

SEWING OURSELVES TOGETHER: CLOTHING, DECORATIVE ARTS AND
THE EXPRESSION OF METIS AND HALF BREED IDENTITY

BY

SHERRY FARRELL RACETTE

A Dissertation submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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PREFACE

Picking Up the Needle

When I was a university student, I worked at a summer education program in The Pas in northern Manitoba. There I met three women from the Manitoba Métis Federation who had obtained a grant to teach people who worked with their children. Tired of requests to come into classrooms to teach children beadwork, they had decided that the best use of their time and skills was to “teach the teachers” with the expectation that beadwork would be incorporated into the curriculum. The women seemed to take special care that I learned what they had to teach. Maybe it was because I was the only aboriginal woman in the workshop; maybe it was because I was interested. Kathleen Delaronde, a traditional artist of the highest caliber, was one of those women. I got to know her and her family and during another northern summer, I stayed at their home and learned at her kitchen table. Nobody in my family did beadwork, but I felt an immediate connection with beads and leather.

Although beadwork and traditional arts were new to me, sewing clothes and making decorative objects for the home were not. Both my parents had been poor as children and took tremendous pleasure in dressing well. My grandmother always dressed up to go to town, and tortured my uncles by dressing them in little matching suits and hats. One summer while we were visiting my grandmother in Quebec, she sat me down at her treadle sewing machine and helped me sew a dress for my doll. At home I started sewing by helping my mother who was always making something. My job was to rip her mistakes while she forged ahead and to do hand sewing which she still loathes. In addition to what she had learned from my grandmother, my mother had taken a tailoring course that was offered by the Singer sewing machine company, and she sent me off to take a similar course when I was a teenager. Now she helps me when I embark on projects that involve sewing. For an art exhibit, *Dolls for Big Girls*, I merged what I knew about Métis and First Nations history and traditional arts and clothing. While I made little

moccasins, my mother dressed the old woman for a piece entitled *Flight* based on her memories of clothing worn by my great-grandmother, Annie Polson King.

When I began my journey into traditional arts, my mother brought me a birch bark basket that belonged to my grandmother, Helen King Hanbury. Disappointed that, in a fit of creativity, my grandmother had painted it with green boat paint, I put the basket aside. I didn't open it until shortly after my grandmother died. One day I found myself sitting on the edge of my bed with the basket in my lap. When I took off the lid, I found moccasin patterns, a piece of embroidery, assorted odds and ends, and a handmade needle case with a simple flower embroidered on the cover. I realized that I had unknowingly picked up a needle to an aesthetic tradition that my grandmother had put down. Since that time I have taken opportunities to learn from elder artists, such as the late Margaret McAuley of Cumberland House, and struggled on by myself. I have also thought a great deal about what it means when we wrap ourselves up and present ourselves to the world in a certain way and what it means when we stop. This study is an extension of the journey that began when Kathleen Delaronde helped me pick up the needle. It has been done with the greatest respect for the women who have taught me and the artists from long ago, who I am sure have been standing beside me guiding my research.

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Glossary of Terms Related to Trade Goods and Historic Garments

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Baize, Bays | A coarse, long napped woolen fabric made in Britain of a brownish red or bay colour. Baize was typically used for monks' habits or soldier's uniforms. |
| Balmoral | A Scottish "tam-o-shanter" style flat cap. The band was frequently worked with quills or beads. |
| Beads | Indigenous beads were laboriously constructed with bow drills from shell, seeds or soft stone. Trade beads were introduced during the fur trade in a variety of sizes and types. |
| Cut glass | Small, blown glass beads that are cut to catch the light. |
| Faceted | Metal, glass seed and pony beads which have a faceted surface to reflect light. |
| Pony | Any solid colour bead of size 8/0 or larger. So called because they were shipped in packs on horses in the plains and foothill regions. |
| Pound | Another term for pony beads, sold in one pound bundles. |
| Seed | Any of the small coloured beads which fall between 20/0 and 10/0 size. (10 being the larger size) |
| White Heart | A bead that is made of translucent glass over a white core. |
| Beaverteen | Strong, smooth cotton cloth used for making heavy work trousers, lighter than moleskin. |

| | |
|--|--|
| Blanketing Caps | Separate hood shaped head gear made from blanket remnants or wool fabric. Some versions had two wolf or lynx ears, and others were trimmed with feathers. |
| Bodice | After 1860 most dresses were two piece, a separate bodice that fit closely to the body and a skirt. |
| Broadcloth | A fine woolen fabric woven in widths wider than 27 inches. Fine broadcloth often has a sheen. |
| Bottes de boeuf, bottes sauvages, beef shoes | A French-Canadian adaptation of the moccasin. It had a molded sole of heavier leather, with a lighter leather beef shoes upper, a birch bark insole, lined with a blanket sock. It was treated with animal fat and beeswax to be more water resistant. |
| Cadiz, cadis | A type of coarse woolen fabric, also sold as a ribbon binding. |
| Calico | A Hindu word meaning spotted used to describe a printed fabric of cotton, chintz or muslin originally made in India. Calico prints of the fur trade were primarily geometric in shape. |
| Camelot | A cheap wool blend imitation of the rich camel hair or "camlet" fabrics of the Orient, the term "camelot" is synonymous with tawdry. |
| Drugget | Heavy cloth of wool or wool blended with half silk or linen. |
| Duffels | Woolen fabric with a thick tufted or knotted nap. Originally made in Duffel, England. |
| Ells | A very old unit of measurement, one ell was 45 inches long. It was used to distinguish different sizes and lengths of capotes. Capotes were available in sizes varying from 1 to 4 1/2 ells. |

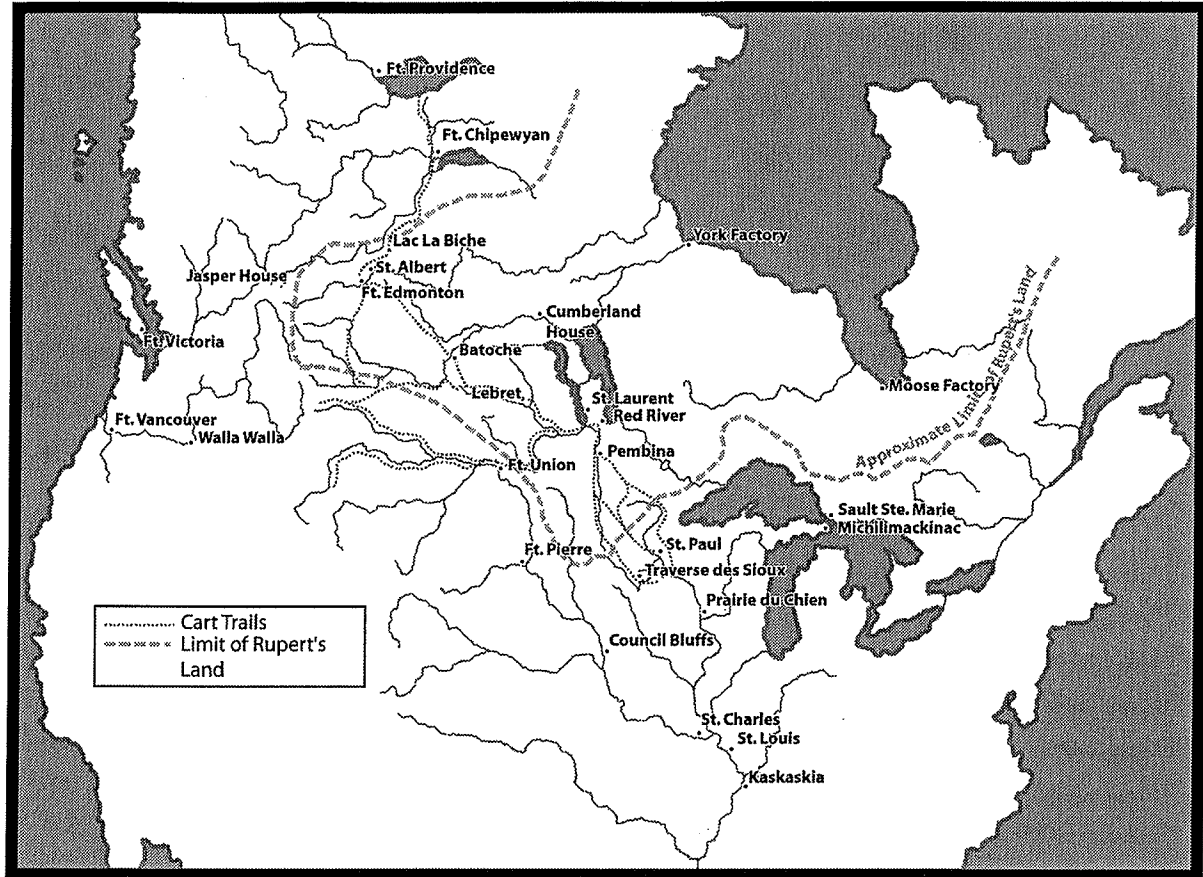
| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Etoffe du pays | Blue-grey homespun wool made in Quebec. |
| Ferret, ferreting | A kind of narrow ribbon or tape made of cotton or silk. |
| Garters | Narrow strips of fingerwoven or worsted fabric, woven quillwork bands or strips of velvet or wool decorated with beadwork used to secure leggings. |
| Gartering | Lengths of ribbon, silk or worsted cloth which were cut to form garters used below or above the knee. |
| Glengarry Cap | A fitted woolen cap creased from the front to the back of the crown originally part of certain regimental uniforms of Scottish highlanders |
| Laced | An adjective identifying the use of silver or gold metallic braid as trim on a garment. |
| Merino | A soft woolen fabric resembling cashmere, made from the fine wool of sheep of the same name. |
| Moleskin | A soft, heavy-napped cotton twill fabric, popular for making warm trousers. |
| Ostrich feathers | Dyed ostrich plumes, commonly used for hatband trimmings. |
| Otter Tail Design | A series of elongated hexagons with two, three or four diamonds connecting them representing the track left by an otter when it crosses the ice in the spring. |
| Outfit | The complete inventory of men and goods in a particular region or post in a specific year. For example, "Saskatchewan Outfit, 1822." |
| Pagoda Sleeves | Sleeves on women's garments that flared from the elbow. |

- Point A point is a black line woven into a blanket indicating its size and value. The Hudson's Bay Company introduced the point system in 1779 to correspond with the Standard of Trade. Originally one point correlated with one beaver pelt.
- Sioux stitch A distinctive beadwork stitch used by Dakota and Lakota women in which short rows of beads are tacked down in horizontal lines, creating a ridged effect.
- Slops Originally a common workman's trouser with wide legs hemmed several inches below the knee. It became a general term for inexpensive work clothes.
- Sousae, soosee A cloth of silk or mixed cotton and silk available in checks and stripes, popular for handkerchiefs and scarves.
- Stroud Coarse, cheap woolen cloth made in Stroud, England with undyed selvages. Popular for leggings, blankets, shirts and other garments.
- Trade Silver A wide range of jewelry and accessories made from German silver, a nickle alloy. Made by silversmiths in Quebec and the eastern United States for the fur trade.
- Worsted A closely twisted yarn made of long-staple wool in which the fibres are arranged to lie parallel to each other.

Abbreviations Used for Museum and Archival Collections

| | |
|--|-------|
| Agate Fossil Beds National Monument, Nebraska | AGFO |
| American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming | AHC |
| Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg | AM |
| Archives of Ontario, Toronto | AO |
| Canadian Museum of Civilization, Ottawa | CMC |
| Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin | CSHSW |
| Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society | CMHS |
| Denver Art Museum | DM |
| Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary | GAI |
| Gabriel Dumont Institute, Saskatoon SK. | GDI |
| Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg | HBCA |
| Manitoba Museum, Winnipeg | MM |
| Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul | MNHS |
| Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis | MOHS |
| Montana Historical Society, Helena | MTHS |
| Musée Heritage Museum, St. Albert, AB | MHM |
| Musée St. Boniface | MSB |
| Musée McCord Museum, Montreal | MMM |
| Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology, Cambridge UK | MAA |
| National Archives of Canada, Ottawa | NAC |
| National Museum of Ireland, Dublin | NMI |
| Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln | NSHS |
| Parks Canada, Winnipeg | PC |
| Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford UK | PR |
| Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton | PAA |
| Provincial Museum of Alberta, Edmonton | PMA |
| Royal Saskatchewan Museum, Regina | RSKM |
| Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh | RSM |
| Ross House Museum, Winnipeg | RHM |
| Saskatchewan Archives Board, Regina | SAB |
| State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck | SHSND |

Map 1: Métis and Half Breed North America



CHAPTER ONE

Métis and Half Breed Clothing and Decorative Arts

Each aesthetic experience is a part of the creation of a system of meaning such that each part informs the other and the whole . . . [but] aesthetic expression is performative; by doing something, aesthetic expression reestablishes equilibriums . . . Thus our concern in analyzing indigenous aesthetics is with action and agency as well as the organization of knowledge and meaning systems.¹

The Métis were often described in travel and colonial narratives as presenting a compelling visual image. In 1823 William Keating described his first sight of them: “Twenty hunters, mounted on their best steeds, rode in abreast . . . Their dress is singular, but not deficient in beauty; it is a mixture of the European and Indian habits.”² Henry Youle Hinde described seeing a Cree woman in 1858 at a church service, “neatly inhabited in the dress of the half-breeds.”³ References to aesthetic and clothing traditions unique to people identified as “half-breeds” are a persistent theme throughout the historic record. Did Métis and Half Breed people dress the same? Was style a means of communicating territory and social space? What does it mean when a group of people present themselves as a visual collective?

At its most fundamental, clothing is worn for protection whether it be physical protection from the elements or for the emotional and psychological protection it may offer in terms of privacy, conformity and modesty. Clothing can be instrumental in the active construction of group identity and not merely reflective of it, communicating underlying histories and current social realities.⁴ The clothing worn by Métis and Half Breed people reflects the historic events that have impacted them over time: the fur trade, changing economies, resistance and

¹Steven Luthold, *Indigenous Aesthetics: Native Art, Media and Identity* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 7-8.

²William Keating, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Source of St. Peter's River, Lake Winnepeek, Lake of the Woods, etc, performed in the year 1823* (1825; repr. Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, 1959), 39.

³Henry Youle Hinde, *Narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857 and of the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition of 1858* (1860; repr. Edmonton: M. G. Hurtig, 1971), 205.

⁴Robin Metcalfe, *Dressing Down* (Oakville, Ontario: Oakville Galleries, 1998), 32.

displacement. The profound poverty and racism that affected many families and communities throughout the twentieth century has been balanced by survival, persistence and the renewal and regeneration that has marked the last three decades.

The decorated surface of clothing, worn on the canvas of the human form and extended onto functional objects used in everyday life, provided the bulk of aesthetic expression through beadwork, quillwork, painting and textile arts. Because visual art is communicative, engaging both artist and audience, shared aesthetic expressions serve to bind people in an emotional response to what is culturally defined as beautiful or well made – the collective linking of eyes, hands and heart.

Treatment of Métis Artistic Production in the Literature

The evolution of Métis nationalism on the northwestern prairies and its subsequent role in the larger narrative of Canadian history has been the dominant focus in the literature on Métis people. Marcel Giraud's *The Métis in the Canadian West* is generally recognized as the most complete of the early historical works.⁵ It embraced a range of Métis history seldom addressed, but is flawed by racial and geographical determinism and negative views towards miscegenation.⁶ Giraud dismissed Métis culture as fundamentally flawed and of little interest to scholars.

[the Canadian] could give the young Métis . . . only a weakened and profoundly altered image of his own native culture. It was reduced to little more than vague notions of Christianity tinged with superstition, while the Indian woman in her turn transmitted to her Métis children only the husk of a culture that was gravely disturbed by association with the whites and whose disciplines [were] communicated to the child [as] only the fragile rudiments . . . nothing better than a combination of two incomplete cultures without any firm foundation.⁷

George Woodcock's introduction to the 1986 edition echoes this reading of the Métis as a culturally incomplete people and includes the following statement: "since this was a people

⁵Marcel Giraud, *The Metis in the Canadian West* (1945; repr. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1986).

⁶Frank Tough, "Race, Personality and History: a Review of Marcel Giraud's *The Metis in the Canadian West*," *Native Studies Review* 5, 2 (1989): 84.

⁷Giraud, *Metis in the Canadian West*, 353.

lacking in those forms of artistic self-expression that are languages of the spirit -- we have little tangible record of their inner lives.”⁸

Ted Brassler credits Minnesota archaeologist Burton W. Thayer and Frederick H. Douglas, curator at the Denver Art Museum, as the first scholars to correct the historical reconstruction of the Métis as a people lacking in artistic self-expression.⁹ Thayer began to identify Métis work, catalogued as Dakota, in museum collections. He stated that works previously identified as innovative or adaptive applications of “borrowed styles were not borrowed at all, but were made by an entirely different people.”¹⁰ His paper sought to distinguish “Red River Half-breed” work from that of the Santee Sioux. In 1975, Brassler as the Plains ethnologist at the National Museum of Canada similarly began to identify an unacknowledged body of Métis art production in Canadian museum collections.

In his seminal work, “Métis Artisans”, Brassler noted that while there was ample evidence of a floral art tradition within the “predominantly geometric character of Plains Indian decorative art . . . few scholars have tried to trace the origin of this floral style.”¹¹ He proposed a tentative progression and developmental chronology of a distinct Métis artistic tradition. He positioned the emerging Métis within western movements of Algonkian First Nations, identifying Pembina in present-day North Dakota as “their nation’s capital.”¹² Brassler proposed 1800 – 1820 as the date for the emergence of floral imagery in the Red River Region and a continuum of media adopted over time: paint (1800) quillwork (1820), with silk and beads becoming the dominant medium in the 1850s. “*Bo’jou, Neejee!*” *Profiles of Canadian Indian Art*, a major national exhibition curated by Brassler in 1976, identified Métis material in two regional categories: Red River Metis

⁸Giraud, *Metis in the Canadian West*, xii.

⁹Ted J. Brassler, “Metis Artisans,” *The Beaver* (Autumn 1975): 221.

¹⁰B. W. Thayer, “Some Examples of Red River Half Breed Art,” *Minnesota Archaeologist* 8 (1942): 47 and 49.

¹¹Brassler, *Metis Artisans*, 52.

¹²He also identified an unspecified yet instrumental role of the “Praying or French Iroquois” and the Nipissing. See Brassler, *Metis Artisans*, 56

type and Northwest Territories Metis type.¹³ In the exhibition catalogue, Brassier described the Métis as a visually distinct people who produced “large quantities of highly decorated skin coats, pouches, moccasins and horse gear, which they traded all over the northern and central Plains.”¹⁴ He credited Métis women with floral imagery marked by complexity and “sparkling delicacy” and identified their Sioux name as the Flower Beadwork People. However, Brassier’s efforts to articulate the development of Métis art became more uncertain. His subsequent work, “In Search of Métis Art” was a repetition of his earlier findings and emphasized the difficulties associated with scholarly work on the subject.¹⁵ He included the influence of Catholic mission schools in the Red River region, first explored by Jan Morier in “Métis Decorative Art and Its Inspiration.”¹⁶ He subscribed to Alfred Bailey’s 1937 analysis, which stated that the use of floral imagery could be mapped along principal fur trade routes.¹⁷

It appeared that while Brassier could identify Métis style, any developmental analysis had become problematic. He described the art produced by the Red River Métis as having “flowered and withered” before ethnologists began systematic collections of documented artifacts.¹⁸ He subscribed to Kroeber’s artistic evolutionism, which applies the idea of cycles of growth, climax and decline to the study of art, when he described Métis artistic production as a “regional climax within a cultural continuum,” identifying a nineteenth century classical period followed by

¹³*Bo'jou Neejee* was a major exhibition that toured extensively, stimulated by the renewal of interest in First Nations art and the National Museum’s acquisition of the Speyer Collection. The exhibition was divided into two sections, one that attempted to represent aboriginal societies prior to contact and one that explored innovation and change.

¹⁴Brassier, *Bo'jou Nejee! Profiles of Canadian Indian Art* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1976), 47-48.

¹⁵Ted J. Brassier, “In search of métis art,” *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America*, ed. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 221-229.

¹⁶See Jan Morier, “Metis Decorative Arts and Its Inspiration,” *Dawson and Hind* 8 (1979): 28–32 for a discussion of floral motifs in a pattern book belonging to the Grey Nuns and regional quillwork.

¹⁷Bailey entered into Speck and Barbeau’s discussions on the double curve, resisting the idea that the indigenous double curve was the ancestor of floral imagery. Alfred G. Bailey, *The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Cultures, 1504–1700* (1937; repr. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 151.

¹⁸Brassier, *In Search of Metis Art*, 221, 226, 228.

subsequent movement into ethnic market production. The complex and overlapping cultural communities in the Red River region and the lack of adequate provenance in museum collections made Brassier's efforts to develop a chronological sequence difficult. His final word on the study of Métis art emphasized the need for a "wide focus . . . due to the very nature of métis society, the wide distribution of métis crafts in trade, and the subsequent migrations" which resulted in "métis art style [putting] its stamp on the art of practically every tribal group of the northern plains and the North West Territories."¹⁹

Julia Harrison's reflections on *Metis: People Between Two Worlds*, a 1985 exhibition mounted by the Glenbow-Alberta Institute to commemorate the one-hundredth anniversary of the fall of Batoche, expressed similar frustrations. Collection efforts made by the Glenbow were disappointing and the difficulties in identification experienced by Brassier persisted.

Because early objects documented to have been made or used by Metis are extremely rare in museum collections . . . the story was told by the use of examples of similar objects and replicas. The Red River component of the Metis population was emphasized because it is the best documented.²⁰

The difficulties encountered by Brassier, Harrison and others contributed to the decline of scholarly interest in Métis art production. However, research activity triggered by Brassier resulted in a series of noteworthy and more manageable regionally focused or collection-based studies.

Kate Duncan's 1981 article, "The Métis and Production of Embroidery in the Subarctic", was based on her initial foray into the Emma Shaw Colcleugh collection at the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology.²¹ Duncan employed travel narratives and early Athapaskan ethnologies to confirm the important artistic production of women of mixed European and First

¹⁹Brassier, *In Search of Metis Art*, 225

²⁰Julia Harrison, "Metis: A Glenbow Museum Exhibition," *American Indian Art Magazine* 11, 2 (1986): 57.

²¹Kate Duncan, "The Metis and Production of Embroidery in the Subarctic," *The Museum of the Fur Trade Quarterly* 17, 3 (1981): 1-8.

Nations ancestry. However, she argued against the broader application of the term Métis to regions outside the Red River and stated, “Subarctic work should and must be attributed by tribe or place of collection, keeping in mind the possible Métis factor.”²² Judy Thompson’s 1983 article, “She Sets the Fashion for the Whole North”, was a response to the arrival of the small, but well-documented Frederick Bell collection at the National Museum of Man.²³ Thompson connected the collection to travel narratives and regional fieldwork done by early ethnologists. In addition to her role in further defining a regional style, Thompson advanced the important idea of fashion in Métis art, describing it as following trends, having innovators and followers, and styles which came into vogue and were replaced by new ideas and techniques. Thompson challenged the old ideas of culturally pristine, static, unchanging tribal styles, subsequently polluted by outside influence. She identified a vigorous aesthetic climate within a particular time period (1850 - 1935) adopting, like Brasser, a Kroeberian analysis of artistic climax and decline.

Barbara Hail and Kate Duncan’s *Out of the North: the Subarctic Collection of the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology* (1989) was a major work based primarily on material collected by Emma Shaw Colcleugh between 1888 and 1897 and the smaller June Bedford collection. The Colcleugh collection included a notebook that placed many of the objects in particular northern communities such as Norway House on Lake Winnipeg and Great Slave Lake. Hail and Duncan also conducted community-based research, interviewing artists and collecting contemporary work, retracing Emma Shaw Colcleugh’s original journey. They developed an extensive analysis of design and form that was applied to specific works to examine linkages between objects. The authors attempted to identify and standardize design elements and motifs such as the expanded rosette, tendril and serpentine leaf. These named elements were useful tools for visual analysis, but were not terms used by artists. However, they helped identify similarities

²²Duncan, *Metis Embroidery in the Subarctic*, 7.

²³Judy Thompson, “Turn of the Century Metis Decorative Art from the Frederick Bell Collection: “She Sets the Fashion for the Whole North”,” *American Indian Art Magazine* 8, 2 (1983): 37–53.

and linkages between places and objects over time. Hail and Duncan also proposed four central subarctic regional styles: James Bay Cree, Great Slave Lake - Mackenzie River, Lake Winnipeg Small Floral and Norway House. Following Duncan's earlier assertion that Métis material should continue to be identified by tribe and community, the authors placed Métis artistic production within the context of regional First Nations art production as a type of sub-group.

In his 1993 article on the James Cook collection, Thomas P. Myers identified a Métis population affiliated with the Sioux and more southerly nations and proposed another regional style: High Plains Métis.²⁴ He discussed the stylized floral work collected by the James Cook family, which included the work of Mrs. Julia Garnier, the wife of Baptiste Garnier, and other women of French-Sioux descent. Brasser used the term Sioux-Métis to describe the more stylized floral work initially identified as Red River Half Breed by Thayer, but the group Myers called High Plains Métis were the children of "Indian or mixed-blood wives of French-Canadian scouts who reached the High Plains by way of St. Louis or Kaskaskia [who] were Sioux, Cheyenne, Ute or Shoshone . . . rather than Cree or Ojibway which is usually implied by the word Métis."²⁵ Sharon Blady's 1995 thesis, "The Flower Beadwork People: Factors Contributing to the Emergence of a Distinctive Métis Culture and Artistic Style at Red River from 1844 – 1969", focused almost entirely on a small collection of beadwork from the Carriere-Nault and Carriere-Perrault families at the Musée St. Boniface.²⁶ In addition to an extensive design analysis, Blady used the collection as a window into the resilience, ingenuity and strength of Métis women, reading beadwork as social text.

²⁴Thomas P. Myers, "The Cook Collection: a Turn-of-the-Century Collection from the Nebraska Frontier," *American Indian Art Magazine* 19, 1 (1993): 61-67.

²⁵Myers, *The Cook Collection*, 66.

²⁶Sharon Blady, "The Flower Beadwork People: Factors Contributing to the Emergence of a Distinctive Metis Culture and Artistic Style at Red River from 1844 to 1969." (M. A. thesis, University of Victoria, 1995). Blady's research has been published in two subsequent articles, "Beadwork as an Expression of Metis Cultural Identity," *Issues in the North* 1 (1996): 133-144 and "Les Métisses: Towards a Feminist History of Red River," *Issues in the North*, 2 (1997): 179-186.

The literature on Métis art, while generally celebrating its beauty, can be critiqued for its unquestioning application of the Western aesthetic sensibilities on which Kroeber's artistic judgments are based.²⁷ Brassler, Thompson, Hail and Duncan apply, in varying degrees, the idea of artistic evolutionism. There is general agreement among scholars that the work of the nineteenth century represents intensity and aesthetic climax. Kate Duncan's "Visual Perception, a Factor in Design Change" applied cognitive theory to account for what she saw as progressive simplification leading to the loss of "internal design integrity."²⁸ The emphasis on decline that emerges in the literature ignores contemporary Métis work that continues to provide examples of mastery of form and medium. Scholars have also been unable to trace an evolutionary path for the development of floral beadwork or locate a clearly defined Métis artistic terrain. However, while many questions remain unanswered, there is an overwhelming consensus in the literature that acknowledges both the existence of a distinct visual repertoire and the influence of Métis artistic production. Since Brassler's initial inclusion of Métis work in *Bo'jou Neejee*, every major exhibition or publication on the collective artistic traditions of the First Nations of Canada has recognized the contributions of the Métis.

The exhibition catalogue for *The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples* acknowledged the artistic production of Métis women and exposed the scholarly confusion that surrounds it.²⁹ For example, the Northern Plains, curated by Ted Brassler, included garments identified as Red River Metis type and Sioux Metis type. Three coats with similar cut and decoration were alternately identified as: Western Ojibwe, Red River Ojibwe type and Red River Metis type. The criteria for applying different designations to similar garments with no discernable provenance were not clear. Janet C. Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips' *Native North*

²⁷R. Jon McGee and Richard L. Warmus, *Anthropological Theory: an Introductory Theory* (London: Mayfield Publishing, 1996), 139.

²⁸Hail and Duncan, *Out of the North*, 81.

²⁹Julia D. Harrison, Ted J. Brassler, Ruth B. Phillips, et al, *The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples*, (McClelland and Stewart and the Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1988), 74-76.

American Art also acknowledged the important, yet unclear role of the Métis in the development of floral artwork in the Mackenzie River delta region.³⁰ The authors described the importation of “a new floral design vocabulary” by fur traders and missionaries and Red River Métis who also “brought with them a refined and highly accomplished floral style executed in silk embroidery and beadwork.”³¹ A brief discussion of Métis art on the plains assumed direct needlework instruction at mission schools established in the 1820s, although very little is known about either the content or extent of school experiences for Métis girls prior to the entry of the Grey Nuns in 1844.³² The authors restated the scholarly consensus on the volume of Red River Métis art production and its role in creating an artistic synthesis of diverse influences. In general, most scholars recognize two distinct regional styles: Red River Métis and Mackenzie River delta or Subarctic Métis. Unlike the wide recognition of Mackenzie River Métis type initially proposed by Brassler and confirmed by subsequent regional studies, the Lake Winnipeg small floral and Norway House styles suggested by Hail and Duncan have generated some interest, but have not been used in other studies or embraced by museum curators. Thomas Myers has also retreated from his proposed High Plains Métis designation for stylized floral work and currently identifies it as “Lakota floral.”³³

Steven Grafe’s 1999 study, “The Origins of Floral-Design Beadwork in the Southern Columbia River Plateau” resists the now widely accepted idea that the Métis and other eastern groups provided the vehicle for the diffusion of floral beadwork.³⁴ Grafe makes a strong case against the diffusion model, proposing that the floral beadwork done by plateau peoples was an

³⁰Janet C. Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, *Native North American Art*. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

³¹Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 150.

³²Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 130

³³Thomas P. Myers, curator of anthropology, University of Nebraska State Museum, personal communication, April 17, 2000.

³⁴Steven Leroy Grafe, “The Origins of Floral-Design Beadwork in the Southern Columbia River Plateau,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of New Mexico, 1999).

internal response to change. Grafe stated that the adaptation of a “new iconographic system occurred only after seed beads became readily available and after these same groups began to actively interact with growing numbers of Euroamericans.”³⁵ He identifies the 1860s as the point when floral work emerges on the plateau and asserts that it developed in response to direct interaction, not filtered through a Métis or Iroquois intermediary.³⁶ His diminishing of the Métis presence in the region flaws Grafe’s critique of the east – west diffusion model. While he makes a strong argument for autonomous, internally driven transformation, he has underestimated the longevity of Métis residency in the regions included in his study.

Towards a Métis Theory of Identity Development

The language used in the literature to describe the field or space in which encounters took place, and identities emerged and changed has evolved. The visual imagery has shifted from lines that demarcated specific territories to Fredrik Barth’s “borders” and “boundaries” that individuals and groups negotiated.³⁷ Gloria Anzaldua broadened the linear border to “borderlands” in 1987, while Richard White proposed a jointly constructed “middle ground” in 1991, followed in 1992 by Marie Louise Pratt’s “contact zone.”³⁸ While the terms proposed by Anzaldua, White and Pratt described specific locations or regions, Homi Bhaba’s concept of the “third space” moves beyond place.³⁹ His notion of fluid, shifting spaces that are simultaneously marginalized and dynamic has several compelling aspects for the study of the Métis experience. Bhaba’s hybridity is much more than the sum of its parts; an idea that has particular resonance for

³⁵Grafe, “Floral Beadwork in the Southern Columbia River Plateau,” x.

³⁶Grafe, “Floral Beadwork in the Southern Columbia River Plateau,” 534–535.

³⁷Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: the Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969).

³⁸Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands: la Frontera* (San Francisco: Spinster/Aunt Lute, 1987); Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge University Press, 1991); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992)

³⁹Homi Bhaba, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

a people persistently perceived as half-formed, or half-cultured.⁴⁰ Bhaba's "third space" also has limitations. His unpredictable, unsettled hybrid state can be critiqued as a new version of old literary metaphors – the stereotypical construct of the "half breed torn between two worlds" as a metaphor for racial, cultural and territorial conflict. Scholars who have followed Bhaba have tended to exoticize hybridity and present it as creative, elusive and inherently unstable. What relevance do these theories have in settings where hybridity was the norm, involving thousands of people whose cultural traditions stabilized over generations?

The Métis have been identified as a new people, but they were not the only new social and cultural formation to emerge in the post-contact era in North America. Jonathan Hill offered a useful definition of ethnogenesis as the "historical emergence of a people who define themselves in relation to a sociocultural and linguistic heritage." He emphasized the importance of recognizing the context of drastic change, discontinuity and dominance from which new identities emerged.⁴¹ The exploration of identity development and its subsequent aesthetic expression requires a *métis* approach that integrates and combines theoretical elements. Reaching broadly into the literature on hybridity, ethnogenesis and bi-cultural identity development can provide useful elements for constructing a framework to examine Métis and Half Breed identity as it evolves or doesn't evolve. An understanding of the fluidity and creative potential of the spaces and places where people from vastly different backgrounds sought to interact can help us understand the emergence of cultural expressions that integrated elements into new linguistic, aesthetic and social forms.

The development of cohesive and interconnected communities who claimed both territory and nationhood demand that we look beyond the bi-racial and bi-cultural elements of Métis and Half Breed identity. Models developed by Patricia Albers and Nancy Hickerson in their

⁴⁰Only last month, one of my children was told they were a "half-baked, unfinished Indian".

⁴¹Jonathan D. Hill, *History, Power and Identity: Ethnogenesis in America, 1492-1992* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1996), 1.

contributions to *History, Power and Identity* (1996) describe ethnogenesis as a process with identifiable stages. Borrowed from Hickerson is the trigger of separation, removal or destruction as stimulus to new identity formation and subsequent reintegration and rebirth, coming together as a new people, “forgetting” former identities.⁴² Albers explored identities that emerged from cooperation and fusion, particularly those that emerged from sharing territory and formed tightly integrated coalitions that gradually dissolved ethnic differences.⁴³ She envisaged a continuum with four structural positions, three of which maintain connections with parent cultures. Only the emergent ethnic community that glosses over differences and establishes itself as a separate political entity is identified as completing the process of ethnogenesis. In addition to this fully emerged group, Albers’ third position on the continuum, the hybrid coalition, is relevant in the study of Métis identity. The hybrid coalition, which is characterized by intermarriage and co-residency, was marked by the development of local settlements with dual ethnic origins that began to constitute sociopolitical bodies with separate political and economic interests. These communities “stood apart” from their parent cultures, but retained an “umbilical connection to either or both parental blocs.”⁴⁴ Hybrid coalitions have among their options, the constant potential for re-merger.

In his study of Mestizo societies, Claudio Esteva-Fabregat emphasized the complexity of the internal and external forces that created distinct societies. He dismissed micro-studies as single cases of acculturation in a myriad of individual and group variations that formed coherent

⁴²Hickerson’s model of ethnogenesis has three phases: separation, a liminal phase where survival strategies are sought, and reintegration. Nancy Hickerson, “Ethnogenesis in the South Plains: Jumano to Kiowa?,” in *History, Power and Identity*, 70-84.

⁴³The four stages on Alber’s ethnogenesis continuum are: polyethnic alliance formation, ethnic block confederation, hybridized group coalition and emergent ethnic community. Patricia C. Albers, “Changing Patterns in Ethnicity in the Northeastern Plains, 1780 – 1870,” in *History, Power and Identity*, 91-92.

⁴⁴Albers, *Changing Patterns in Ethnicity*, 94.

collective identities.⁴⁵ Of particular importance to this study, is his challenge to the assumption of a distinct Métis or Mestizo identity for individuals or groups of diverse or mixed heritage. Such an identity must be accompanied by the construction of new cultural forms such as language, social practice and aesthetic traditions. According to Esteva-Fabregat, “the assumed equation of race/culture a + race/culture b = race/culture c” does not hold up in many cases because biological combination does not necessarily result in cultural recombination.⁴⁶ He emphasized the importance of “particular sets of circumstances” and essential preconditions for a deeper “mixing”. These are longevity and stability. According to Esteva-Fabregat, syncretic cultural recombination is an irreversible phenomenon, but one that remains open to new experiences.⁴⁷ Serge Gruzinski’s *The Mestizo Mind* also challenges the assumed “ambiguity and ambivalence . . . the supposed curse hanging over the heads of composite worlds” and concurs with Esteva-Fabregat that mestizo or *métis* intellectual and aesthetic traditions combine flexibility with “extreme rigour of expression” making it possible for them to conceptualize complex situations, and thrive in them.⁴⁸ Esteva-Fabregat also contends that situating bi-racial populations in a racial or economic class does not preclude other meaningful identities and self-definitions from forming. According to Esteva-Fabregat, “class consciousness, a syncretic cultural heritage and social consciousness based on racial categorization” are the social and political fields from which “mestizo ideologies” and nationalism emerge.⁴⁹

Identity development also plays out on two levels: individual and group. A collective identity may exist, but it will not have equal resonance for all people who could potentially belong. A model developed by Louise Cotrell for her study of urban people of mixed ancestry

⁴⁵Esteva-Fabregat, *Mestizaje*, 30.

⁴⁶Claudio Esteva-Fabregat, *Mestizaje in Ibero-America*, translated by John Wheat (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1990), 49.

⁴⁷Esteva-Fabregat, *Mestizaje*, 48.

⁴⁸Serge Gruzinski, *The Mestizo Mind: the Intellectual Dynamics of Colonization and Globalization* (Routledge, London, 2002), 9 and 205.

⁴⁹Esteva-Fabregat, *Mestizaje*, 77

offers the elements of parental influence, negative identity and personal choice. She identified a high degree of ambivalence or unpredictability in the identity choices made by first generation children.⁵⁰ Also of interest is Augustin Barbara's 1989 study of "mixed marriages" that revealed how women experienced a powerful pull towards reintegration with their own cultural community following the birth of children.⁵¹ These works provide a framework for exploring the development of Métis and Half Breed collective identities that were both transient and permanent – triggered by historic events, moving through stages towards becoming a new people, with constant push-and-pull factors that impacted both individuals and entire communities. It is important not to envision this process as a linear one, but as overlapping circles of interaction or complex river systems with many tributaries, quiet pools and swirling movement.

How does material culture reflect this process, or more specifically dress and the decorative arts? Manning Nash identified dress as a "secondary surface pointer" reflective of the deeper structures of ethnicity which allowed members of the group to recognize each other.⁵² However, Dorothy Holland's notion of the "figured world" – the day-to-day world in which identities were (and are) constructed and continually negotiated – gives greater importance to what she calls "cultural artifacts."⁵³ In the figured world, artifacts are animate, in that they have considerable power to evoke, to connect and trigger. They are also the cultural work through which identities are constructed and expressed, serving as "both instrument and collective remembrance". New studies of dress have incorporated these ideas of interaction and constant shifting in the construction of culture and identity.⁵⁴

⁵⁰Louise G. Cotrell, "Americans of Indian and European Descent: Ethnic Identity Issues, Twelve Lives in the Annals of Modern Mixed Bloods (Native American Descent)," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California Berkeley, 1993), 1.

⁵¹Augustin Barbara, *Marriage Across Frontiers* (Clevedon, Avon: Multilingual Matters, 1989), 117.

⁵²Manning Nash, *The Cauldron of Ethnicity in the Modern World* (University of Chicago Press, 1989), 11.

⁵³Dorothy Holland and William Lachicotte Jr. et al, *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 60-63.

⁵⁴The study of dress as an emerging social science employs semiotics and symbolic interaction theory. See

If dress and the decorative arts that embellished dress and extended into the worlds of home and work can be viewed as objects positioned within developmental histories, they become words in a story. They might express positions or moments in a larger story. They were created within the contexts of the lives of people who created, wore and used them. They also, as Appadurai has pointed out, had lives and stories of their own as they were passed from hand to hand, and were commodified and transformed by the shifting meanings projected onto them.⁵⁵ Discussions of ethnic or national dress have tended to emphasize the exotic and have read elements of dress as inflexible cultural texts that emphasize difference. However, the current scholarly interest in identity has begun to influence these discussions. The reconceptualizing of culture as “surprisingly fluid” has implications for our understanding of material culture.⁵⁶ As one anthropologist noted, “I had been taught that people followed cultural patterns. Where were the obedient pattern followers?”⁵⁷

Joanne Eicher, in *Dress and Ethnicity*, stated that ethnic dress was not static and resisted using the word traditional for its assumed resistance to change. Other studies have described the freezing of tradition when dress ceases to function as living culture and becomes frozen as an icon of a remembered nostalgic past.⁵⁸ With these cautions in mind, scholars continue to accept two basic premises about clothing and dress: that it communicates information about personal and group identity and as an extension of that function, communicates specific collective

Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins and Joanne Eicher, “Dress and Identity,” *Social Science Aspects of Dress*, ed. Sharron Lennon (Monument, Colorado: International Textile and Apparel Association, 1993), 29-38.

⁵⁵ Arjun Appadurai, “Commodities and the Politics of Value” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3-63.

⁵⁶ Jean Loup Anselme, *Mestizo Logics: Anthropology of Identity in Africa and Elsewhere* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), xi.

⁵⁷ Holland, *Identity and Agency*, 16.

⁵⁸ Joanne Eicher, “Dress as an Expression of Ethnic Identity,” *Dress and Ethnicity: Change Across Space and Time*, ed. Joanne Eicher (Oxford: Berg, 1995), 4. See also Ian Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983) and Malcolm Chapman, “Freezing the Frame: Dress and Ethnicity in Brittany and Gaelic Scotland,” In Eicher, *Dress and Ethnicity*, 7-28.

identities.⁵⁹ Such communication is seldom simple. It is often mediated, variable and complex with overlapping and frequently contradictory messages being sent and received. However, if dress is ultimately hybrid, ambivalent and ambiguous in its use of intertextual elements and compounded by appropriation and recycling, a study of Métis dress and decorative arts provides a rich opportunity for exploring the manner in which disparate elements can be manipulated to construct and reflect identity.⁶⁰

Acknowledging the Challenges

It is important to recognize the limitations in the data available for constructing a history and context for Métis and Half Breed dress and arts production. The greatest challenge is the relative absence of women. While most of the material in museums is the creative work of women, the bulk of it was made for men. Comparatively little of what was actually worn and used by women has survived. In addition, the historic lens of journals, narratives and other documents provides much more information about the activities of men. With few exceptions, the historical record is silent on the economic lives of women, making it difficult to track their activities as consumers and manufacturers. This is particularly true of the business records of the Hudson's Bay and American Fur companies. The rare mention in a post journal and descriptions in travel narratives, diaries and memoirs must suffice. There are also gaps in the visual record created by artists fixed upon capturing the untainted aboriginal. Métis and Half Breed people may have been present, but were often dismissed as subjects. As George Catlin had done in 1832, Karl Bodmer painted scenes between 1833 and 1834 that effectively edited out people with

⁵⁹Justine M. Cordwell and Ronald A. Schwarz, *The Fabrics of Culture: the Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979).

⁶⁰Alexandra Warwick and Dani Cavallaro, *Fashioning the Frame: Boundaries, Dress and the Body* (Oxford: Berg, 1998), 7.

hybrid tastes and heritage.⁶¹ He painted the Cree wife of François Deschamps, but left no visual record of Deschamps in spite of his importance to the expedition and critical involvement in the adventures that befell the company. Similarly Pierre Dorion's spacious red tipi and Sioux relatives was the subject of a watercolour sketch, but Dorion attracted little interest. The field sketches of Paul Kane, Frank Blackwell Mayer and Rudolph Kurtz provide a window into the northern plains of the mid-nineteenth century, but beyond that the images become patchier.

Artists and the photographers who followed them also created compositions with an artist's eye – selecting and editing, choosing the most interesting subjects for an imagined audience and market. Many of the photographs created by Humphrey Lloyd Hime in the late 1850s were clearly staged, but to what degree? Were the subjects representative or were they simply the most picturesque? In addition to the problems associated with visual documents, similar challenges arise when using narratives and memoirs. The post-colonial critique has questioned the reliability of colonial narratives such as the journals, travel narratives and other texts used in this study.⁶² Travel narratives in particular were written for the arm-chair adventurer, and may emphasize individuals and groups who were not necessarily typical, invent or distort events, and construct their authors as colonial heroes.

Narratives authored by Métis and Half Breed people have also been used in this study. They bring their own set of challenges. Similarly affected by the demands and expectations of audience, many authors told their story as a form of pioneer narrative, occasionally suppressing their connections to the people and places they describe.⁶³ Several of the narratives were

⁶¹Most of the Bodmer field sketches and engraving plates are in the collection of the Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁶²Colonial texts have been critiqued for constructing images of indigenous peoples that justified colonization and rationalized its consequences. Dennis Porter, "Orientalism and its Problems," *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: a Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). See also Sarah Mills, *Discourses of Difference: an Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1991).

⁶³Lucy Eldersveld Murphy discussed shifting power and social conditions as reflected in personal

originally delivered as oral text and transformed by the act of writing. Louis Goulet dictated his memoirs to Guillaume Charette in 1903.⁶⁴ Johnny Grant dictated his memoirs to his wife Clothilde Bruneau, between 1906 and 1907, and a section was subsequently published.⁶⁵ Peter Erasmus told his story to Henry Thompson, a young Métis reporter working for an Edmonton newspaper in 1920. Victoria Callihoo's interviews were published in the *Alberta Historical Review* between 1953 and 1960. Other lesser known interviews and manuscripts were found in archival collections. Each of these narratives was filtered through a transcriber-editor: wife, friend, reporter. Whose voice do we hear? In the introduction to his manuscript based on conversations with the elderly Louis Goulet, Guillaume Charette described the original spoken text as a vibrant story told between puffs from "une bonne pipe de hart-rouge" in a language which he described as a "mélange de cris, de saulteux, d'anglais cassé, et de français archaïque."⁶⁶ While acknowledging that he had edited Goulet's spoken text into more standard French, Charette asserted "ces notes sont transmises au lecteur dans toute leur authenticité" in which "on ne trouvera pas un mot de fiction."

Some individuals wrote their own narratives. Elizabeth Fisher Baird's "Reminiscences" were published in a series of articles in the *Green Bay Gazette* between 1886 and 1887.⁶⁷ Louis Schmidt wrote "Les Memoirs des Louis Schmidt" in 1912. Excerpts from Mary Delorme Smith's diaries and memoirs were published in the *Canadian Cattlemen* in 1948 and 1949. The contents of both types of memoirs were sometimes massaged, appearing to solicit the approval of the

narratives in her paper "All Indians Called Me Sister: Metis and Creole Identity in the Great Lakes Region, 1820 – 1880", presented at the session: Identity and Ethnicity in the Midwest, 1780 to 1880, Annual Meeting of the American Society for Ethnohistory. (London, Ontario, October 18 – 22, 2000).

⁶⁴The manuscript is undated, but Charette identified 1903 as the date he embarked on a series of biographies of elders who lived the old life on the plains.

⁶⁵The original hand-written manuscript and a later transcribed manuscript were kept by descendants of Johnny Grant until a section of the original was published by Washington State University Press.

⁶⁶A good pipe of hart-rouge and spoken in a mixture of Cree, Saulteaux, broken English and archaic French. . . . These notes were passed on to the reader in all their authenticity [you will] not find one word of fiction. Guillaume Charette-Louis Goulet Manuscript, p.1, MG9 A6, AM.

⁶⁷According to the editor, Mrs. Baird agreed to certain changes and added additional information to her memoirs when the original columns were published by the Wisconsin Historical Society.

unseen reporter or an assumed white audience. Some authors enhanced whiteness by pulling European ancestors down the family tree and pushing First Nations ancestors up or simply not mentioning them at all. In other narratives, the relationship between the author and “the Indian” is more slippery, alternating between an oppositional “them”, or an inclusive “us” and “me”. In some ways these contradictions and absences enrich the memoirs, as they illustrate the complex social and historic realities from which they emerged.

The social lives of objects can also raise havoc in any attempt to use material in museum collections. For example, George Winters painted Jim Godfroy (French / Miami) in 1839 wearing a hide coat with painted or embroidered decoration. The coat form, fitted with a fringed cape over the shoulders, is most often identified as Delaware or Shawnee in museum collections yet Godfroy told Winters that it “had been bought from some of the tribes in the far west beyond the Mississippi.”⁶⁸ Similarly a coat found among the possessions of John W. Quinney, a noted Stockbridge chief, and acquired by the Smithsonian Institution in 1929 bears a striking resemblance to a coat worn by a man identified as a “Red River Half Breed” in a sketch made by Frank Blackwell Mayer at St. Paul, Minnesota.⁶⁹ Could it be the same coat? If so, how had it come into the possession of a Stockbridge family living in present-day Wisconsin?

An 1859 diary kept by Dr. Augustus Thibido on a journey to the Columbia district, that took him through the Red River and across the northern plains, describes a significant amount of exchange between explorers, adventurers and fur traders. Clothing and other goods were used as currency to make purchases or exchanged as gifts. In July, Thibido purchased “a porcupine quill worked collar for my hunting shirt, and 6 pr. Mocassins” at Pembina, and was also presented with

⁶⁸ *Jim Godfroy, son of Francis Godfroy*, George Winters Collection at the Tippecanoe County Historical Association, Lafayette, Indiana. Image and journal excerpts in Sarah E. Cooke and Rachel B. Ramadhyani, *Indians and a Changing Frontier: the Art of George Winters* (Indianapolis, Indiana Historical Society, 1993), 121.

⁶⁹ Ted Brassier first identified the similarity between the two coats. Ann McMullen, curator, National Museum of the American Indian, personal communication, November 12, 2002. See F. W. Hodge and W. C. Orchard, “John W. Quinney’s Coat. *Indian Notes* 6, 4 (1929): 343-351.

“a beautiful thing to keep tobacco in” as a gift from a man noted only as “Botineau.”⁷⁰ On the next leg of his journey, Thibido commissioned a “full hunter suit” from the wife of his Métis guide. While at Fort Ellice he “traded my saddle for an Indian pad saddle,” and exchanged “my sheath knife with William McKay for a “magnificent knife which Lord Southesk gave him” the same year. He also exchanged a handkerchief for moccasins, traded the Pembina tobacco pouch along with other goods for “the best buffalo runner in these parts.” The day after that exchange he “put pockets in my hunting shirt.”⁷¹ As he passed through the mountain posts in November when his resources were stretched thin, he traded the buffalo pants made at Fort Ellice for a pair made of moose hide and exchanged his pad saddle for a fresh horse and provisions.⁷² Not only did Thibido move goods made in the Red River and Saskatchewan regions across the mountains, but also his own sense of aesthetics and function resulted in the transformation of garments in his possession. Thibido was not the only man to sew for himself. In 1847, John Palliser made a shirt from a tanned elk hide to replace his worn out grey capote.

I had with me an elk-skin, which had been . . . dressed . . . at Fort Union; this I took and cut into a hunting shirt with loose sleeves, sewing it up partly with thread procured at the fort; the dressed skin of a small deer furnished the pockets in the front, and it was subsequently ornamented for me with porcupine by some Indian women, on my return to the fort.⁷³

Palliser hired Crow women to do the quillwork in exchange for meat.⁷⁴ These few scenarios provide examples of the lives of garments and objects, not only as they moved, but as they were changed through indirect or serial collaboration, becoming sites of additions and alterations made over time by different people. How many items in museum collections have similar stories?

⁷⁰July 20-22, 1859 entries made at Pembina. “Diary of Dr. Augustus J. Thibido of the Northwest Exploring Expedition”, reprinted from the *Pacific North-west Quarterly* XXXI (July 1940): 300-301. Pamphlet File: Western Canada - Descriptions and Travel, SAB.

⁷¹August 10-24 entries made at Fort Ellice. Diary of Dr. Augustus Thibido, 304-307.

⁷²November 17-26 entries made at Jaspar House and Plante’s post at the head of the Spokane River valley, Diary of Dr. Augustus Thibido, 336-339.

⁷³John Palliser, *The Solitary Hunter or Sporting Adventures in the Prairies* (London: George Routledge, 1856), 165 - 166.

⁷⁴Palliser, *The Solitary Hunter*, 175.

Time and resources have imposed the final limitation on this study. I have attempted to visit as many as museums and archival collections as possible, but many collections have not been included. My residence and personal connections are mainly on the prairies and much of my data is concentrated there. I have attempted wherever possible to extend outward, but particularly in the data collected through interviews, I have focused on those who were closer to home. Much more needs to be done, particularly regarding the artists who worked and continue to work in the North West Territories and the region of British Columbia, Oregon and Washington that was formerly known as Columbia.

Methodology and Purpose: Taking It Back Home

In conducting this research, I was guided by Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith's assertions regarding the rights of indigenous people to be the first beneficiaries of their ancestors' knowledge and inspired by bell hooks' words regarding the importance of remembering.⁷⁵ Smith proposed research ethics based on Maori protocols and community contexts that, for the most part, are applicable in this case.

1. Respect for people
2. Be the 'seen' face
3. Look, listen, speak
4. Share and be generous
5. Be cautious
6. Do not trample over people
7. Don't flaunt your knowledge

The reader will doubtless become aware of the abundance of genealogical work woven throughout this study. It speaks to three principles: grounding the work in that which is meaningful to the people, being cautious and remembering. The women who created these works and the men who wore and marketed them have families and communities, and they should be

⁷⁵Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London, Denedin: Zed Books and University of Otago Press, 1999), 119 – 120.

recognized. As often as possible I have tried to surface and name the artist, struggling against the imposed anonymity that bell hooks wrote about. “I want to call their names in resistance, to oppose the erasure . . . We have too often had no names, our history recorded without specificity, as though it’s not important to know who – which one of us – the particulars.”⁷⁶

Smith identified twenty-five indigenous methodologies. This project attempts to use the following: claiming, story telling, celebrating survival, remembering, revitalizing and returning. These have shaped the process of research more than the final form, although this dissertation is only an interim stage in the process of reporting. I have attempted to be “the seen face” by sharing my research at community gatherings such as those held at Batoche, Ile à la Crosse and Lebret in Saskatchewan and Lewistown, Montana. I set up displays of clothing, slides and archival photographs at Batoche, Lewistown and Lebret. I found that slides were not always practical and switched to photographs organized into binders. This format has been particularly useful in kitchen table sessions with small groups and individuals. I also made patterns from material in museum collections and studied sewing techniques, which for the most part will not be reported on here. These relate to the methodologies of revitalizing and returning by making the information available to people seeking to reclaim their artist traditions and visual identity and also through the construction of clothing that can be worn at community gatherings to promote awareness. Throughout the process I have shared my research with organizations and individuals from the Métis community within the constraints of museum and archival control over material in their collections. The same constraints apply regarding contemporary artists who have shared their materials and methods. Their generosity has greatly contributed to this project.

The collections of the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives and other collections including the Glenbow-Alberta Institute, the provincial archives of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta,

⁷⁶bell hooks, “Aesthetic Inheritances: history worked by hand,” *Yearning: Race, gender and cultural politics* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1990), 116.

the state historical societies of North Dakota, Montana and Missouri and the National Archives of Canada have been used as sources for narratives, trade lists, accounts and other documents useful in creating a historical context and reconstructing the story around objects in museum collections or represented in documentary art and photographs. Documents related to fur trade employment, scrip applications, census and mission records were used as genealogical sources. In addition, I conducted a limited number of individual interviews. The material culture aspect of the study included more than fifteen museum collections most notably the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, the Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh, the Museum of Civilization in Ottawa, the Manitoba Museum, the Musée St. Boniface, the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, the Glenbow-Alberta Institute, the Provincial Museum of Alberta, the North Dakota Historical Society and the Montana Historical Society. Other museums consulted regarding specific items in their collection include the Haffenreffer Museum in Rhode Island, the Minnesota Historical Society, the Alabama Historical Society, the Nebraska Historical Society, the Canadian Museum of Civilization and the Musée McCord. While I looked at material that curatorial staff identified as Métis, the primary purpose has been to locate material connected it to a specific Métis or Half Breed artist, family or community. This provided further direction to the larger research task as I attempted to reconstruct the lives of the artists and the world from which their work emerged.

About the Choices Regarding Terminology

Throughout this study I have generally employed the terms “métis” and Métis according to the distinctions made by the Métis National Council to the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations in 1984 and have also used the terms employed historically in a particular region.⁷⁷ While the National Council, and scholars who have followed their guidelines, have used

⁷⁷See Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown’s discussion regarding terminology in Peterson and Brown, *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America*, 6 and Grafe, *Floral Beadwork in*

the lower case “métis” as an adjective applied to individuals of mixed ancestry, the term is also used here to describe *métis* as a state of being or state of mind that could and did include people from a variety of ethnicities. Following the leadership of Maria Campbell and Harry Daniels, I also propose a respectful rehabilitation of the term “Half Breed”, which is not only found in historic documents, but was and continues to be a commonly employed term at the “grassroots” of community and conversation.⁷⁸ It is often a more accurate choice when describing communities that would not have identified themselves historically as either Métis or Mechif. When using the terms Métis, Mechif, Metif or Half Breed as a noun to describe people with a shared collective identity, they have been capitalized.

I have chosen not to use the terms nation or tribe with the exception of their use in quotations of historical text. Instead I have used “collective” or “collective identities”, having found these to be more flexible terms that embrace groups both with national territories and those whose experiences have been more diasporic. The following characteristics of a collective identity are particularly useful:

1. It involves the construction and reconstruction of a sense of themselves by self-identifying communities, using the signs provided by their cultures.
2. Collective identities typically are groups of people located in a specific national territory endowed with meaning, but also includes groups of people whose identities have been impacted by diaspora and for whom strict territorial connections do not apply.⁷⁹

The ability of the concept of collective identity to encompass historic events that shift and displace people from territory, the idea of shared and overlapping territories and the ongoing construction and re-construction of self-identifying communities is more generally applicable to

the Southern Columbia River Plateau, 12.

⁷⁸ Maria Campbell chose *Half Breed* as the title for her autobiography, and like many people remember Half Breed as the group identity articulated by their community. Maria Campbell, Harry Daniels and others claim Half Breed with pride.

⁷⁹ See Philip Schlesinger, “Wishful Thinking: Cultural Politics, Media and Collective Identities in Europe,” *Journal of Communication* 43, 2 (1993): 61 and Alberto Melucci, *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989).

both the historic realities of Métis and Half Breed communities and their continuing struggles in the contemporary world.

Situating Myself in Relation to the Research

My own role as relative insider contributes to the uniqueness of the study. I am a member of the Timiskaming Band of Algonquins with links to the fur trade communities of Eastmain and Moose Factory. I was born in Manitoba and have long-standing personal, professional and political alliances with the Métis of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Currently holding Bill C-31 status, my family, like many others, has experienced over generations the shifting legal and political definitions that impact identity. I can attest to the reality of overlapping identities from within those circles. I am also a practicing artist of both traditional and contemporary media. Although I have not developed the proficiency of the artists that I have learned from and our “long ago” women, I believe that an artist’s eyes either see more or see differently. The artist’s way of seeing heightens appreciation of the technical virtuosity and aesthetics employed by master artists. The Métis community generally recognizes me as an artist and educator, particularly for my illustrative work in two books: *The Flower Beadwork People* and Maria Campbell’s *Stories of the Road Allowance People*.⁸⁰ My longstanding association with the Gabriel Dumont Institute, initially as a faculty member with the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) in Regina and later as artist, researcher and consultant, continues to the present time. These relationships have given me privileged access to information that would be rare for outside researchers because they have evolved over decades, and many ongoing conversations that have both informed my work and created a nest for me to work in.

⁸⁰I had the disconcerting experience of admiring Métis musician John Leclair’s beaded vest only to be told that one of my paintings had been the inspiration for it. Sherry Farrell Racette, *The Flower Beadwork People* (Regina: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 1991). Also Maria Campbell, *Stories of the Road Allowance People* (Penticton: Theytus Press, 1995).

CHAPTER TWO

Métis, Half Breed and Mixed Blood: Identifying Self and Group

*The study of several communities situated on a synchronic level . . . representing different segments of a larger society really implies working with the total culture in interaction with the total society . . . No community thus represents the total culture of a society, nor does one individual represent the total community.*¹

The term Metis (May-tee), as it is currently pronounced and broadly applied, was seldom used historically. Métis (Meh-tis), Mechif (Meh-chif), Metif (Meh-tif), Bois Brulés or Half Breed were used synonymously. The term *métis* had apparently been in common use for some time when Cornelius de Pauw described them in 1770 as a group of people distinct from “Creoles”, “the natural peoples of America” and Europeans.² Catholic church records in St. Louis and Cahokia were using the term *metif* as an ethnic identity by 1773.³ While these terms originated as racial categories and indicators of social class, a collective identity appears to have been well established by the mid-eighteenth century. In 1817 Thomas Nuttall identified a community of Quapaw-French families trading and hunting on the Arkansas river as Metif.⁴ William McGillivray testified at the 1818 investigation into the conflicts between the North West and Hudson Bay Companies, that “the half-breeds under the denominations of bois brulés and metifs have formed a separate and distinct tribe of Indians for a considerable time back.”⁵ Statements gathered for the investigation from the Athabasca and Saskatchewan River districts

¹Esteva-Fabregat, *Mestizaje*, 30.

²As cited in Cornelius J. Jaenen, “Miscegenation in Eighteenth Century New France,” *New Dimensions in Ethnohistory: Papers of the Second Laurier Conference on Ethnohistory and Ethnology*, ed. Barry Gough and Laird Christie (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1991), 88.

³Register of Burials of the St. Louis Cathedral, October 4, 1770 - May 4, 1781, Missouri Historical Society (MOHS).

⁴The Metif were described as “hunters or in fact Indians in habits” although they gave a “ball” for Nuttall’s party. Thomas Nuttall, *A Journal of Travels into the Arkansas Territory During the Year 1819*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 110-111.

⁵As cited in Jennifer S. H. Brown, “Women as Centre and Symbol in the Emergence of Métis Communities,” *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 3, 1 (1983): 39 - 46.

also used the terms *metif*, *Bois Brulé* and half-breed synonymously.⁶ The same year, Father Joseph Provencher wrote from Red River that, “most of the engagés keep women, by whom they have children All the clerks and bourgeois also have wives . . . the children [have] been called *bois brulés* for many years.”⁷ During his travels between 1838 and 1844, John Charles Fremont observed, “the home of the Half-breeds is at Pembina in British North America. They are called indifferently Métis or Half-breeds, *Bois Brulés*, and *Gens Libres* or Free People of the North.”⁸

The distinctions between terms appear to have been largely linguistic. If one was speaking French, one used the terms *Métis* or *Bois Brulés*. In English, Half Breed was the more common term, although “Native” or “Native of the country” was also found in employment and mission records. Peter Garrioch used the term “Rupertian” in his 1843 journal – “spent the winter with a few Rupertian families” and “hired 2 men of the Rupertians to assist me in carrying my affects across the Missouri.”⁹ It may have been a term used by members of the free trade movement engaged in opposition to the Hudson’s Bay Company or it might have been in wider use among people born in “Rupert’s Land” who recognized it as a distinct territory. As people moved towards settlement, communities tended to cluster around language and religion – French / Catholic/*Métis* and British/Anglican/Half Breed, but the synonymous application of terms continued. When James Fidler applied for scrip in 1878, his father, William Fidler was identified as “*Métis*” and his mother, Jane Young as “*Métisse*” simply because the person taking his

⁶Amable Lafond, July 24, 1817. Auley McAuley, Feb. 10, 1818. Depositions and other documents relating to North West Company Aggression in the Athabasca District 1815-20. Fort Chipewyan Miscellaneous Post Records. B.39/z/1: fols. 1-21, Hudson’s Bay Company Archives (HBCA).

⁷Father Provencher to Bishop Plessis, Red River Settlement. September 13, 1818. In Grace Lee Nute, *Documents Relating to Northwest Missions, 1815-1827*. (1943, repr. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1981), 158.

⁸John Charles Fremont, *The Expeditions of John Charles Fremont: Travels from 1838 – 1844*, vol. 1, ed. by Donald Jackson and Mary L. Spence, 63 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1970).

⁹Peter Garrioch Journal, 1843 – 1847, p. 10, MG2 C38, Archives of Manitoba (AM).

application used the French affidavit form.¹⁰ Similarly, when Eli Guardipee used the phrase: “My own people, the half-breeds”, he would probably have made another choice had he been speaking French or Mechif.¹¹

The terms *canadien* and *creole* described ethnic categories in close proximity to Métis and Half Breed people and sometimes indicated overlapping social and cultural spaces. Lahontan used both creole and canadien when referring to settlers in New France.¹² The use of the term Canadien or the anglicised Canadian to denote a regional (as opposed to the ethnic) identity persisted well into the nineteenth century. It was applied by the Hudson’s Bay Company to individuals born in Upper or Lower Canada, but was also used to identify former employees of the North West Company. The terms Canadien and Creole were occasionally used interchangeably with the terms Metif and Half Breed. In 1804, John Hodgson of Albany used the phrase “Half Breed or Creoles”, as did Ross Cox in his 1832 memoir.¹³ The register kept by Father De Smet along the Missouri River applied the terms *creole* and *metif* with an awareness of some distinction between the two groups that is not easily discernible. In 1827 Alexis Merille Entaya was identified as Metif, while the 1830 entries for Louis Pelletier and Joseph Entaya identified them as Creole.¹⁴ One can speculate that residency, class or occupation may have been the factors that determined which identity the priest selected.

¹⁰James Fidler scrip affidavit, vol. 1320, series D-11-8-a, Record Group (RG) 15, National Archives of Canada (NAC).

¹¹Eli Guardipee (French / Saulteaux) was born in 1857. Eli Guardipee (1940) “Eli Guardipee’s Story as told to John B. Ritch,” p. 15, Montana Historical Society (MNHS).

¹²Gilles Gougeon, “An Interview with Robert Lahaise,” *A History of Quebec Nationalism*. (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1994), 4.

¹³As cited in Victor Lytwyn, *The Fur Trade of the Little North: Indians, Pedlars, and Englishmen East of Lake Winnipeg, 1760 – 1821* (Winnipeg: Rupert’s Land Research Centre. University of Winnipeg, 1986), 107 and Ross Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River* (New York: J. & J. Harper, 1832), 289. “Half breed” and “canadian” were used somewhat indiscriminately in American territory, see Rudolph Friederich Kurz, *Journal of Rudolph Friederich Kurz: an Account of his Experiences among Fur Traders and American Indians on the Mississippi and Upper Missouri Rivers During the Years 1846 to 1852* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 115, 1937), 30- 32.

¹⁴Members of the Pelletier dit Entaya family took the surnames Pelletier, Antaya or Entaya. Register of Osage Mission, Baptisms of Upper Missouri Indians by Father De Smet, from the Records at St. Mary’s Church, St. Mary’s Kansas. Notes by Stella M. Drumm from Church Registers, MOHS.

Métis Spaces and Interactive Zones: New France and Rupert's Land

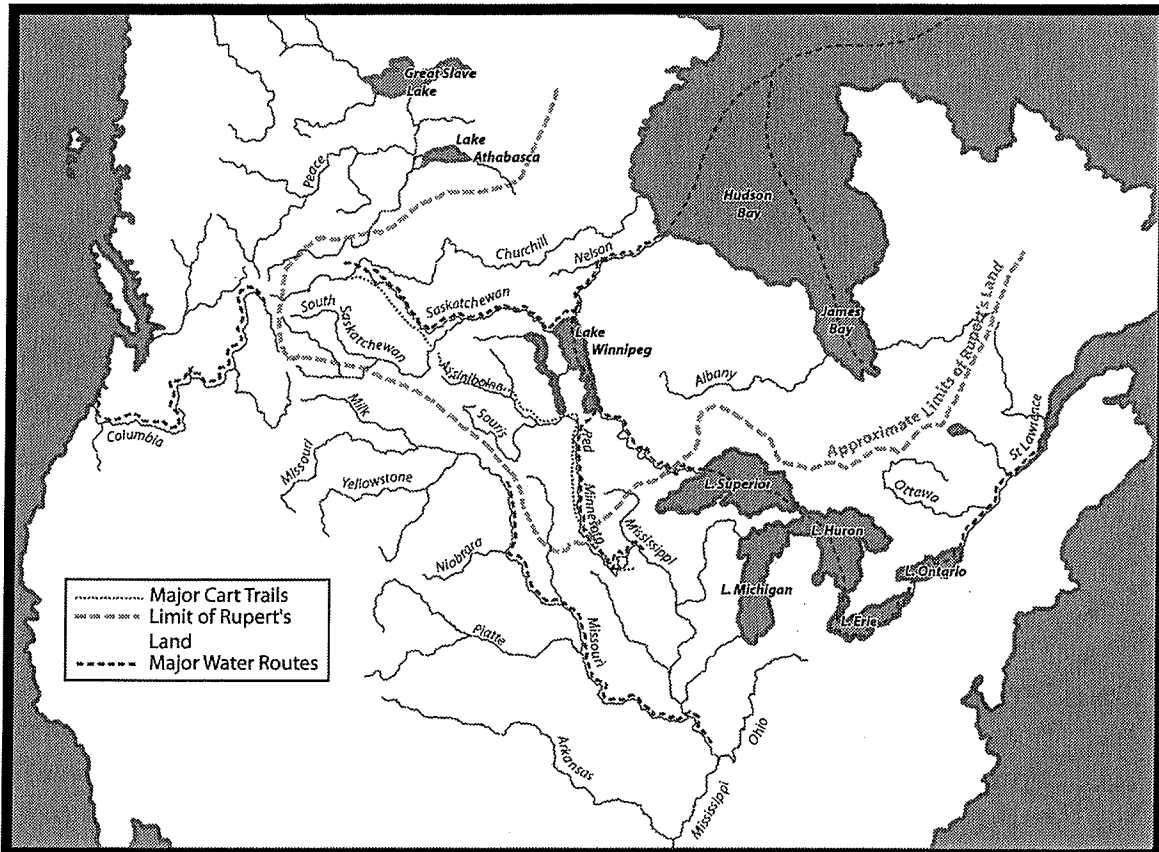
How do we map metissage? Lightfoot and Martinez proposed replacing the construct of frontiers and boundaries with fluid zones of contact and interaction formed by cross-cutting social networks that became the interactive space in which people were transformed and new cultural constructs created.¹⁵ This could be expanded to include movement in multiple directions and the building of layers over time to accommodate people and goods moving in and out and the increasing complexity created by the accumulation of historic events and generations of families. Historians have only begun to pursue, as evidenced through studies utilizing Métis genealogy, the movement of large numbers of people north, south, east and west in overlapping waves of movement which included a form of what Peers described as “back and forth commuting.”¹⁶

The fur trade provided the motivation for the European presence in much of North America and it necessitated peaceful co-existence with fur producers. Strategic marriage could align a trader with families of political and economic influence, which simultaneously secured economic benefits for the accepting family. The manner in which the two principal groups, the British and the French, elected to undertake their business ventures had a lasting impact on the development of Métis and Half Breed populations. Both offered two of Esteva-Fabregat's preconditions for the development of métis or mestizo consciousness – longevity and stability.

¹⁵Kent G. Lightfoot and Antoinette Martinez, “Frontiers and Boundaries in Archaeological Perspective,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 473–474.

¹⁶Laura Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780 to 1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994), 59.

Map 2: Water Systems in the Interactive Zones



French metissage can be mapped along two fronts: the initial northern contact zones of Acadia and the St. Lawrence River valley with its subsequent movement into the Great Lakes and a later zone (1699-1715) based in Louisiana that moved up the Mississippi River. Throughout most of the seventeenth century colonial and religious authorities in New France supported marriages between First Nations women and French men. First Nations individuals became “francised”, primarily through Catholic conversion and fluency in the French language.¹⁷ In the words of the Ursuline, Marie de l’Incarnation: “Nous avons francisé plusieurs filles sauvages

¹⁷Thierry Berthet, “La Francisation des Amerindiens en Nouvelle France: Politiques et enjeux Frenching the Natives in New France: Policies and Aims,” *Etudes Canadiennes / Canadian Studies* 34 (1993): 79-89. See also Olive Dickason for a description of early French / First Nations interaction and intermarriage. Olive Dickason, “From “One Nation” in the Northeast to “New Nation” in the Northwest: A look at the emergence of the metis,” *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, ed. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer Brown, 19-36 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985).

Huronne et Algonquines, que nous avons ensuite mariées à des Français qui pour font [sic] fort bon mélange.”¹⁸ The girls who contributed to this good strong mixture were not simply brown French girls. Catherine Annenontak was raised at the Ursuline convent until her marriage to Jean Durand in 1662, yet when she took her own daughter to the convent, the Ursulines recorded that the child “avait été élevée selon les costumes et les habitudes de la nation de sa mère et que la langue huronne.”¹⁹ Madame Durand had remained sufficiently Huron to raise her children in the traditions of her people and she also supplemented the family income with “les raquettes et les souliers sauvage.” In 1701, three of Catherine’s sons: Ignace Durand, Louis Durand and Charles Couturier engaged as voyageurs for the “pays d’en-haut.”²⁰ Her great-grandson, Jean Baptiste Cadotte, was to follow them and with Catherine, “a girl of the nepissing” and his second wife Athanasie, an Ojibwe woman, created a family who would dominate the Great Lakes fur trade. The Pelletier dit Antaya family, prominent in the Illinois fur trade, was another early family who honored a First Nations ancestor by carrying her name, Antaya, as a “dit” name.²¹ The Great Lakes and Lower Missouri regions saw similar rates of intermarriage and the development of distinct hybrid communities during the early years of the fur trade.

The volume of female slaves throughout French colonial territory raises a seldom-addressed area of metissage. Men in all regions fathered children with First Nations slaves. Marcel Trudel’s study on slavery in New France identified 921 First Nations women who bore

¹⁸We have “francised” many Huron and Algonquin girls, who we then married to the French to make a good strong mixture. Joseph and Vinteur Durand, *Jean Durand et sa Posterité* (Sillery, Quebec: L’Association des Familles Durand, 1991), 82.

¹⁹*Jean Durand*, 132-133 and 154. Colonial records document a promissory note and purchase made by Jean Durand with Catherine’s indigenous production.

²⁰Ignace and Louis Durand were the sons of her first marriage to Jean Durand. Charles Couturier was the son of her second marriage to Jacques Couturier. Jean Baptiste Cadotte’s grandmother was her daughter, Marie Durand Cadotte. *Jean Durand*, 175, 200. Cadotte’s children were baptized at St. Ignace Mission, Michilimackinac beginning in 1756.

²¹Antaya married into the Pelletier family around 1665. Note 99. Census of Kahokia, August 27, 1787. *Cahokia Records, 1778 – 1790*, vol. 2, p. 632. Collection of the Illinois State Historical Library (CIHS).

children while occupying the social status of slave.²² Most of these children were born at military and trade outposts and not in Montreal or Quebec where the greatest concentration of female slaves worked. While slaves married and had children of their own, Trudel identified colonial owners fathering as many as six children with one slave woman. The 1747 baptismal records for Michilimackinac included Jean Baptiste, the son of Madeleine, a slave of Sieur Chaboyer, fathered by Daniel Villeneuve and Charles Chevalier Tallier's three-year-old son whose mother was identified as a Sioux slave.²³ The nature of these relationships and the degree of control enslaved women had over their own sexual activities are unknown. However, they were mothers of a relatively large population of children whose own lives and identities remain unexplored. In addition, their activities as domestic laborers have not been fully investigated. Considering the extensive adaptation and use of First Nations clothing, decorative arts and survival technology throughout colonial New France, the presence of such a large domestic force raises interesting questions regarding the cultural production of these items.

While official support for intermarriage declined, the church saw the legitimization of such unions as an important aspect of their missionary work. The Kaskaskia register for 1695 - 1815 indicated a significant number of relationships between French men and women who were predominantly identified as Illinois, Piansau, Kaskaskias and Padoka.²⁴ Marie Rouensa Accault Phillipe, the daughter of the Kaskaskian chief Rouensa, became a devout Catholic who disinherited her son Michel because he "lived the life of an Indian."²⁵ The Cahokia marriage

²²Marcel Trudel (1960), *L'Esclavage au Canada francais*. As cited in Cornelius Jaenen, "Miscegenation in Eighteenth Century New France," 89-90. Also the Register of Burials of the St. Louis Cathedral, Oct. 4, 1770-May 4, 1781 documented the deaths of "metif" slaves, most of them children, MOHS.

²³Trudel, *L'esclavage au Canada*, 132-133 and the Baptismal Records of the Mission of St. Ignace de Michilimacinac, 1695 - 1821. *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin (CSHSW)* 19 (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1910), 1-148.

²⁴Registre de la Paroisse Notre Dame des Kaskaskias, 1695 - 1815. MOHS.

²⁵Marie Rouensa added a codicil to her will, reinstating her son's inheritance if he changed his way of life. In Judith A. Franke, *French Peoria and the Illinois Country, 1673 - 1846* (Springfield: Illinois State Museum Society, 1995), 27.

records for 1747 to 1805 identified twenty First Nations women as mothers and two as brides.²⁶ By the close of the eighteenth century, the Arteau, Barron, Blondeau, Bourdon, Dumouchel, Gonneville, Marchero, Taillefer, St. Michel, and Rolet families were among those clearly identified in the mission records as *metif*. Other family surnames found in the Cahokia records can be found in any Métis community in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.²⁷ The structure of French colonialism had a significant and enduring impact on the development of a distinct Métis identity, particularly the entrepreneurial structure of the colonial fur trade. Individual fur traders moved deeply into a territory and once there most established families. If the Catholic church legitimized the union, the wife and children were in a position to inherit any possessions and business interests. When the United States became the colonial power in the Great Lakes region, they found a population that had considerable influence in both the fur trade and regional politics. Thousands of Métis lived in villages clustered around the Upper Great Lakes and to the west of Lake Superior.²⁸ Similar communities were established along the Mississippi river system, among them Cahokia, St. Charles and Ste. Genevieve.

The Hudson's Bay Company established another interactive zone along Hudson Bay, which extended into James Bay and later moved inland, officially adopting at its formation an isolationist, corporate strategy based on the patriarchal model of the British household.²⁹ Policies limiting contact with indigenous people proved impossible and impractical to enforce. Each family and post became a *métis* space, however temporary, in which syncretic cultural formations were constructed along a continuum of possibilities. Throughout its history the

²⁶Oscar W. Collet's Index to Marriage Registers of Cahokia. MOHS.

²⁷Aubuchon, Belcour, Boyer, Chartrand, Delorme, Desjarlais, Fleury, Houle, Laderoute, Laframboise, Ouelette, Racette, Rivard, Trottier, Turcotte, Pelletier dit Antaya.

²⁸Peterson identified fifty-three such communities. See "Many Roads to Red River: Metis Genesis in the Great Lakes Region, 1680 – 1815," In Peterson and Brown, *New Peoples*, 44.

²⁹See Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980), 217 – 218. See also Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870*. (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing, 1980).

Hudson's Bay Company tended to resist the development of *métis* spaces, striving to transform Native or Half Breed offspring into colonial subjects, albeit as inexpensively as possible.

Although almost every long-term employee had a family, there was a persistent tendency to view them as a drain on company resources. Employees of the company could return home at their contract's end and those who remained in the country were often transferred to other posts. The responsibility for care and transportation of the families left behind was a constant source of tension. Despite this, in many regions of Rupert's Land, generations of "Bay" families lived, married and raised children at company posts. When officials complained of the burden of dependent populations, estimated between 100 to 300 people per post, the Hudson's Bay Company embarked on a program of active relocation, anticipating a potential risk "to the Peace of the Country and the safety of the Trading Posts."³⁰ The Red River Settlement was, in part, a colonizing project where the Company hoped that the missions established there would have a settling and "civilizing influence" over the growing Métis and Half Breed populations. It also offered a solution for retiring fur traders who did not want to abandon their families or take them out of the country. As early as 1818, Robert Miles wrote at Norway House "a boat left for Red River with a number of old servants . . . and their families who intend to settle there."³¹ Those with British fathers often moved to Protestant parishes where families like themselves tended to occupy the same social class and shared common goals.

Regional Population Pools

By the early nineteenth century, there were several regional population pools with a Métis or Half Breed collective identity. In addition to those emerging from the initial interactive

³⁰There was an estimated population of 4 dependents per employee at Albany Post. Albany Post Census 1838. Albany Miscellaneous Records, B.3/z/1, HBCA and R. Harvey Fleming, *Minutes of Council, Northern Department of Rupert's Land, 1821-31* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1940), 33.

³¹Robert Seaborn Miles Journal, 1818-1819. HBCA Library.

zones in the Hudson Bay and Great Lakes regions and a cluster of communities at the Mississippi – Missouri river junction, a large population pool emerged in the Red River region extending from Sheyenne River and Devils Lake in present day North Dakota, north to the southern tip of Lake Winnipeg and fanning west along the Assiniboine river.³² Another population pool developed on the upper Missouri river, which moved people north from St. Louis to a network of American Fur Company posts. The Columbia district in present day Oregon, Washington and British Columbia also emerged as a distinct regional population pool, where fur trade relationships were formed among diverse indigenous populations, and people from Europe, Hawaii and the Sandwich Islands. The Athabasca and Saskatchewan river systems also saw the development of regional populations. Individuals and families who moved away from these hybrid communities tended to flow in three directions: reintegration with a First Nations parent culture, merger with a similar hybrid community in a different region or joining the growing population of independent communities-in-motion that lived on the northern plains.

There were attempts throughout the nineteenth century to provide population estimates of Métis and Half Breed collectives. In 1861, Lewis Henry Morgan estimated the total population on the plains as between 10,000 and 20,000.³³ In 1870, Randolph Marcy estimated the population of the Red River region as between 10,000 and 12,000 people and described meeting “hundreds of them” west of Devil’s Lake in 1868.³⁴ Four years later, the Hudson’s Bay Company conducted a census for the newly established Canadian government that included statistics on the

³²In 1864, General Sibley described “Red River half-breeds” arriving “from Devils Lake and the Upper Cheyenne River” during his negotiations with the Dakota. Brigadier-General H. H. Sibley to Major-General John Pope, Saint Paul, Minnesota, January 23, 1864. *Official Correspondence Pertaining to the War of the Outbreak, 1862-1865*, South Dakota Historical Collections, vol. 8, 154.

³³Morgan’s principal informant on the northern plains was Angus McKay. Lewis Henry Morgan, *The Indian Journals, 1859 – 62* (New York: Dover Publications, 1993), 138.

³⁴The article was written to promote the acquisition of the region by the United States and based on travels done in 1868. Randolph B. Marcy, “Rupert’s Land and It’s People”, *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 41, 242 (July 1870): 286-292.

populations of “Halfbreeds French” and “Halfbreeds English” in the Northern Department.³⁵

There were no returns from the Athabasca and McKenzie River districts and the Swan River returns were incomplete because those living in the vicinity of Fort Ellice were considered not to have “any claim on the Canadian Government” and the people at Riding Mountain “were settled with the Treaty made with the Indians in Manitoba.” The low numbers for “Halfbreeds English” raise questions regarding how census-takers categorized people, and the lack of people in either category in the Norway House district suggests that the census may not have included people living within the confines of Hudson’s Bay Company posts. The census was also taken two years after the smallpox epidemic of 1870 when, according to William Butler, “the entire loss along the North Saskatchewan has been 1200 persons.³⁶ The losses at the Métis settlement of St. Albert were particularly high, estimated at three hundred.³⁷

Figure 2.1: 1872 Census Returns for Half Breeds and Whites in the North

| District | Halfbreeds French | | | Halfbreeds English | | | Whites | | |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------|------------|--------------|-----------------|
| | <i>Men</i> | <i>Women</i> | <i>Children</i> | <i>Men</i> | <i>Women</i> | <i>Children</i> | <i>Men</i> | <i>Women</i> | <i>Children</i> |
| York | 6 | 6 | 15 | | | | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Norway House | 1 | 1 | 15 | | | | | | |
| Cumberland | 49 | 40 | 15 | | | | 8 | 5 | 3 |
| Swan River | 122 | 121 | 349 | | | | 2 | 2 | 6 |
| Saskatchewan | 382 | 411 | 1361 | 53 | 48 | 155 | 27 | 7 | 7 |
| English River | 29 | 23 | 79 | | | | 28 | 22 | 45 |
| Sub-Totals | 589 | 602 | 1834 | 53 | 48 | 155 | 68 | 38 | 64 |
| TOTAL | | 3,025 | | | 256 | | | 170 | |

³⁵Census of Whites, Halfbreeds, and Indians in the following districts in the Northern Department, 1st January, 1872, file 614 (1873), vol. 230, series D-11-1, RG 15, NAC.

³⁶William Francis Butler, *The Great Lone Land: a Tale of Travel and Adventure in the North-West of America* (London: Burns and Oates, 1915), 372.

³⁷Rev. George Grant, *Ocean to Ocean: Sanford Fleming’s Expedition through Canada in 1872* (1873; repr. Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1967), 194.

An 1879 report published by the Smithsonian Institution attempted to estimate the population and geographic locations of “the French Half-Breeds of the Northwest.”³⁸

Figure 2.2: The French Half-Breeds of the North West, 1879

| American Locations | Population Estimate | Representative Communities |
|----------------------|---------------------|--|
| Dakota | 1,200 | Pembina, Devil’s Lake and Lower Brule Agencies |
| Michigan | 16,000 | Detroit, Saginaw, Mackinac, St. Ignace, |
| Minnesota | 780 | Grand Portage, Saint Paul, White Earth Agency |
| Montana | 1,008 | Milk River, French Town, Flathead Agency |
| Oregon | 300 | French Prairie, Willamette Valley |
| Washington Territory | 250 | Cowlitz, Colville Valley, Okanagan Valley |
| TOTAL | 19, 538 | |

| Canadian Locations | Population Estimate | Representative Communities |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---|
| British Columbia | 250 | Fraser and Okanagan Rivers, Kamloops |
| Manitoba | 6,500 | Fort Garry, St. Boniface, St. Francis Xavier |
| Manitoba Territory | 500 | Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba, Rainy Lake |
| Peace River District | 1,300 | Lac la Biche, Lesser Slave Lake, Peace River |
| Saskatchewan District | 2,500 | Fort Edmonton, St. Albert, St. Anne |
| South Saskatchewan | 180 | Turtle Mountain, Wood Mountain, Cypress Hills |
| TOTAL | 11, 230 | |

The population given for southern Saskatchewan does not appear to include the estimated 300 – 400 families served by the Lac Qu’Appelle mission.³⁹

Regional collectives were not isolated; they were interconnected. In the first half of the nineteenth century, observers included communities such as St. Peter’s and Lac qui Parle on the Minnesota river within the designation, “Red River” Half Breed. Regular and close connections flourished, particularly while the southern region was still considered British territory. Common

³⁸A. Havard, “The French Half-Breeds of the Northwest,” *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, 1879* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1880), 308-327.

³⁹ Local Métis historian, Jim Laroque, quoting from a speech written by his father, J. Z. Laroque, personal communication, November 22, 2003, Lebret, Saskatchewan.

economic goals during the Métis free trade movement strengthened these connections.⁴⁰

James Sinclair (Scots/Cree), leader of the free trade movement in the Red River Settlement, was a good friend and business partner of Joseph Renville (French/Dakota) who operated his own trading post at Lac qui Parle.⁴¹ Peter Garrioch, another Red River free trader, was a frequent visitor at Fort Pierre and Fort Union and taught for a time at Fort Snelling.⁴² Frank Blackwell Mayer's journal and drawings made in 1851 documented a similarity in visual appearance, clothing and cultural practice. Red River carts were in common use, particularly along the routes carved by free traders. The camp organization that Mayer observed at Traverse des Sioux was similar to that employed across a wide Métis landscape.⁴³

The Dorion family of Cumberland House in northeastern Saskatchewan provides an example of a Métis family with a continental history.⁴⁴ Jean Baptiste Dorion was born in 1800, the son of Pierre Dorion Jr. (French / Sioux) and "Madame Dorion", Marie Ioway. His mother became a western legend following her dramatic trek through the Rocky Mountains after the death of her husband and other members of the party he was guiding.⁴⁵ By 1821, her son "J. Bte Dorion" was listed among the "officers and men wintering at Cumberland House" employed as a middle man, described as "slow and steady". In 1822, his name appeared on a list of "Cumberland House Canadians" and he was still at Cumberland House in 1863 - 64 with John

⁴⁰Marcel Giraud described "a current of trade" between the Red River Settlement and Prairie des Chien, Fort Snelling, St. Peter's, Pembina and American Fur Company posts along the Missouri. Giraud, *Métis in the Canadian West* 2, 280.

