 Bureau of Indian Affairs documentation, Emma’s mother Nellie Minesinger Finley was a “full-blooded Indian (3/4 degree Snake Indian and 1/4 degree Flathead Indian).” A copy of this letter, Floyd L. Archiquette to Walter K. Miles, 3 March 1966, is in the Minesinger biographical vertical file, Montana Historical Society Archives. Complicating matters further, in another document in this file, a copy of the testimony of Emma H. Magee on 6 April 1933, in the matter of the estate of Nellie M. Finley, Emma stated that Nellie’s parents were “Carlos Monture, father, and Mary, last name unknown, mother. Married long ago. He was part Flathead and part Spanish and Mary was Flathead.” Emma also stated that her mother had a brother named Charles Monture, who was “always called Brother to the Eagles.” It is not possible to reconcile all of these discrepancies. I do not agree with Miles’ conclusion however that there were no Spaniards in Flathead/Shoshone country in the 1820s. In William Kittson’s journal for example, covering the Peter Skene Ogden Snake Country Expedition of 1824–25 it is noted on 23 May 1825 that they met a camp of “3 Canadians, a Russian and an old Spaniard.” See David E. Miller, ed., “William Kittson’s Journal Covering Peter Skene Ogden’s 1824–25 Snake Country Expedition,” <http://www.xmission.com/~drudy/mtman/html/kitjrl.html>. In D’Arcy McNickle’s book *The Surrounded* (New York: Dodd Mead and Co., 1936), the main character, Archildeon, is the son of an Indian mother and a Spanish father.

There was also a Nicholas Montour on the expedition and he deserted, remaining in Snake country, opting to trap for American prices. See John Phillip Reid, *Contested Empire: Peter Skene Ogden and the Snake River Expeditions* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 137–38. Research on family history that Jean Ensminger requested in 1995 indicated that Nellie’s parents were “Michel and Mary Strong-Old-Woman Monteray.” Eugene Mark Felsman, Salish and Kootenai and Pend d’Oreille Family Historian to Jean Ensminger, 23 February 1995. Thanks to Jean Ensminger for sharing this document.

Walter K. Miles also had doubts that Nellie was born in 1826. This was discussed in correspondence with his cousin Mike Graham who believed that she was

likely born in the 1840s. Graham's grandmother had always said that Nellie was about 88 when she died, not 107. Graham believed that Nellie could not have been in her thirties when she married and that she could not have had a child (Johnny, born 1879) at age fifty-three. See Mike Graham to Walter K. Miles, 23 March 1966, Minesinger biographical vertical file, Montana Historical Society Archives. The issue of Nellie's age is complicated by conflicting census records. In 1870 Nellie is listed as age twenty-five, compared to James's age of thirty-two. If accurate, Nellie would have been born in 1845. (James has also shaved approximately ten years off his date of birth in this census). In 1880 the wife of James Madison Minesinger (age fifty-six) is named "Margaret" and she is age thirty-six. In this case James's age is accurate. Thanks to Amy McKinney for the census research contained in an email dated 19 June 2008. In the 1891 census from southern Alberta, James is age sixty-five and Nellie is forty-three. Yet Nellie's obituaries record that she was born in 1826, and that she was 105 years old when she died in 1932. See Miles, "My Genealogy," vol. 8, Appendix 10. In Emma's personal archive, there is also a page from her calendar in which she has recorded "Mother passed away at the age of 107 years, 6 months." In the record of Emma's testimony in the matter of her mother's estate, it is noted that the death certificate showed the date of birth as 25 December 1826.

Finally, Miles concluded that the name "Quick to See" was a fabrication, based on correspondence he had with the Fort Hall Indian Reservation that he did not quote but which indicated that the name "Quick to See" did not sound like a Shoshone name, as during that period of time, "they used Indian names, not given in English." Walter K. Miles, "My Genealogy" 8: xxiii, Glenbow Archives. Miles does not provide enough evidence to satisfy me that "Quick to See" was a fabrication.

13. Patterson, *Montana Memories*, 6.

14. *Ibid.*, 23.

15. Anne M. Smith, with Alden Hayes, *Shoshone Tales* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993). Jean Ensminger recalled that her grandmother Emma told her Coyote stories.

16. Testimony by Emma H. Magee, 6 April 1933, biographical vertical file, Minesinger, James and Nellie, Montana Historical Society Archives.

17. Walter K. Miles, "My Genealogy," vol. 8, p. 18, Glenbow Archives.

18. *Ibid.* There are also conflicting stories about why James Madison Minesinger went west. The version presented in *Montana Memories* is that he contracted ague while working as a fireman on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, and that his physician advised a change of climate for a prolonged convalescence. (Patterson, *Montana Memories*, 7.) Another version is that "His youth is shrouded in mystery, but it is believed that he took the 'rap' for a woman that had killed a man in the Eastern States. Influential friends of both parties arranged free passage with the railways for Jim to go as far west as possible, and lose himself on the frontier. This

he did most successfully.” High River Pioneers and Old Timers Association, *Leaves from the Medicine Tree* (Lethbridge: High River Pioneers and Old Timers Association, 1960), 35. Many of the family histories in *Leaves from the Medicine Tree* contain stories or “rural legends” that may have been embellished around campfires or saloons.

19. Copy of a newsletter on the topic of James Madison Minesinger to family members from Walter K. Miles, Christmas, 1973. File of newsletters and other materials in the Miles collection, Glenbow Archives. Miles found no record of the marriage of Quick to See and James Minesinger. He was informed by the Jesuit Fathers of St. Francis Xavier Rectory that the earliest marriage records began in 1878.

20. Obituary of Emma Harriet Magee, Appendix 189, Walter K. Miles, “My Genealogy,” vol. 8, Miles Collection, Glenbow Archives.

21. Patterson, *Montana Memories*, 19.

22. See Jaune Quick-To-See-Smith, “Family Album,” in Lucy R. Lippard, ed., *Partial Recall* (New York: The New Press, 1992), 61.

23. Patterson, *Montana Memories*, 35.

24. *Ibid.*, 52.

25. *Ibid.*, 23–24. In a letter from the Canadian Department of Mines and Natural Resources, Winnipeg, 21 March 1967, Walter K. Miles learned that Mary or Marie Borsow was born in St. Charles, Manitoba on 2 March 1857, that she was the “illegitimate child of Joseph Borsow and Angelique Desnoyer and that she used the name Marie Bourassa,” but that when she married Henry Minesinger she used the name Mary Borsow. She also used the name Marie Charette in order to apply for a second land allotment (Métis scrip). This application was disallowed when it was discovered that Marie Bourassa and Marie Charette were one and the same, and that she received a land allotment on 14 February 1879.

26. High River Pioneers and Old Timers Association, *Leaves from the Medicine Tree*, 36.

27. *Ibid.*, 35.

28. According to *Under the Chinook Arch: A History of Cayley and Surrounding Area* (Cayley: Cayley Women’s Institutes, 1967): 340: “Eden Valley ranch was first owned by Jim Meinsinger [*sic*]. It was known as the Beaudry ranch for many years then was purchased by Frazier Hunt of New York who named it Eden Valley. He sold it to John Garner who sold it to the Dominion government.” It was purchased by the Canadian government in the 1940s and became part of the Eden Valley reserve (Nakoda).

29. Patterson, *Montana Memories*, 68.

30. *Ibid.*, 73.

31. Ibid., footnote.

32. Ibid., 78.

33. According to *Montana Memories* James Madison Minesinger died in Calgary in May 1892. Walter K. Miles however found in the archives of St. Mary's Catholic Church, Calgary, that he died on 16 May 1894, and was buried the next day. Walter K. Miles, "My Genealogy" vol. 8, Miles collection, Glenbow Archives. According to *Leaves from the Medicine Tree*, p. 36, "In 1894 Jim contracted pneumonia, while on a drinking spree in Calgary, and died."

34. Patterson, *Montana Memories*, 79.

35. Mrs. James Minesinger to Emma Minesinger Waymack, 17 January 1895. Collection of Jean Ensminger, Los Angeles, California. This letter must have been written by someone else for Nellie. In a letter also in the Ensminger collection, Fred C. Morgan to Mrs. A.D. Magee, 3 October 1913, regarding Nellie's allotment on the Flathead Reservation, her "inability to read or write" is mentioned.

36. See Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press/University of Alberta Press, 2008), 56–60.

37. Paula Petrik, "'If She Be Content:' The Development of Montana Divorce Law, 1865–1907." *The Western Historical Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (1987): 264.