⁴¹Geneva D. Lent, *West of the Mountains: James Sinclair and the Hudson's Bay Company* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963), 205.

⁴²Peter Garrioch recorded his experiences across a landscape that included present-day Manitoba, the Dakotas, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Missouri. Born in the Red River Settlement, he married Margaret, daughter of Kenneth McKenzie an important fur trader on the Upper Missouri. George Henry Gunn, "Peter Garrioch at St. Peter's, 1837," *Minnesota History* 20 (1939): 119-128.

⁴³Frank Blackwell Mayer, *With Pen and Pencil on the Frontier in 1851: the Diary and Sketches of Frank Blackwell Mayer*. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1986), 171.

⁴⁴Leah Dorion, "Are the Metis a Western Canadian Phenomena? A Case Study of the Dorion Trading Family," *Metis Legacy*, ed. Lawrence Barkwell, Leah Dorion, and Darren Prefontaine (Saskatoon, Winnipeg: Gabriel Dumont Institute / Louis Riel Institute, 2000).

⁴⁵T. C. Elliott, "The Grave of Madame Dorion," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 36, 1 (1935): 102-104.

and Pierre Dorion who were also with the Cumberland House District Outfit.⁴⁶ When Jean Baptiste Dorion applied for scrip at Cumberland House in 1887, he identified his mother as “Madame Dorion” and described his life’s journey:

I lived when young in Missouri and afterward at Columbia River, then I came in McKenzie River District also at Athabasca River, then in Cumberland District where I lived at Grand Rapids on the 15th July 1870 and here at Cumberland House for the last fifteen years.⁴⁷

While Jean Baptiste Dorion’s descendants shifted towards a Cree Métis identity, his uncle, also named Jean Baptiste Dorion, served as interpreter at Fort Pierre on the Missouri river.⁴⁸ His descendants identified as Sioux, while other members of the large Dorion family remained with the Iowa.⁴⁹

Métis Ethnicity

When one considers the range of potential influences on the emergent cultural world of the Métis, the ethnicity of First Nations mothers could provide useful information regarding the constructive elements. Catholic mission records are a fruitful source of information because the church followed the French legal system, requiring a women entering into a marriage to have a legal identity constructed through parental identity or community. In such entries a woman’s First Nations ethnicity was often transformed into a surname, as was the case with “Josephthe Sauteuse” and “Elizabeth Maskego.”⁵⁰ Other women were identified simply as “une Sauteuse.” Mission records give some indication of the ethnic combinations coming together in different regions. The baptismal records of St. Ignace Mission at Michilimackinac (1695 - 1821) in the

⁴⁶Cumberland House Miscellaneous Post Records, B.49/z/1: folio 17 and 20, HBCA.

⁴⁷Dorion, *The Dorion Trading Family*, 19.

⁴⁸*Expeditions of John Charles Fremont*, 79.

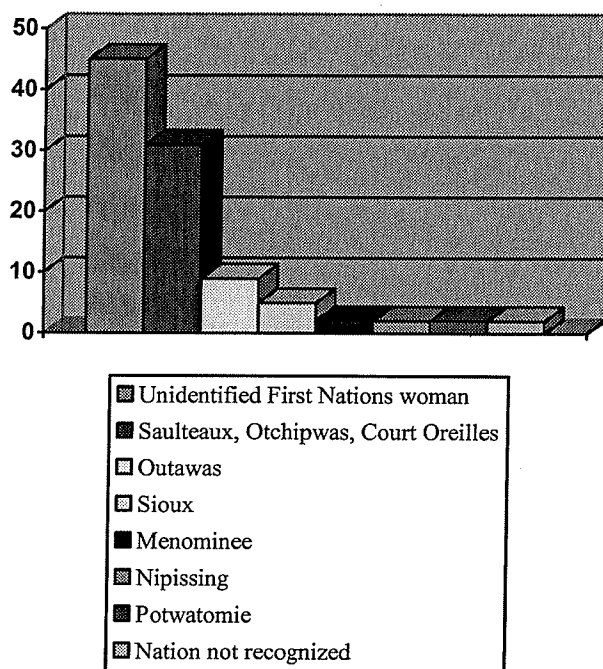
⁴⁹Nine members of the Dorion family were allocated lands as Half Breed or Mixed Blood Iowa in 1856-1857. “Barada Family Genealogy and History,” MOHS. Paul Dorion’s son Louis was baptized in 1851 at a Sioux camp, “Baptisms of Upper Missouri Indians by Father de Smet, MOHS.

⁵⁰Warren Sinclair, “The Surnames of Aboriginal Wives of the Metis and their Sense of Identity,” a paper presented at the Rupert’s Land Colloquium 2000, May 24-28, 2000. Vancouver, Washington.

Great Lakes identified ninety-eight First Nations women as mothers of métis children.⁵¹

Of the fifty-three women for whom specific First Nations identities were documented, the majority (59%) were “Otchipwas”, “Court Oreilles” or “Saulteux”.⁵² In descending order the remaining women were Odawa (17%), Sioux (9%), Potawatomi (4%), Nippissing (4%) and Menominee (4%).

Figure 2.3: Ethnicity of First Nations Mothers in the Michilimackinac Mission Records



The Catholic records at St. Charles, Missouri (1792 - 1846) documented a range of First Nations ethnicities among the individuals baptized, married and buried there.⁵³ Angelique Seignor, the mother of Jean Vallee’s two daughters was “a native of the High Missouri of the Ritara Indians.” The mother of François Malboeuf’s six children was identified in 1792 as

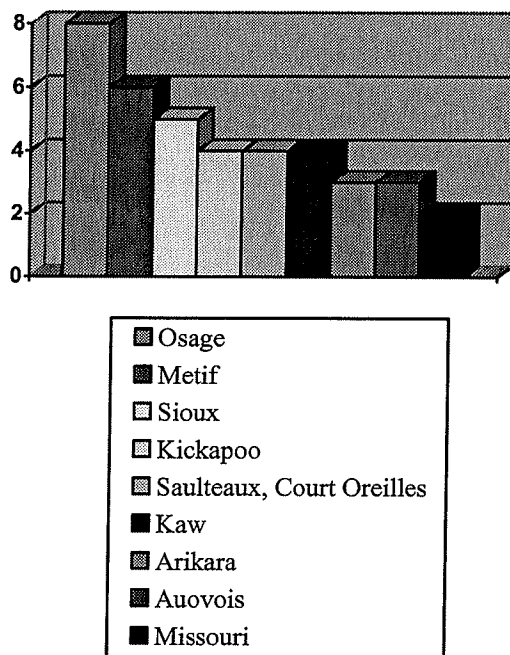
⁵¹1725 – 1804 Register of Marriages in the Parish of Michilimackinac, *CSHSW* 18 (1908), 469–513; Baptismal Records of the Mission of St. Ignace de Michilimacinac, 1695 – 1821, *CSHSW* 19 (1910), 1–148.

⁵²The Saulteux and Court Oreilles were part of the larger Ojibwe collective.

⁵³St. Charles Barromeo Church, St. Charles Missouri, translation of Parish Records 1792-1846, MOHS.

“Joseph Beau Sauvage of the Nation of the Mountain Crow”, in 1794 as “Josephine Crise, Sauvage of the Mountain Crow Nation and at the baptism of her son François in 1795 simply as “Josephine a Sauvage”. Between 1794 and 1803, the ethnicity of 59 women was noted in the records, although nine were given no specific tribal affiliation and two were identified by region: Upper Missouri and Prairie.

Figure 2.4: Ethnicity of First Nations Mothers in the St. Charles Missouri Parish Records

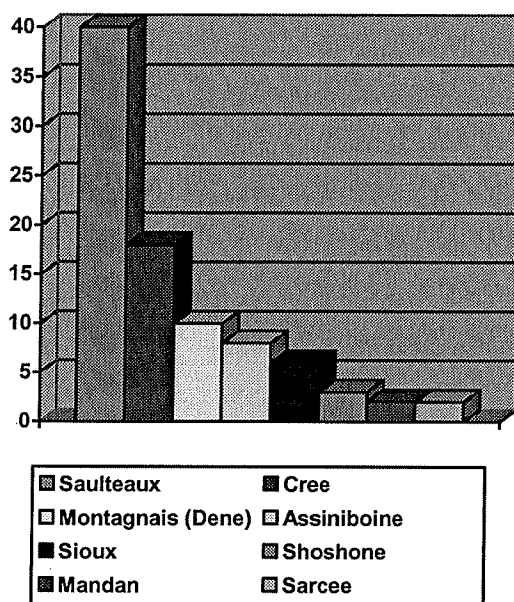


The remaining forty-eight women came from more than twenty distinct ethnicities, with the largest groups being the Osage (17%), Metif (13%) and Sioux (10%). The rest were distributed in small numbers among other groups. It is difficult to determine whether these families resided in the St. Charles region or whether children had been brought there for baptism.

In the Catholic Registry for St. Boniface (1825 - 1834), the ethnicity of two hundred and seventy couples can be determined, primarily through the marriages of their adult children who

had been drawn to the Red River region from a wide geographic area.⁵⁴ As indicated by the registry, the majority of the couples (78%) were in endogamous Métis relationships. Ninety-one First Nations women were noted as mothers and ten were brides themselves. Eight women were identified generically as were “Louise Indian” and “Josephete Sauvage”. “Marie de la montagne de Roche” was identified geographically.

Figure 2.5: Ethnicity of First Nations Mothers and Brides in the St. Boniface Register



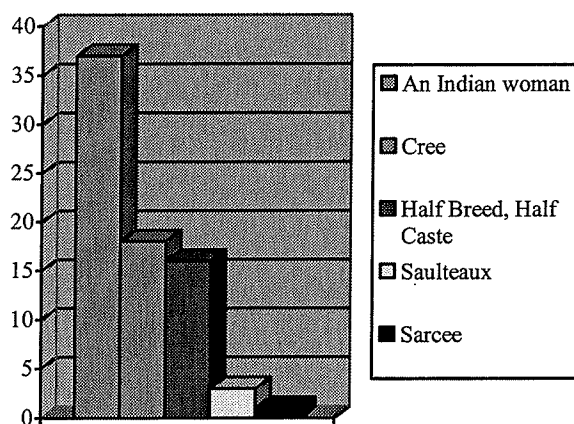
Forty (44%) women were identified as Saulteaux. Of the Cree women documented (20%), six were northern or “Swampy” Cree with the surnames “Maskego”, “Masquegon” or “Maskegon.” Ten women (11%) were Montagnais or Dene, seven (8%) were Assiniboine and another six (7%) were Sioux. The remaining eleven women were Shoshone, Mandan, and Sarcee with individual women from the Crow, Collets, Menominee, and Blackfoot nations. The trends of ethnic alliance as seen in the Great Lakes and Red River regions indicate a strong French / Saulteaux or Ojibwe

⁵⁴Ancienne Registres de Saint Boniface, 1825-1834. As reconstructed by Gail Morin, Al Yerbury, Mary McClammy, David Courchane and Denis Garard from surviving records and indexes. Internet site: www.televar.com/~gmorin/stboniface.htm.

affiliation. As Chief Trader John MacLeod observed in 1811, the “Saulteaux and French by long trade and blood connections, naturally drew together.”⁵⁵

The Anglican registry (1813 – 1836) in the Red River Settlement, although providing much less data regarding First Nations ethnicity, indicated the different alliances made by British fur traders.⁵⁶ Many entries for the baptisms or marriages of children simply noted the mother as “an Indian woman” or “Nancy, an Indian woman.” Communities of origin were sometimes identified from which ethnic identity can be inferred. Thomas Topping’s wife, “an Indian woman of York Factory”, Thomas Halcrow’s “Mary, a Southward Indian woman” and Robert Stevens’ wife “Mary, a Native woman from the coast of Hudson Bay” can be assumed to be Cree.

Figure 2.6: Ethnicity of “Native” Mothers in the Anglican Register, Red River Settlement



Eighty-four First Nations or Half Breed women were noted as mothers and wives in families headed by a European male. Although only thirty-seven entries had any data regarding a woman’s ethnicity, there appears to be less diversity than documented in other mission records.

The registers in the Red River Settlement also reflect the different alliances made in interactive zones by British and French fur traders. The St. Boniface mission primarily served

⁵⁵“Diary, etc. of Chief Trader John MacLeod, Service of Hudson’s Bay Company, Red River Settlement, 1811,” *Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota* 2, (1908), 130

⁵⁶St. John’s Anglican (Church of England) Parish Records, 1813–1836, E.4/1-2, HBCA.

families of French heritage, with only nine British family names appearing in the registry. With the exception of Michel Lambert and Peter Erasmus, all of the families in the Anglican register had British surnames. The different trends in French / British / First Nations intermarriage can also be seen in the location of surnames in the 1843 census of Saulteaux and Swampy Cree Villages.⁵⁷ By 1843, the surnames of families living at Saulteaux Village were increasingly French. Men with French surnames headed fifty families. There were six Desjarlais families including those headed by Antoine, Francis, Joseph and Jean Baptiste. Paul Chartrand's family was also residing at Saulteaux Village as were members of the Levellee, Gladue, Ducharme, Belcourt and Richard families. The French-Saulteaux sector of Saulteaux village was significant given the total population of 187.⁵⁸ By contrast, twenty-six surnames from the rosters of the Hudson's Bay Company appeared in the census data for Swampy Cree Village including: Isham, Garrioch, Favel, Flett, Kennedy, McKay, Sinclair, Smith, Spence, Sutherland, Thomas, Tait and Whitford. By 1843 ethnicity, particularly British ethnicity could not be determined by surname. Families bearing the same British surname could be European, Half Breed or Cree, although European families were very much in the minority.

As indicated by registers from different regions, the genesis of Métis and Half Breed people moved beyond the scope of local hybrid coalitions. Women and their children often moved away from their cultures of origin to become members of ethnically diverse communities. Alexander Ross worked in the Columbia district from 1813 to 1825. He described a group he assembled in 1823, which consisted of two Americans, seventeen Canadians, five "half breeds from the east side of the mountains", twelve Iroquois, two "Abanakee from Lower Canada", two "natives" from Lake Nippissing, one Saulteaux from Lake Huron, two Crees from Athabasca, one Chinook, two Spokanes, two "Kouttanois", three Flatheads, two "Callispelluns", one "Palooch"

⁵⁷1843 Census of the Red River Settlement, E.5/11, 2-35, AM.

⁵⁸Census takers did not include either Saulteaux or Métis families residing in lodges.

and one “Snake slave.”⁵⁹ Twenty-five of the men in the party were married and traveling with their wives and a total of sixty-four children. His own wife Sally, an Okanagan woman, accompanied Ross to the Red River Settlement.

Osborne Russell’s description of an emergent *métis* group in the vicinity of Fort Hall, in present-day Idaho, illustrates the genesis of a shared identity that in its early stages was socially based. Russell spent the winter of 1839 with “several French and half breed trappers encamped with the Snakes [Shoshone].”

the man . . . of the lodge in which I staid was a French man with a flathead wife and one child. the inmates of the next lodge was a half breed Iowa with a Nez percey wife and two children his wifes brother and another halfbreed next lodge was a half breed Cree his wife a Nez percey two children. The Inmates of the third lodge was a half breed snake his wife (a Nez percey and two children).⁶⁰

This diverse group was beginning to develop shared traditions and a sense of collectivity, identifying themselves as “kin”. They took the name “gens d’esprit” or kindred spirits who lived together as a small community within the Shoshone camp and came together for their own purposes. The purpose in 1839 was a Christmas dinner, which blended culinary traditions (wild game, berries, pudding, cake and coffee) and where the chief topics of discussion were the political affairs of the region.⁶¹ As marriage practices became increasingly endogamous, a Métis or Half Breed collective became more compelling to each successive generation.

The unique regional diversity described by Ross in the early nineteenth century continued in the Columbia and Rocky Mountains. Descendants of the Mohawk, Court Oreille, Nipissing and other eastern groups were subsumed within a generic “Iroquois” identity. This resilient identity has persisted in spite of more than a century of intermarriage and co-residency with other

⁵⁹Alexander Ross, *The Fur Hunters of the Far West* (1855; repr. Tulsa: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 208 - 209.

⁶⁰Osborne Russell, *Journal of a Trapper* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 114.

⁶¹Russell, *Journal of a Trapper*, 114 and 172. See note 175 for definition of “gens d’esprit”.

groups. In 1859, Dr. James Hector of the Palliser expedition described the “Iroquois half breeds” he encountered near Jasper House.

found a camp, four tents of Iroquois half breeds. These Iroquois were originally trappers for the NW Company . . . turned “freemen” . . . and have since tented about like Indians, trading the skins and furs they procure at Jasper House. There are only about thirty tents of them, and they all talk the Cree language beside their own, and have lately intermarried a good deal with the Cree half breeds of Lac Ste. Anne.⁶²

Louis and Ignace Kwarakwante and Ignace Wanyande who left the Mohawk community of Kahnawake for employment in the Athabasca region at the close of the eighteenth century established several of these families.⁶³ They initially took wives from the Sekani nation, although Louis took a second wife, Marie Patenaude. Louis’s son Michel camped near the St. Albert mission where Father Lacombe renamed the family “Cailloux”, which became the variations of Callihoo that are common in the region today. Louis’ sister Cecile married John Baptiste Belcourt. A distinct Iroquois-Métis identity endured and continues to influence the regional character of Métis identity to the present time.⁶⁴ In each region where a distinct Métis or Half Breed population developed, certain ethnic combinations dominated the cultural tone of the community. These groups had a greater opportunity to impact the cultural content transmitted from generation to generation. However, by moving into shared identities through intermarriage and the development of common communities and economies, a distinct Métis identity complete with an array of evolving cultural and social traditions emerged.

The genealogies of Métis and Half Breed families often illustrate an additional factor that moved families and communities along a *Métis* identity path: a multiplicity of First Nations descent. This can be seen as a factor where people of multiple indigenous ethnicities living in separate communities moved towards a distinct Métis or Half Breed identity, while the life

⁶²Irene M. Spry, *The Papers of the Palliser Expedition, 1857 – 1860* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1968), 367.

⁶³“Belcourt Genealogy,” Christi Belcourt personal communication. September 17, 2003.

⁶⁴See Anne Anderson, *The First Metis, A New Nation*. (Edmonton: UVISCO Press, 1985) for the development of the Callihoo/Karakonte family and their intermarriage with Alberta Métis families.

choices made by the Omaha La Flesches, the Dakota Renvilles and the Potawatomi Vieau in terms of marriage choice, persistent residency and cultural participation led to the reintegration of most of their descendants into the First Nations parent culture.⁶⁵ However, two sons of Joseph Renville II and Marie Little Crow, Joseph and François, were enumerated in the 1850 census in Pembina County, Minnesota Territory. They had married Alexis Bellegarde's two daughters: Euphrosine (Frezine) and Margeurite.⁶⁶ The family was known alternately as Renville, Ranville or Rainville. The Renvilles moved into the Cypress Hills and Wood Mountain areas, intermarrying with the Bellehumeur, Monet, Houle, Grant and Gosselin families.⁶⁷ In 1881 the marriage of Joseph Poitras and Josephine Renville, Joseph and Frezine's daughter, was entered in the Qu'Appelle mission records. In 1880 Jonas Rainville married Marie Louise Bellehumeur at St. Peter's Mission in Montana.⁶⁸ The same year, their names appear on a petition sent to General Miles under Louis Riel's leadership. Their son François and several other family members, including Euphrosine Bellegarde Rainville, made successful applications for scrip.⁶⁹ In a process that took at least two generations and physical separation from their homeland, the identity of one branch of the Renville family transformed from Dakota to Métis.

⁶⁵For a discussion of these families see Tanis Thorne, *The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996). Gary Anderson, "Joseph Renville and the Ethos of Biculturalism. *Being and Becoming Indian*, ed. James Clifton (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1989). Jacqueline Peterson, "The People in Between: Indian-White Marriage and the Genesis of Metis Society in the Great Lakes Region, 1680-1830," (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, 1981).

⁶⁶1850 United States Census, Pembina County, Minnesota Territory.

⁶⁷Gail Morin, ed., *Baptisms, Marriages and Burials of St. Ignace Parish of Willow Bunch, Saskatchewan*. (Pawtucket: Quintin Publication, 1998). Also Régistre des Baptemes, Marriage et de Sépulture, Mission de St. Florent, Lac Qu'Appelle Mission, Lebert, Saskatchewan.

⁶⁸John Reinville, son of Francis Reinville and Margaret Belgarde married Marie Aloysia Monet at Flat Willow Creek, Montana on December 27, 1880. St. Peter's Mission Register. Louis Riel to Major General N. A. Miles. Fort Keogh, Montana, August 20, 1880, Metis Search File, MNHS.

⁶⁹Euphrosine Belgarde Rainville scrip application, HB 5285, vol. 198, series D-11-3; Francois Rainville Jr. scrip affidavits no. 3784-3791, 1876, vol. 1323, series D-11-8a; François Rainville of Wood Mountain, son of Jonas Rainville and Marie Bellehumeur, claim 1913, vol. 1364, series D-11-8-c, RG 15, NAC.

Constant Motion: Métis of the High Plains

On June 21, 1876 Alexis Labombarde was sworn in as a witness at an inquiry into the Cypress Hills Massacre. When asked to state his place of residence, he replied, “I live anywhere on the prairie.”⁷⁰ Most regional population pools grew around a network of fur trade posts, but a mobile population of Métis lived on the high plains of present-day Manitoba, North Dakota, Montana, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Rarely identified in census records, they remain statistically elusive. These are the people whose places of birth and death were noted as “on the plains” in mission and scrip records. While they visited the Red River Settlement to access goods and services, most did not reside there for any length of time. Andrew Maxwell, who came west with the 1871 Canadian Pacific Railway survey, recalled the site used annually to conduct trade.

On this prairie where now stands the present Hudson Bay Store, Eatons, the government buildings, there was nothing but Old York boats in the summer then the Traders and Hunters camped here when they came in from the west -- Sometimes there would be as many as a thousand horses. When the tents were pitched the trading began and great quantities of Robes and furs of all description changed hands, then there was the Horse Racing, and the dancing and all the rest of it. In the spring vast quantities of Pemmican came in and in the Spring the furs.⁷¹

Narcisse Lacerte was born “on [the] plains, 22nd May, 1867” to Julie Caplette and Narcisse Lacerte, Sr., both identified as Half Breed.⁷² According to Narcisse: “My parents were plain hunters and up to five years ago used to winter in the Territories and to spend part of the summer season in Manitoba.” Eli Guardipee’s family spent most of each year in a mobile hunting camp, utilizing the Turtle Mountains as a base.⁷³ He recalled how their large camp from Turtle Mountain met another “great camp” along the Milk River: “Our party stopped there a couple of weeks to visit and hunt with these people.” The region became a merger point where

⁷⁰*Manitoba Daily Free Press*, Weds. June 21, 1876. Vol. II. No. 301, 3.

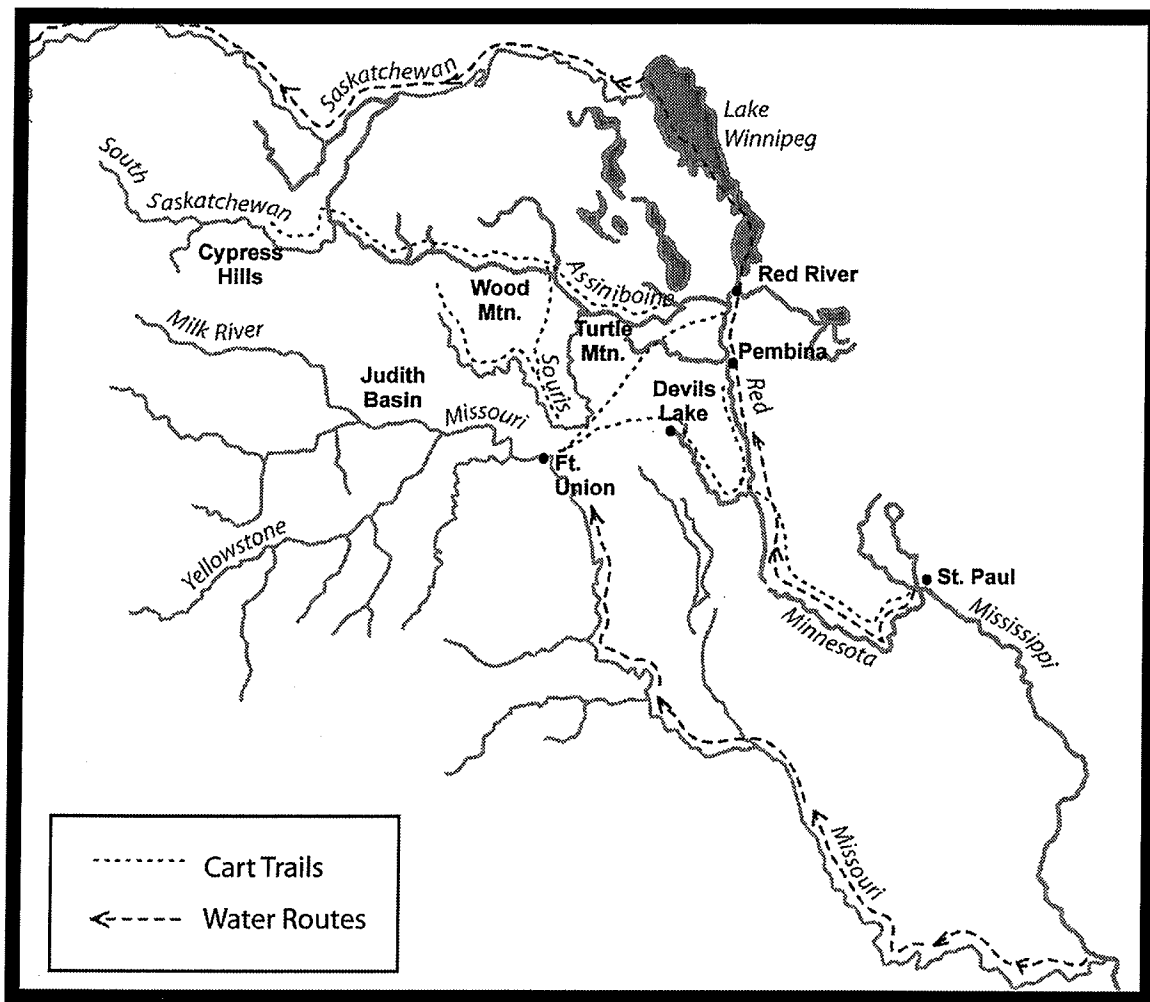
⁷¹Andrew William Maxwell worked on the CPR survey with engineer Frank Moberly in 1871. He married Flora Garrioch, who he met at the signing of Treaty 4 in Fort Qu’Appelle. Andrew William Maxwell Papers, Joanne Thom Episkinew Family Collection, used with permission.

⁷²Narcisse Lacerte Jr. claim 1571, vol. 1329, series D-11-8-b, RG 15, NAC.

⁷³“Eli Guardipee’s Story as told to John B. Ritch” (1940), p. 4, Small Collection 772, MNHS.

people moving south, east and west met a stream of people coming north up the Missouri River seeking employment with the American Fur Company. Individuals of mixed descent became the dominant population associated with the regional fur trade. Many of these individuals and families were carving a life for themselves in the face of shrinking and shifting economic options.

Map 3: The High Plains and Parklands



Freeman accounts and reports of large groups of free traders in the Swan River district indicate a large and mobile population. In 1856 only eight freemen had accounts at the Hudson's Bay Company post at Fort Pelly, but within five years the number had increased to thirty-four.⁷⁴ Some of these freemen had relocated to the region to take advantage of economic opportunities; but many were born and raised there and others remained in the region after their contracts expired. While men such as Pierre La Pierre, Norbert Welsh and Angus McGillis traded throughout the region, others patched together an economy based on the buffalo hunt, supplemented by itinerant labour. In 1857, the journal writer at Qu'Appelle Lake noted the comings and goings of free traders, keeping careful track of his rivals.

October 21 Upwards of eighty tents passed during last week –
 all free traders going to their wintering grounds the largest
 traders among them are John Dease and George Fisher.⁷⁵

Entries documented a regular pattern of incoming Métis in the late fall and early winter, followed by an exodus in late March, timed with the northern swing of the buffalo migration. "Wednesday March 21 -- Bon Guardipy a freeman arrived from hunting reports that the Buffalo are coming in fast."⁷⁶ The 1872 Fort Qu'Appelle journal documented similar movements across the plains and noted men paying off their debts with meat.⁷⁷ The margins of the post journal also noted the frequent practice of employing men and occasionally women for short-term contracts.⁷⁸

When seasonally employed as hunters and laborers at the forts along the Upper Missouri, Métis hunters and their families operated as an intact community traveling together in camps, in

⁷⁴"Free" was sometimes used as a euphemism for unemployed. Lists of Swan River Freemen, 1856-1866, Fort Pelly Miscellaneous Post Records, B.159/z/1, HBCA.

⁷⁵"Journal of Daily Occurrences Kept at Qu'Appelle Lake, 1857 – 1858," p. 4, Saskatchewan Archives Board (SAB).

⁷⁶Journal of Daily Occurrences, 15.

⁷⁷March 21, 1872, "Journal of Daily Events at Fort Qu'Appelle, 1872 – 1879," Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

⁷⁸The notes were often quite detailed. Charles Favel's agreement made September 5, 1872 specified the amount of hay to be cut (30 loads), the duration of the job (not later than ten days from this date), the number of oxen he would be allowed to use (6), and a payment of 5/ for each load of hay, hauled and stacked. On March 13, 1878, it was noted "Esabella La Fountaine came to work," Journal of Daily Events.

Metchif – “aller en nick ah wah.”⁷⁹ There were patterns of movement between the upper Missouri and Red River regions. Between 1835 and 1837 Francis Chardon documented “May and Durant”, “Delorme and Lady”, “Portra a half breed from the North” and “Bellehumeur and his family” leaving Fort Clark for Red River during the months of June and August.⁸⁰ Rudolph Kurz, writing at Fort Union fourteen years later, described Métis “employed for a limited term which ends on the 15th of next month [April].”⁸¹ The family of Michel Bellehumeur left for Red River in 1837 and was subsequently enumerated living at White Horse Plains.⁸² By 1851, Bellehumeur was once again working on the Missouri.

These mobile Métis created an alternate economy where men and women worked without contracts, or were contracted for specified periods of time. They were not listed among salaried employees and were paid in credit or horses. Horses became currency. Peter Garrioch’s 1844 journal noted that he had “purchased a horse of Alexes La Bom Burb for eight pounds; that is 2 pounds in flour and two pounds in goods at present and the balance to be paid as I am able in the same way.”⁸³ Labombarde was among the Métis employed at Fort Union in 1852 where Kurz expressed some concern for the upcoming payment in horses:

The metifs are employed for a limited term . . . and they draw their pay in horses. They own now 26 animals in this drove under our care, while only three horses and six mules remain to the company. When the metifs depart with their drove I wonder what is going to be done with regard to our horse camp?⁸⁴

During the winter of 1857, the Qu’Appelle Lake journal noted freemen making purchases through

⁷⁹Probably aller en neekinawhk, to go home or homeward. Charles Larpenteur, *Forty Years a Fur Trader on the Upper Missouri: the Personal Narrative of Charles Larpenteur, 1833 – 1872* (Minneapolis: Ross & Haines, 1962), 80. Chardon described Vallée and his family leaving for Fort Union in 1837 “with the intention of hunting in company with the other half breeds”. Annie H. Abel, ed., *Chardon’s Journal at Fort Clark, 1834 – 1839* (1930, repr. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 61.

⁸⁰Chardon’s Journal, 38, 69, 125, 164.

⁸¹Chardon’s Journal, 314.

⁸²Red River Censuses for 1840, 1846-47, 1849. Archives of Manitoba (AM). Bellehumeur’s return to the Missouri was noted by Kurtz, *The Journal of Rudolph Kurtz*, 246.

⁸³Peter Garrioch Journal, 1843-1847, p. 48. MG2 C.38, AM.

⁸⁴*The Journal of Rudolph Kurz*, 314.

horse-trading.⁸⁵ Walter Traill, writing in the late 1860s, recalled that a man with a large number of good horses was considered wealthy and “said to be rich in horses.”⁸⁶

The American army kept careful watch over the cross-currents of Métis movement. As the United States asserted jurisdiction over the territory, the region became increasingly militarized. In 1845 at Devils Lake, Captain Sumner issued a warning to “mixed-bloods that cross-border buffalo hunts would soon be forbidden.”⁸⁷ After 1870, the American government was determined to push the Métis across the Canadian border and viewed them as interlopers. In 1878 the army dispersed a community of several hundred Métis with seventy-five Red River carts at a winter camp on the Milk River.⁸⁸ However, many families had originated in the region and patterns of resource use and residency straddled the new border. Michel Klyne and Madeline Beauchemin’s family can be traced up and down the Red River Valley region, before they settled in the Qu’Appelle Valley.⁸⁹ Their children were born along a path that began in 1840 at Point Douglas in the Red River Settlement and traveled through Fort Ellice, Wood Mountain, Saint Joseph in Dakota territory and Devils Lake. Eight of the ten surviving Klyne children settled at Fort Qu’Appelle with their parents, but their brother Benjamin remained in American territory. He was born at Devils Lake in 1845 and as a young man worked as a scout on the mail route between Fort Totten and Fort Stevenson on the Missouri River.⁹⁰ He joined a buffalo camp on

⁸⁵December 16, 1857. February 12, March 27 1858. Journal of Daily Occurences Kept at Qu’Appelle Lake, SAB.

⁸⁶Walter Traill, *In Rupert’s Land: Memoirs of Walter Traill* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970), 57.

⁸⁷Nancy L. Woolworth (1964), “Captain Edwin V. Sumner’s Expedition to Devil’s Lake” cited in Gregory Camp, “The Turtle Mountain Plains-Chippewa and Metis, 1797 – 1935. (PhD. Dissertation, University of New Mexico, 1987), 76.

⁸⁸Raymond DeMallie, “The Sioux in Dakota and Montana Territories: Cultural History of the Ogden B. Read Collection,” *Vestiges of a Proud Nation*, ed. Glen Markoe (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 43.

⁸⁹Michel Klyne was the son of Michel Klyne, the postmaster at Jasper House and his Cree wife. He was born at Fort Edmonton in 1811 and married Madeleine Beauchemin in 1839 at the Red River Settlement. She was born “on the prairie” in 1820. Madeleine Klyne claim 182, vol. 1329, series D-11-8-b and Madeleine Beauchemin claim 65, vol. 1325, series D-11-8-b, RG 15, NAC.

⁹⁰Ben Kline (1931), “Ben Kline Remembers (Interview by Oscar Mueller)”; “Sketch of Ben Kline’s Life, Gathered by Father Van Den Broeck During Many Private Conversation with his Friend Ben,”

the Milk River in 1868 and remained in Montana territory, ranching in the Lewistown area. His name, "Benjamin Klyne," appeared on a list of petitioners submitted by Louis Riel in 1880 requesting "the setting aside one or two small Halfbreed counties near the buffalo region."⁹¹

The Qu'Appelle mission records identify the Cypress Hills and Wood Mountain areas as two *métis* spaces that served as both meeting grounds for those living on territory under American and British jurisdiction, and points of entry for those moving back and forth. The volume of baptisms and confirmations between 1870 and 1872 suggest that Wood Mountain winter camps were large.⁹² Scrip applications made by residents of Montana and North Dakota also trace movement across the region. Moise Letreille of Montana applied on behalf of his deceased son Joseph who was born near Moose Jaw, as did Cuthbert Lemire and Louise Swain on behalf of their deceased daughters identifying Pelletier Lake, Fort Qu'Appelle and Touchwood Hills as the locations of their births and deaths.⁹³ Pierre Sansregret of Fort Assiniboine, Montana applied on behalf of deceased children born across the line. The family's movement can be traced from Blackfoot Crossing to Maple Creek and finally to Batoche. Isaac Cowie noted the movement of "American" Métis into the Wood Mountain and Cypress Hills and the increased dissatisfaction among regional Métis resulting from waves of post-1870 migration from Manitoba.⁹⁴ The Flammand family increased substantially when long time resident Olivier Flammand was joined by his brothers Louis, Pierre, Jean Baptiste and Antoine who had relocated to Lebret by 1873.⁹⁵

(1925), Small Collection 942, MNHS.

⁹¹Louis Riel to Major General N. A. Miles, Fort Keogh August 20, 1880, Metis Search File, MNHS.

⁹²There were twenty baptisms in 1870, Wood Mountain winter register and eighty-two Catholic confirmations on April 1, 1872, Montagne de Bois, Registre des Baptemes, Mariage et de Sépulture, Lac Qu'Appelle Mission.

⁹³Moise Latreille claim no. 1158; Cuthbert Lemire scrip no. 1140, vol. 1355, series D-11-8-c, RG 15, NAC.

⁹⁴Isaac Cowie, *The Company of Adventurers* (1913; repr. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 437.

⁹⁵Red River Census Records (AM); Registre des Baptemes, Mariage et de Sépulture, Lac Qu'Appelle Mission.

Outside Influences and Métis and Half Breed Collective Identity

Métis identity was and continues to be molded by internal and external forces.

Underlying the attitudes, political treatment and legislation that impacted Métis and Half Breed people during the nineteenth century were the scientific theories of race and mixed-race of the time. Some scientific theories acknowledged “hybrid vigour” in the first offspring of miscegenation, but expected subsequent generations to display the “predisposition or inevitable tendencies to special diseases . . . until the whole generation is quite extinct.”⁹⁶ William Newton’s contradictory ideas were evident in his declaration that “the physical life in the French half-race is very strong” and his mourning of the “inevitable” passing of the inferior “half-races.”

If a half-race man is good, he is very good; if he is bad, he can be utterly depraved. In any case, he claims our pitiful interest . . . he falls into helpless suffering, to be caught by some disease which will soon take him off. Then, when a few years are passed, men ask where are the half races gone? And how is it they disappear? Alas! it is as true here as everywhere – by cruelty and vice, or even by the well-meant benevolence of the “higher race,” the natives of new lands are “improved” off the face of the earth. It is a sad and mysterious story . . . as the human race fulfils its destiny.⁹⁷

In addition to their expected physical degeneration over time, it was also believed that “a declension of the European intellect [would occur] in the second or third generation.”⁹⁸ The half-savage barbarian existed in theory and attitude. Moral degeneration, physical weakness, lack of intellect and low impulse control formed a cluster of stereotypical expectations of Métis and Half Breed people. The assumed shamefulness of a bi-racial heritage influenced the identity choices

⁹⁶The abhorrence of racial mixing was particularly strong towards African people, but affected attitudes towards miscegenation in general. W. A. Dixon (1883) as cited in Naomi Zack, *Race and Mixed Race* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 123. See Robert J. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995) for a discussion of the attraction-repulsion response to miscegenation and the contradictory beliefs and attitudes towards hybrid peoples.

⁹⁷William Newton, *Twenty Years on the Saskatchewan, N. W. Canada* (London: E. Stock, 1897), 39, 44 - 45.

⁹⁸Intelligence was considered a European attribute. For a discussion of the impact of racial theory on the career of one individual see John Long, “Archdeacon Thomas Vincent of Moosonee and the Handicap of Metis Racial Status,” *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 3, 1 (1983): 105.

made by some individuals, and affected the peace of mind of many.⁹⁹

A significant institutional force in the construction of Métis and Half Breed identity has been the development of the legally defined “Indian” through the political process of treaty making to extinguish aboriginal title to land marked for European settlement. The impact of this process on Métis and Half Breed identity began in the United States. When the lower Great Lakes moved into American jurisdiction in 1818, government authorities were unsure of the legal and political identity of the regional Metif. If they were British subjects, they could be classed as foreigners and asked to leave the country. However their connections with resident First Nations raised perplexing legal questions.

There yet remains . . . some pretty important principles to settle and establish within this Agency, respecting the proper subjects for the rights of Citizenship . . . The great mass of the people who inhabit this district are of French extraction and were found in the Country on its delivery by the British to the American Government, or such as have descended from them mostly from a connection with the aboriginal inhabitants.¹⁰⁰

The question arose regarding the Indian title to the Country around Green Bay and Prairie du Chien.¹⁰¹ After further investigation, it appeared that Indian title had not been extinguished and a series of treaties were signed in the region. Many of the families considered foreigners in 1819 were recognized and compensated through the treaty process. The question that confronted the American government was one that has echoed throughout Métis history and persists to the present time. What are the legal rights of half-breeds? If viewed as children, they could make claims against the Indian parental estate, if viewed as Indians they were entitled to the same settlements as other “Indians.” The 1821 Treaty with the Odawa was possibly the first treaty to make specific and separate provisions for “half-breeds.”¹⁰² Land grants ranging in size from

⁹⁹See Sylvia Van Kirk, “What if Mama is an Indian?: the Cultural Ambivalence of the Alexander Ross Family,” *The New Peoples*, 207-217.

¹⁰⁰W. H. Puthuff, Indian Agent to Lewis Cass, Michilimacinac, 4 March 1818, *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* (CSHSW) 20, 32.

¹⁰¹Lewis Cass to J. C. Calhoun, Secretary of War, Detroit, 30 July 1818, *CSHSW* 20, 60.

¹⁰²These included “Pierre Le Clerc, son of Moi-qua, Joseph Laframbois, son of Shaw-we-no-qua and

one-half to two sections were given to “persons being all Indian by descent.” Individuals were named with their family claim noted. At the 1824 Treaty with the Sauk and Fox, Maurice Blondeau, “a half Indian of the Fox tribe,” was instrumental in negotiating the inclusion of:

the small tract of land lying between the river Desmoi and the Mississippi . . . intended for the use of the halfbreeds belonging to the Sock and Fox nations . . . they holding it however by the same title and in the same manner that other Indian titles are held.¹⁰³

Unlike the individual land grants in the Odawa treaty, the Sauk-Fox Half Breed Tract was to be held as a collective. In subsequent treaties throughout the early nineteenth century, “halfbreed” tracts were viewed as equivalent to Indian title, but by the 1840’s Half Breed scrip was instituted as a means to extinguish the aboriginal title held by individuals.¹⁰⁴

In Canada, attempts to establish clean lines of distinction between “Half Breeds” and “Indians” made administration of government policies a bureaucratic nightmare. During the 1873 negotiations of the Northwest Angle treaty, the Fort Frances chief asked for provisions for “those children that we call the Half-breed – those that have been born of our women of Indian blood” as their relatives on the other side of the border had done decades earlier.¹⁰⁵ The government response was that Half Breeds must “be either white or Indian.” Yet, representatives of the federal government expressed frustration when trying to distinguish Métis and Half Breeds from “Indians” throughout the western treaty process of the 1870’s. In 1874 Alexander Morris subsequently expressed his concern that:

There is reason to believe that many of the half breeds in Manitoba, especially in the parish of St. Peters have identified themselves with the Indians, and

“Teresa Chandler or To-e-ak-qua, a Potawatomie woman and her daughter Betsey Fisher”. See Charles Kappler, ed. Treaty with the Ottawa, 1821. *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties 2* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 199-200.

¹⁰³Treaty with the Sauk and Fox, 1824. Kappler, *Laws and Treaties*, 207.

¹⁰⁴Documents relating to the Land Scrip Acts are in Record Group 49. Records of Land Management. National Archives and Record Administration. See the NARA website: www.gov/guide/rg049.

¹⁰⁵Alexander Morris, *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians* (1880; repr. Toronto: Prospero Books, 2000), 69.

have taken the treaty money . . . and that elsewhere half breeds have claimed the right to receive money as Indians.¹⁰⁶

Morris's concerns were probably motivated by the fact that St. Peter's was the largest reserve in western Canada.¹⁰⁷ His direction to Meredith stated, "you should take the opportunity, when paying the Indians their next Treaty money, of fully explaining . . . that any half breed who receives any annuity or presents as an Indian thereby disqualifies himself and his children from receiving the allotment of lands as a half breed." Morris's directive emphasized the restrictive elements of First Nations status: the inability to acquire or sell property, legal status as wards of the government and the lack of voting rights.

In 1876, a petition was submitted from Fort Walsh to the federal government on behalf of "our brethren scattered over the Prairie in No. 4 district" seeking to "relinquish our land claims which we understand the Government has granted in the province of Manitoba" in order to "be admitted into "No. 4 Treaty and to secure the same distribution of annuity money as the Indian and to be treated in Common the same as the Indians with the exception that we be privileged to select our own chief." The petitioners declared "we are half breeds of the Cree and Saulteux Tribes and have lived from childhood upon the prairies and adopted the customs of the Indians."¹⁰⁸ In a report made by J. M. Walsh of the North West Mounted Police, the Treaty Four chiefs supported their petition.¹⁰⁹ According to Walsh, the chiefs "further demanded that the half Breeds be admitted to the treaty and receive the same payment as themselves, they regarded them

¹⁰⁶Alexander Morris to E. A. Meredith, Deputy Minister of the Interior, Ottawa, 21 April 1874.

Alexander Morris Papers, No. 2970, fo. 711, MG 12 B1, AM.

¹⁰⁷In 1884 St. Peter's had a population of 1,390, more than twice the population of other large bands. Statement of the number of Indians of different Bands discharged from Treaty in Manitoba and the North West Territories in 1885 and subsequent years, with the population of each Band previous to the withdrawals, file 93,083, vol. 3880, RG 10, NAC.

¹⁰⁸Petition from half breeds in the vicinity of Fort Walsh asking that they may be admitted to the Treaty of 1874, file 7089, vol. 3637, RG 10, NAC.

¹⁰⁹Qu'Appelle Agency Report relative to the payment of annuities to the Indians of Treaty 4, submitted by J. M. Walsh, Inspector of the Northwest Mounted Police at Fort Walsh, North West Territories, file 7088, vol. 3637, RG 10, NAC

as their brothers of the plains and were not inclined to part company with them.” Walsh responded that while they would not be recognized as a collective, “if half Breeds wished to relinquish their claim to lands and live among and be like Indians”, then he would submit the names of any individuals desiring to do so. Government implementation of both the western treaties and Half Breed scrip forced a rigid categorization of race, ethnicity and country in a region where such boundaries had previously been fluid.

A petition sent in 1878 from the same region by “Half Breeds Living in Vicinity of Cypress Hills” requested a special land reserve which would “commence at a point upon the international line, where crossed by the Pembina River; thence running west along said line 150 miles; thence at right angles, north 50 miles; thence due east, 150 miles; thence due south, 50 miles, to point of beginning.”¹¹⁰ Declaring the area “the only one offering to the half-breeds the requisite facilities of a permanent home”, the 296 applicants boldly claimed the borderlands for their own. If most of the men who signed were heads of families, a conservative estimate of the Métis collective represented by the petition would be 800 to 1000 individuals, given the large size of Métis families of the time period. Many of the men on the 1878 petition had petitioned two years earlier for admission into Treaty Four as a collective. Pierre and Joseph Leveille, François Lafontaine, Bonaventure Gariépy, Joseph Parisien, Baptiste and Alex Pelletier were among those who attempted to negotiate the survival of their community through whatever means available. After these attempts failed, the collective began to falter. Many, such as the families of Norbert Welsh, Roderick Ross, Cuthbert St. Denis and Michel Klyne who established permanent homes near the Catholic mission at Lebret, created distinct Métis communities. Individuals and families also negotiated membership in Cree and Saulteaux bands. Baptiste Racette, whose name

¹¹⁰Petition From Half-Breeds Living in the Vicinity of Cypress Hills, Received Through the North-West Council, not dated.; Covering Letter from the Lieut. Governor of the North-West Territories, Dated 30th September, 1878. *Epitome: Parliamentary Documents in connection with the North West Rebellion, 1885.* (Ottawa: Maclean, Roger & Co., 1886)

appeared in the Cypress Hills petition of 1878, had already “made up his mind to become an Indian” and had taken treaty annuity in 1875.¹¹¹ Zacharie LeRat dit Pitwewekijik became “Chief of the Half Breeds” at Cowessess where his descendants live today.¹¹² Joseph La Mere also took treaty with Cowessess and François Lafontaine or Ka-Ka-Keese was accepted into Muscowequan only to withdraw or be discharged by 1886. In 1892 the Department of Indian Affairs issued a “List of Half Breeds who have withdrawn from Treaty.”¹¹³ Between 1885 and 1892 over 1400 individuals identified by the department as “Half Breeds” had been discharged from Treaty. Among them were Baptiste Racette’s son Joseph and three members of the LeRat family who left Cowessess, Louis Racette who had been at the Battleford Agency until 1886 and Olivier Flammand and his wife Ellen Malleterre who left Muscowpetung Agency the same year.

The correspondence regarding Joseph Dumont’s shifting status reveals the complexity of movement taken by some individuals. In a letter written in 1892, Joseph Dumont dit Kayole stated that he had been “admitted into Treaty with the Carlton Indians These Carlton Indians were composed of Crees and Half-breeds.”¹¹⁴ He attracted the government’s attention when he applied for scrip under the name of “Louis Kayole” while simultaneously attempting to collect retroactive annuity payments as Joseph Dumont, a member of One Arrow’s band. A letter from the Indian Agent clarified his situation:

“Louis Kayole” is a son of Vidal Dumond No. 56 of One Arrow’s band and was in the rebellion at Batoche in 1885, after which he went across the line and remained there until the Summer of 1889, when he crossed back to Swift Current and is still there working for the NW Mtd Police and others . . . I find in pay sheets that Vidal Dumond (his father) was paid for 1 Man, 1 woman, 2 boys & 5 girls and arrears for 1882 for 8 persons.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹February 2, 1875, Journal of Daily Events at Fort Qu’Appelle, 1872-1879. SAB.

¹¹²Zacharie Lerat, son of François Lerat dit Pitwewekijik, Lac Qu’Appelle Mission, Registre No. 1, 1868-81.

¹¹³List of Half-breeds discharged from Treaty up to June 1st, 1892, file 93,083, vol. 3880, RG 10, NAC.

¹¹⁴Joseph Dumont to Hayter Reed, Indian Commissioner. Swift Current, 13 July 1892, file 92,856, vol. 3880, RG 10, NAC.

¹¹⁵Memo, R. S. McKenzie, Indian Agent, Duck Lake, 2 April 1892. file 92,856, vol. 3880, RG 10, NAC.

Both Joseph Dumont and his father withdrew from One Arrow's band and applied for scrip. Involvement in resistance and fear of reprisal were additional elements in the knot of motives that saw individuals caught up in post-resistance flight attempting to negotiate benefits while avoiding recrimination. The efforts of individuals to maneuver back and forth indicate their reluctance to accept the government's vision of assimilation and disappearance. It also reflects the grim realities expressed in the 1878 Cypress Hills petition which stated that it was "impossible to form any congregation profitable to [our] families among the white immigrants who are establishing themselves in the North-West Territory."¹¹⁶ Frederick Desjarlais' inability to support his family in an increasingly unfamiliar world was his reason for seeking reentry into Saddle Lake.¹¹⁷ Hayter Reed opposed readmission as setting a "bad example", but acknowledged that there were "no funds available" from the Department of the Interior "for the relief of destitute Half Breeds." The campaign to entice and push Half Breed and Métis people into withdrawing from treaty had significant impact. Subsequent scrip applications indicate that many people with strong First Nations' affiliations had been categorized as "half breed" including the children of Cree chiefs Ahtakakoop and Mistawasis.¹¹⁸ By 1892 the Peeaysis band in Alberta had lost 97% of its membership, Mistawasis had lost 26% and John Smith's had lost 39%.¹¹⁹

During this time, the American-Canadian border became progressively more difficult to negotiate. Suddenly people had to decide if they were American or Canadian, "white" or "Indian", and if "Indian" establish membership in a clearly identifiable band or nation. Many were unable or unwilling to do so. The American government declared the western Métis as

¹¹⁶Petition From Half-Breeds Living in the Vicinity of Cypress Hills.

¹¹⁷Correspondence regarding Frederick Desjarlais and Family . . . also regarding aid to Indians who left the Treaty, file 57,336, vol. 3817, RG 10, NAC.

¹¹⁸Peggy Belanger identified her parents as Mistawasis Belanger (HB) and Mashe-nah-sho-whisk (HB). Claim 549, vol. 1335, series D-11-8-c; Marie (Chatelain) Genereux identified her parents as Attakakosh Chastellain (HB) and Omanakwa-mis (Saulteaux). Claim 963, vol. 1348, series D-11-8c, RG 15, NAC.

¹¹⁹Statement of the number of Indians of different Bands discharged from Treaty in Manitoba and the North West Territories in 1885 and subsequent years, with the population of each Band previous to the withdrawals, file 93,083, vol. 3880, RG 10, NAC.

Canadian and attempted to push them across the border. Those who persisted in their traditional movement were greeted with increasing hostility. In June 1889, the *River Press* of Fort Benton ran an article with the headline, "Without Country or Tribe". Identifying "roaming half-breeds" who "recognize no government as theirs and acknowledge no tribal relations", the author advocated firm government action "to keep them within bounds and see that they cease their present mode of life."¹²⁰ Perceived as a "constant terror to isolated settlers and a menace to good order", the article concluded "that those who have not and will not accept lands and homes are not fit people to be allowed to wander at will in either country."

Métis Spaces and Collective Identity

Métis genesis was virtually continental in scope, moving along a complex, interconnected network. Motivated by the fur trade and transported along water systems and overland trails, similar population pools developed in different regions, each combining different ethnicities with resulting variations in regional cultural tradition. Longevity and stability are needed to construct an identity based on both miscegenation and syncretic cultural recombination. It is also important to consider "separation" or severing the "umbilical connection" as critical factors in the construction of Métis and Half Breed identity.¹²¹ Movement was frequently integrated into descriptions of Métis people, with comparisons to rabbits, vagrants and gypsies. There was an element of exodus in some of this movement. A wave of Great Lakes Métis left a traumatic American occupation of their communities following the War of 1812. Many of those who did not maintain connections with First Nations kin moved west to Pembina at the invitation of Lord Selkirk.¹²² Those moving north and east from the Missouri and Columbia regions fled the

¹²⁰"Without Country or Tribe," *River Press*, June 26, 1889 (Fort Benton), p. 4. MNHS.

¹²¹ Hickerson, *Ethnogenesis in the South Plains*; Albers, *Changing Patterns of Ethnicity, History*, 70, 94.

¹²² Lord Selkirk invited displaced fur trade families to reside on his land grant. Earl of Selkirk to Robert Dickson, London, 21 May 1819, *CSHSW* 20, 109.

growing racism and violence of the American west. The post-resistance exodus from Manitoba in 1870 and Saskatchewan in 1885 shifted large populations north, south and west.

Giraud's discussion of the "circumstances, consequences and persistence of Métis nomadism" identified the independent and moving cultural core as the source of Métis resistance and nationalism.¹²³ Louis Schmidt described the importance of that shared experience when he recalled: "Nous formions une caravane très numoreuse, parfois de deux à trois cents charettes ensemble. Métis Français et Anglais, Canadiens et Ecosais, nous etions tous Métis" (We formed a caravan, very numerous, sometimes two or three hundred carts together. French Métis and English, Canadians and Scottish, we were all Métis).¹²⁴ It was to these restorative spaces, whether brigade, trapline or camp, that the Métis moved for renewal of their sense of a collective self, feeling as Peter Erasmus did in a camp near present-day Edmonton, Alberta far from his Red River birthplace that – "we were one people, with one purpose", creating what bell hooks described as "communities of resistance" by distancing themselves from colonial control and creating "homeplace, however fragile and tenuous."¹²⁵ The development of Métis consciousness grew among the individuals, families and entire communities who moved from one location to another, from one *métis* space to another.¹²⁶

¹²³Giraud, *Metis in the Canadian West*, 113 - 175.

¹²⁴Louis Schmidt, "Les Memoires de Louis Schmidt (Le Patriote de L'Ouest), Duck Lake Saskatchewan, 1911 – 1912," p. 31, MG9 A31, AM.

¹²⁵Peter Erasmus, *Buffalo Days and Nights* (Calgary: Fifth House, 1999), 33 – 34; bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1990), 42.

¹²⁶ Once an independent cultural nucleus formed, it was an irreversible phenomenon. *Mestizaje*, 69, 48.

CHAPTER THREE

The *métis* Space of New Possibilities: Elements of Hybrid Style

*"I smiled at the medley, the variety of dresses, of habits and ideas; but above all, at the confusion of languages in our camp."*¹

Alexander Ross, speaking in 1823 about a camp in the Columbia region, described the cross-cutting social networks that formed interactive zones, the *métis* spaces that were home to the construction of new forms of cultural knowledge. Through the vehicle of trade and the human relationships that developed from that common purpose, indigenous materials, construction techniques and garment forms encountered European goods such as fabric, steel needles and thread, a different repertoire of construction techniques and imported clothing. A hybrid style of dress that served to mark or express ethnicity emerged from these interactive fields. It was influenced by a range of intersecting factors: exchange, proximity, occupation, class, and the array of cross-cultural dress traditions brought together by groups of people who gathered and interacted for varying lengths of time.

In some respects, dressing and undressing the body had been a focus of the fur trade since its inception. Trade on Hudson Bay had been initiated by literally taking the "coat" beaver off Cree bodies. Coat or worn beaver pelts were the object of trade until the closing decades of the seventeenth century when market demand shifted. As a result, European traders had to convince the people, who were both producers and customers, to change their dress traditions by trading fur instead of wearing it. By 1689 the London Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company was instructing their traders to "encourage the Indians to weare Cloth [baize], Flannel Duffles or any Woolen thing rather than Beaver."² The following year they issued another directive:

Wee would have you encourage the Indians to weare more of our Cloth & their beaver Coates Lesse, that we may have more Returns of Skin Beaver for the

¹Alexander Ross, *The Fur Hunters of the Far West* (1885; repr. Tulsa: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 208 - 209.

²E. E. Rich, ed., *Hudson's Bay Copy Booke of Letters, Commissions, Instructions Outward, 1688 -1696*. (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1957), 61

trade is quite turned here in Europe & skin or Parchment is More now in Request for trade & coate Beaver little.³

In 1694, the proprietors at Albany struggled to find clothing that would appeal to their customers. Some fabrics they reported “were altogether unfit for Indian use” and “The Painted Callico Shirts supposed to be of a Size bigge enough for men, are hardly large enough for youths of 15 years of age.”⁴ However, the campaign had met with success by the early eighteenth century as wool blankets and stroud yard goods were widely adopted as garments and constructive materials. But the clothing narrative in the interactive zones evolved along circular rather than linear paths. The adoption of imported cloth and clothing coexisted with the persistence of ancient garment forms and the development of new forms that combined aesthetics, techniques and materials.

Indigenous Style

The earliest descriptions of indigenous clothing along the paths of contact and trade show both variety and common trends. Travelling in Arkansas Territory in 1819, botanist and adventurer Thomas Nuttall was able to make comparisons to clothing observed during his earlier travels in the Great Lakes and Missouri regions. Nuttall identified the “component parts” of men’s dress “as usual, moccasins for the feet, leggings which cover the leg and thigh; a breech-cloth; an overall or hunting shirt, seamed up, and slipped over the head.”⁵ The robe or blanket, breech clout, leggings, moccasins, hoods and fingerless mittens tied around the neck were observed across North America. The primary garments worn on the upper body show more variety in clothing type and style, than those on the lower body. James Isham, writing from York Factory on Hudson Bay in 1743, offered these descriptions of Cree dress.

The ancient wear and apperral . . . was Leather smock and a Loose Robe over, for the women, the men having Leather waistcoats or body coats, and a Loose Gar’b over . . . the way of the womens wear and apparel is to take abou’t 1 and 1/2 yard

³Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Copy Booke*, 98.

⁴1694 Albany post journal, B3/d/3, HBCA.

⁵Thomas Nuttall, *A Journal of Travels into the Arkansas Territory During the Year 1819* (Tulsa: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 99.

of cloth, which is to be sow'd up the side to the arm pitts . . . their is 4 strings which they style (aniskomon) which ties over the shoulder's and serves them for smock, Ground, and peticoate . . . they having no other garment But a coat of skins flying over Loose, which Becomes them very well . . . the female sex also wear's a Clout or (arsian) in the winter time to Keep -- warm; But never in the Summer; made of a Quarter of a Yard of cloth, have a string round their waste, next their skin, by which they tuck itt in fore and of't, with Stockings of the same stuff; -- which Reaches 1/2 way their thigh and ties to the said string round their waste; with their Garter's tied below the Knee; their shoes are made of Deer skin Drest; and sock's of Green Rabbit skin, with the pel't next the skin . . . they also have Sleeves of Leather or cloth from the Rist to the shoulder which they also tie together with strings before and behind, -- and a Cap they wear of a peice of Cloth which they sow behind and Reaches over their shoulder's, all these garments are word. full of Beads, porqu'pine Quills, and other ornaments, which they Deck themselves out with.⁶

A pair of eighteenth century dolls collected on Hudson's Bay are dressed in variations of the garments and decorative elements described by Isham (plate 1).⁷ The hood worn by one of the dolls, described as "a cap which reaches over the shoulder" by Isham and "a tippet" by other early observers, is an ancient and widely distributed garment form.⁸ According to Isham, men's dress did "not Differ much from the women . . . having a Close coate nex't their skin, and a Loose Coate over flying op'n before, with an arsian or clout . . . Leaving part of their thighs Bear, their Stockings Reaching but a Little way above their Knee's, round Cap of a piece of Cloth." Basic garment forms were made from hide "if they can procure no Cloth."⁹ In 1812, Thomas McKeevor, a physician who accompanied the Earl of Selkirk and his party, offered a description of Cree clothing at York Factory. "The common dress of men, in summer, consists of an English

⁶A Cree vocabulary developed by Isham listed an "ar-se-an" as "a cloth for private parts". E. E. Rich, ed., *James Isham's Observations on Hudson's Bay, 1743 and Notes and Observations on a Book Entitled a Voyage to Hudson's Bay in the Dobbs Galley, 1749* (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1949), 14, 109-110.

⁷The dolls' clothing is primarily made of hide decorated with paint and porcupine quills with some elements of trade cloth and beads. One wears a strap dress, the other a side-fold dress. Catalogue numbers 1976.459 and 1976.460. Horniman Museum and Library, London England.

⁸For a description of a shell outline of a hood see James A. Tuck, *Ancient People of Port au Choix: the Excavation of an Archaic Indian Cemetary in Newfoundland*. (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1989); Cath Oberholtzer, "Together We Survive: East Cree Material Culture," (PhD. Dissertation, McMaster University, 1994), 124-126. An outline of a woman's hood in a Manitoba burial site was formed by 1,641 pin cherry seed beads. Kevin Brownlee and E. Leigh Syms, *Kayasoch Kikawenow: Our Mother from Long Ago, an Early Cree Woman and Her Personal Belongings from Nagami Bay, Southern Indian Lake* (Winnipeg: The Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, 1999), 16.

blanket thrown loosely round their shoulders; under this a deer-skin jacket, the sleeves of which are distinct from the body, so that they can be removed at pleasure . . . embroidered with dyed porcupine quills in a very neat and elegant manner.”¹⁰ He noted the appeal of European coats “of scarlet, or green cloth, made after the military fashion, and ornamented with a profusion of tin, or silver trinkets, giving them a very noble and majestic appearance.” Robert Hood painted a Cree family at Cumberland House in 1820. He described women wearing leather clothing.

stockings . . . gartered at the knees and ornamented at the ankles with rows of beads. An undergarment covers the body from the neck to the feet, the sleeves not being sewed to it, but attached to one another by a strip of cloth across the back. Their hoods are fastened at the neck, forming a tippet on the shoulder which . . . is adorned by stained porcupine quills, beads and tassels of leather or worsted.¹¹

Thomas J. Farnham noted that male dress among the Ojibwe in 1839 was “composed of deer and fawn skins . . . breech clout, moccasins, leggings, frock or hunting shirt” and in winter “a kind of tippet”, mittens and a robe for men and “leggings . . . tied below the knee” and an ankle-length “frock or chemise” worn by women. Peter Grant, writing around 1804, described the Saulteaux wearing “bleu cloth” breech clouts and “leggings made of moltons, strouds, or scarlet cloth . . . with a narrow wing . . . garnished with gartering riband and beads.”¹² Fur, hide, stroud and duffle were the materials most often used to construct basic garment forms.

Indigenous dress in more western regions was comprised of similar elements with traditional cut and materials persisting well into the mid-nineteenth century. In 1794, John

⁹*Observations on Hudson's Bay*, 110-111.

¹⁰Thomas McKeevor, *A Voyage to Hudson's Bay* (London: Sir Richard Phillips and Co., 1819), 51-52.

¹¹A tippet is a short cape worn around the shoulders. See Francois Boucher, *20,000 Years of Fashion: the History of Clothing and Personal Adornment* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1967), 435; C. Stuart Houston, ed., *To the Arctic by Canoe, 1819-1821: the Journal and Paintings of Robert Hood, Midshipman with Franklin* (Montreal, Toronto: McGill-Queens University Press, 1974), 72-73.

¹²Thomas J. Farnham (1843), “Travels in the Great Western Prairies, the Anahuac and Rocky Mountains, and in the Oregon Territory,” reprinted in Reuben G. Thwaites (1906). *Travels in the Far Northwest, 1839-1846*, vol. 1 (Cleveland, Ohio: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1906), 157-158. Peter Grant's comments on Saulteaux clothing are found in L. R. Masson, *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest: Recits de Voyages, Lettres et Rapports inedits relatifs au Nord-Ouest Canadien* (Quebec: A. Cote et Cie, 1890), 317-318.

Macdonell described the Cree and Assiniboine dressed “all in leather that is a shirt & Leggins, a Buffalo Robe or a Blanket by way of covering the whole.”¹³ Rather than the close-fitting garments constructed from a single large hide wrapped around the body worn in more northern and eastern regions, most garments on the plains were constructed by piecing smaller hides together. This led to more voluminous garments that incorporated the raw edges of the hide as decorative elements. François Laroque left a description of Absaroke or Crow clothing worn in the summer of 1805:

The men weare tight Leggins made of the skin of [a] small deer reaching up to the hips and the end tacked in a belt or girdle, the seam is ornamented with beads, porcupine quills, horse and human hair died with divers colours. Their shirts are made of the same kind of skin and are composed of 3 skins, 2 making the body and one the sleeves. The skins are joint together on the shou[ld]der only & the sleeves also which are left open under the pit of the arm . . . guarnished . . . with the same materials as the leggins, and their shoes are made in the manner of mittens having a seam round the outside of the foot without pleats. Over this part of the dress they wear a Buffaloe Robe on which is painted their war exploits, or garnished with beads and porcupine quills ove[r] the seam The womens dress consists in a pair of leggins reaching to the middle of the thigh & tied with a garter below the knee, they wear no hair in their ornaments, but the seams of their leggins are covered with blue beads . . . Their Leggins are round like stockings and have no fringes as the men’s their shift or Cottillon reaches midleg and lower and are made of Elk skin, but the finer ones are mad[e] of two Cabri or Mountain Ram skins . . . the bottom or lower part is cut out into fringes and garnished with Porcupine. The skins are joined below as high as the Ribs . . . The sleeves are joined to the body of the shift on the shoulders only and encircle the arm from the Elbow to the wrist . . . part of the leather is left to flap down so as to hide the pit of the arm.¹⁴

At Fort Union, almost half a century later, Rudolph Kurz observed Absaroke women wearing “full dress shirts or smocks” trimmed with elk teeth and Cree and Saulteaux women wearing strap dresses. He described the Cree wearing “their ancient and original dress almost entire.”¹⁵

¹³John Macdonell’s “The Red River”. *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains: Canadian Traders Among the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians, 1738-1818*, ed. W. Raymond Wood and Thomas D. Thiessen (Tulsa: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 88.

¹⁴François-Antoine Larocque’s “Yellowstone Journal”. *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains*, 215-216.

¹⁵*Journal of Rudolph Friederich Kurz*, 156 and 153.

The Emergence of Hybrid Dress

One of the first garments to become imbued with new meaning in the interactive zones was the coat. It is difficult to know which mercantile project initiated the practice of presenting coats as diplomatic gifts, but by 1684 the Hudson's Bay Company's outward shipment included sixteen presentation coats, accessorized with hats, belts and swords.¹⁶ These coats were trimmed with ornamental gilt braid in the military fashion. The terms captain and lieutenant came into common use for leading men of trading and contracted hunting parties, and coats were presented with varying degrees of pomp and circumstance. The volume of coats and regimental gear required to cement economic relationships, and their popularity as an item of trade, were the main reasons the company began to hire tailors. In 1706, the London Committee informed Anthony Beale at Albany that instead of the coats he had ordered, they were sending "Cloth, with buttons & thread flannell for Edging & a Taylor to make them, hoping you will keep him close to his worke in the winter."¹⁷

Other imported garments were incorporated into the repertoire of dress. Based on his extensive travels, Thomas Nuttall credited "the Canadian French" with introducing handkerchiefs tied around the head and the "habit of wearing printed calicoe shirts next to the skin."¹⁸ Yard goods and blankets replaced hide, although garments tended to hold the "memory of hide" in their basic cut and construction.¹⁹ Kurz noted that Hidatsa women wore "their traditional shirt of deerskin or of blue and white striped ticking or some other cloth made according to their ancient

¹⁶E. E. Rich, ed., *Minutes of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1679 – 1684* (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1946), 292 – 293.

¹⁷Laced coats referred to the gilt braid used for trim. Glyndwr Williams, ed., *Hudson's Bay Miscellany, 1670 – 1870* (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1975), 67.

¹⁸Nuttall, *Travels into the Arkansas Territory*, 99.

¹⁹A garment originally constructed from animal skins often echoes that history in the cut and shape of the garment, simply replacing hide with cloth. See Dorothy Burnham, *Cut My Cote* (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1973), 20

style.”²⁰ However, the discourse of dress was not a one-way conversation. Indigenous people were not passive recipients of introduced goods; they exerted pressure through market demand and brought their own clothing traditions into the dialogue.

The requirements of clothing production for both trade and survival brought European men and local women together, and through their shared activity, created an interactive zone where sewing techniques and materials were exchanged. Hudson’s Bay Company employees adopted elements of regional Cree dress and women assisted in the creation of “Indian clothing”. In 1743 James Isham described “English Dress in these Norther’n parts . . . not unbecomming to us in this part of the world, -- Which is a Beaver Coate or tockey which Reaches to the Calf of the Leg.”²¹ Articles of indigenous dress were often more affordable, readily available and better suited to the climate and extremes in temperature. This was particularly important during winter and for people whose occupations required travel. A long straight-cut painted hide coat called a “toggey” by fur traders, was often trimmed with elaborate porcupine quillwork (plate 2). James Isham’s Cree vocabulary listed “muska togy” as the original word for “tockey.”²² It became an essential form of winter clothing worn well into the nineteenth century at northern posts. Samuel Hearne stated in his 1774 journal that he had given “each of the People a Dresst Moose Skin to make them a Toggey for the Winter.”²³ In 1821 Nicholas Garry recorded the contents of several cases of “Curiosities” shipped home to England, which included two garments, each described as a “painted leather Toggy with Porcupine Epaulets and trimmed with Otter skin.”²⁴ Ballantyne, writing in 1848, described it as “the usual costume of the Cree Indians: a large leathern coat, very

²⁰*Journal of Rudolph Friederich Kurz*, 88.

²¹*Observations on Hudson’s Bay*, 117.

²²Of Cloaths and Things Carried Abt. One &C, *Observations on Hudson’s Bay*, 14.

²³E. E. Rich, ed., *Cumberland House Journals and Inland Journal, 1775-82* (London: The Hudson’s Bay Record Society, 1951), 205n.

²⁴Nicholas Garry, *Diary of Nicholas Garry, Deputy-Governor of the Hudson’s Bay Company from 1822-1835*. (Toronto: Royal Society of Canada, 1900), 137.

much overlapped in front.”²⁵ David Thompson noted other elements of indigenous dress in a journal kept in 1798 while on a trading expedition: “Yesterday I got a close [?] Jacket of Buffalo made for me & today a pair of Shoes of do [ditto] from Hugh.”²⁶

At Fort Alexandria on the upper Assiniboine river, a mingling of Saulteaux, Iroquois, Metis, French Canadian and Scottish tastes, combined with access to trade goods had resulted, by 1800, in garment forms such as “Deer skin trowsers” and a recognizable visual identity constructed of borrowed elements. Nor’wester James King was alarmed when he wrote to Archibald McLeod that he had seen a party of Assinibone who had in their possession:

fifteen Horses & all saddled with saddles made by our people. among the Saddles were one with Iron Stirrups, they moreover had 2 fine white shirts, a fine Cloth Coat, & 2 womens hoods garnished with Ribbons . . . Mr. King . . . is very apprehensive they have kill’d some of our Gentlemen who might have been removing from one Fort to another.²⁷

The visual elements that McLeod associated with “our people” -- a distinct, but unspecified form of saddle, cloth garments and women’s hoods made from trade goods -- served to distinguish members of a fur trading collective from the people they did business with.

If clothing choices and merging styles were influenced by proximity to both indigenous materials and trade goods, the pragmatic factors of availability and function were no less important. Clothing was sometimes scarce, and the supplies traders had on hand limited the choice of imported goods. Hudson’s Bay Company traders at Edmonton and Buckingham House during the winter of 1795-1796 exchanged complaints regarding the scarcity of clothing. William Tomison had limited goods available to construct captain’s outfits and “not a bit of Duffle of any

²⁵Robert M. Ballantyne, *Hudson’s Bay, or, Everyday life in the wilds of North America* (London: W. Blackwood, 1848) 59.

²⁶“David Thompson’s Journal,” *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains*, 120.

²⁷The horses and goods were sighted by James King at Fort des Prairie. “The Diary of Archibald N. McLeod,” *Five Fur Traders of the Northwest*, ed., by Charles M. Gates (Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society, 1965), 133, 143; François LaRocque’s 1805 Yellowstone journal noted a saddle “such as the Canadians make in the N.W Country,” *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains*, 213.

kind . . . only 19 yards of red Baize, not one small blanket.” However, he sent James Spence “six Captain coats, twelve small for boys . . . two white shirts and four checkered which is more than I can spare. I will be obliged to make the Cotton into shirts.”²⁸ The Edmonton post journal of February 25, 1796 noted, “W. Swain arrived . . . to get clothing made being almost naked as we all are for want of another Taylor.” Mr. Swain’s clothing problems were relieved by March 5 when the resident tailor was noted “making cloathing for Mr. Swain of the best cut fine wool.”²⁹

In spite of fluctuating supply, people affiliated with a post through family ties, trade or employment had greater access to imported goods. Children enjoyed the privilege of a company tailor if one was available. Peter Fidler’s Buckingham House journal for November, 1796 noted the manufacture of clothing for the children of the post. “Taylor making a small coat for Ja. Gaddy’s Boy”, “Taylor finished the little Coat” and “Taylor making clothing for the late James Spence’s Children.”³⁰ In 1820 Lieutenant Robert Hood made watercolour sketches of three children at Cumberland House with the caption, *Likenesses of Bois Brulés*.³¹ The cloth dresses with white lace at the neck worn by Quatoo and Atatoo, two girls of almost identical appearance, and the tailored cloth coat or jacket, white shirt and black silk cravat worn by Sasasis illustrate the impact of their proximity to the post. Similarly, *Toutout, one of Mr. Dease’s Children* painted in 1826 by George Back, shows a blonde child wearing a dark blue garment with a curving neckline trimmed with black, and a red and white patterned scarf worn around the shoulders with a white cravat or handkerchief.³² Father Joseph Provencher went so far as to suggest that fur trade companies made “their men take women, and so give them a chance to spend their earnings by

²⁸Edmonton Country Correspondence, Edmonton Post Journal, November, 1795, B.60/a/1, fo. 4, 8, HBCA.

²⁹Edmonton Post Journal entry for February 25, 1796, B.60/a/6 fo. 48, HBCA.

³⁰Buckingham House Journal, November 11-23, 1796, B.49/1/27, HBCA.

³¹Lieut. Robert Hood of the 1819-1820 Franklin Expedition, “Sketches of Métis children,” NA-132-4, GAI.

³²George Back (1826). *Toutout, one of Mr. Dease’s Children*. From the sketchbook “Views in the McKenzies River and Along the Coast to the Westward.” Accession No. 1921-3-1.3. NAC.

buying clothing at high prices in order to dress their wives and children.”³³

At York Factory, Thomas McKeever observed the impact of new ideas on social practice and clothing. By 1812, Cree women at the post had embraced the notion that Sunday was a special day and dressed accordingly.

On Sunday, in place of the blanket, they wear a piece of green or scarlet cloth, made into the form of a mantle, and thrown carelessly over the shoulders; it is in general very handsomely embroidered with various ribbons, particularly green and yellow; under this they wear a cloth dress, not unlike a European riding-habit. When going abroad, they wear a black beaver hat, ornamented with feathers and bands of various-coloured ribbons. On the entire, an Indian woman in her Sunday dress, has a very pretty and interesting appearance.³⁴

The fine cloth and ribbon Sunday-best worn by the ladies of York Factory illustrate the importance of both access to trade goods and inventiveness. Creativity, play and experimentation in the interactive zones combined new and old elements of fashion. Garments that would later become emblematic of Métis identity emerged in similar *métis* spaces: the fingerwoven sash, the capote and leggings or les mitasse.

The Fingerwoven Sash

The origins of the fingerwoven sash are hazy. While similar garment types existed in the both indigenous and European dress traditions, there is no evidence of the application of North American finger-weaving techniques to belt production before the interactive or contact period. However, by the late eighteenth century, fingerwoven sashes were being manufactured, traded and worn by several different groups. In 1819, Thomas Nuttall observed the Osage, Cherokee and others taking “pains to unravel old blankets and cloth, and reweave the yarn into belts and garters. This weaving is no modern invention of the Indians.”³⁵ A sash collected around 1780 in

³³Father Provencher to Bishop Plessis, Red River, September 13, 1818. *Documents Relating to Northwest Missions*, 158.

³⁴*A Voyage to Hudson's Bay*, 52.

³⁵Nuttall referred to De Soto and Du Pratz's earlier observations of woven garments made of plant “lint” in Florida and Louisiana. *A Journal of Travels into the Arkansas Territory*, 216.

the eastern Great Lakes by Sir John Caldwell is now in the Speyer collection at the Canadian Museum of Civilization. It is woven primarily from unraveled trade cloth with blue linen thread strung with white beads woven every tenth strand to create a pattern of interlocking diamonds.”³⁶ Trade goods simply replaced the original materials of quill and natural fibres that were used to make long belts. James Isham described Cree belts “4 foot long and 4 inches wide.”³⁷ These were manufactured on bow-looms made of willow and birch bark, but the functions served by the long belt were to continue with the fingerwoven sash.

In winter when [men] travel the outer garment is tucked up above the knees, by a belt which is sometimes only a leather thong; at others they use a belt three inches broad and neatly worked with porcupine quills; upon this is hung the hatchet and a small bag called Skippertoggin which contains utensils for smoking a pipe and kindling a fire.³⁸

Applying fingerweaving to the construction of belts was probably a new idea. The likely predecessor to the fingerwoven sash was the netted sash of which there are several early eighteenth century examples, including one in the collection of the National Museum of Ireland made from netted plant fibres (plate 1). The densely woven surface has a black and yellow lightning design on a red field. Another early sash in the British Museum is made of dark brown worsted netted in an open pattern with regular intervals of porcupine quill wrapping (1).³⁹

Barbeau speculated that the garter may have been first site of fingerweaving.⁴⁰ One pair of fingerwoven garter pendants collected at Michilimackinac by De Peyster between 1775 and 1779 combined wool, vegetable fibres, porcupine quill, beads and deer hair (plate 1).⁴¹ The

³⁶III-X-230. Speyer Collection. CMC. This sash is discussed in Ted J. Brassler, *Bo'jou Neejeel: Profiles of Canadian Indian Art* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1976), 122 and Dorothy K. Burnham, *The Comfortable Arts*. (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1981), 37.

³⁷James Isham (1742-1743). *Observations on Hudson's Bay*. E.2/1, f.69. Search File: Sashes, HBCA.

³⁸James Isham, *Observations on Hudson's Bay*, E2/12, p. 244. Search File: Sashes, HBCA.

³⁹Netted sash made of plant fibres (Sash L: 91.4 cm. W: 5.1 cm. Fringe L. 5.4 c.m.) N.N. 458, NMI.

Netted sash made of dark brown worsted and porcupine quillwork. (L. 122 c.m. W. 10 c.m.) 2643 BM.

⁴⁰Marius Barbeau, *Assomption Sash* (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1972), 14.

⁴¹Arent Schuyler de Peyster was British commandant at Michilimackinac between 1775 and 1779. Pair of garter pendants, 1880.1889 and 1901, NMI.

length of worsted strands may have been the stimulus for adoption. With the exception of lengths of sinew, rawhide and plant fibre, most indigenous techniques involved the frequent, time consuming splicing of short tufts of hair or quills. Early basket-weave sashes evolved from twining and braiding techniques previously applied to mats, containers and bags; substituting lengths of unraveled wool for hemp twine.⁴² Indigenous elements such as quill-wrapped fringe and deer hair tassels can be found on the earliest garters and sashes.⁴³ There were colour variations and design elements created by incorporating beads and through negative space.

The woolen sash and garter forms probably moved back and forth between indigenous and European hands. An elderly French-Canadian artisan told Marius Barbeau “in the old days long ago, her people had first learned how to weave sashes from the Algonkin Indians of Ruisseau-du-Nord.”⁴⁴ Pehr Kalm commented in 1749:

Chose curieuse! tandis que beaucoup de nations imitent les coutumes françaises, je remarque, qu’ici, ce sont les Français qui, à maints égards suivent les coutumes des Indiens, avec lesquels ils ont des rapports journaliers. Ils fument, dans des pipes indiennes, un tabac préparé à l’indienne . . . et portent jarretières et ceintures comme les Indiens . . . ils s’enveloppent les pieds avec des morceaux d’étoffe carrés au lieu de bas et ont adopté beaucoup d’autre façons indiennes.⁴⁵

The reverse of the typical French influence on fashion observed by Kalm, particularly “wearing garters and sashes like the Indians” described the emergence of a form of hybrid dress common to both groups. Sashes or belts noted as ceintures or sanctures can be found in Quebec clothing inventories and trade accounts by the late seventeenth century. However, while the term *ceinture*

⁴²Sweet grass and ash splints were used to manufacture baskets, while bullrush leaves and a fine twine manufactured from dogbane or Indian hemp was woven or braided into tumplines, bags and mats. Kalm observed women in 1749 making thread without a spinning wheel or spindle, by rolling hemp fibres on their bare thigh. Pehr Kalm, *Voyage dans L’Amerique du Nord*, ed. L. W. Marchand (Montreal: Memoire de la Societe historique de Montreal, 1880), 110.

⁴³Other early examples from the Great Lakes include (1972 AM 13.15) garters collected by Jeffrey Barow Amherst between 1758 and 1763, (1956.665), British Museum; early 19th century garters collected by Jasper Grant (1902:34 and 315); garters with netted quillwork (1880:1899 and 1901), National Museum of Ireland; two sashes with quillwork (1956.665 and 1894.415), Royal Scottish Museum.

⁴⁴*Assomption Sash*, 20.

⁴⁵Kalm, *Voyage dans L’Amerique du Nord*, 193.

is most often associated with the fingerwoven sash, it translates simply as belt and neither style or construction technique can be inferred from early references. In 1689, “1 sancture” was included in a list of purchases made by Michel Pelletier dit Antaya of Illinois on his mother’s account.⁴⁶

Documents such as the 1711 inventory of items belonging to Louis Durand, a voyageur of French and Huron ancestry, included a sash.⁴⁷ In 1801, the actions of an engagé working at Fort Alexandria on the upper Assiniboine River, identified by Archibald McLeod only as “Cadotte,” expressed the social and economic value of a *ceinture*.

one of [the young men] stole a Ceinture of Cadottes, which he missed not until they had been off near two hours, he took his Gun & Snow Shoes with an intention of persuing them all day but he overtook them before noon, & threatened to shoot one of them if he Did not tell him which of them had stolen the Belt, they restored the Sash & proceeded quietly on their journey.⁴⁸

While sashes and garters of indigenous manufacture can be found with arrow, lightning, diamond and chevron designs; the earliest *ceintures-fléchés* are associated with dress *à la Canadien* and probably emerged in the Quebec weaving villages.⁴⁹ L’Assomption and St. Jacques de L’Achigan became centres of production for the sash form that is the most recognizable today. The red *coeur* or heart at the centre of each *ceinture fleché* is its most distinctive design element.

The North West Company may have been the first to supply yarn for the indigenous manufacture of sashes. The company also commissioned sashes for both an indigenous market and their own employees, stimulating the development of creative centres of production.

Between 1804 and 1820, North West Company inventories offered an increasing variety of

⁴⁶ Statement of Account for Illinois Trade. *The French Foundations, 1680-1693*. (1934). Illinois Historical Collections, vol. 23 (Springfield: Illinois Historical Society), p. 173.

⁴⁷ The sash was part of an outfit, “un Capot a veste Et une Cinture Estime vingt cinq Livres” in the inventory made of Louis Durand’s possessions on August 11, 1711. Durand, *Jean Durand*, 277.

⁴⁸ The Diary of Archibald N. McLeod. *Five Fur Traders of the North West*, 159.

⁴⁹ Sashes collected by Jasper Grant in the Great Lakes between 1800 and 1809 include a red sash with a lightning design worked in white beads (L. 70.5 cm. W. 9 cm., Fringe 85 cm.) 1902.311; an armband in a tri-colour chevron (L. 31 cm. W. 5.9 cm. Fringe 17 cm.) 1902.312; and a multiple arrow design outlined in white beads (L. 95 cm. W. 17 cm., Fringe 55 cm.) 1902.514, NMI.

worsted belts: common, fine, North West, scarlet, fine scarlet, scarlet and crimson North West.⁵⁰

In 1821, a range of the company's sashes were identified as "part of Athabasca men's equipment", a rare occurrence. During the same period ten pounds of crimson and scarlet worsted, eighty-five pounds of worsted in assorted colours and white beads (nine pounds and twenty-two "masses") for the manufacture of sashes were sent to Lac des Deux Montagnes, a Catholic mission established in 1718 which attracted a population of Mohawks, Algonquins and Nipissings. Whether these supplies were for the production of commissioned sashes or responding to a demand for raw materials is not evident in the records.

Figure 3.1: Sashes in North West Company Accounts⁵¹

| Outfit | Volume | Manufacturer | Destination |
|--------|------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| 1799 | 96 worsted sashes | Notary at l'Assumption | |
| 1800 | 24 ceinture fléché | Trudeau | Grand Portage |
| | 72 ceintures a fléché | | Poste de Barriere |
| 1801 | 30 ceintures | James Dunlop | |
| 1802 | 13 ceintures (various sizes) | F. Venance | |
| | 6 worsted | F. Venance | |
| 1803 | 53 ceintures (à flamme) | L. Venance | |
| | 3 ditto a fleche | | |
| 1804 | 19 fine Ceintures | L. Venance | |
| | 12 worsted belts | | June canoes |
| | 10 worsted belts | | Athabasca |
| | 6 worsted belts | | Fort Desprairies |
| | 6 ceintures | | Lac la Pluie |
| | 70 fine worsted belts | | Grand Portage |
| | 46 common | | " |
| | 15 broad worsted belts | | " |
| | 5 narrow fine | | |

Sashes appear only occasionally in the inventories of the American Fur Company, and not until the mid-nineteenth century. They do not appear in Hudson's Bay Company inventories until 1818.⁵² However, John McKay, writing in 1796 from his Hudson's Bay Company post on

⁵⁰ Barbeau, Extract from a Survey of Accounts, 18.

⁵¹Data gathered from accounts listed in Marius Barbeau (1939) "Extract from a Survey of the North West Accounts in the Archives of Quebec," HBCA.

the Rainy River, requested “worsted of colours to make sashes of, the latter I have got a sample of from my Neighbour.”⁵³ The sample that accompanied McKay’s order was provided by Peter Grant from the North West Company post. McKay’s insertion of a sample from the opposition suggests that the recipient of the order would be unfamiliar with the item. This early request for worsted and an 1805 watercolour showing a man in the vicinity of James Bay wearing a white capote with narrow sash are indications that while the Hudson’s Bay Company did not import sashes, the people living and trading at their posts were familiar with them as elements of dress.⁵⁴

Following the merger with the North West Company, the Hudson’s Bay Company not only acquired their stock of sashes, but continued to commission sashes for a growing market. Female artisans interviewed by Barbeau identified a Monsieur Belanger as a prominent local producer who “had been brought up among the Indians . . . traded with the Indians; his sashes were known locally as “les ceintures de M. Bélanger.”⁵⁵ The dates of Bélanger’s influence on sash production were remembered as 1830 to 1850, possibly the same “Boulanger” who supplied sashes to the Hudson’s Bay Company during the same period.

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| 20th December, 1848 | Paid Salomon Boulanger for 101 Assomption Belts bought from him this day |
| 16th November, 1849 | Paid Solomon Boulanger 67 large N. W. Belts @ 10/6 d each 50 smaller “ @ 9/6 |
| 5th October, 1852 | Paid Solomon Boulanger 114 L’Assomption Belts @ 10/ each 174 “ @ 9/6 ⁵⁶ |

⁵²The Hudson’s Bay Company’s first shipment of 172 sashes in four sizes was sent to James Bird at Jack River from the company’s Montreal agents in 1818. B.134/d/15, folio 10, Search File: Sashes, HBCA.

⁵³John McKay correspondence, Rainy River, Oct. 8, 1796 (B.105/a/4), Search File: Sashes, HBCA.

⁵⁴The sash appears to be fingerwoven with a diagonal stripe in alternating colours and fringe. William Richards c. 1805, *A Man and his Wife Returning with a Load of Partridges from their Tent*, HBCA.

⁵⁵*Assomption Sash*, 32.

⁵⁶York Factory Scheme Indent Books, B.134/d/35-37; L’Assomption Sashes or Belts, p. 2, Search File - Sashes, HBCA.

L'Assomption and St. Jacques de L'Achigan continued to specialize in the manufacture of ceintures fléchés, surviving as a cottage industry into the late nineteenth century. Competition with machine woven sashes imported from England by the Hudson's Bay Company meant that women who worked for long hours on a single sash often did so for as little as fifteen to thirty cents a day.⁵⁷ Lower priced imports began to push the handmade L'Assomption Belts off the market. The 1857 indent of supplies from England for the Athabasca district listed sixty "Canadian L'Assomption Belts" along with forty "English L'Assomption Belts". By the following decade the greater proportion of sashes on inventory were made in Britain. The 1869 Swan River Outfit listed 246 sashes identified as "colored worsted" and "Scarlet worsted" in widths of two, four and six inches; with only 110 "L'Assomption Broad and Narrow" sashes with the margin notation "Canada."⁵⁸ In 1863, the textile company L. Block and Sons supplied fifty coloured and scarlet sashes in standard widths for the Saskatchewan district.⁵⁹

By the mid-nineteenth century the creation, marketing and display of sashes as a significant part of dress crossed ethnic and occupational lines. They continued to be an important accessory among the Huron, Mohawk, Potawatomi, Cherokee and Osage. Huron and Mohawk chiefs wore sashes across the chest, while Potawatomi men wrapped them into a turban. Sashes worn by fur traders and voyageurs emerged as a critical element of a collective visual identity. Alexander Ross commented on the similarity of Métis and Canadian dress at the Red River Settlement, "a common blue capote, red belt and corduroy trousers [is] the universal costume of both . . . the belt being the simple badge of distinction; the former wearing it generally over, and

⁵⁷Low prices, conflicts over methods of payment and competition resulted in demise of the craft. *Assomption Sash*, 32-33.

⁵⁸Indent for Supplies from England for the trade of Athabasca District, Fort Chipewyan Miscellaneous Post Records, B.39/z/1, fo. 134; Indent for Sundry Goods from York Factory for the Trade of Swan River District for Outfit 1869, Fort Pelly Miscellaneous Post Records, B.159/z/1, fo. 9, HBCA.

⁵⁹Invoice of Merchandise Shipped by the Hudson's Bay Company on board the Tura . . . for Montreal . . . for the Trade of the Saskatchewan District, Suppliers 1863, Fort Edmonton Miscellaneous Post Records, B.60/z/1, fo. 59, HBCA.

the latter generally under the capote.”⁶⁰ These overlapping clothing traditions were further complicated by the fact that most groups who wore the sash as an important element of dress continued to produce finger woven sashes, while simultaneously purchasing imported sashes.

The Capote

Like the term *ceinture*, the early use of the word *capote* is somewhat ambiguous. It was a generic term for a number of coat forms, not only the simple hooded garment most often associated with the word. The earliest capote was a hooded cape, but the term was also applied to hooded garments worn by priests.⁶¹ Two early references to garments in the possession of Michel Pelletier dit Antaya and Louis Durand position the *ceinture* or sash as an essential accessory to the capote.⁶² Madame Antaya’s 1688 accounts for the Illinois trade included both capotes and fabric to manufacture capotes.

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 19 au 1/2 Serge à Capot | @ 4 livres, 5 sols |
| 18 au 1/2 étoffe à Capot Rouge | @ 4 livres, 5 sols |
| 10 Capotes bleus | @ 8 livres, 10 sols |
| 3 capotes | @ 3 livres ⁶³ |

A 1702 invoice for goods for the Jesuit’s Illinois mission included a request for “6 blue capotes (large, medium, small) and 6 ells of stuff for capotes to make Breech clouts.”⁶⁴ The 1748 estate

⁶⁰Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement, its Rise, Progress and Present State* (1856; repr. Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1972), 190.

⁶¹The term ‘capote’ originally referred to a voluminous over-garment with a large hood that covered the head and face. Pat Tomczyszyn, “A Sampling of Garments Worn in New France. *Le Costume Traditionnel: A Study of Clothing and Textiles in the Town of Quebec 1635-1760*. (Master of Science Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1999). See also Patrick Folkes and Nancy Penny, *Cassocks, Doublets, and Deerskins: Religious and secular costume on the mission frontier of New France in the first half of the seventeenth century* (Midland, Ontario: Friends of St. Marie, 1988), 44.

⁶²17 Juillet 1689 Michel doit 1 grand Capote, 2 cravatt, 1 sancture”, Statement of Account for Illinois Trade, 173; “Un Capot a veste Et une Cinture Estime” from the inventory of Louis Durand’s possessions on August 11, 1711. *Jean Durand*, 277.

⁶³Madame Antaya was Marguerite-Madeleine Morisseau, wife of Francois Pelletier. Statement of Account for Illinois Trade, 162-177.

⁶⁴Invoice for the Illinois Missions. March 5, 1702, *Jesuit Relations* vol. LXVI, 30.

inventory of Marie Baron of Kaskaskia included three capotes. One was plain, noted only as “capote” while two were made of cadiz, one being “adorned with silver lace” valued with its matching “waistcoat of red camelot adorned with silver lace and silver buttons” at 60 livres.⁶⁵

The capote developed into two forms: a straight-cut garment made of blankets that wrapped around the body and a tailored garment made from yard goods (plate 2). By the mid eighteenth century, the term capote assumed the presence of an attached hood. By 1810 the tailored capote had acquired “a long-skirted frock” and by 1816, “a waist, a close fit, a Prussian collar . . . a full skirt hanging vertically in the front, the back with a vent, side pleats and hip-buttons.”⁶⁶ In 1817 Thomas Nuttall described men’s dress in French-speaking communities along the Arkansas and Missouri rivers as “blanket capeaus, buckskin pantaloons, and mockasins”, noting that “blanket capeaus . . . are here, as in Canada, the prevailing dress.”⁶⁷ The term capote was occasionally applied to leather garments. In 1802 Alexander Henry the Younger described a man who “offered me his services” asking for nothing “but dressed leather to make a shirt, capot and trousers, all the year round and a little tobacco.” John Tanner credited a “thick moose skin capote” with a hood with saving his life. In 1879, Robert Ballantyne described a cloth capote as “summer dress”, which in winter was “laid aside for one of smoked red-deer skin . . . lined with flannel . . . edged with fur.”⁶⁸

⁶⁵Catherine Baron’s Estate Inventory, Kaskaskia Manuscripts--Private Papers, Illinois Historical Society.

⁶⁶A la Canadienne, 73.

⁶⁷*A Journal of Travels into the Arkansas Territory*, 56, 86.

⁶⁸Alexander Henry, *The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry: Fur Trader of the North West Company, 1799-1804*. (Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, 1897), 206. Tanner credited the heavy hide of his hood for protecting his head from a tomahawk blow. John Tanner, *A Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner* (New York: G. C. & H. Cariveli, 1830), 236; Robert Ballantyne, *Hudson Bay*, 68.

Figure 3.2: Variety and Volume of Capotes from Sample Inventories⁶⁹

| | NWC | HBC | HBC | HBC | AMC | AMC | HBC | HBC |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------|----------|----------|-----------|---------|
| | General | Sault St. | Moose | Fort | Upper | Rocky | Athabasca | Swan |
| TYPE | Accounts | Marie | Factory | William | Missouri | Mountain | | River |
| | 1799-1820 | 1818-26 | 1825 | 1828-29 | 1831 | 1836-37 | 1857 | 1869-70 |
| Generic | X | | | | | | | |
| Blanketing | | | | | | | | 174 |
| Blanket | X | X | | | | 57 | 145 | |
| Blue | | | | | | 30 | | |
| Green | | | | | | 41 | | |
| White/col'd | | | | | | 6 | | |
| White | | | | | | 3 | | |
| Cloth | X | | | | | | | |
| Blue | | X | 140 | X | | | | |
| Blue & grey | | | | | 60 | 20 | | |
| Blue, caped | | | 400 | | | | | |
| Grey | | | | | | | | 30 |
| Grey Mixed | | | | | | | 82 | 361 |
| White | | | 60 | X | | | | |
| Duffle | | | | | | | | |
| Black | | | | | | | | 30 |
| Grey | | | | | | | | 23 |
| White | | | | | | | | 23 |
| Fine Cloth | | X | | | | | | |
| Blue | | | | | | | 80 | 179 |
| Indian | | | | | | | | |
| Blue | | | | | | | | 116 |
| White | | | | | | | 645 | 529 |
| Illinois | | | 100 | X | | | | |
| Blue | 300 | | | | | | | |
| Laced | 30 | | | | | | | |
| Molton | X | | 200 | X | | | | |
| Total | NA | NA | 900 | NA | 60 | 56 | 952 | 1465 |

X signifies garment is present, but no quantities listed

North West Company records document a steadily increasing volume of manufactured capotes of various styles, ranging from "30 Laced capotes" purchased in 1802, to an order in

⁶⁹Data sources: North West Company: Barbeau, Survey of North West Company Accounts. Hudson's Bay Company: 1825 Moose Factory Accounts (B.135/d/121), Sault Ste. Marie Miscellaneous Post Records (B.194/z/), Indent for supplies from England for the trade of Athabasca District Outfit 1857. Fort Chipewyan Miscellaneous Post Records (B.39/1/1), Indent for Swan River District for Outfit 1869 and Outfit 1870, Fort Pelly Miscellaneous Post Records (B.159/z/1). HBCA. Accounts 1828 - 1829. Roderick MacKenzie Papers. Fort William Collection. MG1 C1, AM. American Fur Company: Invoice for Sundry Mdse. Shipped on board of the Steam Boat Yellow Stone for the trade of the Upper Missouri Outfit 1831. P. Chouteau Maffit Collection. Invoice of Sundry Merchandise furnished Rocky Mountain Outfit 1837 under charge of Fontanelle, Fitzpatrick & Co. Papers of the St. Louis Fur Trade. Missouri Historical Society.

1820 for “300 blue Illinois capotes.”⁷⁰ By 1825, the Moose Factory account book noted nine hundred “capots” in various sizes and styles.⁷¹ The most popular colour seems to have been blue, although a significant trade was done in white capotes, which were also known as hunting capotes for their usefulness as camouflage in winter hunting. In 1834, John Kirk Townsend’s party purchased “enormous overcoats, made of green blankets” from a store at St. Louis with other articles required for their trip to the Rocky Mountains.⁷²

Isaac Cowie, on his arrival at York Factory in 1867, described the use of capotes to create a visual identity based on occupation. “It appeared that the approved uniform for clerks . . . was a greyish blue cloth “Illinois” capote with silverplated buttons, and a broad scarlet worsted sash . . . the fresh faced Highland . . . recruits could always be distinguished by the white blanketing capotes . . . their regulation costume.”⁷³ Capotes were considered essential garments for the purposes of travel, adventure or occupations related to the fur trade. They were observed throughout North America, but the greatest volume of manufactured capotes was shipped into the trading territories of the North West and Hudson’s Bay companies.

Les Mitasse

Unlike the cloudy history of the ceinture and capote, “les mitasse” or leggings were a straight-forward French adaptation from indigenous clothing traditions. The term mitasse, according to Thwaites, was derived from the Algonquin word for “leggings worn by Indians and hunters in the winter.”⁷⁴ Cuoq’s 1886 *Lexique de la Langue Algonquine* states that the

⁷⁰The term ‘Laced’ referred to the use of ornamental metallic braid. Extract from a Survey of the Archives of the Seminary of Quebec, pp. 4, 17.

⁷¹1825 Moose Factory Account Books, B.135/d/121, HBCA.

⁷²John Kirk Townsend, *Narrative of a Journey Across the Rocky Mountains to the Columbia River* (1839; repr. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), 11.

⁷³Cowie, *Company of Adventurers*, 116-119.

⁷⁴Thwaites, note 9 of *Jesuit Relations*, vol. LXVII, 334. Clapin defined mitasse as “guetre en peau de chevreuil ou en drap, ornee de dessins de rassades ou de poil d’original de differentes couleurs.” Gaiter

Algonquin term mitas “est passe dans le francais, on dit une pair de mitasses.”⁷⁵ The phrase “pair de mitasse” is mentioned throughout the Jesuit Relations as a common item of trade, barter and diplomacy. Michel Begon presented “a Blanket, a Shirt, A pair of Mitasses, and some Tobacco, Powder, and Lead” as diplomatic gifts to five Iroquois men in 1721. The 1748 Book of Accounts for the Illinois Mission records the frequent use of “pairs of mitasse” along with other goods as items of exchange and payment for labour and services.⁷⁶ However, the garment form did not remain unchanged. Cloth became a preferred material for constructing “mitas” and by 1735; Luc Francois Nau noted the impact of French goods on the dress traditions of the Mohawk at Sault St. Louis, including “les mitasse”:

Over the shirt they usually wear a garment of french fashion, with lace sewed on all the seams. When the weather is cold, or on gala-days they wear a cloth mantle, an ell and a half square, the lower border of which is trimmed with 8 or 9 bands of lace. Their mitasse, that is their Leggings are adorned with ribbons and a variety of flowers embroidered with elk-hair dyed red or yellow. These are made to fit closely, the better to show off the elaborate finish of the work.⁷⁷

Ever quick to respond to market demand, fur traders began to manufacture cloth leggings for trade and diplomatic gifts. A pair of leggings was listed among the gifts given to three men made captain by Alexander Henry the Younger in 1801.⁷⁸ In 1829, a man hired at Fort William “for service at Hay-making” was paid in clothing and dress-related goods that included “1 pr. Scarlet Leggings.”⁷⁹ Even Letitia Hargrave, the Scottish wife of Chief Factor James Hargrave of York Factory, and no admirer of indigenous fashion, wore leggings. She described herself in

of hide or wool, ornamented with designs of beads or moose hair of different colours. Sylva Clapin (1894). *Dictionnaire Canadien-Francais* (Montreal: C. Beauchemin, 1894), 218.

⁷⁵Jean Andre Cuoq, *Lexique de la Langue Algonquine* (Montreal: J. Chapleau, 1886), 233.

⁷⁶In addition to mitasse, trade shirts, beads and blankets were items of exchange. The 1748 Book of Accounts for the Illinois Mission, *Jesuit Relations*, vol. LXX, 35, 42, 49; Michel Begon to Father Sebastien Rale, Quebec, June, 14, 1721; *Jesuit Relations*, vol. LXVII, 59.

⁷⁷Luc Francois Nau to Reverend Father Bonin, Sault St. Louis, October 2, 1735, *Jesuit Relations*, vol. LXVII, 265.

⁷⁸*Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry*, 56.

⁷⁹Accounts 1828-1829. Fort William Collection, p. 65., MG1 C1, AM.

1842 wearing “dark blue cloth leggins . . . [buttoned] to my drawers”. Compared to those worn by other women at the post, her leggings were plain, while “theirs have beads which look much better & don’t fade as mine do.” While she wore her leggings for practical reasons, she commented that, “It is not for the cold they do it, as girls or even ladies don’t wear drawers, merely leggins of cloth embroidered with beads, fastened by a garter under the knee.”⁸⁰ Like the capote and ceinture, les mitasses, called leggings or leggins in English, were widely adopted as garments suited to the environment and an evolving hybrid aesthetic.

Dress in *métis* Spaces

Interactive zones were often transient and always shifting. Settlement and changing economies transformed interactive zones and caused dramatic changes to social relations of interdependence. A region’s former status as an interactive zone frequently became integrated into regional culture through place names, family names, community traditions, language and clothing. In Quebec, “dress à la canadienne” was firmly positioned in the social class occupied by habitants and labourers. It generally took the form of men’s dress and included moccasins, a capote, a red toque and a fingerwoven ceinture. Francis Back’s study of the capot in Quebec clothing inventories between 1650 and 1715 identified a regional preference for blue.⁸¹

Creole dress, particularly daily or working dress, illustrated the diverse cultural influences in the region. In the 1790’s Vital St. Gemme Bauvais of Ste. Genevieve wore “a blue cotton handkerchief on his head, one corner thereof descending behind and partly covering the eel skin which bound his hair; a check shirt; coarse pantaloons on his hips; and the Indian sandal, or moccasin, the only covering to the feet worn by both sexes.”⁸² Creole men wore their hair long

⁸⁰Margaret A. Macleod, *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave*. (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1947), 90.

⁸¹Francis Back (1988), “Le capot canadien: ses origine et son evolution aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles” as cited in Tomczyszyn, *Le Costume Traditionnel*, 54.

⁸²Henry Brakenridge’s descriptions of Creoles at Ste. Genevieve as cited in Carl J. Ekberg, *Colonial Ste.*

and braided. Capotes of various colors and materials were common, worn knee-length, with attached capes or hoods and often accessorized with a sash at the waist. “Les mitaines de ce cuir” and “les mitasse” or leggings were worn during cold weather. Moccasins and leggings were an obvious First Nations adaptation in Creole dress, but the red eel skin ribbon described was first documented in 1662 at the Iroquois mission of Sault Ste. Francois Xavier near Montreal.⁸³

Creole women wore their dresses shorter than was considered modest by most observers and Perrin du Lac was shocked by the appearance of Madame Vallé of Ste. Genevieve during a visit in the late 1790’s. He declared her dress as “grotesque” stating that it was “at odds with the adopted customs of the civilized world.”⁸⁴ Creole women of means wore gold earrings and elaborate fabrics on special occasions, but daily dress generally consisted of “a sleeveless bodice of red and blue material, over a short-sleeved waist of flowered muslin, an ankle-length skirt of scarlet drugget or printed calico, and Indian moccasins.”⁸⁵ Moccasins continued to be common footwear in St. Louis and other communities, worn by prosperous Creole families well into nineteenth century. The wealthy Chouteau family may have worn French fabrics and fashions, but Madame Chouteau’s dress maintained its regional flavor.

Madame Chouteau . . . dressed in the style of the inhabitants and of rich materials. In those days, the materials were of satins and silks and velvets and lace and gorgeously beaded moccasins. Their head dress was remarkably worn like turbans and entwined with ribbon and flowers.⁸⁶

Anna Maria Von Phyl made several watercolour portraits of the residents of St. Louis in 1818 that showed men and women wearing moccasins and other elements of hybrid dress (plate 2).

Genevieve: an Adventure on the Mississippi Frontier. (Tucson: The Patrice Press, 1996), 314.

⁸³Letter of Father Claude Chauchetiere, respecting the Iroquois mission of Sault Ste. Francois Xavier, near Montreal. October 14, 1682. *The Jesuit Relations*, vol. LXII, 185.

⁸⁴Ekberg, *Colonial Ste. Genevieve*, 314-315; Charles van Ravensway, *St. Louis: an Informal History of the City and Its People, 1764 – 1865* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1991), 68– 69.

⁸⁵Ravensway, *St. Louis: an Informal History*, 68-69.

⁸⁶Orral Messmore Robidoux, *Memorial to the Robidoux Brothers: a History of the Robidoux in America* (Kansas City: Smith-Grievies Col, 1924), 48.

The use of cloth and clothing imported by trade, alongside the persistence of indigenous garment forms established forms of hybrid dress. Clothing adaptations did not necessarily reflect conscious alterations to value systems and beliefs. Interaction and familiarity led to gradual changes to dress and material culture, which were often made for practical reasons such as availability, cost and suitability to the environment. The Cree adopted blue stroud and named it *manitouwaggan* or “spirit cloth” because of the physical properties that enabled it to wick moisture and dry without warping or hardening.⁸⁷ Acts of appropriation, play and experimentation led to the development of essential elements of a hybrid repertoire. The sash, capote and leggings are garments whose origins reach back to the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. New constructions of dress that developed in interactive zones, once stabilized and learned by subsequent generations, have endured. It was in the experimental realm, the *métis* space of new possibilities, that items of dress were invented and transformed.

⁸⁷Louis Bird, personal communication, February 19, 2003, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

CHAPTER FOUR

“After the Half Breed Fashion”: Reconstructing Nineteenth Century Métis and Half Breed Dress

All of them have a blue capote with a hood . . . secured round their waist by a military sash; they wear a shirt of calico or painted muslin, mocassins and leather leggings fastened around the leg by garters ornamented with beads etc. The Bois Brules often dispense with a hat; when they have one, it is generally varigated in the Indian manner, with feathers, gilt lace and other tawdry ornaments.¹

While traveling in the Red River region in 1823, William Keating, a young geologist with an American scientific and exploring expedition, observed the clothing worn by a group of Métis men who rode out to meet his party. Journals, narratives and visual records offer only glimpses into the development of a hybrid Métis or Half Breed style, but clusters of imagery and text can be used to partially reconstruct a picture of dress as it evolved during the nineteenth century and stabilized into a style that communicated identity. This was most evident in regions where a distinct Métis or Half Breed identity was shared by large groups of people engaged in collective pursuits, living in common communities. The memories of individuals who lived in those communities, combined with visual and text documents created by observers ranging from explorers, adventurers, artists and soldiers describe clothing, which combined elements from the material repertoires of ancestral heritage, historical occupations and trade goods. These elements created a style of dress, which for a time constructed a visually defined cultural space.

The Great Lakes and the Red River Valley

During his travels, William Keating passed through both the Great Lakes and Red River regions as his expedition was seeking the source of the Red River. The descriptions of clothing left by Keating and other observers, combined with the paintings of Peter Rindisbacher and

¹William Keating, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Source of St. Peter's River, Lake Winnepeek, Lake of the Woods, etc. performed in the Year 1823* (1825; repr. Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, 1959), 39-40.

George Winter, provide a window into the early nineteenth century and allow for some comparisons across regions (plate 3). The paintings and lithographs of Peter Rindisbacher depict Métis dress worn in the Red River region during the 1820s. Between 1837 and 1843, George Winters created portraits of people involved in the treaty making and relocations that transformed the Great Lakes region. He made several sketches and paintings of individuals of mixed European, Miami or Potawatomi descent.²

The people who inhabit the Rindisbacher paintings wore an eclectic ensemble that combined indigenous elements such as moccasins, hide leggings and fine quillwork accessories with tailored broadcloth coats, fine wool shawls and top hats.³ The rich visual display worn by Rindisbacher's "Halfcastes" substantiates comments made by Father Sévère Dumoulin on the relative wealth of the Métis hunting class of the time.

To tell the truth, these hunters [of Pembina] are at the present time the richest ones of the colony; they earn a considerable amount hunting the buffalo, which they sell for six or more dollars at the fort, for four on the drying scaffold, and for three in the field.⁴

The male subjects in Rindisbacher's "A Halfcast with his wife and child" and "A Halfcast with His Two Wives" could be wearing full length leggings or trousers made of hide. The outside seams were edged with fringe, embellished with a quillwork border and quill rosette accents. In "A Gentleman travelling in a Dog Cariole in Hudson's Bay with an Indian Guide," the man running alongside the cariole is shown with his knee-length coat open, illustrating the bare thigh

²In addition to the individuals discussed here, portraits also identified as "half-breeds" by Winters include: Nancy and Pea-walk Robb, Maurie Gosslin, Mary Ann Benache, Louisa and Jim Godfroy.

³Rindisbacher works depicting Métis subjects include: "A Halfcast and His Two Wives" (M. Knoedler & Co.); "A Halfcast with his wife and child" (Winnipeg Art Gallery); "Half Breed Dog Driver from Red River Settlement with an Assumption sash and garters" (National Archives of Canada).

⁴Father Dumoulin to Bishop Plessis. Pembina, January 5, 1819. In Grace Lee Nute, *Documents Relating to Northwest Missions, 1815-1827* (1943, repr. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, Clarence Walworth Alvord Memorial Commission, 1981), 180.

above full-length red cloth leggings with extensive ribbonwork up the outside edge.⁵ The women painted by Rindisbacher were portrayed in profile, covered with shawls or blankets, making it difficult to establish whether the dresses they wore were one-piece garments or skirts with separate bodices or shortgowns. Their skirts were gathered and mid-calf in length. Their blouses had very low necklines and were worn with a scarf or undergarment covering the bosom. With the exception of moccasins, the women were clothed entirely in trade goods: fabric dresses and leggings with ribbonwork trim along the skirt bottom, cuff and outer edge of the legging. One woman wore a point blanket around her waist, while other women were wrapped in large Indian print shawls. Their moccasins had small vamps and cuffs, a floral design visible on one.

A similar cluster of text describes clothing worn by people of mixed ancestry in the Great Lakes region during the same time period. Albert G. Ellis, a surveyor from New York who arrived at Green Bay in 1822, commented on the persistence of hide clothing among the residents he identified as “native settlers.”

Both sexes, for the most part, arrayed themselves in garments procured from the chase; those of the males were almost entirely of deer skin, while the females indulged in a few cotton stuffs obtained from the traders. All wore the moccasin; not a boot or shoe was to be seen among them.⁶

In the winter of 1824, the head of the newly arrived American military organized a Christmas feast at Green Bay to ease relationships with residents. Ellis recalled the eclectic assortment of clothing worn on the occasion:

The variety of costume would have engaged the study of an artist, belles and beaux, men and women, were attired in all the grades of dress, from the highest Parisian down to the buck-skin coats, pants, petticoat, and moccasins of the aborigines. Yet as no one of the *elite* thought himself over-dressed, so, on the other hand, none of the citizens, French or half-breeds, reproached themselves with the least want of etiquette . . . on account of costume.⁷

⁵One in a series of six lithographs published in 1825. *Views in Hudson's Bay* (London: W. Day, 1825).

⁶“Ellis’s Recollections,” *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, vol. 7 (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1908), 219.

⁷Ellis’s Recollections, 263.

Not surprisingly, people who moved between and among different groups manipulated clothing to suit their needs. In 1823, William Keating described Jean Baptiste Richardville (French/Miami), who sometimes “dressed like a trader . . . sometimes assumes the Indian costume, with the exception of the blanket, for which he always substitutes a capote.”⁸

The portraits created by George Winter between 1837 and 1839 provide images of a style of clothing which had been worn in the region for some time. The sketches, paintings and accompanying journal notations document visual distinctions between older men such as Kaw-kaw-kay whose dress he described as “particularly attractive . . . free from [the] tawdry pretensions” or “gaudy trappings” Winters associated with individuals of mixed heritage who lived in closer proximity to traders.⁹ Journal descriptions accompanied by a drawing and painting of Jean Baptiste Brouillete, a Miami interpreter, documented his creative embellishment of the standard “Indian” ensemble:

He was a ‘French halfbreed’ of elegant appearance, very straight and slim . . . His tout ensemble was unique . . . expensively shewey. He wore around his head a rich figured crimson shawl a la turban, with long and flowing ends gracefully falling over the shoulders. Silver ornaments - or clusters of earbobs testified their weight by a partial elongation of the ears . . . He wore a fine frock coat of the latest fashion . . . His ‘pes-mo-kin’, or shirt was white, spotted with a small red figure, overhanging very handsome blue leggings, ‘winged’ with very rich silk ribbons of prismatic hues . . . A handsome red silk sash was thrown gracefully over his left shoulder, and passing over the breast and under the right arm, with clusters of knots, and fringed masses, gave point and style to Brouillete’s tall and majestic figure.¹⁰

Other subjects of Winter’s portraiture were men such as Francis Godfroy, a contemporary of

⁸Keating, *Narrative of an Expedition*, 104-106.

⁹Winter favourably compared the dress of Mis-qua-back and Kaw-kaw-kay which maintained indigenous elements such as hide leggings and feathers. The images and excerpts from Winter’s notes and journals were published in the catalogue of the Winter collection. Sarah E. Cooke and Rachel B. Ramadhyani, *Indians and a Changing Frontier, The Art of George Winter*. (Indianapolis: Tippecanoe County Historical Association, 1993), 68 and 95.

¹⁰*Beau-ri-ette - Miami Indian, 1837 (G0367) and Bouri-ette-Indian Interpreter, (OV3-80)* are in the George Winter Collection of the Tippecanoe County Historical Association, Lafayette, Indiana. *Indians and a Changing Frontier*, 112-113.

Jean Baptiste Richardville.¹¹ Winters also painted Ben-ache, a Potawatomi head man.¹² The Brouillettes, Godfroys and Richardvilles were of mixed ancestry, raised as Miami, while simultaneously maintaining elements of Canadien tradition.¹³ These men stood at the centre of their respective societies, but others, such as Joseph Barron, Luther Naoquat Rice and Joseph Bourassa were in the more intermediary positions of government interpreters.¹⁴ However, despite a continuing identification with their maternal kin, consistent visual distinctions set them apart. No man of mixed ancestry was depicted wearing a blanket and they tended to wear their hair shorter than other Miami and Potawatomi men. Joseph Barron and Francis Godfroy wore their hair in a single braid “à la aborigine – with a large bow of black ribbons dangling” down their backs.¹⁵ All men painted by Winter wore loose shirts or coats of a modified European cut, but the dress of Barron, Ben-ache, Godfroy and Brouillette was an eclectic ensemblage; layering sashes, vests and coats over the long shirt and full leggings with embellished wings which were the primary garments worn by Potawatomi, Miami and other Great Lakes men.¹⁶ Like their male counterparts, the women painted by Winter wore more elaborate variations of a standard outfit consisting of a wrap-around skirt, blouse, shawl, scarf and trade silver jewelry.

These images allow some comparison across regions. There are similarities in the dress portrayed by Rindisbacher and Winter. As Winter commented in his journal, “when the indian assumes the white man’s garb, he always chooses a frock coat. It is an object of beauty to his

¹¹Richardville was the principal civil chief and Godfroy was war chief for the Miami nation. General John Tipton Papers III, The Ohio Valley-Great Lakes Ethnohistory Archives: Miami Collection, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. Portraits of Richardville and Godfroy were included in James Otto Lewis’s *Aboriginal Portfolio, 1835-1836*. (Philadelphia: Lehman and Duval).

¹²*Ben-ache*, G-365 and Plate 11, George Winter Collection.

¹³Winter described the French -Potawatomi and French-Miami as fond of fiddle music. William Brouillette’s portraits are entitled *Bill the Fiddler*. G-419 and G-420. George Winter Collection.

¹⁴*Joseph Barron-Interpreter*, (G-362). *Bourassa, Indian Interpreter 1837*, (G-358). *Noah-quet: Known as Rice the Interpreter, a Half Breed Indian*, (G-373). George Winter Collection.

¹⁵*Indians and a Changing Frontier*, p. 60.

¹⁶*Francis Godfroy, War Chief*, M-63, Plate 24 and Plate 47. *Noah-quet, Known as Rice the Interpreter, a Half Breed Indian Sketched--1837*. G-373. George Winter Collection.

eye.”¹⁷ Both the cut and colour of the knee-length, close-fitting coats worn in the Great Lakes and Red River regions were similar. The sash or ceinture was an important accessory, worn around the waist in the Red River, across the chest in the Great Lakes. Men in both areas wore full-length leggings. Indigo and red were the colours of choice in both regions. In addition to the general adoption of cloth, the most identifiable trend observed and represented in visual documents that linked people of mixed ancestry in the Great Lakes and Red River regions was the extensive use of decorative ribbonwork. The Rindisbacher and Winter subjects, both male and female, adopted elements of European fashion and combined the innovative application of trade goods and the elaboration of indigenous garment forms to create visually distinct dress.

Document Clusters: Oregon and Fort Vancouver

John Dunn, in his history of Oregon territory published in 1844, described the dress worn by the women of Fort Vancouver during his eight year stay in the region:

Many of the officers of the company marry half breed women . . . They are, in general, good housewives; and are remarkably ingenious as needlewomen . . . These half-breed women are of a superior class; being the daughters of chief traders, by Indian women, of a superior descent or of superior personal attractions. Though they generally dress after the English fashion, according as they see it used by the English wives of the superior officers, yet they retain one peculiarity – the leggin or gaiter, which is made (now that the tanned deerskin has been superseded) of the finest, and most gaudy coloured cloth, beautifully ornamented with beads.¹⁸

The half-breed wives of officers, in their turn, influenced the wives of the “lower classes of the company’s servants [chosen] from the tribes of the upper country These, too, imitate, in costume, the dress of the officers’ wives, as much as they can.” According to Dunn, officers’

¹⁷*Indians and a Changing Frontier*, 112.

¹⁸John Dunn, *History of the Oregon Territory and British North America fur trade: with an account of the habits and customs of the principal native tribes on the northern continent* (London: Edward and Hughes, 1844), 147.

wives adopted a “low-quartered shoe”, while local women retained the wrap-around moccasin.¹⁹

One such woman of fashionable influence was Helene McDonald Kittson, described by her stepson as “a very clever woman of Scotch descent. She could speak several languages. Very few women were as skillful as she was in needle work, especially in embroidering leather.”²⁰

Illustrations of the regional dress described by Dunn can be found in the sketches made in 1845 by Henry James Warre, whose drawings of “Grand Ball at Fort Victoria” includes two views of “My Partner at a Grand Ball Given at Fort Victoria” (plate 4). Warre drew women wearing variations of an outfit which included leggings with winged edges, decorated with what appears to be geometric ribbonwork. Gathered skirts that came to the mid-calf, a blouse with full sleeves, apron, scarf or small shawl around the shoulders and necklaces of beads completed the festive wear of the female dancers. Male dress was represented as more varied. One exuberant dancer wore a frock coat, vest, shirt and cravat, while other men wore shirts, scarves and sashes.²¹

Document Clusters: Fort Union and the Missouri River

Text and visual records document a somewhat different regional style along the Missouri River. In 1832 Prince Maximilian of Wied, a European traveler and adventurer, and Karl Bodmer, the artist employed to document the expedition, left St. Louis and traveled up the Missouri River. Maximilian commented on the novelty of the “half Indian costume” worn by American Fur Company engages from Fort Union who provided the pair with protection and

¹⁹*History of the Oregon Territory*, 148.

²⁰Helene McDonald, the daughter of Finan McDonald and Charlotte or Margaret Pend d’Oreille. Her second husband was Richard Grant, making her the stepmother of Johnny Grant. Johnny Grant, *Very Close to Trouble: the Johnny Grant Memoir*, ed. Lyndel Meikle (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1996), 84.

²¹Henry James Warre, *Grand Ball at Fort Victoria* and *My Partner at a Grand Ball Given at Fort Victoria, October 6, 1845*, from the sketchbook “Travels from Cape Disappointment to Fort Victoria, September-October, 1845, Accession No. 1971-86. NAC.

transportation.²² On their arrival at Fort Union he noted the class distinctions expressed by the dress of the inhabitants:

The dress of the white agents of the Company is made of cloth, like our own; but the hunters often wear a leather dress, ornamented, for the most part, in the Indian fashion, while the common engages wear white blanket coats, such as I have described when speaking of the inhabitants of Indiana on the Wabasha. They are mostly shod in Indian mocassins . . . The hunters, here, maintain that these Indian shoes are better adapted to the prairies than our European ones, as they do not become so slippery. They are frequently soled with elk hide, or parchment.²³

In 1837 Alfred Jacob Miller, the travel companion and expedition artist for William Drummond Stewart, did watercolour and pencil studies of Antoine Clement, a “Canadian Half Breed.” Like Maximilian and Bodmer, the two traveled up the Missouri to the fur trade posts along the upper reaches. A comparison between the field sketches and later studio portrait reveal Miller’s transformation of Clement into an idealized great hunter whose features and colouring became progressively more European, although his clothing was drawn with greater consistency.²⁴

Several of the images created along the Missouri River illustrate a regional preference for hide clothing (plate 4). The interpreter painted at Fort Clark by Karl Bodmer wore a hide coat, moccasins and leather trousers or leggings. Alfred Jacob Miller consistently portrayed men he identified as “engagés” or “half-breeds” wearing straight-cut hide coats with few tailored elements. These include a drawing of two men at the 1837 Green River Rendezvous, several works depicting Antoine Clement, a portrait of “Louis, a Rocky Mountain Trapper” and a sketch of three engages cooking. The irregular edge of the hide can be seen along the bottom of coat

²²Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed. *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846: Part I of Maximilian, Prince of Wied's, Travels in the Interior of North America, 1832-1834*. (Cleveland, Ohio: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1906), 250.

²³*Part I of Maximilian, Prince of Wied's, Travels in the Interior of North America, 1832-1834*, 378. Great coats compared with the blanket coats worn at Fort Union were “made of the common woolen horsecloths, white or green, with gay stripes on the collar, cuffs, and pockets; nay some are striped all over like zebras: such a coat . . . cannot be had here for less than eight or ten dollars.” Maximilian, 180.

²⁴Two sketches of Antoine Clement show him with dark shoulder length hair and dark eyes. In the oil painting done in Scotland, *Antoine Clement, the Great Hunter*, Miller transformed Clement into a light haired, green-eyed French Canadian.

skirts and front openings. Antoine Clement's coat was portrayed in some detail with leather ties and fringe at the shoulder and arm seams. Similarly constructed leather leggings or trousers and moccasins complete their outfits. Elements not documented elsewhere are the hoods made from animal pelts and occasionally ornamented with feathers worn by Bodmer's interpreter and the men drawn by Miller.

In 1846 Father Nicholas Point, who had accompanied Father de Smet to begin mission work among the Flathead and Coeur d'Alene, met the family of Michel Champagne at Fort Lewis. Michel Champagne served as clerk and barge pilot for the American Fur Company. Among Point's fantastic paintings of religious conversion are several portraits of the Champagne family. He took particular delight in the Catholic devotions of Marie and Josette Champagne who were the subject of the painting, *Deux Petites Soeurs Métisses*. Point described Josette and Marie as devout children "who did not let a day of the month pass without placing at the feet of the Blessed Virgin the tribute of their piety and their virtuous efforts." In their portrait, the girls wore dresses manufactured of hide, trimmed with red trade cloth, elk teeth and beads. Point also painted "Interprete du Mission, Jn. Bte. Champagne, fils de Mich."²⁵ The young interpreter was represented wearing a cap and white shirt, with the red straps of a pouch and powder horn crossing the young interpreter's chest. Point painted swirling designs representing beadwork or embroidery along the straps and also painted floral designs on the wooden stock of Champagne's gun, representing either carved or painted decoration.²⁶

²⁵ Joseph P. Donnelly, S. J., *Wilderness Kingdom, Indian Life in the Rocky Mountains: 1840-1847. The Journal and Paintings of Nicholas Point, S. J.* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), 221. *Deux Petites Soeurs Métisses, Marie et Josette* is shown on p. 211, *Interprete du Mission, Jn. Bte. Champagne fils de Mich*, p. 218. The originals are in the Archives de la Compagnie de Jesus, St. Jerome, Quebec.

²⁶ Baptiste Champagne worked in the Fort Union area during the 1850's. Jack Holterman. *King of the High Missouri* (Helena, Montana: Falcon Press, 1987), 91, 117. In 1862, Johnny Grant hired Baptiste Champagne as an interpreter, identifying him as a Blackfoot half-breed based at Fort Benton, *Very Close to Trouble*, 93, 174.

In the summer of 1848, Swiss artist Rudolph Kurz described the Missouri town of St. Joseph with its streets crowded with the bourgeois and employees of different fur trade companies who operated along the Missouri River system. He met a group of men he described as engagés or Mountaineers and spent time sketching and talking to four men in particular: Lambert, Francois Desolles, Michaux and Wiskom. He ascribed dual identities to these men as “Canadians” and “half-breeds” who “like to dress themselves in clothes made of tanned deerskin, embroidered and fringed. One recognizes them therefore, at sight; knows who they are and whence they come. They are stared at as though they were bears.”²⁷ Lambert told Kurz that he was a “bravo” and through his bravery in war had earned the right to “portez les plumes . . . wear an eagle feather in his hair and to have the same emblazoned in Indian fashion on his buffalo robe.”²⁸ One of the Canadian half breed engagés who befriended Kurz at St. Joseph was sketched wearing full length fringed hide leggings, a breech clout, head scarf and short jacket or shirt, while another wore a cloth jacket, cravat, felt hat, trousers and moccasins. At Council Bluffs, Kurz sketched two hunting companions identified only as “Omaha and half breed.” The Omaha man was bare chested, wearing a breech clout and moccasins. He wore his hair long and braided and used a piece of buffalo hide for a saddle. The other man, possibly one of the Fontanelle brothers Kurz had become acquainted with, had shoulder length hair, leather trousers, fringed jacket and a saddle with a pommel.²⁹

As Kurz traveled up the Missouri, he sketched the “half-breed” sons of Charles Martin, the boat pilot, noting in his journal that “the people with him dressed as half-breeds and wore their hair long.”³⁰ He found employment at Fort Berthold where he described his first sight of

²⁷ *Journal of Rudolph Kurz*, 30-31.

²⁸ *Journal of Rudolph Kurz*, 32.

²⁹ *Omaha, Halfbreed, Journal of Rudolph Kurz*, plate 23.

³⁰ *Journal of Rudolph Kurz*, 63.

“a dozen Métisse de la Riviere Rouge” who were accompanied by a Catholic priest “from their large settlement, a day’s journey from here.”³¹ His detailed journal entry suggests that “Métisse” style was different from the “half-breed” style he had become familiar with on the Missouri.

All were dressed in bright colors, semi-European, semi Indian in style--tobacco pouches, girdles, knife cases, saddles, shoes and whips were elaborately decorated with glass beads, porcupine quills, feather quills, etc., in an artistic work done by their wives and sweethearts, but their clothes were of European rather than western cut.³²

While employed at Fort Union as a clerk, Kurz drew several members of the community of seasonal employees he identified as “metif” (plate 6). Among these were Alexis Labombarde and his step-daughters Domitilde and Margeurite Gravelle. In one sketch, Domitilde wore her hair tied in a low pony tail with a hair slide or cloth hair wrap and a small shawl or scarf tied around her shoulders. In another profile, her hair is loose. Margeurite also wore her hair in a low pony tail, and dressed in a blouse with an open throat, skirt, small ruffled shawl over her shoulders, trade silver earrings and a bead necklace. Alexis Labombarde, noted as “LaBombarde” in Kurz’s sketch, had shoulder-length hair, a coat or jacket with buttons, shirt and cravat.³³ Other sketches include Metif subjects. There is a small sketch of a woman wearing a blouse, mid-calf skirt, leggings and moccasins with her hair hidden underneath a kerchief tied at the nape of the neck.

The clothing worn by the women of the post stands in marked contrast to the persistence of indigenous fashion Kurz documented in his studies of the Assiniboine, Saulteaux, Cree and Gros Ventre women who accompanied trading parties. In “Ball at Fort Union” Kurz drew

³¹*Journal of Rudolph Kurz*, 82.

³²*Journal of Rudolph Kurz*, 82.

³³*Domitilde LaBombarde*, plate 7; *Alexis LaBombarde*, plate 23, *Journal of Rudolph Friederich Kurz*. *Marguerite la Bombarde*, Fort Union, 24.11.51, SB/165, Berne Historical Museum.

women with low pony tails wearing dresses with full skirts, aprons and scarves.³⁴ These must have been the working women of the post, who wore plain cloth dresses with narrow sleeves, curving necklines and gathered skirts. “Returning from the Dobies Ball” portrays a group of men and women on horseback. Kurz’s frequent hunting partner, Owen Mackenzie wore a frock coat, shirt and cravat with a pair of hide trousers with quillwork and fringe worked down the outer seam. His wife, seated behind him, wore moccasins, close fitted leggings, and was wrapped in a point blanket.³⁵ The frock coat, hide pants, moccasins and medium-length hair worn by Alexis Labombarde, Owen MacKenzie and Baptiste Lafontaine seem to characterize male “metif” dress as Kurz observed it. The sash, while not a common accessory, was worn in the Missouri region. Kurtz drew Joseph LaFlesche, who lived at Council Bluffs, wearing a sash, as well as the engagés at St. Joseph and Battiste Lafontaine, the interpreter at Fort Union.³⁶

The Eclectic Construction of Distinct Dress

The composite or eclectic construction of distinct Métis or Half Breed dress was clearly created from a wider range of choices than the dress worn by other groups. In the Peter Rindisbacher paintings, “Halfcaste” dress straddled the boundaries created by the clothing worn by Indians, voyageurs, or Gentlemen. The quillwork panels and bags worn by Métis men on the upper body and their leggings and moccasins are identical in colour, style and construction to those worn by men identified as Saukteaux, Ojibwe or Cree. Similar, but not identical, eared hoods were worn by an Indian guide and a Métis buffalo hunter. The long indigo coats worn by

³⁴Ball auf Fort Union, 26.12.51. SB/158. Berne Historical Museum (BHM).

³⁵Owen Mackenzie was the son of Kenneth Mackenzie and one of his country wives, reportedly a Crow woman. F. A. Chardon, *Chardon’s Journal at Fort Clark, 1834-1839* (1932; repr. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 215; *Riding from the Dobie Ball*, 4.10.51, SF/156, BHM.

³⁶Joseph Laflesche (French-Ponca) was adopted by Big Elk, Chief of the Omaha. Mary and Joseph Laflesche were among the friends whom Kurz dined with on his return to Council Bluffs, *Journal of Rudolph Kurz*, 334.

gentlemen and Métis men appear to be the same. The feather trimmed top hats and sashes are also worn by voyageurs. Only the ribbonwork on the top hat and the fitted leather jacket with elaborate quilled shoulder decoration (possibly a cut-away coat) do not occur elsewhere.³⁷

Similarly, the coats, white shirts and black silk cravats worn by Barron, Godfroy, Rice and Brouillette in the George Winter paintings are indistinguishable from those of government representatives at the treaty negotiations. The cloth leggings and head scarves worn by men of mixed ancestry are similar to those worn by their Miami and Potawatomi kin. But the Métis combination or assemblage was unique.

The paintings of Paul Kane in the Red River, Saskatchewan and Columbia districts, the drawings of Captain George E. Finlay at the Red River Settlement and the brief glimpse into dress in the Columbia region provided by Warre and Dunne suggest that by the 1840s, the dress worn by Métis and Half Breed peoples had common elements that occurred across regions.³⁸ In addition to the frequently noted indigo capote and fingerwoven sash, other elements emerged. The functional straps of the shot pouch, powder horn and fire bag were typically red, the colour of life, blood and the hunt. Red was also highly visible, enabling the eye to quickly locate these essential items. Rindisbacher showed the bag suspended around the neck, with the pouch flat against the chest. By mid-century, bag straps had lengthened, crossing the chest. Paul Kane, Father Point and Rudolph Kurz all depicted men wearing crossed straps across the chest. When represented in colour, they were usually red, embellished with beads and extended with tabs,

³⁷The garment is worn by a man who appears to be acting as interpreter. The Red Lake Chief, making Speech to the Governor of Red River at Fort Douglas in 1823, *Views in Hudson's Bay*.

³⁸Paul Kane's Métis subjects included *Francois Lucie, a Cree Half Breed Guide*, 31.78/146, POP 9, *Camping on the Prairie*, 31.78/156 POP 18, "Métis Chasing the Main Buffalo Herd" 31.78/127 PWC 16 (Stark Museum of Art, Orange, Texas) and *Half Breeds Running Buffalo*, 912.1.26, *Half Breeds Travelling*, 912.1.24 (Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto). Captain George E. Finlay was stationed at the Red River Settlement between 1846 and 1848. A portfolio of his sketches is in the collection of the Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary.

fringe or beaded tassels. While there are occasional references to Métis or Half Breed women wearing hide clothing, hide was primarily associated with male dress.³⁹ Among women cloth dresses, leggings with decorative cuffs or wings and ribbons as a decorative element appear to have been widely worn. Together, male and female dress gave expression to a distinct Métis and Half Breed visual identity, which began to define a space where social class, ethnicity and occupation overlapped.

Red River and Saskatchewan Style

In 1859, the Earl of Southesk embarked on a hunting expedition from the Red River Settlement accompanied by a group of Métis guides. His journal is one of the few textual records that offer descriptions of clothing and comparative comments on style. Southesk had traveled from St. Paul to Red River with a party that included James McKay whom he described as “dressed in Red River style -- a blue cloth capot (hooded frock coat) with brass buttons; red-and-black flannel shirt, which served also for waistcoat; black belt round the waist; buff leather moccasins on his feet; trowsers of brown and white striped home-made woolen stuff.”⁴⁰ He elaborated on Red River style in his description of a group of “smartly dressed” men setting out on their summer buffalo hunt:

The hunters were all in their summer clothing, wearing the usual brass-buttoned blue capot, with moleskin trowsers and calico shirts. Wide awakes, or cloth caps with peaks, were the favorite head-coverings. Gaily embroidered saddle cloths and belts were evidently [preferred] to those of a less showy appearance; red, white,

³⁹Jemima Kittson, the stepdaughter of Richard Grant of Fort Hall, was remembered by John McBride wearing a hide dress “strikingly beautiful with her long dark hair falling around her neck and shoulders”. Johnny Grant, *Very Close to Trouble*, note 4, p. 33. A portrait and hide dress collected by Paul Kane are associated with Cunne-wabun, identified as a Cree half breed from Fort Edmonton in Kane’s book. Dress H4.42-1, Manitoba Museum. Paul Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist* (1858; repr. Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1968), 265. The dresses were observed in 1840 and 1846 respectively.

⁴⁰The 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 territories in 1859 and 1860* (1875; repr. Edmonton: M. G. Hurtig, 1969), 9.

and blue beading, on a black cloth ground, seemed to form the most general arrangement.⁴¹

Frank Blackwell Mayer's sketches of Red River Half Breeds camped at St. Paul, Minnesota in 1851 provide images that correspond with Southesk's descriptions (plate 7).

According to Southesk, the dress of the men in his party changed as they moved farther from Red River, with variations according to individual taste. While their clothing was similar, John McKay, James Short, George Kline, Antoine Blandoine and Old Lagrace were individually distinct, primarily through their choice of headgear and accessories.⁴² Leather clothing was first mentioned as the party moved into the Saskatchewan region. Pierre Desnommé, hired at Fort Ellice, was described as:

a quaint looking oldish man, with a dark, bony French-Indian face, and long black hair. He wears leather trousers, which have become a varnished mahogany from stains and hard usage, a blue cotton shirt, and a dark-blue woolen, mushroom-topped, lowland Scotch bonnet . . . common in Forfarshire in my childhood, but it has red and white chequers round the headpiece, and Pierre has added a glazed leather peak.⁴³

As the party left Fort Edmonton, Southesk noted that his men had changed their style of dress to what he identified as Saskatchewan style.

all the men had come out in leather since we entered the wood country, and look infinitely more picturesque and sportsmanlike than when dressed in their blue cloth capots. Some of them had mounted little blue caps, covered with streamers of ribbon of different colours, -- after the gay fashion of Saskatchewan-land, where taste seems freer to indulge than in the graver regions of Fort Garry.⁴⁴

In addition to the fringed leather hunting shirts, each man appeared to dress up for the journey, possibly inspired by the formal salutes the party received from the Hudson's Bay Company

⁴¹Southesk, *Saskatchewan*, 45.

⁴²John McKay was born in 1832, the son of James McKay and Margeurite Gladu, John McKay claim no. 2868, vol. 1322, series D-11-8-a; George Kline was born in 1828, the son of Michel Klyne and Suzanne Lafrance, George Klyne claim no. 445, vol. 1321, series D-11-8-a; Antoine Blandion was born at Jaspard House in 1833, the son of Antoine Blandion and Catherine Breland or Berland, Antoine Blandion claim no. 885, vol. 1325, series D-11-8-b, RG 15, NAC.

⁴³Southesk, *Saskatchewan*, 53-54.

⁴⁴Southesk, *Saskatchewan*, 171.

officials in honour of the Earl's presence.⁴⁵ John McKay wore a hide coat without fringe and a "wide-brimmed black hat . . . like a "Spanish cavalier of old". George Kline had a "broad-brimmed white hat . . . with wavy blue-ribbon streamers" and "belts of silver and red brocade" that crossed his chest. James Short wore a "handsome pouch of leather ornamented with blue and white beads." In addition to a "purple cotton shirt, tight but very long and wrinkled trousers," Lagrace wore a "white flannel cap" which could have been a form of the peaked hood depicted by Rindisbacher. Southesk provided two descriptions: "Old Lagrace . . . has decorated his white flannel cap with a strip of scarlet cloth, which presents a most imposing appearance" and "a white blanket skull-cap enriched with peak and ears, and decorated with streamers of scarlet cloth, beneath a battered eagle feather."⁴⁶ At Fort Pitt on their return journey, the party was further outfitted for winter.

My men were all in their new attire: white flannel leggings drawn over the trowsers and gartered below the knee, moccasins of enormous size, stuffed with wraps of blanketing; thick white or blue capots over their leather shirts.⁴⁷

The hats chosen by the party indicate that while the common functions of winter headgear and similar regional tastes can be seen, each man selected headgear from the general repertoire to construct his own personal style. John McKay chose "a round one of otter skin", while "Kline, Matheson and Toma wore the entire skins of foxes, coiled round their broad-brimmed felt hats. 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."⁴⁸

Saskatchewan style as described by Southesk seemed relatively unchanged since Paul Kane

⁴⁵The Fort Edmonton post journal noted on August 11 and 17, 1859 that "we put up the HBCo flag and gave a salute of three guns" to mark the Earl of Southesk's arrival and departure. Upon his return from the mountains, "his Lordship saluted the Fort across, and on his landing on this side of the River we gave him a salute of 7 guns and had the Flag hoisted," Fort Edmonton Post Journal, B.60/a.30: 55, 73, HBCA.

⁴⁶Southesk, *Saskatchewan*, 187-204.

⁴⁷Southesk, *Saskatchewan*, 292.

⁴⁸Southesk, *Saskatchewan*, 292.

painted Francois Lucier's portrait at Fort Edmonton a decade earlier (plate 8). Lucier's headgear was also a creative construction that enhanced an ordinary hat by wrapping it with fur and adding the embellishments of a patent leather peak, ribbons, and a red ostrich feather.

Southesk noted an additional difference between Saskatchewan and Red River style; the varied sizes of moccasin vamps. "The part that comes over the instep is usually covered with red, blue or white cloth, and ornamented with embroidery in beads or dyed horse hair. In Red River, this part is much larger, and lower over the foot, than in Saskatchewan; generally also the toe is less pointed, and the ankle-covering less high."⁴⁹ Passing a group of Métis outside the church at White Horse Plains, Southesk made his final comments on Red River style shortly before his departure, expressing his preference for the brighter, more exuberant Saskatchewan style.

They have one almost inevitable type of dress, which though handsome in itself, looks rather sombre in a crowd, -- capots of dark blue, leggings of the same, caps either of the same or of some dark fur. The only relief to this monotony is given by a scarlet, crimson, or varigated scarf round the waist, and red stripes embroidered with various coloured ribbons down the outside of the leggings. The female costume is generally dark also, and not remarkable, though with much picturesqueness about the head-dress which is sometimes a dark shawl or blanket worn as a hood, sometimes a crimson or yellow silk handkerchief, which forms a rich contrast to the glossy black hair it partly conceals.⁵⁰

Southesk's comments on the "generally dark" colour of female dress and an earlier description of women with "long masses of straight black hair [falling] over their backs; blue and white cotton gowns, shapeless, stayless, uncrinolined" worn with a "gaudy handkerchief on the head" are his only observations on female Red River style.⁵¹ Isaac Ingalls Stevens' description of the women he met at a Métis buffalo camp in 1853, only five years earlier, constructs a brighter picture. "The women are industrious, dress in gaudy calicoes, are fond of beads and finery, and are

⁴⁹Southesk, *Saskatchewan*, 232-233.

⁵⁰Southesk, *Saskatchewan*, 348.

⁵¹Southesk, *Saskatchewan*, 44.

remarkably apt at making beadwork, moccasins, and sewing.”⁵² Southesk’s observations of men shifting clothing style as they moved away from the settlement could also have applied to women. Did women living on the plains have a more colourful style of clothing than women living in the settlement? Did their clothing choices become freer when they moved into camps or did Southesk’s observations simply document a recent shift in fashion to darker, more subdued colours? The narrow scope of travel narratives, moving through the same communities and observing comparatively few people, provide a small sample of clothing and make it difficult to answer these and other questions.

Memories of Dress: Métis Remembrances and Descriptions of Clothing

When I reached my seventh year, I was ready for school. Our clothes were leather pants with a soft deerskin coat, cotton shirts, Indian moccasins with blanket duffels for our feet. The girls wore print dresses with, I believe, homemade knitted underwear. The boys wore nothing else, winter or summer. The moccasins were either moose hide or buffalo skin, as they were considered warmer and more durable.⁵³

Peter Erasmus’s memories of the clothing worn during his childhood at the Red River Settlement is one of several narratives and memoirs left by people whose lives were observed and documented by outside observers. Primarily male voices, men such as Peter Erasmus, Louis Schmidt, Louis Goulet and George Sanderson wore the clothes described by others. Marie Delorme Smith, Jane Flett Garson and Victoria Belcourt Callihoo provide seldom-heard female voices. Clothing is rarely the primary focus of these memoirs, but Louis Schmidt, Johnny Grant, Victoria Belcourt Callihoo, and Louis Goulet all devoted time in their memoirs to construct an image of the lives they experienced and the historic events witnessed. Interspersed among stories of buffalo hunts, winter camps, adventures and struggle are descriptions of dress worn during the

⁵²Isaac Ingalls Stevens (1860), “Narrative and Final Report of Explorations for a Pacific Railroad” as cited in Steven L. Grafe, *Origins of Floral Beadwork in the Columbia Plateau*, 133.

⁵³Peter Erasmus, *Buffalo Days and Nights* (1920-1928; Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1999), 4.

last half of the nineteenth century. Louis Schmidt described the clothing worn by the Métis of earlier days.

Le voyageur, l'artisan ou n'importe qui, ne portait qu'un pantalon, une chemise, des souliers mous et un casquette quelconque, or un chameau ou une tuque se couvrir la tete. Les bas ou chassons n'étaient pas connus. L'hiver, on mettait une peau de lièvre ou un morceau d'étoffe de laine dans sa chaussure, et un capot de drap sans doublure pour se garantir du froid. Généralement, on passait une ceinture par dessus ce capot (a capuchon) mais bien des jeune gens ne se servient de leur ceinture, pendante devant, que pour retenir leur pantalon. Personne ne portait de bretille, excepté les jeune enfants.⁵⁴

Voyageur, craftsman, it didn't matter who, all wore pants, a shirt, moose shoes and some type of cap, or a 'chameau' or a tuque to cover the head. Socks or stockings were not known. In winter, one wore a rabbit skin or a piece of woolen cloth in his shoe [moccasin], and a wool capote without lining for protection from the cold. Generally, the sash was worn over the capot (with hood) but many younger people didn't use their sash hanging in front, but to hold up their pants. Nobody wore braces, except young children.

Victoria Callihoo recalled elements of men's dress worn later in the century, "Our men never had underwear, nor socks but we had large coats from buffalo skins. Outer leggings were worn, made from the Hudson's Bay Co. blankets. These leggings reached up to the waist. A buckskin string was tied to the leggings and that tied to one's belt."⁵⁵ The dress traditions of "les anciens Métis", as remembered by Louis Goulet, persisted among plains hunters when fashions began to change after 1870:

the winter hunters still wore moccasins, coarse wool clothes, big Hudson's Bay Company flannel shirts, the kind of sash called a ceinture fleche and leggings. In winter they wore a hooded light wool capot, their capot de crait-rien and an old cap The flannel shirts were usually grey, whereas the cotton shirts were brightly coloured. Trousers were of broadcloth, rarely linen, usually navy blue, preferably made of heavy English cloth, sometimes that ribbed plush we call corduroy . . . Many winter hunters also wore a kind of trousers called culottes à bavaloise which usually opened at the hip.⁵⁶

⁵⁴Louis Schmidt (1912), "Habillements des Métis, Addenda to Louis Schmidt Memoires," p. 5. "Les Memoires de Louis Schmidt," MG9 A31, AM.

⁵⁵Victoria Callihoo, nee Belcourt, was over a century old when she passed away on April 25, 1966. Victoria Callihoo, "Early Life in Lac Ste. Anne and St. Albert in the 1870's," reprinted in *Windspeaker*, April 12, 1988, p. 18, Victoria Callihoo File, St. Albert Museum.

⁵⁶Louis Goulet, *Vanishing Spaces: Memoirs of Louis Goulet*, ed. Guillaume Charette, trans. by Ray

The “capot de craint-rien” or “fear-nothing coat” mentioned by Goulet is not referred to elsewhere and the meaning of its name has not been found. He described it as “a kind of short, fur-lined jacket” and later as “a kind of between-seasons coat with a hood.”⁵⁷ Goulet also offered descriptions of “les mitasse . . . like long cuffs worn on the leg as a kind of over-stocking. They were leather or cloth, especially velvet, and usually decorated with intricate stitching as was the case with moccasins.” Fashionable male dress as remembered by Goulet included “elaborately decorated shirts, vests and jackets as well as trousers, often embroidered, with fringes along the seams Later on when I was courting girls, we had the culottes crampée that were tight on the thigh but opened into bellbottoms above the shoe.”⁵⁸ A hat with a wide, flat brim and high crown was “du dernier chic” and mittens that hung from cords around the neck were considered “de bon ton.”⁵⁹ “The more dashing young men wore mitts embroidered in gaudy colours with fur above the wrist, and sometimes beadwork.”⁶⁰ Women’s dress, according to Louis Schmidt, was “aussi simple.”⁶¹

Seulement leur modist demandait un peu plus de soin , Ainsi elles portaient un petit chale ou un grand mouchoir sur la poitrine, un autre sur la tete pour sortir, ainsi qu’un chale. En hiver, les fortunées mettaient une couverture de drap fin par dessus leur chale. En guise de bas, elles portaient des mitasses, espèce de petites jambières en drap ordinairement garnies de varsades. Elles se chaussaient comme les hommes.⁶²

Only their millinery demanded a little more attention. Thus they wore a little shawl or a large handkerchief on the bosom, another on the head to go out, in the same way as the shawl. In winter, the fortunate ones put a fine wool blanket over their shawl. Instead of stockings, they wore ‘des mitasses’, a type of small leggings made of ordinary wool garnished with beads. They were shod like the men.

Ellenwood (Winnipeg: Edition Bois Brules, 1980), 47.

⁵⁷References to the “capot craint-rien” are found in Goulet, *Vanishing Spaces*, 47 and 49.

⁵⁸Goulet, *Vanishing Spaces*, 49.

⁵⁹The phrases “du derniere chic” (the latest fashion) and “le bon ton” (in good taste) are taken from the Goulet manuscript in the Archives of Manitoba. “Guillaume Charette -- Louis Goulet Manuscript,” pp. 45-46, MG9 A6, AM

⁶⁰Goulet, *Vanishing Spaces*, 49.

⁶¹Louis Schmidt, *Habillements des Métis*, 5.

⁶²Schmidt, 5-6.

According to Johnny Grant, women in the Red River region “did not wear embroidered moccasins and instead of stockings, they wore leggings made of cloth embroidered with beads or ribbon of different colors in a wavy zig-zag pattern four or five inches high from the ankle. A colored silk handkerchief covered their heads.”⁶³ Victoria Belcourt Callihoo remembered similar clothing worn by women in the Lac St. Anne region:

Women also had no stockings. Like the men they wrapped their feet in an oblong piece of flannel. Women wore leggings. There were worn below the knee. They were made of black velvet and were beaded on one side, the outside of the leg. When we women did outside work or made trips in the winter, we wrapped our knees with flannelette. Women had no coats, but wore shawls.⁶⁴

Louis Goulet’s narrative included memories of women’s dress, which in addition to the clothing elements mentioned by others, had a detailed description of one particular garment. He described greater conservatism among women who persisted in “la mode chez les anciens Métis:”⁶⁵

I wouldn’t risk giving a detailed description except to say that the women also wore moccasins, especially embroidered ones, leggings, a dress with a long skirt falling to the ankles and topped by a kind of jerkin called a basque with sleeves that puffed out between the elbow and shoulder, ending at the top with a point rising as high as the ear. Velvet was the favorite material.⁶⁶

Johnny Grant declared “the half-breed never wears boots or shoes, but only moccasins and in wet weather they wear rubbers over their moccasins. Very few wore stockings, only a piece of flannel nip around their feet.” While pieces of wool flannel wrapped around the foot instead of socks are mentioned in several memoirs, Louis Goulet identified a more elaborate “housse” which was a pouch sewn of wool or rabbit skin that was slipped over the foot inside the moccasin.⁶⁷ Goulet also discussed moccasins with more specificity, identifying “at least three

⁶³ Grant, *Very Close to Trouble*, 153.

⁶⁴ Callihoo, 17.

⁶⁵ Goulet – Louis Goulet Manuscript, 45.

⁶⁶ Goulet, *Vanishing Spaces*, 49.

⁶⁷ Goulet, *Vanishing Spaces*, 48.

moccasin.⁶⁷ Goulet also discussed moccasins with more specificity, identifying “at least three different kinds of moccasin: the mitten type . . . pointed-toe shoes without embroidery; and another kind with the upper part and crown richly decorated with needlework, strands of horse hair in various shades, porcupine quills or sometimes even deer skin with the hair still on as well as beadwork in different colours.”⁶⁸

Clothing memories are often tinged with nostalgia for a younger self, a lost community and a remembered history. Occasionally, memories of dress merge with associations with beloved family members. Mary Lucier Laframboise remembered the touch of her father’s “suit of tanned buffalo skins . . . soft as an old blanket.”⁶⁹ George Sanderson recounted a humorous story of the first time he purchased a gift for his mother, Elizabeth Anderson. Young George had no idea how much fabric was required to make a dress and was told by the storekeeper, “a Lady like your mother always buys ten yards.” He recalled, “Of course styles in those days were not as they are now. The women made their gowns long, wide and beautiful . . . I must say that I admired the style in my mother’s day.”⁷⁰ Marie Rose Delorme Smith made reference to the wide skirts of women’s dresses in the context of a story that described her flight from the uncomfortable attentions of a hired man. She and her sister made a bed for their children with their dresses. “We sat on the floor and spread our skirts (lucky we had old time skirts, very wide) and on them our little ones lay at night.”⁷¹ She remembered her mother nurturing a love of personal decoration by encouraging her young daughters to gather small snail shells, rose hips and “the large seed of the white berry” which she would patiently pierce “with a square needle”

⁶⁷Goulet, *Vanishing Spaces*, 48.

⁶⁸Goulet, *Vanishing Spaces*, p. 48.

⁶⁹Mary Lucier Laframboise was present during her husband’s interview and several comments are attributed to her. Joseph Laframboise Interview (1938), p. 5, Pioneer Biography Files, series 30529, Works Progress Administration (WPA), State Historical Society of North Dakota (SHSND).

⁷⁰George William Sanderson (circa 1935), “Through Memories Windows,” p. 5, MG9 A107, AM.

⁷¹Marie Rose Delorme Smith, “The Adventures of the Wild West of 1870. I was quite young when my

and help them make necklaces.⁷²

Clothing references in winter stories provide a subtext that celebrates the hardiness of people who lived in earlier times. Peter Erasmus seemed somewhat puzzled by his own recollections: “I do not remember being really cold with these meager clothes”; and wondered if “perhaps it was the strong foods we ate that helped us resist the cold.”⁷³ Other narratives emphasize activity and good humour as the means to cope with harsh conditions. Jane Flett recalled the winter of 1871 when she was a young, recently married woman who was part of a party sent from Fort Simpson to Fort Liard because of a food shortage. She recalled the clothing she wore for a seven day journey on snowshoes in frigid January weather.

One morning when we got up it was so cold that the trees were cracking like guns firing . . . We wore cloth dresses, with duffle coats (of Hudson Bay blanket cloth), but we didn't feel the cold. (We ran most of the way, and I challenged the men to run races!) We had a shawl over the coats, and our moose mitts and mocassins were duffle lined.⁷⁴

Johnny Grant also recalled the hardiness of Métis women who did “not wear coats or cloaks, but a piece of fine black cloth about two yards long which they wore in cold weather over a couple of shawls . . . Dressed in that manner they would face any wind or cold. They often walked six or seven miles to church and sometimes farther after a week of hard work.”⁷⁵ Other aspects of dress became lively story elements. Johnny Grant used the blunt-cut shoulder length hair style common among Métis men during the last half of the nineteenth century to create a visual image of a man breaking a horse.

Two half-breeds from Edmonton . . . Charles Favel and his brother . . . One of them who considered himself a great rider agreed to ride the horse, and for the rest of us it was an amusing sight to see that horse buck. He bucked forward and

father died, I can Just Remember Like a Dream,” p. 15, file 3, M1154, Marie Rose Smith Fonds, GAI.

⁷²Delorme Smith, “Eighty Years on the Plains,” p. 2, file 4, M1154, Marie Rose Smith Fonds, GAI.

⁷³*Buffalo Days and Nights*, 4.

⁷⁴Jane Flett Garson was born at Fort Youcan on March 1, 1854 to Andrew Flett and Mary Campbell (nd.),

“Story of Jane Flett Garson, Hoey Sask,” pp 2-3, E.172/1, HBCA.

⁷⁵Grant, *Very Close to Trouble*, 153-154.

sideways and every other way that a horse can buck . . . but he could not throw his rider off . . . It was comical to see him. His hair was rather long, and cut broom fashion, and the bucking of the horse shook him so that his hair would fly up every time his head moved. When he dismounted he looked at his bruised knuckles ruefully, but he only said, "Hey boy, he jumps high."⁷⁶

Memoirs help situate dress in time and place. In his WPA interview in 1938, Joseph Laframboise stated that his "clothes in 1865 were made of elk skin, moose skin, bear skin and buffalo hide," providing a specific point in time when hide clothing predominated in the Pembina - Turtle Mountain region.⁷⁷ Like Peter Erasmus, "he did not wear any underclothes at that time." Memoirs can also offer insights into the reasons people began to shift away from the distinct dress that communicated collective identity. Louis Goulet described his younger self as a fine dresser, a man concerned with personal appearance and an eager consumer of new fashion.

I'm sure anybody who knew me then will remember what a fastidious dresser I was. In fact, I could never stand having my clothes the least bit untidy and nothing pleased me more than the latest styles in the most handsome and best-quality fabrics. I don't like tooting my own horn but I'm not ashamed to say most people thought I was quite a good-looking fellow!⁷⁸

Goulet recalled, "everybody in Red River, with a few exceptions dressed in the latest fashions from Montreal and St. Paul." He described "les hivernants", the people who wintered on the plains, as "behind everybody else and a little slow to pick up on the newest fashions", but equated their persistent use of traditional clothing with their ability to live "en toute liberté continuer la vie et les anciennes coutumes de la prairie."⁷⁹ Johnny Grant saw changes in fashion as a reflection of growing distinctions between social classes, particularly in the Red River Settlement.

One pleasant feature of the country was the general friendship that existed between all classes, rich or poor, and of any nationality or creed. Everyone was friendly with

⁷⁶Grant, *Very Close to Trouble*, 92.

⁷⁷Joseph Laframboise Interview, p. 4. (1938).

⁷⁸Louis Goulet Manuscript, 95 and Goulet, *Vanishing Spaces*, 91-92.

⁷⁹The complete freedom to live the life and continue the ancient customs of the prairie. Louis Goulet Manuscript, 43-44.

his neighbours as though they were members of one family. But with the coming of the surveyors and new settlers from Ontario there was a great change. Good fellowship and harmony came to an end. A number of the half-breeds began to take on the manners of the whites. Others held back and a division grew.⁸⁰

The Photographic Record

Improvements to the photographic process by the mid nineteenth century made equipment less cumbersome and moved photography out of the studio environment. Photographers began to move north and west. Individuals interested in trying new technology also moved the tools of photography into new regions and communities. Photographs were created for both public consumption and the more intimate purpose of family memory. Some of the earliest photographs taken of Métis and Half Breed people include a portrait of Pierre Bottineau taken at St. Paul, Minnesota around 1855 and a series of photographs of freighters camping at Pembina taken in 1856 (plate 9).⁸¹ Also in 1856, Humphrey Lloyd Hime produced a series of photographs to illustrate the reports of two western expeditions.⁸² He photographed “John McKay, a Plain Cree Half-Breed”, “Susan, a Swampy Cree Half-Breed”, “Wigwam, an Ojibwa Half Breed” and “Letitia, a Cree Half Breed” during his 1857-1858 residency at Red River (10).⁸³ Benjamin Franklin Upton produced a series of photographs at St. Paul in 1860. The series, which depicted Red River carts and drivers, was available commercially as postcards and stereographs, including the image “Red River carts at rest stop, Métis Indians.”⁸⁴

⁸⁰Grant, *Very Close to Trouble*, 157.

⁸¹These photographs are in the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society.

⁸²Hime worked for the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition and the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition. Humphrey Lloyd Hime, *Photographs Taken at Lord Selkirk's Settlement on the Red River of the North to Illustrate a Narrative of the Canadian Exploring Expedition in Rupertsland by Henry Youle Hind in Charge of the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Expedition* (London: J. Hogarth, 1860).

⁸³Susan is sometimes identified as Jane L'Adamar and Letitia as Letitia Bird. The photographs were carefully staged with buffalo robes, fur pelts and saddles as props. Humphrey Lloyd Hime Collection. Accession No. 1936-273. NAC.

⁸⁴Benjamin Franklin Upton Collection. MHS.

By the 1860s, Ryder Larsen had established a photographic studio at the Red River Settlement. He produced a range of portraits which, judging by the volume, were popular among many residents who dressed up to have their photographs taken. A photograph taken of George “Shaman” Racette in 1869 appeared in the *Canadian Illustrated News* with the caption, “A Red River Insurgent.”⁸⁵ Other photographs taken during the same time period include a series of portraits and community studies done by two Hudson’s Bay Company officers who became accomplished amateur photographers. Bernard Rogan Ross and Charles Horetzky, who worked together at Moose Factory, took a series of photographs in the region between 1867 and 1868. Ross produced a series of fine portraits taken at Rupert House identifying the subject as either Half Breed or Cree.⁸⁶ Charles Horetzky went on to become the expedition photographer for Sanford Fleming’s 1871 Canadian Pacific Railway Expedition.⁸⁷ Among his expedition photographs were “Half Breeds and dogs, Carleton” taken at Fort Carlton in 1871 and a number of images of dog runners and cariole drivers. These early photographs are the images that can be most closely correlated with mid-century observations by outsiders and the personal narratives created by Métis elders in the early twentieth century. Tailored capotes of different styles range from Pierre Bottineau’s double breasted coat without a hood (1855) to the more common hooded capotes with wide lapels worn by John McKay (1858), Elzear Goulet (c. 1869) and Jean Baptiste L’Hirondelle Jr. (n. d.).⁸⁸ Several of the portraits show a fairly complete view of the men’s

⁸⁵Racette, George (Shamon) 1-1. AM. George Racette was identified incorrectly as “a prominent character in the rank and file of the insurgent party” in *The Canadian Illustrated News*, December 18, 1869, George Racette Vertical File. AM. For a discussion of Ryder Larsen’s photographic career in the Red River region see Virginia Berry, *A Boundless Horizon* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1983), 42-43.

⁸⁶Portraits, mostly taken at Rupert’s House, are Annie Chilton, Janet Woppumnasweskum, Lizzie Moar, Clara Moar and Nickun Chilton, identified as Half Breed. Bernard Rogan Ross Collection, F2179, AO.

⁸⁷Horetzky is noted in the list of expedition members as “photographer, former HB officer”. George Grant, *Ocean to Ocean: Sanford Fleming’s Expedition through Canada in 1872* (London: J. Campbell, 1873).

⁸⁸Pierre Bottineau, Negative no. 93237, Location no. por 18144r3. MNHS; John McKay, Humphry Lloyd Hime Collection 27, AM; Elzear Goulet, Fonds 001, SHSB 229; Jean Baptiste L’Hirondelle Jr., 1989.02.45, MHM.

ensemble so often described in narratives and memoirs. John McKay's dark capote and pants were worn with a plaid shirt, and accessorized with a sash, pointed toe moccasins and plain hide or cloth leggings.

A number of characteristic elements of men's dress can be found in photographs taken between 1860 and 1880. For a portrait taken in 1860, Joseph Rolette wore a capote trimmed along the lapels, hood and cuffs with narrow strips of fur (plate 11).⁸⁹ This is the only visual example of the style described by Milton and Cheadle in 1865 as "long capote . . . with bands and lappets of fur, after the half-breed fashion."⁹⁰ Rolette's capote was wrapped around the body and secured with a sash. Tucked into the sash was a beaded firebag with a large central floral motif. Rolette had worn a similar outfit for a portrait painted a few years earlier.⁹¹ In the painting the fringed panel bag, which appears to the same one in the photograph, is fully visible. In a photographic portrait taken with his wife, John L'Hirondelle Jr. of St. Albert wore a hooded capote with wide lapels and brass buttons, a high neck shirt in a print fabric, a sash and pointed toe moccasins (14). Another man, photographed around 1870, wore a capote with brass buttons, wrapped around the body, kept in place by his sash (12).⁹² The buttons served only as decorative accents, not their typical function. The image also provides a rare visual record of the solid coloured sashes that appear on Hudson's Bay Company trade lists. Most of the sashes worn by men in photographs are multicoloured; this one is probably scarlet or crimson.

John Rowand Jr. was photographed in a capote made from a heavy woolen blanket cloth,

⁸⁹Joseph Rolette, Neg. no. 88840, Location no. por 15345p1, MNHS.

⁹⁰Viscount Milton and W. B. Cheadle, *The North-West Passage by Land: Being the Narrative of an Expedition from the Atlantic to the Pacific* (1865; repr. Toronto: Coles, 1970), 80.

⁹¹In the portrait the capote is worn with a fur hat, sash, full length hide leggings with decorated wings up the outside edge, garters and pointed-toe moccasins. A knife and bag are tucked into the sash. Neg. no. 85404, Location no. AV1991.85.38, MNHS.

⁹²Unidentified couple, NA-4405-17, GAI.

wrapped around the body, secured with a sash (12). A pair of embroidered mittens tied together with a strip of gartering hangs around his neck in the style identified by Louis Goulet as the fashionable dress of his day.⁹³ George Racette's full length blanket leggings were described by Victoria Belcourt Callihoo, and his overall winter dress is similar to that worn by the Earl of Southesk's guides (11). There is ample photographic evidence of the "fur caps . . . in great variety" that Southesk 's men wore.⁹⁴ Antoine Blandoine, who joined the Southesk party at Fort Edmonton and later settled in the St. Albert region, wore a coat, white shirt and soft fabric neck scarf. His hair, like George Racette, John Rowand Jr. and many of the other men photographed, is worn in the "broom-cut" described by Johnny Grant (13). It is a blunt-cut, worn with or without bangs, coming to the jaw-line or just above the shoulder.⁹⁵

A wide variety of felt hats and peaked caps can also be seen, although the top hats, Scotch bonnets and pill box hats which appear in the visual records of the 1840's and 1850's seem to have gone out of fashion.⁹⁶ Fire bags, leggings and hide pants occasionally appear. A photograph taken of George Setter and his sons of the Red River Settlement illustrates the persistence of the sash and moccasins as important elements of dress (15). While the father and his four sons wore clothing that could have been worn anywhere, their regional and ethnic identities were expressed through their pointed-toe moccasins and sashes. The two older sons, like their father, wore sashes wrapped around the waist with the fringe tucked into the folds. The matching suits of the two younger boys, perhaps under the age of twelve, did not include sashes. The photograph raises a question. Was a boy presented with a sash at a particular age or did he need to reach a certain height before he could manage a sash?

Many of the men photographed wore fashionable shirts in white or print fabrics with a

⁹³John Rowand Jr., Bannatyne Family 100, AM.

⁹⁴Southesk, *Saskatchewan*, 292.

⁹⁵Antoine Blandoin or Dion, P978.07.01, MHM.

black silk tie or neck scarf. A Red River cart driver photographed at St. Paul in 1858 and George Racette, photographed in 1869, wore similar hide jackets with a narrow beaded panel down the front (11).⁹⁷ Both the cut and decorative elements of these hide jackets and the narrow collar bands of the shirts reflect the significant shifts in men's clothing following the Crimean War. Louis Goulet described Métis awareness of the newest fashions from Montreal and St. Paul. The steady traffic and regular commerce between St. Paul business interests and Métis free traders provided the means for exposure, and possibly the active marketing of trends in fashionable dress. Worn in 1858, the shirts indicate the participation of Métis men in "au courant" fashion trends in Britain and the United States. Worn in 1872-1874 by most of the men in the party of "French half breed hunters and traders on the plains" photographed by the Boundary Commission, what was once new and innovative has been absorbed into an identifiable style of collective dress (plate 16).⁹⁸ Bernard Rogan Ross's 1869 photograph of Nickun Chilton of Rupert House, who wore an outfit similar to many of the men photographed in more western and southerly locations, suggests that "half breed fashion" was even more widely distributed. However, Ross's addition of the phrase "a Rupert's Run Dandy" to his subject's name could also imply that Chilton's clothing choices were not typical for the region.⁹⁹

There are fewer photographs of women wearing the dress of "les anciennes Métis" as described in the memoirs. Although a woman was among a group of Red River cart drivers photographed in 1856, she is barely visible and details of her clothing are difficult to see. Jane L'Adhemar and Letitia Bird, photographed by Hime at Red River in 1858, wore print dresses

⁹⁶A cart driver photographed in St. Paul in 1858 wore a pill box hat.

⁹⁷"Red River carts from Pembina encamped on St. Anthony Hill," Benjamin Franklin Upton, 1858, Negative no. 405, Location no. HE2.1p26, MNHS.

⁹⁸"French half breed hunters and traders on the plains," Boundary Commission (1872-74) 215, AM.

⁹⁹Chilton wears a tailored capote with wide lapels, white shirt, black silk tie and vest. His hair is a broom-cut which curls above the ears. "Nickun Chilton, a Rupert's Run Dandy," F2179-1-0-0-12, AO.

fashionable dress. Letitia Bird's bodice and skirt were sewn from the same plaid fabric with a predominant horizontal stripe. Jane L'Adhemar's dress was made from a linear floral print and appears to have a separate blouse and skirt. While it is difficult to be certain, she may also have worn an apron sewn from a similar floral pattern with a wider stripe. Differences between their dress and that of other early Victorian women lay not in the cut of the dresses, but in the presence or absence of other dress elements. The skirts lacked the wide silhouette created by hoops and crinolines and the white or lace under-sleeves usually worn with pagoda sleeves.¹⁰¹ In addition, elements of indigenous dress have been incorporated into the ensembles. The viewer gets a glimpse of the beaded cuff of a legging and a pair of pointed-toe moccasins peeking out from under Jane's dress.

Photographs of women increase in volume towards the end of the nineteenth century and primarily reflect the widespread adoption of fashionable dress. However, a few undated photographs and the dress of older women provide examples of the clothing described in the memoirs. Most photographs show women seated, or in three-quarters view. This, combined with the length of skirts, keeps leggings or footwear out of sight. Only two other photographs offer a glimpse of women's leggings (plate 17). A photograph of two young girls standing beside a Red River cart, taken in northern Alberta around 1882, shows several inches of the floral beaded cuffs of their leggings, and in one case reveals the curved wing with a narrow decorative edging along the cuff and up the sides.¹⁰² A group studio portrait, taken circa 1890, includes an older woman whose leggings and moccasins are visible. Her overall appearance stands in marked contrast to the more fashionable dress of the younger women around her.¹⁰³ While a

Humphry Lloyd Hime Collection 28 and 29, AM.

¹⁰¹Juanita Leisch, *Who Wore What? Women's Wear, 1861 – 1865* (Gettysburg, Pennsylvania: Thomas Publications, 1995), 38 – 39.

¹⁰²NA-239-20, GAI.

¹⁰³B.7257, Provincial Museum of Alberta (PAA).

scant sample of only three images, the floral beadwork and style correlate with the leggings described in memoirs and narratives.

A small fabric shawl or scarf worn over the shoulders and fastened with a broach or pin was a common garment, worn with a variety of dress styles and often with an apron (plate 18). A woman whose photograph was taken around 1880 wore a gathered skirt, a blouse with long full sleeves, gathered onto a narrow cuff and a shoulder shawl and apron out of contrasting fabric.¹⁰⁴ The apron had three rows of wide ribbon sewn around the bottom edge. The shawl had a narrow braid or ribbon band sewn along the edge and a short fringe. It was pinned at the base of the neck and worn with a strand of large beads. Elise Beaudry, in her portrait taken with Jean Baptiste L'Hirondelle, wore a two piece dress with an apron and small shoulder shawl (14). The blouse had a fitted bodice and gathered sleeves with a narrow cuff. Her skirt had a pleated detail around the bottom of the skirt. A small shawl fell just over her shoulders to the upper arm. It was trimmed with braid and pinned with a broach at the collar bone.¹⁰⁵ These outfits, including the shawls, were sewn from yard goods. Mrs. Xavier Letendre dit Batoche was photographed wearing a similar ensemble (18).¹⁰⁶ Her full skirt had three rows of wide velvet ribbon and a small shawl with a deep netted fringe was pinned over her shoulders. The skirt and shawl may have been made from the same fabric in a rich or deep colour. Her blouse was sewn from a darker colour with velvet cuffs, possibly matching the velvet ribbon on the skirt. Small woolen plaid shawls were also worn as shoulder shawls. They were sometimes worn with dresses made from contrasting tartan prints. Two women photographed in the vicinity of St. Francois Xavier, wore small fringed tartan shawls with an array of other printed fabrics (18).¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴The blouse and skirt were made of a darker fabric, the apron and shawl made in a contrasting fabric in a lighter colour. NA-2631-19, GAI.

¹⁰⁵Elise Beaudry and Jean Baptiste L'Hirondelle Jr. 1989.02.46 MHM.

¹⁰⁶Mrs. Xavier Letendre dit Batoche. R-A 12117 SAB.

¹⁰⁷Breland (Pascal) Family 5. AM.

Although the photograph is in black and white, the variety of fabrics chosen to construct their ensembles suggests a colourful appearance. One woman wore a skirt and bodice made from plaid fabric with a shawl in a different, darker tartan in a heavier fabric. The woman standing beside her wore a tartan wool shawl over a dress, an apron in a pale print, and a floral scarf around her head. In addition to her solid-coloured dress, she wore three different prints and probably four different colours. Larger shawls, many in dark solid fabrics, but also in stripes and plaid, were frequently documented (plate 19).