38. Patterson, *Montana Memories*, 81.

39. Ibid., 46–48; see also Jennifer Brower, *Lost Tracks: Buffalo National Park, 1909–1939* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2008).

40. Patterson, *Montana Memories*, p. 83. Editors Robert Bigart and Clarence Woodcock wrote: "Actually the Indian Office decided *Emma* did not have rights on the Flathead Reservation. They were only informed of her Shoshone blood and not her Flathead blood. The decision was later reversed before the reservation was opened in 1910" (Letter from Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Mrs. A.D. Magee, 25 August 1899, LS, LB 415, pages 285–86, RG 75, National Archives, Washington, D.C.).

41. Patterson, *Montana Memories*, p. 85.

42. Burton M. Smith, "The Politics of Allotment: The Flathead Indian Reservation as a Test Case," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (1979): 132.

43. Felix S. Cohen, *Handbook of Federal Indian Law* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1945), 218.

44. Smith, "The Politics of Allotment," 132.

45. Ibid., 136.

46. See “Honor Roll—Original Allottees—1908,” in J.F. McAlear as told to Sharon Bergman, *The Fabulous Flathead* (Polson: Treasure State Pub. Co., 1962), 219.
47. Fred C. Morgan to Mrs. A.D. Magee, 3 October 1913, collection of Jean Ensminger.
48. Miles, “My Genealogy” vol. 8, p. 24, Miles Collection, Glenbow Archives.
49. Miles, James, Record Group 15 (RG 15), records of the Department of the Interior, series D-II-8-C, vol. 1359, Library and Archives Canada (LAC); Miles, Mary Samantha, RG 15, D-II-8-C, vol. 1359, LAC.
50. Patterson, *Montana Memories*, 88.
51. Jeff Bowen, *Indian Wills, 1911–1921: Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs*, Book Four (Baltimore: Clearfield Company, 2007), 75–76.
52. Patterson, *Montana Memories*, 94.
53. Emma Minesinger Magee, untitled memoir, collection of Jean Ensminger.
54. *Ibid.*, 2–3.
55. Patterson, *Montana Memories*, 56–57.
56. Emma Minesinger Magee, untitled memoir, p. 2, collection of Jean Ensminger.
57. Patterson, *Montana Memories*, 52.
58. Emma Minesinger Magee, untitled memoir, p. 3–4, collection of Jean Ensminger.
59. Patterson, *Montana Memories*, 67.
60. Miles, “My Genealogy,” vol. 9, 36, Miles Collection, Glenbow Archives.
61. See the Preface to Jock Carpenter, *Fifty Dollar Bride: Marie Rose Smith — A Chronicle of Métis Life in the 19th Century* (Hanna, Alberta: Gorman and Gorman Ltd., 1977). See also Doris McKinnon, “‘I am alone in this world’: The Identities of Marie Rose Smith” (MA thesis, University of Calgary, 2006); Maggie MacKellar, *Core of My Heart, My Country: Women’s Sense of Place and the Land in Australia and Canada* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2004).
62. Sherry Farrell Racette, “Sewing for a Living: The Commodification of Métis Women’s Artistic Production,” in *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada’s Colonial Past*, ed. Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005), 36–37.
63. Grace Patterson McComas, “The Author: Ida Smith Patterson” (1903–1954), in Patterson, *Montana Memories*, xi.
64. Grace Patterson McComas wrote that Ida Smith Patterson published articles and poems in the *Idaho Farmer* and the *Montana Farmer* but research by University of Calgary PhD student Amy McKinney did not locate any of these. One of

Ida S. Patterson's articles, "Flathead Lake Boasts 135 Scenic Miles of Shoreline," was published in *The Daily Missoulan*. 23 August 1953.

65. McComas, xi.

66. Patterson, *Montana Memories*, 46.

67. Ibid, 41–42, 51.

68. Miles, "My Genealogy," vol. 8, appendix 189, Miles Collection, Glenbow Archives.

69. See for example Wong, *Sending My Heart Back across the Years*; Gretchen Bataille and Kathleen M. Sands, *American Indian Women: Telling Their Lives* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984); H. David Brumble, *American Indian Autobiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Kathleen Mullen Sands and Theodore Rios, *Telling A Good One: The Process of a Native American Collaborative Biography* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000).

70. Wong, *Sending My Heart Back across the Years*, 11.

71. Farrell Racette, "Sewing for a Living," 40–41.

72. Henry E. Stamm IV, "An Introduction to Shoshone-Bannock Art and Beadwork: Continuity and Change in Art and Images in the Northern Rockies," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Western History Association, Dallas, October 2003. For more information, see <http://www.windriverhistory.org/exhibits/shoshone-art/index.html>.

73. Farrell Racette, "Sewing for a Living," 36–37.

74. Thanks to Patricia McCormack for her analysis of the beadwork.

75. Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation." in Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 149.

## (9) Searching for Catherine Auger: The Forgotten Wife of the *Wíhtikôw* (Windigo)

1. Compare *Letter from George Holmes to Bishop Richard Young, 1897*, Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA), Accession (Acc.) 70.387, File A.281/327, Box 59, with *Census, 1891 Athabasca District*, “White Fish Lake Returns,” Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Reel T-6426. The letter notes the names of the two women, and the census identifies them as an adoptive mother and daughter of almost the same age.

2. *Edmonton Bulletin*, “Lesser Slave Lake,” 15 March 1897. The account does not mention specifically what the clergy did to assist the women, but as they were regarded by their people as possessed by evil spirits, it is likely they interceded in a spiritual fashion.

3. *Letter from George Holmes to Bishop Richard Young, 1897*, PAA.

4. *Edmonton Bulletin*, “Lesser Slave Lake,” 15 March 1897. The *Bulletin* was the first newspaper for what would become the city of Edmonton.

5. For discussions of the *wíhtikôw* (var. *windigo* or *witiko*) phenomenon see, for example, Morton I. Teicher, *Windigo Psychosis: A Study of the Relationship Between Belief and Behaviour Among the Indians of North-eastern Canada* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960); Jennifer S.H. Brown and Robert Brightman, *The Orders of the Dreamed: George Nelson on Northern Cree and Ojibwa Religion and Myth*, 1823 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988); Robert A. Brightman, *Grateful Prey: Rock Cree Human–Animal Relationships* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, University of Regina, 2002 [1973]), 132–58; Raymond Fogelson, “Psychological Theories of Windigo ‘Psychosis’ and a Preliminary Application of a Models Approach,” in *Context and Meaning in Cultural Anthropology: Essays in Honour of A. Irving Hallowell*, ed. Melford E. Spiro (New York: Free Press, 1965), 74–99; and Nathan D. Carlson, “Reviving Witiko (Windigo): An Ethnohistory of ‘Cannibal Monsters’ in the Athabasca District of Northern Alberta, 1878–1910,” *Ethnohistory* 56(3) (Summer 2009): 355–94. For a more skeptical commentary, refuting the existence of the *wíhtikôw* condition or windigo “psychosis,” see Louis Marano, *Windigo Psychosis: An Anatomy of an Emic/Etic Confusion* (Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Florida, 1981) and “Windigo Psychosis: An Anatomy of an Emic/Etic Confusion,” *Current Anthropology* 4 (1982): 385–412. Despite Marano’s dismissal of the *wíhtikôw* “psychosis,” on the basis of an (incorrectly) perceived absence of “non-biased” (i.e., non-Native) attestations to the condition, there is a body of evidence that calls this hypothesis into question. See Robert A. Brightman, “The Windigo in the Material World,” *Ethnohistory* 35(4) (Fall 1988): 337–79, and the writings by Francis Beaton, reproduced in this essay and cited below, which are the most compelling Euro-Canadian eyewitness accounts on the *wíhtikôw* condition currently known to exist.

6. *Edmonton Bulletin*, “Lesser Slave Lake,” 15 March 1897; *Letter from George Holmes to Bishop Richard Young, 1897*, PAA.

7. Catherine Auger’s mother, Marie Anne Lechasseur, and my great-great-great grandmother, Adele Lechasseur (born 1850), who were both born at Whitefish Lake, were either sisters or related as an aunt and niece, as there are two Marie Anne Lechasseurs (a mother and daughter) who lived at Whitefish Lake at the time, and one may have been both Adele and Catherine’s mother (being that Adele’s mother’s was Marie Anne Lechasseur, née Calahaisen). Compare “Auger, Catherine,” LAC Record Group (RG) 15, Vol. 1419, Reel C-14696, with “Andrews, Pierre,” LAC RG 15, Vol. 1418, Reel C-14945.