Three photographs of Madeline Bruneau Hodgson and her daughters illustrate the rapid change in women's clothing (20). One, taken in 1881, shows Madeline and her five daughters wearing clothing that bears a striking similarity to the feminine styles documented by Rudolph Kurz at Fort Union in 1851.¹⁰⁸ Madeline wore a print skirt, dark blouse and scarf with her hair loose around her shoulders. Her daughters wore print dresses, gathered at the waist with simple necklines and straight sleeves. The two older girls wore small shoulder shawls in contrasting print fabrics. The younger girl wore an apron in a third print, while her older sister had silver bead and cone earrings and two strands of large beads around her neck. Although the photograph is in black and white, the combination of fabrics reflects the female love of "gaudy calicos" recorded by some observers. In a photograph taken the following decade, Madeline and her daughters wore dresses with full skirts, long sleeves and high collars.¹⁰⁹ There is no evidence of the shoulder shawls and jewelry worn earlier. Madeline's dress was a dark, solid fabric, while the girls wore plaid. In a third photograph taken when she was seventeen years old, Philomene Hodgson wore a fashionable dress with a high neck and tight fitted bodice.¹¹⁰ It was made of

¹⁰⁸ Photograph of George and Madeline Hodgson's family taken shortly after their 1881 arrival at the Sarcee reservation near Calgary where he was employed as an Indian agent. P974.185.07 MHM.

¹⁰⁹ George and Madeline Hodgson and family, on Sarcee reserve circa 1890, NA-2583-7, GAI. This photograph is not included in plate 20.

¹¹⁰ Philomene Hodgson Glenn circa 1890, NA-3496-9, GAI

dark, solid coloured fabric with velvet trim and small buttons down the front. Philomene would have been eight years old in 1881 and she was probably one of the two older girls in the earliest photograph.¹¹¹ Her dress between the ages of eight and seventeen changed dramatically as she shifted from the distinct dress of Métis women to the more broadly fashionable styles of her time.

Another late nineteenth century photograph taken of three generations of Klyne-Desjarlais women reflect movement from traditional to more contemporary dress (plate 21). Madeleine Beauchemin Klyne “born on the plains in 1820,” her daughter Madeline Klyne Desjarlais and granddaughters Marie Justine and Rosina Desjarlais were photographed at Lebret or Fort Qu’ Appelle.¹¹² Madeline and Rosina wore dresses with full leg-of-mutton sleeves, which returned to fashion in the mid 1890s.¹¹³ Their hair was pulled into buns, while Justine wore her waist-length hair loose. The dresses worn by the three younger women were embellished with tucks and ruffles. Madeleine Beauchemin, their grandmother, wore a plain dark dress with straight sleeves and a small shoulder shawl worn over her shoulders and tied behind the back. Her hair was worn loose and parted in the middle.

By the closing decades of the nineteenth century, women had moved away from the brighter colours of their grandmothers and adopted dark shades such as brown or black. This was particularly true among older women (21). The growing somberness of women’s dress occurred during a time when Métis and Half Breed communities experienced an intense period of family and community loss. The Victorian elaboration of mourning may have had resonance for

¹¹¹Philomene Hodgson Glenn was born in 1873 at Battle River to George and Madeline Hodgson. Philomene Glenn claim 1699, vol. 1349, series D-11-8-c, RG 15, NAC.

¹¹²Three generations of Klyne-Desjarlais family, R-A8823, SAB. Madeleine Beauchemin was the daughter of Andrew Beauchemin and Charlotte Pelletier. She married Michel Klyne at the Red River Settlement in 1839. Their daughter Madeline was born in 1861 at St. Joseph in Dakota Territory. She married Thomas Desjarlais in 1879 at Fort Qu’Appelle. Madeleine Beauchemin claim 65, vol. 1325; Madeline Klyne claim 105, vol. 1329, series D-11-8-b, RG 15, NAC.

women struggling to deal with bereavement and change. It also corresponds with the movement of Métis women into mission settlements, such as St. Albert and Lebret. Public displays of Catholic devotion through the wearing of large crosses, combined with dark dresses and shawls that frequently covered the head, gave older women an almost nun-like appearance (plate 22). Rose Plante Normand, photographed with a group of Catholic sisters at the St. Albert mission, wore her hair loose over her shoulders, a small tartan shawl across her chest, and a plain print dress with narrow sleeves.¹¹⁴ The most dominant element in her dress was the large cross around her neck. Rose and her husband were devout Catholics who accompanied two missionaries west before leaving the Red River area in 1859 to spend the remainder of their lives working at the St. Albert mission. Marie Grant Breland, the wife of prominent free trader Pascal Breland of St. Francois Xavier, was photographed wearing a similar large cross.¹¹⁵ The cross was at least twelve centimeters in length and hung from a necklace made of multiple strands of beads. In two photographs taken twenty years apart, it was her most dominant element of dress, standing in sharp contrast to plain dark garments worn without embellishment. Crosses may have been gifts to acknowledge or encourage piety, worn to indicate membership in Catholic societies or to signify an individual's ability to perform certain lay functions on behalf of the church.

Photographs taken in the early twentieth century show clothing that is indicative of differences between generations and relative degrees of wealth. The fashionable dress, more costly fabrics, expensive trims and accessories worn by some women contrast with the economy or poverty of dress shown by others and, if not an actual indication of prosperity, certainly

¹¹³ Francois Boucher, *20,000 Years of Fashion* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1987), 397.

¹¹⁴ Biography, Rose Plante-Normand, MHM. La Rose Plante was born in 1825 at St. Boniface to Basil Plante and Genevieve La Course. She married Michel Normand in 1843. La Rose Plante claim 932, vol. 1331, series D-11-8-b, RG15, NAC. See also Arlene Borgstede, ed. *The Black Robe's Vision: A History of St. Albert and District* (St. Albert, Alberta: St. Albert Historical Society, 1985), 20, 33.

¹¹⁵ Marie Grant Breland was born in 1820, the daughter of Cuthbert Grant and Marie Desmarais. Marie Breland claim 1120, vol. 1319, series D-11-8-a, RG 15, NAC; "Marie Grant Breland," Margaret

reflected the desire to appear prosperous. A photograph of Mercedes Callihoo and Adelaide Gouin taken at the Lac Ste. Anne Pilgrimage around 1930 provides an example (plate 22). Mercedes wore a stylish outfit in the current fashion, while her elderly companion wore a plain dark dress in a style from the previous century. A dark scarf tied over her shoulders was fastened with a safety pin. Her only ornament was a necklace of dark beads.¹¹⁶ Older women were often more conservative in their clothing choices and continued to wear shoulder shawls and large crosses, while their daughters and granddaughters gravitated towards the fashionable dress of their day, based on their ability to purchase such garments or sew their own.

The Essential Elements of Dress

More than four decades after Keating's 1823 description of Bois Brulés dress, shoulder length hair, indigo capotes, and sashes worn with an array of accessories embroidered in floral motifs constructed, particularly for men, a stable and instantly recognizable appearance. In 1867 George Winship observed men at the Red River Settlement wearing "black corduroy trousers of the barn door variety, secured . . . by a red sash, a white shirt with fancy bosom, and over-all a blue-black capote, ornamented with brass buttons. It was the style of dress that had been in vogue in the Selkirk Settlement for many years."¹¹⁷ The dress described by the Earl of Southesk in 1859 was still much in evidence at Fort Qu'Appelle in 1867. Isaac Cowie recalled his first impressions of Donald Sinclair "strutting about in gorgeous attire."¹¹⁸

He wore his black hair long [in] ringlets reaching his shoulders, under a low crowned, broad-brimmed, soft black felt hat, adorned with a "black foxtail feather," which was an article of trade at the time and resembled a small ostrich plume. He wore a new navy

Arnett MacLeod Collection No. 20; "Pascal and Marie Breland," Pascal Breland Collection No. 6, A.M.

¹¹⁶ Adelaide Gouin was born in 1856 at Fort Pitt. She was the daughter of Antoine Gouin and Catherine Boucher. Adelaide Gouin claim 796, vol. 1328, series D-11-8-b, RG 15, NAC.

¹¹⁷ George Winship (1914), "My First Flat-Boat Ride Down the Red River, and Incidents Connected Therewith," p. 2, MG3 B15, AM.

¹¹⁸ Cowie, *The Company of Adventurers*, 233.

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, heavily decorated by broad stripes of beadwork on the outer sides and fastened below the knee by broad garters completely covered with beaded patterns of flowers and leaves. Beautifully made, yellowish brown moose moccasins, topped with fine silkwork . . . a broad, vari-coloured L'Assomption belt, under which was tucked a profusely ornamented firebag . . . he was strictly in mode by exhibiting 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. On his left hand was a finely silkworked buckskin glove, and in it he held its mate while greeting me with the right.¹¹⁹

Fine dress "in the fashion of the country" was an expression of a degree of prosperity. Cowie's friends, Louis and Sousie Racette, were "conspicuous by their fine appearance and equipment."¹²⁰ Donald Sinclair was a prosperous free trader, while the men observed by Winship were "owners of [cart] trains [who] were said to be very rich." Isaac Cowie identified the worsted sash, tied around the hips not the waist, the capote and shawl as key elements of Métis dress. Capotes existed in some variety, but "the fine navy blue cloth one having a double row of gilt brass buttons in front was the dress coat of the country."

Métis women wore lengths of black broadcloth as shawls.¹²¹ The wearing of the sash and moccasins among men and the shrouded dark dress of older women continued well into the twentieth century. In 1908, the older women in a group photographed in southern Saskatchewan wore dark dresses, large crosses and shawls (plate 22).¹²² Madeline Mercredi Bird of Fort Chipewyan recalled the persistence of shawls as an important woman's garment:

My mum wore a shawl. Me too, I use to wear a shawl when I was a young married woman. Even young girls wore shawls called merinos. A merino was like a velvet shawl with lots of pretty embroidery. It was either blue or black . . . Some shawls were heavy and warm like blankets. Some shawls were black silk and all embroidered. They were beautiful.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Cowie, *The Company of Adventurers*, 233-234.

¹²⁰ Cowie, *The Company of Adventurers*, 326.

¹²¹ "Journal of Daily Occurrences, Fort Ellice, Swan River District, May 1858-1859," transcribed with annotations by Isaac Cowie in 1916, pp. 83 and 90, HBC file R-1248, SAB.

¹²² "Métis family at Auvergne," 1908, R-A19719, SAB.

¹²³ Madeline Bird, *Living Kindness: the Dream of My Life: the memoirs of Métis elder, Madeline Bird* (Yellowknife: Outcrop, 1991), 50.

John Gaddie and Napoleon Lavallee's family were photographed in 1906 at Crooked Lake, near Broadview, Saskatchewan (plates 15 and 23).¹²⁴ Moccasins, sashes and shoulder shawls were still in evidence. Edmund Morris photographed Peter Erasmus in 1909 wearing a black felt hat, sash and pointed-toe moccasins.¹²⁵ A series of photographs taken in 1948 at Batoche show two veterans of the Riel conflict, Jean Caron and Charles Trottier, wearing moccasins. They were accompanied by an elderly woman wearing a long black dress, head scarf, shawl and moccasins (23).¹²⁶ Text and visual records document a somewhat standardized "half-breed fashion" worn from Fort Snelling, to St. Paul, up the Red River, across the northern plains and northward into the parkland and mountain regions. However, the narrow concentration of data along well-traveled paths of movement may mislead us about the actual extent of this social and cultural terrain. The consistency of the clothing choices made by Métis and Half Breed people throughout the nineteenth century, particularly between 1820 and 1870, indicates the widespread existence of a stable and visually recognizable identity.

¹²⁴John Gaddie, Scotch Half Breed; Napoleon Lavallee and family, RA 253 (series), SAB.

¹²⁵Métis family circa 1908, RA 19,719, SAB; Peter Erasmus, Danish/Swampy Cree, Edmund Morris Collection 252, AM.

¹²⁶"Old Timers Meet (Charles Trottier, Jean Caron)," Batoche, 1948. slides No. 367-369, Everett Baker Slide Collection, Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society.

CHAPTER FIVE

Tent Pegs: Material Evidence

My aunt and my mom knew that this was her little bag, they just knew that. They said that's my Grandma Rosalie Lepine (they didn't call her Rosalie Nolin), that was her bag. When my mom actually took it from there she said, "That's where that bag is!" I don't know what kind of memory she had, but "Oh there it is!" It was that kind of revelation.¹

In addition to visual records, text descriptions and memories, items of clothing and decorative objects have survived in museum collections and as treasured family possessions. While only a comparative few can be positioned with any certainty within Métis and Half Breed communities, those few serve as tent pegs to secure or tether ideas regarding style and visual identity to a person, time or location. Most often, objects are merely noted as having been collected from or made by an individual identified as "half breed". A fingerwoven sash in the museum at Cambridge University was noted as "made by half breed, French – Indian cross", while the mid-twentieth century field notes for a beaded vest describe it as made by "an old Métis woman from Lestock, Saskatchewan" (plate 24).² The name of the individual who wore or used an item might occasionally survive, but the name of the woman who created it is usually conspicuously absent. Most objects in museum collections are functional pieces collected by men who acquired them during an expedition, hunting trip or during their tenure in the fur trade when such items were often critical to their comfort and survival. Others were purchased by travelers to take home or send to family members as mementos or pieces of exotica. A very small number of objects in museum collections were created for, used by and collected from Métis or Half Breed people themselves. Ironically, garments that were once commonplace, such as the indigo capote, are now the rarest.

¹Wilfred Burton talking about his great-grandmother, Rosalie Lepine Nolin's sewing bag. Wilfred Burton, personal communication, Regina, Saskatchewan, August 28, 2002.

²Note accompanying sash (Z.114.71) in the collection of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge; field notes made in 1981 by Ted Brassier regarding a beaded vest (V-Z-11) in the collection of the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

Although a considerable volume of garments and decorative objects correspond to descriptions and images in the visual and textual record, most of these pieces have lost their story. However, in cases where scraps of their stories have survived, cryptic references to half breeds or notes regarding a community of origin pin objects together and loosely construct a visual picture of the decorative arts and visual identities of the people who made them, used them and marketed them. When grouped together, these surviving objects communicate considerable information regarding constructive technique, style, artistic materials and aesthetics. The rare examples that are placed within the full context of a person's life, such as Rosalie Lepine's beaded bag now treasured by her great-grandson, carry not only their physical evidence, but also the stories of entire families.

These objects also tell the story of how museums have typically organized their collections and conceptualized ethnology. Most museums have departments of ethnology that include collections from a range of indigenous peoples from North America to Africa, and have treated them as ethnographic, not historic. In North America, material created by those who came for the purposes of exploration and settlement, in contrast, is typically labeled as "pioneer" or more recently as "cultural history." The placement of an object in a collection has often reflected the rigidity or flexibility of museum staff in terms of defining indigenous production, but it has also been affected by the lack of provenance accompanying objects and the manner in which Métis and Half Breed donors have sometimes reframed their family identities into early pioneers or settlers.³ In the past, museums overlooked indigenous participation in activities such as rug and quilt making which were associated with settlement and "whiteness". Collection initiatives resisted objects that reflected change and accommodation while privileging those that represented

³ Lucy Eldersveld Murphy discussed the reframing of Métis identity into that of pioneer in "All Indians Called Me Sister: Métis and Creole Identity in the Great Lakes Region, 1820-1880," a paper presented at the American Society for Ethnohistory Annual Meeting, London, Ontario, October 18 – 22, 2000.

“tradition”. As recently as 1995, Eicher and Erokosima felt the need to challenge the notion that “what is ethnic must be completely indigenous.”⁴

Coats, Outfits and Jackets

Although hide coats and jackets are the garments most often associated with the Métis by curators and scholars, surprisingly few of them can be identified in terms of use or manufacture with any degree of certainty. In spite of historical references that speak to the volume of coats and outfits produced and marketed by Métis people, they are vaguely described. There is also little provenance accompanying most of the surviving garments in museum collections. The garments most often assumed to be of Métis manufacture are hide coats with elements of tailoring, ranging from knee to mid-thigh in length and embellished with porcupine quillwork. These form a significant body of garments in museum collections. A matching pair of hide pants often accompanies them. The ornamentation on the coats is typically floral, with other elements such as wrapped fringe and geometric quillwork at the shoulder. Curators, following the work of Ted Brasser, have generally identified the coats as Red River Métis. The identification is largely based on the similarity of the floral quillwork to objects collected from the Red River region and those represented in Peter Rindisbacher and Paul Kane’s paintings of Métis buffalo hunters. Most of the scant information available in museum records relates to the person who collected or wore the garments. Where they were acquired and who made them is open to speculation.

In 1821, John Halkett, the brother-in-law of the Earl of Selkirk, collected a painted and quilled coat in the vicinity of Red River when he performed his duties as an executor of the Earl

⁴Joanne B. Eicher and Tonye B. Erekosima, “Why Do They Call It Kalabari? Cultural Authentication and the Demarcation of Ethnic Identity,” *Dress and Ethnicity*, ed. Joanne B. Eicher (Oxford: Berg, 1995), 144.

of Selkirk's estate (plate 25).⁵ Men associated with the American Fur Company also acquired several hide frock coats embellished with fine quillwork that are currently in museum collections. Most, like Robert Campbell, Honore Picotte and Pierre Chouteau spent considerable time working at forts on the Upper Missouri.⁶ John James Audubon and Edward Harris also acquired tailored hide coats with fine quillwork during their expedition along the Missouri, which included an extended stay at Fort Union (26).⁷ Alexander Ramsey, the first territorial governor of Minnesota, could have obtained his coat at the treaty proceedings and Half Breed land surrenders that he participated in, or purchased it from Red River Métis camps at St. Paul (26).⁸

Only three or four coats can be identified with some certainty as "Red River" or "Red River half breed." These include the Halkett coat, the Quinney coat at the Smithsonian Institution, which appears to be the same one represented in an 1851 drawing by Frederick Blackwell Mayer, a coat noted as coming from the "Red River Colony" in the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford and an almost identical one in the British Museum with the same "Red River Colony" provenance.⁹ The Halkett coat, which can be fixed in time and location, has a straight-cut front and a tailored back with curving seams and three pleats in the central back skirt. The painting on the coat includes elements from earlier painted Cree coats such as the painted line along the spine and decorative areas defined by incised lines and rows of indigo dots. The delicate floral branches curving up the front of the coat are innovative. The painted area around

⁵The coat was accessioned with a pair of pants, but may not have been worn or acquired as a set. Both pieces are in the Hudson's Bay Company collection of the Manitoba Museum.

⁶The Picotte coat (1914.47.1) and the Chouteau coat (1906.13.2) are in the collection of the Missouri Historical Society. The Robert Campbell coat is in the collection of Campbell House Museum, St. Louis, Missouri. Alexander Ramsey's coat (8303.2) is in the collection of the Minnesota Historical Society.

⁷The John James Audubon coat (Item No. 70) is part of the Audubon collection in the Ornithology Department of the Smithsonian Institution. The Edward Harris coat (86.3147.24) is in the collection of the Alabama Historical Society.

⁸Carolyn Gilman, ed., *Where Two Worlds Meet: the Great Lakes Fur Trade* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society), 107.

⁹John Halkett coat and pants (HBC34-30 a/b Manitoba Museum); John W. Quinney coat (61/5161 Smithsonian Institution); painted coat (1951.2.19, Pitt Rivers Museum); painted coat (1954.WAM 5965, British Museum). Both the Pitt Rivers and British Museum coats were previously in the collection of the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum.

the bottom of the skirt is comprised of three bands of floral painting reminiscent of the bands of floral beadwork typically found on Cree women's hoods. Hide trousers with a sturdy waistband, drop front and brass buttons were accessioned with the coat (plate 25). A quillwork band of repeating cross motifs, alternating blue and red, was worked up the outside of the trousers, which are also edged with a short fringe. A small quilled rosette was placed behind the upper calf at the back of each trouser leg. The pants are similar to those documented by Rindisbacher and Kurz.

The coat in the Pitt Rivers collection, noted as from the "Red River colony", is an extraordinary garment, made even more interesting by the fact that a sister-garment likely made by the same hands is in the collection of the British Museum (27).¹⁰ Strips of loom-woven quillwork trace the spine line and the curving back seams, two large rosettes are placed over the shoulder blade area and three are placed at the small of the back. In addition to the heavily quilled shoulder, three quillwork strips are placed at intervals down the sleeve. The painted borders down the front and around lower edge of the garment are boldly executed in red, blue and black. All the edges of the coat, including the bottom of the skirt, had been trimmed with strips of fur. The sister coat in the collection of the British museum has similar elements: large painted motifs around the skirt, painted borders up the front and around the skirt edge and an abundance of quillwork. The coats had been part of the Wellcome Medical Museum collection and were probably collected together. In addition to the wide borders of alternating feathered circles and red and black rectangles, composite shapes formed of small triangles and large triangular shapes with pairs of curving lines at the tip of the triangle are placed around the skirt. Although readings of the possible symbolism are speculative, the images resonate with references to hunters and their horned prey.¹¹

¹⁰1954 W AM 5 965 British Museum (BM); 1951.2.19 Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM).

¹¹Scholarly interpretations have primarily focused on painted Nascapi coats, which Jonathan King applied to the Red River coat in the British Museum. See Dorothy K. Burnham, *To Please the Caribou* (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1992), 304 note 7 and Jonathan C. H. King, *Thunderbird and Lightning* (British

An 1851 drawing by Frederick Mayer, entitled “Winter dress of Red River Half-breeds” shows a Métis man wearing a painted coat with beaded embellishment. In the drawing, the man also wears leather pants, which though sketchily drawn, are similar to the pants that accompany the Halkett coat. A coat acquired from the John W. Quinney family, currently in the collection of the Smithsonian Institution is remarkably similar to the coat depicted in the Mayer sketch (plates 28, 29).¹² The coat retains a painted line down the spine, and lines which accent the curved seams on the back. Instead of porcupine quillwork, beaded elements were executed on separate pieces of fine hide and appliquéd to the coat. The painted and beaded elements are primarily geometric with interspersed foliate shapes. Two rosettes are placed over each shoulder blade. The painted and beaded border is outlined by double lines with an inside row of dots. The coat has the same fur trim represented in the drawing. Métis men were frequently described as wearing leather garments, but few visual images show men wearing leather jackets or coats. Garments made for them are even fewer. The Quinney coat could be a notable exception. John W. Quinney, a noted Mohican chief, was in St. Paul, Minnesota at the same time as Frederick Blackwell Mayer.

Interspersed among sketches of Red River carts and people identified as “Red River Half Breeds” is an autographed sketch of Quinney wearing a tailored jacket and vest with white shirt and stock, with John W. Quinney (autograph) and the note “sachem of the Stockbridge or the Muk-he-connew (Mohican) Indians.”¹³ Drawings of a man wearing the coat, labeled “Winter Dress of Red River Half Breeds” appear several pages later. Quinney was an older man with short hair and a lean face; the man wearing the coat was younger, with shoulder length dark hair. It seems likely

Museums Publication, 1982), 43.

¹²In his article, “In Search of Métis Art”, Ted Brassler identified the coat in the Meyer sketch as one “now in the collection of the Museum of the American Indian”, but did not discuss its relationship with the Quinney family. Brassler, caption plate 7.

¹³The sketch dated July 29, 1851 can be found in Sketchbook 44, p. 3, Frank Blackwell Mayer sketchbooks, Ayer Collection, Newberry Library.

that Quinney acquired the coat as a gift or purchase from the man drawn by Mayer, making it the only surviving coat made for and worn by a Métis man.

Although the provenance is not conclusive, the four coats have several elements in common. Placed in the Red River region between 1822 and 1851, the coats show a persistence of painted decoration and the continuing resonance of Cree symbolism. They all combine painted designs with quillwork or beadwork. They were created as winter garments and retain some of their fur trim. The coats are knee-length or longer. They are gently tailored, with the front maintaining the straight-cut of eighteenth century coats. None of them have floral quillwork, although two of them have painted or beaded floral elements.

A group of jackets created at a much later date are similar to a jacket worn in the 1869 Ryder Larsen portrait of George Racette (plate 30). One, identified as a “halfbreed jacket,” and collected between 1870 and 1880, is in the Manitoba Museum. Two jackets associated with Louis Riel and another in the Frederick Bell Collection are in the Canadian Museum of Civilization.¹⁴ The jacket worn by George Racette in his portrait has an elongated U-shaped decorative placket made of dark fabric. The front edges of the jacket are formed by the raw edge of the hide. One of the Riel jackets has a fur collar and a decorative placket made of dark cloth embellished with floral beadwork, similar in style to the placket decoration on the jackets in late nineteenth century photographs. The jacket has short fringes at the shoulder. Another jacket associated with Riel, described as “Halfbreed embroidered coat worn by Louis Riel at the Battle of Batoche, 1885”, has a similar box-like cut with a narrow band collar. Two decorative plackets with silk embroidered flowers run the length of the jacket front. The yoke and cuffs are also embroidered. Fringe trims the yoke and shoulder seams, with a short fringe along the collar seam.

¹⁴Dr. F. Matheson Half Breed jacket H.4.0.26, Manitoba Museum; Louis Riel jackets E-111 and V-A-35; Flora Loutit jacket VI-Z-249, Frederick Bell Collection, Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC).

The jacket in the Manitoba Museum, although embellished with narrow strips of fine loom-woven quillwork, is also similar in construction to the jacket worn in the Racette photograph. Both jackets are collarless with fringe trimming the collar and shoulder area. A decorative placket running the entire front length of the jacket covers the fasteners. Finely woven strips of geometric quillwork in shades of orange and purple trim the front placket and shoulders, and serve as decorative elements on the cuffs and pockets. The Frederick Bell collection includes a similar jacket, embellished with fine silk embroidery, made for Bell by Flora Loutit at Fort Chipewyan in 1905. This was probably the same Mrs. Loutit credited by Agnes Dean Cameron as creating “silk embroidery of a fineness which would be the envy of any young ladies seminary in Europe or America.”¹⁵ The jacket has a narrow band collar and decorative plackets down the front. Flowering stems of silk embroidered flowers trim the yoke, cuffs, pockets and front edges of the jacket. The flowers are embroidered in a laid-button hole stitch in shades of pink, red, blue and green. Fine fringe wrapped with porcupine quillwork is sewn from a mid-point of the front collar seam along the edges of the yoke. Traces of white fur can be found along the front and cuffs of the jacket. This jacket style, with a cut influenced by the fashionable trends of the late 1850s, seems to have replaced earlier, longer garments and stabilized into a “traditional” jacket style which remained popular well into the twentieth century and is the forerunner of the beaded leather jackets made today.

Looking at Fire Bags

References to fire bags and shot pouches as essential elements of dress required for the rigors of travel and life in a harsh and often unforgiving environment occur throughout the

¹⁵ Agnes Dean Cameron and a Mrs. Loutit were fellow passengers on a scow travelling from Fort McMurray to the Peace River district in 1908. See Agnes Dean Cameron, *The New North: An Account of a Woman's 1908 Journey Through Canada to the Arctic* (1912; repr. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1986), 251.

nineteenth century, particularly attracting the attention of writers by the early 1840s. Fire bags and shot pouches existed in some variety. Early bags collected from the Cree along Hudson Bay are U-shaped and constructed from three pieces of hide or cloth to form two separate pockets (plate 31).¹⁶ Square bags with rounded top corners with attached rectangular pieces of loom woven quillwork or beadwork are most often associated with the Great Lakes Ojibwe and later with the Saukteaux living in the Red River region. References to fire bags in narrative text span a broad geography ranging from the Columbia, across the plains and into more northern regions. Edward Ermatinger noted in his travel journal kept during a trip from Fort Vancouver to York Factory in 1828 that he had left “at Walla Walla 10 muskets and 9 horns and shot bags for the people [coming down].”¹⁷ Charles Wilkes, the commander of the United States Exploring Expedition, provided a description of bags worn by voyageurs at Fort Vancouver in 1841. According to Wilkes, the bags were made by “the wives of the officers of the Company” who “exercise great taste.”¹⁸

the usual worked tobacco and fire pouch . . . is of the shape of a lady’s reticule, and generally made of red or blue cloth, prettily worked with beads . . . The simple bag does not, however, afford sufficient scope for ornament, and it has usually several long tails to it, which are worked with silk of gaudy colours.

Fire bags matching that description were included in both the field sketch and later oil painting made by Paul Kane of an 1847 Columbia brigade encampment at the Dalles.¹⁹ John Nevins, travelling from York Factory in 1842, stated that “an Indian or Canadian would lose almost anything rather than his fire-bag” which he described as carrying the essentials of fire-making

¹⁶A U-shaped pouch made of sealskin, trimmed with loom quillwork (1998.H266) was acquired circa 1786 by Alfred Robinson at York Factory; U-shaped pouch made of stroud with loom beadwork (G.126) was collected before 1800, George Allen Collection, Hancock Museum, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

¹⁷Edward Ermatinger, *Edward Ermatinger’s York Factory Express Journal, Being a Record of Journeys Made Between Fort Vancouver and Hudson Bay in the Years 1827-1828* (Toronto: Royal Society of Canada Proceedings and Transactions, vol. 6, 1912), 115.

¹⁸Excerpts from Volume 4 of the United States Exploring Expedition narrative cited in “Voyageurs on the Columbia, 1841: Source Material,” *Museum of the Fur Trade Quarterly* 25, 4 (1989): 6.

¹⁹Paul Kane, *At the Boat Encampment*. The field sketch is in the collection of the Stark Museum. The oil painting is in the collection of the Royal Ontario Museum.

including a small piece of dry birch bark for kindling.²⁰ Peter Garrioch's loss of his fire bag "in crossing the creeks" almost proved disastrous on a trip he made alone from Red River in 1844. "I had lost all my fire tackle, but fortunately I had a flint gun which answered every purpose."²¹ Because the ability to hunt and light a fire for warmth and cooking was essential to survival, every traveler had a fire bag, and consequently a considerable volume of these bags can be found in museum collections.

Not surprisingly, given the strong cultural and kin affiliation between the Métis and Saulteaux in the Red River region, the earliest bags associated with the Métis are essentially Saulteaux in form, created with new trade goods and decorative elements. A bag in the British Museum identified as "Métis, Manitoba" appears to be an early form of panel bag (plate 31).²² It is made from a rectangular piece of red cloth with a narrow band of quillwork across the top and a loom woven panel of pound or pony beads. The bag is trimmed with two rows of beaded fringe made from unraveled wool. The strap is loosely fingerwoven in an open netting stitch. A loom woven panel with beaded fringe also identified as "Métis, Manitoba" is all that remains of another early panel bag (31).²³ Several bags collected in the Great Lakes region, including one in the Chandler-Pohrt collection dated circa 1860, are remarkably similar to a bag in the collection of the Museum of Civilization in Ottawa identified as "an old half-breed fire bag from the prairies (31)."²⁴ The bag is made of fine red broadcloth, ribbon and cloth tape with areas of open white

²⁰ John Birkbeck Nevins, *A Narrative of Two Voyages to Hudson's Bay: with Traditions of the North American Indians* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1847), 49.

²¹ Peter Garrioch Journal 1843-1847, p. 10, MG2 C38, AM.

²² The bag is undated, 97.787 Christy, BM.

²³ Beaded panel with fringe, Q83.305, BM.

²⁴ A pouch made of black broadcloth with a beaded panel and finger woven shoulder strap is in the collection of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. It is dated circa 1830, 1954.1544, SHSW. Another bag constructed from a finger woven yarn panel interwoven with white beads, sewn to black broadcloth with a loom woven shoulder strap dated circa 1860 in the Chandler-Pohrt Collection (No. 3026) is very similar to the red bag collected by Dr. Bell, V-Z-5, CMC.

beadwork in the diamond and otter tail designs most frequently associated with the Ojibwe.

Geometric loom woven “fingers” are sewn along the bottom of the bag.

Paul Kane’s portrait of Francois Lucier depicts him wearing a square pouch made of indigo or black cloth, decorated with strips of loom woven quillwork, with looped fringe wrapped with quills (plate 8). The straps of both his bag and powder horn are red. A similar bag made of dark blue stroud bound with ribbon and decorated with strips of quillwork is in the Speyer Collection at the Museum of Civilization bearing the label “Bag made by the Red River Indians.”²⁵ Edward Harris collected a similar bag at Fort Union in 1843, possibly made by Nancy Kipling Labombarde or one of the other Métis women living and working at the post (31).²⁶ The bag, while rectangular, has rounded bottom corners, reminiscent of the U-shaped Cree bag. The bag and shoulder strap are made of indigo cloth. Its primary decorative elements are two strips of loom woven quillwork with rows of fringe made of quill-wrapped leather and white woolen tassels.

Tabbed fire bags, which have been dubbed “octopus” bags by museum curators and scholars because of their eight tabs, are among the most common bag forms in museum collections. One of the earliest, the “S. Black” bag in the collection of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, England was made before 1842.²⁷ The bag was probably made for Samuel Black, a fur trader of the day. While details of the bag’s origins are not available, it does tether a style of bag and embellishment to a time and possibly a location. More significant than the bag form, is the skillful and delicate floral embroidery executed in a fine chain or Pekinese stitch. The symmetrical composition reflects a confident artist’s hand. The same confidence was exhibited in a similar composition done in silk embroidery on a hide bag collected by John Rae now in the

²⁵The bag is identified as Red River Métis, before 1840, Speyer Collection V-Z-6, CMC.

²⁶ 86.3147.27, Edward Harris Collection, Alabama Department of History and Archives.

²⁷1983 B.1.38, PRM. For a discussion of the bag see Laura Peers, “Many Tender Ties: the Shifting Contexts and Meanings of the S BLACK Bag,” *World Archaeology* 31, 2 (October 1999): 288- 302.

collection of the Royal Scottish Museum.²⁸ An outfit consisting of shirt, trousers, sash and tabbed bag worn by T. E. Drake while hunting in the Rocky Mountains in 1847 is in the collection of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter, England. Included with the outfit is a red fire bag with somewhat tentative floral beadwork.²⁹ The delicate design is similar to the embroidery on the Black and Rae bags, all three compositions organized around a strong vertical line created by stacked motifs up the centre of the bag.

Scholars have positioned most of these bags in the Red River region, but while Black and Rae spent time at Red River, they also traveled to other districts. It has also been suggested that the bags were made by Métis or Half Breed women. The execution of the silk embroidery indicates a trained hand, but trained by whom? The bags, particularly the Rae bags, show an array of quality trade goods and a wide, but subtle colour palette. Black had a country wife and daughters, while John Rae was a family friend of the Vincent family, probably dating from his tenure at Moose Factory where he served as post surgeon. In a letter written in 1843 from Moose Factory to her daughter Elizabeth Truthwaite at Red River, Jane Renton Vincent noted "Our friend Mr. Rae left for Canada on the 20th September."³⁰ Brassier proposed that the octopus bag was an innovation of the Red River Métis during the 1840's based on a Great Lakes prototype, advancing his thesis that the Red River region served as a centre of artistic experimentation, creative and technical excellence and heightened production.³¹ However, the tabbed fire bag appears to have been well established by 1840 in both the Columbia and Red River regions, and very likely beyond.

²⁸The bag is part of a group of articles related to the Franklin expedition donated by Rae to the Royal Scottish Museum. L304.128, John Rae Collection, RSM. A drawstring panel bag with similar silk embroidery is also part of the collection. L. 304. 129, RSM. Rae's Franklin Expeditions were made in 1848-1851 and 1853-1854.

²⁹64/1974/120, T. E. Drake Collection, Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter.

³⁰Jane Vincent to Elizabeth Truthwaite, Moose Factory, October 1, 1843. Truthwaite, Elizabeth (Mrs.), MG2 C11, AM.

³¹Ted J. Brassier, "The Lost Tribes Found Again," *Bo'Jou, Neejee*, 47 and "In Search of Métis Art," *The New Peoples*, 224.

The Earl of Southesk collected two beautiful fire bags at the Red River Settlement “from Half Breed, 1859” (plate 32).³² The bags are profusely beaded in two very different styles. One bag has a large solid-beaded area shaped like a crest with the monogrammed initials “WJC” on a variegated background, surrounded by dark green leaves. Emerging from the centre of the topmost leaf pair is a group of three pink flowers and a pair of buds with green tendrils and yellow berries. The beadwork on the opposite side has a large central motif consisting of a complex pink flower surrounded by green leaves and sprays of buds and berries and one flower. The bag is outlined with black fabric tape, with a single line of white beads tacked along the seam. The outside edge of the bag is further accented with linear patterns of open blue and pink beadwork, reminiscent of the open diamond and otter tail designs. Each tab has a wider pattern of open beadwork with metallic accent beads placed inside and outside the pattern. Each side of the pouch has a different pattern worked along the tabs in pink and blue.

Both Southesk bags have an element of playfulness and experimentation, utilizing an extensive palette of beads in terms of size and colour. One bag in particular uses tiny beads in twenty-five colours to construct three-dimensional forms. Some areas of the beadwork have been sewn over a foundation formed by layers of paper or birch bark. The bag uses a variety of conventional and unconventional beadwork techniques to create an almost surreal explosion of floral and foliate imagery. One side of the pouch has a diagonal line of four large flowers surrounded by an array of twenty-one flowers, buds and berries. Tendrils and elongated leaf forms swirl outward from the bouquet. The cloth tabs are heavily beaded with three-dimensional strawberries on a white stem with a spray of three blue flowers at the top. The other side of pouch has a bouquet of flowers spilling from a blue and white vase. The decorative elements of the vase are represented using tiny beads in at least twelve colours. The tabs are worked with a

³² Notes on pieces of paper and a handwritten catalogue entitled *Articles from Saskatchewan* provide details regarding the acquisitions on some, but not all of the items, Earl of Southesk Collection, Kinnaird Castle.

more restrained vertical arrangement of three bud sprays. The beadwork is multi-directional and rarely confines itself to the more typical application of concentric lines of beads to outline and fill forms.

In 1862 Bernard Rogan Ross, chief trader at Fort Simpson, donated a "Smoking Bag made by Half Breed Indians" to the Royal Scottish Museum (plate 33).³³ The bag is made of black wool edged with red and ivory silk ribbon. It has the usual line of white beads along the seam of the ribbon and a two-bead edge stitch worked along the outside of the entire bag. The beadwork technique is more conventional, but still shows inventiveness in areas of cross-hatching and variegated colour. The floral design on one side is a sensuous white branching stem that varies in width from four to two beads. The composition includes the plant roots, which are represented in lines and loops constructed by a single string of beads. The seven flowering branches that extend from the central stem hold six variations of bud and berry motifs and three flowers, with the largest flower at the top of the composition. Each tab is beaded with a white feathered stem and three green leaves. The flowering branch on the opposite side of the pouch has a sturdy stem that rises from a tiny stylized vase. Four larger flowers are combined with two different bud forms arranged in groups of three. Two large pink flowers connect the upper area of the bag with the feathered stem that extends into the tabs. The two outer tabs are embroidered with a flowering branch and two large undulating leaves, while the branches on the inner two tabs are embellished with three flowers.

Created in approximately the same period and probably coming from two different regions, the bags while unique, have some similarities besides their basic form and size.³⁴ The decorative area on all three bags, excluding the ribbon or fabric trim and beaded outline, is approximately 18 by 25 centimeters; a small space for such intense areas of decoration. The

³³Bernard Rogan Ross Collection 848.41, Royal Scottish Museum (RSM).

³⁴The Southesk bags are 40.7 cm. L x 21.7 W and 46.2 cm. L x 21 cm. W respectively. The Ross bag is 43.2 cm. L x 20.3 cm. W.

beadwork on the bags reflects an art form not yet standardized into a common repertoire of stitches and styles. While familiar motifs such as the four petal rose, the rose bud, tendrils and feathered stems are in place, they are used in complex and varied ways. Larger beads are used with smaller ones to construct tiny flowers. Leaf and flower forms are handled with imagination. The palette, while rich and varied (ranging from 15 - 25 colours), is dominated by shades of pink and green.

Bags with a specific Métis or Half Breed provenance are also found in collections made around 1890 by Emily Shaw Colcleugh and in 1905 by Frederick Bell, two travelers who made overlapping journeys several years apart. Both collections have been studied and discussed by other scholars.³⁵ Emily Shaw Colcleugh collected between 1888 and 1894, making most of her acquisitions during two long trips as a passenger on Hudson's Bay Company boats. She also briefly resided in Winnipeg and Selkirk, communities that grew out of the old Red River Settlement. Her first trip, made in 1888, began at St. Peter's near present-day Selkirk and ended at Fort Edmonton. Her second trip in 1894 took her into the Athabasca and Mackenzie River districts. Frederick Bell acquired his collection in 1905 when he served as a special constable for the North West Mounted Police. He accompanied the Treaty No. 8 party from Edmonton to Fort McPherson, travelling up the Athabasca and Mackenzie rivers.

Among the items acquired by Emma Shaw Colcleugh in 1894 were two bags collected from individuals recorded as "French Half-Breeds" in her notes (plate 34). An unusual bag with six tabs instead of the usual eight was collected at Fort Simpson from "a French Half-breed."³⁶ The bag is smaller than earlier tabbed fire bags. One black velvet bag was noted as "Tobacco

³⁵For a discussion of Métis material in the Frederick Bell collection see Judith Thompson, "Turn-of-the-Century Métis Decorative Art from the Frederick Bell Collection," *American Indian Art Magazine* 8,4 (1983): 36-48. The Emma Shaw Colcleugh collection is discussed in Barbara A. Hail and Kate Duncan, *Out of the North: the Subarctic Collection of the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology* (Haffenreffer Museum, Brown University and University of Washington Press, 1989).

³⁶Bag, 71-5007, Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology (HMA).

pouch, French half-breed, Fort McMurray.”³⁷ Constructed of two pieces of floral beaded black velvet, edged with red ribbon and closed with a tasseled drawstring made from silk thread, the bag bears a strong similarity to women’s sewing bags or reticules. Four similar tobacco pouches in the Musée McCord belonging to Fred and Leon Gaudet of Fort Good Hope were made around the same time period (plate 34).³⁸ The bags are also made of velvet with multicoloured drawstrings and tassels made of silk thread. Three of the bags are embroidered, while one is beaded. One is embroidered in a laid button hole stitch, while the others are done in a fine chain stitch. The compositions are complex floral sprays that compress colour and motif into a relatively small decorative area. The bags are further ornamented with lines of spot stitched beadwork or featherstitch silk embroidery.

A larger rectangular bag made of black velvet echoes the shape of earlier panel bags. It was identified as a “Half-breed Fire-bag, St. Peter, Red River, Manitoba”, and is very similar to one in the Frederick Bell collection described as “Halfbreed work showing French-Canadian influence” (33)³⁹ The documentation that accompanied the bag also included the comments “Fire bag. Black velvet – modern work. Great Slave Lake. Ft. Resolution.”⁴⁰ The bags are remarkably similar, considering they were collected more than a decade and two thousand kilometers apart. Both are made of black velvet, bound with silk ribbon with a single line of white beads along the edge of the ribbon and a two-bead edge stitch around the entire perimeter of the bag. Each bag has a short fringe of approximately seven centimeters. The fringe on the St. Peter’s bag is beaded, while the fringe on the Fort Resolution bag is partially beaded with each fringe ending in a double wool tassel. The lower half of each bag has dense floral beadwork that

³⁷Tobacco pouch, 60-45-89, HMA.

³⁸Tobacco pouches, ME 988.136.14, Musée McCord Museum (MMM). Fred and Leon Gaudet were the sons of Chief Trader Charles Philippe Gaudet and Marie Houle Fisher. The bags were made by either their mother or their sisters.

³⁹Fire bag (34 cm. x 16.3 cm. W) 57.453, HMA; fire bag (32 cm. L x 18.5 cm. W) VI-Z-210 CMC.

⁴⁰Notes made by Frederick Bell and his widow Mrs. Marcella Bell accompanied the collection, artifact card, CMC.

is different on both sides. Each bag has one side dominated by a centrally placed, complex pink flower with petals arranged around a large centre segmented by curved lines. The central flower on the St. Peter's bag is made of twelve petals around a circle segmented into six equal parts, while the Fort Resolution motif is eight petals arranged around a circle made of four equal parts. Another bag in the Bell collection is a more contemporary version of the northern Algonkian U-shape, made of black velvet, embellished with dense floral beadwork and a shoulder strap of brightly coloured braided wool (plate 34).

Sometime after 1860, the variety of bag forms that persisted in other regions was replaced on the prairies by a long narrow bag that could be tucked into the folds of a sash (plate 35). A smaller, narrower version of the plains pipe bags made by the Cree, Saulteaux, Dakota and others, the bags carried the usual fire tackle and smoking material. While these bags are common in museum collections, they are seldom identified as Métis. However, two bags in the Royal Scottish Museum can be identified by their similarity to bags in archival photographs and their communities of origin: Batoche and Fort Garry.⁴¹ The bags are both long rectangles made of hide with squares of solid beadwork. The beadwork on either side of the bag consists of different floral motifs on a white background. Long fringes are sewn along the base of the bag, wrapped in porcupine quill on one bag, left plain on the other. The tops of both bags have been cut into four short "fingers" and trimmed with a two-bead edge stitch along the outer edge of the hide. The beaded squares on the bags are similar in composition and colour to the squares of beadwork suspended from the four corners of pad saddles. A similar long bag that once belonged to the Pruden family has four rounded fingers at the top and a panel of floral beadwork on a white background.⁴² The bag was made of fine indigo wool broadcloth with hide fringe and

⁴¹Bag identified as Cree from Batoche (1968.687) and another identified as from Fort Garry 1870.44.22, Royal Scottish Museum (RSM), Edinburgh.

⁴²The Prudens were a Cree-English family. Pruden fire bag, H88.94.26, Provincial Museum of Alberta (PMA)

edged with dark blue silk ribbon. Instead of the usual single line and edging in white beads, the Pruden bag has a single line of medium blue beads and a two-bead edge stitch in deep pink.

The surviving bags indicate that fire bags existed in some variety, and were subject to fashionable trends. The tabbed bag appears to have predominated across a broad terrain for most of the mid-nineteenth century. References to the long, narrow bag appear by the late 1860s and it is the most common fire bag style in the photographic record. Unlike the wide distribution of the tabbed bag, it seems to have been regionally situated on the northern plains. Other bag forms which appear in visual documents and museum collections suggest that while a particular bag form may have enjoyed fashionable popularity, there was always room for individual expression. A fire bag made from fine fur belonging to Louis Riel in the collection of the St. Boniface Museum is edged with red fabric tape and has no other decorative elements (plate 34).⁴³ The bag worn with the outfit in Mayer's "Winter Dress of Red River half breeds" was also made of fur with a decorative panel and fringe. Fur may not have been an unusual material for a firebag, but its vulnerability to decay may account for its under-representation in museum collections. While fire bags can be found in a variety of forms, they are unified by their function and visual importance. For comparatively small elements of dress, they command the viewer's attention through the use of colour, fine materials, intense areas of decoration and their central position on the body.

Watch Pockets and Small Bags

During the last half of the nineteenth century pocket watches acquired a number of accessories. These included chains, ornamental fobs, decorative stands and pockets to hold them when not in use. Tiny pockets were often sewn into men's garments to hold watches, but small pouches and decorative pockets were also used to protect a watch when placed in a larger jacket

⁴³The bag is in poor condition, having lost most of its fur. EE-357, MSB.

or trouser pocket. A variety of other small bags were also produced and used. Women also used small velvet bags based on the Victorian lady's reticule as sewing bags and for storing small possessions. Small beaded purses were used for coins. Small bags were often quite elaborately beaded or embroidered, serving as decorative elements whether they were carried on the person or set out for ornamental display.

The Earl of Southesk collected three silk embroidered watch pockets between 1859 and 1860, which he identified as "made by Red River Half Breed women" (plate 36).⁴⁴ The three pockets are made of fine white caribou hide, embroidered with silk thread and trimmed with silk ribbon. The pouches are reminiscent of the Cree U-shaped pouch and have a higher back, with a pocket on the front. On two of the pouches, the higher back area is used as a decorative surface. The silk embroidery is done in chain, Pekinese and satin stitches with shades of pink and green predominating. Two of the pouches have a silk ribbon handle, while one has a blue ribbon ruffle stitched around the perimeter of the pocket. A very small watch pocket made of hide embellished with floral beadwork found among the possessions of Baptiste "La Prairie" Lagimodiere is in the collection of the St. Boniface Museum (36). The bead size, colour palette and floral motifs on the pocket are similar to the beadwork on a pair of leggings that he also wore. His wife, Marie Harrison, likely made these for him.⁴⁵ Another tiny watch pocket was collected at White Earth, Minnesota circa 1870 and is currently in the collection of the North Dakota Historical Society (36).⁴⁶ The pocket is made of indigo wool broadcloth, edged with brown fabric tape and embellished with floral beadwork on both sides. Frederick Bell collected a similar watch pocket

⁴⁴ *Articles from Saskatchewan.*

⁴⁵ Lagimodiere watch pocket, PA 247, Musée St. Boniface (MSB). Jean Baptiste "La Prairie" Lagimodiere was identified as French Canadian and his wife Marie Harrison as half breed in their children's scrip applications. Elzear Lagimodiere claim 725, vol. 1322, series D-11-8-a, RG 15, NAC.

⁴⁶ Watch pocket collected by W. H. DeGraff from White Earth, Minnesota, 12421, State Historical Society of North Dakota (SHSND). A large number of Métis and Half Breed people lived in the vicinity of Devil's Lake and many were enrolled at White Earth at the time the watch pocket was collected. Michael Davis WPA, p. 13. William Davis WPA, p. 9, SHSND.

during his 1905 expedition into the Mackenzie and Athabasca districts (plate 36). The watch pocket is a tiny pouch made of black velvet with drawstrings and tassels made of silk thread. Both sides of the U-shaped pouch have a floral motif done in beadwork. The inside edges of the pouch are outlined with a zigzag border of clear beads with accents of faceted brass beads at regular intervals. According to the collection notes it is a “watch bag. Tassels would hang out of waistcoat pocket. Halfbreed work.”⁴⁷ While only a small sample of six, these tiny watch pockets are useful indicators of the scope and longevity of the watch pocket as a decorative item. Covering a territory from Minnesota to the Athabasca and a time period of almost half a century, these tiny pockets serve as small signposts that mark the extent of their production and distribution and also help establish the range of the complex floral compositions characteristic of their ornamentation.

Several small bags created and used by Métis and Half Breed women can also be found in museum collections. Bella Gaudet of Fort Good Hope made an unusual purse circa 1900 (plate 37).⁴⁸ The purse was constructed by sewing a round velvet bag with a band of floral beadwork to an ornate silver frame and clasp. The purse is trimmed with loops of silver, white and gold beads and a large tassel of silk thread. The Frederick Bell collection includes a small, semi-circular purse noted as “Beaded pouch or purse – dark blue velvet. Flower design. Half-breed work.”⁴⁹ The dense floral beadwork packs complex motifs and a palette of fourteen colours into a tiny decorative area. At the turn of the century, small bags made of netted beadwork became popular. A tiny bag made of three different shades of blue beads strung through pairs of brass metallic beads is in the collection of the Provincial Museum of Alberta (37). Bethsey Fraser Borwick made the bag in Edmonton around 1900. She was the wife of Bill Borwick, the blacksmith at

⁴⁷Notes accompanying collection, VI-Z-203, F. Bell Collection, CMC.

⁴⁸Notes accompanying collection, Velvet purse, ME 988.136.6, Musée McCord Museum (MMM).

⁴⁹The decorative area is 6.5 cm. x 13cm. VI-Z-200, F. Bell Coll., CMC.

Fort Edmonton, and the daughter of Colin Fraser and Nancy Beaudry.⁵⁰ Another tiny netted bag made by Mary Cunningham Callihoo is in the collection of the Musée Heritage Museum in St. Albert (plate 37).⁵¹ Mary was born in 1893, the daughter of James Cunningham and Mary Hodgson. The bag was made later in the century, but is similar to the earlier Fraser-Borwick bag. The Cunningham-Callihoo bag is made of transparent cranberry beads strung through a clear bead. The pouch still retains its fabric lining. Both little bags were started from a velvet piece that formed the opening of the bag with beaded loops that serve as decorative elements. These small bags were marketable items for tourists and travelers, but they were also exchanged as gifts. The Harrison-Lagimodiere watch pocket, the Bella Gaudet purse and the two netted bags made by Bethsey Fraser Borwick and Mary Cunningham Callihoo indicate that their production and use were not exclusively for a souvenir market.

La Robe Métisse

A smoke and water-damaged dress that survived the destruction of the St. Boniface Cathedral was once in the collection of the St. Boniface Historical Society housed in the basement (plate 38).⁵² Identified as “une robe Métisse”, it is a solitary example of a hand-made dress that does not emulate fashionable European clothing. The square cut maintained elements of earlier hide garments and made maximum use of the fabric with little waste. The fine cotton broadcloth used to construct the dress had a satin-like surface and came in widths of sixty-six centimeters. Three widths of fabric were used to create the skirt and the sleeves were likely made from what was cut away to create the upper part of the dress. The bodice of the dress was made

⁵⁰Blue netted bag, H95.75.2, Provincial Museum of Alberta. Bethsey was born in 1833, her father, Colin Fraser was Hudson's Bay Company governor George Simpson's Scottish piper. Bethsey Fraser claim 501, vol. 1327, series B-11-8-b, RG 15, NAC. William Borwick Biographical Sheet, HBCA.

⁵¹Mrs. Callihoo donated a significant collection of early twentieth century material to the Musée Heritage Museum in St. Albert, Alberta. Netted bag 974.02.52, MHM. Mary Valerie (Cunningham) Callihoo, “The James Cunningham Story,” *The Black Robe's Vision*, 109.

⁵²La robe Métisse, EE-344, MSB.

by folding a length of fabric in half and cutting a simple neck opening. There were no armholes and the sleeves, also made from folded squares of fabric, were attached to the bodice and the sides were sewn closed. One piece of fabric was centered at the front of the skirt, while two additional lengths were sewn into a series of nine box pleats that began under each arm and went around the back of the dress, creating greater fullness. The dress was hand-sewn with unfinished seams.

Wide bands of fine silk ribbon sewn around the skirt bottom and along the shoulder seams provided the only embellishment. The four rows of ribbon sewn around the skirt bottom create a single band twenty-four centimeters wide. Water damage to the garment makes it difficult to determine the original colours of the ribbon. The two wider ribbons at the top and bottom of the border are different, but similar floral designs with horizontal stripes through the pattern. The two inner ribbon bands appear red and green, although the red might be a colour-run from another garment. The ribbon trim along the shoulder seam is narrower and the same ribbon was folded to create a binding and ties for the neck opening. The dress is 133 centimeters from shoulder to hem and the circumference of the waist is 127 centimeters, indicating that the dress was made for a short, and possibly stout woman. The dress could also have been made for a pregnancy or worn with a belt or ribbon to draw the waist closer to the body. With the exception of the box pleats, the cut of “la robe Métisse” is similar to fabric dresses worn by Dakota, Blackfoot and Cree women which echoed both the style of earlier hide dresses and the “way of working” that hide imposes on the maker. The woman who made the dress accepted the shape of the fabric, as hide clothing accepted and worked with the shape and characteristics of animal hide. The narrow lengths of fabric determined the style of the dress. The dress was constructed from six square or rectangular pieces: three lengths of fabric for the skirt, one folded for the bodice and two smaller pieces for the sleeves. It is probable that no fabric was wasted. No documentation survived the fire, making it impossible to place the dress in terms of time.

However, there are photographs of older Métis women wearing plain, high-waisted dresses that appear similar to this dress. Is this an example of the “shapeless, stayless, uncrinolined” cotton gowns worn by Métis women observed by the Earl of Southesk in 1859?⁵³

Quilts, Pillows and Household Articles

Much of the material in museum collections that can be placed within specific Métis or Half Breed families and communities takes the form of decorative and functional items created for the household. During the course of conducting this research, textiles emerged as a particularly vibrant area of artistic production. They also evoked powerful responses of memory and identification from the Métis people who looked at the photographs and slides. Textiles were the most recent area of intense production and consequently more people have vivid memories of working with cloth. Several quilts whose makers’ identities are preserved were found in the collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, the Provincial Museum of Alberta and the Minnesota Historical Society. None of the quilts are conventionally quilted with stitches, rather they are all tie-quilted. Five of these are crazy quilts, two created at Pembina (plate 39). Martha Gervais Bottineau made her crazy quilt between 1885 and 1893 and Rosalie Ducept Bruce made hers at the turn of the century.⁵⁴ Both quilts were constructed of large square or rectangular blocks appliquéd with irregular pieces of cloth embroidered with a range of images and outlined in a diverse array of embroidery stitches. It is the subject matter of this imagery that sets these quilts apart from others of their style. Rosalie Ducept Bruce’s quilt dances with birds, cranberry bushes, fish, flowers and a horse. Martha Gervais Bottineau’s quilt is also animated with embroidered and painted birds and flowers that are drawn from the natural environment she

⁵³Southesk, *Saskatchewan*, 44.

⁵⁴Martha Gervais Bottineau crazy quilt, 8945.3, MNHS. Rosalie Ducept Bruce crazy quilt, 81.93.1, SHSND. Martha Gervais was the second wife of Pierre Bottineau. Charles Bottineau Biographical Sheet, HBCA; Search File: Bottineau Family. HBCA. Rosalie Ducept Bruce applied for scrip as an heir of Pierre Ducept. Scrip Files: HB 1331 and 1337, vol. 180, series D-11-3, RG 15, NAC.

was surrounded by. The floral motifs and embroidery techniques are similar to those found in beadwork and silk embroidery. The fabrics employed are more utilitarian than the velvets and silk used on the typical Victorian crazy quilt.

Unidentified members of the Ross family reportedly made a crazy quilt and table cover in the collection of Ross House Museum in Winnipeg.⁵⁵ This quilt was also formed by a series of appliquéd blocks pieced together to form the quilt top. The names of members of the Ross family are interspersed with images of a whooping crane, thistles, flowers and a group of visual references to the family's identity as British subjects which include Masonic symbols and flags.

The popularity of crazy quilts caused cigar companies to include small pieces of printed silk in packages of cigars. Mary Victoria Mercredi Loutit created a cigar silk quilt that combined "crazy" elements with a red and white block design (plate 40). Mrs. Loutit made her cigar silk quilt at Fort Chipwywan between 1900 and 1911. Her marriage to Chief Factor John James Loutit gave her access to a desirable commodity that other women in the community might not have enjoyed. According to the acquisition notes, the quilt was a treasured possession that was only used at Christmas and New Year.⁵⁶ Margaret Pruden Fraser of Fort Edmonton made another crazy quilt with a matching pillow.⁵⁷ This quilt was made before 1920 from an eye-popping array of cotton prints. It has less embroidery than most crazy quilts, but there is some cross-stitching in four colours of cotton embroidery thread. Another example of early twentieth century crazy quilt patchwork can be found on a pillow cover made in shades of pink and rose by Justine Beaudry

⁵⁵Alexander Ross family quilt, X988.1.98, Ross House Museum. The table cover is not catalogued and was found folded inside the quilt and may have been donated to the museum from another source.

⁵⁶Mary Victoria Mercredi Loutit cigar silk quilt, H88.158.1, PMA. She was the daughter of Joseph Mercredi and Christine Lepine, artifact report, PMA.

⁵⁷Margaret Pruden Fraser crazy quilt and pillow cover, H83.102.3/4, PMA. Margaret Ann (Maggie) Pruden was born at the Red River Settlement in 1859. She married Henry Fraser, the son of Colin Fraser and Nancy Beaudry at Fort Edmonton in 1884. Acquisition File, Esme-Fraser Pike, PMA. Also Henry Fraser claim 3205, vol. 1358, series D-11-8-c, RG 15, NAC.

Bellerose of St. Albert.⁵⁸ The frequent pairing of quilts and matching pillows suggests that the pillow probably had a companion quilt.

The making of a crazy quilt provided an artistic outlet for the woman creating it. The imagination required to create a diverse range of complementary images, the use of colour and the frugality of employing even the tiniest scraps of fabric appealed to both the aesthetics and economy of Métis women. The time span in which these examples of crazy patchwork were created correspond with its popularity as an art form, which peaked between 1880 and 1920. These quilts indicate that Métis women participated in this fashionable trend and utilized it, as did their Victorian sisters, as a vehicle to showcase their needlework even though it was executed on the surface of more modest fabrics.

Textiles may have been an introduced material, but making blankets was an old practice. In a 1938 interview, Mary Lucier Laframboise recalled making blankets “out of buffalo hides [with] wild goose and duck feathers in them. The last one she made was the year she was married . . . in 1882.”⁵⁹ While the majority of the quilts in museum collections demonstrate the participation of Métis women in larger craft movements, two quilts made a considerable distance apart may indicate the existence of a distinct Métis and Half Breed quilting tradition similar to those that have been identified among other ethnic or regional groups. (plate 41)⁶⁰ Maggie Pruden Fraser made a bold black and red quilt at Fort Edmonton around 1880 from superfine wool broadcloth purchased from the local Hudson’s Bay Company post ten years earlier.⁶¹ The donor described it as a “links quilt.” The quilt is a variation of a simple block design in

⁵⁸Justine Beaudry Bellerose pillow cover, 982.01.06, MHM. This pillow is not included in the plates.

⁵⁹Mary Lucier Laframboise was present during her husband’s interview and several comments are attributed to her. Joseph Laframboise Interview (1938), p. 5.

⁶⁰Distinct Amish, Hawaiian and African-American quilt traditions have been acknowledged by textile historians. See Carter Houck, *The Quilt Encyclopedia Illustrated* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Publishers and the Museum of American Folk Art, 1991).

⁶¹Margaret ‘Maggie’ Pruden Fraser quilt and pillow, H83.102.2/3, PMA; acquisition file, Esme Fraser Pike, PMA.

alternating squares. However, in a departure from this common design, teardrop shapes cut from black wool were appliquéd in groups of three onto the centre of each red block. The use of embroidery on a block quilt is also unusual. Branch-like designs in a chain stitch connect each trio of teardrops. Each teardrop is outlined in a buttonhole stitch. Short lines of cross-stitching in yellow, lavender, white or green are placed at right angles to the corner angles of each block. The matching pillow has circular black and red pieces arranged on each block. The medallions are embroidered with a variety of branch motifs, including some with berries, and are outlined with a buttonhole stitch in yellow or lavender.

An elderly woman at Turtle Mountain created another bold and bright quilt in a similar design. Marie Josephine Renville Poitras created the quilt during the 1940's at the age of ninety. This quilt shares several of its constructive elements with the Pruden-Fraser quilt. It is made of wool and heavy cotton fabrics.⁶² The design is a variation of the block design with appliquéd shapes in contrasting colours. The design elements are outlined with feather stitching in green or yellow. The Renville-Poitras quilt is a more complex variation of the block design, composed of twenty blocks formed by twenty-five alternating squares of fuchsia and green. Each larger block is bordered by bands of hot pink fabric. On the central square of each larger block are single appliquéd leaves in shades of orange and yellow. The quilt top has a border of green and red-orange fabric. The border across the top is a simple block design outlined with embroidery, while the side borders are made of alternating triangles with a variety of organic shapes appliquéd to each triangle. There is evidence of great economy in the piecing of some of the tiny squares and

⁶²Marie Josephine Renville Poitra quilt, 94.82.1. SHSND. Marie Josephine Renville (1864-1962) was the daughter of Joseph Renville and Frezine Bellegarde. She met her husband Joseph Poitras at Fort Union, but they were married in 1881 at LeBret, Saskatchewan. 1881 Registre des Baptems, Marriage et de Sèpèlture, Mission de St. Florent. Lac Qu'Appelle Mission, p. 3. See also Josephine Renville in *St. Anne's Centennial: 100 Years of Faith, Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation, Belcourt, North Dakota: St. Anne's Catholic Church*, 1985), 495-496.

the salvaging of the yellow embroidery thread from the cords of Bull Durham tobacco bags.⁶³

These two quilts, unique in the greater body of quilt production, but so similar to each other could be evidence of a distinct form of pieced blanket. Their production by an elderly woman could indicate a desire to preserve an older style.

The expressive and commemorative uses of quilting have continued into the present time. A quilt in the collection of the Provincial Museum of Alberta was made by a group of women in Edmonton to honour Adrien Hope, a respected Métis elder (plate 40). The quilt was made in 1978 to commemorate a fiftieth anniversary.⁶⁴ This bright, embroidered quilt is a contemporary version of the earlier embroidered block quilts. Theresa Brien, a contemporary Metchif quilt artist from Turtle Mountain, made another anniversary quilt. Her quilt, a log cabin design organized to form a large cross, was made in 1990 to commemorate the anniversary of the local Catholic church.⁶⁵

In addition to patchwork quilts, evidence of additional textile production has survived in the form of handmade rugs and pillows. While these items, particularly rugs, could be and were commodified, they were also utilized within the family and community circle for gifts and to beautify the home environment. The most spectacular piece in this group of material is a large hooked rug made by Marie Grant Breland as a wedding gift for one of her sons (plate 42).⁶⁶ It is the masterful work of a skilled woman who demonstrates her technical and design virtuosity in the execution of this large-scale piece. Complex in its use of colour and design, Marie Breland drew on her many artistic influences. The rug is organized around a large central square with a red vase of flowers on a gray background. A wide floral band around the central motif is broken at the four corners, by a square split on the diagonal by a red and blue pinwheel design borrowed

⁶³Artifact Data Sheet, 1984.00082.00001, SHSND.

⁶⁴Adrien Hope quilt, H88.30.3, PMA.

⁶⁵Theresa Brien quilt, 94.82.2, SHSND.

⁶⁶The rug is a large area rug; most hooked and braided rugs are smaller scatter mats. Marie Grant Breland rug, DA330, Musée St. Boniface (MSB).

from the repertoire of quilt patterns on one half and a section of narrow strips based on the French Canadian rug-making technique of “la catalogue” on the other.⁶⁷ The floral motifs along the wide border are worked in pinks and reds on a black background, identical to those done in beadwork on black wool or velvet. An inner row of Ojibwe otter tail and an outer row of tipi camp motifs form the geometric border that edges the rug. The narrow fabric pieces used are approximately one centimeter in width, which while increasing the time required to complete the rug, gave the artist greater control and allowed for the execution of the subtle shifts in colour and development of detail. The Grant-Breland rug, a group of four rugs collected from the Selkirk area and one collected from “a Métis lady in Prince Albert” are among the few examples in museum collections of what was a significant volume of textile production.⁶⁸ As was the case with quilting, Métis women participated in widespread popular craft movements at the time of their popularity and integrated new art forms into their repertoire. The practice of rug hooking originated in North America and its popularity as a commodity began in the late nineteenth century.⁶⁹ Rug braiding was a European practice that moved west with settlement. Métis women made both types of rugs, but few braided or hooked rugs have retained their story and most in museum collections are assumed to have originated with Euro-Canadian makers.

There are several examples of small household items made from cloth and embellished with beadwork or embroidery (plate 43). Two velvet pillows embellished with beadwork and stuffed with down are in the collection of the St. Boniface museum: a black velvet pillow belonging to the Carriere family and a large red velvet pillow made by the “Métis mother” of the

⁶⁷La Catalogne refers to a style of French Canadian rug made on looms with strips of rags. This type of rug production was well known in the Red River Settlement. Pierrette Boily, curator, Musée St. Boniface, personal communication, February 17, 2003.

⁶⁸A group of five rugs were collected from the Selkirk area from women identified as Margaret Flett, Granny Anderson and Mrs. Sinclair (H9.23-120 – 124 Manitoba Museum); a small hooked scatter mat with a floral design collected in the mid-twentieth century was attributed to “a Métis lady in Prince Albert” (AR 173 GAI). These rugs are not illustrated in plate 42.

⁶⁹Burlap used as the backing for hooked rugs became available during the 1850s.

donor.⁷⁰ A large gold velvet square with floral beadwork belonging to Caroline Pruden Sinclair was probably used as a small table cover as it seems too large for a pillow.⁷¹ The beadwork of these pieces has the same basic composition, consisting of beaded motifs in the centre and each of the four corners, usually employing mirror symmetry across the diagonal. The beadwork on the Carriere pillow begins at each of the four corners and is linked by a sinuous white stem with buds, flowers and leaves branching off at regular intervals on short stems. The beads are strung on sinew and are tacked with a single cotton or linen thread. The beadwork is finely sewn, with stitches every bead or two. Pairs of metallic beads are tucked into the outer rows of leaf and petal elements. Also in the Musée St. Boniface collection is an unfinished round floral beaded pillow cover reportedly made by a niece of Louis Riel.⁷² It is made from fine black wool broadcloth with a circular stem of floral beadwork, alternating flower motifs with smaller pairs of buds and leaves. The Lewistown Museum has a small round pillow identified as a “wedding pillow” that was collected at Turtle Mountain.⁷³ The pillow is made of black velvet with a large central floral spray. Evidence of a drawing made in a white substance is still visible underneath the beadwork.⁷⁴ Two rows of two-bead spot stitching form circular outlines around the central motif. It is possible that the pillow has been made more than once. Currently it is sewn onto a light cotton canvas pillow with a blue and green wool backing with a beaded scallop fringe sewn along the seam. Marie Grant Breland made a pink wool and silk cushion that is in the Manitoba Museum.⁷⁵ The large rose motifs, in subtle shades of pink and red, are worked in a long satin

⁷⁰Carrière beaded pillow (EE-119) and beaded pillow made by Marianne Lacasse’s Métis mother (EE-120 MSB).

⁷¹The fabric square is 55 x 58 cm. It shows no evidence of having been sewn into a pillow. There is a cotton backing and the corner and central areas have been reinforced with heavy cotton prints to support the beadwork. The velvet has been turned and sewn with tack stitches which may have been done later in the piece’s life. HG.67.13.17, Parks Canada (PC).

⁷²Unfinished pillow cover attributed to a niece of Louis Riel, EE-118 MSB.

⁷³Beaded pillow, 2000.870-1 Lewistown Museum, Lewistown, Montana.

⁷⁴This could be white flour or chalk.

⁷⁵Marie Breland embroidered pillow, H.4.1.537, the Manitoba Museum (MM).

stitch. The design is not symmetrical. Two roses surrounded by a rich array of leaves, buds and violets are positioned in one corner with a smaller motif with one central rose on the opposite side.

Some household articles utilized indigenous materials in new forms. A small group of birch bark containers and trays collected from the Red River area, scattered among several museum collections, document the participation of Métis women in the production of baskets and containers, a widespread activity which involved many other groups (plate 44). Bark containers were generally referred to as “rogans” or “cossettes.” These objects are all made of birch bark with floral and other decorative elements added with porcupine quills or dyed spruce root. While the materials utilized drew from indigenous tradition, the forms were adapted to suit late nineteenth and early twentieth century tastes and household requirements. An octagonal basket with lid was collected from the Red River Settlement and later donated to the Royal Scottish Museum.⁷⁶ The stitching is done in spruce root, but the coloured embellishments are made with large quills. Each of the eight sides has a floral motif in red, green and white. The lid of the rogan has a large circular design in blue, red and white formed by concentric circles of geometric elements around a large six pointed star or flower. A “Mrs. Renville” of Pembina made two fine birch bark trays with elaborate floral porcupine quillwork.⁷⁷ One tray is oval, the other rectangular. Wide borders of floral motifs are worked around the edge of each tray. The edges of the trays are treated similarly to garments. One has a two-bead edge stitch in clear seed beads worked along the raw edge of the bark, while the other has a more elaborate braided quillwork border in alternating bands of purple, blue, pinks and green in addition to a two-bead edge stitch in white beads done along the raw edge. A later bark basket made by a “Mrs. Lavoie” in the

⁷⁶Collected before 1871 from the Red River Settlement, 1871.18, RSM.

⁷⁷Birch bark trays 505 and 9907 SHSND.

collection of the Manitoba Museum also has floral elements worked in spruce root, which although faded were once a bright red and green.⁷⁸

Three tea cozies and a shelf valence made of fine hide decorated with brightly coloured floral porcupine quillwork document the shift of an ancient art form into the twentieth century (plate 45). One, made by Malanie Blondeau, is fully sewn and trimmed.⁷⁹ The side seams are trimmed with notched hide and a wide band of white fur was once sewn along the bottom. Loops of wrapped quillwork form a handle at the top of the cozy. A central purple flower grounds large stylized sprays of flowers, with contrast petals in orange on one side and yellow on the other. A spiraling scallop in a purple saw tooth stitch outlines the composition. A pair of unassembled tea cozies with remarkably similar designs raises several questions. Both once belonged to members of old Hudson's Bay Company Half Breed families. One pair was found among the possessions of Caroline Pruden Sinclair.⁸⁰ A large seventeen-petal flower worked in bright purple and orange is the central element of a complex floral spray that covers much of the hide. A spiraling scallop in a purple saw-tooth stitch forms a border. These designs, echoing the composition of mid-nineteenth century silk embroidery, are organized by stacking elements along a central vertical line with delicate, symmetrical elements branching outwards. The other side of the Pruden-Sinclair tea cozy is not so purely symmetrical. A yellow and orange flower composed of pairs of curved petals and a pair of purple tendrils are placed around a central point, slightly off the central line. The flowers at the end of the sinuous branches are equal in terms of size and colour, but are generally not the same shape. Another pair of tea cozy pieces in Manitoba Museum is very similar in design, although executed on bleached caribou hide in more delicate colours of mauve and pink.⁸¹

⁷⁸H4.1.530 a & b, the Manitoba Museum.

⁷⁹AR 12, Glenbow Alberta Institute (GAI).

⁸⁰HG.67.13.31, Parks Canada (PC).

⁸¹HBC97-3 MM.

An elaborately quilled shelf valence belonging to the McMurray family, possibly acquired by Chief Factor William McMurray or made by a member of his family, is also made of bleached caribou hide and embroidered with a delicate palette of mauves, pinks and yellow.⁸² The shelf valence has several design elements in common with the tea cozy made by Malanie Blondeau in the early twentieth century. Swirling scallops in mauve sawtooth stitching link the three floral sprays. The edge of the hide is notched and the entire valence is outlined with a two-quill zigzag band in two shades of mauve. An elaborate netted fringe made of finely cut hide and wrapped quill was made separately and sewn to the back of the valence. These pieces, along with the quillwork done throughout the nineteenth century, speak to the persistence and importance of porcupine quill as a medium. Ancient mediums maintained vitality and were renewed through the introduction of new dye stuffs and new forms. Their uniformity in terms of colour palette and design suggests that they were either made from patterns that were widely available or commissioned and distributed throughout the network of Hudson's Bay Company posts. Rosalie La Plante La Rocque used a quillwork kit in the collection of the Royal Saskatchewan Museum in 1890, and the Malanie Blondeau tea cozy was made in the early twentieth century. Both women came from the small Métis community of Lebrét, Saskatchewan.⁸³ Do these items anchor other pieces of floral quillwork found on household accessories to a turn of the century date? How many of them originated with one individual artist or one artistic community?

⁸²HBCL-66 MM. The valence is 41.5 cm. long and varies in width from 13 cm. at the widest point of the scalloped edge to 7 cm. at the narrowest. The fringe is 11 cm. in width, with wrapped fringe fill at the narrowest point of the scallop. William McMurray (1820-1877) was identified in the Hudson's Bay Company records as a "Native of Rupertsland." His first wife was Annie Ballenden, his second Harriet Inkster. William McMurray Biographical Sheet, HBCA.

⁸³These two women and their work are discussed in Chapter 8.

A Family Collection: Marie Houle Fisher Gaudet and her Daughters

A varied collection of over sixty items originating with the family of Charles Philippe Gaudet and Marie Houle Fisher of Fort Good Hope provides a rare example of the range of material created for home and family (plates 47, 48).⁸⁴ The collection includes the artistic production of Marie Houle Gaudet and her daughters, but few of the objects can be identified with one specific artist. Marie Houle was born at Fort Simpson in 1843, the daughter of Alexander Fisher and Marie Houle.⁸⁵ Her grandparents were François Houle, a Métis interpreter, and his Dene wife. The couple never married and Marie did not use her father's surname. Her family remembers her as Marie Houle and her mother as "la vieille Houle." The Gaudets had eleven children, seven who lived to adulthood.

The children were raised in a strict Catholic environment and their son Leon recalled that they were brought up "très, très sévèrement."⁸⁶ Christina, Dora and Isabella attended the convent at Fort Providence and their brothers went to school in St. Boniface. The girls in particular were remembered as living isolated lives, working hard to meet the needs of the household, looking after their brothers and devoting their energies to the church. Christina died in 1900 at the age of thirty-six, Dora in 1909 at the age of thirty-two. Marie Houle Gaudet died in 1914. In 1917 Charles Philippe Gaudet, accompanied by Fred and Bella, began his return journey to Quebec after more than fifty years in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company. He died enroute at St. Boniface. Fred and Bella continued their journey and spent the remainder of their lives in

⁸⁴The Gaudet Collection, ME 988.136 1-63, Musée McCord Museum. Julien Gaudet gave a lengthy interview regarding the collection and his family history. See Nicole Dorval, "Entrevues Aupres d'un Donateur du Musée McCord; Présentation d'un Questionnaire Pour d' Eventuels Donateurs de Collection," Report de travail dirigé au programme de muséologie Faculté des études supérieures, Université de Montréal, Musée McCord Museum 1990. For a biography of Marie Gaudet see Dianne Payment, "Marie Fisher Gaudet: La Providence du fort Fort Good Hope," *Selected Papers of Rupert's Land Colloquium 2000, May 24 - 28, 2000, Vancouver, Washington*. (Winnipeg: The Centre for Rupert's Land Studies, University of Winnipeg, 2000).

⁸⁵Dorval, Entrevues, 17.

⁸⁶Dorval, Entrevues, 39.

Quebec. Leon had also moved to Quebec, working as a fur trader. The objects they brought from Fort Good Hope remained in the wooden chests they traveled in, suppressed and hidden, as was their mother's Dene ancestry.

According to the donor, Julien Gaudet, most of the decorative objects in the collection were made for Frederick and Leon by their sisters. Among these were strips of beadwork for a pair of leggings, moccasins, fingerwoven garters, tobacco pouches, mittens, gloves, a complete set of embroidered dog tuppies, four wall pockets and two shelf valences. Julien Gaudet remembers that the wall pockets and shelf valences were the only items displayed in Bella and Fred's home after they moved to St. Lambert, Quebec.⁸⁷ The valences covered small shelves on the walls of their home and the wall pockets were hung in the bedrooms on the wall beside the beds. While all of the work created by the women of the family shows skill and taste, two of the wall pockets and the two shelf valences speak to a common aesthetic (plate 48).⁸⁸ Could these be the work of Bella, a talented artist, who painted the murals inside the church at Fort Good Hope?⁸⁹ When taken as a group, the artistic sensibilities of the artist emerge. The four pieces have a vibrant colour palette, elaborate and inventive floral compositions and unique motifs. Flowering branches on delicate blue or silver-grey stems, silk tassels, netted fringe and silk ribbon bows reflect an imaginative artist with access to an array of materials. Unusual and complex floral forms, pairs of yellow and gold flowers with drooping petals, daffodils and bold pansies interject bright accents into a predominantly pink and red palette. If Bella's life was as restricted and isolated as her nephew suggests, her creative life was rich, sensual and inventive.

⁸⁷Dorval, Entrevues, 92.

⁸⁸Valences, ME 988.136.7 and ME 988.136.8; wall pockets, ME 988.136.11 and ME 988.136.12, MMM.

⁸⁹Marie Gaudet sewed and embroidered the altar cloths and she and her daughters "were sacristines responsible for the decoration and maintenance of the altar" and Bella "painted frescos, a portrait of Jesus and decorations on the communion table." Payment, Marie Fisher Gaudet, 191.

One Woman's Production: Mary "Florida" Monkman Tait and the Southesk Collection

The Earl of Southesk brought eight pairs of moccasins home to Kinnaird castle. Richard Hardisty had presented three pairs to him, although only two have survived. One pair in the collection corresponds with those worn in the photograph he had taken wearing his "hunting outfit."⁹⁰ These are similar to a pair belonging to Dr. James Hector of the Palliser expedition, donated to the Royal Scottish Museum in 1861.⁹¹ The Southesk moccasins are wrap-arounds with indigo broadcloth vamps outlined with seven rows of dyed and wrapped horsehair. Unlike the moccasins made as special gifts for the Southesk children, these moccasins are utilitarian.

Mary Florida Monkman, the wife of Philip Tait, was described by Southesk "as doing some sewing for me, and was now engaged in making me a few pairs of moccasins to take home on my return."⁹² The moccasins she made at Fort Carleton in 1859 provide a rare opportunity to examine the artistic production of one woman. This little collection of six pairs of children's moccasins was created within a relatively short time frame, and employs similar techniques, materials and colours (plate 49). All the moccasins are made in pointed-toe style with a small vamp of fine white caribou hide outlined with two or three rows of dyed and wrapped horsehair. With the exception of one pair, the "shoe" of the moccasins is made of lightly smoked deer hide. There is some variation in the treatment of the cuff. One pair of white wrap-arounds has a decorative cuff in indigo wool. The others have white hide cuffs, one pair with a notched outer edge, while the others are bound with fine silk ribbon. The notched edges appear to be the predecessor of the pinked edges that have retained their popularity until the present time.

⁹⁰Southesk noted that he hired Mrs. Tait to do some unspecified sewing prior to commissioning her to make moccasins for his children. There were originally six pairs of moccasins made for the children, but today there are only four complete pairs as two are missing their mates.

⁹¹The Hector moccasins were identified as made by "Half Breed Indians". They are pointed-toe, with a plain white caribou vamp outlined with three rows of blue and red porcupine quillwork stem stitch. Text of an old tag in the acquisition file, Hector moccasins 702.5/5A RSM.

⁹²Phillip Tait or Tate was employed as post master and clerk although Southesk identified him as a hunter. He married three times, but in 1859 his wife was Florida, also known as Mary Monkman. The family had arrived at Carlton in 1855. Philip Tate 'A', Biographical Sheet, HBCA.

The decorative elements are constructed from narrow bands of cotton fabric, silk ribbon and embroidery thread. Pink and blue ribbon bows and accents trim three pairs of the moccasins. Each vamp was embroidered with a different floral motif: four variations of a flowering branch and two with a large central flower surrounded by a circle of leaves and buds. Two of the moccasins have additional floral embroidery along the cuffs. The embroidery was executed in some variety, particularly a sprig of purple and rose coloured thistles done in a combination of chain, satin and stem stitch. Buds and small inner circles were done in a laid buttonhole stitch, but the predominant stitch in Mrs. Tait's repertoire was the chain stitch she used to construct stems, tendrils, leaves and flowers. The stitches were applied in concentric lines that outlined and filled shapes with the exception of the vertical application of a long satin stitch used to create thistle flowers. The colour palette used for the floral elements of the silk embroidery is a range of soft pastels, while the stems and leaves were done in stronger shades of green. The moccasins are quite small, ranging in length from sixteen to twenty-two centimeters from toe to heel.

The moccasins show Mary Tait to have been a skilled seamstress. The decorative area on each vamp is only sixteen square centimeters, yet she was able to utilize as many as eight different colours in that tiny area. Many tiny, perfectly executed stitches were made to create the moccasins from the fine wrapping of individual hairs around the horsehair outline to the neat and regular stitches on the seams. She used a delicate and subtle palette of pinks and beiges. There is also evidence of economy in the tiny pieces of cotton fabric used to bind the raw edges and the piecing of hide evident on one of the moccasins. This little group of moccasins is unusual, but not because of any particular characteristics they possess. Their significance lies in the fact that they can be tethered to a time, a location and a named artist.

Listening to Objects

When considered as a group, objects that can be positioned with varying degrees of certainty in the hands of a Métis or Half Breed woman, communicate important information about style, artistic technique and media. They relate to each other visually, but also show change and individuality. With few exceptions, embellishment is overwhelmingly floral. Subtle variations of pink, rose and red against tones of green appear to have been the dominant palette from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century. The Southesk collection illustrates the artistic scope that existed across the interconnected network of Métis and Half Breed communities and demonstrates the range of motif, object form and media within that network during the same time period. As a consumer, Southesk could choose from floral designs that ranged from stylized shapes to an extraordinary degree of realism and he could choose work done on hide or cloth, embroidered in quill, silk thread or beads. There was no linear progression from indigenous to European materials and styles; the new and the ancient co-existed and were part of the hybrid repertoire that each woman drew upon.

Different women, living in different communities, used a common repertoire of motifs, although inventiveness and experimentation is also evident. Fortunately clothing and decorative objects made for family members or exchanged as gifts serve as a counter-point to the volume of material created for sale. The range of materials used to create clothing and decorative objects is quite extraordinary and, not surprisingly, in true *métis* style, straddle the new and old. Media ranged from the indigenous to the innovative, but not in any kind of trajectory. Malanie Blondeau probably made her quillwork tea cozy almost two decades after Marie Grant Breland embroidered the flowers on her pink wool and satin pillow. In the same way that text and visual documents map a visual identity over a particular terrain, the surviving objects provide the material link.

CHAPTER SIX

Spirit and Function: Symbolic Aspects of Occupational Dress

*A blinding blizzard came on. It was about forty below zero, but we kept on . . . We were on the open plain, and had no shelter, but we were not cold. We were no weaklings, we men of the old brigades!*¹

As an elderly man, Norbert Welsh reflected on his life on the northern plains as a freighter, hunter and trader. He expressed pride in the ability to endure hardship when travelling and working under difficult conditions. Occupation and work can create an important category of identity, particularly when enhanced by collective action.² Occupation placed demands on clothing, requiring it to serve particular functions and also reflect the social status that accompanied certain positions. The symbolism of dress often originates in its practical, use-bound functionality, accumulating layers of meaning through repetitive associations with particular settings, individuals and actions.

Dress and occupation became intertwined during the fur trade because clothing and the materials to make clothing were often issued with equipment supplied to men as part of the contractual relationship. Between 1814 and 1818, the standard equipment issued by the American Fur Company to voyageurs Francois Mercier, Jean Baptiste Nadeau and Louis Mainville included two point blankets, two cotton shirts, one pair of ox hide shoes, a portage collar and tobacco.³ Men earning more money in other occupations were issued additional

¹ Norbert Welsh with Mary Weekes, *The Last Buffalo Hunter* (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1939), 77.

² Although Tilly critiques the link between occupation and identity as lacking the “linguistic and geographic coherence” of ethnic identity, he acknowledged that the ties created through occupation “shape the social units involved”. Christopher Tilly, “The trouble with stories,” Charles Tilly Web site, <http://www.sociology.columbia.edu/pub.tilly>, 5, 19 (accessed March 4, 1998).

³ Oxhide shoes, also known as *souliers du boeuf* or *bottes sauvages*, were manufactured in Quebec for both local and fur trade markets. Men’s accounts from the American Fur Company Settlement Book, 1814 – 1818, pp. 8, 16, 26, 28, Michlimackinac and Sault Ste. Marie Records, American Fur Company Fonds, M58, NAC. The settlement book does not indicate occupation, only salary and equipment. Voyageurs can be identified by the portage collars included in their equipment.

goods. Amable Pursien at 1200 per annum received a “callicoe” shirt, a blue capote and a black silk handkerchief. Pierre Lasallier at 1800 per annum fared somewhat better with the addition of stroud, “fine” cotton shirts, a grey capot and a dressed deerskin. Clothing and goods were also offered as incentives, to secure the services of a desirable employee and as payment for particular skills or additional work. When voyageur Francois Dufau was contracted in 1808 to winter at Moose Fort in the James Bay region, he was offered 600 livres per annum, double the usual equipment and promised a pair of cloth breeches each year with the provision that if “required to work in his trade as mason or carpenter, he will receive 750 per annum, but no breeches the second year.”⁴ In 1817, the American Fur Company added a beaver hat and a vest to voyageur Alexis Lecompte’s basic equipment, perhaps to secure his services.⁵ In his 1835 contract, the Hudson’s Bay Company offered guide Alexis L’Esperance the incentive of a blue capote and other goods if he brought the Portage La Loche brigade into York Factory in time to meet the English ships.⁶ In 1858 at Fort Ellice, an unidentified “Freeman” was paid “for Work -- 1 colored Belt 2 inches.”⁷

Métis and Half Breed men tended to cluster in certain occupational categories. The volume of York boat brigade men identified as “Native,” “natif du pays” or “Native of Red River” increased steadily after 1830. By 1870, forty-five percent of the men identified as labourers in the total work force of the Hudson’s Bay Company were identified as “Native.”⁸ In addition to direct employment with fur trade companies, occupations such as free trading,

⁴François Hippolyte Dufau contract with McTavish, McGillivray and Co. to engage for Moose Fort, Montreal, 5 March 1808, Davies/Scroggie Collection of Voyageur Contracts, Yale Collection of Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

⁵American Fur Company Settlement Book, 1814 – 1818, p. 26.

⁶Servants Contracts, B239/u/1, HBCA.

⁷Journal of Daily Occurrences, Fort Ellice, Swan River District, May 1858-1859, HBC file R-1248, SAB.

⁸Philip Goldring, “Papers on the Labour System of the Hudson’s Bay Company, 1821 – 1900,” (Environment Canada: Manuscript Report Number 362, 412, 1977), 81 – 84. See also Goldring, “Labour Records of the Hudson’s Bay Company, 1821 – 1870,” *Archivaria* 11 (Winter 1980/1981).

freighting and buffalo hunting became the economic base of many Métis communities. The clothing worn when engaged in meaningful work has the capacity to produce what Hodder described as a “material symbol” which once invested with meaning, has both durability and persistence.⁹ Several of the most enduring elements of Métis dress, such as the sash, the capote and a penchant for flashy headgear have their roots in occupational clothing.

Voyageurs and Tripmen

Distinctive voyageur dress first emerged during the French colonial fur trade and endured over generations of voyageurs, glossing over ethnic differences.¹⁰ Although the occupational category of voyageur drew men from a wide range of backgrounds, certain groups were predominant. French Canadians, Mohawks from Kahnawake and Métis dominated the brigades coming out of Montreal, the Great Lakes and Red River, while Orkneymen and Natives such as John “Rem” Kipling and Samuel Atkinson worked the boats of the Hudson’s Bay Company.¹¹ Voyageurs developed an array of expressive traditions, some appropriated from indigenous peoples and others evolving over decades of occupational practice. Robert Rundle, a missionary heading west with a brigade in 1840 observed voyageurs offering, “3 coats, 1 hat and 1 cap” to “la vieille qui souffle” (the Old Woman Who Blows) whose presence would enable them to hoist a sail and rest from their labours.¹² Voyageurs adopted the common practice of the formal arrival. As performed by the Cree, Saulteaux and Dakota, formal arrivals were often

⁹For a discussion of material culture versus language as a medium for cultural meaning, see Ian Hodder, “Post-modernism, Post-structuralism and Post-processual Archaeology,” *The Meanings of Things: Material Culture and Symbolic Expression*, ed. Ian Hodder (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 72-73.

¹⁰See Francis Back, “The Dress of the First Voyageurs, 1650-1715,” *Museum of the Fur Trade Quarterly* 36, 2 (2000): 3-19.

¹¹The term Native in Hudson’s Bay usage was generally synonymous with “Native-born” or “half-breed.” John Rem Kipling, a “Native of Rupertsland” worked his way from middleman to steersman on the Albany brigades between 1798 and 1804. Search File: John Ram Kipling, HBCA. Samuel Atkinson, son of Chief Factor George Atkinson and his Cree wife, served as voyageur on the Rupert House and other regional brigades circa 1820 - 1840. Abstracts of Servants Accounts, B.135/g/1 – 53, HBCA.

organized into processions announced by song.¹³ Voyageur performance of the formal approach began with a stop to dress themselves in their best attire. Thérèse Fisher Baird described “Point á la Barbe -- the point where one shaves . . . so named from the fact that all voyageurs stopped there to shave and make themselves presentable” before arriving at Michilimackinac.¹⁴ Henry Sibley recalled his 1832 arrival by canoe at Detroit:

the voyageurs prepared for a grand entry into the City, by arraying themselves in their best apparel. They donned high crowned hats . . . with an abundance of tinsel cords, and black plumes, calico shirts of bright tints exactly alike, and broad worsted belts around their waists. Being all fine athletic fellows they made quite a striking appearance. The canoe had been gaily painted, and on this occasion two large black plumes, and two of bright red of like dimensions adorned the bow and stern [and] under . . . the inspiration of a Canadian boat song . . . we shot down the grand river.¹⁵

In 1834 Sir John Richardson described the unfortunate effect a deluge of rain had on the arrival of a group of voyageurs at Cumberland House, “The crew had dressed themselves out in all their finery,-- silver bands, tassels, and feathers in their hats, -- intending to approach the station with some effect; but unhappily for the poor fellows, the rain fell in torrents [and] their feathers drooped.”¹⁶ Voyageur dress had a marked similarity across regions and time. Colin Inkster, born at the Red River Settlement in 1843, recalled the voyageurs of his childhood making “a stop before they arrived at one of the Company’s posts, so that they might array themselves in all their finery of dyed feathers, ribbons and coloured neckerchiefs, and then they would make their

¹²Robert Rundle, *The Rundle Journals: 1840 – 1848* (Calgary: Historical Society of Alberta, 1977), 16.

¹³Rudolph Kurz described one hundred Saulteaux marching towards Fort Union “their festive array in order,” *Journal of Rudolph Kurz*, 84. William Asham described his Cree grandfather’s party “thinking they would meet strangers that day, they put on their ornamented attire”. James Asham (1932), “The History of My Ancestors: the Swampy Cree Indians,” MG1 A9, AM.

¹⁴Elizabeth Thérèse Baird, “Reminiscences of Early Days on Mackinac Island, *CSHSW*, vol. 14, (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1898), 63.

¹⁵Thomas C. Blegen, ed., *The Unfinished Biography of Henry Hastings Sibley* (Minneapolis: The Voyageur Press, Fred Totten Phelps, 1932), 21-22.

¹⁶Sir George Back and Sir John Richardson, *Narrative of the Arctic Land Expedition to the Mouth of the Great Fish River, and along the shores of the Arctic Ocean in the years 1833, 1834 and 1835* (Paris: A. and W. Calignani, 1836), 31.

spectacular arrival, singing their songs as they drove their canoes along at top speed.”¹⁷ Their visual appearance was further enhanced by long hair and body tattoos.¹⁸

Figure 6.1 Voyageur Dress and Appearance Across Regions¹⁹

| Date | Location | Description | Observer |
|------|----------------|--|------------------------|
| 1825 | Mackinac | white striped cotton shirt, blue pantaloons, red sash around the waist, and red handkerchief around the neck | Elizabeth Fisher Baird |
| 1836 | Green Bay | the French and half-caste voyageurs in tassled, bright-colored capotes and blanket blouses of diverse hues | Elizabeth Smith Martin |
| 1840 | York Factory | dressed in sky blue capotes scarlet sashes & high scarlet night caps & mocassins | Letitia Hargrave |
| 1841 | Columbia | fourteen voyageurs all gaily dressed in their ribands and plumes; the former tied in large bunches of diverse colours, with numerous ends floating in the breeze | Charles Wilkes |
| | Fort Vancouver | all his finery, feathers, and flowing ribands, tying on his ornamented leggins, sashes, and the usual worked tobacco and fire bag | Charles Wilkes |
| 1851 | St. Paul | The scarf sash, pipe and moccasins are the only remnants of the old voyageur dress | Frank Blackwell Mayer |
| 1867 | Lake Winnipeg | manned by Métis, all gaily decorated in fancy shirts and feathers, just as they had embarked that morning at Oxford [House] after a ball | Isaac Cowie |

In addition to the standard equipment provided by their employers, voyageurs were avid consumers of goods. According to Ross Cox, the voyageur love of finery was exploited by their employers: “Every article of extra clothing or finery which they want must be obtained from the

¹⁷W. J. Healey, “Interview with Colin Inkster,” Manitoba History Scrapbook M10, Manitoba Legislative Library.

¹⁸C. Stuart Houston, ed., *Arctic Artist: the Journal and Paintings of George Back Midshipman with Franklin, 1819-1822* (Montreal-Toronto: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 132 and Grace Lee Nute, *The Voyageur*, (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1955), 73.

¹⁹Data for Figure 6.1: Baird, “Early Days on Mackinac Island,” 63; Elizabeth Smith Martin, “Visit to Fort Howard in 1836,” *Proceedings of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin 60th Annual Meeting, October 24, 1912*, 182; Margaret A. MacLeod, *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1947), 78; David B. Tyler, *The Wilkes Expedition* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1968), 240 – 241; Mayer, 96 and Cowie, 127.

Company's stores; and as there is no second shop at which to apply, prices immeasurably beyond the value are charged for the various articles they purchase."²⁰ Fur trade inventories and accounts confirm that goods consumed by voyageurs were kept in stock, although such goods were also attractive to other customers. Hudson's Bay Company accounts provide some insight into the voyageur consumer. At Sault Ste. Marie, the 1826 inventory included corded hat tinsel, a range of feathers identified as black foptail, black ostrich, coloured cock and circle, and an assortment of handkerchiefs (red barred, madras, blue bandanna, ronnel silk and english black).²¹ In 1847, thirteen voyageurs were issued advances in goods, with silk and cotton handkerchiefs being the most popular choice.²² The guides of Sir George Simpson's canoes were provided with an assortment of goods in 1858, which included "2 blanket capots, 1 tartan vest, 1 felt hat, 1 black silk hat, 1 fine yacht shirt and 1 pr. corduroy trousers."²³ Such goods could be found at posts across the country. The Swan River District Invoice Outfit listed "Colored Cock Feathers (1 Dozen) and 3 Gross (Colored Silk Ferrets) and 10 Broad L' Assumption Belts" among the goods in its inventory for 1859.²⁴ These goods were also popular in the Athabasca district where the 1857 indent for supplies from England included "col'd cock feathers (1/2 doz), black foptail feathers (8 doz), black silk Ferrets (3 gross), col'd silk Ferrets (6 gross)"²⁵

²⁰Ross Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River: Including the Narrative of a Residence of Six Years on the Western Side of the Rocky Mountains Among Various Tribes of Indians; Hitherto Unknown; Together with a Journey Across the American Continent* (New York: J. & J. Harper, 1832), 306.

²¹Indent of Sundry Merchandise, Sept. 1826, Sault Ste. Marie Miscellaneous Post Records, B194/z/1: 104 – 105, HBCA.

²²Advances Goers & Comers, Sault Ste. Marie Miscellaneous Post Records, B195/z/1: 91, HBCA.

²³To Guides of Sir G. Simpson canoes, July 20, 1858, Sault Ste. Marie Miscellaneous Post Records, B194/z/1: 46, HBCA.

²⁴Ferretting was a narrow tape made of silk or cotton. Cory Silverstein, "Clothed Encounters: the Power of Dress in Relations between Anishnaabe and British Peoples in the Great Lakes Region, 1750 – 2000," (Ph.D. dissertation, McMaster University, 2000), 424; Swan River District Invoice Outfit 1859, Microfilm R2.4, SAB.

²⁵Indent for supplies from England for the trade of Athabasca district, Fort Chipwyan Miscellaneous Post Records, B.39/z/1: fo. 134, HBCA.

The popularity of voyageur goods continued long after French Canadian recruitment declined. Early descriptions of Métis dress are almost indistinguishable from descriptions of voyageurs. Juliette Kinzie described meeting “a tall, stalwart, fine-looking young mitiff or half-breed” from the large Grignon family of Green Bay in 1830. “He was still in the same garb -- calico shirt, bright colored scarf around his waist and on his head a straw hat encircled with a band of black ostrish feathers, the usual dress of the class.”²⁶ Several of the old voyageur traditions were kept alive by their Métis descendants, including wearing a plume of cock feathers while parading and “chantant le coq” during the challenges which initiated boxing matches between brigades when they met at Norway House, Portage La Loche or York Factory.²⁷ Métis interest in voyageur commodities also persisted. In 1870, a number of Red River tripmen purchased capotes and other goods such as “drab Beaverteen Trousers, red “flannell” shirts, jackets, pairs of “foxtail” feathers, and black silk handkerchiefs at the Norway House stores.²⁸ Métis men working in water transportation continued to “dress up” for special arrivals. William Cornwallis King described their brigade’s arrival at Ile a la Crosse in 1863.

Opposite Rabbit Skin river where our brigade could be seen from the fort, we halted and Baptiste Bouvier, the guide, changed the positions of the crews. He put the picked boatmen in his own boat and gave them new sweaters so they would be uniformly dressed. The flag of the Company was run up. The men got their guns loaded and placed at hand ready to answer the salute from the fort. The chief singers in the brigade were instructed to lead the singing when the boats were near the fort.²⁹

As late as 1908, Agnes Dean Cameron noted that on their approach to Fort Good Hope, their riverboat pilot Tenny Goulet changed to “his ‘other clothes’ and a resplendent l’Assumption belt,

²⁶Mrs. John H. Kinzie, *Wah-bun: The Early Day in the North West* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Co., 1873), 59 and 61.

²⁷J. J. Gunn, *Echoes of the Red* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1930) 54-58; Cowie, *The Company of Adventurers*, 129-130.

²⁸Norway House Tripmen’s Accounts, 1870, B154/d/244-250, HBCA.

²⁹Mary Weekes, *Trader King as told to Mary Weekes* (Regina: School Aids and Textbook Publishing Co., 1949), 66.

for this is his home.”³⁰ While most elements of voyageur dress originated in one cultural tradition or another, the finger-woven sash worn by Tenny Goulet has proven to be the most durable material symbol emerging from voyageur dress and the truest hybrid.

Freighters, Runners and Dog Drivers

The term voyageur was broadly applied to men working in either land or water transport and any large group travelling together was called a brigade. In 1803, Alexander Henry the Younger described “the bustle and noise” of a “caravan” departing Pembina for the Hair Hills – a hybrid collection of four carts, three travois, several pack horses, people and “a train of 20 dogs.”³¹ Carts were in early use in the Great Lakes and Red River, and trails linking regions were constructed during the free trade period. In 1833, Charles Larpenteur arrived on the upper Missouri, purchased a cart and a horse from “some of the half-breeds, who had come over early in the fall” and jokingly referred to himself as “a regular carter of Fort William, dressed in cowskin pants, cowskin coat, buckskin shirt, wolfskin cap, red flannel undershirt and a blue check shirt over that, stepping behind my old horse and cart.”³² In 1838, Joseph Nicollet hired “eight voyageurs, each at the head of his heavily loaded cart”. Among them were Joseph Rainville Jr. and his wife, bringing “up the rear to supervise the march. The flag floats at the center of the file.”³³

³⁰ Agnes Dean Cameron, *The New North: an Account of a Woman's 1908 Journey Through Canada to the Arctic* (1909; repr. Saskatoon: Western Producer Books, 1986), 160.

³¹ Elliott Coues, ed., *New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest: the Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry, Fur Trader of the Northwest Company and of David Thompson, Official Geographer of the Same Company, 1799 – 1814*. New York: F. P. Harper, 1897), 225-227. The “French pony cart” of the Great Lakes region was described in Beta Hubbard, *Memorials of a Half Century* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1887), 123.

³² Fort William was an old post next to Fort Union that was home to Métis employees and their families. Larpenteur. *Forty Years a Fur Trader*, 43-44.

³³ Edmund C. Bray and Martha Coleman Bray, eds. *Joseph Nicollet on the Plains and Prairies, the Expeditions of 1838-39 with Journals, Letters, and Notes on the Dakota Indians*. (St. Paul: Minnesota

Over time the volume of men engaged as cart drivers increased and the bonds forged through “a great deal of merriment . . . mixed up with their hard work” was described by Alexander Begg. He remarked, “like the bands who go to the buffalo hunts, the brigades engaged in freighting goods have their own customs, laws, and a certain kind of discipline peculiar to themselves.”³⁴ Begg observed that the destination of Red River brigades had at one time been La Crosse (in present day Wisconsin), then St. Paul. By 1871 it was St. Cloud, Minnesota “and so it will go on until the carts will be altogether superseded by the iron horse.”³⁵ During Begg’s day, the volume of carts on the north-south route ranged from 1,500 to 2,000 (150 to 200 brigades) accompanied by a workforce of “five to six hundred half-breeds who visit the States every summer.” Manton Marble, a correspondent for *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, commented on the “odd uniformity” of a group of Métis freighters at St. Paul in 1858.

Their dark, coarse blue coats, glittering with a savage profusion of enormous buttons of polished brass; their long, waving sashes of the brightest red, and jaunty little caps, half Tartar and half French; even their loose trowsers of English corduroy or some dark woolen stuff, if not of elk or bison skin down to the quaint and dingy moccasins wherewith they clothe their feet.³⁶

Begg also noted the “peculiarly dressed men” whose clothing communicated a visual identity in which ethnicity and occupation overlapped.

All of them had sashes round their waist, some of which were of the brightest hues. A few, sported leggings highly ornamented with bead work. One or two wore long blue coats; with bright buttons, while others were in their shirt sleeves; and most of them had moccasins on their feet.³⁷

This, by the mid-nineteenth century, was the standard working garb of many Métis men.

Historical Society, 1976), 49.

³⁴These descriptions come from Begg’s semi-fictitious novel set in Red River based on real characters and events under thinly disguised pseudonyms. Alexander Begg, *Dot It Down: a Story of Life in the North-West*. (Toronto: Hunter & Rose, 1871), 215

³⁵Begg, *Dot It Down*, 60, 215. Hargrave described a brigade as “consisting of ten carts each;” J. J. Hargrave, *Red River*. (1871; repr. Altona, Manitoba: Friesen Printers, 1977), 59.

³⁶Manton Marble, “The Red River Trail,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 18, 1 (1858): 615 and “The People of Red River,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 18 (1858 or 1859): 169.

According to Minnesota historian William Folwell, the “arrival, sojourn, and departure” of the Red River brigades was the highlight of a St. Paul summer and “the bois brulés in their semibarbaric costumes was the delight of multiplying tourists.”³⁸ Their role as a tourist attraction no doubt accounts for a series of photographs taken of cart drivers between 1856 and 1860 in the collection of the Minnesota Historical Society. Several were made into stereographic images that were most likely sold to tourists.³⁹ Red River brigades were probably the most numerous and certainly the best documented, but a web of cart trails used by independent and Hudson’s Bay Company freighters formed a criss-crossing network linking camps, settlements and fur trade posts across the plains, and into the parkland regions.

Many of the men who worked as freighters during the summer months were also involved in winter transport. Any extensive winter travel done across western and northern Canada was done by dog team. Groups of dog teams travelling together were also known as a brigade. The men who drove the dogs or ran ahead to break the trail took great pride in their work, which was enhanced by a spirit of competition. In 1822, the Rev. John West traveled by dog team and commented:

It often astonished me to see with what an unwearied pace, the drivers hurry along their dogs in a cariole . . . day after day in a journey of two and three hundred miles. I have seen some of the English half-breeds greatly excel in this respect.⁴⁰

Drivers and runners were the athletes of their day. One noted runner was George Kipling from St. Peter’s mission at the Red River Settlement. He ran or hauled the mail packet from Fort

³⁷Begg, *Dot It Down*, 47-48.

³⁸William Watts Folwell, *A History of Minnesota* (1921; repr. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1956), 226.

³⁹One stereograph (Negative no. 60242) was part of “Martin’s Collection of Indian Portraits” sold through Martin’s Art Gallery at St. Paul. Another (Location no. HE2.1r33 MHS) was hand coloured with bright red and blue accents, MNHS.

⁴⁰John West, *The Substance of a Journal During a Residence at the Red River Colony*, (London, L. B. Seeley, 1824), 50.

Garry to Norway House, a round trip of three hundred miles, averaging thirty-five miles a day.⁴¹

Runners chose their clothing carefully. William Cornwallis King recalled, "No matter how cold the weather, he wore ordinary clothes; moccasins, wool socks, light fawn skin capote, leggings of the same light skin. These were the lightest and warmest travelling clothes available." Louis LaRoque ran the mail packet in the Athabasca District. He took great pride in doing one particular seventy mile run in twelve hours. "It was fifty below zero . . . I was wearing light moccasins and duffles, two Hudson Bay shirts and moleskin trousers and carried a blanket."⁴² As William Butler recalled, "To be a good driver of dogs, and to be able to run fifty miles in a day with ease is to be a great man. The fame of a noted dog-driver spreads far and wide."⁴³

The clothing worn in the performance of running and dog driving was based on northern Algonkian and Athapaskan survival technology, which applied the principles of layering, reduced areas of exposure and facilitated movement.⁴⁴ H. M. Robinson commented on the light layering of clothing and constant movement essential in winter travel, noting that a driver used garters and sashes to maximize his body heat, by tying:

his trousers tightly around the ankle, and the sleeves of his capote closely about the wrists. This with the gaudy sash always wrapped around his waist, divides his clothing into two air-tight compartments, as it were. If it becomes cold in one, he always has the other in which to take refuge; or, he can loosen his belt, thus turning on a supply of caloric, which equalizes the temperature in both compartments.⁴⁵

⁴¹*Trader King*, 23.

⁴²Louis Laroque, "Reflections of Fifty Years Service, Athabasca District," (two drafts) E.183/1:15 and E.183/2:2. HBCA. Louis Laroque was born around 1850 on the Mackenzie River to François Laroque and Angelique Sayese. The family relocated in 1851 to Red River, but in 1861 moved to the Lac la Biche region with a group of one hundred families. He married Angelique Sauv  in 1871 at Lac la Biche. Louis Laroque claim 1094, vol. 1329, series D-11-8-b, RG 15, NAC.

⁴³William Francis Butler, *The Great Lone Land: a Tale of Travel and Adventure in the North-West of America* (London: Burns and Oates, 1915), 335.

⁴⁴Richard Conn, "Some Design Concepts of Traditional Subarctic Clothing," *Arctic Anthropology* 28, 1 (1991).

⁴⁵Henry M. Robinson, *The Great Fur Land, or Sketches of Life in the Hudson's Bay Territories* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1879), 230.

According to John McDougall, the essential dog driver's outfit was "a flannel shirt, moleskin pants, full length leggings with garters below the knees, [duffel] socks and neat moccasins, a Hudson's Bay capote, unlined and unpadded in any part, a light cap, and mittens which are most of the time tied on the load", noting that "we, costumed as we are, must move or freeze . . . we run and lift and pull and push, and are warm."⁴⁶

The high regard in which dog drivers and runners were held was reflected in the elaborate outfits worn by both dogs and men. William Butler observed "six trains of dogs, twenty-three dogs in all . . . beaded, belled and ribboned."⁴⁷ In the winter of 1863, Norbert Welsh bought four untrained dogs from a Cree camp at the cost of thirty dollars per dog. He built a sleigh out of oak boards and invested considerable time and money in the visual presentation of his team. "My whole outfit -- toboggan, dogs, harnesses and bells -- cost me about a hundred and seventy dollars . . . Appearance in those days was everything. If a man hadn't a good outfit, he was nothing."⁴⁸ His "good outfit" included "feathers" which were attached to each dog's harness:

This decoration was really a little stick about a foot long, knitted over with yarn of all colors. At the end of the stick there was a woollen knob no bigger than my fist, and to this knob ribbons were tied--ribbons of all colors, red, blue, yellow, black and pink. The more colors the better. The lash of my whip was about four feet long. It was made out of plaited caribou skin, and attached to a handle. On both handle and lash, I had rubbed vermilion. The whip, too, was decorated with ribbons of all colors.⁴⁹

Each dog had a richly embellished little blanket, called a *tapis* or *tuppee*. Some were brightly fringed with rows of bells, others were embroidered with silk or cotton thread or floral beadwork. The tradition of elaborate dog outfits has vague origins, but appears in visual and text records by the early 19th century. Robert Seaborne Mile's journal entries for the winter of 1818-1819 at

⁴⁶John McDougall, *Pathfinding on Plain and Prairie: Stirring Scenes of Life in the Canadian North-West* (Montreal: C. W. Coates, W. Briggs, 1898), 20.

⁴⁷Butler, *The Wild North Land* 96.

⁴⁸*The Last Buffalo Hunter*, p.45.

Fort Wedderburn on Lake Athabasca, noted dogs hauling game killed by Iroquois hunters at the post. Sketches of dogs wearing blankets and harnesses with “feathers” appear on the back pages of his journal.⁵⁰ Rindisbacher’s “Winter Voyaging in a Light Sledge”, a watercolour made at the Red River Settlement in 1822-1823 illustrated the dress of both dogs and dog driver.⁵¹ In a preliminary sketch, the dog tapis were drawn with decorative trim that emphasized the rectangular shape of the blanket. The subsequent painting added triangles that also followed the line of the blanket. The feathers were brush-like with a bell suspended on either side. The Métis dog driver’s knee length indigo capote, sash, “mittaines” with a contrasting cuff, and eared hood stand in contrast to the blanket-wrapped Saulteaux guide whose head is bare in the sketch, but who wears a peaked hood in the painting. In both the sketch and painting, the Saulteaux guide has a more austere appearance with the feathers tied to the peak of his hood serving as his only accessory. The Métis dog driver has extensive ribbonwork on his leggings and wears a hood with ribbon streamers attached to the ears, replacing feathers with a new element.

In 1846 Paul Kane sketched, with considerable attention to detail, a fancy dog train at Fort Edmonton whose tapis were decorated with extensive areas of floral beadwork or embroidery and trimmed with fringe.⁵² The feathers appear to be longer than the ones in the Rindisbacher sketch and multi-coloured ribbon streamers that reached the dogs’ back further extended them. More bells were used in the 1846 outfit, with several small bells sewn onto the feathers and a band of larger bells strapped around each dogs’ chest. In the oil painting created in his Toronto studio, “Winter Travelling in Dog Sleds”, Kane appears to have used Francois

⁴⁹The Last Buffalo Hunter, p.46.

⁵⁰Robert Seaborne Miles Journal, 1818 - 1819. H.B.C.A. Library.

⁵¹The sketch and watercolour were published in Alvin M. Josephy, Jr. (1970). *The Artist Was a Young Man: the Life Story of Peter Rindisbacher*. Fort Worth, Texas: Amon Carter Museum, pp.34 and 35.

⁵²*Sled Dogs Decorated for the Wedding Party*, watercolour on paper, 1848. 31.78/123, Stark Museum of Art; *Winter Travelling in Dog sleds*, oil on canvas, ROM 912.1.48, Royal Ontario Museum.

Lucier, the subject in another painting, as the model for the dog driver. Like the driver drawn by Rindisbacher, Kane's dog driver wore an indigo capote with a sash tied around his waist and "mittaines" with a similar decorative cuff. Unlike the Rindisbacher subject, the Kane dog driver wore a pair of pouches with red straps crossing his chest and the eared-hood worn in 1822 was replaced by a cap with a patent leather peak, wrapped with a fur pelt, and embellished with blue, yellow and red ribbons and metallic braid or a silver pin.⁵³

Like Red River cart freighters, dog teams and drivers were a comparatively frequent subject of photography (plate 50). In locations ranging from Pembina, Fort Garry, Prince Albert, Edmonton, Fort Chipewyan and Jasper, the dog teams photographed show remarkable similarity to the sketches and paintings of earlier decades. The clothing and visual appearance of dog drivers illustrate that while dress remained distinct, it was also a site of innovation and change. An 1856 photograph of Tarbell and Campbell, two dog drivers from Pembina, show each man dressed in different versions of what was essentially the same outfit: thigh-high leggings and a white capote wrapped around the body, tied with a sash.⁵⁴ The hood and cuffs of the capote were made from a contrasting colour. Each man wore a pair of long duffle leggings trimmed with a narrow binding of darker fabric. The outer edge of each legging formed a flap that ended in a point. These appear to reference older garment forms such as the leggings worn by Cree hunters whose shape echoed the legs of caribou; simultaneously representing the legs of hunter and prey. Both Cath Oberholtzer and Adrian Tanner noted beliefs regarding moccasins, leggings and

⁵³Kane did a sketch and oil portrait of François Lucier who was either the dog driver in the wedding party or served as a "stand-in" in the composition of the studio painting done between 1849-56. The dog driver in the painting is wearing an identical outfit viewed from the side. An oil sketch done by Kane in the field provides a closer view of the Lucier outfit, particularly his hat. François Lucier was born around 1796, described in his contract as a "natif de pay sauvage", the son of François Lucier Sr. of Montreal who worked for the North West Company at Fort des Prairies and later for the Hudson's Bay Company in the Saskatchewan district. Lucier started work at fifteen at Fort des Prairies and by 1829 was horse keeper and voyageur at Fort Edmonton. François Lucier Biographical Sheet, HBCA. Kane described him as a "half breed Cree". *Wanderings of an Artist*, 265.

snowshoes which were visually emphasized to please the spirits and prevent the legs from becoming tired.⁵⁵ Perhaps dog runners and drivers also made visual supplications to the spirits to gain strength and endurance.

While both drivers photographed at Pembina wore the same basic outfit, each man expressed his individual tastes through his choice of accessories. Both wore solid coloured silk handkerchiefs tied in a large soft bow, but Tarbell chose a peaked cap from which he suspended tassels and wore garters made of dark fabric covered with beadwork, trimmed with wool pompoms and tassels. Campbell, on the other hand, wore a solid coloured toque and tied a plain band of leather or fabric under the knee in lieu of garters. Dog drivers photographed in 1859 at St. Paul wore the same capote and legging style.⁵⁶ Another man dressed as a runner or driver, identified as Mr. Anderson, was photographed at the Red River Settlement.⁵⁷ He also wore a white capote with contrasting trim and hood in a darker fabric. His leggings were made of leather with a strip of dense floral beadwork on dark fabric along each outside edge, fastened with floral beaded garters with wool pompoms. Arthur Heming sketched a "Half Breed Dog Driver" in 1895 who also wore a white capote, with trim, cuffs and hood in a darker fabric.⁵⁸ His full-length leggings appear to be fringed hide with garters at the knee. Dog drivers photographed by Humphrey Lloyd Hime in 1858, were an exception to the general trend of tailored white capotes. In "Dog carioles returning to Crow Wing" the drivers wore dark capotes, with thigh-high leggings and fur caps.⁵⁹ A photograph taken at Jasper House in 1872 showed dog drivers

⁵⁴Dog team drivers, Tarbell and Campbell, from Pembina, 1856. Neg. no. 5786, MNHS.

⁵⁵Cath Oberholtzer, "Cree Leggings as a Form of Communication," *Actes du Vingt-Cinquieme Congres des Algonquistes*, ed. William Cowan (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1994), p. 366; Adrian Tanner, *Bringing Home Animals: Religious Ideology and Mode of Production of the Mistassini Cree Hunters* (Memorial University of Newfoundland: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1979), 92-93.

⁵⁶Dog sled and drivers, St. Paul 1859. Neg. no. 63936, MNHS.

⁵⁷Mr. Anderson, Scottish Métis, Red River, Manitoba. NA-4405-18, GAI.

⁵⁸Arthur Heming sketch of a Métis dog driver at Lac La Biche, Alberta circa 1895. NA-1185-6, GAI.

⁵⁹Dog carioles returning to Crow Wing, 1858. N12581, Humphrey Lloyd Hime 33, AM.

wearing dark capotes with short, full skirts that ended at the top of the thigh.⁶⁰ Another taken in 1899 shows a range of garments worn by a group gathered around a dog team, but perhaps only the man in the short, full-skirted white capote standing at the head of the team was dressed for a run.⁶¹ Use of fancy dog outfits continued into the twentieth century in the McKenzie and Athabasca regions of the North West Territories. Métis elder Madeline Bird recalled, “even the dogs were all dolled up for the Christmas season [with] beaded tapis, pompoms on their collars and belts on their backs.”⁶² The dressing of dog teams, dog drivers and runners reflected both continuity and change, but consistently merged function and occupational pride through distinctive visual elements

Dressing for Diplomacy: Scout, Interpreter and Trader

In the early decades of the 19th century, Jean Baptiste Dubay from Green Bay was given the name “Oskaatawananee” or the Flourishing Young Trader by the Ojibwe because of the care he took to set up a visually pleasing venue for trade. William Powell recalled, “Its attractive appearance would fix their attention, they would feel honored by the attention and would be quite sure to give him their trade.”⁶³ Dubay clearly understood the relationship between enhanced visibility, trade and diplomacy. Dressing to conduct business became standard fur trade protocol, as William Hamilton and Alex McKay demonstrated in 1858.

⁶⁰Charles Horetzsky, Carioles and dog drivers near Jasper House, 1872. NA-382-2, GAI.

⁶¹Chief Factor McDougall and dog team, 1899 (NA-1135-28) and ‘Peace River Jim’ Cornwall, circa 1900 (NA-2760-8), GAI.

⁶²Madeline Bird, *Living Kindness: The Dream of My Life; the Memoirs of Métis Elder, Madeline Bird* (Yellowknife: Outcrop, 1991), 27.

⁶³Dubay was born around 1806, the son of Louis Dubay and the daughter of Pewatenot, a chief of the Menominee. William Powell, “William Powell’s Recollections in an Interview with Lyman C. Draper,” *Proceedings of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 60th Annual Meeting, October 24, 1912* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1913), 176.

We changed our everyday buckskin suits for a caribou suit with double fringes at every seam. Both suits were tony and costly. I always found that when I dressed up in my fancy suit, both the chiefs and others received me as a person above the common order.⁶⁴

Identifiable dress was particularly crucial for traders moving away from the relative security of the fur trade post. Parties engaged in negotiations also required a distinct visual identity that could be clearly perceived from a distance. Johnny Grant described the importance of clothing when he worked as an interpreter for the American army engaged to track the Flathead men involved in a fatal attack on an immigrant train in 1853. Grant refused to travel with two soldiers until they changed their clothes, "I will not go with two men in their present dress, for the Indians will mistrust us. I will lend one my leather shirt and the other my coat."⁶⁵ While leather clothing was practical and durable, certain styles became associated with occupational categories: scout, interpreter or trader. Individuals of mixed descent dominated the occupations of interpreter and scout, while the occupation of trader was more ethnically diverse.

Few visual records or descriptions exist for the clothing worn by early interpreters, but leather clothing became increasingly important for protection against the elements and visibility. The occupations of scout and guide often correlated with that of interpreter, and the clothing worn in the performance of these roles was similar. In a progression that would repeat itself in the early twentieth century, the clothing associated with occupations based in the fur trade shifted to an association with more diplomatic roles. As the fur trade's economic dominance faded, the treaty-making process moved to the fore. In the United States, the men who had served the American Fur Company as guides and hunters found new employment with the American army after the company collapsed and sold several of their western forts to the

⁶⁴William T. Hamilton, "A Trading Expedition Among the Indians in 1858," *Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana*, vol. 3 (Helena: Montana Historical Society, 1906), 54

⁶⁵Grant, *Very Close to Trouble*, 55.

government.⁶⁶ The army found an intact group of skilled men to serve as scouts and interpreters. Residency and activity remained constant, but the employing body shifted from fur trading entrepreneurs to military officials. Similarly, when the North West Mounted Police moved into western Canada in 1874, they formed a close working relationship with the Hudson's Bay Company posts. Men who worked as free traders, hunters, freighters and voyageurs found a new market for their skills.

Initially, an interpreter was selected from within the community or chosen because of his or her ties to the group involved in the discussions. Maurice Blondeau merged his kinship ties to the Fox, knowledge of two distinct political systems and multi-lingual competence in his dual role of interpreter and negotiator at the 1824 Treaty of the Sauk and Fox.⁶⁷ As the treaty-making process moved farther west, the role became an occupation. Perhaps no other occupational category overlapped so completely with ethnicity as did the role of interpreter. The Lakota term "ieska" or interpreter is still in use as an identifying term for Lakotas of mixed descent.⁶⁸

Charles Allen recalled the interpreters he knew:

Louis Richards and Joseph Bissonette, Jr. were the official interpreters of the [Red Cloud] agency. They were intelligent mixed-bloods of the Sioux, of middle age and of standing and influence among their people. Others were equally efficient as interpreters . . . Louis Shangreau and William Garnett . . . were of the Oglala -- Red Cloud's band of Sioux. There were other interpreters who chanced to be present from the Spotted Tail and Missouri River bands, Louis

⁶⁶Fort Laramie was purchased in 1849 by the U. S. army for troops brought in for the protection of the Oregon trail. Fort Union was sold in 1865 after Pierre Chouteau failed in his attempts to have his trading license renewed. Charles W. Allen, *From Fort Laramie to Wounded Knee: In the West That Was* (1938; repr. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 40; Erwin N. Thompson, "Here far from civilization the traders pass the best of their days: Social Life at Fort Union Trading Post," *Fort Union Fur Trade Symposium Proceedings: September 13-15, 1990* (Williston, North Dakota: Friends of Fort Union Trading Post, 1994), 49.

⁶⁷"Treaty with the Sauk and Fox, 1824," *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* 2, 207

⁶⁸Paul M. Robertson, "The Power of the Land: Identity, Ethnicity, and Class among the Oglala Lakota," (PhD. Dissertation. The Graduate School of the Union Institute, 1995), 65-66.

Bourdeau, John Bruguier and Louis Robideaux . . . There were several others whose names I failed to learn, but all were of mixed blood.⁶⁹

Linguistic and diplomatic ability was woven into the fabric of daily life for most Métis and Half Breed people and fluency in several languages became the norm, not the exception. Alexis Labombarde who worked as interpreter with the Sioux and Blackfoot, James McKay and George Racette who served as interpreters for the Sioux, Saulteaux and Cree did not have kinship ties to all the groups they worked with, but developed relationships over years of trade and friendship.⁷⁰ According to Louis Goulet the criteria for serving as a scout with the American army were “to ride, handle horses in all kinds of ways, converse and read in English, speak at least three Indian dialects fluently, shoot a shotgun, rifle and pistol, even box a little and throw a knife [and] be at least six feet tall and weigh no less than 185 pounds.”⁷¹ Goulet, Jean Baptiste Desjarlais and Billy Jackson signed on at Fort Buford on the Missouri River.

In the west, old and new roles merged the occupations of hunter, scout, guide, interpreter and trader into the broader identity of “plainsman” known in Metchif as “li zhawnd la prairie” [les gens de la prairie] or “keepakeewkayw.”⁷² In his memoirs, Métis elder Eli Guardipee paid tribute to the plainsman whose identity merged ethnicity, the occupations of scout, interpreter and trader with an ethos that defined a good man as one with skill, courage, good sense and good humour. “The men whose names were famous in the plains country when I was young have gone further. Some lie beneath mounds that are marked; others in remote places unknown even to

⁶⁹ Allen, *From Fort Laramie to Wounded Knee*, p.21-22.

⁷⁰ Interpreters served both sides engaged in diplomatic exchange. Alexis Labombarde worked as a Sioux interpreter for thirty years, including serving Whitecap at Batoche in 1885. He also worked at the Blackfoot agency in Montana. James McKay’s kinship ties were probably with the Cree, but he was highly regarded by the Sioux. George Racette’s mother was Saulteaux, his relationship with the Sioux was established through trade.

⁷¹ Guillaume Charette, ed., *Vanishing Spaces: Memoirs of Louis Goulet*, trans. by Ray Ellenwood (St. Boniface: Editions Bois Brulés, 1980), 90 – 91.

⁷² Patline Laverdure and Ida Rose Allard, *The Michif Dictionary: Turtle Mountain Chippewa Cree* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Press, 1983), 231.

those who loved them. It was good to know them.”⁷³ Two plainsmen Guardipee had been proud to know were “Peter Cadotte, commonly known as Cadotte, the Scout” and Alexis Labombarde. He remembered Labombarde as “a large, dark man [who] wore his hair long and usually dressed in buckskin.” The leather clothing worn on the plains was initially chosen for practicality. It was more durable than cloth and, according to Malcolm McLeod, “long journeys on horseback necessitated leather trousers.”⁷⁴ The Métis guides hired by the Earl of Southesk in 1858 changed from cloth capotes to “fringed leather hunting-shirts -- of every colour, from the yellow of newness, and the white of new-washedness, to the blood-stained brown of extreme antiquity.”⁷⁵ Southesk compared the struggles of his party as they pushed their way into densely forested foothills to “tournaments of old”; declaring, “nothing but leather is a defense.”⁷⁶

In addition to the practicality of leather clothing, distinct variations of leather dress enabled the scout or interpreter to be clearly visible and identifiable as neither Indian, soldier, or government official (plate 51). The more conflicted the social field, the more essential visibility became. During an 1874 riot at the Red Cloud agency, interpreters working in relays of two, stood on a balcony fervently advocating peace.⁷⁷ Drawings, which accompanied media coverage of the 1879 government hearings into Sioux grievances, illustrate the capability of their clothing to create a visual focal point.⁷⁸ The figure of the interpreter is immediately identifiable in the crowded room. He physically occupied a third space located between the inner circle of

⁷³Elie Guardipee's Story, 7-8.

⁷⁴ Archibald McDonald with notes by Malcolm McLeod, *Peace River: a Canoe Voyage from Hudson's Bay to the Pacific by Sir George Simpson, Journal of the late Chief Factor, Archibald McDonald (Hon. Hudson's Bay Company) Who Accompanied Him* (1872; repr. Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1971), 94 n. lviii.

⁷⁵Southesk, *Saskatchewan*, 202.

⁷⁶Southesk, *Saskatchewan*, 226.

⁷⁷Allen, *From Fort Laramie to Wounded Knee*, 22.

⁷⁸“First Official Investigation of Indian Grievances -- Visit of Secretary Schultz to the Spotted Tail Indian Agency on the Rosebud River,” *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* 49 (October 4, 1879): 69. Western Photograph Collection (X033616), Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado.

seated Sioux leaders and the elevated platform from which government officials spoke. While the gathered assembly also wore elements of European dress, feathers trimmed commercially purchased hats and blankets were draped around their bodies. The interpreter wore dark pants, white shirt and a knee-length hide coat embroidered with either beads or quills.

Two career scouts, Jerry Potts and Joseph Culbertson, were photographed wearing the clothing that set them apart and enabled them to do their jobs.⁷⁹ Jerry Potts was employed as a scout and interpreter with the North West Mounted Police from 1874 to 1895. In the photograph most often associated with him, Potts wore his “working” outfit: fringed leather jacket with beadwork, short fringed leather leggings, beaded moccasins and a fire bag tucked into a commercial belt (51). In other photographs Potts wore a variety of purchased hats, cloth jackets and coats. Similarly Joseph Culbertson, a scout for the U. S. army for twenty years, was photographed on horseback wearing a beaded leather jacket, leggings and moccasins. He was also photographed wearing clothing that made him virtually indistinguishable from other employees.

It is probable that the distinct clothing worn by scouts and interpreters had a relatively short life span. The identity of plainsman and the occupations of scout and interpreter could only thrive while the political and economic context that gave the roles such importance continued. In 1885, a Métis scout working for the North West Mounted Police in the Lethbridge – Maple Creek area wore a hip-length tailored jacket covered with floral beadwork with a commercial belt around the waist and a pair of fringed leather pants. But of the four scouts from the Alberta Field

⁷⁹Jerry Potts was born at Fort Benton in 1844, the son of Andrew Potts and a Blackfoot woman, Jeremiah Potts claim no. 286, vol. 1331, series D-11-8-b, RG 15, NAC; Joseph Culbertson was born at Fort Union, the son of fur trader Alexander Culbertson and Natawista Iksana. Joseph Culbertson, *Indian Scout Memoirs: 1876-1895* (Anaheim, California: Van-Allen Publishing, 1984).

Force photographed the same year, only one man identified as “J. Whitford” wore a beaded leather jacket, moccasins and sash (plate 51). By the close of the nineteenth century the treaties on the Canadian and American plains had been signed, resistance had faded and the role of scout and interpreter diminished. However, as men shifted to alternate means of earning a living, elements of their clothing moved with them.

Clothing Purchases of Working Men

While documentary art, photographs and journal descriptions tend to emphasize those occupations that attracted notice and were more vividly remembered, the dress of people working inside posts as clerks, tradesmen and labourers was seldom documented. Hudson’s Bay Company accounts documenting men’s purchases help to fill this gap. The company manufactured their own “slops,” which were inexpensive ready-made clothing for labourers.⁸⁰ As early as 1809, the Albany post inventory listed under slops: blue serge and corduroy breeches, duck and Guernsey frocks, great coats, blue serge jackets, three types of “trousers” and an assortment of hats.⁸¹ However, George Atkinson Jr. (Cree/English) and his brother Jacob’s 1812 – 1813 accounts at Eastmain reveal a modest volume of purchases.⁸²

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| Atkinson, George | Atkinson, Jacob |
| blankets, striped 3 | baize, 6 yds. |
| duffle, 3 yds. | blankets striped, 2 |
| Handkerchiefs, 2 | flannel, 12 yds. |
| Hat common, 1 | Handkerchief, soosee 2 |
| Sash large, 1 | Hat common 1 |
| Shirts flannel 4 | Sash large, 1 |
| | Shirts cotton, 4 |
| | Shirts, flannel 3 |

⁸⁰Mary Brooks Picken, *The Fashion Dictionary* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1957), 155.

⁸¹Guernsey frocks were knitted garments worn by sailors, known today as fisherman’s sweaters. 1809 Inventory, Albany Post Accounts, B.3/d/122 – 125, HBCA

⁸²Jacob and George Atkinson accounts. Eastmain Servants Accounts 1812 – 1814, B59/d/39-43, HBCA.

Shirts, sashes, hats and handkerchiefs were the only manufactured clothing purchased. One can assume women in their families produced most of their clothing, and that hide clothing continued to be important as relatively little fabric and no shoes were purchased.

The Hudson's Bay Company responded to consumer need for leather clothing by selling tanned hides.⁸³ At Pembina, between September 8 and November 27, 1848, George Racette purchased five large and two small "red deer skins", one moose hide, two and a half buffalo hides and one prime buffalo robe. Between January 18 and April 30 he purchased an additional two large "red deer skins" and one large buffalo hide. He made no purchases of clothing or other materials. While men's accounts are usually incomplete, they provide a window into consumer trends. Purchases made by fourteen men in present-day Saskatchewan between 1840 and 1860 suggest moderate consumption of manufactured clothing, with shirts, capotes, and accessories (sashes, caps and handkerchiefs) the most common choices.⁸⁴ With the exception of Chief Trader William McKay and Peter Hourie, a post master, the men were employed as labourers or interpreters.⁸⁵ These accounts document individual purchases only, and some were made to construct specific garments. Purchases made in 1866 at Carlton House by François Larocque, Maxime Vermet and George Sayer of equal amounts of duffle, gartering, leather mittens and "shoes", appear to be preparations for winter travel. The small amounts of stroud and duffle purchased were probably used to make leggings for winter travel or other accessories. Tanned hides and sinew accounted for the largest volume of men's purchases, indicating that leather clothing and home manufacture continued to be important to men working at posts.

⁸³George Rasette account, 1848 Pembina, B.160/d/4: 7, HBCA.

⁸⁴Data sources for Figure 6.2: Swan River Servants Book Debt, 1840-1841; Swan River District Private Orders on York Factory Debt 1866. HBC File R-1248. SAB. Carlton House Miscellaneous Men's Accounts, B.27/z/1, fo. 6; Fort Pelly Miscellaneous Post Records, B.159/z/1, fo. 180-185, HBCA.

⁸⁵Erna Buffie, "Fort Ellice Personnel," (Historic Resources Branch, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1975); Servants, 1862 Fort Pelly Miscellaneous Post Records, B.159/z/; William McKay and Peter Hourie Biographical Sheets, HBCA.

| Goods | 1840 William Ballenden | 1840 Michael Desmarais | 1840 Francis Desmarais | 1857 William Daniel 'A' | 1857 William Daniel 'B' | 1857 Jean Parisien | 1857 Thomas Favel | 1858 Pierre Deschambault | 1862 Baptiste Patenaude | 1866 Peter Hourie | 1866 François Laroque | 1866 Maxime Vermet | 1866 George Sayer | 1866 William McKay |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Alpaca, black | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cloth, 2 nd scarlet | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 18 yds. |
| Duffie | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Duffie, white | | | | | | | | | | | 1/3 yd. | 1/3 yd. | | |
| Duffie, fine white | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1.5 yds. |
| Stroud, cm. wte. | | 2/3 yd. | | | | | | | | | 2/3 yd. | 2/3 yd. | 2/3 yd. | 3 yds. |
| Stroud, HB red | 1/2 yd. | | | 30 in. | | 2/3 yd. | | | | | | | | |
| Stroud, HB blue | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tartan | | | | | | | | | 2/3 yd. | | | | | |
| Velvet, black | | | | | | | | 5 yds. | | | | | | |
| Silk thread | | | | | | | | 2 yds. | | | | | | |
| Seed beads, col'd | | | | | | | | black | | | | | | 6 bnchs |
| Thimbles, brass | | | 1/2 doz | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ribbon | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sinew | | | | 2 blds. | | 2 blds. | | | 2 yds. clrd. | | | | | |
| Skin, Buffalo | | 1 | 1 | 3 | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | 1 blade |
| Skin, Deer | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Skin, Moose | 2 | 2 | 1 | | 1 | | | | 1 lge. | | | | | |
| Skin, Red deer | | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | | | | 1 lge. | | | | | |
| Robe, Buffalo | | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| Capote, fine blue | | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | | |
| Capote, grey | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Capote, Indian | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Belt, L' Assump | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Belt, scarlet | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | |
| Cap, fine cloth | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Patent cap peak | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | |
| Garters, lace | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Garters, col'd | 4 yds. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Garters, Highland | | | | | | | | | 2 yds. | | | | | |
| Handkerchiefs, | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 yds. | 3 yds. | |
| Mittens, leather | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 3 |
| Shirt, common | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| Shoes | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 3 |
| Dog bells | | | | | | | | | | | 4 | 4 | 4 | |

Figure 6.2: Men's Purchases at Carlton House, Fort Pelly and Swan River District, 1840 to 1860.

A more complete account at Fort Pelly for François Villeneuve from June 1 to November 25, 1862 shows a wider range of purchases.⁸⁶

| | |
|---------|--------------------------------|
| June 1 | 1 patent leather peak |
| | 1 common cotton shirt |
| July 28 | 1 small moose skin |
| | 2 sinew blades |
| Oct. 5 | 1 large red deer skin |
| | 1/2 large moose skin |
| Nov. 22 | 3 yds. black hair ribbon |
| Nov. 25 | 1 common red flannel shirt |
| | 2/3 2 nd blue cloth |
| | 1/8 oz. silk thread |
| | 3 yds. black ribbon |
| | 1 sinew blade |
| | 1 large moose skin |
| | 1 small red deer skin |

This series of purchases made over several months follows the consumer trends in other men's accounts. The only garments purchased by Villeneuve were two shirts, and a leather peak for a cap. His most regular purchases were leather and sinew. By contrast, the accounts of two free men at Fort Pelly also in 1862, suggest that men free trading and hunting outside the post community may have had more disposable income, or placed a greater importance on dress.⁸⁷

| Pierre Genaille | John Severight |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 fine cloth capote | 4 yds. H. B. blue strouds |
| 1 Blanketing capote | 4 common cotton shirts |
| 4 common cotton shirts | 10 yds. 7/8 pt. cotton |
| 12 yds. white flannel | 8 yds. Blue Druggets |
| 20 yds. grey cotton | 4 bunches white Seed beads |
| 1 lb. col'd Thread | 4 yds. HB White Strouds |
| 1 Red flannel Shirt | 4 Bunches Col'd Seed beads |
| 1 Blue flannel Shirt | 1 lb. Col'd Thread |
| 2 dressed Buffalo skins | 1 pair Tailors Scissors |

⁸⁶François Villeneuve was a middle man on the Swan River brigade. Swan River District Brigade 1858-1859, Fort Pelly Miscellaneous Accounts, B.159/z/1: 262; François Villeneuve, Fort Pelly 1862 Account Book, B.159/d/71: 132, HBCA.

⁸⁷Pierre Genaille and John Severight Free Men Accounts, September 1862, Fort Pelly Miscellaneous

Purchases made by Arthur Pruden, Chief Trader at Carlton House, between 1860 and 1864 attest to the increased consumption of Métis and Half Breed men with better jobs.⁸⁸ Pruden bought clothing that gave him options in dress that other men did not have. He purchased a “Fine Blue Capot” and grey ones, perhaps for daily use. While trousers were rare purchases for most men, Pruden bought trousers in different fabrics including tweed, “fine grey”, “fine blue cloth”, the more common “Beaverteen” and a flashy pair in “green wool Tartan”. He bought “Turkey red Cotton handkerchiefs” by the dozen and the black silk handkerchiefs that had been popular for decades. Among his purchases were four sashes, including “1 broad Eng. L’Assumption Belt, 1 L’Assumption Belt narrow and two Scarlet worsted Belts.”⁸⁹ The tanned deer hides, seed beads and embroidery thread in Pruden’s account suggest that his moccasins and accessories were embellished. Most of Pruden’s clothing choices elaborated or extended the basic working man’s outfit of capote, shirt, trousers, sash and moccasins, but he also had the option to “dress up” for meetings and special occasions. The most significant difference, aside from volume, was a marked decrease in leather consumption and home manufacture.

Changing Economies, Changing Dress

Several elements of the distinct dress worn during the nineteenth century, particularly by men, were chosen primarily for function and to communicate collective identity in the economic sectors they dominated. Details such as the length or cut of a capote, reflected whether a man rode a horse, walked on snowshoes or ran beside a dog train. Colourful decorative elements enhanced visibility, perhaps even kept an individual alive. Specific items such as the fire bag, mittens or the dog whip, were essential to survival. Colour and embellishment were visual cues

Accounts, B.159/d/71: 136 and 140 HBCA.

⁸⁸Mr. Arthur Pruden Account, Carlton House Miscellaneous Records, B.27/z/1: 11 – 36. HBCA.

⁸⁹The sashes could have been for Pruden’s two sons or purchased for another person.

that enabled their owners to locate them quickly. The same principle was applied to the overall dress of individuals such as interpreters or brigade guides, who played critical roles. Pride was communicated through the elaboration of visual elements and wearing items of dress that associated an individual with a particular occupation. Louis Goulet recalled changing his clothing whenever he changed jobs. As a scout for the American army in 1881, Goulet dressed in “jacket, pants and overcoat of navy blue wool; a felt hat with quite a large brim; black leather boots with spurs.”⁹⁰ His fondest memory was “looking smart and keeping my uniform neat.” In 1892, he “revetis ma livrée de cowboy” and started working on cattle drives in the Medicine Hat, Lethbridge and Pincher Creek regions.⁹¹ He wasn’t alone. The horsemanship required for buffalo hunting and scouting, made a natural shift into “bronc busting” and ranch work. As men moved into ranch work, bandanas, cowboy hats and boots replaced the soft silk handkerchief ties and moccasins worn by their fathers. John McGillis was photographed on horseback wearing both the fashionable new “woolies” and more traditional fringed hide pants working at the H2 Ranch in southern Alberta between 1900 and 1903.⁹²

Where traditional occupations continued, the garments associated with those occupations also continued. Pointed toe moccasins with small vamps placed high on the foot were particularly suited for wearing snowshoes and were important to the comfort and success of hunters, trappers and men travelling during the winter. Louis Dorion of Cumberland House emphasized the role of function in moccasin design.

the moccasins they made especially for hunting . . . they’re still pointed, but they were quite large because you put all the bottom with rabbit fur to keep your feet warm then you wrapped your feet around with rabbit fur on top of that . . . these same moccasins . . . had a double sole stitched on the bottom of them because you’re going through rough

⁹⁰ Charette, *Vanishing Spaces*, 91.

⁹¹ Louis Goulet Manuscript, 157.

⁹² ‘Woolies’ were chaps made from Angora goat skin. They were introduced in the 1880’s and remained popular until the 1920’s. John McGillis on H2 Ranch, NA -2365-90, NA-2365- 91, GAI.

terrain in the bush . . . They were made very tough for that reason [and] it would give you a little more free movement with your toes . . . and you had good grip when you were walking through the snow [when] you have to wear snowshoes.⁹³

As local economies shifted away from hunting and trapping by the mid-twentieth century, the need to make and wear winter moccasins diminished.

The relationship between occupation and dress can shed some light on the sudden shift away from the distinctive dress historically associated with Métis and Half Breed communities that occurred between 1890 and 1910. Garment styles and garment types survived as long as they served a purpose, some shifting from one occupational context to another (plate 52). The fringed leather “scout” jacket survived occupational shifts to ranching and also became an item of dress associated with hunting guides or outfitters in the new park systems in both the United States and Canada. The Moberly family of Jasper House became noted guides throughout the foothill and mountain regions.⁹⁴ In a photograph taken in 1903, John Moberly wore fringed leather pants, moccasins, fur mittens and fur hat, while his companions wore beaded fringed jackets and moccasins.⁹⁵ The occupational fields historically occupied by Métis and Half Breed men involved physical exertion and skill – most were labouring men. Consequently, new garments were adopted to serve practical needs. Overalls, boots and plaid flannel shirts were blended with more traditional garb. John Thomas was photographed at Cumberland House around 1920, wearing a sash around his denim overalls.⁹⁶ His clothing, and that worn by other men, visually expressed the social and economic transitions that impacted their daily lives, while elements of their formerly distinct dress shifted to communicate identities beyond occupation.

⁹³Louis Dorion participated in an interview with his sister Isabelle Dorion Impey conducted by Leah Dorion and Maria Campbell at Prince Albert on July 25, 2001, Gabriel Dumont Institute. Used with permission.

⁹⁴Henry John Moberly, chief factor for the Hudson’s Bay Company, married Suzanne Cardinal (Karakonti). Their sons and grandsons worked as guides in the Jasper region. Notes accompanying photographs, NA-3187 (series), GAI.

⁹⁵John Moberly and family, Moberly Flats, Alberta, NA-3187-2, GAI.

⁹⁶John Thomas at Cumberland House, RA-1008, SAB.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Clothing in Action: the Expressive Properties of Dress

He led us to a large lodge, highly decorated outside with Indian totems and devices, supposed to represent, in colors, hunting, horse-stealing and battle scenes. Inside, all around the sides were, similarly decorated native art, curtains of dressed buffalo skins, and spread on the grass and rushes covering the floor were couches of many folds of robes, over which, in his own place, were a number of bright, various colored and striped blankets, besides many downy pillows covered with brilliant chintz, or turkey red cotton.

Divesting himself of his fine blue cloth, brass-buttoned capote . . . and dressing his long curly hair carefully, he put on a light linen jacket, and ordered the table to be laid. The table was without legs, being merely a board, about four by four feet, hinged in the middle so as to fold up, and nicely painted in different colors, with rays from the centre representing the sun.¹

The expressive capacity of clothing and dress is embedded in social action. The simplest garment becomes animated when placed on a human form. In 1868 Pierre La Pierre, a Métis free-trader in the Saskatchewan region, welcomed Isaac Cowie into his home at a hunting camp west of Gull Lake.² Through the carefully ordered visual presentation of his person and his lodge, he communicated his social role and economic status. He wore and displayed the prime trade goods that he marketed. His prestige as hunter and warrior was expressed in the pictographic images painted on the exterior of his home, which continued on the interior hangings. Christopher Tilley described material culture as “a framing and communicative medium which can be used for transforming, storing or preserving social information”,

¹Isaac Cowie, *Company of Adventurers*, 299-300.

²Pierre LaPierre was born at LaPierre House in Yukon territory. He married Adelaide Boyer at Fort Frances in 1849. By 1857 the family was living in the Touchwood Hills. He was listed among the Fort Pelly Servants in 1862 as “Native, Interpreter and Trader”. Fort Pelly Miscellaneous Post Records, B.159/z/1 fo. 187, HBCA. The birthplaces of fifteen children trace the family’s movement from Touchwood Hills, to Shoal River, Swift Current, Wood Mountain and Fort Qu’Appelle. Pierre LaPierre Biographical Sheet, HBCA; Adelaide LaPierre claims 9 and 21, vol. 1329, series D-11-8-b, RG 15, NAC.

simultaneously serving as both medium and text.³ Clearly La Pierre ordered his material world to communicate to an audience of Métis, Cree, Saulteaux and the occasional Hudson's Bay Company trader. Clothing and other material extensions of the self provide visual cues in identification and serve as a trigger to guide social interaction. For an independent trader, visibility was essential. Cowie had been able to quickly locate La Pierre in a "mob of black-haired brown-bodied men, women and children", describing him as a "dignified and dandified figure of a gentleman arrayed in the height of the mode prevalent amongst Le Métis Français."⁴

Dressing oneself is both an act of individual agency and a personal aesthetic expression. The manner in which individuals present themselves visually is not a mere reflection of existing cultural and social structures. Individuals can use clothing as a means of becoming who they want to be within a particular social context. It can also be the means through which the social system can be negotiated, simultaneously reflecting and constructing social order. While Pierre La Pierre dressed to situate himself firmly within a Métis collective, others used clothing to position themselves within other identities or to negotiate social class. In 1859, the Earl of Southesk described his Cree guide, Napeskis, as "a good looking Indian . . . of French half-breed origin."⁵ Through choices such as a breech clout, full length leggings and the length and style of his hair, Napeskis, unlike Southesk's other guides, communicated a Cree identity.

he had arrayed himself in a new coat, -- no less than a superfine blue cloth surtout with gilt buttons, and a high velvet collar of an anciently fashionable cut; but instead of trousers he wore leather leggings of the Indian pattern, which reached but a certain way up his limbs, and when the wind blew back his coat skirts there was a strange

³Christopher Tilley, "Interpreting Material Culture," *The Fabrics of Culture: the Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment*, ed. Justine Cordwell and Ronald Schwartz (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), 189.

⁴Cowie, *Company of Adventurers*, p. 298.

⁵Napeskis was the younger brother of Cree chief Ahtahkakoop. Deanna Christensen, *Ahtahkakoop* (Ahtahkakoop, Saskatchewan: Ahtahkakoop Publishing, 2000), 72. Their father was French or Métis with the surname of Chastellain, their mother Cree. Marie Genereux identified her father as Attakakosh Chastellain, a half breed, in her scrip application. Marie Genereux claim 863, vol. 1348, series D-11-8-c, RG 15, NAC. Description of Napeskis in Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*, 108.

exhibition of rich mahogany-coloured skin. His long, straight black hair was twisted into a quantity of tails bound round with coils of brass wire.

In contrast to both La Pierre and Napeskis, James Ross adopted fashionable European dress in the 1860s to position himself in a social class suitable to that of his father and his Euro-Canadian wife, education and professional ambitions.⁶ In one photograph, Ross wore a black silk top hat and tails, the height of fashion for an upwardly mobile British man.⁷ La Pierre, Ross and Napeskis had similar ethnic parentage, but used clothing to negotiate different social and ethnic identities. Women also used clothing to negotiate social and cultural worlds and communicate their choices.

Constructing a visual identity relies on the interplay of presentation and its reading by the consuming audience who correlate the projected image with their own culturally determined expectations regarding gender, age, economic status and a range of overlapping information categories. The social discourse of clothing and dress takes place within particular situations that provide context. A piece of clothing or decorative item is only an object until it becomes animated through use or infused with memory and story. Who made it? Who wore it? How is it placed on the body? When is it worn? How does it move? In order to understand the social meaning of material culture, it is important to reconstruct the context in which it was used. Do objects have different meanings in different social situations? What is the visual impact on an audience when one person or a large group makes a particular visual presentation?

⁶James Ross was the son of Alexander Ross and Sally, his Okanagan wife. See Sylvia Van Kirk, "What if Mama is an Indian?: the Cultural Ambivalence of the Alexander Ross Family," *The New Peoples*, 207.

⁷Ross, James, AM.

Talking to Each Other: Courtship, Marriage and Expressions of Love

Within Métis and Half Breed communities, clothing and decorative items sought attention and communicated an array of messages. Elaborate decoration on a garment could increase social visibility, seek a blessing from an unseen world or express love. Men and women used clothing and personal decoration to communicate prosperity, competence and for the purposes of attracting love and attention. At an 1868-69 Wood Mountain winter camp, Olivier Flammand incorporated flirting into his corporate persona as trader, dressing “in brilliant array” to attract the attention of women and provoke envy, causing other men to purchase the goods he displayed on his own body. While Isaac Cowie questioned such unconventional use of company goods, he acknowledged that “Flammand’s flirtations with the belles of the camp” had been good for business.

[He] had arrayed himself daily and gone out to visit with new clothing and finery from his store [and] basked in the smiles of the fair sex . . . the hunters, envious of him, and desirous to eclipse him, one after another began to give up the furs and robes they had previously refused to trade with him, for fine blue cloth capotes with brass buttons, fine cloth trousers, broad L’Assomption belts, fine colored flannel shirts, black silk neckerchiefs, and foxtail plumes . . . scented hair oil . . . silver finger rings and gilt earrings.⁸

William Butler also observed the relationship between fine dress and flirtation when the presence of two good-looking women at a Cree camp halted his party’s progress in 1872. Although Butler was frustrated as his Métis guides dressed “themselves in their gayest trappings” and delayed their departure; he found “courting” dress noteworthy – “the half-breed . . . devotes the largest share of attention to his legs; beads, buckles and embroidered ribbons flutter from his leggings and his garters are resplendent with coloured worsted or porcupine quillwork.”⁹

⁸Cowie, *Company of Adventurers*, 352-353.

⁹William Francis Butler, *The Wild North Land: Being the Story of a Winter Journey with Dogs Across Northern North America* (1873; repr. Edmonton: M. G. Hurtig, 1968), 179.

Women also manipulated dress to look well and increase personal attraction. Marie

Delorme Smith described a love of personal decoration nurtured from infancy:

We liked to decorate ourselves with fancy shells or other ornaments, perhaps that is why when a baby girl was born, they immediately pierced the lobes of her ears so she could, when grown, wear ear rings. Today I never feel fully dressed unless my ear rings are in place.¹⁰

Métis women were often described in admiring terms by observers such as Alexander Ross.

“The half-breed women are . . . exceedingly well-featured and comely -- many even handsome; and those who have the means are tidy about their person and dress. They are fond of show, and invariably attire themselves in gaudy prints, and shawls, chiefly of the tartan kind.”¹¹ Bright colours enhanced visibility, while the blanket or shawl, described by Ross as “indispensable”, provided protection from the elements and also served as an expressive garment. According to Ross, women manipulated the blanket or shawl to reveal and conceal their faces, subsequently avoiding or inviting communication. The shawl could shroud the head to preserve modesty, be pulled over the face to express shyness and moved aside to reveal eyes peering over the folds of fabric. Covering the mouth with hands or shawl emphasized the use of the eyes to communicate and express emotion. Ross described this flirtatious behaviour as “false modesty”, while the Earl of Southesk described the expression of a woman he admired as “half-shy, half-disdainful.”¹²

Women’s feet and legs were also the focus of visual attention. Within the confines of the modest demeanour expected of women, lifting a skirt to expose a neat foot in a well-sewn moccasin and richly embroidered leggings was a bold move.¹³ Women signaled their marital status with visual signs. Southesk described brightly coloured scarves worn “on the head, the married ones bound

¹⁰Marie Rose Delorme Smith (n. d.), “Eighty Years on the Plains,” p. 16, File 4, Mary Rose Smith Fonds, M1154, GAI.

¹¹Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement*, 191.

¹²Ross, *The Red River Settlement*, 191-192. Southesk described a woman in a cart brigade leaving Red River. *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*, 44.

¹³Maria Campbell, personal communication, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, November 29, 2003.

one also across the bosom.”¹⁴ He could be referring to the small shoulder shawls frequently seen in photographs.

A woman’s ability to construct and embellish the many items upon which survival depended was greatly admired and attracted the interest of potential spouses. Women could express their admiration and romantic intentions by offering their handiwork to a man. The Earl of Southesk collected a fingerwoven sash and noted its relationship to courtship and love, “made by girls for their sweethearts to wear as sash with capote. These ceintures were plaited and were a test of handicraft skill.”¹⁵ Walter Traill wrote from Fort Qu’Appelle that he was the subject of romantic overtures:

Ladies in Rupert’s Land as elsewhere indulge in matchmaking and have been disposing of me right and left. One even promised to work me a set of dog clothes for my wedding gift and now has actually written to say that she has commenced them The writer is a beautiful worker in beads and silk but as I cannot seriously entertain her offer, I shall refer the matter to my sister . . . Now is the time for the benefit of her advice in the face of such a strong inducement!¹⁶

When creating clothing or decorative objects for people who held a special place in a woman’s life, the greater the area of embellishment, the more public the declaration of love and affection. This was especially true of the clothing women made for their husbands and children.¹⁷ Women at Fort Edmonton reportedly made small bridal pouches that “the bride would embroider for her groom, and if the embroidery work was very detailed and beautiful, it meant that the bride loved her husband a great deal and he would wear the pouch to show it off.”¹⁸ Isabelle Dorion Impey explained a woman’s motives; “You wanted the love of your life to look handsome, so you

¹⁴Southesk, *Saskatchewan*, 44.

¹⁵From a note found with a fingerwoven sash in the Earl of Southesk’s collection, Kinnaird Castle, Scotland.

¹⁶Walter Traill, *In Rupert’s Land: Memoirs of Walter Traill* (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1970), 106.

¹⁷This was particularly apparent on jackets made by women for their husbands. Jeanine Krauchi, interview with the author, Winnipeg, Manitoba. August 1, 2002.

would do all this nice work to have him dressed.”¹⁹ Marie Rose Delorme Smith described Métis women enveloping their babies in beadwork:

Young mothers, too, when on the trail, vied with one another in seeing who could make the prettiest Ti-ki-na-kan (baby beaded bag) which is the cradle . . . and is strapped to the mother’s back when travelling. We were just as proud to “show off” our bead work on the baby bag as you are to display your knitting or embroidery.²⁰

Marriage in Métis and Half Breed communities developed within the context of indigenous custom marriage practices and the various forms of *marriage à la façon du pays* that developed during the fur trade. Most journals offer sparse descriptions of social practices that surrounded marriage and rarely mention dress. At Fort Vermillion in 1809, Alexander Henry only noted, “my neighbour gave a good dance at his house in honour of the Wedding of his eldest daughter to one of his men.”²¹ More detailed descriptions of two fur trade marriages in the Columbia district can be found in Ross Cox’s narrative. The first was contracted in 1813 between Pierre Michel, “the son of a respectable Canadian by an Indian woman” and “a handsome girl about sixteen years of age”, the niece of a prominent Flathead chief.²² Following his successful appeal, the groom presented gifts, which included “a gun to her uncle, some cloth, calico, and ornaments to her female relatives, with a pistol and handsome dagger to his friend” the war chief who had championed his petition. In a process similar to the dressing of trade captains, clothing and performance was used at Pierre Michel’s marriage to represent the forging of new partnerships and identities and the cementing of a social contract. The symbolic shedding of her leather dress, followed by bathing and dressing in new garments made of trade cloth appeared to represent the bride’s movement from one cultural community to another, from one

¹⁸ Accession Report, Fraser-Pike Collection, June 21, 1983, PMA.

¹⁹ Isabelle Dorion Impey, Gabriel Dumont Institute Interview, used with permission.

²⁰ Delorme Smith, *Eighty Years on the Plains*, 22.

²¹ *Journal of Alexander Henry the Younger*, 416.

²² Ross Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River*, 128.

identity to another. Having been reconstructed into a new person, the bride surrounded by women and led by a party of singing men, marched solemnly towards the fort. The procession ended at the doors of the fort and formed a circle in which further ceremonies were conducted which included dance, song and a pipe ceremony.

A second marriage described by Cox was contracted between a clerk and a young Spokane woman in 1814, which in spite of its greater simplicity, maintained the critical elements of gift exchange, presentation at the gates of the post, bathing and redressing. The marriage of Alexander Culbertson and his Blood wife, Natawista, at Fort Union in 1840 was also marked by negotiation, gift exchange and a formal procession to the post which reputedly involved the bride mounted on a black horse surrounded by white horses bearing gifts.²³ These elaborations of the basic marriage ceremony incorporated elements of diplomatic protocol and symbolic gestures meaningful to both the bride and groom.

Métis marriages were contracted by both customary and Euro-Christian conventions from the late eighteenth through the nineteenth centuries and often combined elements of both. Clothing, gifts, dance and food were the common elements, with elaborations determined by resources, status and circumstance. William Davis described his custom marriage to Frazienne Omlie in 1867. "He went to Devils Lake to marry her, and then went back to St. Joe . . . in those days there were no laws governing marriage and he simply took her as his wife."²⁴ Mr. Davis provided no details on any celebrations held in conjunction with his straightforward custom marriage. The first marriage celebrated in the Cathedral of St. Louis was the 1766 union of Toussaint Hunant, described as "a metif hunter" and Marie Beaugenou.²⁵ The groom wore a

²³There are conflicting descriptions of the wedding, but the essential elements are consistent with the weddings described by Cox. See Jack Holterman, *King of the High Missouri* (Helena, Montana: Falcon Press, 1987), 57-62.

²⁴Question 10, Mr. Davis marriages and his children, William Davis, Pioneer Questionnaire, 6-7.

²⁵Tanis Thorne, *The Many Hands of My Relations*, 77.

“new buckskin suit, embroidered moccasins and other Indian finery.” With this exception, descriptions of men’s dress are rare. Marriage was a woman’s public moment.

Sophie Thérèse Rankin wore an elaborate wedding ensemble in 1802 when she married Charles or Louis Grignon at Green Bay (plate 53).²⁶ She was the daughter of British fur trader David Rankin and a French / Odawa / Menominee mother. Grignon was the son of Pierre Grignon and Louise Domitille Langlade.²⁷ The ensemble reflects the status of the couple as members of the Great Lakes fur trade elite. The skirt, leggings and blanket were made of fine indigo and red wool covered with multi-coloured silk ribbonwork, creating a vibrant display of trade goods available to regional Métis families. The marriage had ended by 1807 and Sophie Thérèse subsequently formed another custom marriage with John Lawe. Elizabeth Thérèse Fisher Baird described Mrs. Lawe as “one of the best of women, and as she wore the Indian dress, that at once endeared her to me.”²⁸ Rachel Lawe Grignon was photographed wearing her mother’s outfit with strands of beads around her neck, trade silver earrings, brooches and a cross.

Mrs. Baird remembered similar outfits worn at two Great Lakes weddings. At the marriage of her cousin Josette in 1817, the bride’s mother and aunt, Magdeleine Laframboise and Thérèse Schindler, “were present in full Indian costume.” In 1819, when Edward Biddle married the Odawa step-daughter of fur trader Joseph Bailly, the bride, her mother, and Mesdames Laframboise and Schindler wore dresses similar to the Rankin ensemble.²⁹

²⁶ According to Neville Public Museum records, her groom was Louis Grignon. Jacqueline Peterson identified him as Charles Grignon. Rachel K. Pannabecker, “Ribbonwork of the Great Lakes Indians: the Material of Acculturation,” (PhD. Dissertation, Ohio State University, 1986), 157. For the Grignon/Renville families see Jacqueline Peterson, “The Founders of Green Bay: A Marriage of Indian and White,” *Voyageur: Historical Review of Brown County and Northeast Wisconsin* 1 (1984): 19-26.

²⁷ The Langlades were a prominent French/Odawa family. Charles Grignon was baptized in 1779. “Register of Baptisms at the Mission of St. Ignace de Michilimakinak,” *CSHSW* 19, 89.

²⁸ Elizabeth Thérèse Fisher Baird, “Reminiscences of Life in Territorial Wisconsin,” *CSHSW* 14 (1886-1887; repr. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1898), 207.

²⁹ The sisters (Mrs. Baird’s grandmother and aunt) were the daughters of Jean Baptiste Marcot and Marie Neskeshe, an Odawa woman. Magdelaine married fur trader Joseph Laframboise. She took over his

a double skirt made of fine narrow broadcloth, with but one pleat on each side; no fullness in front nor in the back. The skirt reached about half-way between the ankle and the knee, and was elaborately embroidered with ribbon and beads on both the lower and upper edges. On the lower, the width of the trimming was six inches, and on the upper, five inches. The same trimming extended up the overlapping edge of the skirt. Above this horizontal trimming were rows upon rows of ribbon, four or five inches wide, placed so near together that only a narrow strip of the cloth showed, like a narrow cord. Accompanying this was worn a pair of leggings made of broadcloth. When the skirt is black, the leggins are of scarlet broadcloth, the embroidery about three inches from the side edge. Around the bottom the trimming is between four and five inches in width. The moccasins, also, were embroidered with ribbon and beads. Then we come to the blanket, as it is called, which is of fine broadcloth, either black or red, with most elaborate work of ribbon; no beads, however, are used on it. This is worn somewhat as the Spanish women wear their mantles. The waist, or sacque, is a sort of loose-fitting garment made of silk for extra occasions, but usually of calico. It is made plain, without either embroidery of ribbon or beads. The sleeves snugly fit the arm and wrist, and the neck has only a binding to finish it. Beads enough are worn around the neck to fill in and come down in front. Silver brooches are worn according to taste. The hair is worn plain, parted in the middle, braided down the back, and tied up again, making a double queue.³⁰

The economic and social prominence of most of these Great Lakes families collapsed within five years of the weddings where these lavish ribbonwork outfits were worn, dramatically altering the social context in which this form of dress flourished.³¹

In other regions, weddings were much more modest in material terms, but continued to focus social attention on women and community celebration. Gifts made in payment for the bride continued to be an integral part of the marriage contract in hunting camps on the eastern and northern plains. David Faribault gave two horses for Nancy "Winona" McClure prior to their camp wedding at Traverse des Sioux in 1851.³² Peter Lavallee of Regina recalled the bride price his grandfather Xavier Lavallee paid for Elise Rocheblanc in 1872. "My grandmother was bought for sixteen head of horses. She was sixteen years old and the horses was worth \$200 a

business after his death, and became a wealthy woman. Her sister Thérèse was also a successful fur trader.

³⁰Baird, "Reminiscences," 44-45.

³¹Peterson, *The Founders of Green Bay*.

³²The wedding was officiated by Alexis Bailly, the step-brother of the bride at the 1817 wedding described by Elizabeth Fisher Baird. Mayer, *With Pen and Pencil*, 171.

head. Yeah. He bought her in Fort Qu'Appelle and gave sixteen head of horses. That man wanted one horse a year for her.”³³ Marie Rose Delorme Smith noted with some chagrin that prior to her marriage in 1877, her husband “gave a present of fifty dollars to my mother, I being an orphan girl. I might as well say I was sold for fifty dollars.”³⁴ According to the memoirs of Peter Erasmus and Norbert Welsh, the organization and payment of the essential components of a wedding was the groom’s responsibility. Erasmus was somewhat overwhelmed by “all the things I was told were necessary to have for the wedding . . . and I began to realize that marriage was a costly procedure.”³⁵ Norbert Welsh successfully bartered for “a fine piece of cloth for the wedding dress, and took it to the girl. Her name was Cecile Boyer.”

Winter was traditionally the time for community celebrations -- “much feasting, dancing and the celebrating of marriages.”³⁶ A painting by Paul Kane shows Margaret Harriott Rowand tucked into her wedding cariole with her hair flowing out from under a small hat.³⁷ Paul Kane described John Rowand Jr. and Margaret beginning their married life in 1848 by traveling to Fort Pitt in dog trains especially embellished for the occasion, “Our carioles were also handsomely decorated, the bride’s more particularly which had been made expressly for the occasion, and was elaborately painted and ornamented.”³⁸ Marie Rose Delorme Smith recalled the role of the sleigh or cariole in the ceremonies that led up to her marriage to Charlie Smith.

³³Elise Rocheblanc, the daughter of Francois Rocheblanc and Judith Desjarlais was born in 1856 at St. Francois Xavier and married at Qu'Appelle to Xavier Lavallee. Elise Rocheblanc claim 1188, vol. 1365, series D-11-8-c. RG 15, NAC; Peter Lavallee Interview, Regina, Saskatchewan, August 8, 1983, IH-SD.103, Indian History Film Project, First Nations University of Canada Library Collection.

³⁴Marie Rose Delorme Smith (nd), “The Adventures of the Wild West of 1870. I Was Quite Young When My Father Died, I Can Just Remember Like a Dream,” p. 10, File 3, Mary Rose Smith Fonds. (M1154) GAI.

³⁵Erasmus, *Buffalo Days and Nights*, 175; Welsh, *The Last Buffalo Hunter*, 56.

³⁶Joseph Z. Laroque, “Buffalo Hunters Travelled Plains in Army Fashion,” *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, February 5, 1950, Clipping File: Bison, American, SAB.

³⁷*Winter Travelling in Dog Sleds* was painted at Kane’s Toronto studio between 1849 and 1856 from field sketches made at Fort Edmonton in 1848. ROM 912.1.48.

They took great care of me and treated me like a little queen. They wrapped me in a buffalo robe and gave me a driver to drive my flat sleigh . . . when we would camp, they had to dig snow so as to put up a teepee. I would stay in the sleigh until the teepee was warm and then they would carry me in.³⁹

She was conveyed in this manner to St. Albert where she was married. A wedding feast of venison, bannock, berry stew and tea followed the ceremony. Peter Erasmus brought “Ribbons and decorations packed in the toboggan ready for the return with my bride” and wrapped Charlotte Jackson in “two silky buffalo robes” for the trip Whitefish Lake mission where the service was performed and their return to Victoria for a wedding supper and celebration.⁴⁰

The item of dress that held the greatest significance in Métis weddings throughout the northwest during the second half of the nineteenth century was the moccasin. According to custom or traditional marriage practice: a woman’s manufacture and presentation of a pair of moccasins to her future husband constituted the marriage contract. Joe Dion recalled:

A certain role that the moccasin played that was rather unique was in tying the knot at our weddings . . . the wife-to-be offered a pair of moccasins, along with a bowl of food, to her future husband. This ceremony, simple as it may seem, nevertheless had a lot of significance and was taken by both parties with its true meaning which often tended to make lasting and happy unions.⁴¹

For couples participating in Christian marriages, the presentation and acceptance of moccasins represented an engagement or agreement to the proposed union. When Norbert Welsh proposed to Cecile Boyer, he recalled, “What grand moccasins she made for me! I was sure I had found the right girl!”⁴² Special moccasins were the focal point of weddings Johnny Grant observed at the Red River Settlement during the winter of 1867. As the bride sang a farewell song to her family:

³⁸Paul Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist*, 270-271.

³⁹Delorme Smith, *Adventures of the Wild West of 1870*, p. 11.

⁴⁰Erasmus, *Buffalo Days and Nights*, 175.

⁴¹Joseph Dion, *My Tribe the Crees* (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1993), 10.

a friend of the family, would go under the table and take one of her moccasins off and auction it off. Sometimes it brought a high price which was then used to pay the fiddler or some other expense of the wedding. The bride who had used her best skill to make her moccasins pretty and attractive listened blushing to the bidding and was always relieved when the moccasin was returned to its place.⁴³

The tradition of “stealing the shoe” was part of wedding celebrations in the Qu’Appelle valley into the twentieth century. According to Peter Lavallee, “the four best boys” would begin the bidding. “If anyone goes over that fourth one they buy the shoe themselves . . . and the money goes to them [the bridal couple].”⁴⁴ Wedding guests also prepared “fancy moccasins ornamented with beadwork and colored silk work to wear at weddings”, particularly for the wedding dance which was held at the home of the bride. It was an object of pride to have “worn out more than one pair of moccasins at a wedding.”⁴⁵ A sketch by William Sabel, “Half breed Red River jig, Celebrating the Wedding,” made in the 1870s shows a group of dancers, wearing sashes, leggings, shawls and other finery for the special occasion (plate 53).⁴⁶

Weddings were community celebrations. At the Hudson’s Bay Company post at Qu’Appelle in 1873, the men were given the day off to celebrate the marriage of Baptiste Pelletier and Caroline Sanderson.⁴⁷ Weddings that took place at the Red River Settlement often involved the entire parish in celebrations that lasted for days. Catholic marriages were generally scheduled for Tuesdays, as no dancing was allowed on Fridays. Protestant marriages were most often held on Thursdays, moving through a series of festivities at different locations until the

⁴²Welsh, *The Last Buffalo Hunter*, 56.

⁴³Grant, *Very Close to Trouble: the Johnny Grant Memoir*, 156.

⁴⁴Peter Lavallee Interview.

⁴⁵William J. Healy, *Women of Red River* (1923; repr. Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1967), 211-212.

⁴⁶*Half breed Red River Jig Celebrating the Wedding*, W. T. Sabel Collection 14, AM.

⁴⁷“The men got a holiday today on account of the marriage of Caroline Sandison,” April 29, 1873, Journal of Daily Events at Fort Qu’Appelle, 1872 – 1879, Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Caroline Sanderson, daughter of George Sanderson was born at St. Andrews in 1841. Caroline Sanderson claim 1346, vol. 1366, series D-11-8-c, RG 15, NAC.

final wedding dinner and dance the following Tuesday.⁴⁸ On their wedding day the bride and groom walked to the church joined by their families and guests who formed a long procession. In later years processions were done on horseback, cart or cariole. On these occasions horses wore brightly coloured ribbon decorations on their bridles. The Scottish tradition of kirking was incorporated into marriages in Protestant parishes. The bride and groom would attend church together the first Sunday following their marriage:

the bride and groom accompanied by the two groomsmen and the two bridesmaids drove to the church and sat together in a pew in the front of the church. Their horses were decorated again with the many-colored ribbons which had bedecked them on the marriage day and the bridal party were arrayed in their best clothes.⁴⁹

Aside from embellished wedding moccasins, women and men simply wore their best clothes.

By the close of the nineteenth century, the visual focus of women's wedding apparel had shifted from the moccasin to the dress. Despite the rarity of women's garments in museums, four wedding dresses have survived in Alberta collections.⁵⁰ Maria Pruden wore the earliest dress for her marriage to George Kennedy at Fort Edmonton in 1879. It is a two-piece dress in rich pale khaki fabric. The fine tailoring and multiple linings suggest that it may have been purchased for the occasion. As an elderly woman, Mrs. Kennedy recalled that she also began her married life with a wedding trip in a dog cariole. "On the day of their marriage, she and her husband left by dog team for the north."⁵¹ Young women from the Fraser family of Fort Chipewyan wore two dresses. Lovisa Fraser's cousin, Flora MacDonald, sewed the dress worn at Lovisa's wedding to John Wylie in 1901.⁵² It was made of purple twill with wide silk bands accenting two deep

⁴⁸For descriptions of weddings see *Women of Red River*, 210-212; *Very Close to Trouble*, 155-156.

⁴⁹*Women of Red River*, 212.

⁵⁰Justine Beaudry Bellerose dress, 982.01.11, Musée Heritage Museum; Maria Pruden Kennedy dress, H92.28.1, Lovisa Fraser Wylie dress, H73.1251A-D, Jenny Fraser Flett dress, H85.11.39.1, PMA.

⁵¹"Edmonton Pioneer of 97 Traces Her Roots Back to Another Edmonton," *Winnipeg Free Press*, Monday, January 3, 1955, p. 12.

⁵²The young couple was descended from generations of Half Breed families employed by the Hudson's Bay Company. Lovisa Fraser was the daughter of Colin Fraser Jr. and Flora Rowland. Her groom,

ruffles that formed the base of the skirt. The collar has a series of triangular cuts trimmed with a beaded edging. In 1927, her niece Jenny Fraser, the eighteen-year-old bride of Edward Flett, purchased light blue satin at the Fort Chipewyan Hudson's Bay Company store and made herself a wedding dress that merged traditional elements with contemporary style. The dress has a distinct twenties profile, with a wide panel of diamond shapes outlined with seed and bugle beads which also trim the neck and sleeves. Justine Beaudry and her cousin Lucy L'Hirondelle created a three-piece wedding dress for Justine's marriage to Pierre Bellerose at St. Albert in 1903 (plate 53).⁵³ A long-sleeved blouse sewn from fine pink organdy was worn under a pink striped cotton jacket with a low round neckline and three-quarter sleeves. A bell shaped skirt sewn from the same fabric was trimmed with pink ribbon and large bows. The dress was trimmed with beaded fabric tape. While elements of indigenous design and decorative technique are occasionally evident, these dresses primarily reflected the bride's desire to participate in the fashionable dress of her time and make a strong visual statement on her wedding day.

The creation or purchase of a special wedding dress represented a considerable investment of time and resources during a difficult period of social, political and economic transition. Maria Pruden married George Kennedy in a finely tailored dress and immediately left by dog team to begin her married life in a series of isolated posts similar to the ones she had grown up in. She became a midwife, as did Jenny Fraser Flett at Fort Chipewyan.⁵⁴ Her frothy pink dress belies the profound lack of luxury that marked Justine Beaudry Bellerose's life. While the Fraser and Pruden women continued to live within the protective, but far from

John Wylie was the son of Annie Flett.