8. Marie Carlson would occasionally accompany her Métis father, Édouard Beauchamp (1879–1960), to the Trout Lake outpost run by the HBC, where he was employed as a clerk and fur trader. It was here, sometime circa 1920–1930 that the two discovered the story of the Trout Lake incident and saw the grave of the executed *wîhtikôw*. Shirley Serre, tape-recorded interview, Gift Lake Métis Settlement, Alberta, 15 November 2005.

9. *Illegitimate* is an evaluation placed upon birth status by Euro-Canadian Judeo-Christian writers, and does no justice to how Catherine’s parents may have understood their own marriage, in the custom of the country. It probably tells us simply that her parents had not been legally married by a Christian priest.

10. See *Half-Breed Scrip Applications*, LAC RG 15, Vol. 1419, Reel C-14696, Auger surname. Many Augers noted in the scrip applications are married to persons bearing the surname Lechasseur (in varying renderings) from Whitefish Lake.

11. *Census, 1901, Athabasca District, “Wabasca returns,”* LAC, Reel T-6555. The census sheet may list Buck Lake as a birthplace (the writing is difficult to read), which is also located in the area that many Augers hailed from, in the region of Lac la Biche.

12. “Auger, Catherine,” LAC RG 15.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Napanin* may have been a nickname. The word is of unknown origin; it could be archaic Cree, or some other Algonquian language (such as *Saulteaux*). Catherine and Napanin may have been relatives (perhaps cross-cousins), as well. This inference is derived from an analysis of Métis scrip applications filed by members of the *Wâpôskow* (Wabasca) community bearing the Auger surname. Catherine Auger and her two known siblings, who were all children of John Auger, seem to have had a mother who bore a family name similar to that of Samuel (Dominique) Auger, Napanin’s brother. The two brothers were sons of Baptiste Auger and,

according to Samuel's scrip application, a woman referred to as Petasaquayau. The names of the mothers of the three siblings, Catherine, Nancy, and Augustin Auger, appear as Mary Etesequayyo (Augustin), Ikkanin Lechasseur (Nancy), and Mary Anne Ikkanin or Lechasseur (Catherine), respectively, but these may be variations on the same name. In addition, Adele Etenesekwegen or Eteusekweyeu (the writing is ambiguous) Lechasseur, the relative of Catherine Auger mentioned in note 7, was the daughter of a man named Nitayosiquao or Old Lechasseur. Again, it may be that these names (Etenesekwegen or Eteusekweyeu) were one and the same but were spelled differently by the scrip commissioners who heard them spoken and then wrote them down. Alternately, some of these names may simply be mistaken renderings of the generic Cree word for *woman*, *iskwew*. The question remains unanswered, but it is certainly possible that Felix and Catherine Auger were relatives, given the tradition of intermarriage between the Lechasseurs and Augers (note 10), and the fact that the marriage of cross-cousins was a common practice at the time. If Catherine and Felix were blood relatives, then Felix Auger may have been a relative of mine as well.

16. *Edmonton Bulletin*, "Wapiska Lakes," 16 April 1896.

17. See Gerhard Ens, "Taking Treaty and Scrip, 1899–1900: A Quantitative Portrait of Northern Alberta Communities," *Lobstick* 1, Issue 1 (2000): 255.

18. See, for example, Sherry Farrell Racette, "Beads, Silk and Quills: The Clothing and Decorative Arts of the Métis," in *Métis Legacy*, ed. Lawrence J. Barkwell, Leah Dorion, and Darren R. Préfontaine (Winnipeg Pemmican Publications, 2001), 181–88.

19. *Edmonton Bulletin*, "Wapiska Lakes," 16 April 1896.

20. See Raymond J.A. Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and Métis* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press and Western Canadian Publishers: 1996), 28–68.

21. *Bishop Young's letter journal to the Church Missionary Society*, PAA, Acc. 70.387, File A 280/1a, Box 52, p. 270–274.

22. *Ibid.*

23. The literal meaning, 'fake spirit', is not to be understood as referring to a deceptive or contrary spirit, but rather to an effigy built to represent a real spirit. In other words, the effigy was not the spirit itself, but a facsimile of it.

24. See Brown and Brightman, *Orders of the Dreamed*, for various discussions on the *pâhkak* ceremony, particularly pages 51–54, 85, 111, and 189–198.

25. Cannibalism was considered by Algonquian peoples to be a repugnant act. See Johann Georg Kohl, *Kitchi-Gami: Life Among the Lake Superior Ojibway* (St. Paul: 1985 [1860]), 356.

26. Marie Merasty, *The World of Wetiko: Tales from the Woodland Cree*, ed. Candace Savage, (Saskatoon: Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College, 1974), 1.
27. See Brightman, *Grateful Prey*, 132–58.
28. *Bishop Young's letter journal to the Church Missionary Society*, PAA.
29. Ibid. There is also a Moose Lake (once referred to as Shaw House, after the fur trade post that stood there) in the vicinity of Lac la Biche and Bear Lake, where many members of the extended Auger family were born and lived. It is uncertain which Moose Lake was being referred to, but it is likely that Moose Lake, later Calling Lake, was the locale mentioned, on account of its closer proximity to Wâpôskow.
30. See Jean LaBissoniere, S.P., *Providence Trail Blazers* (Edmonton, Sisters of Providence, 1976), 86.
31. *Edmonton Bulletin*, "Wapiska Lakes," 16 April 1896.
32. Ibid.
33. *Bishop Young's letter journal to the Church Missionary Society*, PAA. The term *lunatic* was most surely from either Holmes' or Young's idiom, and not from Catherine herself. Moreover, it is unclear whether this retelling was a quoting of Catherine's words, paraphrased by Holmes, or retold by Young. I have treated the quote as coming from Catherine herself by using first person particles (i.e., *me*, *I*, etc.), but I must emphasize that this was my personal choice, in order to give Catherine a central position in the narrative. Mrs. Auger may have told the story to Holmes somewhat differently than how it was retold either by him or Bishop Young. Further, I did this to emphasize *her* testimony, which closely matches that of her husband, delivered to Francis Beatton in his journal (see note 36). That the two accounts match so closely is worth pointing out. Also the text is already altered images from Young's own imagination (*Shadowy terrors . . . amid the silence and solitude of the woods . . .*).
34. *Edmonton Bulletin*, "Wapiska Lakes", 16 April 1896.
35. "Beatton, Francis," LAC RG 15, Vol. 1335, Reel C-14947.
36. *Copy of Francis Beatton's journal in George Holmes' letters, 1896*, PAA, Acc. A.281/5, File 70.387, Box 53. Napanin's claim that someone had "put medicine on him and that was the reason that he was going to be a cannibal" suggests that he believed that he had been cursed—perhaps by the "*wîhtikôw* prophet" himself—and perhaps for his disregard of the warning delivered and for his family's involvement with the Anglican missionaries. Cannibalism, dreams, and sorcery ("bad medicine") were believed by northern Algonquians to be the causes of the *wîhtikôw* condition. See Carlson, "Reviving Witiko".

37. According to the “Wapiska Lakes” article in the *Edmonton Bulletin* (16 April 1896, 1), Catherine Auger was at a “neighbour’s house with her baby” during the ordeal. It is assumed here that this was the cabin of her father-in-law.

38. *Bishop Young’s letter journal to the Church Missionary Society*, PAA.

39. *Ibid.*

40. Émile Grouard, O.M.I., “Souvenirs de mes soixante ans d’apostolat dans l’Athabasca Mackenzie, oeuvre apostolique de M.I. Lyons,” in Clint Westman, *Understanding Cree Religious Discourse* (Unpublished PhD dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Alberta, 2008), 118–19, translation by Clint Westman and Gabriel Asselin. I am indebted to Westman for this material, which was incorrectly cited in the endnotes of Carlson, “Reviving Witiko.” I appreciate the correction for this citation, which I had listed as coming from a different source, with apologies for any confusion this error may have caused. Westman’s provision of sources was valuable in assisting me to piece together the events of the Trout Lake story.

41. The bear grease treatment was often a last resort; if such treatments were not efficacious, the victim was generally deemed incurable and executed. According to Métis elder Bernard Cardinal of Trout Lake, a Cree eyewitness said that Napanin expelled a substance resembling “paint” in different colours after drinking the bear grease. Whatever this might have been, the fact that Napanin could not expel the ice suggests that, from the Native perspective, the cure had failed and nothing more could be done for the victim but execute him. See Carlson, “Reviving Witiko,” 374–375; and Nathan D. Carlson, *Reviving the Wîhtikôw: Cannibal Monsters in Northern Alberta Cree and Métis Cosmology* (Unpublished Honour’s thesis, University of Alberta, 2005), 133–34.