⁵³Lucy L'Hirondelle was adopted by Justine's parents, Narcisse Beaudry and Lucie Breland of Egg Lake.

⁵⁴Maria Pruden Kennedy "often acted as midwife," Edmonton Pioneer Traces Her Roots. For Lovisa and Jenny Fraser's dresses see Patricia McCormack, *Northwind Dreaming: Kiwetin Pawatamowin, Tthisi Niltsi Nats'ete, Fort Chipewyan 1788-1988* (Edmonton: Provincial Museum of Alberta, 1988), 86, 77.

luxurious confines of the Hudson's Bay posts that had been home to generations of their fur-trading ancestors, Justine Beaudry Bellerose was a young Métis woman struggling to raise a family of thirteen children in the aftermath of social and economic collapse. She was remembered as a tiny woman; "fun-loving, a hard worker, a seamstress, a cook, a baker, a doctor . . . a master of a myriad of other things."⁵⁵ The pink dress was preserved and valued, as were the wedding dresses of other women. In addition to the original wedding photograph, Justine's daughter Elizabeth Bellerose and her friend Delia Arcand were photographed wearing their mothers' wedding dresses at St. Albert around 1930. The wedding dress, when it was affordable, had the same resonance for Métis women as other brides. Each dress became an embodiment of the resilient spirits and hopes of the women who constructed, wore and preserved them.

Celebration and Display

Consistently identified as an aspect of Métis cultural practice; laughter, play and celebration created places of safety and solidarity. In 1823 William Keating described the warm welcome and triumphant processional return of a Red River Métis hunting party that had been "absent forty-five days without being heard from."⁵⁶ At settlements and missions, returning hunters and their families attended church to give thanks for "a successful hunt and safe return."

the half-breeds gather to the cathedral in all their fanciful variety of dress, their brilliant sashes, and blue or white capotes; the dress of the women, too; not less brilliantly catching the eye, there is a sense of harmony gratified by this likeness and general prevalence of striking colors, which would never be elicited by the same throngs in a country meeting-house in New England.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ As a young man Pierre Bellerose worked as a hunter, guide and freighter with his father. Dorothy Bellerose Chartrand, "Pierre and Justine Bellerose," *The Black Robe's Vision: a History of St. Albert and District* (St. Albert, Alberta: St. Albert Historical Society, 1985), 404; Pierre Bellerose claim 2786, vol. 1329, series D-11-8-b; Justine Beaudry claim 2670, vol. 1335, series D-11-8-c, RG 15, NAC.

⁵⁶ Keating, *Narrative of an Expedition*, 39.

⁵⁷ Manton Marble, "To Red River and Beyond 3rd Paper," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 22, 120 (1861): 314.

Clergymen occasionally noted with some frustration the love of display and processional that accompanied Métis and Half Breed people's attendance at church. Johnny Grant described New Year's Day as the "great fete" for Catholics at Red River, which often began before daylight as carioles would join in a procession to begin the morning with a High Mass. "They all had bells or ribbons of different colors on their horses' bridles, vying with each other as to who would have his horse most gaily trimmed."⁵⁸ The 1863 *Nor'Wester* reported that horses running in the annual New Year's Day races "were decorated with flowers and ribbons."⁵⁹ While New Years at Red River may have been more elaborate than festivities in other communities, celebrations were well established at Moose Fort by 1749 where "having three fiddlers in this Fort, our people celebrated the evening with dancing and were all merry" and at Brandon House in 1797 where the "Ladys, the wives of the Canadians" marked the occasion "with the complimentary Kiss of the new year according to their Custom, and drest in their wedding garments."⁶⁰

Paul Kane described "half-breeds glittering in every ornament they could lay their hands on" during the Christmas celebrations at Fort Edmonton in 1848.⁶¹ Marie Rose Delorme Smith noted that women placed particular effort "beading in pretty designs the moccasins we wore for holiday wear. Long hours were spent beading the front of vests, the cuffs of coats; and the lad with a nicely beaded buckskin shirt was proud indeed."⁶² Special decorative items were taken out during the holidays, such as the brilliantly coloured cigar silk quilt made by Mary Mercredi Loutit at Fort Chipewyan, and displayed only at Christmas.⁶³ A set of four turn-of-the-century dog tuppies made by the Gaudet sisters of Fort Good Hope for their brothers were only used

⁵⁸ Grant, *Very Close to Trouble*, 155.

⁵⁹ Margaret Arnett MacLeod, "Red River New Year," *The Beaver* (December, 1953): 43.

⁶⁰ MacLeod, Red River New Year.

⁶¹ Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist*, 263.

⁶² Delorme Smith, *The Adventures of the Wild West of 1870*, p. 22-23.

⁶³ The quilt was made between 1900 and 1911 by Mary Victoria Mercredi Loutit, the wife of Chief Factor Joseph Loutit of Fort Chipewyan. Ethnology Collection Artifact Report, H88.158.1, PMA.

during holidays.⁶⁴ They were made of fine white caribou embroidered with large flowers in shades of pink and red, buds and green leaves. Three of the tuppies were trimmed with commercial fringe and multi-coloured wool tassels, while one was fringed with multi-coloured wool. Elder Madeline Bird recalled that, “the church was full and we could smell the new moccasin shoes, coats and mitts all beaded up. The mothers worked for long hours before Christmas to make sure that all the family was well dressed with new warm clothing for Christmas time.”⁶⁵

Dances or “balls” as they were usually called were frequent events and occurred across a broad terrain. While balls could take place anywhere from a family home to around a camp fire, balls at the Red River Settlement could be quite elaborate and exclusive. In some respects, balls provided an arena for men and women to establish themselves against growing prejudices, using clothing and performance as a means to position themselves in a higher social class. Women of means ordered gowns from England, which were shipped through York Factory. James Sinclair ordered a “beautiful imported frock from New York and a pair of white kid gloves, said to have been the first of their kind ever worn in Red River” for his daughter Harriet’s presentation at a military ball given for retiring troops in 1848.⁶⁶ Sinclair also used the ball as an opportunity to introduce the polka, a new dance he had learned in the ballrooms of New York and St. Louis during his business travels. The combination of clothing and performance created quite a stir and John Peter Pruden took his daughter Caroline home in a huff when she danced with Sinclair against his wishes.⁶⁷ Harriet Sinclair and Caroline Pruden were remembered as the proverbial

⁶⁴According to Julien Gaudet, they were made during the ‘last years’ by Marie Gaudet or her daughters. Julien Gaudet interview, pp. 93 – 94. Dog tuppies, Gaudet Collection, ME 988.136. 19 – 22, MMM.

⁶⁵Madeline Bird, *Living Kindness*, 27

⁶⁶D. Geneva Lent, *West of the Mountains: James Sinclair and the Hudson’s Bay Company* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963), 200-201. See also Harriet Sinclair Cowan’s recollection’s in Healy, *Women of Red River*, 216 –218.

⁶⁷Mary Mindess (n.d.), “When Caroline Danced the Polka,” John Peter Pruden Search File, HBCA.

belles of the ball. While this form of ball differed significantly from more informal, spontaneous dances, “along with the pretty, and in some cases, expensive imported gowns seen at the ball, the girls wore dainty white moccasins on their feet.” Many travelers, such as the correspondent for *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* reporting from Pembina, enjoyed the hospitality, fun and display of a “half-breed ball.”

The men were stripped to shirt, trowsers, belt and moccasins; and the women wore gowns which had no hoops . . . a black-eyed beauty in blue calico and a strapping bois brulé, would jump up from the floor and outdo their predecessors in vigor and velocity.⁶⁸

As Dr. Thibido of the Northwest Exploring Expedition noted in his 1859 diary, “had a grand dance at Joe Roulette’s with the half breed girls danced until daylight in the morning.” In 1859, Roulette also “gathered a large party of friends and neighbours and entertained” the Earl of Southesk “with a supper and a ball” before he began his journey home.⁶⁹ In 1860 Lewis Henry Morgan attended a ball at the Half Breed Reservation in Nebraska Territory:

It was got up at short notice. A young man was sent to notify the girls, another to sweep out the store and arrange the seats, and another to notify the two village fiddlers . . . Among the girls were several half breeds, French and Dakota. They were well dressed in English fashion, not omitting hoops, talk our language well, and two of them were educated at St. Louis . . . They are good dancers and have the manners of ladies.⁷⁰

At Fort Carlton in 1862, “a ball was got up by the half-breeds in honour” of Viscount Milton and Dr. Cheadle who described the clothing worn by the dancers:

The men appeared in gaudy array, with beaded firebag, gay sash, blue or scarlet leggings, girt below the knee with beaded garters, and moccasins elaborately embroidered; the women in short, bright-coloured skirts, showing the richly-embroidered leggings, and white moccasins of cariboo-skin, beautifully worked with flowery patterns in beads, silk and moose hair.⁷¹

⁶⁸Manton Marble, “To Red River and Beyond, 2nd Paper,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 21, 123 (October 1860): 585.

⁶⁹Diary of Dr. Augustus J. Thibido, 301. Southesk, *Saskatchewan*, 367.

⁷⁰Morgan, *The Indian Journals*, 116.

⁷¹Milton and Cheadle, *The North-West Passage By Land*, 70.

Susan Bettelyon recalled the winter of 1865-66 when all “the mixed-blood families camped at Fort Laramie These people seemed to be born for gaiety and music; it is life with them and they are never as happy as when the music was on the air.”⁷² She described “the half-breed girls, all dressed up in bright calico with ribbons in their hair and on their waists, that could fly around in a quadrille . . . stepping to the music in their moccasined feet.” A drawing of a “Half Breed dance at Devils Lake, Dakota Territory” and another by William Sabel, “Red River Jig (Shocking!)” show dancers resplendent in ribbons, print fabrics and beaded leggings.⁷³

In 1871, a young member of the Transcontinental Railway Expedition attended “a regular old time Red River Ball.”⁷⁴ The following night the guide’s relatives organized “another Ball [at White Horse Plain] . . . all the people for miles around were bid and they kept it up until peep of day.” The next day they continued on to Portage La Prairie where again:

the people were very Big hearted -- and we could not get away for two days, there was dancing and dancing and fiddling and fiddling from morning til night and from night to morning. Our chief finding no other way to get started ordered a move at 3 o’clock in the morning And we stole away.

Maria Pruden Kennedy described herself as “the belle of the trading posts’ balls” held in her youth.⁷⁵ In 1877 Lady Dufferin attended a ball at Government House in Winnipeg and noted with some disappointment that “the ladies were well-dressed and the dancing as at Ottawa or London. Six years ago, at a ball here, ladies would have come in moccasins, and danced nothing but the Red River jig. This state of society would have had some charm for us.”⁷⁶ Métis elder, Eli Guardipee saw the community celebrations of his youth as reflective of a total lifestyle that

⁷²Susan Bordeaux Bettelyon and Josephine Waggoner, *With My Own Eyes: a Lakota Woman Tells Her People’s History*, ed. Emily Levine (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 91.

⁷³*Half Breed Dance at Devil’s Lake, Dakota Territory* by Corporal Louis Voelkerer, circa 1870. Neg 3360, Loc. GV1.3p31, Minnesota Historical Society. *Red River Jig Shocking!* W. T. Sabel Collection 13, AM.

⁷⁴Andrew Maxwell memoir.

⁷⁵Edmonton Pioneer Traces Her Roots.

⁷⁶Lady Dufferin, *My Canadian Journal, 1872 – 1878* (1891; repr. Don Mills: Longman’s Canada, 1969), 250.

balanced work and play. "It was truly a happy life that these people were living . . . they hunted and worked hard during the day, but when night came they danced and sang the old French songs, until the late hours . . . and slept the sleep of people who had no cares for the moment."⁷⁷

Asserting Collective Identity

Dress can allow members of a group to recognize each other and to be recognized as a group by others, serving as signs of recognition, belonging and territory.⁷⁸ European observers throughout the nineteenth century often found the visual presentation of a group of Métis men somewhat intimidating or disconcerting. William Keating described his party's first encounter with Métis men south of the Red River Settlement in 1823, when "Twenty hunters, mounted on their best steeds, rode in abreast; having heard of our arrival, they fired a salute as they passed our camp."⁷⁹ The men, in almost identical dress, presented a visual solidarity that underscored their collective action. The welcoming salute demonstrated their peaceful intent, but their visual and auditory presentation also served to establish their proprietary interest in the territory. Along the Red River valley and across the plains, travelers described similar presentations by groups of men on horseback. These documented encounters provide us with descriptions of men known in Metchif as *Les Cavaliers*. These men served as scouts or guides and their visual appearance and performance were an integral aspect of their defensive role. Joseph LaRoque, whose father had led a camp based in present-day Saskatchewan, described *les cavaliers* as "young men on horseback, a gun in one hand and a whip in the other, who rode behind and well ahead of the

⁷⁷Eli Guardipee Reminiscence.

⁷⁸Manning Nash, *The Cauldron of Ethnicity in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 11; Penny Storm, *Functions of Dress: Tool of Cultures and the Individual* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1987), 116-117.

⁷⁹Keating, *Narrative of an Expedition*, 39-40.

caravan scouting every inch of the prairie.”⁸⁰ According to William and Michael Davis, who grew up in northern plains hunting camps, it was the cavaliers’ responsibility to watch for enemies, approach strangers, “locate the buffaloes and find water.”⁸¹ “Two rode out from the column to the left, two to the right, and two went ahead.” They used action and clothing to send coded signals back to the camp. “When the scouts located buffaloes after camp had been pitched, they would either ride back . . . and report or they would ride back and forth on a ridge so that they could be seen from the camp.” If they sighted a potential threat to the camp, “they rode back and forth . . . took off their coats or jackets and waved them up and down.”

Les cavaliers and captains of brigades and camps marked both their role and status with clothing. In his memoirs, Norbert Welsh, an elderly Métis trader, described Joseph McKay as “a regular cavalier of the plains. Full of dash, like all first class traders and buffalo hunters. He always rode a fast buffalo running horse [and] had a rich outfit for his horse -- beaded saddle and cloth and fancy bridle with lariat and whip. He cut a handsome figure on his prancing horse.”⁸²

A sketch and description of John McKay, captain of a large camp observed north of Fort Abercrombie, was published in 1858 (plate 54).

The rider, a young McKay, who was captain of the train, was well mounted and sat his horse finely. His clear, bronzed face was set off by a jaunty cap. He wore a checked flannel shirt, and each shoulder bore a fancy wampum bead belt, that suspended the powder-horn and shot-pouch. He had upon his feet moccasins worked with beads and quills and carried in his hand a short-handled riding-whip, with a long thick lash of buffalo hide.⁸³

As Norbert Welsh recalled, “We paid attention to class distinctions in those days, and we buffalo

⁸⁰Joe LaRoque, *Buffalo Hunters Travelled Plains in Army Fashion*

⁸¹William and Michael Davis were the sons of William Davis and Marie Enneau, described by their sons as “French-Indian.” Michael Davis (1937) Interview Transcript, p. 10. See also William Davis Interview for description of camp life, Rolette County, WPA Biography File, SHSND.

⁸²Welsh, *The Last Buffalo Hunter*, 22.

⁸³“To Red River and Beyond,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 21 (1860): 305.

hunters and traders thought quite well of ourselves.”⁸⁴

When hundreds of hunters gathered together in the moments before a buffalo hunt, it created a visual spectacle that strengthened collective identity. “All the able-bodied men were speedily armed . . . their superfluous clothing thrown off, sashes tied tighter, and girths buckled a hole or two higher . . . A dozen or more of the fleetest runners were sent to . . . head the herd and start them back.”⁸⁵ While the riders stripped down to essentials, visual attention shifted to the horses whose “trappings are garnished with beads and porcupine quills, exhibiting all the skill which the hunter’s wife or belle can exercise; while head and tail display all the colours of the rainbow in the variety of ribbon attached to them.”⁸⁶ In 1860, Lewis Henry Morgan described Métis horsemen lining up before the hunt. “When a herd is neared, the runners are saddled and the guns are loaded and they get as near as they can under the cover of some hill . . . They start all abreast.”⁸⁷ While Morgan’s hunt involved “about, perhaps one hundred horsemen”, the correspondents for *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* reported that “three hundred and fifty horsemen came flying over the ridge and down its slope in full pursuit, and in front of them all, not a quarter of a mile away, a herd of near a thousand buffaloes in headlong flight.”⁸⁸ The elaborately embellished saddle blanket, pad saddle or *sel à royon*, bridle and riding quirt provided an important way for hunters and their wives to solicit good fortune and communicate respect for the animals they depended upon (plate 54).⁸⁹ It also communicated a man’s status and

⁸⁴Welsh, *The Last Buffalo Hunter*, p. 22.

⁸⁵To Red River and Beyond. *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, 589.

⁸⁶John McLean, *Notes of a Twenty-Five Years Service in the Hudson’s Bay Territories* (1849; repr. Toronto: Champlain Society, 1932), 375.

⁸⁷Morgan, *The Indian Journals*, 140.

⁸⁸To Red River and Beyond, 589.

⁸⁹Métis beadwork on hunting clothing and equipment appear to be closely related to similar Cree beliefs regarding embellishment, prayer, animal spirits and hunting luck. See Regina Flannery and Mary Elizabeth Chambers (1985). Each Man Had His own ‘Friends’: the Role of Dream Visitors in Traditional East Cree Belief and Practice. *Arctic Anthropology* 22 (1985): 5, 7; Naomi Adelson, “Being Alive and Well: Indigenous Belief as Opposition Among the Whapmagoostui Cree. (PhD. dissertation,

identity as a hunter. When multiplied by the hundreds, the visual effect must have been stunning.

War and Peace

In addition to the collective identities expressed through shared economic and social pursuits, clothing and visual appearance were also manipulated to express group identity and purpose in critical actions related to war and peace. During the 1818 inquiry held into the Battle of Seven Oaks in June, 1816, dress was presented as evidence to establish or dispute motive and to determine whether the dress and visual presentation of the Métis expressed aggression or the intent to disguise their identities and frighten the Selkirk settlers. The testimony of John Pritchard described the Métis who confronted Governor Robert Semple on Frog Plain: “the Half-breeds . . . surrounded us in the shape of a half-moon or half-circle . . . they were painted and disguised in the most hideous manner”⁹⁰ Donald McCoy testified that, “we were surrounded by this party; who were generally all painted . . . They were strongly armed, having guns, bows and arrows, spears and tomahawks.”⁹¹ The formation of painted, armed horsemen in a half circle was established military protocol among the nations of the plains. However, Hudson’s Bay Company witnesses stated that it was unusual and suspicious behaviour for North West Company clerk, Cuthbert Grant, and his men to whoop and paint their faces. John Pritchard testified: “I never saw the Halfbreeds paint; they imitate the white people and dress like them at all times, except when engaged in sporting as Indians.” He referred to their visual presentation as a disguise or masquerade.⁹² North-West Company witnesses countered that it was so common that it communicated no particular intent. When asked, “is their painting themselves an uncommon

McGill University, 1992), 171.

⁹⁰“John Pritchard’s Examination,” *Report of the Proceedings Connected with the Dispute Between the Earl of Selkirk and the North-West Company* (Montreal: Jams Lane and Nahum Mower, 1819),160.

⁹¹“Donald McCoy’s Examination,” *Report of the Proceedings*, 116.

⁹²John Pritchard’s Examination, 164.

thing, or does it indicate an hostile disposition? a manifestation of going to war? ", John McDonell replied, it was "by no means uncommon. I have seen them very generally painted. It is not uncommon to see them painted, and is no proof of hostilities being intended". He also stated, "It is very common to the Indians and Half Breeds to give the whoop . . . hardly two get on horseback without giving the whoop."⁹³ Antoine La Pointe testified, "It is their custom to paint on different occasions", but the "Bois Brulés" had not been "generally painted when they set out."⁹⁴ The formal presentation of suits of clothing to the victorious Métis by North West Company was also a line of inquiry at the trial.

the half-breeds and other servants of the North-West Company, were assembled . . . when Archibald Norman McLeod . . . made a speech, in which he told the half-breeds . . . that they had defended themselves and their lands well . . . that he had brought with him clothing for forty of them, -- that he did not expect to meet so many of them there, but that the rest should receive the like articles on the arrival of the canoes in the fall.⁹⁵

Métis leaders Cuthbert Grant, Bostonnois Pangman and Seraphim Lamarre distributed the clothing, described as suits or outfits.⁹⁶ Pierre Pambrun testified, "I saw a capote and feathers that one came away with, and he told me it was for [June]19th."⁹⁷ The North West Company maintained there was nothing unusual in this distribution of equipment, but the event appears to follow commonly understood military and diplomatic protocols generally practiced in the region.

Alexander Ross described a conflict at the Red River Settlement in 1834 that echoed the actions described in the 1818 inquiry. On this occasion, the Métis were outraged when one of their party was struck across the face by a Hudson's Bay Company employee. Ross, sent to talk to the angry Métis, noted that he was "struck with their savage appearance".

⁹³"John McDonell's Examination," *Report of the Proceedings*, 206 and 208.

⁹⁴"Antoine La Pointe's Examination," *Report of the Proceedings*, 236 and 238.

⁹⁵F. D. Heurter, *Narratives of John Pritchard, Pierre Chrysologue Pambrun and Frederick Damien Heurter, Respecting the Aggressions of the North West Company, Against the Earl of Selkirk's Settlement Upon Red River* (London: John Murray, 1819), 66.

⁹⁶"F. D. Heurter's Examination," *Report of the Proceedings*, 127. William McGillivray's testimony described the clothing in question as "a quantity of equipments, about thirty or forty suits", 183.

the half-breeds met in council, and in conclusion demanded that Mr. [Thomas] Simpson should be forthwith delivered up to them, to be dealt with as they might think proper . . . or if this demand were not complied with, they would destroy Fort Garry, and take him by force. This threat was transmitted to the Governor of the colony, and almost at the same moment the war-song and war-dance was commenced in the fashion of the Indians.⁹⁸

A similar incident occurred at Norway House in 1853 when a member of the Saskatchewan or Blaireau (Badger) brigade was arrested and jailed. Word of his arrest reached the departed brigade who abandoned their cargo and returned to the post early the next morning. “The inmates of the fort, aroused by songs and war whoops” saw a boat “loaded down with every Blaireau of the brigade”. The men who confronted the factor in charge were described as painted and singing war songs.⁹⁹ Warrior traditions among high plains Métis persisted well into the late nineteenth century. Norbert Welsh recalled Baptiste Ah-you-skan Framboise’s actions during an attack by a party of Sioux: “he grabbed his gun and ammunition and jumped out of his tent singing a war-song.”¹⁰⁰ According to Mr. J. B. Laderoute, the Métis men who rode with William Dease during the Red River Resistance of 1869 wore coloured feathers in their hair “as signs of Warfare”, causing Father Ritchot to call them “a band of Renegades that wants to precipitate themselves in Hell! See those Plumes! Go! Go! Bank [sic] of Rags go and do your worse.”¹⁰¹

Clothing and visual appearance were also manipulated when the Métis were negotiating peace between parties in conflict and exchanged to express alliance or friendship. An 1860 *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* article described the Métis of St. Joseph, led by Jean Baptiste

⁹⁷“Pierre Chrysologue Pambrun’s Examination,” *Report of the Proceedings*, 113.

⁹⁸Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement*, 168.

⁹⁹The man refused to continue with the brigade having planned to disembark at Norway House and proceed to Red River for his retirement as his contract had expired. The incident is described in J. J. Gunn, *Echoes of the Red*, 41-42.

¹⁰⁰Welsh, *The Last Buffalo Hunter*, 276.

¹⁰¹Among the men so dressed were La Venture Parisien. J. B. Laderoute (1913), “Memoirs of the Troubles in Manitoba 1869-70,” pp. 11-12 and 28, RCMP Museum, Regina.

Wilkie, returning from treaty negotiations with the Sioux.¹⁰²

we heard, nearby in a ravine of the thick woods which surround us on every side, Sioux war songs The party soon emerged from the woods . . . swift riders galloping ahead, some of them with huge white buffalo robes trailing from their shoulders, like the vestments of a priest at high mass, and painted with savage devices and in gaudy colors; others in the blanket and leggins of Sioux braves, tricked out with painted quills or brilliant wampum; others still in the half-breed dress, woolens, with handsome bead decorations, skin caps--a motley crowd, headed by Battiste Wilkie, the President of the Councilors of St. Jo. It was a deputation of half-breeds returning from treaty-making with the Sioux at Devil's Lake.¹⁰³

A drawing of Jean Baptiste Wilkie shows him wearing full-length hide leggings with garters below the knee, a shirt trimmed with wide strips of quillwork and heavy fringe, holding a long-stemmed pipe (plate 55). The caption reads, "President of the Councilors of St. Joseph, in Sioux warrior's dress." Diplomatic "dressing" of an ally or friend was an ancient practice, first observed by the Jesuits.¹⁰⁴ The "gifting" and receiving of clothing symbolized diplomatic partnership and was indicative of acceptance as "one of us."

During the 1874 negotiations for Treaty No. 4, George Racette, representing the "Indians from Fort Pelly," carefully organized a visual presentation designed to impress government officials and announce the importance of their delegation.

the whole camp came forward in martial array, led by an enormously large man, riding a very fair specimen of the buffalo hunters of that time . . . his rider attired in blue cloth capot with brass buttons, cotton shirt (unstarched), moleskin trowsers and new deer skin mocassins with broad Lassomption belt or sash of variegated colors in silk around his waist, Indian pad saddle with heavily beaded saddle cloth . . . now riding well in advance curvetting and ascribing circles and half-circles, at the canter or lope. . . parading up and down . . . until close up to our Marquee tent. Then at a given signal the soldiers . . . rode

¹⁰²Jean Baptiste Wilkie was the son of a Saulteaux woman and Alexander Wilkie, a clerk with Alexander Henry in 1805 and 1806. *The Journal of Alexander Henry*, 171, 177. Described as "an English half-breed, brought up among the French; a man of good sound sense and long experience, and withal a fine bold-looking fellow," *The Red River Settlement*, 248. The 1850 U. S. Census for Pembina County, Minnesota identified Jean Baptiste Wilkie as 47, born at Pembina, married to Elize Azure, 42.

¹⁰³To Red River and Beyond. Second Paper, 606. The drawing of Wilkie appeared in To Red River and Beyond, Third Paper, 306.

¹⁰⁴Father du Poisson described a man placing a painted hide or mataché around his shoulders to express friendship. Father du Poisson Missionary to the Akensas to Father Patouillet, *Jesuit Relations*, vol. 67, 257.

forward in sections and passed in review before him at a gallop, towards the fort, and on their return circled around him in a single file displaying some feats of horsemanship while the rest of the camp were dismounted awaiting further orders.¹⁰⁵

A similarly choreographed exhibition of horsemanship, “the last demonstration of riding we old buffalo-hunters gave on the plains”, was executed by one hundred Métis men in honour of the Marquis of Lorne at Fort Qu’Appelle in 1881.¹⁰⁶ In each instance, man and horse created a visual unit, which through collective displays of horsemanship communicated a strong group identity, suggesting that the assembled riders would make useful allies and formidable enemies.

Social Context and Meaning

Throughout the nineteenth century, Métis and Half Breed people communicated a collective visual identity that utilized a repertoire of associated actions and meanings. Individuals could choose to conform, or they could manipulate clothing and visual appearance to negotiate entry into other groups or social classes. New items could also replace earlier garment forms in an essentially enduring clothing action. The coat or vest replaced the ancient practice of draping a painted hide over the shoulders of the person one wished to honour or ally oneself with. Shoes replaced the profusely beaded wedding moccasins, but the tradition of “stealing the shoe” continued long after wedding moccasins disappeared.

Items of clothing and decorative objects do not exist in isolation, nor do they derive their meaning solely from the act of perception or viewing. Their meaning is embedded in the social contexts that animate them. People actively participate in the creation and re-creation of cultural meaning.¹⁰⁷ As an object moves from one social context to another, its meaning could be

¹⁰⁵ Memories of the Treaty of 1874, p. 2, Alexander Morris Papers, MG1 A7, AM.

¹⁰⁶ Welsh, *The Last Buffalo Hunter*, 225.

¹⁰⁷ Susan Kaiser, “Linking the Social Psychology of Dress to Culture: a Contextual Perspective,” *Social Science Aspects of Dress: New Directions*, ed. Sharron Lennon (Monument, Colorado: International Textile and Apparel Association, 1993), 39 – 40.

transformed. In Ile à la Crosse, a glove or a hat thrown in front of a rival was a challenge to dance the Red River jig.¹⁰⁸ A finger-woven sash created by a woman to demonstrate her skill and express her regard for a man could be either a flirtatious overture or an expression of commitment, depending on whether she was single or married. The man wearing that sash would tighten it when riding into the hunt or into battle. Some elders recalled specific colours and designs associated with particular families.

I [remember] that story my grandfather told me about the sashes and it was in the context of him lamenting that you couldn't leave your stuff out anymore that people just stole it. He said that long ago you didn't do that because people knew what was yours. If you had it wrapped with your sash everybody knew it was yours because of the colours the family used. They knew that it belonged to the Bouviers, or it belonged to the Gardiner's or to the Daigneault's. It was essentially a way of marking.¹⁰⁹

Clothing is still used to express alliance, approval and acceptance. Cree Métis, Keith Goulet, who represented Cumberland Constituency in Saskatchewan's Legislative Assembly from 1986 to 2003, received many beaded garments as expressions of support and approval.¹¹⁰ He has also commissioned garments, wearing them proudly at official functions and political gatherings. The spontaneous gesture of removing a vest or jacket and "dressing" another person is still commonly practiced. One of the better-known incidents happened at Fort Simpson in 1987 when Harry Daniels, then president of the Native Council of Canada, removed his beaded jacket and placed it around the shoulders of Pope John Paul II (plate 55).¹¹¹ People give objects meaning, but cultural meaning is rarely stable. Objects and clothing actions that had significance in certain historic contexts are sometimes forgotten, while others endure for generations.

¹⁰⁸Rita Bouvier interview with the author, October 4, 2002, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

¹⁰⁹Rita Bouvier interview.

¹¹⁰Keith Goulet, personal communication, November 23, 2003, Regina, Saskatchewan.

¹¹¹Harry Daniels, personal communication, September 13, 2003, Regina Beach, Saskatchewan, photographs used with permission.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Sewing for a Living: the Commodification of Women's Artistic Production

My mother's name was Sauve; she came from the North and was partly of Indian blood--Swampee. My father died when I was very young. He had been sick for a long time . . . My mother had to support the family. She made fine moccasins and fine coats for other women.¹

Norbert Welsh, Charlotte Sauv e's son, remembered the family she supported with her sewing as "seven children . . . all small."² Charlotte's industrious application of her skills was not unusual. Johnny Grant described hard-working women at Red River who:

had a pleasant rivalry as to who made the finest garments for their husbands. They embroidered moccasins with silk or beads and also ornamented pieces of black cloth or leather which were used to carry a powder horn and a shot sack. Besides this they trimmed leather coats and gun covers, using porcupine quills sometimes with the silk and beads.³

He noted that women also "tanned the hides and got the leather to make moccasins" did all their sewing by hand and "in summer they helped in the hay-field and then in harvesting the grain."⁴ The women remembered by Johnny Grant were dressing their husbands and children, wrapping them up in their finest silk and bead embroidery to present them to an audience of friendly rivals who dressed their own families. Charlotte Sauv e, on the other hand, sewed for a living and lightened the domestic burden of "other women" who could afford to purchase her services.

In 1868, when the Red River crops were devastated by a grasshopper plague, women organized to assist a community in profound crisis. Generally recognized as "first-class needlewomen," prominent women formed a clothing club that divided the region into districts. Women such as Anne McDermott Bannatyne mobilized women in each area "to see that no one

¹Welsh, *The Last Buffalo Hunter*, 13-14.

²In her scrip application filed in Manitoba, Charlotte identified herself as the daughter of Jean Baptiste Sauv e, (French Canadian) and Margeurite (an Indian), born in 1808 on "the Polar Sea". Charlotte Walsh [Welsh] claim 994, vol. 1324, series D-11-9-a, RG 15, NAC.

³Grant, *Very Close to Trouble*, 153.

⁴Grant, *Very Close to Trouble*, 154.

in her district went unclothed.”⁵ The women of Red River are only one example of a female economy, which not only played a critical social role, but occupied an essential niche within the overall economy of the fur trade and the myriad of associated quasi-independent initiatives undertaken by free traders and family groups. In 1844, three women at Moose Factory were commissioned to make birch bark baskets or rogans for Governor George Simpson. Identified only as Mrs. Gladman, Mrs. Vincent and Mrs. Flett, they made several variations of “nest round, basket and flat” for a total cost of 4 pounds, 5 shillings.⁶ The Gladman and Vincent families were related through marriage, suggesting the possibility of female kin-based work groups.

Learning to Sew

The development of a skilled population of women was the result of home-based instruction and participation in the communal work of women, supplemented by exposure to the curriculum of early schools. Daughters learned from mothers, and those affiliated with fur trade posts were also exposed to new techniques and markets. Between 1785 and 1786 London Committee of the Hudson’s Bay Company received a series of complaints from Humphrey Marten at York Factory regarding Alfred Robinson, a young surgeon employed there. The complaints focused on Robinson’s relationship with a young Cree woman. Although her name was not mentioned in the correspondence, she was probably Sehwahtahow, the maker of a long

⁵“Pioneer women Played Their Part: The Days of Red River When Keeping Schools Supplied With Teachers Was a Problem,” Manitoba History Scrapbook, p. 84a. M9 (Nov. 10, 1928 - Aug. 27, 1947), Manitoba Legislative Library. Anne Bannatyne was the daughter of Andrew McDermott (Irish) and Sarah McNab (Half Breed). Anne Bannatyne claim 1690, vol. 1329, series D-8-a, RG 15, NAC.

⁶Mrs. Gladman and Mrs. Vincent were probably Mary Moore, the wife of George Gladman Sr. and Jane Renton, the first country wife of Thomas Vincent. E. E. Rich, ed., *John Rae’s Correspondence with the Hudson’s Bay Company on Arctic Exploration, 1844-1855* (London: The Hudson’s Bay Record Society, 1853), 3. See Jennifer S. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980), 75, 139 – 140 for a discussion of the Gladman and Vincent families.

painted hide coat that Robinson brought back to England. The coat remained in the possession of his descendants along with the memory and name of the woman who made it.⁷ The volume of hide coats that traveled to England with retiring fur traders would indicate that Sehwahtahow was not alone.⁸ The necessity of having women as companions and helpmates was an accepted aspect of fur trade life. The 1804 – 1805 post journal at Fort Churchill documents women and the unidentified journal writer working side by side.

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| September 1 st | Myself employed at times in cutting out Indian cloathing (having no Taylor) and the women belonging to the factory making the same, Snowshoes, shoes for the men and various things requisite -- |
| October | myself cutting out Indian cloathing and the women making these etc. |
| February | Myself cutting out and the Indian women making Indian cloathing, Shoes etc. ⁹ |

Children of fur trade families had access to a range of educational experiences. As was true throughout the fur trade, the active interest and financial support of a father determined the type of education a daughter received. The three daughters of Dr. David Mitchell, a surgeon in the British army at Michilimackinac, and his Odawa wife were sent to Europe for a “lady’s education,” while their brothers were sent to Montreal. Unlike their older siblings, Therese Marcot Schindler and Madeline Marcot Laframboise were not sent to Montreal for an education because their father died when they were very young. Both sisters became successful fur traders and Therese finally taught herself to read French following her retirement from active trade. Madeline’s daughter Josette Laframboise was “at Montreal, at school” in 1809 when her father died and her mother subsequently took over the family business.¹⁰ The Marcot sisters used their

⁷The coat with accessories is part of the James Robertson Collection at the Hancock Museum, University of Newcastle, No. 1998.H267.

⁸Most British museum collections have at least one of these coats. During the course of this study, eleven such coats were identified in five museum collections.

⁹1804 – 1805 Fort Churchill post journal, B.42/a/130, HBCA.

¹⁰Elizabeth Thérèse Fisher Baird, *Reminiscences of Early Days on Mackinac Island*, 35, 38, 40.

own resources to ensure that their children had access to at least a rudimentary education. A tradition of woman-to-woman education had developed at Michilimackinac by the early nineteenth century. Angélique Adhemar, the sister-in-law of fur trader Alexis Laframboise, opened a school in 1802.¹¹ Although the school was only open for a few years, one of their students Marianne Lasaliere, opened her own boarding school before 1825 for the daughters of fur-traders.

the . . . manager of the American Fur Company, persuaded my mother to open a school for the traders' daughters . . . the first boarding school in the Northwest. It was not however, a school of the modern sort. The girls were taught to read, to write, and to sew, which latter accomplishment included the art of cutting and making their own clothes. In addition, they were taught general housekeeping.¹²

Cutting, which involved creating patterns to fit the intended wearer, and sewing clothes became a recognized area of female expertise. In January 1814, Robert Dickson sent John Lawe "Three dress'd Skins for a pr Capotes for me." In less than a month Lawe's wife, Sophie Thérèse Rankin, had made and delivered the capote. Robert Dickson enthused to her husband: "My Capot is a famous one and fits me to a hair. Thank your girl for the trouble she has had in making it so well. I would not change Coats with the Grand Turk."¹³

Early mission schools continued to integrate sewing into the curriculum for female students. In 1823, William Keating visited the Baptist missionary school at St. Joseph's. He observed fifteen female students out of a total student population that ranged between forty and sixty children. He noted that "females receive in the school the same instruction which is given

¹¹Baird, *Reminiscences*, 20.

¹²Marianne Lasaliere was the daughter of Thérèse Marcot and her first husband Pierre Lasaliere. Her grandmother was Migisan, the daughter of Kewinaquot, an Odawa chief. Her step-father George Schindler opened a school for boys following his retirement from active trade due to ill health. According to her daughter, Marianne opened her school around the same time. Schindler died in 1825. *Reminiscences*, 22.

¹³Robert Dickson to John Lawe, 13 January 1814, Lac Puants; Robert Dickson to John Lawe, 6 February 1814, Winebagoe Lake, *CSHSW* 11, 283 and 293.

to the boys, and are in addition to this, taught spinning, weaving, and sewing, both plain and ornamental; they were just beginning to embroider.” He observed that the girls enjoyed embroidery and needlework was used as a “reward and stimulus; it encourages their taste and natural imitation which is very great.”¹⁴ Local women were still teaching in the 1830’s.

Marianne Lasaliere Fisher was teaching at the Michilimackinac Catholic mission in 1832, and by 1836 Elizabeth Grignon was teaching at Green Bay.¹⁵

The development of the Mackinaw coat is credited to the industry and competence of the women of Michilimackinac. During a clothing shortage in the winter of 1811-1812, Captain Charles Roberts at Fort St. Joseph, in protest at the threadbare state of his troops, made a “requisition to the storekeeper of the Indian department, a consignment of heavy blankets for the purpose of making them greatcoats.”¹⁶ John Askin hired a group of “half-breed women” who not only designed a garment that met the captain’s requirements, but delivered the order within two weeks. Roberts had ordered blue coats, but when the women ran out of blue blankets they completed the order with red coats and a few in plaid. Askin was soon inundated with requests for the coats, including one from a dispatch runner who asked that his be cut above the knee.¹⁷

The Red River Settlement also became a site for the merger of indigenous knowledge, European notions of a lady’s education and the enduring demand for female production. From 1833 to 1835, English governess Mary Lowman included sewing and needlework in her program for girls at the Red River Academy. Following her marriage to retired Chief Factor James Bird, a male teacher changed the curriculum, causing John Dugald Cameron’s daughter to complain,

¹⁴ Keating, *Narrative of an Expedition*, 153.

¹⁵ Father Baraga to Father Reese, 29 October 1832, Mackinaw; Father Sim Saéndert to Bishop Rese, 28 January 1836, Green Bay, Wisconsin, III-29, A. L. S. University of Notre Dame Archives, Notre Dame Indiana.

¹⁶ H. J. L. Wooley, “The Origin of the Mackinaw Coat,” *The Canadian Magazine* (January 1928), 25; “Mackinaw Coat Will Observe 139th Anniversary,” *Indian Head News* (December 21, 1950), Blankets Search File, HBCA.

“since Mr. Allen began to teach, none of them have been allowed the use of the needle.”¹⁸ Her father commented that he was “not sorry for” the change “as they all sew well enough--except some of the little ones.” Seven daughters from the Campbell family “at one time traveled all the way from the Peace River to attend the Red River Academy.”¹⁹ Small groups of scholars attended schools such as the one established by Mrs. Ingham who “opened a school in a house belonging to Mr. Logan. Among her pupils were: Harriet Sinclair, Annie McDermott, Barbara Logan and Caroline Pruden.”²⁰ Matilda Davis, who had been educated in England, established another school around 1840. She was the daughter of “John Davis and Nancy, a Half Breed.”²¹ She established a private school for girls at St. Andrews in the Red River Settlement.

Miss Davis' School offered full board for students from northern and western posts and day instruction for local girls. The school's advertisement described a program consisting of “the usual branches of a solid English education, with French, Music, Drawing, Dancing, Plain and Ornamental Needle-work.”²² As many girls would return to the posts as the young wives of clerks and company officers, sewing was an important part of the curriculum. Jane Bell Clark, the wife of the chief factor at Fort Carlton, wrote to both praise and encourage her daughter. “Miss Davis writes me you made all your own clothes this year and that you sew very neatly when you like.”²³ Miss Davis herself excelled at the fine needlework she promoted and her papers reveal that she had won “Best Silk Work Mottoes, 2nd Indian Shoes, 3rd Quilt Work” in

¹⁷This proved to be the most popular and enduring form of the coat and plaid the most popular colour.

¹⁸John D. Cameron to James Hargrave, Red River, 1 February 1835, G. P. Glazebrook, ed., *The Hargrave Correspondence* (Toronto: Champlain Society Publications, 1938), 71.

¹⁹Pioneer Women Played Their Part, 84a-b.

²⁰Pioneer Women Played Their Part, 84a-b.

²¹The heirs of Matilda Davis (deceased) claim 60, vol. 1320, series D-11-8-a, RG 15, NAC.

²²Davis Papers - Matilda Davis School, 1859-1878, File No. 6, Barbara Johnstone Collections, P2343, AM.

²³Jane Bell Clark, 14 September 1865, Fort Carleton, Box One, File One: Correspondence, Matilda Davis School Collection, MG2 C24, AM. Jane Bell Blanchard identified her mother as Jane Bell (Half Breed) in her scrip application. Jane Blanchard claim 1469, vol. 1325, series D-11-8-b, RG 15, NAC.

local competitions and her Hudson's Bay Company accounts show regular purchases of coloured seed beads and silk embroidery thread. One purchase in 1866 was noted as "Beads for Children." A list of the girls attending Miss Davis's school shows a preponderance of families long associated with the Hudson's Bay Company: Flett, Truthwaite, Dreaver, Murray, Clark, Black, Bunn, Cook, Bruce, Inkster, Christie, McKenzie, McKay, Hardisty and Spencer.²⁴

The schools operated by the Catholic church served a different clientele. In 1829, Angelique and Margeurite Nolin, two Métis sisters from Pembina, opened the first school for girls in St. Boniface. Very little is known about the curriculum of early Catholic schools, but in 1826 Father Provencher hired "our farmer's wife who is a Canadian [to] teach the girls of the school to work the flax and [buffalo] wool, in order that they might inspire in the others the desire to do so."²⁵ Weaving was still being taught in 1838 when the Hudson's Bay Company "began to pay the wages of two weaving instructors who taught the children of St. Boniface."²⁶ The school started by the Nolin sisters was taken over by the Sisters of Charity or the Grey Nuns, in 1844. The Grey Nuns prioritized sewing in their curriculum and they had women among them, particularly Mère Thérèse Coullée and Soeur Lagrave, who excelled at floral embroidery, but they were not the first teachers to combine domestic skills and practical arts with literacy.²⁷

The Red River Settlement also did not offer the only educational opportunities. In 1857 Father Georges Belcourt began to train Métis teaching sisters, the "Sisters of the Propagation of the Faith", for schools he established at Pembina and St. Joseph.²⁸ Two of the young Métisse

²⁴Box One, File 9: Accounts (n. d.); Box One, Files 12: Accounts (1866-1870); File 13: Accounts (1871-1876); Box Two, File 1 (1863) Matilda Davis School Collection, MG2 C24, AM.

²⁵The Nolin sisters were still teaching at Baie St. Paul in the early 1830's, see Donald Chaput, "The Misses Nolin of Red River," *The Beaver* (Winter, 1975): 14-17. Provencher's comments are in Nute, *Documents Relating to Northwest Missions*, 439.

²⁶See also W. B. Ready, "Early Red River Schools," *The Beaver* (December, 1947): 34-36.

²⁷Jan Morier, "Métis Decorative Arts and Its Inspiration," *Dawson and Hind* 8, 1 (1979): 28-32.

²⁸See Terrence G. Kardong, "Metis Sisters, 1857-1860," *Beyond Red River* (Fargo, North Dakota: Diocese of Fargo, 1988): 27-28.

teachers remembered by their students were Rachel Cavalier and Sister Ketchie.²⁹ The fledgling order was only in existence for three years. It was disbanded amid scandal and disgrace when three of the young women made charges of sexual misconduct against Father Belcourt.³⁰ Although they existed for only a short time and very little information regarding Belcourt's schools has been found, a group of local women teaching the children of families primarily engaged in hunting raises intriguing questions regarding their possible impact on the development and diffusion of art forms which thrived in that sector of the Métis collective. The Sisters of St. Joseph convent at St. Paul, Minnesota attracted daughters of American Fur Company employees, such as Celia Campbell, who attended for nine months in 1860 where she learned "fancy needlework."³¹ Susan Bordeaux Bettelyoun described another school in Kansas run by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart where "hundreds of the children . . . born of Indian mothers were brought to be cared for."³² The girls' curriculum was based on "domestic arts" including "sewing (plain and embroidery) . . . and the painting of pictures on canvas, tapestry, and textiles."

Métis and Half Breed girls certainly had an early exposure to schools, but the duration and regularity of their instruction need to be carefully examined. How many girls actually attended school? In 1826 Provencher reported, "our school is still going, but there are few pupils."³³ Many girls did not attend school. Female enrolment at local schools in the Red River

²⁹Michael Davis, *Pioneer Questionnaire*, pp. 6-7 and Joseph Laframboise, *Pioneer Questionnaire*, p. 2.

³⁰Belcourt denied the charges and maintained that he had whipped them for disciplinary reasons before expelling them from the order, Kardong, 28. According to Louis Goulet "les vieux de la generation de mon père" attributed the burning of the St. Boniface cathedral and other misfortunes as punishment for the treatment of Belcourt and the closure of the mission at St. Joseph. Louis Goulet manuscript, 163-164.

³¹She was the daughter of Dakota / French / Scottish parents, Scott and Margaret Campbell of Traverse des Sioux in present day Minnesota. Celia Campbell Stay Papers, *Massacre at Lower Sioux Agency*, p. 4, MG1 A8, AM. The Campbells were a prominent fur trade family.

³²Susan Bordeaux was the daughter of James Bordeaux and Red Cormorant Woman, a Lakota. She grew up at Fort Laramie. Susan Bordeaux Bettelyoun and Josephine Waggoner, *With My Own Eyes*, 35.

³³Nute, *Documents Relating to Northwest Missions*, 436.

Settlement in the last half of the nineteenth century was typically in the range of twenty to forty students per year. The 1873-74 attendance records for the Ecoles de Saint Norbert indicate a fluctuating enrollment which did not exceed twenty-eight in any month. In addition, attendance declined sharply in April and May with entire families disappearing from the register.³⁴

Schools did not merely serve as distribution points for European designs and sewing techniques; the curriculum was also molded by local artistic traditions and the continuing importance of moccasins and other indigenous clothing forms as essential requirements for life in the west. The earliest surviving examples of floral work in the Red River region predate the arrival of the Grey Nuns in 1844.³⁵ An 1851 entry in the Mother Superior's journal at St. Boniface also suggests a dynamic climate of exchange that took place outside the classroom. Soeur Lagrave, who worked at the St. François Xavier mission, decorated the interior of the new cathedral at St. Boniface with elaborate paintings of garlands and urns of flowers. These became a source of inspiration for "the native women, who enjoy silk-thread, bead and quill embroidery [and] came to copy these designs from the Cathedral."³⁶ These women came to view the visual spectacle of their own volition. Mary Rose Delorme, who spent four years at a St. Boniface convent, credited "the lessons learned at my mother's side" for her knowledge of traditional media and the skill that brought her renown as a mature artist.³⁷

According to Madeline Mercredi Bird, the Holy Angels Mission at Fort Chipewyan "didn't have real teachers in those days. The convent needed the girls to do all the work around the convent and to look after the priests' and brothers' clothing."³⁸ Madeline valued the

³⁴Registre Ecoles de Saint Norbert, 1873-1874, St. Boniface Historical Society.

³⁵A horse crupper with floral quillwork was collected in 1841 from the Red River region. Cat. No. V-X-290 Canadian Museum of Civilization, Ottawa. The Samuel Black bag in the Pitt Rivers Museum was collected in 1842. Cat. No. B.1.38, E. M. Hopkins Collection, Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford.

³⁶*Chroniques des Soeurs Grises* as cited in Morier, *Métis Decorative Art and its Inspiration*, 31.

³⁷Delorme Smith, *Eighty Years on the Plains*, 2.

³⁸Bird, *Living Kindness*, 45.

practical experiences she had while a student there: "I learned everything at the convent, cooking bread, pastry and good meals, how to make butter, milk the cows and look after the chickens, how to do heavy laundry, decorate the altars, do beadwork, crochet, knitting, crafts and quilting."³⁹ With these skills she was able to sew her own wedding dress trimmed with handmade lace. However, her convent training was only one aspect of her education. She identified her mother and grandmother as important sources of knowledge.

[My grandmother] used to stitch birchbark baskets and used roots for everything . . . We used to collect all kinds of roots and tie them together. When she needed them to do crochet work she would soak them in water for awhile. Only she didn't use a store crochet hook, she crocheted with her fingers. She got along well with nature and nature gave her all the important things she needed . . . She brought many of her secrets with her from her first home in St. Boniface . . . She is the reason why I had such a good chance to learn so much of the early ways of survival and to make life more pleasant with flowers, decoration and fancy work on clothing.⁴⁰

While the domestic activities included in school curricula introduced girls to a range of skills and techniques, older, experienced women in the intimate circle of home and family provided the mentored learning that formed the principal vehicle for training.

Clothing Production at Fur Trade Posts

The formative years of the fur trade saw the development of hybrid traditions which sprang from a social field cross-cut by mercantile competition, economic necessity, basic survival needs and cross-cultural dynamics. The Hudson's Bay Company employed their first tailor in 1706 and by the late eighteenth century, tailors were manufacturing clothing in western posts such as Manchester House and Edmonton. By the 1790s, Peter Fidler's rough journal at Chesterfield House revealed the presence of other sewers at the posts.⁴¹ He documented the

³⁹Bird, *Living Kindness*, 21 and 31.

⁴⁰Madeline Bird identified her grandmother as Charlotte Deschambeau. Bird, *Living Kindness*, 63.

⁴¹Edmonton Post Journal, February 25, 1796-March 8, 1796. B.60/a/1. Manchester House Post Journal, 1786-1789. B121/a/1-4. Rough draft of Peter Fidler's Chesterfield House Journal. B.39/a/2-6. HBCA.

manufacture of sixty-three hide coats in addition to one hundred cloth coats made by the tailor. In 1809 Alexander Henry the Younger's list of the residents at Fort Vermillion included twenty-seven men with families and a combined total of sixty-seven children. Henry's journal described dances, weddings, and women who were usually "all busily employed" processing meat and hides, sewing and procuring a significant amount of food.⁴² However, as essential as a First Nations wife was, the daughters and granddaughters of these unions became the preferred spouse. As Van Kirk's study of women in fur trade society indicated, these women "supplanted" their mother's role for a complex array of reasons.⁴³ By the early decades of the nineteenth century, women living at fur trade posts were predominantly of mixed descent, and their increased presence coincided with a decline in the employment of tailors.

In 1822, the Hudson's Bay Company's equation of sewing and women's duty provided an opportunity to reduce expenditures. The Minutes of Council for the Northern Department noted the presence of women's free labour in their decision to stop importing slops and move to local manufacture.

Our Slops are generally of good quality and by no means extravagantly priced, but as an other measure of Economy, we have it in contemplation to make up the Clothes principally at this place and at the English Establishments which . . . would reduce the Expense very materially as the labour would actually cost nothing it being the duty of the Women at the different Posts to do all that is necessary in regard to Needle Work.⁴⁴

In addition to slops, hide coats in a variety of sizes were listed in the 1824 Moose Factory post inventory under "Goods of Country Manufacture."⁴⁵ By 1840, the female residents of fur trade

⁴²Alexander Henry, *The Journal of Alexander Henry the Younger, 1799-1814*, vol. 2 (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1992), 407-408, 418, 428-466.

⁴³Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing, 1980).

⁴⁴R. Harvey Fleming, ed., *Minutes of Council Northern Department of Rupert Land, 1821-31* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1940), 378.

⁴⁵Coats were listed as 6, 5, 4 and 3 skin coats. Goods of Country Manufacture, Moose Factory Inventory 1824, 1824 Moose Factory Account Book, B.135/a/120, fo. 2, HBCA.

posts were described as “the only tailors and washer women in the country, and make all the mittens, moccasins, fur caps, deer skin coats etc., etc., worn in the land.”⁴⁶ At York Factory in 1840, Letitia Hargrave described women sewing for her family needs:

an Indian half cast lady [who] took the . . . opportunity to send 6 pairs of moccasins along with a request that we should send her tea and sugar in return. Another embroidered covers of fine scarlet cloth for the dogs that draw my cariole. Hargrave paid the cloth silk & ribbons & her return is to be a merino gown made in the London fashion.”⁴⁷

Paul Kane noted that in 1846, the employment of the women at Fort Edmonton, “consists of making moccasins and clothing for the men and converting the dried meat into pemmican.”⁴⁸

At Moose Factory, Samuel Taylor noted in his diary of February 1853 that his wife, Nancy McKay, had been issued the sewing that she was paid to do for the company.⁴⁹ He wrote, “the women of Moose Factory all got coverings, bags, nets and snowshoes on Friday 18th.” Entries made in March of 1856 provide greater detail regarding the items women were engaged to manufacture and the pressure they were under to complete the work within tight time constraints.

The women all got coverings, bags and shoes to make up on Monday the 10th.
The women got their pay for making the company’s coverings, shoes, bags,
net, netting snowshoes, etc. etc.
On Saturday the 29th the above work was not finished entirely yet.
My wife finished all the above work and sent it all upon Monday 30th.⁵⁰

Women were also considered essential members of long distance expeditions. Sir John Franklin’s expeditions included “the wives of three voyageurs, who were brought for the purpose of making shoes and clothes for the men” as did the expeditions led by John Rae.⁵¹ George Simpson sent directions to Norway House regarding the role of women in Rae’s 1847 expedition.

⁴⁶Robert M. Ballantyne *Hudson Bay: or Everyday Life in the Wilds of North America* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1879), 53.

⁴⁷*Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 73.

⁴⁸*Wanderings of an Artist*, 93.

⁴⁹Jane Harriott identified her parents as Samuel Taylor (Scot) and Nancy McKay (Half Breed). Jane Harriott scrip affidavit, vol. 1321, series D-11-8-a, RG 15, NAC.

⁵⁰Samuel Taylor’s Journal, pp. 11 and 21. Miscellaneous Diaries, Microfilm R 2.47, SAB.

Three of the men attached to the expedition will be accompanied by their wives, as the services of the females may be useful in washing, making and mending people's clothes and moccasins, netting snowshoes . . . and other necessary work; these women of course will have to be maintained as a charge on the expedition, to be moderately remunerated for any public service they may render, but to be paid by the people themselves for washing, etc.⁵²

Rae's list of "Articles Required for Arctic Expedition Summer 1853" included "60 pairs of good moose skin shoes", an indication of the volume of moccasins consumed during rigorous travel.⁵³

By 1867, unmarried men such as Walter Traill were responsible for costs related to clothing care and contracted women living at posts to do their laundry, sew, mend and make moccasins. Writing from Fort Ellice, he declared, "Truly our washing is our main expense for with the greatest economy, I am unable to reduce the cost of it to less than a fifth of my salary."⁵⁴ In 1879 at York Factory, George Simpson McTavish contracted Mrs. Sally Gunn, who did "my washing, mending, making moccasins, mittens, leggings, ornamented with beads or silk, or anything necessary according to the custom of the country, for remuneration of one pound sterling . . . I got full value for my money, and during the years I was at York Factory, Sally never neglected me."⁵⁵ Walter Traill bemoaned the loss of his "washer woman" when she married suddenly, leaving him with no one to supply the clothing he required for the performance of his duties at Fort Qu'Appelle.⁵⁶ Traill also illustrates how need and desire merged in fur trader demand for Métis style clothing. He not only dressed in the garb of the country, but adapted his behaviour to incorporate Métis cultural performance into his own presentation of self. Isaac Cowie described his first sight of Traill, "a dashing horseman, clad in buckskin shirt

⁵¹Sir John Franklin, *Thirty Years in the Arctic Region* (New York: G. Casper, 1859), 115.

⁵²E. E. Rich, ed., *John Rae's Correspondence with the Hudson's Bay Company on Arctic Exploration, 1844 - 1855* (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1953), 76.

⁵³*John Rae's Correspondence*, 333.

⁵⁴Walter Traill, *In Rupert's Land: Memoirs of Walter Traill* (Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, 1970), 99.

⁵⁵George Simpson McTavish, *Behind the Palisades: an Autobiography* (Victoria: E. Gurd, 1963), 42-43.

⁵⁶Traill, *In Rupert's Land*, 99.

and leggings, carrying a gun crossways in front in the bend of his left arm, and a quirt dangling from the wrist of his right,” who proceeded to greet Cowie with a handshake on horseback, in “the fashion of the country.”⁵⁷ The fur trader-consumer dressed for more than function. He also sought to emulate the masculine ideal represented by the physical life of the Métis hunters, runners and voyageurs whose clothing they wore.⁵⁸

A Female Economy: Self-Directed and Partnered Entrepreneurship

A series of women’s accounts in the 1828 Abitibi post records and the records of the women who produced rogans for George Simpson at Moose Factory in 1844 indicate that some women were marketing their goods and skills, providing sewing and artistic services beyond the confines of their resident post. The Officer’s Shop Book at Abitibi provides a rare window into the economic lives of five women: Madame Gervais, Nancy Folds, Nanny Governor White, Betsy Pottinger, Mrs. Doré and “Nancy Kirkness say Spence.”⁵⁹ While the accounts do not specify that women were being paid for artistic and clothing production, it seems a reasonable conclusion. Nancy Kirkness Spence’s account had the greatest volume of transactions. The items charged to her account, with few exceptions, were materials required to produce clothing and decorative objects such as beads, cloth, scissors, thimbles, tape and thread. Also noted are payments or transfers made by different men, most of them company officers not resident at Abitibi. Men’s names listed beside the note “By transfer,” with amounts entered as credits in Nancy Kirkness Spence’s 1828 accounts included:

⁵⁷Isaac Cowie, *Company of Adventurers*, 181-182.

⁵⁸Rubenstein described physical strength and agility as the principal tenants of the masculine physical ideal. See Ruth P. Rubenstein, *Dress Codes: Meanings and Messages in American Culture* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995), 90-91. See also Elizabeth Vibert, “Real Men Hunt Buffalo: Masculinity, Race and Class in British Traders’ Narratives,” in *Cultures of Empire: a Reader*, ed. Catherine Hall (London: Routledge, 2000).

⁵⁹Officer’s Shop Book, 1828 Abitibi Accounts, B.1/d/1: 2 – 11, HBCA.

W. Mittleberger
 R. J. Hamlyn
 James Hargrave
 Joseph Charles
 D. J. Jones
 C. Cumming
 D. Finlayson
 John Charles
 A. Stewart⁶⁰

Other women's accounts were less active, but Nancy Folds received credit from "Ed. Ermatinger, C. Robertson, A. McDonald, W. G. Rae and Rob't. Miles." James Hargrave and R. J. Hamlyn appear in Nanny Governor White's account and Betsy Pottinger received transfers from John Clarke, Joseph McGillivray and one entry noted as "Cash, Prompt Sales".

In addition to dressing their own families and sewing "for the company" at fur trade posts, Métis and Half Breed women also dressed a steady stream of men coming to the northwest for a variety of reasons. Throughout the nineteenth century, there were three basic paths of westward travel. The old water route from the east led from Lachine, through the Great Lakes to Fort William, down the Rainy River system to the Winnipeg River and south to the mouth of the Red River on Lake Winnipeg. By 1859 travellers could take the train from Lachine to Chicago, and from there to Saint Cloud, Minnesota, continuing by land or water to Pembina and on to the Red River Settlement. A second route, by ship to York Factory, continued by York boat brigade to the same destination. The Red River Settlement served as a supply depot for incoming fur traders, exploring expeditions, hunters and adventurers traveling westward from one Hudson's Bay Company post to another, visiting in sequence -- Fort Ellice, Fort Qu'Appelle, Fort Carlton, Fort Pitt, Fort Edmonton and Jasper House. A third route came up the Missouri River from St. Louis and followed a similar string of American Fur Company posts: Fort Pierre, Fort Clark, Fort Union and Fort Benton. Travelers were dependent upon fur company posts for supplies.

⁶⁰Nancy Kirkness say Spence account. B.1/d/1: 3-6, HBCA.

Also to be found at the posts were Métis men to serve as guides and hunters, and women to manufacture the particular clothing required for the rigors of western travel.

The narratives and journals kept by men who traveled north and west illustrate the regularity of such consumers. Women responded to the ready market, and by the mid-nineteenth century, Métis girls at Red River were the objects of admiration, described by Ballantyne as “generally very pretty; they make excellent wives.”

With beads, and brightly coloured porcupine’s quills, and silk, they work the most beautiful devices on the moccasins, leggings and leathern coats worn by the inhabitants; and during the long winter months, they spin, and weave an excellent kind of cloth from the wool produced by the sheep of the settlement, mixed with that of the buffalo, brought from the prairies by the hunters.⁶¹

J. J. Hargrave described “the making of Indian shoes or moccasins” as one of the settlement’s “most common exercises of domestic manufacture.”⁶² Travelers and newcomers generally emulated Métis dress, with its combination of indigenous and imported elements, as the most suited to the conditions of the country. In 1819 Father Dumoulin, a missionary at Pembina, wrote the Bishop of Quebec asking, “Is it necessary to be very particular about saying Mass in moccasins out here where nothing else is worn?”⁶³ In 1856, Dr. John Bunn at the Red River Settlement apologized to family friends in England for his inability to replace the gifts that his recently deceased step-mother, Phoebe Sinclair, had regularly supplied: moccasins, dolls and birch bark rogans. The items he ordered “were not ready to time, as the demand is somewhat brisk by the number of visitors and passers-by.”⁶⁴ The Earl of Southesk described the “quaint

⁶¹Ballantyne, *Hudson Bay: or Everyday Life in the Wilds of North America*, 106-107.

⁶²Hargrave, *Red River*, 179.

⁶³Nute, *Documents Relating to Northwest Missions*, 189.

⁶⁴Thomas Bunn maintained a life-long correspondence with the Bayley family, supplying them with items made by his wife Phoebe Sinclair and receiving in return an annual box of magazines and newspapers. Denis Bayley, *A Londoner in Rupert’s Land: Thomas Bunn of the Hudson’s Bay Company* (Chichester, England: Moore and Rillyer, 1969), 95.

and pretty dress” of the Sisters of Charity at the Catholic mission at Red River in 1859. The sisters wore “moccasins instead of shoes, according to the universal custom of the country, to which even the bishops conformed.”⁶⁵ It is possible that the sisters benefited, as did the priests, from a tradition described by Louis Schmidt in which Métis members of the Catholic community supported the mission. Hunters saved the finest cuts of meat, traders gave “sa meilleur piece de drap pour le missionnaire” and women “rivalisaient de zèle et d’empressement pour confectionner les souliers et des mitaines du pretre” (had a zealous rivalry, eager to make the shoes and mittens of the priest).⁶⁶ George Winship recalled his initial prejudice in 1867 “against the style of men’s dress in vogue” at the Red River Settlement. His later adoption of Métis dress, which he described as “both comfortable and ornamental” was the result of its practicality coupled with his desire to emulate Métis men who he felt “enjoyed life greatly” leading “an ideal life hunting, traveling and trading, being in the open and riding spirited horses.”⁶⁷

Before many months passed I was attired much the same as they including moccasins . . . red sash and capeaux. I even began to speak with the accent of the native . . . completely absorbed by my environment and made over into a child of the wild.⁶⁸

The continuing importance of Métis dress was evident in 1870 when William Butler described himself as having “all the appliances of half-breed apparel . . . possessed of ample stores of leggings, buffalo ‘mitaines’ and capotes, wherewith to face the biting breeze of the prairie and to stand at night the icy biouvac.”⁶⁹ In 1871 Charles Napier Bell posed for a photograph he titled, “In Prairie Hunter’s Costume” (plate 56).⁷⁰ Wearing moccasins, fringed leather pants and jacket, fur hat and gauntlets, Bell tucked a pistol, knife and beaded firebag into his belt or sash and

⁶⁵Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*, 33.

⁶⁶Louis Schmidt (1912), Addenda to Louis Schmidt Memoires, pp. 1-2, “Les Memoires de Louis Schmidt,” MG9 A31, AM.

⁶⁷George Winship (1914), “My First Flat-Boat Ride Down the Red River, and Incidents Connected Therewith,” p. 2, MG 3 B15, AM.

⁶⁸Winship, *My First Flat-Boat Ride*, 6.

⁶⁹William Butler, *The Great Lone Land*, 201.

holding a pair of snowshoes and a rifle appeared ready for all the challenges of western travel.

He used his gear from 1872 to 1873, trapping and hunting along the North Saskatchewan River.⁷¹

Market demand at the Red River Settlement was high, but not unique. Other locations served as gateways and supply depots. In 1851, Swiss artist Rudolph Kurz was employed as a clerk at Fort Union on the Missouri river, straddling the border between what is now North Dakota and Montana. His November 17 journal entry noted that he had “finally decided to order from Madame Bombarde a winter suit made of buckskin. Up to the present time I have worn my summer clothes, with a buckskin shirt.” Four days later he wrote, “Today I received my winter suit of calfskin, made with hood, ‘metif fashion’, and sewed through with sinew.”⁷² The Madame Bombarde who made Kurz’s winter suit was contracted, with her two daughters, to make clothing, while her husband Alexis Labombarde was contracted as a hunter, guide and laborer. According to Kurz, the women were “employed regularly at the fort to make clothes for pay (credit on account).”⁷³ Items listed on an inventory made at Fort Union on May 15, 1851 may be examples of their artistic production:

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 pair Garnished Leather Pants | \$6.25 |
| 11 pairs Garnished Mockasins | 5.50 ⁷⁴ |

Madame Labombarde was born Nancy Kipling. Her 1885 scrip application provides a rare opportunity to hear her voice. It is written in the first person and appears to have been dictated. “I was born at Winnipeg about 1810. My father was James Kipling. My mother was Marguerite Okenese. My father was a halfbreed. My mother was an Indian.”⁷⁵ Fur trade

⁷⁰In *Prairie Hunter's costume*, March 10, 1871, Charles Napier Bell Collection (2), Neg. 10514, AM.

⁷¹Charles Napier Bell, Manitoba Historical Society web site, www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/bell_cn.shtml.

⁷²*Journal of Rudolph Kurz*, 229, 234.

⁷³*Journal of Rudolph Kurz*, 252.

⁷⁴Inventory of Stock, the Property of Pierre Chouteau Jr. & Co. on hand at Fort Union, 15th May 1851, Montana Historical Society.

⁷⁵Nancy Kipling claim 107, vol. 1329, series D-11-8-b, RG 15, NAC.

records and journals identify her father as John Kipling also known as Jack Rem or John Rem Kipling to distinguish him from other men of the same name.⁷⁶ He was described as a “native of Rupertsland” probably born on Hudson Bay. He joined the service of the Hudson’s Bay Company at Albany in 1798, working his way from middleman to steersman on the Albany boats. According to his Hudson’s Bay Company employment records, Kipling was steersman at Norway House by 1811, but his name appears on a list of thirteen men at Pembina for the 1811-1812 outfit along with “Kipling, John Sr., Kipling, John Jr., and Kipling, John Ram”.⁷⁷ He was at Pembina until 1815; the following year he was interpreter at Turtle River. He was at the Forks from 1817 to 1819. His employment with the Hudson’s Bay Company ended in 1821. The Kipling family remained on the high plains, and reappear in the historical record living at Fort William, an old fort near Fort Union used to stable horses and the Metif families employed to care for them.

Nancy Kipling’s scrip application provides an understated synopsis that belies the drama of her life. “I married twice. The first time to Michel Gravel, on the plains about 1825.” She also named her two daughters from her first marriage, Marguerite and Domitilde, born in 1826 and 1828. His daughters’ scrip applications identified their father as a “Halfbreed.”⁷⁸ He was employed in 1828 and 1830 by the American Fur Company as a Cree interpreter.⁷⁹ By the early 1830’s he was working as a clerk. In 1834, Nancy accompanied her husband to Fort Cass on the Yellowstone River, but returned to live in her father’s accommodations at Fort William. “M. Gravelle did not like fort Cass quarters for his wife and has sent her back here, Jack Ram’s

⁷⁶John Ram Kipling Biographical Sheet; John Ram Kipling Search File, HBCA.

⁷⁷Pembina Miscellaneous Post Records, B160/d/1. HBCA.

⁷⁸Marguerite Swain claim 1625, vol. 1332, series D-11-8-b, RG 15, NAC.

⁷⁹*Chardon’s Journal at Fort Clark*, 297-298, 354.

family will in a few days number fourteen !!!”⁸⁰ The 1835-1836 journals kept by Chardon and Larpenteur at Fort Union and Fort Clark documented a series of tragic events in Nancy’s life. In July 1835, tensions developed between Jean Baptiste Gardepie, who shared quarters with the Kipling-Gravel family, and the Deschamps family which resulted in the death of François Deschamps Sr. In the fall of 1835, Michel Gravel was killed by the Blackfoot while trapping beaver on Milk River.⁸¹ Tensions between the two families erupted again on the night of June 28, 1836 when Mother Deschamps urged her sons to avenge their father’s death. Charles Larpenteur was awakened when Nancy Kipling, “crying bitterly, informed me that Deschamps had killed her father and shot at her.”

I was awakened by loud raps and voices at the door, which latter I could distinguish to be those of females, crying, “Open the door! quick -- they are fighting -- they have killed my father!” They were the widow of Michel Gravel and her mother, the wife of Jack Rem.⁸²

Nancy lost both her father and husband in one year and witnessed the extermination of the Deschamps family, an extraordinary event which ended with the burning of old Fort William. Larpenteur recorded, it was “not a crueler death than they deserved, but much crueler than I wished to witness.”⁸³ Nancy returned either to Pembina or the Red River Settlement later that year where her baptism was entered in the Anglican register on February 16, 1836; “Nancy Keppling, An Adult Woman.”⁸⁴ As a young widow with at least two small children, Nancy quickly remarried. According to her scrip deposition, she married “to Alexis Labombarde at Red River, about 1835.” Labombarde worked for the American Fur Company at Fort Union. Kenneth McKenzie mentioned him in 1834 writing, “I wish you to re-engage Labombarde before

⁸⁰Hamilton to Halsey, 17 September 1834, Fort Union, in *Chardon’s Journal at Fort Clark*, 288.

⁸¹Charles Larpenteur, *Forty Years a Fur Trader*, 72-76.

⁸²Larpenteur, *Forty Years a Fur Trader*, 80-84.

⁸³Larpenteur, *Forty Years a Fur Trader*, 84.

⁸⁴Anglican Register, St. John’s Baptisms. E.4/1a: fo. 126, AM.

you come down.”⁸⁵ Most records describe him as a “half-breed” although Nancy identified him as “a plain Indian” who “resided at various places throughout Manitoba and the Territories.”⁸⁶

In fact, the Labombardes spent most of their time along the Upper Missouri.

In 1843, Alexis was at Fort Pierre where he was engaged to assist John Jacob Audubon’s zoological expedition. Nancy, described by Audubon as “a good-looking young woman” accompanied them.⁸⁷ Edward Harris, a member of Audubon’s party, acquired a finely quilled hide frock coat, wrap-around moccasins, a pouch with quilled strips and quill wrapped fringe and a pad saddle. These items are currently in the Montgomery Museum in Montgomery, Alabama and were probably acquired from Nancy Labombarde. His accounts indicated that he purchased elk and antelope hides and paid someone for “making moccasins.”⁸⁸ Audubon also acquired a similar fitted coat with quilled decoration that is in the collections of the American Museum of Natural History.⁸⁹ Rudolph Kurz described a conflict between Nancy and Edward Denig that resulted in her departure from Fort Union, which had served as her home base for more than twenty years. “Madame la Bombard . . . refused Mr. Denig the loan of her dogs [he] retaliated by giving her no more work to do now she has to use her own supply of meat for food.”⁹⁰ On April 10, 1852 Kurz noted Alexis Labombarde’s arrival at a hunting camp:

for the purpose of making an arrangement with Belhumeur whereby he could induce the latter to go along with his family to the Red River. In other words, La Bombarde is

⁸⁵Kenneth McKenzie to Samuel Tulloch, 8 January 1834, Fort Union, Fort Union Letter Book, Fort Union Historical Park Collection.

⁸⁶John J. Audubon and Edward Harris described him as ‘a half-breed’ when he served their party as a guide in 1843. Edwin Morris identified him as “Alex La Bombarde, a halfbreed” when he served as guide and interpreter for the NWMP. See Maria R. Audubon, *Audubon and His Journals* (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1972), 529; John Francis McDermott, ed. *Up the Missouri with Audubon: the Journal of Edward Harris* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1951), 84; Edwin Morris (nd) “Lt. Col. Irvine and the North West Mounted Police,” p. 9, MG12 B2 351, AM.

⁸⁷*Audubon and His Journals*, 529.

⁸⁸Post accounts often show men who acquired outfits purchasing hide, *Journal of Edward Harris*, 217.

⁸⁹Item No. 70., Department of Ornithology, American Museum of Natural History.

⁹⁰*Journal of Rudolph Kurz*, 252.

employed by Mr. Denig for another year but his family is not included in the contract. They must go. The metifs leave tomorrow with their horses.⁹¹

The duration of Nancy Kipling Labombarde's residence along the Missouri River, the economic unit she formed with her two daughters, the presence of other Métis women in the community of itinerant workers along the network of American Fur Company posts, and the marked stylistic similarity of coats collected in the Upper Missouri region suggests an almost workshop-like environment.⁹² Two decades of relative stability following her marriage to Alexis Labombarde provided her with economic security and safety, while her proximity to the American Fur Company provided the materials and market demand necessary for a voluminous output.

In 1859, the Earl of Southesk purchased both functional clothing and decorative items as he traveled westward. He made purchases noted as made by "half breed women" at the Red River Settlement, including two fire bags and several small pouches. At Fort Carlton, he contracted Mary "Florida" Monkman Tait to do some unspecified sewing and make moccasins. In addition, Richard Hardisty "insisted on giving me three beautifully finished sets [of moccasins]" and "a leather hunting-shirt for wear in the Rocky Mountains, where the dead and rugged branches in the thick fir woods make a terrible havoc of all woolen clothes" (plate 57)).⁹³ At Fort Edmonton, Southesk's party purchased further equipment, and along the McLeod River he noted that "the wife of one of the [half-breed] hunters has made me a gun-cover of moose leather, ornamented with fringes and narrow braidings of red and black cloth, after the

⁹¹ *Journal of Rudolph Kurz*, 324.

⁹² Most of the fitted hide coats that have provenance belonged to men who spent time on the Upper Missouri and by necessity passed through Fort Pierre and Fort Union. This would include the Pierre Chouteau, Honore Picotte and Robert Campbell coats at the Missouri Historical Society and Campbell House in St. Louis, Missouri.

⁹³ The maker of the gifts is not mentioned and the incident predates Hardisty's marriage in 1866 to Eliza McDougall, the daughter of a missionary. Richard Hardisty claim 1138, vol. 1328, series D-11-8-b, RG 15, NAC; Southesk, *Saskatchewan*, 131 - 132.

picturesque fashion of the country.”⁹⁴ On his return journey, the party was dressed in fresh winter clothing at Fort Pitt, which included “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.”⁹⁵

Also traveling west in 1859 was Dr. Augustus Thibido of the Northwest Exploring Expedition. At the Red River Settlement on August 12, he hired Pierre Desnommé, who had just been with the Southesk party, as a guide. Thibido “agreed with the half-breed for his wife to make me a pair of buffalo skin breeches & shirt” which he received on August 19, noting “Got a full hunter suit of buffalo skin dressed from Pierre. Traded a handkerchief for a pair of moccasins.”⁹⁶ Mrs. Desnommé was Madeleine Amyotte.⁹⁷ She created a complete outfit in less than a week. Another pair of travelers on the same route in 1862, Milton and Cheadle, contracted Judith Morin, the wife of their guide Louis La Ronde, to make twelve pairs of moccasins, one caribou skin hunting shirt, one pair of moose skin breeches and leggings at the Red River Settlement prior to setting out. They also traded their saddle for “an Indian pad” at a local store.⁹⁸ They “discarded boots and coats, adopting the costume of the country, viz. moccasins and hunting-shirts of the Cariboo deer.”

Husbands and fathers often provided the initial contact with a potential customer. Southesk met Philip Tait’s hunting party from Fort Carleton and camped nearby. He noted, “Tait himself paid me a special visit, accompanied by his six-year old daughter whose “bright black

⁹⁴Southesk, *Saskatchewan*, 181.

⁹⁵Southesk, *Saskatchewan*, 292.

⁹⁶Diary of Dr. Augustus J. Thibido, 287-347.

⁹⁷Josette Denommé Racette identified her parents as Pierre Denommé and Madeleine Amiot. Josette Denommé claim No. 89, vol. 1327, series D-11-8-b, RG 15, NAC.

⁹⁸W. E. Cheadle, *Cheadle’s Journal of Trip Across Canada, 1862 - 1863* (Ottawa: Graphic Publishers, 1931), 45 and 47; Elise Chartrand identified her parents as Louis la Ronde and Judith Morin. Elise Chartrand scrip affidavit, vol. 1319, series D-11-8-a, RG 15, NAC.

eyes and pleasant smiles seemed to bring sunbeams with them to my lonely tent.”⁹⁹ It may have been this child who inspired Southesk to commission Mrs Tait to make gifts for his own three children. Madeline Amyotte Desnommé and Judith Morin Laronde secured their customers through their husbands’ employment as guides. In 1889, Baptiste Tastewich, identified as a “Half Breed Iroquois” by the man who proved to be his eager customer, greeted Warburton Pike, an English adventurer traveling through the Peace River district on his way to the barren grounds. He carried “a dozen pair of the best moose-skin moccasins from his daughters, who were beyond compare the belles of Hudson’s Hope”.¹⁰⁰ Tastewich advised him not to travel and made grim weather forecasts, telling the party to “wait a fortnight . . . while he would make us five pairs of snowshoes.” Like many travelers before him, Pike was feted with “a ball given every night, and the moose-dance, rabbit-dance, and duck-dance were kept up till the small hours.”

Women’s production was important merchandise in free traders’ economic activity. In 1844, Peter Garrioch, a free trader, noted that he had “Sold one of my coats for four robes. I still have three remaining, thank fortune.”¹⁰¹ A cart train of a “dozen Métisse” traders arrived at Fort Berthold in 1851 where they were described by Kurz as wanting “horses, either in exchange or by purchase . . . All were dressed in bright colors . . . tobacco pouches, girdles, knife cases, saddles, shoes, and whips were elaborately decorated with glass beads, porcupine quills, etc.” He bartered for “some beautiful work at a reasonable price . . . a knife . . . with its embroidered sheath . . . a most beautifully ornamented pouch and whip . . . six pairs of children’s shoes, three

⁹⁹Southesk’s journey was taken on the advice of his physician, following the death of his wife for whom he grieved deeply. Earl of Southesk, personal communication, April 24, 2002; Southesk, *Saskatchewan*, 104.

¹⁰⁰Warburton Pike, *The Barren Ground of Northern Canada* (London: Macmillan, 1892), 233-236.

¹⁰¹Peter Garrioch Journal, 1843-1847, p. 10. MG2 C38, AM.

pairs of larger moccasins, one pair of gloves for winter lined with beaver and three ceintures.”¹⁰²

At St. Paul, Minnesota the same year, Frank Blackwell Mayer observed a cart train “laden with buffalo hides, pemmican . . . embroidered leather coats, moccasins, saddles, etc. These they sell or exchange at St. Paul and return again to their secluded homes.”¹⁰³ He described the three primary mediums used by Métis women: “beautiful garnished work of beads, porcupine quills and silk.”

Some traders marketed women’s production on a large scale. Louis Goulet recalled his father conducting “a roaring business, specializing in buying and selling suits of moose, deer and cariboo hide.”¹⁰⁴ Moise Goulet hired women to create clothing for him and traveled to different communities to purchase garments to market to the Hudson’s Bay Company and American markets. Workers described as “les vieilles” (elderly women) were employed “sur une assez grande echelle” (on a grand scale) at hivernant camps.¹⁰⁵ In 1867, the Goulet family left St. Norbert and traveled across the northern plains to the Judith basin in Montana, intending to winter in the Saddle Lake region of Alberta and from there settle at St. Albert. That year Moise Goulet reportedly made five trips to Lac La Biche and two to Lesser Slave Lake where “il revenait chaque fois charge d’habits de peau d’original et de caribou, de peleteries surtout de loutre et de castor.”¹⁰⁶ As money was rarely used in these bartering exchanges, hide clothing served as both commodity and currency.

Métis women both responded to the needs of the people they dressed and consciously created consumer desire for the goods they produced, often using the bodies of their own men for advertisement. The similarity of clothing and accessories worn by a range of men across a broad

¹⁰² *Journal of Rudolph Kurz*, 85-86.

¹⁰³ Frank Blackwell Mayer, *With Pen and Pencil on the Frontier in 1851*, 238.

¹⁰⁴ Charette, *Vanishing Spaces*, 67.

¹⁰⁵ In Metchif, married women were also referred to as “les vieilles”. Louis Goulet Manuscript, 47

¹⁰⁶ Louis Goulet Manuscript, 47.

terrain, as documented in both visual records and museum collections, indicates the success of their project. But while the decline of the fur trade marked the end of the social and economic infrastructure created by the network of posts, it did not mark the end of women's production. The fur trade continued, very much as it always had, throughout the north and the early years of the twentieth century saw women in other regions adapt to the dramatic shifts in their economy, transforming their production to suit new needs and new markets.

Marie Rose Delorme Smith, who by 1881 had settled on a ranch at Pincher Creek, found that her garment production developed increasing economic importance as other sources of revenue failed.¹⁰⁷ She was among a group of Métis women who competed for the prize money offered for fancy costume at the Calgary Stampede. The beaded glove or gauntlet with heavily embellished cuffs emerged at this time and became, with the fringed and beaded vest, essential elements of "cowboy" or western dress. Marie Rose described her "buckskin gloves [which] were very much sought after by the early settlers of our community from MacLeod to Pincher Creek." The glove was not part of the traditional repertoire of garments

When Arthur Rouleau was once returning from MacLeod, he lost one of a pair of brand new gloves. Disgustedly he threw the other glove on the table saying, "Here, Mrs. Smith, you may have this." I ripped the glove, cut a pattern from it and made my first pair of buckskin gloves, stitching them by hand. Then I branched out making buckskin shirts and bedroom slippers, drawing my own beaded designs. When my husband saw how interested I had become in the buckskin work . . . he . . . brought me - yes - a brand new sewing machine. I thought then that the whole wide world was mine.¹⁰⁸

Marie Rose received commissions to create beaded garments for hotel employees at Waterton National Park and even created garments worn by First Nations men and women to construct the images of "Indianess" used in post cards and performance created for consumption by tourists.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷Marie Rose Smith. *Eighty Years on the Plains*, 2

¹⁰⁸*Eighty Years on the Plains*, 170.

¹⁰⁹Mary Rose kept copies of post cards that used her work, Marie Rose Smith Fonds, GAI.

In 1909, the Canadian Handicraft Guild, which took an active role in promoting and marketing traditional arts unique to Canada, began a working relationship with the Department of Indian Affairs.¹¹⁰ One of their members, Amelia Paget, initiated a project in 1913 that involved a Métis woman from the Qu'Appelle Valley who maintained her family with her artistic production. She described their meeting in her report:

I left Edgeley towards the end of August and returned to the [Qu'Appelle Industrial] School. Here I made enquiries for the address of a certain French family, by name of Blondeau, whose women were noted years ago for the fancy work they did in quill, silk and beadwork, as well as for moccasin making. Finding that the three remaining members of the family, Madame Blondeau, and her aged sister Isabelle, and Melanie the daughter still occupied the little cottage on their small holding directly across the Lake from the School, I rowed over to their place which is most beautifully situated on the South side of the Lake. Here I found that Melanie was the sole support of her family, and that she earned every cent by her excellent work. Her mother and Aunt Isabelle were too old and feeble to help her in any way towards earning anything for their daily needs. But they had taught her their handicrafts, and what that meant to them nobody can ever fully realize. Melanie was doing a beautiful piece of quill work (a tea-cozy) on smoked deerskin. As it was an order I could not obtain it for the Shop. It has been impossible for her to do any work except where the materials were provided, as of course she has not had the means to provide anything herself. I left some deerskin and beads with her to do some work for the Guild which she was delighted to get.¹¹¹

A quillwork tea cozy associated with Malanie or Melanie Blondeau is in the collection of the Glenbow-Alberta Institute.¹¹² Given the volume of her output as the sole support of her family, it is probable that similar household articles in museum collections can be traced either to her hands or other Métis women in the region. Porcupine quillwork persisted as a preferred medium in the south-east corner of Saskatchewan, but the forms had shifted to accommodate a female consumer interested in objects which would beautify her home or her person. A quillwork sewing kit belonging to Rosalie Laplante Laroque of Lebret is in the collection of the

¹¹⁰See Ellen Easton McLeod, *In Good Hands: the Women of the Canadian Handicraft Guild* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999)

¹¹¹Amelia M. Paget (1913), "Report on the Qu'Appelle Agencies," file 40,000-9, vol. 7908, RG 10, NAC.

¹¹²The acquisition notes identify the artist, as do elder's memories, as Malanie Blondeau. Government records use the anglicized Melanie. Quill worked tea cozy, AR 12, GAI.

Royal Saskatchewan Museum. The kit was in active use in the 1890s and was organized by a family member or curator into a framed display with samples of material and stitches used.¹¹³ The persistence of quillwork in this sector of the Métis population can perhaps be related to their late movement towards settlement. The profound poverty that fell upon this community in the post-1885 era could also have been a factor. Quills, natural dyes and hide could be obtained from nature, needing only an application of a woman's energy, knowledge and artistic skill. Stroud and beads had to be purchased.

Malanie Blondeau was born in 1866, the daughter of Simon Blondeau and Françoise Desjarlais. Her mother and Aunt Isabella were the daughters of Antoine Desjarlais and Catherine Allary. The last of the Saskatchewan buffalo hunters, the Blondeaus were at the Battle of Grand Coteau in 1851.¹¹⁴ Like other families in the region, they shifted between applying for treaty and scrip, following a survival strategy Simon Blondeau imposed on his children during the difficult transition years.