42. *Copy of Francis Beaton’s journal in George Holmes’ letters*, 1896, PAA.

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Edmonton Bulletin*, “Wapiska Lakes,” 16 April 1896.

45. Grouard was able to record an account of the events after a visit to Trout Lake. See Westman, *Understanding Cree Religious Discourse*, 118–19.

46. *Bishop Young’s letter journal to the Church Missionary Society*, PAA; *Edmonton Bulletin*, “Wapiska Lakes,” 16 April 1896.

47. See Carlson, *Reviving the Wîhtikôw*, 133–34.

48. *Bishop Young’s letter journal to the Church Missionary Society*, PAA; Westman, *Understanding Cree Religious Discourse*, 118–119; *Murder of an Insane Indian at Front Lake*, LAC RG 18, Vol. 152, File 271–280, n.p. (Front Lake is now Trout Lake.)

49. This information is derived from a letter written by Grouard to an unnamed recipient, found in *Murder of an Insane Indian at Front Lake*, LAC RG 18. In the letter, Napanin is referred to as “Francis Auger,” but this is almost certainly an error in the typewritten transcription of the original handwritten letter (now missing from the archival record), as the police file also contains a typewritten facsimile of Beaton’s journal, likely produced by the same copyist. Several differences exist between the original handwritten copy and the typewritten copy (for example, the name Napanin is rendered incorrectly as Mapanin), suggesting that the copyist compiling the investigation file for the NWMP made various errors, one of which could well have been “Francis” in place of “Felix” Auger. Compare *Copy of Francis Beaton’s journal in George Holmes’ letters*, 1896, PAA, with *Murder of an Insane Indian at Front Lake*, PAA, for errors in the copy. Nowhere in the historical record is there anything to suggest that *two* men bearing the name “F. Auger” were executed at Trout Lake in 1896. Moreover, Catherine Auger would have called his husband by his correct name (Felix), whereas the NWMP copyist was far removed from the events.

50. According to the files from the NWMP, those responsible for the execution were not apprehended or charged in the aftermath of the incident, in part because the main investigator in the case, “M. Larriviere” died before he was able to compile a report on the homicide, and because the police’s geographical knowledge of the region was so poor, they did not know where Trout Lake was located. Hoping to avoid an embarrassment with government officials, the police conveniently forgot about the incident. For instance, in 1898, A.M. Jarvis, the inspector responsible for the Athabasca police patrol, in a report to the Police Commissioner in Ottawa stated: “Indians of unsound mind, styled “We’h-ti-koo,” and reported to become cannibals, are frequently made away with to prevent them from killing and eating other members of their family or tribe. These occurrences caused the reports of *alleged* murders. *I was unable to locate any recent practice of this*, but the nuns at Lesser Slave Lake had rescued some young girls from the threatened fate, and the Rev. Mr. White took charge of a young man who was rapidly becoming “We’h-ti-koo,” and would soon have been killed by his own tribe” (*Sessional Papers*, vol. 12; *Third Session of the Eighth Parliament of the Dominion of Canada*, Session 1898 [1899], 173; emphasis added). The NWMP stated in a letter posted as a proclamation at Trout Lake in 1897 that those who had been implicated in the homicide would go unpunished—proving their knowledge that the killing had *actually occurred*—but that further acts would not be tolerated. It is assumed Jarvis’ mention of the “young girls” was a reference to the Whitefish Lake *wihtikôw* cases, and the report of the “young man” a reference to Samuel (Dominique) Auger. See the above cited quote in comparison with *Murder of an Insane Indian at Front Lake*, LAC RG 18, and *Edmonton Bulletin*, “Lesser Slave Lake” 18 March 1897.

51. *Bishop Young’s letter journal to the Church Missionary Society*, PAA.

52. “Auger, Catherine,” LAC RG 15.

53. *Murder of an Insane Indian at Front Lake*, LAC RG 18.

54. According to Weaver’s letter, “every little while there is a scare about a cannibal and the people get so excited that at any time there might be another murder. Only about three weeks since the people told us a cannibal was seen near the Post, Hudson’s Bay Co. [at Wâpôskow]. The man in charge was away but I believe his wife and children fled to a little settlement about a mile away; that night there was a scare in Wapuscow . . . many of the people left their tents and fled to a house the door of which they locked. We told the people it was not true and they quieted down the next day and for the present the scare is over. But at these times if anything unusual happened or a strange Indian was seen he might be shot.” See *Murder of an Insane Indian at Front Lake*, LAC RG 18.

55. *Bishop Young’s letter journal to the Church Missionary Society*, PAA; *Edmonton Bulletin*, March 5, 1911; 1898, *Insane Indian at Wapaskaw*, LAC RG 18 vol. 150, File 228-98. Auger was taken to Stony Mountain Penitentiary in Manitoba, where he evidently recovered from his condition and was sent home.

56. See Charles Mair, *Through the Mackenzie Basin: A Narrative of the Athabasca and Peace River Treaty Expedition of 1899* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1908), 52–75, 132–46.

57. “Full-Blood” Indians were required to take Treaty, but as the vast majority of “Indians” were of mixed ancestry, the mixed blood population was eligible to apply for Treaty or Métis scrip.

58. “Auger, Catherine,” LAC RG 15.

59. Carlson, “Reviving Witiko,” 380; *Edmonton Bulletin*, 20 April 1899 (no title); *Edmonton Bulletin*, 27 April 1899 (supplement); Teicher, *Windigo Psychosis*, 93–103.

60. Such was the case for Dominique Auger, who was incarcerated at Stony Mountain Penitentiary. At the time, owing to overcrowded conditions in mental hospitals, Stony Mountain was sometimes used to house the mentally ill. The Marie Boucon *wihtikôw* case of 1910 at Fort Vermillion offers another example. See LaBissoniere, *Providence Trail Blazers*, 74–75. Acknowledgements and gratitude go to Norm Blaskovitz, for bringing the Boucon case to my attention.

61. See Marano, “Windigo Psychosis”; James B. Waldram, *Revenge of the Windigo: The Construction of the Mind and Mental Health of North American Aboriginal Peoples* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 5, 18, 194. Waldram and others still use Marano’s thesis to refute the existence of the *wihtikôw* condition.

62. *Census, 1901*, Athabasca District, “Wabasca returns,” LAC, Reel T-6555.

## (10) Pakwâciskwew:

### A Reacquaintance with Wilderness Woman

1. *Pagwâdakamig*, *pagwâdj* are defined by Frederic Baraga as “wilderness.” See Baraga, *A Dictionary of the Ojibwe Language* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1992), 289. Louis Bird uses the Cree word *Pakwâciskwew* and the English name Wilderness Woman for this personage. She also appears as Bo-kwatch-ikway (Cree) and Pigwadjiikwe (Wild Woman) (Ojibwe).
2. For some excellent discussion, see chapter 12, “Fear and Anxiety as Cultural and Individual Variables in a Primitive Society,” and chapter 21, “Some Empirical Aspects of Northern Saulteaux Religion,” in A. Irving Hallowell, *Contributions to Ojibwe Studies: Essays, 1934–1972*, ed. Jennifer S.H. Brown and Susan Elaine Gray (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, forthcoming).
3. Louis Bird, *The Spirit Lives in the Mind: Omushkego Stories, Lives, and Dreams*, compiled and edited by Susan Elaine Gray (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2007), 129.
4. *Bagwaji-ikwe* (wild[erness] woman). Northern spelling would be *Pakwaci-ihkwe*. Thanks to Rand Valentine, a scholar of Algonquian languages.
5. Edward Rae, “Man Always Sitting Travels with Bo-kwatch-ikway,” in Chief Thomas Fiddler, *Legends From the Forest*, ed. James R. Stevens (Moonbeam, ON: Penumbra Press, 1986), 83. Fiddler was the hereditary leader of the Sucker clan at Big Sandy Lake on the Upper Severn River, Ontario. His father, Robert Fiddler, and grandfather, Jack Fiddler, were leaders before him. This lineage is traceable to a great-grandfather who had no English name. He was Porcupine Standing Sideways who died in 1891.
6. Maureen Matthews, “Mother Earth,” a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation *Ideas* documentary broadcast, 5 June 2003, 6.
7. Bird and Gray, *The Spirit Lives in the Mind*, 129–30.
8. *Ibid.*, 91–92. See also Louis Bird, *Telling Our Stories: Omushkego Legends and Histories from Hudson Bay*, ed. Jennifer S.H. Brown, Paul W. DePasquale, and Mark F. Ruml (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2005), chaps. 3 and 4.
9. Bird, *The Spirit Lives in the Mind*, 93.
10. *Ibid.*, 130.
11. Rae, “Man Always Sitting Travels,” 83.
12. Matthews, “Mother Earth,” 6.
13. A. Irving Hallowell, “Disease and its Causes,” n.d., Alfred Irving Hallowell Papers, 1892–1981, Ms. Coll. 26, American Philosophical Society (APS), Philadelphia, unpublished paper, held by Jennifer S.H. Brown.
14. Louis Bird to Susan Gray, personal communication, March 2008.
15. Hallowell, “Disease and its Causes.”