The women never stopped talking about the lost lands. They were more bitter than the men who were told there was more land and they believed that. Its funny, Mr. Blondeau, my great grandpa wouldn't let the boys take treaty and yet he let the daughters take treaty. I don't know why. They had scrips for the boys and the girls took treaty. Grandma and her sister went down on treaty day with their carts and they sold their treaty because they got flour and sugar and things like that you know, groceries. That was government policy, they could do that, but they had nothing after that. They didn't understand.¹¹⁵

The artistic skill that enabled the three Blondeau women to maintain their tenuous hold on the

¹¹³J. Z. Laroque donor file, Royal Saskatchewan Museum, Regina, Saskatchewan. Rosalie Laroque was born in 1845 at White Horse Plains, the daughter of Antoine Plante and Josette Gagnon. Rosalie Larocque claim 719, vol. 1322, series D-11-8a, RG 15, NAC.

¹¹⁴Melanie Blondeau claim 158, vol 1325; Simon Blondeau was born in 1826 on the Pembina River, Françoise Desjarlais was born the same year "west of Lake Manitoba"; Simon Blondeau claim 2 and 148, vol. 1325; Françoise Desjarlais claim 33, vol. 1327, series D-11-8-b, RG 15, NAC. Françoise Blondeau hid her son Johnnie "in a hole she had dug" during the Battle of Grand Coteau. "Veteran of the West Laid to Rest, *Leader Post*, May 4, 1941, Biography File - Blondeau, John, SAB.

¹¹⁵Lucy Desjarlais Whiteman interview. Rita Shilling *Gabriel's Children* (Saskatoon: Saskatoon Metis Society, Local 11, 1983), 90-91.

small parcel of land they were living on in 1913 was to find a new application. Following her meeting with Malanie Blondeau, Amelia Paget embarked on an energetic campaign to get her hired “on the Staff of the School, to teach the little Indian girls.” She gave Malanie her strongest endorsement urging the Department of Indian Affairs to take “this opportunity of having such a splendid teacher, so competent in every way.” The Canadian Handicraft Guild followed up with correspondence urging the Department to act. Duncan Campbell Scott replied that “while the school authorities, of course, are not called upon to furnish instruction of this kind . . . I think that if the Department could secure the services of this girl at a small wage, say \$15.00 or \$20.00 a month it would be well to make the appointment in the interests of the children of the school.”¹¹⁶

As a result the Qu’Appelle Industrial School was the only residential school in Canada with a line budget item for craft instruction in the annual reports of the Department of Indian Affairs. The budget item for “handicraft instructor” appeared continuously in the annual reports from 1914 to 1931 – “Salary, Melanie Blondeau, instructor in Indian handicraft.”¹¹⁷ On average she was paid \$225.00 annually for eleven and 1/4 months work. During this time the school was involved with great success in the Regina Exhibition. A 1929 receipt found in the department’s handicraft file documents the shipping of a thirty-eight pound package to Lebret with materials for the teacher and her students.¹¹⁸

| | | | |
|------|----------------------|--------|-------|
| 4 | yds. red stroud | 3.25 | 13.00 |
| 4 | “ blue “ | 3.60 | 14.40 |
| 150 | bnchs. seed beads | .30 | 45.00 |
| 1/4 | lb. col. embry. silk | 1 9.50 | 4.87 |
| 1/20 | glovers needles | 4.00 | .20 |
| | | | 77.47 |
| | Express Charges | | 1.73 |
| | | | 79.20 |

¹¹⁶D. C. Scott to Mr. Pedley. Ottawa, 27 February 1913, Ottawa, file 41,000-9, vol. 7908, RG 10, NAC.

¹¹⁷Qu’Appelle Industrial School, “Dominion of Canada Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs (1914 – 1931),” National Library of Canada web site, www.nlc-bnc.ca/indianaffairs/index-e.html.

¹¹⁸Hudson’s Bay Company Shipping Receipt, 7 March 1929, file 41,000-10 Pt. 1, vol. 7908, RG 10, NAC.

Perhaps the enjoyment of teaching and working with materials that she could not otherwise afford, was some compensation for her small annual stipend.

Malanie Blondeau's impact on her young students throughout a teaching career that spanned almost two decades can perhaps be seen in the pronounced shift from the geometric patterns traditionally used on the central and southern plains. The use of floral designs was overwhelmingly identified by the elders interviewed by David Mandelbaum as a relatively new phenomenon, the result of Métis influence. Fine Day said, "In my young days I didn't see very much beadwork. It was mostly porcupine quillwork. We never used floral designs then -- all patterns were geometric. The floral designs came from the half-breed". Ask-kaw-taphi-tak (Sitting with Earth) of File Hills concurred, "In the old days there were no flower beadwork. This style was introduced by the Half Breeds."¹¹⁹ Teaching hundreds of girls over her career, the impact of Malanie Blondeau and her curriculum would have been evident by the time of Mandelbaum's interviews.

As the twentieth century progressed, women's production became increasingly important. As was the case with Malanie Blondeau, their work often provided the sole support for their family. Celina Amyotte Poitras of Lebret described the depression as a time when "there wasn't a speck of work for men [and] the kids really suffered."¹²⁰

I did a lot of sewing for people that's one thing I had to fall back on . . . I had no electricity. I had coal oil lamps. I could hardly see because I had to sew at night, because I had babies and when they were asleep then I'd sew So we managed to live through [it].

Joseph Moran remembered his mother Philomene's fighting spirit, energy and entrepreneurship. Her trade in handmade rugs enabled her to "make a little bit of money", but attracted the notice

¹¹⁹David Mandelbaum Field Notes (1934), Notebook II, R-875, SAB.

¹²⁰Celina Amyotte Poitras Interview, August 3, 1982, Lebret, Saskatchewan, IH-SD.73, Indian History Film Project, First Nations University of Canada Library Collection.

of the Regina police, possibly because she was doing business without a license.¹²¹ Philomene Moran traded her rugs for clothes and other items that she would sell. With only public transportation and without assistance, she moved goods between Yorkton, Fort Qu'Appelle and Regina, all while evading the police.

She used to make rugs, make rugs day after day. She makes 300, 400 rugs and comes to Regina [and] trade them for clothes or anything she could get hold of. Money. If she got clothes she would take them down to Fort Qu'Appelle and sell them down there Because she had no income, her husband was blind But lots of times the detectives would actually wait for her in Regina, you know, because she'd been doing it for years. Lots of times she'd have to come in and sneak around. But she had customers, private customers . . . they wanted the rugs bad, you see. But the police didn't like that . . . she had to be careful how she moved around. She had to walk around, she had nothing, she'd walk.

As her son recalled, "It was quite a load for her, quite a job." Margaret Blondeau Clendenan also made and sold hooked rugs as part of a family enterprise.

We used to make them all winter and in the spring Mom would take off with us with a few mats at a time, maybe ten mats or something. And go to town, stop in a few homes and sell them on the road. They used to go from one door to another and they used to be asked for mats when they came to town. They had friends that would order a mat or two and what size they wanted and all that. The prices were always different, the bigger they were, the more money they were.

Margaret later sold braided rugs to supplement her own family's income. She recalled, "If you took all the rugs I made it would cover this whole town."¹²² According to Adeline Pelletier dit Racette, whose own family conducted a vigorous rug trade, people had trading areas or territories that were strictly adhered to, "Those rugs didn't touch!"¹²³ Both women and men did marketing, and women also supplied other dealers. Maria Campbell's family sold their rugs to a trader who traveled to their community and also on consignment at a local store.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Joe Moran Interview, August 22, 1983, Regina, Saskatchewan, IH-SD.104, Indian History Film Project.

¹²² Margaret Blondeau Clendenan Interview, July 13, 2002, Welwyn, Saskatchewan.

¹²³ Adeline Pelletier dit Racette Interview, Gabriel Dumont Institute Collection. Used with permission.

¹²⁴ Maria Campbell, personal communication, November 8, 2003, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

From Their Hands

Women's production was a critical component of the economy in Métis and Half Breed communities. They converted meat and hides obtained through men's labour into the commodities of pemmican, tanned robes, clothing and decorative items. They continued subsistence production for their own needs while simultaneously producing for a market, managing both resources and the means of production.¹²⁵ The speed with which women like Madeleine Amyotte Desnommé and Nancy Kipling LaBombarde could respond to a request for a complete outfit speaks to a high degree of organization and preparation. Women were ready to manufacture and not only did they respond to the customer on their door step, they assertively marketed their goods. Women approached potential customers and brought goods to their homes or camps.¹²⁶ Husbands or fathers engaged as guides or working as traders also made initial contacts with potential customers. Men and women formed economic partnerships with complementary skill sets. While women across indigenous North America produced useful and beautiful clothing and other decorative items that attracted the attention of consumers, few had their work commodified to the same extent, across such a broad terrain. As traditional economies failed, women's artistic production gained importance. Frugality, efficiency, family labour units, and an acute sense of shifting market trends enabled Métis and Half Breed women to maintain access to consumers. The longevity and volume of their production, and their use of marketing strategies ranging from contractual arrangements with fur trade companies to community based entrepreneurship that moved from the Red River cart to the back of a pick-up truck, suggests that much of the material in museum collections came from their hands.

¹²⁵For a discussion of women's adaptations of gendered economic roles see Lucy Eldersveld Murphy, "Autonomy and the Economic Roles of Indian Women of the Fox-Wisconsin Riverway Region, 1763-1832," *Negotiators of Change: Historical Perspectives on Native American Women*, ed. Nancy Shoemaker (New York: Routledge, 1995), 76.

¹²⁶Southesk, *Saskatchewan*, 123-124.

CHAPTER NINE

Artists, Making and Meaning

*Oh I love all colors, I go to a store where they have beads and I imagine all kinds of flowers and I pick up everything when I'm in there – colours I don't have. I must have over 200 kinds of colours. I've got beads from northern Saskatchewan, the Northern store in [Prince Albert]. I've got beads as far down south as Fort Hall in Idaho, so I've got beads from all over North America. And if I find more, I'll probably buy more. I just love beads!*¹

Isabelle Dorion Impey, originally from Cumberland House in northern Saskatchewan, speaks for artists across generations when she expresses her love for her medium. Artists collect and organize their materials, hoard and recycle, and enjoy the tactile and sensory aspects of the media used to create clothing and decorative arts. Artists often turn to the materials themselves for inspiration: touching, looking, smelling and moving the materials around as they think of the creative possibilities. While an abundance of supplies can be a source of inspiration, scarcity can either limit or engage creativity. The availability of materials and relative degrees of prosperity or poverty have constrained artistic choices over time. Embroidery production was severely impacted by changes to embroidery thread. Métis elder, the late Margaret McAuley of Cumberland House, showed me examples of her silk embroidery and a stash of silk thread purchased at the trading post at The Pas during the 1920's. She had kept it for more than sixty years.² Artists in isolated communities can no longer access the high quality European goods that were once readily available to their grandmothers.

The process of purchasing, preparing and selecting materials is only one step in the creative process. Artists have idiosyncratic ways of working and approaching projects. The steps

¹Isabelle Dorion Impey, interviewed by Leah Dorion and Maria Campbell, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. July 25, 2001, Gabriel Dumont Institute Collection, used with permission.

²I met Mrs. Margaret McAuley through her daughter, Flora Kotowich of Regina. Flo babysat my daughter and I got to know her mother over the course of many visit throughout the 1980's. I visited her in September 19-26, 1988 at Cumberland House where she taught me how to make pointed toe moccasins with thread wrapped horsehair trim. Isabelle Dorion Impey also mentions Granny McAuley and her sister, Mrs. Agnes Carriere, as significant teachers. Both these fine elder-artists have since passed away.

of design and construction involve finding and occupying a workspace, and preliminary phases where inspiration is sought and portfolios of design ideas are accumulated. Some of the surviving material in museum and family collections relates to this process, providing information regarding patterns, techniques and methods of construction. However, it is also through the creative process -- the act of making -- that meaning is constructed.

Artistic Media

*I like red. I really like red. I like yellow. I like bright colours. Anything with bright colours for me is always good.*³

For historic and contemporary artists, the range of media has included both indigenous and imported goods. Quill, hide, sinew, natural fibres and dyes persisted as important choices in artistic materials until the early twentieth century and their use continues to the present time. Textiles and European sewing goods have also been part of the artist's repertoire for more than three hundred years. The 1694 Albany post journal listed "beades of Various sortes and Collours", thread, needles, awls and scissors among the inventory of merchandise."⁴ Textiles on hand were primarily solid-coloured woollen goods, although "painted [printed] calico" was available in the form of manufactured shirts.

Data regarding the availability of certain types of beads and embroidery thread could provide valuable assistance in dating material in museum collections and constructing general time frames for the use of particular colour palettes and the production of certain styles. Fur trade company trade lists itemized individual textiles by type and colour, but seldom provided similar data for beads or embroidery thread. North West Company account books kept between 1795 and 1797 continued to use the French distinctions between generic beads, "les rassades," and

³Saskatchewan braided rug artist Margarette Blondeau Clendenan interviewed by the author, July 13, 2002, Welwyn, Saskatchewan.

⁴Albany post journal 1692-1693, B.3/d/1, HBCA.

commercially produced wampum or “graines des porcelaine.”⁵ An 1831 invoice for the American Fur Company lists “4500 lb. of blue & white pound beads, 25 lb. Fine Seed Beads” along with “Dark Blue” and “Agate.”⁶ Hudson’s Bay Company inventories identified general bead types such as barley corn, round or agate, but by the mid-nineteenth century had begun to list seed beads by colour and type, moving away from the generic “assorted” or “col’d” found in most records. This acknowledgement of a wider assortment of available colours in the records does not correspond with the date these colours became available, nor does it reflect the extensive palette found on beadwork created before 1860.

References to embroidery thread are even sparser than data regarding seed bead type. American Fur Company records for Michilimacinac and Sault Ste. Marie in 1817 note “104 Skeins Sewing Silk” and a supply of “coloured thread,” but offer no information regarding their application as media.⁷ In 1825, “2 Skein sewing Silk , 2 oz. coloured thread and 2 skeins silk twist” were sent to Moose Factory from Sault Ste. Marie.⁸ The 1863 Swan River District Outfit included “1/2 lb. Thread, black silk sewing and 2 1/2 lb. Thread, col’d silk sewing.”⁹ Throughout the nineteenth century, only the generic “colour silk Thread” appears in Hudson’s Bay Company inventories. While silk thread may have been inventoried by the pound, according to Isaac Cowie, “thread was sold in units known as lifts, coloured thread came in little hanks.”¹⁰ Cowie also noted the application of thread as media:

Besides coloured thread for embroidering moccasin tops and other clothing, fire bags, shot pouches, black silk twist was used for tassels on the round ‘pill box’ shaped silk or bead embroidered caps worn by dandies among the freemen and H. B. men.

⁵North West Company Account Books, 1795-1797, F.4/1, HBCA.

⁶Invoice of Sundry Mdse. Shipped on board of the Steam Boat Yellow Stone for the trade of the Upper Missouri Outfit 1831, Pierre Couteau Moffitt Collection, MOHS.

⁷Sundries, Montreal 1st April 1817, Account books and ledgers, Michilimacinac and Sault Ste. Marie Records, American Fur Company Fonds, MG 19 B2, NAC.

⁸Transmitted to Moose, November 1825, Sault Ste. Marie Miscellaneous Post Records, B.194/z/1 fo. 17, HBCA.

⁹Swan River District Outfit 1863, Fort Pelly Miscellaneous Post Records, B.159/z/1 fo. 87, HBCA.

¹⁰Isaac Cowie (1916), Annotations for Fort Ellice Journal, p. 90. SAB.

Both scholars and bead workers generally acknowledge the existence of “old” bead colours that created a distinct palette, particularly during the last half of the nineteenth century. Bead artists and historical reenactors have created a demand for older colours that are currently being reintroduced through a renewal of seed bead manufacture. These “old” colours are currently identified with a definite American bias: Cheyenne pink, Apache brown, mustard yellow and colour names that often include the modifier “greasy” to describe their distinct sheen.¹¹ A small account book kept by Robert Campbell of the American Fur Company between 1858 and 1859 places the historical accuracy of these terms in question.¹² Hand-written lists of beads at the back of the account book are the most complete listing of bead colours found during the course of this study. The beads are listed according to general type: seed, cut seed, glass, white barley corn, pound agate, wampum and pound. While most beads were listed with three to five colours, the palette of two types of seed beads was a more extensive range of twenty colours. The bead colours itemized in Campbell’s notebook: opal white, celestial, lapis lazuli, cornelian, mazarine and hortentin are poetic in comparison to the colour names currently in use. These lists are in the form of notes Campbell made to himself. Therefore, they are not definitive lists of all the colours available from manufacturers and may indicate the more popular colours at the posts or simply the colours Campbell chose to order for the trade. The range of seed bead colour and type distributed through the network of American Fur Company posts has a closer correlation to the bead colours on pieces created during the same period, particularly when compared with the more limited palette noted in Hudson’s Bay Company invoices and inventories.

¹¹‘Old Time Colors’ currently marketed by Bovis Beads of Tuscon, Arizona include NWC Cobalt, Greasy Yellow, Pumpkin, Sioux Green, Arapaho Green, Crow Pale Blue, Cheyenne Pink and White Porcelain.

¹²Account Book of St. Louis in Account with Robert Campbell, 1858-1859. Folder 2-33. Roll 19. Robert Campbell Papers. Papers of the St. Louis Fur Trade. MOHS.

Figure 9.1: Bead Colours for the American Fur Company 1858-1859¹³

| Colour | Seed Beads | Cut Seed Beads |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Alabaster | | X |
| Chalk White | X | X |
| Opal White | | X |
| Green | X | X |
| Cornelian | X | X |
| Mazarine | X | X |
| Hortentin | X | |
| Lemon | X | X |
| Topaz | X | X |
| Pink | | X |
| Rose | X | X |
| Lt. Ruby | | X |
| Ruby | X | X |
| Celestial | X | X |
| Sky Blue | X | |
| Turquoise | X | |
| Lapis Lazuli | | X |
| Violet | | X |
| Orange | | X |
| Black | X | X |
| All Colours | X | X |

An invoice for trade in the lower Red River district in 1851 listed pound and seed beads as items of trade. Pound beads were available in white, dark blue, green and red. Ten units of coloured pound beads were ordered, compared to 200 units of the white beads. Similarly 600 bunches of white seed beads were shipped, compared to 300 bunches of “coloured seed beads.”¹⁴

An 1857 indent of English goods for the Athabasca continued to list beads in general categories:

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 6 doz. | fancy cut Necklace Beads |
| 50 bunches | col'd Seed beads |
| 50 bunches | white Seed beads |
| 60 lbs. | white enamel beads |
| 100 lbs. | fine white enamel beads |
| 100 bunches | gilt and steel seed beads ¹⁵ |

¹³Cornelian refers to a reddish brown made from iron oxide, mazarine is a vivid blue. Hortentin has not been identified. Bulk orders were made in units Campbell referred to as wrappers.

¹⁴Pound beads were ordered by units noted as ‘Hs’ in the invoice, while seed beads were ordered by the bunch. Invoice of Merchandise Shipped on board the Prince of Wales for the trade of Lower Red River District Outfit 1851, Winnipeg Invoice Book – Lower Red River 1851, B.235/d/23, HBCA.

¹⁵Indent for Supplies from England for the trade of the Athabasca District. Fort Chipewyan Miscellaneous

This single invoice provides only a small window into the trade in beads, but indicates that white beads continued to form the greatest volume of bead trade and marks the entry of faceted “gilt and steel seed beads” into the palette. The Swan River District Outfit of 1863 lists seed beads in seven colours: dark blue, light blue, green, lemon, orange, rose pink and violet.¹⁶ An 1867 indent for supplies for the Red River reflects a sharp increase in consumption of coloured beads: a shipment of 2,200 bunches in eleven different colours.¹⁷

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-----|----------|
| 250 bunches | blue | 250 | dk. pink |
| 250 | lt. blue | 250 | ruby |
| 250 | lt. green | 100 | orange |
| 350 | dk. green | 150 | crystal |
| 100 | lemon yellow | 100 | purple |
| 250 | lt. pink | | |

The order also included the following directions to the recipient, “Similar in size and quality to sample No. – the respective shades asked above to be similar to like colors in samples.” This may suggest that the order was a new or unfamiliar one, placed in response to competition.

The proximity of Fort Union, which served as a trade depot for the Upper Missouri and South Saskatchewan districts, might stimulate such an order. The American Fur Company had severed its ties with suppliers by 1836 and ordered directly from Allesandre Bartola of Venice.¹⁸ In addition, there is some indication that the company was aware of the tastes of a Métis market. A certain type of “fancy bead for the whites or half breeds” was noted in 1832.¹⁹ The regular Métis traffic between American posts in the border regions of Montana and North Dakota, combined

Post Records. B.39/z/1 fo. 134, HBCA.

¹⁶Swan River District Outfit 1863, Fort Pelly Miscellaneous Post Records, B.159/z/1 fo. 87, HBCA.

¹⁷Indent for Supplies for Red River District Outfit 1867, Shipment from Europe, A.12/44, HBCA.

¹⁸The quality and range of beads available at Fort Union have been confirmed through extensive archaeological work which has unearthed the greatest volume of trade beads found at any archaeological site in North America. An assemblage of 191,020 beads in 345 varieties has been analyzed. According to Fort Union historians, beads accounted for 10% of the value of imported goods. The findings suggest that the dates for the shift from pound to seed beads, at least in the upper Missouri, dates to approximately 1834. Lester A. Ross, *Trade Beads from Archaeological Excavations at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site* (Lincoln, Nebraska: National Park Service, Midwest Archaeological Center, 2000), 167, 172, A-5, A-8.

¹⁹Lester Ross, *Trade Beads at Fort Union*, B-4.

with the regular commercial exchanges at St. Paul suggests that the rich colour palette found on the distinct Métis work of the time may have come from American suppliers.

Isabelle Dorion Impey's passion for buying materials, in addition to being shared by other contemporary artists, appears to have historical precedent. The personal papers of James Anderson, a chief trader in the Mackenzie River District, includes a notebook in which he listed items that he was directed by his wife and colleagues to secure on his trips out.²⁰ Among a wide range of household items are materials required for artistic and clothing production.

Memorandum of Sundries asked from Halcro 1853
 3 pieces black silk braiding narrow
 9 bunches seed beads pink, blue & green (three shades of each)
 1/2 lb. Steel Beads
 5 ct. needles
 2 Crochet Books
 2 sets Hooks etc. for crochet work

Fort Rae Outfit 1855
 3 large Deer Skin robes of best quality for Sir G S (for W Campbell 2)
 1 for myself²¹

A reminder for "porcupine quills" is included in notes for 1857. Hides were also mentioned in materials sought from outside sources, corresponding with what Anderson described in 1850 as "the scarcity of Moose Skins" in a letter to George Simpson.²² It is unclear as to where Anderson was to secure these goods.

The personal accounts of Arthur Pruden, the Chief Trader at Fort Carlton, reveal that someone – probably his wife Archange Guiboche – was on a creative shopping spree while Pruden was attending the annual meeting of the Northern Council.²³ On June 24, 1863 Pruden

²⁰James Anderson was married to Margaret McKenzie, a daughter of Roderick McKenzie. James Anderson Biographical Sheet, HBCA.

²¹Memoranda, Mackenzie River District 1852-1858, James Anderson Private Papers, E.37/7 fo. 31, 59, 61.

²²James Anderson to Sir George Simpson, 29 October 1850, Fort Chipewyan, James Anderson Private Letters, 1850-1852, E.37/9, HBCA.

²³The 1870 Red River census identified Arthur Pruden as a Protestant Half Breed, recently deceased, survived by his widow Archange Guiboche, AM. Archange was born in 1835 to Edward Guiboche and Marie LaRoc. Her scrip claim was explained to her in Cree and signed with an X. Archange Pruden

purchased “1 Broad Eng. L’assumption Belt, 2 dressed deer skins and 2 fine white Felt Hats” at the Norway House stores.²⁴ The previous day an array of textiles and other media had been charged to Pruden’s account at Fort Carlton. The purchases included:

- 1 lb. white enamel beads
- 10 bunches of col’d seed beads
- 4 bunches Gold and steel beads
- 2 oz. Cochineal
- 4 Brass steel end Thimbles
- 1/2 Crt. glovers needles
- 3/4 Crt white chapel needles
- 1/2 Crt. B. T. needles
- 1 oz. Cochineal
- 2 oz. col’d silk Thread
- 1/2 oz. black silk Thread
- 4 bunches Gold and Steel beads
- 10 bunches coloured seed beads
- 1 bunch white seed beads
- 1 pr. Wom’s fine Scissors
- 1 paper B. C. pins
- 2 bunchs. col’d seed beads

The repetition in the account suggests that several trips were made on the same day or more than one woman made purchases on Pruden’s account. One way or another, significant artistic production was occurring in the Pruden household.

Textiles and beads had to be both available and affordable in order for an artist to develop a palette, although several pieces in museum collections indicate that aesthetic success did not always rely on variety.²⁵ Indigenous materials could be readily harvested and were a continuous source of artistic media. Madeleine Bouvier Laferte developed hair tufting as a creative solution to the critical shortage of silk and beads during the First World War.²⁶ She applied wool

claim 1671, vol. 1323, series D-11-8-a, RG 15, NAC.

²⁴Mr. Arthur Pruden Account. Carlton House Miscellaneous Post Records. B.27/z/1 fo. 25-27, HBCA.

²⁵A small brown velvet table cloth belonging to the family of Chief Trader William McLean has fine floral beadwork done in one colour, transparent amber in size 18. The acquisition notes identify it as Cree, Fort Laird, acquired between 1870-1890. 62.22.6 Parks Canada.

²⁶Sister Beatrice Leduc learned the craft from Celine Laviolette Lafferty, Mrs. Laferte’s daughter-in-law. For a discussion of the development and diffusion of moose hair tufting see Hail and Duncan, *Out of the North*, 251-253. Madeleine Bouvier was born in 1862, the daughter of Joseph Bouvier and Catherine

punchwork techniques observed at the Catholic mission at Fort Providence to moose and caribou hair, and created an innovative new medium that continues as a vibrant art form in the North West Territories. Bark, hide, sinew, slough grass, and quills were some of the other materials regularly processed by women for use as artistic media (plate 57). Horse hair was also collected, washed and dyed, primarily to use as an edging around moccasin vamps. Rose Bertha Fleury of Duck Lake, Saskatchewan recalled her grandmother working with natural media, “Grandma tanned hides and she beaded them . . . You know all the beading was done with quills, she done it with the quills – that’s porcupine quills – and she done it with the slough grass, they called it. And you wove with it, and you sewed it with the beads.”²⁷ She described her grandfather’s methods of securing porcupine quills for her grandmother.

We couldn’t touch them, eh, because if they’re alive and you touch them they just stick to your hands. But he killed it. He used to turn over the porcupines on a board and then he’d cut all the edge, you know the top edge, and then he’d just take them off. You have to take the air out and then it releases them. Then he put them all in a tobacco can and that would be aired out, like, you know in the open can, like in the sun and they’d dry.

Margarette Blondeau Clendenan of Welwyn, Saskatchewan did not remember her mother or grandmother doing beadwork, but described her grandmother, Elizabeth “Betsey” Houle, as “a real herb doctor” who did porcupine quillwork.²⁸ Her knowledge of plants was used for both medicines and dyes. Her granddaughter recalled, “I can still see all the beautiful colours.”²⁹

Beaulieu. She married Boniface Laferte or Lafferty in 1879 at Fort Providence. Madeleine Laferte claim 198, vol. 1353, series D-11-8-c, RG 15.

²⁷Rose Bertha Fleury interview, March 27, 1984, Duck Lake, Saskatchewan, IH-50.18, Indian History Film Project, First Nations University of Canada Library Collection.

²⁸Elizabeth ‘Betsey’ Houle was born in 1874 at Sandy Bay to Amable Hogg and Elizabeth “Betsey” Morrissette, the granddaughter of Amable Hogue and Margeurite Taylor. The family was residing at St. Charles in present day Winnipeg by 1876. She married John Houle at Fort Ellice in 1896. Elizabeth Houle claim no. 1094, vol. 1351, series D-11-8-c; Betsey Hogue claim 899, vol. 1321, series D-11-8-a, RG 15, NAC. The family lived around the St. Lazare area on the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border.

²⁹Margarette Clendenan interview.

As seen in Rose Fleury's memoirs of her grandparents, men frequently assisted in the preparation of artistic materials that their wives would use. Joseph Laframboise described methods of tanning hides with the familiarity of a craftsman.

Some times he used bone for a scraper when he had no steel blades. He would put teeth in the bone something like a meat saw. After all the hair was scrapped off and all the meat scrapped off he would keep on scrapping to make the hide thin Then he would take the hide and sew it up with sinew and make a kind of wigwam out of it and build a smudge inside of the wigwam to smoke it. He would watch it closely that the smudge did not blaze. After it was smoked it would be soft and pliable. The colour of the hide then would be a light brown the reason that he smoked the hide was that when it was made into clothes and got wet it would dry out and be soft, but if the hide were not smoked and made into clothes and got wet it would get hard.³⁰

Marie Houle Gaudet of Fort Good Hope was reputed to be very skilled in the preparation of hides. Her tools, a set of ulus, would not be considered typical of a Métis woman, but very little is known about the exchange and selection of tools (plate 57).³¹ Her husband traded in arctic regions and could have brought them home for her or they could have come from her mother.

Joseph Bouvier of Ile a la Crosse manufactured sinew to prove to his skeptical granddaughter that it was as strong as commercial products (57). "Well he actually made this sinew with me to convince me that it was as strong as nylon thread because I said I didn't believe it. So he made this to make a believer of me! I use this as an example of the education that we were receiving at school. Already by this time I had no experience with it."³² Mr. Bouvier showed Rita the steps for making the sinew that she keeps in a special place in her home, in memory of her grandfather and the lesson he taught her.

Well after its taken out of the moose, he soaked it in water and weighed it down. It's similar to what they did with hide, you know. They would weigh it down in the middle of the lake with big rocks. I think part of it would disintegrate in the water. I remember

³⁰Joseph Laframboise WPA interview, 1938.

³¹The tools are the oldest objects in the Gaudet collection and are attributed to Marie Houle Gaudet. Ulus, ME 988.136.25a-b and ME 988.136.26, Musée McCord Museum.

³²Rita Bouvier interview, October 4, 2002, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Joseph Bouvier was born in Ile à la Crosse, the son of Joseph Bouvier and Catherine Lafleur. Joseph Bouvier claim 156, vol. 1337, series D-11-8-c, RG 15, NAC.

part of the process, he would put it in his mouth and chew it and then pull out each strand singly and roll it before it dried. See, you can see the rolling.

The twisted or rolled strands of sinew can be frayed and fine threads pulled away and used for sewing. The tiny beads found on historic work are usually strung on fine strands of sinew and tacked down with commercial linen or cotton thread. Sinew is superior to thread because it is waterproof and very strong. Today the art of processing sinew and tanning hides is practiced only by a few individuals, but these materials are acknowledged as superior to the more readily available commercial choices made by most contemporary artists.

By the early twentieth century, women were using burlap, rags and flour sacks to create clothing and decorative objects for the home. These humble materials also required preparation before they could be used as media and had to meet certain aesthetic and functional criteria. Margarett Blondenau Clendenan and her mother, Emma Houle Blondenau, made hooked rugs and looked for a fine, thick burlap that would make a better quality rug – “the finer, the thicker it is the better mats you can make. Some was coarse and you would have to double it. It wouldn’t stay tight enough. When it’s all tight like this it’s won’t come apart.”³³ Similarly, certain fabrics were preferred, “there’s some that works way better. Not that it looks very much different, but to sew it’s much different. There’s some that’s easy to sew and some that’s harder to sew.” Flour, sugar and salt were sold in heavy cotton sacks that became an important source of white cloth for an increasingly impoverished people. Victoria Cunningham Calihoo described helping her mother, Mary Hodgson Cunningham, transform commercial cotton sacks into decorative items.

Flour, sugar and salt bags were all soaked in the homemade lye soap and lukewarm water to remove the printing; washed and boiled, then dyed with natural root dyes, to be made in many varied items. The flour bags, left in their natural white colour, were sewn together to make bed sheets, pillowcases or cut in half to make dishtowels. Sugar sacks were dyed and used for clothing . . . Small salt sacks were made into handkerchiefs, some with crocheted edges.³⁴

³³Margarett Clendenan interview.

³⁴Mary Valerie Cunningham Calihoo, “The James Cunningham Story,” *The Black Robe’s Vision*, 110.

Margarette Blondeau Clendenan and her mother combined resources to place bulk orders of flour sacks from suppliers who advertised in the newspaper.

I had a lot of flour sacks to use. They were in the Free Press selling for ten cents a bag, one hundred bags for ten dollars. So Mom and I used to go together. She'd give \$5.00 and I'd give \$5.00 and we'd send an order away. For a hundred flour bags, then we'd divide fifty each, so we had a lot of yards here of white stuff. Then to get them white, we'd use bleach. No javex or nothing in those days. I forget what we used. Must have been lye or homemade soap. There was a lot of homemade soap in those years. We'd take bars and use it on the washboard and get them white after a few washings.³⁵

Having transformed the bags into lengths of white cotton, Margarette made decorative items for her household. She took particular pride in her ample supply of embroidered tea towels, "I don't know how many sets of tea towels I had – all embroidered . . . sets for the whole week – one a day – I had a lot."

Women also accumulated and stored rags to make into hooked and braided rugs. Rita Bouvier was struck by the resourcefulness of her female relatives when she moved into her aunt's house and found "six garbage bags full of beautiful pieces of rags."³⁶ Her aunt Albertine had made quilts and her grandmother, Flora Gardiner Bouvier had made "huge rugs for the church and small ones for the community."³⁷ For women whose artistic production was significant, storing materials could be a problem. Margarette Blondeau Clendenan's rug braiding required a continuous store of rags, "I get rags from all over the place. People give me their rags. At the time I sewed, I'd take so much rags – that was too much stuff to throw away so I kept as much as I could. As much as I could pack in my house (laughter). I just keep them until I need them."³⁸

Artistic media need to be visible during the creative process. Margarette recalled with pleasure, a trailer that she had been able to use for her rug and quilt production through a grant

³⁵Margarette Clendenan interview.

³⁶Rita Bouvier interview.

³⁷Flora Gardiner Bouvier was the daughter of Robert Gardiner and Lucia Daigneault of Ile la Crosse. Lucia Gardiner claim 142, vol. 1348, series D-11-8-c, RG 15, NAC. Flora is listed among Lucia's twelve children.

³⁸Margarette Clendenan interview.

obtained from Manpower and the Métis Society. The storage and display of her materials fulfilled every artist's dream, "That trailer was a wonderful place. So many shelves and nice storage places in the trailer. You can put all your material, you don't have to look. All you got to do is open the door and you'll remember where that colour is. Everything is nice and neat." Now working at her kitchen table, Margarete warns young women who want to learn rug braiding about the importance of keeping your artistic media in view.

It's quite a job and it's like this. You can't keep your house nice and clean. It's just like this. You have to have your rags out to sort them out. Because if you hide them away you don't know what you've got. You don't know where you're going to find it. You've got to have it handy. So I tell them. It takes awhile and it makes a messy house.

Making the Design, Finding a Pattern and Beginning a Project

*It all starts with that first bead.*³⁹

Once the materials have been collected, the process of creation and construction begins. We know very little about the working environment and creative routines of artists who worked in the last century. George Sanderson described his mother and aunt spreading a buffalo robe on the floor of their cabin, laughing and visiting over their beadwork.⁴⁰ A note tucked into a small beaded pocket in the Royal Regina Museum reads, "a beaded shoe top of a moccasin, making a wall pocket now. Beadwork is a very exacting task in an easy comfortable position. Imagine doing it while en route following the caravan in a Red River cart."⁴¹

Design and pattern making included seeking inspiration from outside sources. A book of Parisian embroidery designs used by the Grey Nuns in St. Boniface after 1844 includes motifs

³⁹Gary W. Johnson interview with the author, September 1, 2001, Lewistown, Montana.

⁴⁰Elizabeth 'Betsey' Anderson and her sister Marie, Sanderson, *Memories Windows*, p. 11.

⁴¹The tiny pocket was donated by Mrs. John Marion in 1955. She estimated that "this piece of work must have been done at least 85 years ago." It is impossible to know whether the note documents part of the object's story or whether it represents imaginative musings of the donor or curator. 733/5957 Royal Regina Museum.

found on floral quillwork of the same time period.⁴² Hudson's Bay Company families had access to newspapers, magazines, patterns and supplies that could be obtained during the regular outward trips made by senior district administrators and through the mail. The inclusion of crochet books and hooks among the items listed in James Anderson's 1853 notebook entry indicates that Margaret McKenzie Anderson was aware of the Victorian craft that was gaining popularity at the time.⁴³ Also found among Anderson's private papers was a sheet of commercially printed embroidery designs (plate 58). Métis and Half Breed women, even those living in northern posts such as Fort Chipewyan, were not aesthetically isolated nor were they passive recipients of designs and patterns brought into their communities by outsiders. They were actively seeking information and were avid participants in global craft trends. In turn, they too exerted a creative influence on other women. In 1859 the *Lady's Newspaper* published in London featured a small floral beaded bag noted as "North American Indian" on the cover with project instructions included.⁴⁴ Due to the rise of women's print media and the subsequent publication of patterns in booklets and journals, women on opposite sides of the ocean were engaged in aesthetic exchange.

Historic pieces occasionally provide glimpses into how different women initiated projects. Contemporary artists working in traditional media, continue these methods with surprisingly few modifications. Some pieces reveal hints of the preliminary design work that sits beneath the beaded or embroidered surface. A white paste was sometimes used to delineate general areas and make a rough drawing on the hide or cloth being prepared for beadwork (58).

⁴²For a comparison of the floral quillwork motifs on the Paul Kane horse crupper in the collection of the Manitoba Museum to the Grey Nuns' embroidery book, see Jan Morier, *Métis Decorative Art and Its Inspiration*, 28-32.

⁴³By 1852 crochet instructions and projects were regular inclusions in Godey's *Ladies Book*.

⁴⁴Ruth Phillips identified an avid interest in North American beadwork in women's print media during the 1850's, including instructions for making bags, moccasins and watch cases. Ruth Phillips, *Trading Identities: the Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900* (University of Washington Press and McGill-Queen's University Press).

Jenny McLeod Meyer taught her daughter Jennine Krauchi to draw her beadwork designs on paper.⁴⁵ Jennine's designs go through several drafts, with each drawing becoming bolder and more confident until the final design emerges (plate 58). These are masterful, confident drawings that are artworks on their own merit. For Jennine, most of her creative decision-making occurs during the process of drawing the design and choosing the colours. "It's the pattern making that starts it, choosing the colour and deciding how you want it to look." Beading over the paper design adds to the suspense and motivation of the creative process.

There's this great excitement when you're going to rip the paper off. I do all my patterns on paper. Then you rip that paper off! You don't get to see it until it's all done. When you finish one, you think I'm going to do another one exactly the same. Even my mom, she loves to rip the paper off.

Occasionally it appears that the artist has drawn directly on the hide. Flora Gardiner Bouvier of Ile à la Crosse made red ink by boiling bark in water until she had a red liquid. This would be boiled down until it was the consistency of ink that she would then use to draw her designs.⁴⁶ An unfinished piece of embroidery on leather shows a delicate, but confident drawing in red ink outlining the basic shapes. How many generations had the knowledge that Flora Bouvier used to make her red ink been passed down? Another small moccasin vamp prepared for beadwork or embroidery has a dark ink outline of berry clusters and leaves, one of Flora's favorite designs. Another piece, a moccasin cuff, has had the floral buds cut away from what was once a completed piece of beadwork. Either Flora wanted to change the colours, or was recycling the beads to another project. The dark ink drawing that is revealed has both contour outlines and detail lines. A jacket made by Cecile Benoist Narcelle has an under-drawing of red ink that reveals how artists occasionally changed their mind. Pairs of birds are positioned among the

⁴⁵Jennine is the daughter of "Red" Meyer and Jenny McLeod. Jenny is the daughter of Alexander McLeod and Mary Monkman from the Lake Manitoba region. Jennine Krauchi interview with the author, July 30, 2002, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

⁴⁶Rita has a collection of her grandmother's work including these unfinished projects. Rita Bouvier interview.

floral motifs, most of them holding an object in their beaks – a worm, berries or a pair of leaves. The bird on the top motif on the left side of the jacket front has a drawing in red ink of a branch with three berries, but the completed beadwork is a bird holding a green worm.

A series of four paper templates of beadwork patterns belonging to Louisa Rowland Belcourt is in the collection of the Glenbow museum (plate 58).⁴⁷ Three are square, while the fourth is shaped like a moccasin vamp. The floral designs have been cut out with sharp scissors. Mrs. Belcourt would have been able to trace the pattern and reverse the template to create the mirror symmetry required in cuffs, jacket fronts and moccasin vamps. Other artists used templates, although “positive” shapes, not the “negative” space of Louisa Belcourt’s stencil-like templates, were more common. Margarete Blondeau Clendenan remembered collecting floral images, cutting them out and using them for patterns.

We’d pick up anything that had a nice pattern or nice flower, or a nice leaf or any flowers that we’d get. We’d cut that paper around that flower and put that pattern on that canvas we were using. We could have also ordered mats that were already drawn, but it cost too much money then. We used to make our homemade ones anyway.⁴⁸

Not all designs were taken from magazines and printed material. As Margarete recalled, “They used to draw their own lots of times. Any thing, any design – like table cloths . . . there was always some pretty design on that table cloth, some kind of flower.” When making hooked rugs, Adelaide Pelletier dit Racette traced floral templates with charcoal.⁴⁹ Gary Johnson, a contemporary Montana artist, has individual templates cut from the plastic covers of old notebooks that he keeps in a container beside his work space (59).⁵⁰ As he composes his design, he uses individual templates for each basic shape, breaking down a motif into its essential design

⁴⁷Louisa Rowland Belcourt was the daughter of John Rowland and Sophie Chastellaine. She was born in 1878 at St. Albert. She married George Fraser around 1904 and John Belcourt in 1906. Templates, Belcourt Family Fonds, GAI; Louisa Rowland claim 2473, vol. 1365, series D-11-8-c, RG 15, NAC.

⁴⁸Margarete Clendenan interview.

⁴⁹Adelaide Pelletier dit Racette and Margaret Harrison, GDI interview.

⁵⁰Gary Johnson is a Montana Métis artist of Lakota ancestry. I interviewed Gary at the annual Métis gathering at Lewistown, Montana. Gary was working at his booth, smoking, visiting and beading. Gary Johnson interview.

elements. Christi Belcourt, a young Métis painter, uses a similar technique in paintings based on traditional beadwork designs.⁵¹ She uses a pointillist technique, dabbing tiny dots of paint to replicate each bead. She also uses simple templates that allow her to work with standard design elements to achieve the perfect symmetry and regularity she desires (plate 58).

Isabelle Dorion Impey uses a variety of techniques, depending on the project, including the numerical patterns used by her teachers. Older artists in the Cumberland House area remembered patterns using numerical formulas based on counting beads. As Isabelle describes, “you spend a lot of time counting to make sure that you have the number so that if you are going to do it for two pieces and you want the pieces to match, you know exactly how many beads you used and what colours, so you keep track of the information.”⁵² Isabelle uses paper patterns when she wants the designs to be exactly the same, but also “likes experimenting, trying something different.”

Each artist has his or her own way of beginning a project. Family members have observed Gary Johnson, whose artistic output is virtually continuous, sitting back and rubbing his hands together while looking around his work space, as if to say, “What’s next?”⁵³ Most noted for her beaded jackets, Manitoba artist Jennine Krauchi will begin a commissioned piece by meeting the person who will be wearing the garment and beginning the project as soon as possible. “We’ll sit for an afternoon, maybe an hour. It depends on the person. Thinking about how we can get that whole jacket put together so that its their jacket . . . And I like to have it so that they’ve come, say today, and either tonight or tomorrow I start that jacket.”⁵⁴ Jennine sometimes makes jackets based on personal inspiration, with no particular customer in mind. “Not every piece is a custom piece. It will find its person.” Whether the jacket is a personal or

⁵¹Christi Belcourt lives and works in Ontario. Her family was originally part of the Lac Ste. Anne Métis community. Christi Belcourt, personal communication, June 18, 2003, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

⁵²Isabelle Dorion Impey, GDI interview.

⁵³Gary Johnson interview.

⁵⁴Jennine Krauchi interview.

commissioned piece, construction begins the same way, always starting with the same part of the jacket and with the nervous tension of laying the hides out and making the first cut.

You're touching it, you're looking at it. It's the scariest thing. You lay that hide down and put that first cut in. Okay here we go . . . I always start with the back. Always. In anything that I make, because the back is the show piece. You want to see that back. To me the back is more important than the front for some reason. It's also the biggest part of the jacket. It's the biggest surface to work on – for materials and everything else. I don't think that I've ever made a jacket that I didn't start with the back first.

Margarette Blondeau Clendenan's rugs also require advanced planning and a careful beginning,

"There is where my measurement will go. Then I'll start here and I'll sew this together very carefully and I'll go around and around . . . You have to know your size when you start."⁵⁵

Isabelle Dorion Impey recalled her Aunt Mariah "actually having to take a whole piece apart to teach me that you can't take a short cut when you are doing something."⁵⁶ Each artist

interviewed spoke of the importance of beginning a project carefully and taking the time to do it right.

Sewing Bags, Unfinished Projects and a Porcupine Brush

I think it's a little sewing bag or a little purse of some sort, but when I found it there was bits of leather, lots of different kinds of thread, not so much in spools but all sort of tied up in little bundle. There was all these little leather strips and ends . . . you know little triangular pieces and little circular pieces . . . there was all kinds of those little tidbits, some old buttons. It was stuffed . . . quite fat.⁵⁷

The tools that a woman used in her work have also been the focus of decorative embellishment. A small beaded velvet bag, used as a sewing bag by Rosalie Lepine Nolin, was found among her son's possessions (plate 70). The bag is made of burgundy velvet with different floral designs on either side. It is lined with a light blue chambray and closed with a cord drawstring. A similar little bag was found among the possessions of Caroline Pruden Sinclair

⁵⁵Margarette Clendenan interview.

⁵⁶Isabelle Dorion Impey, GDI interview.

⁵⁷Wilfred Burton Interview, August 28, 2002, Regina, Saskatchewan.

(plate 60).⁵⁸ A folding sewing bag with pockets made of white caribou hide and embellished with fine silk embroidery originally belonged to Mrs. Emily McTavish, and was collected at Norway House (60).⁵⁹ Louise Boushie of Rocky Mountain House used a similar folding sewing bag made of indigo stroud, trimmed with red flannel and edged with blue silk ribbon (60).⁶⁰ Each of the three pockets has a beaded motif. Two are floral sprays, but a grazing horse outlined and partially filled with crystal beads ornaments the bottom pocket. In addition to the needles that rest where Louise left them, a gold four leaf clover and a Catholic medal are pinned to the bag to solicit luck and guidance.

Several beaded scissor cases, similar in cut and often similar in decoration, suggest that they may have been available through the Hudson's Bay Company stores. Two of them were part of collections donated to Lower Fort Garry by families with a close association with the community and the company. One, a solid beaded scissor case with a geometric design on a white background, belonged to Caroline Pruden Sinclair, and another made of moose hide and red velvet with floral beadwork was included in a donation made by Alex Monkman (60).⁶¹ These embellished bags and containers reflect the status of needlework in a woman's life and provided visual pleasure in everyday occupations

Scattered across several museum collections are a number of unfinished projects and pieces that have obviously been recycled into a new form and a new use. Both unfinished projects and pieces that show significant wear reveal the methods of the maker. They can be used

⁵⁸The beadwork and embellishment on the Caroline Pruden Sinclair bag are not skilfully executed. It may be an example of a learning project done by herself or another young person. It is made of black wool broadcloth with a burgundy velvet top, serving as the drawstring area. The bag is well-used and some of the larger frosted cut-glass beads and sequins which form a decorative trim around the bag are missing. HG.67.13.34 Parks Canada (PC).

⁵⁹White caribou hide bag embroidered with a fine chain stitch in peach, sage green and navy silk, AR 235, Glenbow-Alberta Institute (GAI).

⁶⁰Sewing kit, H97.115.1 Provincial Museum of Alberta (PMA).

⁶¹Beaded scissor case belonging to Caroline Pruden Sinclair (HG67.13.20) and beaded scissor case belonging to the Alex Monkman family (HG.71.4.3) P C.

as templates or patterns, silently offering instructions to the interested viewer. Mary Cunningham Calihoo's donation to the Musée Heritage Museum in St. Albert included several unfinished projects and unused supplies, including an unfinished pointed toe moccasin that was begun by her mother, Mary Hodgson Cunningham.⁶² A beaded piece of golden brown velvet that was either a small table cover or a large pillow belonging to Caroline Pruden Sinclair has lost its lining and almost all of the velvet nap.⁶³ The floral beadwork has proven more enduring than the fabric it was sewn on, a testimony to the craftsmanship of its maker. The reverse of the piece shows an assortment of old fabrics used to support the beadwork. Two pieces of dense floral beadwork collected by Lulu Chevalier at Pembina between 1880 and 1889 appear to have been recycled from larger pieces.⁶⁴ Each composition is an elaborate floral spray that emerges from a large leaf or leaf pair. The pieces have a rough triangular shape suggesting an earlier life as corners of a saddle or dog blanket. They have an irregular shape created by cutting along the edge of the beadwork. One piece is untrimmed. The other has been lined with a utilitarian cotton fabric, bound with green fabric tape and outlined with a three-bead spot stitch along the seam line.

Another piece of floral beadwork on indigo wool broadcloth, reportedly purchased from the Riel family at Prince Albert in 1885, shows two levels of economy.⁶⁵ Two pieces of fabric were sewn together with a seam up the middle, partially covered by the large central flower and flowering branches. The edges are not bound and the piece appears to be recycled from a garment for a new life as a small table mat. Two half-circles of hide embellished with floral quillwork found among the possessions of Caroline Pruden Sinclair were obviously intended to

⁶² Supplies and unfinished projects in the Mary Cunningham Calihoo Collection include the unfinished moccasin (1974.02.35a), two velvet squares with floral beadwork (1974.02.68) and a bundle of dyed horsehair (1974.02.12), MHM.

⁶³ HG67.13.17, PC.

⁶⁴ Beadwork on irregular cloth pieces, 9924 and 9925 SHSND.

⁶⁵ JA66.2.3, PC.

be a tea cozy.⁶⁶ Their similarity to tea cozies in other collections suggests that patterns or unfinished pieces were available for purchase. The glimpses of an ink pattern drawn on the hide, revealed in spots where the quillwork has broken, could be evidence of an early form of production craft.

Métis women began to acquire sewing machines by the late nineteenth century. Madeline Dumont reportedly owned a sewing machine and a washing machine at the time of the 1885 Resistance. The Riel family acquired a Singer sewing machine in 1895 for fifty dollars.⁶⁷ Isabelle Dorion Impey recalled her aunt Agnes Doucane using a sewing machine that had to be turned with one hand. “She started off with that and I remember thinking, ‘Oh she’s really doing well’ when she got a treadle because now she could use both hands.”⁶⁸ Marie Beaudry of St. Albert used a brush made from a porcupine tail to clean her sewing machine.⁶⁹ The little tail, resting beside the familiar Singer sewing machine, represents a link between the traditional and modern tools women used. Taken as a group, these objects provide an intimate look at the art and material of construction. Beaded sewing bags and scissor cases reveal the artist’s desire to inject visual pleasure into her daily activities and reflect her regard for her tools. In addition to the clues unfinished projects provide regarding construction, bags full of scraps and recycled projects also reveal the frugality that enabled women to extend the life of their materials and their labour.

Becoming an Artist

Artists, particularly female artists, must juggle their creative work with the demands of work and family. The importance of the artistic and clothing production of Métis women to both themselves and their families is affirmed when one considers both the young age of their initial

⁶⁶HG67.13.31, PC.

⁶⁷Nathalie Kermaal, “Le Temps de Cayoge: La Vie Quotidienne des Femmes Métisses au Manitoba de 1850 à 1900,” (PhD. dissertation, University of Ottawa, 1996), 3.

⁶⁸Isabelle Dorion Impey, GDI interview.

⁶⁹988.14.01 MHM.

involvement and their many other responsibilities. For older artists, like Margarett Clendenan, creative work was squeezed into days full of hard labour and raising large families.

I used to do my sewing after everyone was gone to bed. I'd start my sewing around ten o'clock to two o'clock in the morning. I'd sew for four hours. Around two o'clock I'd go to bed for two or three hours and then five o'clock I was up back to work. We always had lots of chores to do. Cows to milk, we had a lot of chores.⁷⁰

Both Margarett and Isabelle Dorion Impey described the winter as a time of increased artistic activity, taking advantage of the reduction in other chores related to food acquisition. As Isabelle recalled, "I think we found more time in the winter to do all of this because the summers were really busy."⁷¹ Most artists began creative work between the ages of seven and ten. However, a surprising number of them did not receive direct instruction and consider themselves self-taught. On closer examination, most were experiencing indirect instruction consistent with indigenous pedagogy. They had ample opportunity to observe older, more skilled women at work and were encouraged to play with the materials of construction. Christine Morin Misponas of Ile à la Crosse described her mother as a busy woman with many small children who encouraged her daughter to experiment on her own. Christine still makes the geometric design she developed on a moccasin vamp at age ten.⁷² Margarett Clendenan, an accomplished rug maker, had observed her grandmother making rugs and decided to try it herself.

She never taught me no, I've never been taught. I just decided that I would start braiding rugs, grandma used to why can't I. I used to see her braid her rugs and sew them. So many people their rugs look like a little hat or a hay stack. The first mat I made, it never bulged or nothing. I just used to watch her that was good enough.⁷³

Mary Cunningham Calihoo's first learning project was a doll's dress sewn under her mother's watchful eye. Sewing side-by-side, Mary "was given instructions how to cut a dress for my doll. After several unsuccessful attempts to stitch it together and having to rip it out each time because

⁷⁰Margarett had nine children with her first husband, Arthur Ducharme. Margarett Clendenan interview.

⁷¹Isabelle Dorion Impey, GDI interview.

⁷²Christine Morin Misponas, personal communication, July 6, 2001, Ile à la Crosse, Saskatchewan.

⁷³Margarett Clendenan interview.

it was not done properly, the dress was finally completed. My fingers were aching but the job was done.”⁷⁴ She kept the little dress as a treasured memento.

Jennine Krauchi still has the toy sewing machine that her parents gave her when she was “about five. Well here’s my little machine. That’s my very first machine. My Mom and Dad bought me that at Singer’s on Portage Avenue. I made my first dress on that when I was five. My mom still has the little dress.”⁷⁵ She embarked on little projects that often sent her ransacking her parents’ clothing and personal supplies of leather. She recalls, “I guess anyone else would have got really ticked off with me. That was his leather, but no he actually encouraged me. Same with my mom.” In addition to direct instruction from both her parents, Jennine had ample opportunity to observe:

My Dad was always sewing. I always watched my Dad. He and I were very, very close. He taught me an awful lot about working with leather. My mom was doing beadwork and that’s how I learned to do beadwork. So between the two of them, I have to thank them. I was about ten when I first started beadwork. Women were teaching beadwork at the Friendship Centre on Donald Street and my mom was involved. Both parents were involved and I was interested. From the time I was quite young, I was involved in this type of work.

Isabelle Dorion Impey was raised in a household where, in addition to her mother Cecilia, she had “more than one Mother because we had the extended family system . . . the aunts were very much part of the upbringing. I had Maria as well, Ann and Helen and so I was never without a mother . . . as well as other aunts in the community like Agnes Douchene.”⁷⁶ Isabelle described the kitchen table where the women gathered to sew, initiating the girls into the circle of women.

We had this big circle of people in the kitchen and they’d put all the lights on and throw a cloth on the table. We had benches and the women would gather. Do you remember when we made that beaded jacket for Pierre? We were quite young then and learning how to bead. The women were showing us – this is how you bead. This is how you make this. It was a moose hide jacket. This is where I started and as

⁷⁴Mary Cunningham Calihoo, *The James Cunningham Story*, 111.

⁷⁵‘Red’ Meyer was of Dutch heritage. His mother had trained as a fashion designer in Europe, but he developed an avid interest in aboriginal fashion and beadwork. Jennine Krauchi interview.

⁷⁶Isabelle Dorion Impey, GDI interview.

soon as I could handle needles I was allowed to participate. It was such a nice warm place to be.

As Isabelle remembered, “they were teaching you something without making it look like they were really teaching you. If you made a mistake there was a lot of jokes and laughter, but they didn’t make you feel like you did something really dumb.” The women and girls of the Dorion family collaborated on “making these jackets or different garments for the men in the family or else we made moccasins for ourselves.” Collaboration was and continues to be common.

Jennine Krauchi works with her mother Jenny McLeod Meyer:

My mother and I work very closely together. She still does some of my beadwork. We do a lot together. I think because you know each other so well, you can run ideas back and forth. When I’m telling my mom something she gets it right away. The relationship started through beadwork and doing things for me and with myself doing beadwork and making the garments. We have a relationship that is almost the same as with her and my dad. The way they would do things. I like to keep it within the family. It’s always been that way.⁷⁷

As Isabelle remembered, beading was a social event that through process and product connected women with the larger community.

The women were always beading. What was beautiful about it was it was always a social event. They would all get together and there would be a big pot of tea. The women would sit around and they would bead and tease each other or tell stories. It was wonderful. It was a nice way of coming together with other women in the community and there was some real awesome beaders in that community. Some of the work they did, you know you’d see the work even on the animals like you’d see a dog blanket, a beaded dog blanket. So they weren’t just beading for family members, but actually beading to decorate another part of their life, which would be their dog team because that was the common transportation in the wintertime. We didn’t have vehicles then.⁷⁸

As the beadwork left the women’s hands to take its place on the backs of husbands, sons and brothers or brought beauty to the pursuit of everyday occupations, the work itself formed visual associations and bonds.

⁷⁷Jennine Krauchi interview.

⁷⁸Isabelle Dorion Impey, GDI interview.

A theme that emerged consistently in talking with artists was the healing or therapeutic power of creative work. Gary Johnson learned to do beadwork at the age of ten and was further motivated by a family friend who owned a collection of high quality pieces. However, it wasn't until he began beading to alleviate the stress of his work as a policeman, that he became serious about his art. Today he excels at creating pieces in several styles in a variety of media.⁷⁹ His artistic output has steadily increased. As he describes it, "At first it was a stress relief, then it became an obsession. Then it became an addiction – now I'm really getting worried."⁸⁰ While he jokes about his creative motivation, Gary readily acknowledges a deep spiritual connection to his art. Sometime after he had begun beading seriously, he had a dream that transformed his work. He asserts that, "you can see the difference in the pieces I did before the dream and after. There is a real difference." After our interview, his sister-in-law took me aside and added that Gary was too modest to say that he had a gift – a natural talent. She added that "the spirit that came to him in the firefly dream guides him" at which point Gary interjected, "it feels like that, like I am being guided, watched over." Jennine Krauchi also spoke of the healing properties of creative work, particularly beadwork. "Beadwork to me is therapy."⁸¹ Sitting at a little table that her mother gave her, with her beads out, she describes the process of beading as "very soothing", but adds, "It's addictive too (plate 59). Oh I'll just do one more flower, one more petal, one more stem." Embarking on a project during a stressful period of her life, Jenny Meyer told her daughter, "This will be nice, you'll be able to just do your beadwork and really enjoy it. I knew exactly what she meant by that. You know sometimes it's so nice to just sit back and do your beadwork." As Isabelle Dorion Impey declared, "beading is my joy."⁸²

⁷⁹Gary is a versatile artist, but the bulk of his work is done either in a Métis style or honouring the Crow heritage of his wife Louella. He excels at both beadwork and quillwork.

⁸⁰Gary Johnson interview.

⁸¹Jennine Krauchi interview.

⁸²Isabelle Dorion Impey, GDI interview.

Making Meaning

*I always say that each of the beads that you put on is the spirit of giving or the spirit of caring. The spirit of showing that you think a lot of this person.*⁸³

There are occasional suggestions of symbolism in the motifs used in Métis and Half Breed beadwork and quillwork, but meaning appears to be largely derived from the acts of creation and giving. Few of the designs have names. Those that are named such as the rose, berry and bud motifs are simply descriptive. However, flowers and floral imagery have an association with expressions of Catholic devotion, particularly to the Virgin Mary. In 1846, Father Nicholas Point painted a portrait depicting Marie and Josette Champagne placing garlands of white flowers on a cross. His writings extolled the devotion of his two young converts. Speaking of eight year old Josette, Point wrote, “She and her little sister, Marie, did not let a day pass without placing at the feet of the Blessed Virgin the tribute of their piety and their virtuous efforts. They had been the first to crown with flowers the cross now rising on the land of the Blackfeet.”⁸⁴ Louis Goulet’s memoirs confirm that missionaries working among the Métis evoked the floral symbolism associated with the Virgin Mary since medieval times.⁸⁵ Goulet described a nightly service that was held after supper when the brigade camped for the night.

Une cloche tinte, le chef fait comme de coutume le tour intérieur du camp lançant son appel argentin à la prière. Le missionnaire attend devant sa tente dont les pans se sont ouverts tout grands pour découvrir un autel chargé de toutes les fleurs de la majestueuse nature canadienne en l’honneur de la céleste reine de la flore: la Très Sainte-Vierge.⁸⁶

A bell rings, the chief makes his usual tour of the inner camp, singing out the call to prayer. The missionary waits in front of his tent with the flaps opened wide to display an altar heaped with every flower of majestic Canadian nature in honour of the celestial Queen of flowers: the Most Holy Virgin Mary.

⁸³Isabelle Dorion Impey, GDI interview.

⁸⁴Donnelly, *Journal and Paintings of Nicholas Point*, 221.

⁸⁵Originating with a legend describing roses and lilies blooming on Mary’s grave, over fifty plants were associated with the Virgin Mary by the time Johannes Bauhin wrote *De Plantis a Divis Sactisve Nomen Habentibus* in 1591. The three primary flowers associated with Mary are the rose (soul, charity), lily (body, purity) and the violet (humility). Vincenzina Krymov, *Mary’s Flowers: Gardens, Legends and Meditations* (Toronto: Novalis, 1999).

⁸⁶Louis Goulet Manuscript, p. 26, MG9 A6, AM.

Margaret Racette Harrison, a Saskatchewan hooked rug artist, referred to the four-petal rose as a symbol for the cross, and recalled being told that each rosary said placed a rose at the feet of the Virgin Mary.⁸⁷ Beyond that few artists can identify specific motifs as having a particular meaning.

In addition to these scant references that associate floral imagery with Catholic devotion, the study of design and composition can tease symbolic possibilities from the visual text. There are consistent similarities in the Métis approach to an overall composition. Floral beadwork was created in two different styles: one flat and two-dimensional, the other more representational. A prominent central flower dominates most representational floral compositions. That central flower is often a rose, usually referred to as a prairie or wild rose. Some compositions provide a bird's-eye-view into the heart of the flower, while other compositions begin from a stem or paired set of leaves. This leaf pair often resembles the cotyledons or seed leaves, which are the first leaves to emerge from a seed. Each composition has some visual reference to a ground line--a stem, a seed leaf pair, even roots – an implied earth connection. Contemporary Métis artist, Christi Belcourt, recognizes the earth connection in floral imagery, but she also sees the flowers in beadwork and embroidery as a metaphor for Métis people, “We are as resilient as a weed. And as beautiful as a wildflower.”⁸⁸ She has chosen to use the old designs in new and old ways. She speaks of honouring “my grandmother and other women before her who had it really hard,” calling on the healing power of nature’s beauty to affirm, “that life is beautiful”.

I am infatuated with plants because they have taught me so much about life, about myself, and about the soul . . . My paintings are manifestations of my prayers for everything in life to be in balance and harmony. I include in my paintings flowers and plants that are in various stages of their lifecycle to relate the impermanence of

⁸⁷Margaret Racette Harrison, Gabriel Dumont Institute interview, used with permission.

⁸⁸Christi Belcourt (1999), *Resilience of the Flower Beadwork People, New Breed* (Jan/Feb. 2001). Artist comments accompanying painting published on the cover.

life from birth to death. I include roots in my paintings to indicate there is more to life in a spiritual sense than what is seen on the surface . . . At times I also include shadows and soft lines around the plants to suggest the spirit world around us . . .⁸⁹

Sharon Blady's study of Métis beadwork identified a floral image that cannot be traced to a European repertoire: the wild iris. She has speculated on its association with the fleur-de-lys and possible use as political text.⁹⁰ Two hide coats in the Missouri Historical Society collection have prominent fleur-de-lys done in porcupine quillwork.⁹¹ The coats belonged to important members of the French Creole fur trade community in St. Louis: Pierre Chouteau and Honore Picotte. Tensions between the fur trade elite and the American government are well documented and it is possible they wore the fleur-de-lys in pride and opposition.⁹² The Scottish thistle is another recurring motif that has the potential to be read as text, although it is unlikely these motifs were used along neat ethnic lines. However, Métis and Half Breed peoples, particularly those of French or Scottish descent, maintained a strong identification with their parent cultures.

Isabelle Dorion Impey identifies a pointed flower in her beadwork as a tribute to her Dene great-grandmother and stated "I think it's wonderful to be able to adopt the two cultures, the two beading patterns from those two nations and incorporate them into your own."⁹³ In addition to meanings associated with specific floral motifs, gender references were often encoded into the colour choices of embellishment and the cut of garments. Men's moccasins in northern

⁸⁹Christi Belcourt, "Purpose in Art, Métis Identity and Moving Beyond the Self," a paper presented as part of the panel, Nurturing Métis Identity Through the Arts. "The Métis People in the 21st Century". The Indigenous Peoples' Justice Initiative, University of Saskatchewan and Indigenous Bar Association of Canada, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, June 18, 2003.

⁹⁰Sharon Blady (2001), "*Fleur-de-Lis: A Study in Floral Identification, Artistic Influence and Métis Iconography*," unpublished paper.

⁹¹Picotte coat (1914.47.1), Chouteau coat (1906.13.2), Missouri Historical Society.

⁹²During the late 1790's the St. Louis – St. Genevieve region was split between American and Spanish governance. French creole families "found American Illinois of the late eighteenth century an inhospitable place." Carl J. Ekberg, *Colonial Ste. Genevieve*, 399.

⁹³Isabelle Dorion Impey, GDI interview.

communities have a distinct raised cuff. According to Isabelle, “women’s coats and men’s coats are cut different.”⁹⁴

you put the fringes like hers (pointing to a woman’s garment), kind of rounded, but the men’s have a point. That’s something I learned in the community. You can see a little bit better on the vest. If you look at it you’ll see it’s not rounded. It’s actually got a different style . . . more of a point to it.

The most significant meaning that can be ascribed to artistic production, and one that was confirmed through conversations with artists, is the act of creating and giving to an important family member or friend. When the women in the Dorion family gathered to make a moose hide jacket for their brother Pierre, it was part of a process that began with the killing of the moose.

He was actually the one that killed the moose and to celebrate his hunt you ended up making a jacket for him from the very hide he brought back from his hunt. And so it was, we knew it was going to be a special jacket and it was a special time. There was significance there. I think about the joy of that time. The joy of doing these things is not there now, because people can just go and buy a moose hide, for example . . . but the fact that this person killed the moose and it was his moose hide, some of those gifts were there, which are unfortunately missing today.

Creative work constructed meaning in ways that went beyond any specific symbolism underscoring particular motifs. Designs were carefully organized, motifs and colours selected to communicate meanings that were simultaneously deeply personal, generally recognizable and influenced by factors that might not be easily read: family patterns, favourite colours, influences from other communities and life events. Through the act of making, artists found personal healing, brought joy into their own lives and the people who used and viewed their work. Through collaboration and gift giving, they formed enduring bonds between family members that reached out into the larger community. Artists of a certain calibre also derive a considerable portion of their own identities from their work, constructing themselves through the act of making. They take pride in upholding the aesthetic and technical standards of their teachers. Several seek to honour the work of generations past, and seek to carry it forward to a new one.

⁹⁴Isabelle Dorion Impey, GDI interview.

CHAPTER TEN

Half Breed, but not Métis: Lakota and Dakota Mixed Bloods

My great-great grandfather was named Ta-te-manee, or the Walking Wind. He was one of the principal chiefs of the great Sioux or Dakota Indian nation of Minnesota. My great-grandfather's name was Ma-ga-iyah-he, or the Alighting Goose. He was a sub-chief and a noted man The name of my mother's father was Manza-ku-te-manee or the Walking Shooting Iron . . . My mother's name was Winona Before she met my father she was courted by two respectable mixed-blood gentlemen, Joseph Montreille and Antoine Renville . . . but the young white officer, my father, won her heart. Two years after my father's death, though, she married Antoine Renville, and removed to Big Stone lake . . . My dear mother died at Lac qui Parle in 1850, after a long illness. I was with her and cared for her a long time, and her death nearly broke my heart.¹

In her 1894 narrative, Nancy McClure Faribault expressed pride in both her Dakota mother and Euro-American father and described the experiences that impacted her life. The causal factors or sequences of historic events that resulted in hybrid populations are often predictable, but the results are not. Events within the intimate circle of family such as death or separation and larger, often critical, occurrences outside the family sphere determined whether certain identities developed and whether that development was sustained. A Sauk-Fox petition submitted to the House of Representatives in 1828 stated, "Breeds are not an organized community, tribe or nation" in an attempt to resist plans to segregate them.² The petitioners did not want to be separated from their relatives. They may have identified with the term "Half Breed," but only as a modifier to a Sauk-Fox subject. Nations with strong matrilineal traditions, such as the Mohawk and Cherokee, rarely saw the development of distinct Métis or Half Breed

¹Nancy McClure-Huggan, "The Story of Nancy McClure: Captivity Among the Sioux," *Minnesota Historical Society Collections* 6, part 1 (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1887), 440-441.

²Petition to the House of Representatives, August 25, 1829, Sac-Fox Half-Breed Claims as cited in Tanis C. Thorne, "Breeds are Not a Tribe: Mixed-Bloods and Métissage on the Lower Missouri," *Métis Legacy: A Métis Historiography and Annotated Bibliography*, ed. Lawrence J. Barkwell, Leah Dorion, Darren R. Prefontaine (Saskatoon and Winnipeg: Gabriel Dumont Institute and The Louis Riel Institute, 2000), 96.

identities, while in other regions an array of factors created smaller Half Breed or Mixed Blood populations that formed collectives within or attached to a larger national or tribal identity.

Eastern Dakota

Along the network of American Fur Company posts and among their competitors, fur traders made strategic marriages to women from prominent families.³ In Dakota territory, in present-day Minnesota, many fur traders married Sisseton and Mdewakanton women.⁴ Initially these marriages were considered prestigious affiliations that brought honor to their families. Once the country was under American jurisdiction, most posts also had a military detachment. Soldiers, as the fur traders before them, fathered children in Dakota territory, but their tenure at a military post was often brief and relationships of shorter duration. Over time, families connected through economics and marriage formed a string of small satellite communities along the Upper Mississippi – Minnesota river systems. St. Peter's was across the river from Fort Snelling, which was built on the junction of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers. Lac qui Parle grew up around Joseph Renville's trading post on the lake. Like similar families in other regions, some children were given access to schooling. Upon maturity, male children tended to become traders or interpreters while their sisters married incoming fur traders, soldiers or the sons of other "mixed blood" families. David and Olivier Faribault attended school at Prairie du Chien as did Antonio

³John S. Wozniak, *Contact, Negotiation and Conflict: an Ethnohistory of the Eastern Dakota, 1819 – 1839* (Washington: University Press of America, 1978), 103-129 includes extensive appendices of Dakota-fur trade kinship networks with an emphasis on the Campbell, Faribault, Rolette, Kinzie and Fisher families. Wozniak's genealogies were constructed from data obtained from annuity claims made by mixed-blood families and baptismal records.

⁴The Mdewakanton, Sisseton, Wahpeton and Wahpekute are known as Santee Sioux, although they were socially and politically independent and did not refer to themselves by that name until their removal from Minnesota. Santee originates from Issati, a historical term used to identify the Mdewakanton in the 17th century. See Gary Clayton Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota-White Relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650 – 1862* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1997), 284, n.7.

and Louis Provencalle.⁵ Reverend Thomas Williamson established the first school in Minnesota territory in 1835 at Lac qui Parle. In a paper written for the Minnesota Historical Society in 1887, Williamson used the terms “métis” and “mixed blood” to describe some of his students:

The pupils were Dakotas and metis females and small boys. The full Dakota females had too many other things to do to profit much by learning to read English. Of the mixed bloods, four of the first who attended are still living . . . Mrs. Hypolite Depuis and Mrs. Duncan Campbell of Mendota, Mrs. Henry Belland of West St. Paul and Mrs. Magdalen Campbell of the Sisseton reservation.⁶

This is a rare application of the term “métis” to individuals of Dakota descent. Writing in the early twentieth century, Samuel J. Brown chose the term “bois brûlé” to identify the French-Dakota community his family belonged to.⁷ He did not explain his choice or the meaning of the term, which suggests an assumption of familiarity.

In 1839 the Bishop of Dubuque arrived at St. Peter’s, where he found a small community eager for Catholic rites.⁸ Antoine Papin had relocated from the Red River Settlement, as had Joseph Rondeau whose wife, Josephine Beaulieu was a French – Kutenai woman he had met while working as a voyageur in the Columbia district for the Hudson’s Bay Company. With the exception of Mrs. Rondeau and Francoise Marie Boucher, the daughter of “N. Boucher and a Chippeway from Lake Superior”, the people baptized by Bishop Loras at St. Peter’s were of Dakota descent. Louis Martin and his wife, entered in the register as “Ouanino, Sioux woman” had three children baptized as were the five children of Michel Leclair. His wife “a Sioux woman” also appears. The family of Scott Campbell, the son of Archibald Campbell and his

⁵The sons and grandsons of fur traders married to Dakota women, the Faribault (1827-1829) and Provencalle boys (1827-1830) attended the Mackinaw Mission school. Keith R. Widder, *Battle for the Soul: Métis Children Encounter Evangelical Protestants at Mackinaw Mission, 1823 – 1837* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999), 138 and 140.

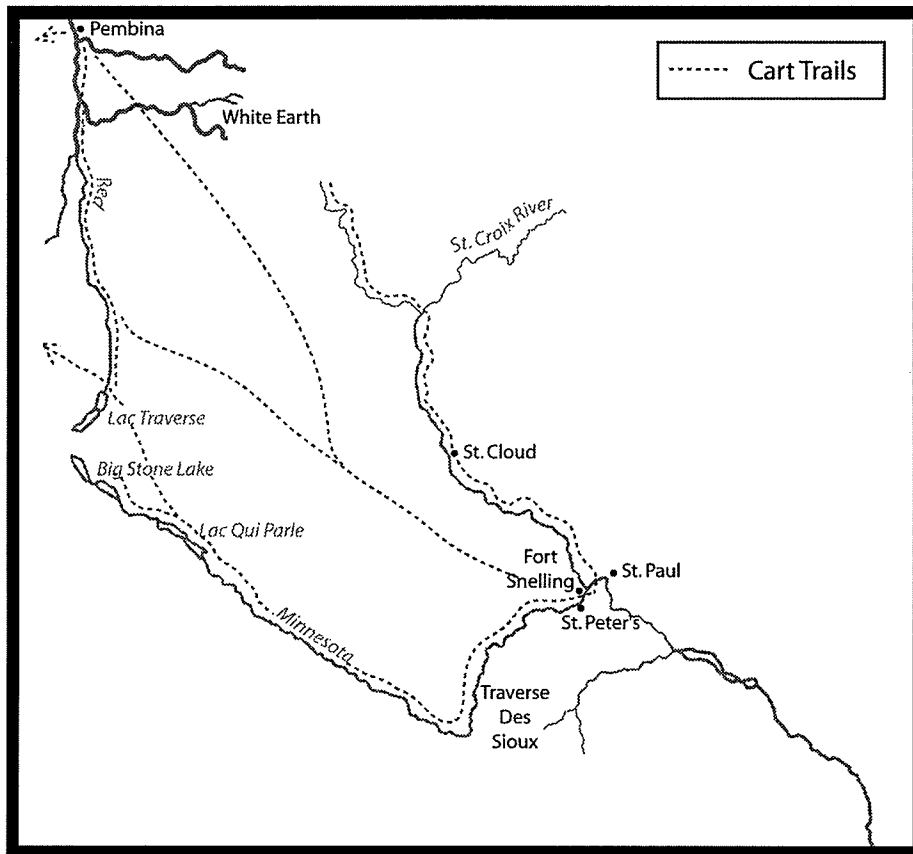
⁶Rev. T. Williamson, “Earliest Schools in Minnesota Valley,” *CMHS* 6, part 1 (1887), 410 - 412.

⁷Samuel J. Brown was the son of an Indian agent and Susan Frenier, the daughter of Narcisse Frenier and Winona ‘Iron Ring’ Campbell, and a half-sister of Gabriel Renville. Samuel J. Brown, “Biographic Sketch of Chief Gabriel Renville,” *CMHS* 10, part 2 (1905), 614 - 615.

⁸Bishop Loras estimated the Catholic community at 185. The baptismal register from his 1839 visit to St. Peter’s was published in M. M. Hoffmann, “New Light on Old St. Peter’s and Early St. Paul. *CMHS* 8, no. 1 (1927), 32 -37.

Mdewakanton wife, had the largest entry – seven children and his wife. Marguerite Menager Campbell was identified in the register as 32 years old “born 1807. In the tribe of the Sioux.”

Map 4: Minnesota and Mississippi River System



Nancy McClure was born at St. Peter's in 1836, the daughter of Winona, the oldest daughter of a prominent Dakota family, and Lieutenant James McClure who had been stationed at Fort Snelling.⁹ Nancy took great pride in her American father, although she never knew him. In her narrative, which primarily spoke of her experiences as a captive during the conflict known as the Little Crow Uprising or the Minnesota Indian War, she referred to herself and others like herself as “half blood”, “half breed” and “mixed blood.” Her common choices were “half breed” and “mixed blood.” Throughout her narrative Nancy represented herself as “always more

⁹Story of Nancy McClure, 438 - 460.

white than Indian in my tastes and sympathies, although I never had cause to blush for my Indian blood on account of the character of my family.”¹⁰ Nancy described her mother as “very anxious that I should be educated and that I should become a good Christian.”¹¹ She attended Williamson’s school, and another run by Jonas Pettijohn at Lac qui Parle. Nancy left school to care for her mother who was terminally ill. Following her mother’s death, she attended school at Traverse des Sioux for six months. The enrollments in these schools were quite small. She recalled, “we girls were given religious instruction and taught reading, writing and something of the other lower branches, and to sew, knit, and, as we grew older, to spin weave, cook and do all kinds of housework. We were taught first in Indian, then in English.”¹²

From a Dakota point of view, becoming a Christian was a significant step away from a Dakota identity and Nancy recalled the harassment they experienced on their way to church.

One Sunday when we went to church, twenty or thirty ‘medicine’ Indians, all armed, were at the building and calling out that they would take away the blankets from all who entered and destroy them. In those days every Indian who could get one wore a blanket. We girls had one apiece, and on Sundays, when we went to church, we took care to have a nice clean one to wrap our little brown forms in, and we were as proud of it as the grandest lady in the land can be to-day of her seal But the threats of the ‘medicine men’ did not stop the Christian Indians from entering the church. They very readily gave up their blankets and went in to worship God After we all got in and the services began, the men outside began to shoot at the church bell for a target.¹³

This and other examples of Dakota opposition to mission work proved an alienating experience for eight-year old Nancy, who along with her classmates Rose Renville, Julia La Framboise and Victoria Augé, was privileged by boarding “in the house” with the missionary’s family.

However, the harassment was directed, not on the basis of “blood” although most Mixed Bloods were Christians, but towards Christians in general, particularly men. As Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve gleaned from her grandmother’s stories, men paid a high price for Christian conversion,

¹⁰Story of Nancy McClure, 445.

¹¹Story of Nancy McClure, 442.

¹²Story of Nancy McClure, 443.

¹³Story of Nancy McClure, 444.

“when a man converted, much more was required of him. He could have only one wife, he must cut his hair, wear pants rather than a breechcloth . . . Male converts also died sudden, mysterious deaths.”¹⁴ By taking the blankets away from Christian Dakota, those representing traditional values and institutions were also making a statement about visual identity. If the church required visual cues to represent Christian conversion, Dakota conservatives retaliated by claiming the blanket as a marker of Dakota identity, and withdrawing it from those they saw as abandoning it.

While Nancy’s formative years were influenced by her experiences at the mission, she maintained close connections with her family. Her mother and stepfather, Antoine Renville, were close at hand when she lived at the mission at Lac qui Parle and she resided with her grandmother at Traverse des Sioux while she attended school there.

I could do all kinds of housework, and was a pretty good seamstress. My home was with my Indian grandmother, and I was the maid of all work. I was often flattered, and I am afraid I became a little vain. I know that I used to try to dress myself well and to appear well . . . One thing we had in plenty that I liked – flowers. The prairies were full of them, and I delighted to gather them.¹⁵

Her grandmother’s home was comprised of two tipis, “one we used to cook and eat in, and the other was what might be called our parlour.”¹⁶ It was during this time that travelling artist, Frank Blackwell Mayer met Nancy, coming to her tipi specifically to see the young woman reputed to be the most beautiful in the region. He drew her portrait and wrote about the visit in his journal.

This is the lodge of Rda-mah-nee or the ‘walking rattler’ & here lives Winuna or Nancy McClure the natural daughter of an officer of our army & an Indian woman . . . On a mattress covered by a neat quilt sat Winuna, the most beautiful of the Indian women I have yet seen. She is but sixteen & the woman has scarcely displaced the child . . . She has been visited by most of our camp, the rarity of her beauty being the attraction & the purchase of moccasins the ostensible object.¹⁷

Mayer filled several sketchbooks, mostly during the 1851 Traverse des Sioux treaty proceedings. His drawings clearly document visual distinctions between the Half Breed and

¹⁴Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve, *Completing the Circle* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 56.

¹⁵Story of Nancy McClure, 445.

¹⁶Story of Nancy McClure, 446.

¹⁷Frank Blackwell Mayer, *With Pen and Pencil on the Frontier in 1851*, 168.

Dakota men gathered for the treaty signing. Living at a cultural and economic crossroads, the Eastern Dakota had traditionally blended the aesthetics and dress of their more westerly kin with elements from their Algonkian neighbors to the east and north. Women in particular had adopted the use of trade cloth and ribbonwork was used to trim leggings, hoods and moccasin cuffs.¹⁸ In Mayer's sketches, Dakota men wore their hair long, often braided and adorned with feathers and fur. Robes and blankets were draped around their bodies. They seldom wore cloth shirts or trousers. The formality of the occasion caused some to wear hide clothing of traditional cut and embellishment.¹⁹ Although kin relationships were recognized throughout the proceedings, the appearance of Michel Renville, David and Fred Faribault, Narcisse Frenier and George Le Blanc was significantly different from that of other men (plate 61).²⁰

Men identified by Mayer as "half breed" wore their hair shorter, between chin and shoulder length. They were dressed in cloth shirts, trousers, sashes, tailored capotes and an assortment of caps and bonnets. Mayer tended to sketch moccasins with a few quick lines, but the few drawings that offer more detail show those worn by Dakota men as a flat moccasin with cuffs. Decoration tended to focus on the cuff area, with quillwork or beadwork in simple horizontal lines or a U-shape on the moccasin top. By contrast, Fred Faribault and Michel

¹⁸ In 1844 Seth Eastman painted Eta Keazah, a Mdewakontan man wearing a wool hood edged with ribbonwork. Neg. 3495B, Smithsonian Institution, National Anthropological Archives. Hide and cloth leggings with fine ribbonwork trim were also collected from the Eastern Dakota before 1860. A 79:4:154 ; A79:4:88, Bishop Whipple School Corporation, Faribault Minnesota.

¹⁹ *Hoochamaza – Iron Limbs*, p. 49, Sketchbook No. 41; *Sagoo, the great boaster?*, p. 107, Sketchbook No. 42; *Sleepy Eyes – Treaty Speech*, p. 35, Sketchbook No. 43, Edward Everett Ayer Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago.

²⁰ Métis and Half Breed subjects drawn by Frederick Blackwell Mayer included *Michel Renville, Half breed*, 48 and 126; *Narcisse Fresnie- or Mahto hiska – grisly bear who sheds his hair or white bear?*, p. 61; *George Leblanc – halfbreed*, Traverse des Sioux, June 30, 1851, p. 65; *Nancy McLure, Winona*, p. 102, Sketch Book No. 41; *Fred Faribault*, p. 59, Sketch Book No. 42; *Red River carts*, p. 19; *La Roque, Feribault*, p. 59, Sketch Book No. 43; *Red River carts, St. Paul, Minnesota Territory*, July 28, 1851, p. 1; *Red River encampment*, p. 6; *Winter dress of Red river half breeds*, pp. 9 and 15; *Baptiste Le Sioux, Pembina French half breed*, pp. 11-12. *Odell's wife*, pp. 44, 59, 60; *Nancy Eastman, half breed*, pp. 53 and 54, Sketch Book No. 44. The few Euro-Americans drawn by Mayer wore different hats, higher collars, had shorter hair and most had beards. See *Mr. Riggins – missionary*, No. 20, Sketch Book No. 43.

Renville's moccasins were pointed-toe with a small vamp.²¹ Their clothing choices were virtually identical to the Red River Half Breeds Mayer drew at Pembina constructing a visual appearance that was quite distinct from that of the Dakota kin they took treaty with.

In addition to Nancy's portrait, Mayer also made two sketches of her wedding to David Faribault, held in conjunction with the signing of the treaty (plate 62). Born around 1819, Faribault was sixteen years her senior. Nancy described her husband as "a son of Jean Baptiste Faribault, one of the first Frenchmen in Minnesota. He was a mixed-blood, a tall, fine looking man, and had a good reputation. He was a trader and very well to do for those days."²² The Mayer sketches show Nancy wearing a pale dress, with long, narrow sleeves, an open neck trimmed with a narrow ruffle, and a gathered skirt falling from the waist. Her hair was pulled back at the nape of her neck, her right hand held by her groom. The bride recalled that she "wore a pretty white bridal dress, white slippers and all the rest of the toilet." David Faribault wore a long dark coat, white shirt, dark tie in a large loose bow with what appeared to be a belt or strap coming over one shoulder across his body.

As the wife of a successful trader, Nancy enjoyed a brief period of prosperity, on one occasion travelling to St. Louis with her husband to purchase goods and horses. In 1862 their comfortable world was altered forever. Their family, along with other members of the fur trade community, was taken captive during the Little Crow Uprising.²³ In response, Gabriel Renville organized the Renville Rangers, a group primarily comprised of Mixed Blood men, many with wives and children captive in the militant camps. They operated as a military unit, but also served as scouts and negotiators.²⁴ Eleven years after Mayer sketched their portraits, the people

²¹Similar dress was worn by "half breeds" drawn at Traverse de Sioux and St. Paul, and men identified as "Canadian," No. 25, Sketch Book No 43; Henri Belland, pp. 17, 63, 64, Sketch Book No. 44.

²²Story of Nancy McClure, 46.

²³One incident escalated into six weeks of violence in which Dakota forces led by Little Crow attempted to sweep American settlement out of their territory, killing an estimated five hundred people.

²⁴Gabriel Renville was the son of Victor Renville and Winona "Iron Ring" Crawford and the grandson of

who had come together at the 1851 treaty signing were caught up in the sudden violence. David Faribault, Narcisse Frenier and Michel Renville rode with the Renville Rangers, while George Provencalle dit Le Blanc was killed fighting on the opposite side. Ironically, returning Half Breed captives were later attacked by angry settlers and many were charged for participating in the violence.²⁵ The Dakota, including those who remained neutral or actively opposed the war and several uninvolved Winnebago bands were removed by steamboat to Crow Creek, South Dakota in conditions compared by John W. Williamson to the middle passage of African slaves.²⁶

Following the conflict, Nancy and her family continued to be the target of Dakota harassment.²⁷ Their situation was exacerbated by David Faribault's role as army interpreter and witness at the subsequent trials. The Faribaults moved frequently and had difficulty re-establishing themselves. Their property had been destroyed during the 1862 conflict and they relocated several times before moving to Fort Ransom in 1867 where David Faribault was "placed in charge of the scouts at this fort."²⁸ In 1868 Faribault traveled to the Red River Settlement to place their daughter Mary in school. While he was away, their home was again ransacked by what Nancy described as a "strong Indian war party." They escaped to Fort Abercrombie, and moved to Cheyenne and then to the Sisseton agency. A proud, independent man, Faribault had difficulty living with the authority of an agent.²⁹ The Faribaults were among the twenty-five

Joseph Renville of Lac qui Parle. Renville was firmly rooted in Dakota traditions and sympathetic to the underlying cause, but was opposed to the war. See Samuel J. Brown, "Biographic Sketch of Chief Gabriel Renville," *CMHS* 10, part 2 (1905), 614-618.