16. I am indebted to Robert Brightman for his fascination with and support of my research around Pakwâciskew. Brightman went out of his way to collect stories about her while on a research trip in July 2007. Pukatawagan is home to the Mathias Colomb Cree Nation (MCCN), located approximately 170 kilometres west of Thompson and approximately 30 kilometres east of the Saskatchewan border. The community of Pukatawagan is isolated with no road access (except for a few months in the winter) and can be accessed via train and plane.
17. Brightman, research notes, Pukatawagan, Manitoba, July 2007.
18. Bird and Gray, *The Spirit Lives in the Mind*, 130–31.
19. Ibid., 93–94.
20. See, for example, ibid., chap. 10, “Wisakaychak.”
21. Robert Brightman, *Grateful Prey: Rock Cree Animal-Human Relationships* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 83.
22. Email conversation with Robert Brightman, 13 July 2006. For more information on the *missipisiwak*, see Selwyn Dewdney, *The Sacred Scrolls of the Southern Ojibway* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 39, 122, 125; Robert Brightman, *Acaoōhkiwina and Ācimōwina: Traditional Narratives of the Rock Cree Indians* (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1989), 18–20; and Ruth Landes, *Religion and the Midéwiwin* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 31, 66–67, 59–60.
23. Hallowell, “Disease and Its Causes.”
24. Ibid.
25. Hallowell, “Check List of Ojibwa Dream Items.” This appears in William Berens, *Memories, Myths, and Dreams of an Ojibwe Leader, by William Berens, as told to A. Irving Hallowell*, ed. Jennifer S.H. Brown and Susan Elaine Gray (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, in press).
26. Louis Bird to Susan Gray, personal communication, August 2007.
27. Hallowell, “Disease and Its Causes.”
28. See, for example, Bird and Gray, *The Spirit Lives in the Mind*, 76.
29. Susan Elaine Gray, *“I Will Fear No Evil”: Ojibwa-Missionary Encounters Along the Berens River, 1875–1940* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2006), 33.
30. Ibid., 148.
31. Ibid., 132–33.
32. Ibid., 35–36.
33. Bird and Gray, *The Spirit Lives in the Mind*, 127.
34. Thomas W. Overholt and J. Baird Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales: An Introduction to an Ojibwa World View* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1982), 62–73.
35. Berens, *Memories, Myths, and Dreams*, Part 4.

**(11) Frances Nickawa:**  
**“A Gifted Interpreter of the Poetry of Her Race”**

1. The quotation in the title comes from “Frances Nickawa: Cree Girl Who Is a Gifted Interpreter of the Poetry of Her Race” (*Saturday Night*, [Toronto] 3 February 1923), one of numerous journalistic articles about Nickawa and her performances. For a short biography, see Jennifer S.H. Brown, “Frances Nickawa,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 15: 1921–30 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 781–82.
2. For brief biographies of E. Ryerson Young’s parents, see Jennifer S.H. Brown on Egerton R. Young, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 13: 1901–10 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 1121–22; and on Elizabeth Bingham Young, *ibid.*, vol. 16 (in press).
3. E. Ryerson Young’s books, which typically centred on northern or Native and Christian themes, included *Duck Lake: Stories of the Canadian Backwoods* (1905), *The Camp Doctor and Other Stories* (1909?), *Three Arrows: The Young Buffalo Hunter* (1932), and *When the Blackfeet Went South and Other Stories* (1936). His father wrote about twelve books based on his experiences in the North, and bibliographers often confuse the two authors.
4. Young, “E. Pauline Johnson, Indian Poetess and Princess” (*Onward*, 19 April 1913, 122) cited in Veronica Strong-Boag and Carole Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe: The Times and Texts of E. Pauline Johnson, Tekahionwake* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 107, 256n27.
5. Young, foreword to “From Wigwam to Concert Platform: The Life of Frances Nickawa,” ca. 1931–32. Copy of unpublished manuscript in the possession of Jennifer S.H. Brown. My thanks to Harold Egerton Young for sharing this manuscript and copies of other documents and letters his father had collected.
6. Hannah T. Riley to E. Ryerson Young, 26 January 1929, written from 6568 Balsam Street, Vancouver. Unfortunately Young’s correspondence includes copies of only a few of his own letters to Riley. Riley’s letters are an essential resource but are entirely non-chronological as regards Nickawa’s life; they range across diverse topics and memories, often with repetitions, although these frequently contain additional details triggered by Young’s questions.
7. In 1932, while staying with his sister Florence Fitzgerald and family in Bayonne, New Jersey, Young received a letter dated 6 September from Harper and Brothers Publishers, New York. It stated: “We have been honored to read your manuscript, KICKAWA [*sic*], and only regret that our plans for forthcoming books have been so fully made that we cannot add yours to the list.” The timing was also bad; it was not easy being an author (or a publisher) in the midst of the Great Depression.
8. Many original papers and manuscripts belonging to E. Ryerson Young and his father, Egerton R. Young, were deposited by various descendants some years ago in the United Church Archives in Toronto (Young Family Fonds, 94.094C/TR).

9. See Jennifer S.H. Brown, “A Cree Nurse in a Cradle of Methodism: Little Mary and the Egerton R. Young Family at Norway House and Berens River,” in *First Days, Fighting Days: Women in Manitoba History*, ed. Mary Kinnear (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1987), 18–40; and Brown, “Growing up Algonquian: A Missionary’s Son in Cree-Ojibwe Country, 1869–1876,” *Papers of the 39th Algonquian Conference*, ed. Karl Hele and Regna Darnell (London, ON: University of Western Ontario, 2008), 72–93.
10. “Frances Nickawa,” *Young Canada Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (April–June 1926): 2. The lead article, “Racial Tolerance,” is on page 1.
11. Trudy Nicks, “Dr. Oronhyatekha’s History Lessons: Reading Museum Collections as Texts,” in *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*, ed. Jennifer S.H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert, 2nd ed. (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2003), 459–89.
12. On Johnson’s background and early life, see Strong-Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, chap. 1.
13. Young, “From Wigwam to Concert Platform”; Riley to Young, 4 February 1930. Riley wrote that Frances “was supposed to be born” at York Factory and that when she “was a baby in a moss bag,” the family moved to Split Lake. On variants of Nickawa’s name, see Young, foreword to “From Wigwam to Concert Platform”; on her parents and birth information, see Young, “From Wigwam to Concert Platform,” 4, and Brown, “Frances Nickawa,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, 1920–1930; on her marriage and death, see Young, “From Wigwam to Concert Platform,” 157, 159.
14. Robert Coutts, introduction to *Voices from Hudson Bay: Cree Stories from York Factory*, ed. Flora Beardy and Robert Coutts (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), xxvii.
15. Register of baptisms, Split Lake, no. 38, Anglican Synod Office, Keewatin, ON; Riley spelled her name “Fannie” and early on switched to calling her Frances. (The minister, Edward Paupanekis, was evidently visiting for at this time he was based at the Methodist mission at Cross Lake, MB; see his biography by Raymond M. Beaumont, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 14, 1911–1920 [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998], 826–27.) On the basis of information from Hannah T. Riley (e.g., 4 February 1930), Young gave the name of Frances’s father as Thomas (not Jack). In 1900, Fanny’s parents had a second daughter, Emily, who was baptized 11 April 1900 and died three days later; the father was not described as deceased in that baptismal entry. Frances’s father must have died not too long afterwards, though, for the Anglican Synod marriage register (Split Lake, no. 30) lists the marriage, on 13 November 1906, of “Betsy Beardy, widow” to Edward McPherson at Split Lake. Thanks to Lacey Sanders for copies of the Anglican Synod entries.
16. Thanks to Raymond Shirritt-Beaumont for his unpublished compilation, “Nakawao or Brown Family” (dated 27 September 2004), tracing the family back to the early 1800s. *Voices from Hudson Bay*, ed. Beardy and Coutts, xxvii, regarding

Young's biography; see Young, "From Wigwam to Concert Platform," 4–6, on the Beardys' move and the death of Frances's father.

17. Riley to Young, letter marked by Young as received 8 January 1930. That little girl was Anna Moody. On her adoption by Miss Yeomans, she became known as Anna Yeomans (Young, "From Wigwam to Concert Platform," 2) but she died at the age of eight (Riley to Young, 14 May 1930). According to a letter postmarked 8 June 1930 (see also Young, "From Wigwam to Concert Platform," 2), Riley thought that Miss Yeomans's first name was Amelia, but she was evidently confusing her with her better known mother, Amelia. Miss Yeomans's given name was Charlotte; she was a nurse and the younger sister of Dr. Lilian Yeomans, who was then principal of the Norway House school. Charlotte came to the school as matron in 1900, the same year as Riley (Riley to Young in a letter he received 24 May 1930). Dr. Amelia Yeomans (1842–1913) was Lilian's and Charlotte's mother. In the 1880s, Amelia and her daughter Lilian were the first women physicians in Manitoba. See Vera Fast on Amelia Le Sueur (Yeomans) and family, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 14, 1911–1920 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 649–50. Riley added in the same letter that "Dr. Lillian had practised as a Medical Dr but her health had failed she made a splendid teacher . . . (she is now an Evangelical in California)." In a letter to Young postmarked 22 May 1930, Riley wrote that Lilian Yeomans taught Frances for two years. She died in Manhattan Beach, CA, according to her obituary in the *Los Angeles Times*, 11 December 1942.

18. Riley to Young, 4 February 1930. In that letter she wrote that, as sewing teacher, "I took entire charge of the children's clothes." Riley was born 12 April 1855 (Riley to Young, 11 April 1929).

19. Riley to Young, letter dated by Young as received 8 January 1930.

20. Young, "From Wigwam to Concert Platform," 1–2, 6, 8; Riley to Young, letter postmarked 9 May 1930. On the adoption and name change, see typescript copies of "Deed of Gift" and "Change of Name" (dated 23 January 1902) in front matter of Young, "From Wigwam to Concert Platform."

21. Riley to Young, letter dated by Young as received 8 January 1930.

22. Riley to Young, 6 March 1929; Young, "From Wigwam to Concert Platform," 10–11; Riley to Young in letter marked as received 8 January 1930. When Nickawa visited Oxford House in 1923, she noted, in a letter of 15 July to Lillian Taggart, how most of the Cree women there "wear shawls, nice black ones for Sunday with long fringes" (quoted in Young, "From Wigwam to Concert Platform," 86). This apparel was of course closer to Cree dress of the time than the fine doeskin dresses that Nickawa later wore onstage.

23. Riley to Young, 4 February 1930; Young, "From Wigwam to Concert Platform," 23, 25. On 6 February 1930, Riley wrote to Young of an incident that took place when Frances was about seventeen. On a crowded streetcar, she was sitting next to the last vacant seat when a young couple boarded. The young man motioned

the woman to the seat, but “she said loud enough for all in the car to hear, ‘Do you think I would sit by an Indian?’” When Riley asked Frances what she did next, Frances said, “we were nearly at 23rd Ave [her stop] so I got up and as I passed her I said, ‘Excuse me: There is no need for you to do so as I am getting off at the next stop.’” Other similar incidents also occurred.

24. Riley to Young, 4 February 1930: “She was in one Hospital nine months just before she came to Vancouver and when she was thirteen the Dr. said he did not think she would ever walk again.”

25. Riley to Young, 6 March 1929; see also letter postmarked 22 May 1930. Elocution, the art and skill of speaking forth effectively and projecting the voice clearly, was a major field of study for ministers, teachers, recitalists, and other performers until microphones, talking movies, and other sound enhancements became standard.

26. Riley to Young, letter postmarked 22 May 1930.

27. Riley to Young, 6 March 1929.

28. Riley to Young, 4 February 1930. Shaw began his career by studying and teaching elocution as his family thought that career “safer and more respectable” than going onstage. From 1892 to 1898, he was principal of the School of Elocution attached to the Conservatory of Music in Toronto, which he transformed into “the first full-fledged acting school in Canada.” Later, as an actor, he became well known under the professional name of Harold Nelson. Douglas Arrell described him as “the only important actor of his generation who set out consciously to use his talents in the service of a vision of a specifically Canadian theatre.” On Shaw’s method of teaching elocution, Arrell wrote that he “played down the rules and conventional techniques that gave it the reputation of being an archaic and pedantic discipline. . . . [He] always laid great stress on the importance of understanding the meaning of the words.” See Arrell, “Harold Nelson: The Early Years (c. 1865–1905),” *Theatre Research in Canada* 1, no. 2 (1980): 1, 229. Nickawa to Doris M. Wade, *Sunday News* (Sydney), 5 July 1924, quoted in Young, “From Wigwam to Concert Platform,” 106–7.

30. Young, “From Wigwam to Concert Platform,” 29–31. The undated page of printed testimonials was among Young’s papers.

31. Riley to Young, 6 March 1929.

32. Young, “From Wigwam to Concert Platform,” 33–36; *Winnipeg Free Press*, 6 December 1919, as quoted in Young; *Winnipeg Tribune*, 6 December 1919.

33. Strong-Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, 110.

34. Nickawa, quoted in Young, “From Wigwam to Concert Platform,” 50–51. An Australian interviewer of Nickawa, Doris M. Wade, writing in the *Sunday News* (Sydney), 5 July 1924 described her performance dress as “a most artistic costume made by the women of her tribe.” Made of deerskin, it was “elaborated with

wonderful beadwork which, of course, has all been done by hand.” Nickawa also mentioned proudly possessing a bag over one hundred years old, which was once used “by a Medicine-man of her tribe.” All quotes from Young, “From Wigwam to Concert Platform,” 108–9.

35. Strong-Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, 113.

36. Riley to Young, 6 February 1930. The scene in question probably represented Nokomis tending the dying Minnehaha, from the part of the poem titled “The Famine.”

37. Young, “From Wigwam to Concert Platform,” 37–38; The Music Man [E.M. Sheldrick, music editor of the *Christian Guardian*], “A Second Pauline Johnson: Frances Nickawa,” 6 April 1921, 16.

38. Young, “From Wigwam to Concert Platform,” 43. The Forster portrait, *Frances Nickawa (Nyakawaya)*, is in the Royal Ontario Museum, accession no. L978.30.6. His text is from the listing of paintings in the Forster bequest to the museum. (His portrait of Pauline Johnson is in a similar style.) Young collected copies of twenty photographs of Nickawa, evidently mainly from Hannah Riley; these are now in the United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto, Young Family Fonds, 94.094P/1–17.

39. Library and Archives Canada, Indian Affairs, RG 10, vol. 4092, file 558,902. Thanks to Sarah Carter for this document and reference.

40. Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), 178, 177.

41. Riley wrote to Young on 11 April 1929 “While in England Frances gave concerts in London, Bedford, Grantham, Yorkshire, Durham, Southport, Doncaster ... Liverpool and she took part in concerts at Queens Hall London, Central Hall Westminster ... and a lot of concerts at small towns.”

42. Barner to Young, 3 July 1930, enclosing a list of some of the projects that Nickawa supported. On Wallace and the history of *Ben-Hur*, see <http://www.ben-hur.com/benhur.html>.

43. Young, “From Wigwam to Concert Platform,” 31, and chap. 6. In October 1921, the Dominion News Service also sent a cable, “Indian Girl Stirred London,” to Canadian newspapers (*ibid.*, 49–51).

44. Young, “From Wigwam to Concert Platform,” 62; “Frances Nickawa: Cree Girl Who Is a Gifted Interpreter of the Poetry of Her Race,” *Saturday Night* (Toronto), 3 February 1923.

45. Riley to Young, who noted receiving the letter 8 January 1930; Barner, enclosure in letter to Young, of 3 July 1930.

46. Arthur Barner, “The Late Frances Nickawa.” *The New Outlook*, 16 January 1929.

(For a timeline of Johnson's stage career, see Strong-Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, 16–17.)

47. Barner, enclosure in letter to Young, of 3 July 1930.
48. Young, "From Wigwam to Concert Platform," 47, quoting from Levi Atkinson.
49. Nickawa, "diary," transcribed by Riley and enclosed in a letter to Young, 4 October 1929, and subsequently quoted in Young, "From Wigwam to Concert Platform," 74. The "diary" in fact is more a retrospective summary than a day-by-day account.
50. Nickawa, "diary," as transcribed by Riley and quoted in Young, "From Wigwam to Concert Platform," 83.
51. Levi Atkinson, quoted in Young, "From Wigwam to Concert Platform," 73.
52. Nickawa to Lillian Taggart, Oxford House, 15 July 1923, quoted in Young, "From Wigwam to Concert Platform," 86.
53. Nickawa to Riley, Oxford House, 15 July 1923, quoted in *ibid.*, 87.
54. C.G. Honnor, quoted in *ibid.*, 94.
55. Barner, enclosure in letter to Young, of 3 July 1930.
56. Barner, quoted in Young, "From Wigwam to Concert Platform," 97.
57. Nickawa, "diary," as transcribed by Riley and enclosed in her letter to Young, 4 October 1929.
58. Riley to Young, 14 April 1930.
59. Riley to Young, letter postmarked 9 May 1930.
60. Riley to Young, 10 January 1930. In a letter of 14 April, Riley noted their arrival date and the sequence of their Australia travels.
61. Methodist Home Missions to Frances Nickawa, Melbourne, 29 June 1925 (copy of letter supplied by Riley to Young). In chapters 10 and 11 of "From Wigwam to Concert Platform," Young quoted numerous enthusiastic reviews from press clippings supplied by Riley.
62. Riley to Young, 14 April 1930.
63. Quoted in Young, "From Wigwam to Concert Platform," 135.
64. Young, "From Wigwam to Concert Platform," 138, based on information from Hannah Riley.
65. "Frances Nickawa," *Young Canada Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (April–June 1926): 2.
66. Riley to Young, 6 February 1930. Thanks to Warren McFadyen, nephew of Mark,

for a copy of the Certificate of Registration of Marriage, registered Victoria, BC, 1 February 1927, no. 93920, which described Mark as a sales manager and a bachelor, aged thirty-one, born in Ireland of English descent (Riley described him as English). McFadyen also located his birth certificate: he was born in Cork, 9 April 1895.

67. “Indian Girl in Gripping Recital: Frances Kickawa [sic] Sways Huge Audience with Dramatic Genius,” clipping from *Calgary Herald*, 6 May 1927, found in Young’s papers.

68. See Strong-Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, 25, 67–68, 140–44, on Johnson’s involvements with men and also on her erotic poetry.

69. Barner, enclosure in letter to Young, dated 3 July 1930.

70. Thanks to both Lacey Sanders and Sarah Carter, who located and copied the two letters cited. The letters are in Library and Archives Canada, Indian Affairs, RG 10, vol. 4092, file 558,902.

71. Young, “From Wigwam to Concert Platform,” chap. 14; Riley to Young, 26 January 1929.

72. Young, foreword to “From Wigwam to Concert Platform,” iv. Hannah Riley received over three hundred letters of condolence after Nickawa’s death (Riley to Young, 12 September 1929).

73. Barner, enclosure in letter to Young, dated 3 July 1930.

74. On sending him the photograph, Riley wrote to Young on 26 January 1929, “About two weeks before Christmas [Frances] was able to walk to the door and sit on the steps to have enclosed snap taken.” They had copies printed for Christmas cards (Riley to Young, 11 April 1929).

75. Riley to Young, 12 September 1929. Arthur Barner wrote to Young the next year: “The spirit of that domestic life is being perpetuated for when I visited Mr Mark and Miss Riley in their comfortable apartment in Calgary, Alberta, she said to me, ‘I could not have thought my old age would be so filled with love and care on the part of one who was a perfect stranger to me until he and Frances met’” (Barner, enclosure in letter to Young, dated 3 July 1930).

76. Certificate of Registration of Death, Province of British Columbia, filed 2 January 1929, no. 23422, copy provided by Warren McFadyen. Riley described Nickawa as having a “nervous breakdown” and then a “bad attack of the flu” in May 1928: Riley to Young, 12 September 1929; 26 January 1929. She added in the former letter that “the Dr had every hope that she would get well until a few hours before she left us.”

77. Strong-Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, 124.

78. Quoted on undated page of printed testimonials in Young papers.

79. “Indian Girl in Gripping Recital.” *Calgary Herald*, 6 May 1927, clipping found in Young’s papers.

80. Strong-Boag and Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, 185.

81. Ibid., 22, as expressed, for example, in her “A Pagan in St. Paul’s.”

82. Copies of records supplied by Warren McFadyen and Geraldine Cook, and email communications to Jennifer S.H. Brown, gratefully received.

83. She copied to me a Vancouver death notice of “Frances Nickawa—Much beloved wife of Arthur Russell Mark” (3 January 1929, newspaper not identified). In acknowledgement of Nickawa’s wide reputation, the notice added: “Canadian, English, Scotch, Australian and American papers please copy.”

## (12) Blazing Her Own Trail: Anahareo's Rejection of Euro-Canadian Stereotypes

1. Grey Owl, *Pilgrims of the Wild* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1935), 17.
2. See Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 186–87; Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale, eds., *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005), 7, 10; and Laura F. Klein and Lillian A. Ackerman, eds., *Women and Power in Native North America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 5.
3. Though her name might imply that she was Métis, *Anahareo* was a mixture of Mohawk and Algonquin, and her anglicized name reflects the Euro-Canadian missionaries who also gave her grandparents their names.
4. On Mattawa, see Leo Morel, *Mattawa: Meeting of the Waters* (Mattawa: Mattawa Historical Society, 1980); Peter Handley, ed., *Anent Michael J.: The Life and Times of Michael J. Rodden* (Cobalt, ON: Highway Books, 1999), 1–53; and *La Sentinelle* (Mattawa, Ontario, 1895, nos. 10–52, Library and Archives Canada (AMICUS catalogue no. 7821012).
5. Morel, *Mattawa*, 17, 42; author interviews with Mitzi Whalen (resident of Mattawa and a family friend), Mattawa, Ontario, June 2008, and with Dolly Bernard (Anahareo's cousin, of Mattawa), June 2007. See also *La Sentinelle* (Mattawa, Ontario), 1895, nos. 10–52, and Handley, *Anent Michael J.*
6. Author interview with Anahareo's daughter Anne Gaskell, Kaslo, British Columbia, May 2008; Donald Smith (Grey Owl's biographer), interview with Emma Dufond, Mattawa, 18 May 1973, Donald Smith Grey Owl Collection, Glenbow Archives, Calgary (hereafter Smith Grey Owl Collection).
7. Donald Smith, interview with Johanna Bernard Murphy, 30 January 1971; Anne Gaskell, May 2008, Smith Grey Owl Collection; author interviews with Dolly Bernard, June 2007, and Anne Gaskell, May 2008.
8. Author interview with Anahareo's daughter Katherine Swartile, Kamloops, British Columbia, May 2008; Anahareo, *Devil in Deerskins* (Toronto: New Press, 1972), 36.
9. Anahareo, *Devil in Deerskins*, 36; author interviews with Katherine Swartile, May 2008, and with Dolly Bernard, June 2007.
10. Lynne Schuyler, freelance journalist, interview with Anahareo, Kamloops, British Columbia, 1980, Katherine Swartile Papers, private collection.
11. Anahareo, *Devil in Deerskins*, 38–40; author interview with Katherine Swartile, May 2008.

12. See Pickles and Rutherford, eds., introduction to *Contact Zones*; Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Small-Town Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 13, 38–39, 211.
13. “Lake Temagami Provide Employment for Bear Island Native,” 11 September 1976 (newspaper unknown), clipping file, Smith Grey Owl Collection.
14. Ibid.; Anahareo, *Devil in Deerskins*, 10–11.
15. Gertie wrote to the social manager at Camp Wabikon, Isabel “Billie” LeDuc, expressing her desire to “hit the road” but indicating that she understood her father’s desire that she go to school. Gertie to Billie, n.d., Isabel Le Duc Papers, Temagami Library, Ontario.
16. Donald B. Smith, *From the Land of the Shadows: The Making of Grey Owl* (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: Western Producer Prairie, 1990), 1–63.
17. Ibid., 65–75.
18. Anahareo, *Devil in Deerskins*, 2–4.
19. Ibid., 10–11.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., 13–14.
22. Ibid., 19–57, 66.
23. Carter, *Capturing Women*, 186–87.
24. Anahareo, *Devil in Deerskins*, 69–74.
25. Ibid., and Smith, *From the Land of the Shadows*, 81.
26. Anahareo, *Devil in Deerskins*, 64–82.
27. Ibid., 78–86.
28. Ibid., 82–90.
29. Ibid., 91–98, and Smith, *From the Land of the Shadows*, 84.
30. Anahareo, *Devil in Deerskins*, 106–11.
31. Ibid., 112–18.
32. Ibid., 118–20.
33. See Sally Zanjani, *A Mine of Her Own* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 33, 172, 305; Frances Backhouse, *Women of the Klondike* (Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 1995); and Claire Rudolph Murphy and Jane G. Haigh, *Gold Rush Women* (Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Books, 1997).

34. Anahareo, *Devil in Deerskins*, 120–23.
35. Ibid., 123–29.
36. Zanjani, *A Mine of her Own*, 33
37. Ibid.
38. Anahareo, *Devil in Deerskins*, 131–32.
39. Smith, *From the Land of Shadows*, 51.
40. Anahareo, *Devil in Deerskins*, 180.
41. Zanjani, *A Mine of Her Own*, 135–36.
42. Smith, *From the Land of the Shadows*, 91.
43. Smith, *From the Land of Shadows*, 90.
44. Ibid., 91–92.
45. Anahareo, *Devil in Deerskins*, 144–45.
46. Zanjani, *A Mine of Her Own*, 158.
47. “Quest for Gold to Buy Airplane Takes Mohawk Girl Prospecting Alone,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 10 October 1931.
48. Ibid.
49. It is not certain that “Paharomen Nahareo” means anything in any language. It is not clear whether Archie or Gertie created the name “Paharomen Nahareo,” but it is likely he did, as he did “Anahereo.” Gertie’s great-grandfather was John Anerha Nelson, the most likely link for the names.
50. See Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan’s Playground: A History of Prince Albert National Park* (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1989), 36, 43, 68, 82.
51. Ibid., 43, 68–70, 82.
52. Graham A. MacDonald and Grit McCreath, *Waskesiu and Its Neighbours: A Casual Illustrated History* (Altona, MB: By the authors, 2008), 48; Waiser, *Saskatchewan’s Playground*, 82.
53. Anahareo, *Devil in Deerskins*, 149–51.
54. Ibid., 158.
55. “Indian Squaw Turns from Kitchen Duties to Gold Prospecting,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 11 September 1933.
56. “Grey Owl’s Wife Leaves Alone in Search for Gold,” *Calgary Herald*, 12 September 1933.

57. Anahareo, *Devil in Deerskins*, 159.
58. Anahareo, *Devil in Deerskins*, 160–61.
59. “Young Indian Woman,” *Canadian Press*, 13 June 1934.
60. Anahareo, *Devil in Deerskins*, 162; Archie to Gertie, 24 June 1934, MG30 D147, Library and Archives Canada.
61. Anahareo, *Devil in Deerskins*, 163–64; Archie to Gertie, 16 May 1934, 24 June 1934, 11 July 1934, 20 July 1934, 27 July 1934, 17 October 1934, MG30 D147, Library and Archives Canada.
62. Anahareo, *Devil in Deerskins*, 165–69.
63. *Ibid.*, 171.
64. “Grey Owl,” CBC-TV broadcast, December 1972.
65. Lovat Dickson to Hugh Eayrs, 14 June 1938; Lovat Dickson to Yvone Perrier, 14 June 1938, Smith Grey Owl Collection.
66. “Mrs. Grey Owl Aids Husband; Has Ambition,” 28 December 1935 (newspaper unknown), clipping file, Smith Grey Owl Collection.
67. On their separation, see Anahareo, *Devil in Deerskins*, 175–76; diary of Betty Somervell, Smith Grey Owl Collection; and Smith, *From the Land of the Shadows*, 164.
68. Margaret Winters Charko (daughter of woman who looked after Dawn in Prince Albert) to author, email messages, 7 May 2008 and 23 September 2006; Smith, *From the Land of the Shadows*, 167–71; MacDonald and McCreath, *Waskesiu and Its Neighbours*, 48, 57; author interview with Anne Gaskell, May 2008.
69. Dawn Richardson (Grey Owl’s granddaughter) to Nancy Ryley (CBC broadcaster), 7 February 1979, Swartile Papers; Leslie Sara, “Could She Not Take Over Work Her Husband Commenced in Prince Albert National Park,” 23 April 1938, *Calgary Daily Herald*, clipping file, Smith Grey Owl Collection.
70. Author interview with Anne Gaskell, May 2008.
71. The Reverend J.M. Roe, quoted in Sara, “Could She Not Take Over Work Her Husband Commenced in Prince Albert National Park.”
72. Joan Sangster, “Native Women, Sexuality and the Law,” in *In the Days of Our Grandmothers: A Reader in Aboriginal Women’s History in Canada*, ed. Mary-Ellen Kelm and Lorna Townsend (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 316–17.
73. Author interview with Anne Gaskell, May 2008.
74. Marily Kjarsgaard, “Family Recalls Controversial Life of Writer, Naturalist,” *Daily Herald* (Prince Albert), 26 September 1964; Anahareo, *Devil in Deerskins*, 178; Robert Martin, interview with Anahareo, *Globe and Mail*, 17 September 1973.

75. "Grey Owl's Deserted Wife Found in Poverty," *Daily Express*, 22 April 1938, Smith Grey Owl Collection.
76. Lovat Dickson to James A. Wood (Superintendent of Prince Albert National Park), 26 April 1938; Lovat Dickson to Hugh Eayrs, 13 May 1938; Lovat Dickson to Hugh Eayrs, 20 May 1938, Smith Grey Owl Collection.
77. Lovat Dickson to Hugh Eayrs, 14 June 1938; Lovat Dickson to Yvone Perrier, 14 June 1938, Smith Grey Owl Collection.
78. "Grey Owl's Former Wife Unravels Mystery of Archie Belaney's Life," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 27 July 1938; Betty Somervell to Kristin Somervell, 1953, Smith Grey Owl Collection; Smith, *From the Land of the Shadows*, 215–16.
79. Countess Gertrude Moltke (Anahareo) to Mr. (Willis) Kingsley Wing (New York agent), 1 July 1961, Katherine Swartile Papers.
80. Author interview with Katherine Swartile, May 2008; Gertie to Richard Gregson (film agent, John Redway and Associates), November 1959, Katherine Swartile Papers.
81. Marriage certificate (Winnipeg), 2 December 1939, Katherine Swartile Papers.
82. Eric to Gertie, 23 September 1944; Wilna Moore to Gertie, 22 July 1947; Mudder (Anahareo) to Dawn (Belaney), 1 May 1948, Katherine Swartile Papers.
83. Author interview with Katherine Swartile, May 2008.
84. Wilna Moore to Mr. Gray, of Macmillan Publishers, 31 December 1952 and 12 February 1953; and Sandwell, Report, Macmillan Publishers, 23 February 1953, notes in Smith Grey Owl Collection (originals in Macmillan Collection, McMaster University Library, Hamilton, Ontario).
85. Author interview with Katherine Swartile, May 2008.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid.
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89. Author interview with Katherine Swartile, May 2008; Dawn Bruce to Anahareo, November 1962, Robert Lewis to Thomas McHugh (both of Jack Douglas Productions), 23 March 1963, and Dawn Bruce to Disney Corporation, 25 May 1964, Katherine Swartile Papers.
90. Smith, *From the Land of the Shadows*, 216.
91. Lynne Schuyler, interview with Dawn Richardson, 1980, Katherine Swartile Papers.

92. Ibid.

93. According to Roy MacSkimming, the founder of New Press, from which *Devil in Deerskins* originally appeared, it was the *Toronto Star* bestseller list that ranked the book as number four. Roy MacSkimming, email to the author, 11 September 2000. Pony (Anahareo) to Rache (Lorat Dickson), 19 January 1973, MG30 D147, Library and Archives Canada; Georgean Short, "Report on Investigations," Grey Owl Project, University of Saskatchewan, 1971, Smith Grey Owl Collection; Lynne Schuyler, interview with Dawn Richardson, 1980, Shirley Popham, Department of Indian Affairs, to Mr. Ron Gadsby (journalist in British Columbia), 30 August 1971, Katherine Swartile Papers.

94. Dawn Richardson to Rache (Lorat Dickson), 18 June 1975, MG30 D147, Library and Archives Canada.

95. Author interview with Katherine Swartile, May 2008; Dawn Richardson to Rache (Lorat Dickson), 25 January 1976, MG30 D147, Library and Archives Canada; "A Mohawk: A Legend in Her Time," *Native Times* (Toronto), November–December 1975; Ken Hinkins, "She's Still Fighting," *The Victorian*, 9 April 1975.

96. "Grey Owl's Widow Speaks Out Against Poisoning Wolves," *Vancouver Sun*, 21 March 1980; Lynne Schuyler, "One Spunky Lady," *BC Outdoors*, February 1981.

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