²⁵ Among those sentenced was David Faribault Jr. whose death sentence was commuted following a campaign of letters written by his father, uncle and General Sibley himself. David Faribault, 1844-1886, Executive Clemency Documents, 1863, SMHC Manuscript Collection 163, Southern Minnesota Historical Center, Memorial Library, Minnesota State University, Mankato.

²⁶ John W. Williamson made the comparison to the middle passage in an 1863 letter to his mother. Roy W. Meyer, *History of the Santee Sioux: United States Policy on Trial* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 146 and 153. Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve's great-grandmother Hannah Howe Frazier was the daughter of John and Maggie Frazier who experienced the difficult relocation. See *Completing the Circle*, 57-59.

²⁷ Story of Nancy McClure, 459.

²⁸ Story of Nancy McClure, 459-460.

²⁹ David Faribault correspondence September - December, 1872. Box 1, Location 1459. Moses N. Adams

families who established the Flandreau Colony in South Dakota, taking up individual homesteads as a collective.³⁰ Their daughter Mary married Reverend John Eastman, illustrating the tendency of Mixed Bloods to either marry endogamously or choose a partner from the larger Christian Dakota community.³¹

With the exception of the images created Frank Blackwell Mayer, it is difficult to reconstruct the artistic production of the Dakota Mixed Blood community. Nathan Jarvis at Fort Snelling collected pointed-toe moccasins with ribbonwork cuffs between 1833 and 1836.³² They are identified as Dakota, but the Mixed Blood community of St. Peter's was well established by that time. A very similar pair of moccasins in the Denver Art Museum's collection has ribbon work cuffs and a quillwork bird on the vamp.³³ A beaded bag in the collection of the Minnesota Historical Society was made around 1860 by Margeurite Métivier (plate 62). She was born in 1829 and baptized by Bishop Loras as the daughter of "Mr. Metivier and a Sioux woman. Baptized at St. Peter's, July 8, 1839."³⁴ She married Andre Godfrey at Mendota and moved to St. Paul in 1848, avoiding the devastation that followed the 1862 conflict. The bag is made of red wool, bound with sky blue silk ribbon and trimmed with a looped fringe along the perimeter. The beadwork combines stylized floral and geometric elements. A square outlined in sky blue, with large triangles above and below, forms the central motif with six floral elements emerging from the four corners and the side. The beadwork was sewn in a variation of a Sioux stitch, including

Papers. MNHS.

³⁰The families left the Santee Reservation in 1869 while the agent was in Washington. David Faribault continued to chafe under the paternalism of missionary John Williamson who was appointed as special agent to the colony, and emerged as a community leader writing petitions and letters opposing Williamson's policies. Meyer, *History of the Santee*, 242-250.

³¹John Eastman was a Dakota Presbyterian minister and the brother of Charles Eastman.

³²Jarvis moccasin reference. Brooklyn Museum.

³³Moccasins tentatively identified as Eastern Sioux circa 1836. Card catalogue data, 1946.48.a,b, Denver Art Museum.

³⁴Red beaded bag circa 1860, Margeurite Métivier, No. 8576.2, MNHS; Baptismal entry in *New Light on Old St. Peter's and Early St. Paul*, *CMHS*, 37. See Paul J. Lareau and Elmer Couteau, *French Canadian Families of the North Central States* (St. Paul, Minnesota: North West Territories French and Canadian Heritage Center, 1980-1983), 1207 for a discussion of Mr. and Mrs. Godfrey.

the stems. Two small floral motifs are outlined and filled with rows of beadwork. The stems on the the primary floral motifs are straight and plain, while those on the smaller motifs are curving with three small “hairs” or “feathers”. Margeurite chose a limited palette of two shades of deep metallic blue with sky blue accents, and pink added on the fringe. The Métivier bag, although it is only one example, may reflect the artistic traditions of the women of St. Peter’s.

The visual distinctions between the Dakota and their Mixed Blood kin began to blur during the last half of the nineteenth century. Many Dakota underwent profound cultural transformations in response to the devastating events of 1862-63 and the punitive, assimilationist government policies that followed their removal to South Dakota. Large numbers of those imprisoned at Camp Release had undergone a religious conversion so sudden and widespread that authorities doubted its sincerity.³⁵ This was expressed visually by cutting men’s long hair and adopting Euro-American clothing, adding to an already complex swirl of factors that influenced choices in dress and artistic production. The drawing that accompanied Nancy McClure Faribault’s 1894 memoir showed a matronly woman with her dark hair pulled back, wearing a high-neck dress with a cameo at her throat – the perfect model of a “pioneer” woman. However, an example of her artistic production does not reflect the cultural accommodation and identification with her Euro-American father she so strongly asserted in her narrative and reflected in her dress. Instead, it reveals the artistic influence of her beloved Dakota mother and grandmother. The hide storage bag attributed to Mrs. David Faribault in the collection of the Minnesota Historical Society is a classic example of northern plains aesthetics (plate 62).³⁶ The bag, commonly called a “possible” bag, was most often used for tipi storage. The bag is

³⁵Dakota prisoners underwent a mass Christian conversion which became a significant aspect of the new cultural traditions in South Dakota, while those living in Canada and remaining in Minnesota were more persistent in Dakota religious practice. See Meyer, *History of the Santee Sioux*, 133-154 and Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve, *Completing the Circle*, 54-65.

³⁶Quilled and beaded hide bag circa 1880, Mrs. David Faribault, No. 5653, MNHS. Bags with this style of linear red quillwork are most often categorized as Cheyenne, although a few are identified as Sioux. They are often attributed to women’s societies and associated with wedding gifts.

decorated with narrow bands of red quillwork positioned between three broader red bands with repeat motifs of purple rectangles with yellow centres. Tufts of red feathers stitched into the quillwork create four vertical stripes. The sides and flap of the bag are decorated with bold green and white geometric beadwork in a raised stitch with red and navy accents. Yellow horsehair, metal cones and quill wrapped hide ties provide further embellishment. The Faribault bag was made around 1880, after Nancy and David Faribault had been integrated into a new community made up largely of people like themselves, Mixed Bloods and Christians of Eastern Dakota descent who found themselves rebuilding new identities in a new place. Pride in Dakota heritage and the powerful pull of kinship were significant factors in the identity paths of children born of bi-racial marriages, balancing the forces of war and contested loyalties.

Lakota Mixed Bloods

As in other regions, the fur trade provided the impetus for relationships between Euro-Americans and Lakota people. Most came up the Missouri River from St. Louis and many of those men came from old Creole and Metif families.³⁷ They continued the established pattern of strategic marriage to cement diplomatic and economic relationships. The Bordeaux, Clairmont (Clement), Dubrey, Janis, Palardy, Narcelle, Lamoureaux, LeDeau and Richard (Richaw) families were among the French-Metif-Lakota families who became influential in the regional fur trade.³⁸ Distinct communities began to form along the regional river systems. A community known as French Village was established in the late 1830's by a cluster of interrelated families on the Nishnabotna River.³⁹ The signature of one of the original residents, Clement Lamoureaux, can be

³⁷Men such as Nicholas Janis and members of the Palardy, Blondeau, Dorion and Vallee families who fathered large families with Lakota women can be identified as members of the Metif communities of Kaskaskias, Cahokia and St. Charles. Others, such as James Bordeaux, were French Creoles.

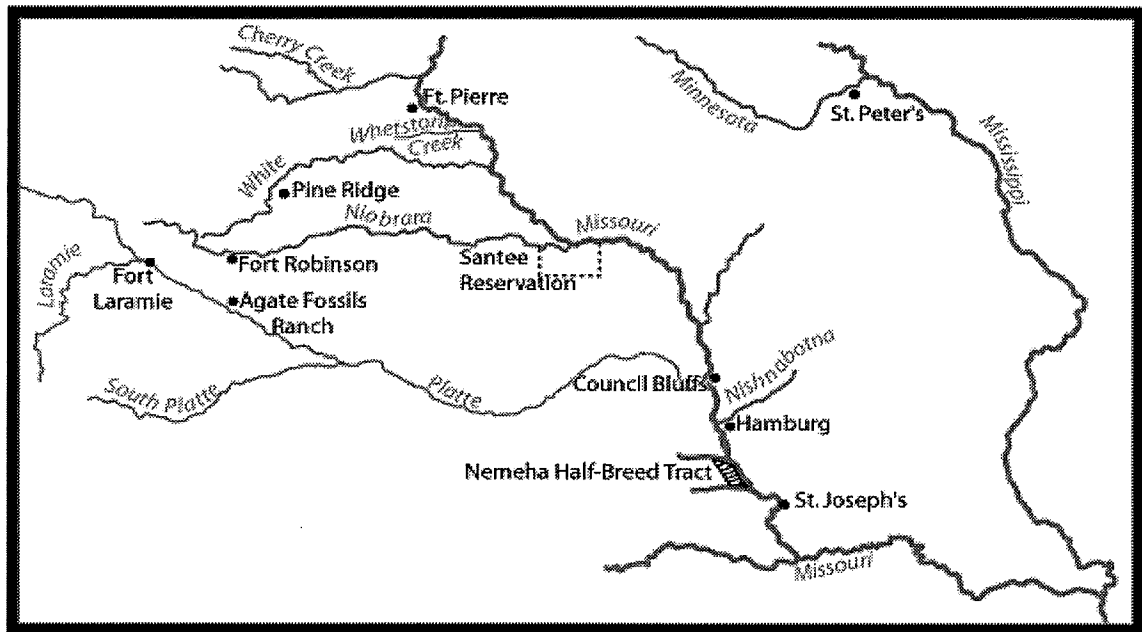
³⁸The notes and index prepared by editor Emily Levine for Bettelyoun and Waggoner, *With My Own Eyes* are a particularly rich source of Mixed Blood family history.

³⁹Bettelyoun and Waggoner, *With My Own Eyes*, 168, n. 1.

found on the 1867 incorporation documents that renamed the community as the city of Hamburg, Iowa. By 1868 seventy-nine families identified as “French - Indians” were living at Whetstone Creek on the Missouri River.⁴⁰ Charles Allen described clearly defined, although somewhat sprawling, social spaces that grew around Fort Laramie.

For about a mile above and below the fort, space was reserved for transient campers. Eastward, between this camp and the junction of the Laramie River and the Platte, stood the lodges of the mixed population – the white men with Indian families. These men were trappers, hunters, guides, dispatch carriers, freighters, wood haulers, haymakers and men-of-all work and their lodges were scattered through the river-bends in neighborly, congenial clusters . . . About twenty-five miles below the fort . . . the Indian villages began.⁴¹

Map 5: Lower Missouri – Platte River Systems



As intermarriage became increasingly frowned upon, the derogatory term “squaw man” came into common use, to describe Euro-American men living with or married to Lakota women. As a man fully committed to his family, Charles Allen resented the term and viewed it as an

⁴⁰Driving Hawk Sneve, *Completing the Circle*, 22.

⁴¹Charles Allen, *From Fort Laramie to Wounded Knee*, 42.

insult to his fifty year marriage to Emma Hawkins, a union that produced twelve children. He defended the character and quality of mixed marriages and the individuals who entered into them.

The unjust and un-called for obloquy heaped upon these men as a class by some designing Indian agents and office workers was done deliberately in an effort to degrade them . . . they conspired to attack, as a class, that host of innocent and defenseless men whose only sin lay in the act of intermarriage and fidelity . . . many realized fully that in 'going native' they had crossed the sacred confines established by society and burned their bridges behind them. Yet personal considerations impelled them to the step regardless of consequences.⁴²

Allen was part of the new wave of men entering Lakota territory. American traders, soldiers, ranchers and a few French Canadians engaging in the fading years of the fur trade increased both the internal diversity and size of the Mixed-Blood or Half Breed Lakota population.

The family of Baptiste Garnier can provide a window into the visual identity and artistic production that developed in this community. Growing up in the *métis* zone described by Allen, Garnier worked as a scout and courier for the American army, alternating with stints as a ranch hand and big game hunter. His friend, John Hunton, summarized Garnier's early life:

Baptiste Garnier (Little Bat) was born in the neighbourhood of Fort Laramie, Nebraska Territory, sometime during the year of 1854. His father was a Canadian Frenchman; his mother a Sioux Indian. His father was killed by Cheyenne Indians in the spring of 1856 near the Upper Platte Agency . . . When about eight years old, his mother having died, he was taken into the family of E. W. Whitcomb, whose wife was a relative . . . until the fall of 1868 [when he] went to live in the family of John Richard, who at that time were on the Laramie river, about ten miles west of Fort Laramie.⁴³

In the mid to late 1890's, Baptiste Garnier was photographed wearing a tailored hide jacket, vest and matching leggings with extensive decorative areas of stylized floral beadwork (plate 63).⁴⁴

Three photographs of Garnier wearing this outfit have survived, taken during the same session.

In one, Garnier stands alone. In the others, he is seated beside Chief Red Cloud, with Knife Chief

⁴²*From Fort Laramie to Wounded Knee*, 94-95.

⁴³"Biographical Sketch Related On Baptiste Garnier by John Hunton," *The Torrington Telegram*, Monday, August 23, 1954, B-G 188-b, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

⁴⁴The photographs were taken by C. C. McBride who had a studio at Crawford, Nebraska. Archival files, Agate Fossil Beds National Monument, National Park Service. Also Baptiste Garnier File, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

and Jack Red Cloud standing behind them. Garnier's short hair, moustache, tailored hide clothing and pointed-toe moccasins set him apart from the long hair, feathers, dark clothing and quilled flat moccasins of his Lakota companions. His wife Julia Mousseau or his sister Lallee Garnier, both accomplished artists, probably made his beaded outfit. Julia Mousseau was also the daughter of a French Canadian and a Lakota woman. Alexis Magliore Mousseau left Quebec as a young man and travelled west in a circuitous route that took him to Massachusetts, New Orleans and St. Louis. In 1848 he joined the American Fur Company and spent several years working between Fort Pierre and Fort Union.⁴⁵ Julia's mother had kinship ties to the family of Crazy Horse and both she and Baptiste maintained a lifelong relationship with Red Cloud and his band.

It is through Garnier's work as an army scout and their relationships with early Nebraska ranchers John Hunton and James H. Cook, that their stories can be reconstructed. Baptiste Garnier befriended both Hunton and Cook shortly after their arrival in the territory and worked on their ranches. His sister Lallee also had a relationship with the two men. She lived with John Hunton as a young woman and, later in life, was employed by the Cook family. Lallee appears frequently in Hunton's diaries, their tumultuous relationship a response to the troubled times. In 1873 he noted purchases made under the heading "April 5 – For Lallee" including clothing for a child named Mary and "Bonnet, Black Dress, Lead Colored Dress, Turquoise Beads", black velvet ribbon and buttons.⁴⁶ Throughout 1875, Hunton made frequent notes regarding Lallee's health and her whereabouts. In 1876 he noted that he "Bought 5 calico dresses, 2 pr. Hose for Lallee" at Fort Laramie.⁴⁷ On June 25, 1877, Hunton wrote, "On arrival home found Lallee had left with all her clothes and belongings. Nice day."⁴⁸ His cavalier attitude was not reflected in entries made over three years, peppered with the plaintive notes: "Lallee with me", "Lallee gone", "Lallee

⁴⁵Alexis Magliore Mousseau Interview, Box 6, Reel #5, Tablet #26 and Tablet #28, Eli Ricker Manuscripts, Nebraska State Historical Society.

⁴⁶L. G. Flannery, ed., *John Hunton's Diary* (Lingle, Wyoming: Guide-Review, 1956), 24.

⁴⁷John Hunton's Diary, vol. 2: 1876-1877, 139

⁴⁸*John Hunton's Diary*, vol. 2, 230.

quite sick and refuses to take medicine” and the explosive, “Saw Lallee at Post. Had talk with her about leaving me . . . Had much rather seen her die.”⁴⁹ In the end, Hunton did what men around him were doing; he attempted to pack her off to the reservation.

Loaded all Lallee’s things on wagon and sent her and them to Patton’s by Sam Groves. Learned that she has been toying with Joe Morris . . . Persuaded Lallee to have her things moved back to Ranch by Patton and she go to Agency first chance. Arranged for her to leave her things at Patton’s and go to Agency at once with Pete Richard . . . I give Tom positive instructions not to bring her back but leave her at Agency . . . Phillips passed, taking his children to McUlvances. He has thrown his squaw away and sent her to the Agency.⁵⁰

Children seemed drawn to Lallee and those who knew her in childhood, remembered her vividly. Pauline Smith Peyton, who as a child, “admired her very much”, witnessed Lallee and Hunton arguing after which “She went into our house and sat in the same chair all day, refusing to go to our table to eat . . . Mother told me not to lean on La Lee, but something in her expressive eyes seemed to want me. I sat on the floor and traced the button holes in La Lee’s shoes, from the bottom to the top, marvelling at the red leather.”⁵¹ Pauline was to recall her mother and other women discussing the treatment of Lakota women “especially La Lee, Cushia and Ann Hornback . . . But she guessed there was nothing [Mr. Powell] could do about them.” A photograph of a young Lallee, shows her decked out in the clothes Hunton dressed her in, including a pair of horseshoe earrings (photo plate 63).⁵²

In spite of Hunton’s efforts, Lallee did not stay at the Agency. She worked at a variety of jobs, moving in with the Cook family at Agate Ranch around 1890. Harold Cook, one of the children she cared for, remembered Lallee as a woman not easily put aside, “As I remember

⁴⁹ *John Hunton’s Diary*, vol. 2, 186.

⁵⁰ *John Hunton’s Diary*, 191.

⁵¹ According to Mrs. Peyton, Lallee “wore the soft, high top shoes that were trimmed in red to please Hunton. Hunton got those shoes for her.” Pauline E. Smith Peyton to L. G. Flannery, 22 October 1955, Douglas Wyoming as cited in *John Hunton’s Diary*, 18 – 21.

⁵² Lallee Garnier photograph, John Hunton Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

her . . . she was still a very fine, striking looking woman . . . very large and robust . . . and a powerful woman . . . I have seen her do many things that took more muscle than most men have, and do them easily.”⁵³ It is in the Agate Ranch collection that examples of Lallee Garnier and Julia Mousseau Garnier’s work have survived. Hunton had noted purchases of beads made for Lallee in his diary and Harold Cook recalled that:

While she could and would at times dress up as white women do, she generally preferred to wear moccasins, that she made herself. She was an expert at leather work and tanning and in doing exceptional ‘beady work’ as she called it, which she taught my mother to do. We have some of her beadwork here now.⁵⁴

The beadwork attributed to Lallee and Julia Mousseau Garnier was done in stylized floral motifs outlined in a single row of either white or dark blue beads. While the majority of the beadwork was done in an appliqué stitch, certain motifs were executed in a Sioux stitch. Gauntlets made by Lallee Garnier are heavily embellished with stylized floral motifs that spread across the upper gauntlet and down the front of the glove (plate 63).⁵⁵ Inside the dark blue outline, motifs are filled with either linear or undulating rows that follow the outline of the shape. James Cook speculated that the “curving, floral designs were influenced by the fact that Little Bat and Lallee were part-French.”⁵⁶ When Short Bull, a nephew of Red Cloud, wanted to present a beaded leather suit to James Cook’s young son Harold, his wife and Julia Mousseau Garnier collaborated. Short Bull’s wife tanned the hide and made the suit, but “because she could no longer see to do beadwork, Mrs. Short Bull turned to the wife of Baptiste (Little Bat) Garnier for the beading.”⁵⁷ The suit was made in 1896 (plate 64).⁵⁸ The pants have a wide band of beadwork

⁵³Harold J. Cook to L. G. Flannery, 16 March 1955, Agate, Nebraska, *John Hunton’s Diary*, vol. 1, 27.

⁵⁴John Hunton noted a \$12.00 purchase of beads for Lallee in his accounts for April 1879. *John Hunton’s Diary*, vol. 3, 149 and Harold J. Cook to L. G. Flannery, *John Hunton’s Diary*, vol. 1, 28.

⁵⁵Beaded gauntlets, Lallee Garnier, AGFO 440, Agate Springs Ranch collection, Agate Fossil Beds National Monument, National Park Service.

⁵⁶Dorothy Cook Meade, *Heart Bags & Hand Shakes: the Story of the Cook Collection* (Lake Ann, Michigan: National Woodlands Publishing Company, 1994), 33.

⁵⁷*Heart Bags & Hand Shakes*, 31.

⁵⁸Beaded jacket and pants made for Harold J. Cook (AGFO 345) and moccasins (AGFO 280), Agate

up the outer front edge of each pant leg, consisting of two alternating floral motifs. The jacket is elaborately beaded, particularly on the back. A repeat floral motif forms a border on the jacket body, cuffs, pockets and down the length of each sleeve. A central seam up the jacket back is covered with a narrow row of blue and red Sioux stitch. On either side of the seam, large floral motifs create a wide decorative area extending from the shoulder to the hem. The motifs are the same as those on Baptiste Garnier's outfit. Other items in the Cook collection cannot be so clearly identified.⁵⁹ However, their style of construction and design are very similar to the other pieces.

The moccasins in the Cook collection, including those attributed to Lallee and Julia Garnier, are flat sewn in both wrap-around and slipper styles (64). Those worn by Baptiste Garnier, pointed-toe with a Sioux stitch covering the central seam, reflect the variety of moccasin styles made by the women of the Garnier family (65). Two very similar pairs are in the collection of the Denver Art Museum, one pair virtually identical (65).⁶⁰ The central stylized flower peeking out from Garnier's leggings were beaded on a darker coloured vamp; those in the Denver Art Museum are cut from fine red stroud. The simple line of beadwork up the front seam also appears similar, done in two shades of blue. Also found in the same collection are four pairs of cuffed leggings, one set also collected near Fort Laramie, with the same cuffed, wrap-around construction and stylized floral beadwork outlined in white (plate 65).⁶¹

Springs Ranch collection, Agate Fossil Beds National Monument, National Park Service.

⁵⁹While Harold Cook wrote that he had several pieces of Lallee's work, there is some confusion as to which pieces are Lallee's. Dorothy Cook Meade identified most of the floral beadwork as Lallee's, but another family member thought that they also had pieces from the Hank Clifford family. Mark Hertig, Museum Curator, Agate Fossil Beds National Monument, personal communication, August 16, 2001. See also Thomas P. Myers, "The Cook Collection: A Turn-of-the-Century Collection from the Nebraska Frontier," *American Indian Art Magazine* 19, 1 (1993): 61-67.

⁶⁰Both pairs of moccasins were collected by Frank M. Walker who delivered supplies "from an army base in Nebraska to Fort Laramie" between 1866 – 1868. Card catalogue data, 1947.136 a, b; 1947.134 a, b. The moccasins discussed here are 1947.134 a, b, Denver Art Museum.

⁶¹Leggings collected by Frank M. Walker 1866-1878, 1947.136 a, b. Also leggings BRR-6-G; 1950.92 a, b; 1946.103, Denver Art Museum.

Baptiste Garnier served the army for a quarter century and by 1898 he was the head scout at Fort Robinson on the White River, close to the Red Cloud Agency. He did not always wear his fancy outfit. Photographs taken on an 1889 hunting trip show Garnier wearing a flat-brimmed hat with a knee-length hide coat. By 1899 Baptiste had passed his outfit on to his son who wore it in a family photograph, while he wore a sheepskin jacket (66).⁶² Another coat played a role in his death. In 1900 he was shot by a bartender while reaching for money inside his army-issue buffalo coat. The bartender was acquitted. John Hunton wrote, "He met an untimely death at the hands of an assassin at Crawford, Nebraska."⁶³ *The Crawford Gazette* reported that passengers on the Elkhorn train were startled by the death songs sung by grieving Lakota travelling from Pine Ridge to the funeral at Fort Robinson.

Caught in the Cross Fire: Conflict and Government Policies

*They reported that there were many half-breeds in the fort that fought against them . . . This made them very bitter against us . . . Some one raised a cry, 'They are killing the half-breeds now!' I caught up my child and ran.*⁶⁴

*Little Bat who had stiffened at the last words of the speaker, yelled, "Look out, Charley!" and we all started to run. Little Bat, who was a noted foot racer, had but given his warning when a shot was heard from the direction of headquarters . . . volleys were heard that sounded much like popcorn.*⁶⁵

More than in any other region, Lakota and Dakota Mixed Blood identity was negotiated on a field that was both externally and internally conflicted. Nancy McClure Faribault's memoirs of her experiences during the Little Crow Uprising of 1862 describe a sharpened Half Breed identity. Her text is sprinkled with references to "half bloods, like ourselves", "my race", "our

⁶²Baptiste Garnier (Little Bat) with family. RG4405-1, Nebraska State Historical Society; Little Bat with Elk, Box 13 Wyoming Hunt, Hayes Ph-3, Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Centre, Fremont, Ohio.

⁶³The record of death and interment stated, "deceased was brutally shot while wholly unarmed and without cause or justification." Historical Marker 265, "The Death of Baptiste Garnier, Main Street, Crawford, Nebraska," Nebraska State Historical Society; *John Hunton's Diary*, vol. 1, 57 and 106.

⁶⁴Story of Nancy McClure, 452.

⁶⁵Charles Allen, *From Fort Laramie to Wounded Knee*, 177.

men.”⁶⁶ She remarked, “the Indians have always bitterly hated the half-breeds for their conduct in favor of the whites in that and other wars, and they hate us still. It seems they can forgive everybody, but us.” However, she spoke of her own Dakota relatives with pride, “My uncle was a very brave, good man.” During such times, the Métis or Bois Brulés were seen, if not as kin, as allies. In the aftermath of the Minnesota conflict, a group of Dakota women fled to Turtle Mountain and gave fourteen children to Métis families “to have them brought up,” so extreme was their concern for the safety of mixed-blood children within the larger Dakota community.⁶⁷

According to Lawrence Taliaferro, who served as Indian agent at Fort Snelling for twenty years, the alienation of the Dakota from their mixed-blood kin can be traced to their affiliation with fur traders who negotiated a “most fatal and dishonest” precedent, during the 1857-58 renegotiation of the Traverse des Sioux treaty.⁶⁸ The political influence of fur traders resulted in recognition of “the claims of traders for lost credits” so that “[Dakota] lands were sold and the traders got the proceeds through the connivance of men called respectable citizens by evil doers.” The alienation created by the collapse of trust in those associated with the fur trade, was further compounded by a shift to an even more problematic involvement with the American army. The army purchased many of the forts that had previously belonged to the American Fur Company. Men employed in the fur trade as interpreters, scouts and laborers were hired by the army to perform the same services. Susan Bordeaux Bettelyoun recalled tensions in 1865 when Mixed Bloods were hired to help the army move a large Lakota band, which included her uncle and other relatives, to the Missouri River where they were to receive annuities. When Lakota men rushed the soldiers and escaped, she recalled that her brother fired his gun only to have their

⁶⁶Story of Nancy McClure, 455 and 453.

⁶⁷Frank Jetty recollected being adopted by Moses Azure and Leocadie Martel. “Frank Jetty’s Reminiscences,” in Gary Clayton Anderson and Alan R. Woolworth, eds. *Through Dakota Eyes: Narrative Accounts of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988), 268.

⁶⁸Lawrence Taliaferro, “Autobiography of Lawrence Taliaferro, Indian Agent at Fort Snelling, 1820 – 1840,” *CMHS* 6, part 1 (1887), 251-252.

father knock it out of his hands.⁶⁹ These conflicts are best viewed as fissures along “blood” lines that can be created in a hybrid community during times of extreme stress. Baptiste Garnier served as a scout in the campaign against Crazy Horse, his wife’s cousin. He was also among the unarmed Mixed Blood interpreters literally caught in the cross fire at Wounded Knee in 1890.⁷⁰

Government policies also played a significant role in the identity paths of Lakota and Dakota Mixed Bloods. In South Dakota, the defeat of the 1862 General Half-Breed Bill which proposed state voting rights to “all English-language literate mixed-bloods” proved a significant factor in choices made by Dakota and Lakota Half Breeds entitled to scrip under the land scrip acts of 1854 and 1858. An 1859 census had revealed their large population, causing the bill’s defeat because “under the act the half-breeds would have outvoted the rest of the territory.”⁷¹ Sioux agencies began to see the relocation of Minnesota Dakota following the 1862 conflicts and large numbers of Half Breeds seeking to take up their allotments on reservation lands. Each agency had different policies regarding bi-racial families. Those headed by a European male were sometimes welcomed. The French Canadian father of Julia Mousseau Garnier spent his declining years on Pine Ridge where his son owned the store at Wounded Knee. But in 1877 at the Red Cloud Agency, white men living with Lakota women were given orders “to leave the reservation within 48 hours or abide the consequences which are understood to be driven away by the military.”⁷² Many left their wives, but took away their children.

In 1889, the newly established Cheyenne River Agency became the home of many people of French-Sioux descent who had formerly worked in the fur trade, residing at posts such as Fort Pierre and Fort Laramie. Racial theory of the time considered those with “white” blood as more

⁶⁹Bettelyoun and Waggoner, *With My Own Eyes*, 88.

⁷⁰Baptiste Garnier, Baptiste Pourier and Baptiste Garneau were among the Mixed Blood interpreters at Wounded Knee in 1890. *From Fort Laramie to Wounded Knee*, 182.

⁷¹Moses Armstrong (1901) *The Early Empire Builders of the Great West* as cited in Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve, *Completing the Circle*, 26.

⁷²*John Hunton’s Diary*, vol. 2: 1876 - 1877, 45.

intelligent and capable of running their own affairs and they were granted more personal independence than “full-bloods” who were maintained as wards with little personal or collective autonomy. Consequently, men such as Narcisse Narcelle and William Lamoureux were able to run large private cattle operations on reservation lands.⁷³ Narcelle’s mother, Pelagie Sarpy, was born at Fort Pierre. She was the daughter of Thomas Lestang Sarpy and a Lakota woman.⁷⁴ She married Paul Narcelle, a French Canadian employed at the post. Narcisse Narcelle’s NSS brand was the first and largest cattle herd in the region. He married Cecilia Benoist, a Yankton Mixed Blood who was the first school teacher at Cherry Creek.⁷⁵

Mixed Bloods lived in distinct communities on Pine Ridge, Rosebud, Cheyenne River and other reservations. Paul Picotte recalled that his family and “all of the mixed blood Indians, lived in a sort of group.”⁷⁶ Tensions frequently developed as factions divided communities along lines defined by blood, religion and politics.

some of those full-blooded Indians wanted to cut off these Indians, these half-breed Indians. They didn’t want ‘em on there because they’d already had their parcel of land, and uh, got rid of it. But old Struck-by-the-Ree, he said “You know those people there are, have the same blood that I, their mothers had . . . and I want them back in the family.”⁷⁷

Picotte displayed a large photograph of Chief Struck-by-the-Ree in his home, recognizing the man who had championed the rights of Half Breeds. Dakota and Lakota Mixed Bloods have been

⁷³Ann Fleming, ed., *South Dakota’s Ziebach County: History of the Prairie* (Dupree, South Dakota: Ziebach County Historical Society, 1982), 7 and 9.

⁷⁴Thomas L. Sarpy was born in 1810, the son of Gregoire Sarpy of the prominent St. Louis fur trade family. He was killed in an explosion that destroyed the Oglala post in 1832. Pelagie’s mother died when she was only five days old and she was raised by a second wife. In Leroy R. Hafen, ed., *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West*, vol. 3 (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1965-1972), 279-283. Pelagie Sarpy Narcelle was interviewed in 1899. See also Charles P. Barbier “Recollections of Ft. La Ramboise in 1862 and the Rescue of Lake Chetak Captives,” *South Dakota Historical Collections*, 11 (Pierre, South Dakota: South Dakota Historical Society, 1922), 282-285.

⁷⁵Narcelle ranched at Cherry Creek and also served as Cheyenne River Agency interpreter in 1882 for Charger, Swift Bird and White Swan. Fleming, *Ziebach Country*, 517.

⁷⁶Paul S. Picotte Interview (1968), p. 3, MS 67, American Indian Research Project, University of South Dakota.

⁷⁷Mr. Picotte was referring to the Nemaha Half Breed Tract. Paul S. Picotte Interview, American Indian Research Project.

threatened with expulsion throughout their history.⁷⁸ Complicated by the fact that many were Santees or Yanktons residing on the territory of more western groups, the identity struggle of those residing on reservations has focused on recognition of their steadfastly maintained Sioux identity and their rights as citizens of that nation.

The Umbilical Connection and Maintenance of Lakota and Dakota Identity

The descendents of the fur trade community in the Traverse des Sioux - Lac qui Parle - St. Peter's region showed the greatest inclination to merge with the Métis and Half Breed collective to the north of them. There was a modest amount of movement by individuals and nuclear families to and from Red River, Pembina and St. Paul. The disruptions caused by the war of 1862 and subsequent government policies imposed on the Eastern Dakota triggered a diaspora that scattered the once closely unified collective. Similarly, the distinct French-Lakota communities in Nebraska and South Dakota disappeared when people moved onto reservations to take up their allotments or were swallowed up by incoming settlers. Most Dakota and Lakota Mixed Bloods, through residency and marriage patterns, maintained their hybrid status with their maternal parent culture. Scholars and historical observers may have underestimated the influence women exerted and the powerful bonds between mothers, grandmothers and children. In 1870 the Episcopal Church passed the following resolutions regarding the threat posed by Lakota and Dakota women to the missionary agenda:

5. That the Indian custom of regarding the daughter as belonging to the mother, even after marriage, is destructive of the authority of the husband, and the cause of so much trouble as to render Christian marriage impossible among the Indians.

⁷⁸See Harry H. Anderson, "The Waldron-Black Tomahawk Controversy and the Status of Mixed Bloods Among the Teton Sioux," *South Dakota History* 21, 1 (1991): 69-83 for a description of a 1889-1905 court battle between a Mixed Blood rancher and a Teton chief. A 1995 study of ethnicity and class among the Lakota revealed continuing tensions and stereotypical perceptions between "mixed bloods" and "full bloods." Paul M. Robertson, "The Power of the Land: Identity, Ethnicity and Class among the Oglala Lakota" (PhD. dissertation, Graduate School of the Union Institute, 1995).

6. That the Christian teaching that the husband is the head of the wife should be enforced; and that for the prevention of troubles, young married people should be encouraged as far as possible, to live in their own homes and not in the families of their parents.⁷⁹

Persistent family bonds and overlapping circles created by church congregations and shared community life prevented a complete separation. More importantly, the “umbilical connection” was maintained and strengthened by marriage back into the nation. Emma Garnier’s obituary illustrates these marriage patterns as practiced by the daughters of Baptiste and Julia Garnier.⁸⁰ Emma and her sister Lizzie married Lakota men from the Black Feather and Pumpkin Seed families. Two other sisters married Peter Janis and Oliver Lapointe, men from prominent Mixed Blood families, and Ellen married an American, George Howard.

The tenacity of the attachment between Mixed Bloods and their Lakota and Dakota kin has resulted in the maintenance of a distinct identity, which functions within a larger collective. Often living in separate neighbourhoods and pursuing different economic agendas, their distinctiveness was communicated visually. Two coats can tentatively establish the lifespan of the visual border constructed by stylized floral beadwork on tailored hide garments. The earliest is a tailored frock coat made for a small boy (plate 66).⁸¹ The coat is lined with checked wool flannel and trimmed with fur and fringe. Two beaded horses hovering above a small sun would have been worn over the heart of the small boy inside the coat. The acquisition notes state that the coat was collected during the 1840’s, which can be confirmed by the rubber buttons that date between 1830 and 1840. Identifying the coat as Lakota or Dakota Mixed Blood is speculative, as no provenance regarding location or maker has survived. However, the fine stylized beadwork that covers the front and back of the garment is very similar to the more recent work attributed to

⁷⁹Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve, *That They May Have Life: the Episcopal Church in South Dakota* (New York: Seabury, 1977), 74-75.

⁸⁰“Emma Garnier Passes Away at Age of 76, November, 1959,” B-G188-c, Emma Garnier Biographical File, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

⁸¹Museum curators Arthur Woodward and Richard Conn identified the coat as ‘Red River type’. Card Catalogue data, 1941.50, Denver Art Museum.

the women of the Garnier family. The spatial organization of the spreading floral beadwork is the same as the coat Julia Mousseau Garnier made for Howard Cook. Cecilia Benoist Narcelle made a coat that employed similar design principles for a rancher at the turn of the century (plate 66).⁸² This coat was also a winter garment, lined with red wool flannel and trimmed with fur. Stylized floral beadwork, outlined with a single row of white beads, covers the upper back and front of the coat. Placed among the floral motifs are pairs of birds. The beadwork is organized on rectangular fields with the central back seam and front opening serving as lines of symmetry. Among Lakota Mixed Bloods in particular, stylized two-dimensional floral motifs that spread across the hide surface of garments established visual identities based on both ethnicity and occupation. Pointed-toe moccasins were another visual marker that served to distinguish Mixed Bloods from their Lakota and Dakota relatives. A small pair of pointed-toe moccasins with wraps closed by buttons, not unlike a high top shoe, was collected at Fort Pierre.⁸³ A note stating that they did not reflect the quality of moccasin available in earlier years accompanied them. The moccasin style, the single floral beaded motif and pink embroidery thread that covered the vamp seam are identical to those worn much further north.

However, these visual borders were blurry and unstable. By the turn of the century, Lakota and Dakota women were incorporating floral imagery and more contemporary garment construction into their own work. Men cut their hair, became Christians and joined Mixed Blood cowboys in ranching enterprises. In a photograph taken the year before his death, Baptiste Garnier, his wife and five children wore a combination of European, Lakota and Mixed Blood

⁸²The coat was made for William Straub, a rancher and family friend who lived beside the Narcelle ranch on the Cheyenne River reservation. It was loaned to Henry Roberts who wore it when he was part of a large contingent of cowboys who attended the second inauguration of Theodore Roosevelt in 1905. Robert Preszler, personal communication, September 23, 2003, Rapid City, South Dakota. Beaded coat L93.2519 Minnilusa Pioneer Museum, Journey Museum, Rapid City.

⁸³Moccasins, collected at Fort Pierre, No. 9686, SHSND.

dress (plate 66).⁸⁴ John Garnier wore the vest and leggings from his father's beaded outfit with a commercial jacket, felt hat and cowboy boots. Baptiste Garnier sported a light coloured felt hat with a beaded hat band in a geometric Sioux stitch and his daughter Emma wore a complete Lakota woman's outfit. The yoke of her trade cloth dress was covered with rows of dentalium shell. Her leggings and moccasins were classic Lakota style with heavy areas of solid geometric beadwork. Her other accessories included a patterned blanket and a bone breastplate. The purpose of the photograph was not recorded – had the Garnier family dressed especially for the photograph or were they gathered to participate in a ceremony in which Emma was the focus? The clothing signs are difficult to read. In the semiotics of clothing, mixed affiliations and dual identities, particularly during times of rapid change, can be expressed in choices that send a cacophony of visual messages.

⁸⁴Baptiste Garnier (Little Bat) with family. RG4405-1, Nebraska State Historical Society.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Final Thoughts and Conclusions

I have three or four pairs of moccasins that my mom made. I have my baby moccasins and I have a pair of moccasins that she made for me before she died. I may have a pair that I used when I was ten or twelve. She made them for all of her grandchildren when they were born except the ones that came right at the end. They all have little teeny newborn moccasins. She would always say that they were the hardest to make. Some of them she would make like wrap-arounds and some she just had the vamp coming up. She got creative. They are quite a thing in our family. Grandma's moccasins. A couple of my nieces and nephews actually got them framed.¹

Along the central routes of the fur trade and across the northern plains, distinct collective communities emerged who called themselves, often synonymously or at different moments in their history: Bois Brulés, Metchif, Metif, Métis, Mixed Blood or Half Breed. Their numbers and their political and economic influence grew over time, as did their sense of collective identity. A distinct Métis or Half Breed identity did not have equal resonance for all individuals of mixed parentage and in some regions it did not develop at all. However, a sprawling spider web of hybrid communities located within an interconnected and interrelated network spread across the continent, with some fading as others developed. Responding to an array of economic, historic and political factors, Métis and Half Breed communities flourished or failed, and like all indigenous peoples during the nineteenth century, faced the pressures of military action or incoming settlement that sought to displace them from their lands. The resulting movement and diasporas have been common threads that run throughout Métis and Half Breed history. New communities emerging from local contexts subsequently attracted people from older communities collapsing in other regions.

Many communities were faced with making choices of affiliation and alliance under duress. Individuals and groups tended to chose from three basic options: maintaining

¹Wilfred Burton interview with the author. Regina, Saskatchewan, August 28, 2002.

connections with First Nations kin and sharing in their removal to another territory, reserve or reservation, moving out of the territory to merge with other similar *métis* communities or trying to survive under the new social order.² Returning to Alber's continuum of ethnogenesis, those communities that maintained their connections as "hybrid coalitions" were more likely to reintegrate with parent cultures.³ However, when affiliations were made which might superficially indicate an identity choice, Métis or Half Breed identities often survived and were maintained by shared location, endogamous marriage and the persistence of cultural practices such as language, beliefs and the oral tradition. Across the Métis and Half Breed landscape, territory was marked by the sights and sounds of laughter, music, dance and the distinct collective dress traditions and aesthetic practices that formed the "figured world" in which identities were constructed and expressed.⁴ Dress and artistic production also provided a means for continuity, moving identity forward through time. Women like Georgina Nolin Burton "dressed" their children and grandchildren in clothing that connected them to their heritage and embraced them as their own.⁵

Constructing the Boundaries of Collective Dress

The development of a distinct Métis or Half Breed style was most evident where groups of people engaged in collective pursuits and lived in common communities. The memories of individuals who lived in these communities, combined with visual and text documents created by

²Lamirand-Young identified these three choices in her study of the Citizen Band Potawatomi. See Kathryn Lamirand-Young, "Never Quite White--Never Quite Indian: the Cultural Dilemma of the Citizen Band Potawatomi," (Ph.D. dissertation. Oklahoma State University, 1995).

³According to Patricia Alber's model of ethnogenesis, a hybrid coalition is an ethnic community that constitutes a socio-political body with separate political and economic interests, but maintaining "an umbilical connection to either or both parent blocs." Albers, *Changing Patterns of Ethnicity*, 94.

⁴Holland, *Identity and Agency*, 60-63.

⁵Elise Georgine 'Georgina' Nolin was born in 1914, the daughter of Gabriel Nolin and Eliza Delorme, Wilfred Burton interview.

observers ranging from explorers, adventurers, artists and soldiers describe a style of dress, which, for a time, constructed a visually defined cultural space. For example, by considering the amount of stroud purchased, Isaac Cowie at Fort Qu'Appelle could assume not only the garment being constructed, but also the gender and ethnicity of the wearer.⁶

1 2/3 yards for a woman's dress

1/3 yard for a woman's leggings (below knee, generally red)

1/2 yard for an Indian man's leggings comes well above the knee, no trousers

2/3 yard for Metis and other man's leggings reaching above the knee and gartered below it, for winter worn over trousers

Cowie described "low, broad brimmed black hats" worn by the Métis, while "grey felt" was worn by "gentlemen and officers." Age was also a factor in headgear chosen by "younger Metis [who] favored rather than the hat, pill box caps of fine black cloth or velvet, adorned with beads or colored silk work and a large black silk tassel attached to the crown."⁷ Elements of clothing and a common aesthetic tradition created visual links between an interconnected network of communities and regions. Similar choices in dress, motif and colour communicated a shared identity. The vitality of the colour palette of nineteenth century beadwork and embroidery corresponds with the comparative prosperity and vigor of that collective identity. Smaller Half Breed collectives, not associated with the Métis, also used clothing and common aesthetics to communicate distinctiveness.

A variety of factors influenced individual choices in dress and visual presentation. The greatest influences of men's dress were: occupation, social roles and function. Occupations and specific roles such as voyageur, trader, guide, *les cavaliers* or captain of a camp were often communicated visually. Function played a key role in the development of garment types, colour choices, decoration and the lifespan of a style. The amount of money a man had to spend on

⁶Isaac Cowie (1916) ed., "Journal of Daily Occurrences, Fort Ellice, Swan River District, May 1858 – 1859," p. 86, transcribed and annotated, HBC File R-1248, SAB.

⁷Cowie, Fort Ellice Journal, p. 90.

dress was also a factor, but this extended beyond the constraints of social class. Voyageurs, free traders and freemen may have placed a greater emphasis on dress, as they appear to have chosen to invest a larger percentage of their income on desirable items. Women's dress was similarly influenced by social roles and income, but the additional factors of age, marital status and their husband's ethnicity had significant impact on their clothing choices. Women also used their personal appearance to communicate their spirituality, particularly Catholic devotion. Both men and women dressed to gain access to higher social classes and were influenced by location. Dress was more subdued at missions and settlements, and more open to the influence of broader fashion trends. People coming in from the prairies were often conspicuous in the greater flamboyance of their dress and the persistence of more traditional styles.

Dress and appearance defined boundaries, albeit shifting ones, between groups of people. It appears to have been relational, changing to negotiate a relative distinctness from First Nations and Europeans, a kind of visual middle ground. The eclectic nature of Métis and Half Breed dress has been consistent over time, blending and merging elements to create unique assemblages. The boundaries constructed by Métis dress can also be discerned by the negative comments made by those who encountered it.⁸ Letitia Hargrave's correspondence was full of disparaging remarks directed at the Half Breed women married to her husband's colleagues. In 1840, she passed along Mrs. George Simpson's gossip regarding Nancy McTavish. "She says she was a complete savage with a coarse blue sort of woolen gown without shape & a blanket fastened around her neck."⁹ Other comments focused on local styles that affronted her British perceptions of good taste:

⁸Kate Duncan noted the frequency of the term gaudy in descriptions of Métis dress. See Kate Corbin Duncan, "The Métis and Production of Embroidery in the Subarctic," *The Museum of the Fur Trade Quarterly* 17, 13 (1981): 1-8.

⁸Cowie, Fort Ellice Journal, p. 90.

⁹Macleod, *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 34, 73.

The lady [Mrs. Gladman] as large as a lady can be & dressed to death in a Waterloo blue Merino, moccasins, a straw bonnet lined with lilac satin with a profusion of lilac blue & white ribbon & a cap border of a very broad blonde, the same depth all around no gloves & a silk shawl, the old fashion white & green pattern.

The most common response to Métis and Half Breed dress was its perceived excess. As Hargrave commented, “the Canadian half breeds are the lads, they sometimes pay a whole year’s wages for a cap, often a Highland bonnet covered with silver work . . . & ostrish feathers.”¹⁰

While her observations could be dismissed as mere cattiness, negative responses and words such as “gaudy” and “tawdry” were common reactions. Paul Kane described “half-breeds glittering in every ornament they could lay their hands on” gathered for a Christmas ball at Fort Edmonton in 1847.¹¹ In 1859 the Earl of Southesk noted his disapproval of floral designs on men’s clothing.

“The embroidery of men’s moccasins with flower patterns is not to be commended, it has a tawdry, effeminate appearance; but . . . I have seldom seen any bead-embroidery of good taste, except among the pure Indians, who . . . prefer geometrical devices to imitations of natural objects.”¹² Patrick Tytler used the phrase “gaudy show” in 1854, while Milton and Cheadle described Métis men in “gaudy array.”¹³ Isaac Cowie’s comments in 1916 echo those made by

Southesk:

Small white beads were predominant in the decoration of Indian dress and moccasins and arranged in squares, circular and other geometric patterns, which were much more artistic than many of the embroideries of the Metis in their attempts to copy flowers and leaves in colored beads and silk . . . although some of the later provides beautiful [effects?].¹⁴

¹⁰Macleod, *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 98.

¹¹Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist*, 263.

¹²Southesk, *Saskatchewan*, 233.

¹³Patrick Tytler (1854), *The Northern Coasts of American and Hudson’s Bay Territories*; W. F. Milton and W. B. Cheadle (1865), *The Northwest Passage by Land* as cited in Kate Corbin Duncan, “The Métis and Production of Embroidery in the Subarctic,” *The Museum of the Fur Trade Quarterly* 17, 13 (1981): 1-8. Duncan noted the consistency of negative reactions to Métis dress.

¹⁴Cowie, *Fort Ellice Journal*, p. 90.

Persistent reactions that viewed Métis and Half Breed style as a degeneration of both First Nations and European aesthetics signal the border of a distinctive dress tradition.

Tensions along the opposite border can be heard in Louis Goulet's emphatic use of the phrase "maudits 'brayais'!" (goddamn breech clout!), when he called upon an item of clothing to distance himself from the Cree men of Big Bear's band.¹⁵ Along the Métis – First Nations border, the choice of the breech clout, was a clear statement of identity. In Goulet's narrative 'breech clout' becomes a derogatory term. During the 1862 Little Crow Uprising, the breech clout served as a visible marker of the division between Mixed Bloods and their Dakota kin. Little Crow's followers read the wearing of trousers as a communication of betrayal, while the breech clout was an expression of loyalty and Dakota identity.¹⁶ Particularly during times of tension and conflict, the length of one's hair, the presence or absence of face paint and the wearing of trousers were powerful statements of male identity which drew a line between "Indian" and "Half Breed". The Crow chief, Plenty Coups, described the "mixed-bloods of Red River" as a "tribe" who wore "bright-colored white man's clothes mixed, like their blood, with the regular apparel of our own people. Their habits were more nearly like ours than like those of the white man, except that they used Red River carts."¹⁷ In a ledger drawing created by Yellow Wolf, a Nez Perce man, entitled "Half bloods on the Milk River", a man with shoulder length hair, brimmed hat with a feather in the band, wearing a dark coat and holding what appears to be a pipe bag, is positioned as an intermediary between two Lakota and Nez Perce men who wear breech clouts, full length leggings and long hair (plate 67).¹⁸

¹⁵Louis Goulet was one of the prisoners taken at Frog Lake in 1885. Charette - Goulet Manuscript, p. 118.

¹⁶David J. Trayte, "The Role of Dress in Eastern Dakota and White Interaction, 1834 – 1862: a Symbol in Contending Cultures," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1993).

¹⁷Frank B. Linderman, *Plenty Coups: Chief of the Crows* (1930; repr. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), 268 – 269.

¹⁸Yellow Wolf, *Half bloods on the Milk River*, Charles Warner Cash book drawing, MS2/1053/20, Idaho Historical Society.

At a trial in the Red River Settlement in 1862, clothing choices and style formed the basis for the defense of two men charged with the unlawful sale of liquor to an Indian. The defense argued before the Council of Assiniboia that clothing had identified the men as Half Breeds, or at least caused his client's error: "I make no difference between half-breed and Indian these Indians were dressed according to their means these were dressed in the halfbreed style. Trowsers and Shirt."¹⁹ The court rejected his defense. Ironically, the testimony of the men who bought the liquor indicates that they were unable or unwilling to place themselves in a clear ethnic category. Transformations were beginning to occur within the material traditions of First Nations people who had become Christian and were living at settlements or employed at missions and fur trade posts. The lines of distinction began to blur.

The preponderance of data regarding men's visual appearance is not only indicative of male bias in the historical record, but also reflects the role Métis men played in forming the protective outer circle of their communities and territories. Most observers only caught glimpses of women and children unless invited inside the inner circle of home, camp and community. The rigour and occupations of Métis life created a masculine identity that was highly visible and performed in public spheres. Male cultural performance measured a man's ability to take risks or demonstrate skill and strength. A man's personal identity and social roles were constructed through his participation in territorial and community defense, hunting, and travelling under arduous conditions. The male occupations of scout, guide, trader and interpreter on the fragile ground negotiated between indigenous peoples and colonizers represented another type of risk. A man performed, primarily to negotiate economic and social status from other men, but also to seek the attention and approval of women. The manner in which a man presented himself was consciously structured, based on the selection of certain items of clothing and accessories,

¹⁹November 20, 1862, General Quarterly Report of Court of Assiniboia Records, No. 10, PP 239, AM.

choices made in the length of his hair or the decoration of spatial extensions of the self such as the horse, canoe or dog team. It becomes apparent, however, that women asserted their presence through the highly visible clothing and decorative work created for the men in their family, communicating critical cultural and social information.

Collective Aesthetics: Realistic and Two-Dimensional Floral and the Painted Vase

In Holland's figured world, the creation of "artifacts" is the work that constructs and expresses cultural worlds.²⁰ Because objects become meaningful through the acts of making, acquiring and viewing they have the power to evoke, connect and trigger collective memories. Through the acts of sewing, braiding, beading and embroidery, women stitched collective identities together. By working in the same style as other women, drawing from a common repertoire of motifs and making similar colour choices, women created connections and manufactured a visual world. The decorative work created by Métis and Half Breed women was overwhelmingly floral (plate 68). By returning to the "tent pegs" or the objects that can be located with some certainty within a particular place and time, a rough visual map of collective aesthetics can be constructed.

A tentative line can be drawn from the lower Red River valley, stretching northwest to the Mackenzie River delta. The floral work created north of this line was executed in a rich colour palette on a dark field created by navy or black wool broadcloth or the paler surface of white or light brown hide. The Columbia and James Bay regions should probably be included within this aesthetic terrain.²¹ The earliest examples of floral work from these regions were more

²⁰Holland, *Identity and Agency*, 60 – 63.

²¹Women in both the James Bay and Columbia regions were producing floral work by the 1840's. Both regions were connected by continual traffic during the fur trade and many families from both districts relocated to the Red River and the northern plains.

stylized and organized around a vertical line that formed an axis of symmetry. The axis was created by a strong central stem and stacked floral elements. By the time the Earl of Southesk collected his pieces at Fort Carlton and Red River in 1859, realistic beadwork and embroidery were typically organized around a large central motif (plate 32). The composition that emanated from the central flower used bilateral or radial symmetry. But, as demonstrated on one of the fire bags Southesk collected, some women designed complex floral compositions that used colour and shape, rather than repetition, to achieve visual balance. Floral motifs of similar size and visual weight often created the illusion of symmetry.

Visual balance and colour appear to have been the primary aesthetic concerns. The predominant palette consisted of large floral accents in the pink-red colour family, stems and foliage in a range of greens, and accents in shades of blue and yellow. Bertha Desjarlais's comment that Métis women embraced the aesthetic challenge of "the more colours the better," is certainly reflected in pieces that use as many as 29 different colours.²² The women who created these exuberant floral compositions drew on a common repertoire of motifs and design elements, but maintained a sense of playfulness and experimentation that kept the work fresh. A large brown velvet pocket created by Rosalie Laplante Laroque of Lebret, Saskatchewan provides an example (67).²³ The pocket is undated, but the size of the beads and the use of sinew suggest that it may have been created before 1890. Mrs. Laroque was a versatile artist who worked with beads, quills and dyed hair. Her work on the wall pocket incorporated realistic, stylized and pictorial elements. Realistic flowers, leaves and buds branch out from a strong vertical axis created by stylized elements stacked on top of each other. The artist included visual references to roots at the base of each floral composition and incorporated beaded outlines depicting a

²²Shilling, *Gabriel's Children*, 93

²³Rosalie Laplante Laroque beaded wall pocket, Lebret Museum, Lebret, Saskatchewan.

whooping crane, fish and water elements in the floral border on the pocket flap.²⁴ Pictorial elements were rare in Métis beadwork and were more typically found embroidered on crazy quilts.

Stylized floral compositions persisted in a visual territory that extended from the Pincher Creek – Cypress Hills area, east to Pembina and south down the Missouri River. The most southerly example is a pair of moccasins made by Mary Gale La Flesche, the wife of Joseph La Flesche of Council Bluffs on the Missouri River.²⁵ While the work of Lakota Mixed Bloods such as Lalee Garnier, Julie Mousseau Garnier and Cecilia Benoist Narcelle mark a clear aesthetic territory in the communities that grew around Fort Pierre, Fort Laramie and Fort Robinson, other surviving examples and photographs push the stylistic range farther north. A single legging, identified as “Half Breed work,” was collected at Terry’s Landing on the junction of the Yellowstone and Big Horn River before 1879 (plate 68).²⁶ The legging is constructed of a single piece of hide that wrapped around the leg with an attached cuff. It is lined with a floral chintz and edged with red and white gingham and pink ribbon. The primary floral composition is comprised of three large pink and blue leaves connected by a white stem that form a vertical line. Three flowering branch pairs curve upwards. Each element is outlined in a single row of white beads. A similar motif is beaded on the cuff. A photograph of Jerry Potts shows him wearing a pair of unembellished fringed hide leggings and moccasins with similar stylized beadwork outlined in white (51).²⁷ Two-dimensional floral work typically employs bilateral symmetry in compositions that spread across the decorative field.

²⁴The white outline suggests a whooping crane. Whooping cranes can still be seen in the area.

²⁵Mary and Joseph La Flesche were friends of Rudolph Kurz and were among the ‘half breeds’ he drew. Mary Gale La Flesche moccasins, no. 1826-1907, Nebraska State Historical Society.

²⁶Ogden B. Read was an officer in the American army. Half Breed legging, 1881.3.59, Read Collection, Robert Hull Fleming Museum, University of Vermont, Burlington, Vermont.

A small group of objects suggests that a distinct two-dimensional floral style developed in the Upper Missouri area (plate 68). Several objects in the Montana Historical Society collection speak to a collective aesthetic. A pouch belonging to the Culbertson family of Fort Union has been given a tentative date of 1850.²⁸ Its shape echoes the panel bags worn in other regions, but long hide fringe replaces the beaded panel. It has a large central floral motif surrounded by an array of ten buds, alternating pink and blue. First documented by Father Point in 1846, red wool shot pouches with floral beadwork may have become a regional style.²⁹ A powder horn, quilt, and pouch made of red wool broadcloth were acquired at Fort Union before 1869.³⁰ The bold, stylized floral beadwork is executed in pinks, blues and yellow. The pouch strap has fingers trimmed with pink, red and black ribbons at the shoulder. A similar shot pouch is in the Provincial Museum of Alberta.³¹ Another group of objects with distinctive stylized floral beadwork also has an association with the Culbertson family and Fort Union. Julia Ereaux Schultz was born in 1872 at Fort Union. Moccasins made by Mrs. Schultz are beaded with stylized floral motifs similar to the other material associated with Fort Union (68).³² Pieces that can be tentatively tagged as “Fort Union” or Upper Missouri style utilized flat floral motifs, but borrowed design elements, such as tendrils, buds and undulating branches from the realistic floral work that dominated Métis and Half Breed work farther north.

²⁷Jerry Potts, in scout clothing, NA 1237-1, GAI.

²⁸Alexander Culbertson came to the Upper Missouri in 1833, emerging as a principal trader in the 1840's and 1850's. Culbertson pouch, No. 25, Montana Historical Society.

²⁹Portrait of Jean Baptiste Champagne wearing a red pouch with floral beadwork, “Inteprete du Mission, Jn. Bte. Champagne fils de Mich” in Donnely, *Wilderness Kingdom*, 218.

³⁰The pieces were donated to the museum in 1869. X69.17.01;X69.17.02; X69.17.04 Cowan Collection, Montana Historical Society.

³¹Shot pouch H92.99.48, PMA.

³²Her mother, Mary Standing Bull was raised by the Cullbertsons at Fort Union. Girl's moccasins made by Julia Ereaux Schulz, 81.67.23; Adult moccasins, 81.67.35; Beaded fragment, 81.67.03. Mrs. Julia Ereaux Schulz photographs, 944-893 & 894. Montana Historical Society. For a discussion of the Ereaux family at Fort Union see Holterman, *King of the High Missouri*, 138.

The painted vase is a recurring motif that appears on work produced from communities across a broad geography and it appears to be unique to Métis artistic production (plate 69). It could have originated with the much-admired vases and floral garlands that Soeur Legrave painted on the walls of the St. Boniface cathedral in 1851. The painted vase, the large prairie rose, buds and berries formed a repertoire of common motifs and design principles that marked collective aesthetic territories. But the manner in which they were interpreted gave voice to the individual artist and smaller communities of artists.

Small decorative elements could also distinguish the work of one community from another. Moccasins made in Ile à la Crosse, particularly those made by the grandmothers of the community, have a distinct visual marker that identifies their community of origin. Three to four rows of alternating deep blue and white beads outline the beaded vamps. The same blue and white border is used on cuffs and other pieces of beadwork. Within the larger aesthetic tradition, regions, communities and individuals developed recognizable styles.

Object Stories

*An dah stories you know, dats dah bes treasure of all to leave your family.
Everyting else on dis eart he gets los or wore out. But dah stories dey las forever.*³³

If, as Barbara Kirshenblat-Gimblett suggests, museums created ethnographic objects through a process of detachment and fragmentation, objects can be reclaimed through the reconstruction or maintenance of the story each piece of clothing or decorative object carries.³⁴ Somehow an object acquires greater significance when its story travels with it. Simple crocheted

³³Maria Campbell, "Dah Teef," *Stories of the Road Allowance People* (Penticton, British Columbia: Theytus Press, 1994), 144.

³⁴This was generally true historically, but contemporary curators in many museums are much more sensitive to context and community. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 3.

baby cuffs are enhanced by the story associated with their origin (plate 70). Marguerite Monet Riel made them in 1882 when she worked at a Montana ranch owned by Henry Macdonald. Marguerite had been hired to care for Macdonald's wife who was in fragile health following the birth of her child. According to the family, "she took a great deal of pleasure in the baby" and was remembered as a solemn woman who "only showed real happiness when she was with her own or other's children."³⁵ Both the sentiment of the gift and the notoriety of the Riel family caused the little cuffs to be preserved, and later transferred to the Montana Historical Society. Anna Isabelle Fleury, a French Canadian midwife, received a beautifully beaded broach cushion in payment for obstetric services provided to a Métis woman in the St. Lazare area (70).³⁶ It is made from scraps of gold brocade with floral beadwork on superfine wool, trimmed with gold tassels made from silk thread. An embroidered drawstring purse, currently in the collection of the Gabriel Dumont Institute, was acquired with much of its little story intact (70).³⁷ The bag is sewn from black taffeta and embroidered with cotton thread. Similar floral sprays consisting of three large roses were embroidered on each side, red on one side with an accent of small blue flowers and pink roses with darker pink buds on the opposite side. The bag was a gift from Adelaide Fraser Rowland to Kate Gretchen Clink. Accompanying the bag was a photograph of Gretchen as a child and a hand-written note that reads, "To Gretchen with love from Mrs. Fred Rowland." These stories locate the objects in particular times and places, but more importantly preserve the emotional context around gifts given and received. The three gifts also provided a

³⁵Crocheted baby wristlets, Marguerite Monet Riel. X58.02.01 a,b. Montana Historical Society. Comments regarding Mrs. Riel are noted on the artifact card. See also Eleanor Macdonald Banks, *Wandersong* (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, 1950), 254.

³⁶Sharon Blady, personal communication, July 30, 2002, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

³⁷The bag was acquired circa 1890. Adelaide Fraser Rowland bag, Gabriel Dumont Institute Collection. Adelaide Fraser was born in 1854 at Slave Lake, the daughter of Colin Fraser and Nancy Beaudry. She married Frederick Rowland at Fort Edmonton in 1876. Adelaide Fraser claim 508, vol. 1327, series D-11-08-b, RG 15, NAC.

means of communication and connection between women from different worlds.

The notion of the storied object seems deeply entrenched in the manner Métis people handle items that remain in the family circle. Through the course of this study I have interviewed people sitting with an object beside them or in their hands, serving as a mnemonic device for the stories it carried, evoking fond memories of the loved ones who created the objects, gentle touches to the object as the story unfolded, sometimes weaving through generations as it moved from one family member to another. Objects carry not only the memory of individuals, but often embody and preserve expressions of love and regard. These remembrances become particularly poignant when the much loved person has left this world, leaving the garments or objects she created to carry her memory and maintain her place in the family. Flora Gardiner Bouvier of Ile à la Crosse made a red wool picture frame with floral embroidery for a photograph of her deceased brother (plate 70). Today the little wool frame is framed itself and occupies a special place her granddaughter's home, preserving not only the regard of a woman for her brother, but the love of a granddaughter for the grandmother who raised her.³⁸

Rosalie Lepine's little velvet sewing bag serves as a mnemonic device that not only tells the story of one decorative object and its journey from mother to son, from son to daughter, and from aunt to nephew, it also carries the stories of her life and that of her family from the post-Batoche era through to the twentieth century (70). Two women probably used the bag: Rosalie Lepine and her granddaughter Lillian Nolin. The bag is made of deep burgundy velvet, sewn by hand and lined with cotton chambray. Two different floral sprays are beaded on either side. The beads are strung on sinew and tacked down with cotton or linen thread. There are nineteen different bead colours, including four shades of pink and four of green. Rosalie Lepine was born

³⁸Rita Bouvier interview with the author, October 4, 2002, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

at the Red River Settlement in 1846 and died in 1927, at Onion Lake, Saskatchewan. She was the second wife of Charles Nolin. Ambroise Lepine was her brother and Louis Riel was her husband's cousin. After the fall of Batoche in 1885, the Nolin family and their children moved westward along the Saskatchewan River.

You can kind of see his children moving there . . . because of what happened at Batoche, it seems like a logical step to go west along the North Saskatchewan River, Frog Lake, Onion Lake on the path to Kihewin Reserve. A lot of them ended up at St. Albert. It was pretty much when people were trapping, you could make a pretty good living trapping.³⁹

Charles Nolin died in 1907 and according to her great-grandson, Rosalie was happier following her husband's death. His family remembers him as a difficult man.

She went and lived with her stepchildren in Onion Lake and that's where she lived for the remainder of her life. When she left, she didn't really take anything with her. She just sort of went and lived with family, she didn't take a lot of material possessions. She left her stuff with my grandfather, but she never returned.

The little bag also carries the story of a remarkable event in Rosalie Lepine's life that marked generations of the Nolin family.

Do you know the story of Rosalie Lepine and the miraculous cure? She was sick and she was cured by holy water There is a little shrine at St. Laurent, a little grotto that is dedicated to her because she was miraculously cured with holy water that was given by the priest to my great grandfather. My grandfather was three and his brother was two or visa versa. According to the Catholic faith a pure and sinless person puts the holy water on you. They actually rubbed it on her, they say bathed . . . I think it was a translation from French and Metchif. So when they were little, while they were growing up they heard this story that they had helped save their mother from this sickness, which is very powerful. In our family [Charles Nolin] had made this promise to the brothers and the priests . . . he had to do what the priests told him to. Just think of all the power that the Catholic church had over people, the extreme power. So the stories that are written in history [say] Charles Nolin testified against his cousin Louis Riel. He comes out very badly. He's in the play. Of course in the trial he wouldn't say the priests made me do this because my wife was sick and then she got saved.

Rosalie's son would "tell these stories. About the miraculous cure. And about being related to Louis Riel."

³⁹Wilfred Burton interview with the author, August 28, 2002, Regina, Saskatchewan.

After Rosalie Lepine moved to Onion Lake, the little bag stayed behind, ending up in a trunk that her son had built to keep special possessions. He was living “in the Midnight Lake, Helena Lake area that’s where my grandpa had taken his scrip. In the Meadow Lake area.” The bag appears to have two layers of sewing – one made at the time of its creation and another made at a later date. In the spots where the beads have come away, traces of a design drawn in white paste are visible and fine spirals of sinew are all that is left of the lines of beadwork. One flower done in a bold primary blue and red seems to jar against the subtle pastel palette of the rest of the bag. A border of clear beads in a chevron design is sewn with heavier thread than that used on the rest of the bag. Did Rosalie make these changes to the bag or did someone who used the bag at a later time create the second layer of sewing? The little bag has its own stories as well as the memories it carries.

Best Dressed Cowgirl; Best Dressed Cowboy: The Lasting Impact of Métis and Half Breed Style

Métis men in southwestern Saskatchewan and Alberta made an occupational shift to ranching by the late nineteenth century. Their sisters and mothers joined them in the shift to ranch life. Marie Delorme Smith laughingly referred to herself as “Buckskin Mary” after her family took up ranching.⁴⁰ Several of the more skilled were successful in the emerging sport of rodeo, and among these were women (plate 71). George Hamilton, the son of Veronique Dumont, was the seven-time winner of the Southern Alberta ‘Bronc’ Championship and he broke, trained and raced horses for a living.⁴¹ Hamilton was photographed wearing the popular

⁴⁰Marie Delorme Smith gave her memoirs the subtitle, “Tribulations of Mrs. C. Smith of Pincher Creek – Buckskin Mary,” *Eighty Years on the Plains*, p. 4, file 4, M1154, Marie Rose Smith Fonds, Glenbow-Alberta Institute (GAI).

⁴¹George Hamilton was noted for wearing “white neckerchiefs, white shirts and Angora chaps” photo notes NA-2800-10; notes regarding his riding and army career, NA-1482-1, GAI.

“woolies,” which were also worn by Willie Dumont, Alex Gladstone and Dan Nault.⁴² The white outfits worn by Willie Dumont and George Hamilton communicated their confidence that their skill would enable their outfits to stay white. Cowboys and cowgirls from the Swain, Kipling, McGillis and Brazeau families were noted for their skill and competed in rodeos across the west wearing fancy beaded outfits.⁴³ So synonymous were “half breeds” and rodeo, that the Calgary Herald reported in 1927 that “the half breeds fell down on their show” and prizes for bronc busting could not be handed out until Thursday “when the boys will be seen on parade in all their glory.”⁴⁴

The female horsemanship that transferred so effectively to ranch life was described by Peter Erasmus, who recalled seeing Métis girls riding along the shores of the Saskatchewan river, performing for the brigade departing from Fort Edmonton.

Fifteen or more riders appeared on the flats that approached the first cut banks of the river I noticed they were mostly girls and young women. They made a picturesque sight as they reared their horses, circled and maneuvered their horses in a wild show of horsemanship . . . I knew most of the young Métis women could handle horses and use a gun with facility – it was not mere showmanship.⁴⁵

By the early decades of the twentieth century, Métis and Half Breed girls dominated the Calgary Stampede. Etta Brown, the daughter of Kootney Brown and Olive Lyonnais, made an outfit for her friend, Vella Baptiste that she wore at the first Calgary Stampede in 1912 (plate 73).⁴⁶ The

⁴²Willie Dumont was photographed wearing an all white outfit and ‘woolies’ in the Milk river area in 1911, NA-777-12; Alex Gladstone and Dan Nault were cowboys at Pincher Creek in 1900, NA-102-5, GAI

⁴³A series of photographs of cowgirls taken from 1920 - 1933 show sisters Minnie Kipling June and Eliza Kipling Wood at the Calgary Stampede. They were the daughters of George Kipling and Lucy Gladue. Most can be found in collection NA-2365, GAI. Eliza Belcourt claim no. 1655, vol. 1335, series D-11-8-c, RG 15, NAC.

⁴⁴Stampede Trail Awards. Calgary Herald, Thursday, July 11, 1927. Brazeau clipping file, Glenbow Library.

⁴⁵Erasmus, *Buffalo Days and Nights*, p. 133.

⁴⁶Vella Baptiste’s family came from Missouri, their ancestry is assumed to be French. However, the pair’s visual presentation was designed by Etta. Riding skirt, vest and accessories made by Etta Brown Platt, Waterton Park, Alberta. C-35384, GAI. Etta was photographed on horseback wearing her matching chaps. NA-4633, GAI.

outfit was a split skirt and vest made of a jute-like fabric covered with embroidered scenes of bucking horses and dark haired cowboys. Etta made herself matching chaps covered with similar embroidery. The two friends wore the outfits when they “put on little acts at local fairs.”⁴⁷

Eliza Kipling Wood and her horse Pat were also regular participants at the Calgary Stampede. She and her sister Minnie June sewed their own fringed and beaded outfits.⁴⁸

Photographs taken of Calgary stampede contestants throughout the 1920's provide various views of their handiwork (plate 71).⁴⁹ Eliza's outfit, worn with gauntlets, was beaded with large stylized motifs, while Minnie June used more realistic floral motifs. Triangular shaped pieces of floral beadwork on a solid white background sewn onto her skirt resemble the corners of pad saddles. The front of her gauntlets are completely covered with floral beadwork on a white background, including the fingers. In 1927, the Calgary Herald reported, “Mrs. Eliza Wood of Calgary, again carried off the prize for the best dressed cowgirl, with Mrs. Joe June, of Calgary, second.”⁵⁰ Their sons were also listed among the winners. Ralph June tied for first and second places in trick and fancy roping, while his three-year-old cousin, Lionel Wood came third. Ralph also placed in the “mounted cowboy event”.

The Brazeau family competed at the Calgary Stampede for generations. An outfit that Louise Belcourt Brazeau made for her daughter, Maggie Brazeau Fry in the early 1920's was later worn by her granddaughter (plate 72). The leather vest and fringed split riding skirt were probably purchased from a commercial supplier, Riley and McCormick. Mrs. Brazeau embellished the skirt, vest and a pair of gauntlets with extensive areas of floral beadwork.⁵¹

⁴⁷“Western Duds” – In Burlap and Wool, Clippings file for C-35384, GAI.

⁴⁸Thelma Challifoux, personal communication, June 15, 2002, Calgary, Alberta.

⁴⁹Photographs range from 1920 to 1933. NA-602-1, NA 2365-2, 5, 8, 9, 44, 62. GAI.

⁵⁰Cowboys Rope and Brand Calf on City Streets. Calgary Herald, July 11, 1927.

⁵¹Louise Belcourt Brazeau was born at Lac Ste. Anne in 1861, the daughter of Alexis Belcourt and Nancy Rowand. She married John Brazeau in 1881. Louise Belcourt claim 939, vol. 1325, series D-11-8-b, RG 15. NAC. C-1382-A- D. Maggie Brazeau Fry was photographed wearing the outfit in 1926, NA-2365-5,

Red roses and rose buds were placed on the skirt and vest, with a row of green leaves beaded along the waistband. Louise's son, Joseph "Calgary Red" Brazeau, was a well-known figure at the Stampede, first appearing in 1912. Her grandchildren Lillian, Beatrice and George "Sonny" Fry were also frequently mentioned among the winners. In 1927 Sonny tied with Ralph June in fancy roping and placed first in both the "mounted and unmounted cowboy under 14 years". In 1930, Lillian and Beatrice won first and second in the "best dressed cowgirl and full equipment mounted, under 16 year event."⁵² Beatrice Fry was photographed in 1933 wearing the outfit her grandmother made at the Red Deer Stampede. The Kipling and Brazeau families always proudly identified themselves as old families that emerged from the fur trade. Through public performance, Métis cowboys and cowgirls moved their collective identities and visual appearance into the twentieth century and influenced the development of the western dress associated with ranching and rodeo. The early date of these outfits place Métis women at the forefront of new clothing trends, integrating new and old skills and imagery to negotiate changing times, demonstrating both the permanence of *métis* cultural synthesis and its openness to new experiences.

Into the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

While the Métis and Half Breed cowboys and cowgirls at the Calgary stampede performed on a public stage, other women made quieter statements at home. Although constantly changing and innovative, elements of decorative art have and continue to act as signifiers of identity and specific items of dress serve as ethnic markers, which from their origins

GAI. See also Collette Lassiter and Jill Oakes, "Ranchwomen, Rodeo Queens and Nightclub Cowgirls: the Evolution of Cowgirl Dress," *Standing on New Ground: Women in Alberta*, ed. Catherine Cavanaugh and Randi Warne (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1993), 62-63.

⁵²"Indians, Old-Timers Win Prizes in Parade Class," Brazeau clipping file, GAI.

through to their contemporary use are expressions of continuity and persistence. However, the collective aesthetic expressions and items of dress such as the sash, pointed toe moccasin, capote and the shoulder shawl that marked a social and cultural terrain began to disintegrate. In 1980, Bertha Desjarlais reflected, “it’s too bad Métis people got rid of all their nice old things to get modern.”⁵³ In addition to changing fashion and a desire to be modern, poverty and racism were factors that impacted the demise of distinct Métis dress. As Caroline Vandale of Duck Lake, Saskatchewan commented in 1973:

Naturally the biggest thing is that we were poor. Poor in the ways that we didn’t have enough to eat, clothing, not enough clothes. We weren’t able to buy clothes in the catalogue or at the store.⁵⁴

Beads, leather and embroidery thread were beyond the means of many. Hunting laws that transformed Métis men into poachers necessitated the destruction of bones and hide in efforts to conceal hunting activities. Markers between “Indian” and Métis visual identity also shifted, as floral motifs became integrated into the artistic production of a broad range of groups. In some communities, particularly in the south, beadwork became associated with “Indianess” and embroidery was embraced as more Métis. Textiles gained prominence as they replaced the beaded and quilled commodities of former times.

The rise of racism caused many Métis and Half Breed people to suppress public performance of their identity. However, as a counter-voice to racism, individuals and groups actively promoted pride and awareness. As early as 1887, L’Union Nationale Metisse St. Joseph du Manitoba had organized at St. Vital with the motto, “reston-unis comme l’ont été nos ancestres.”⁵⁵ Joseph Dion of Alberta organized a dance troupe during the 1930s that performed

⁵³Shilling, *Gabriel’s Children*, 93.

⁵⁴Caroline Vandal, Duck Lake, Saskatchewan, July 11, 1973, IH-140a, Indian Film History Project, First Nations University of Canada Library.

⁵⁵“Let us stay united as our ancestors were.” See photo “Union Nationale Metisse, 1913,” no. 14482, St. Boniface Historical Society.

nationally wearing traditional clothing, and Joseph Z. Laroque of Lebret wrote articles throughout the 1940s for Saskatchewan newspapers such as the *Leader Post* and the *Star Phoenix* to promote pride and awareness of Métis culture and history.⁵⁶

By the late twentieth century Métis visual identity had been distilled or essentialized to one garment, and not surprisingly, a male garment. Other than the fiddle, the object most closely identified with the Métis is the sash. The sash has been transformed into a material symbol firmly rooted in Métis and Half Breed identity. It carries centuries of story and communicates meanings that extend far beyond its origin in occupational dress. It has been an important aspect of Métis dress, for both practical and symbolic reasons, for more than three hundred years. Today, the sash has come to embody Métis culture, not only because of layered meanings accumulated through occupation and cultural performance, but because it appears to be the surviving element of the distinct “Half Breed style”, remembered and worn into the twentieth century. Sashes were preserved and treasured by families. In many communities they were worn by elderly people or for special occasions into the 1930s. The sash has come to represent the people themselves.

Other garments that have maintained or gained prominence are the beaded vest and moccasins. Avelina De Laronde Fiddler of Meadow Lake in northern Saskatchewan made beaded vests and moccasins for her fair-skinned, green-eyed granddaughter, wrapping her up and claiming her as a member of a large family with a rich Métis history (plate 74).⁵⁷ In the closing decades of the twentieth century, visibly identifying a child as Métis or Half Breed could attract

⁵⁶Several photographs of the dance group are in the Glenbow Archives, including two taken at a festival in Quebec, NA-927-2, NA 2815-2 GAI. Joseph Z. Laroque’s articles are in the Saskatchewan archives.

⁵⁷Avelina De Laronde Fiddler was born in 1897, the daughter of William De Laronde and Agnes Morin of Green Lake, Saskatchewan. Her husband, William Fiddler’s parents were Veronique Gervais and Jean Baptiste Fidler. According to family tradition, they were involved in the North West Resistance of 1885, where Veronique “fried up buckshot in a frying pan for her husband.” Merelda Fiddler, personal communication, December 19, 2003, Regina, Saskatchewan. Vest and moccasins, Merelda Fiddler.

racial taunts and teasing. However, the well-worn vests and moccasins indicate that her granddaughter wore them on many occasions. Mothers and grandmothers continued to make moccasins and other garments for the important children in their lives. Dressing became a new form of resistance.

Beginning in the 1970's, Métis people began to reclaim public performance of their cultural traditions. Northern festivals and celebrations such as 'Back to Batoche' have become places where dress is once again highly visible. Graduations, weddings and community gatherings became opportunities to assert collective identity. In 1980, Lily McKay of Cumberland House wore a white leather dress with floral beadwork on the occasion of her graduation (plate 75). It was worn again by her bridesmaid at her 1986 wedding to Clifford Carrier.⁵⁸ Lily and Clifford's wedding was a visual spectacle and celebration of the collective artistic talents of her community. Lily worked with women in her family and community to create leather clothing for every member of the bridal party. The ring bearer carried a beaded and fringed pillow. The church was filled with northern plants. Lily designed the beadwork for her dress and her husband's shirt. She drew from an eclectic range of inspiration: the white doves from the International Year of Peace, the artistic traditions of Cumberland House and Dené beadwork from Fond du Lac where she had taught for a year. The beadwork was done by Nancy Thomas, Margaret Thomas and Lily's sister Stella. Lily entrusted these women with the colour choices for the beadwork.

Within this context of renewal and with true *métis* spirit, new clothing traditions have emerged as pride and vigour have returned. Greg Coyes, a Métis filmmaker originally from Alberta, designed a jacket for himself that incorporated "beads for the grandmothers and the sash

⁵⁸I first visited Lily McKay Carrier in September, 1988 at Cumberland House where we photographed the wedding clothing. Also Lily McKay Carriere, personal communication, May 16, 2003.

for the grandfathers” (plate 74)⁵⁹ Inset into the jacket, alongside the floral beadwork, are sections of a red sash. The sash and the flag flown by Cuthbert Grant, the white infinity sign on a blue field, have been widely adopted as motifs and decorative elements on contemporary clothing. Each has been imbued with symbolism that celebrates a *métis* heritage. Vitaline Lacaille Flett of Fort Chipewyan crocheted a sash in seven colours.⁶⁰ According to Mrs. Flett, red and white represent the mingling of Indian and white blood, brown, green, blue and yellow represent the natural elements of earth, trees, grass, sky and sun. Similarly, the infinity sign is routinely represented as a symbol for the permanent unity of two different, but equal worlds (74). Men wear shirts with sash appliqués. Women have begun to wear the sash as formal attire for special occasions, draping it over one shoulder and across the chest (74). The sash is also presented at ceremonies honouring individuals for their contributions and achievements, most often draped around the shoulders of the recipient. Métis and Half Breed people of all ages wear T-shirts that feature sashes, infinity signs, images of Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont with slogans that identify a special event or declare, “Riel Was Right”. The opening ceremonies of the World Indigenous Games on July 29, 2002 at Winnipeg truly proclaimed the revitalization of Métis visual identity. A large group of people wearing blue and white T-shirts created a Métis flag in the grandstand. But it was the arrival of a large red sash that almost spanned the length of a football field that announced that Métis identity is alive and well in the twenty-first century.

This renewal of interest can be seen in recent initiatives by Métis organizations and communities. The Gabriel Dumont Institute published *Expressing Our Heritage: Metis Artistic Designs*, a teacher resource manual and set of study prints in 2002 and have developed a video series, *Metis Women's Traditional Art*, based on interviews with traditional artists skilled in

⁵⁹Greg Coyes personal communication, January 29, 2002, Vancouver, British Columbia.

⁶⁰Artifact report, Vitaline Lacaille Flett crocheted sash, H87.343.1, PMA.

beadwork, embroidery, rug-hooking and finger-weaving.⁶¹ Traditional arts are also a prominent feature of their newest project: the Virtual Museum of Metis Culture and History. Métis families and communities have collaborated recently with museum curators to create two new exhibitions: “The Métis Kitchen” in the recently opened Parklands Gallery at the Manitoba Museum and the upcoming exhibition at the Museum of the American Indian in Washington D. C. which features the community of St. Laurent, Manitoba.

Final Thoughts and Further Questions

The artistic production of Métis women raises questions that are not easily answered, and speak to the complexity and variety of contexts in which they lived and worked. Sewing could be viewed as menial domestic labour, underpaid and undervalued. We hear the tensions of gender, race and class in the phrases “my washer woman” and “sewing for me.” Certainly echoes of subservience and exploitation can be found in the sparse historic record. The Hudson’s Bay Company considered women’s labour “free”, equating the act of dressing men with women’s duty. However, their own records also document women being paid in cash, goods or credit for their work. In retrospect, and with some chagrin, Louis Goulet described the women employed by his father as showing “that other people’s labour pays best. I suppose if he’d lived in our times he wouldn’t have been called a businessman, more likely a vile capitalist drinking other people’s sweat.”⁶² Yet is there not also power in the act of dressing? And doesn’t that power extend beyond the clothing women created for their own family? If the meaning of dress is constructed through the multi-directional discourse between maker, wearer

⁶¹Cheryl Troupe, *Expressing Our Heritage: Metis Artistic Designs* (Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2002); *Metis Women’s Traditional Art Series* (Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2002-2003). See the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Metis Studies and Applied Research web site for more information on the virtual museum, www.gdins.org.

and audience; “maker” holds an equal position in that communication, simultaneously initiating and responding with garments that attract the consumer.

The volume of Métis women’s production speaks to their economic and aesthetic influence. Through a network of fur trade posts and camps, they dressed most of the men engaged in trade or seeking adventure in the west. Beyond this sprawling domestic market, Red River carts piled with their goods positioned women in a critical economic role that connected their communities to a global economy. Winnipeg and St. Paul, the centres of exchange, were only initial stops in their distribution to an interethnic and international market. Sewing could be a desperate act, done by the light of a candle or kerosene lamp after the children were asleep, to secure the most basic necessities. But collectively, Métis women can be seen as creators and manufacturers who used their work to inscribe their voices on the canvas of the male body.

The development of floral beadwork and quillwork was not the purpose of this study. However, it is clear that Métis and Half Breed artistic expressions are overwhelmingly, but not exclusively, floral. But I would caution readers to remember that while Métis women created a rich floral aesthetic and played a critical role in its development and diffusion, they were not alone.⁶³ All floral beadwork is not Métis. I have found no neat linear progressions or rigid boundaries. The distinctions that existed were fluid and always shifting. There is a complex multi-dimensionality that embraces place, time, relationships, movement and trade. There are hints of the collective aesthetic that I have described here, but I have shied away from asserting a more definitive artistic territory. There are three reasons for that. First, like all researchers, I feel I have only scratched the surface. There is much more work to be done, particularly with the small community and regional museums often left out of material culture studies. They are more likely to have objects that can be identified with specific artists and local families. Secondly, the

⁶²Charette, *Vanishing Spaces*, 67.

material I discovered has sometimes surprised me, teaching me not to make assumptions and proving me wrong if I did. Finally, I prefer to let readers draw their own conclusions. In another role, I am a storyteller and I realized on reading this over that I have unconsciously followed some of those protocols. Storytellers are not supposed to tell their audience what a story means. We cannot impose our own understanding of the story, which shifts every time we tell it, and is understood differently by every listener. We can only tell the story as well as we can. I have, above all, tried to tell a good story, and to respect that if the objects have their own stories, we must learn to let them speak for themselves.

Sewing Ourselves Together

My four children learned to do beadwork around our kitchen table. The youngest was four years old and I still have the little earring that she made. Like all parents concerned with transmitting important values and skills onto the next generation, I wondered if my children would pick up the needle. As they were growing up, they had ample opportunity to watch me sew, bead and paint. There was a period when they beaded enthusiastically, but as they grew older they turned to other pursuits. As they have moved into adulthood, they have shown renewed interest. When my stepson Derek graduated from university, he asked me to make him a capote. I bought an indigo blue blanket at the Witney factory in England, no Hudson's Bay Company white or red for a Racette.⁶⁴ I made a pattern from a tailored capote in the collection of the Manitoba Museum. He is waiting, but I am avoiding making that momentous first cut.

⁶³Mohawk, Huron and James Bay Cree women all produced floral work by the 1840s.

⁶⁴The famous wool point blankets were manufactured in Witney, England for the Hudson's Bay Company's trade for more than 300 years. The factory closed in 2002.

During my daughter Riva's internship in an elementary classroom, she asked if I would help her do a beadwork project with her students. I brought in examples of clothing and beadwork and we dressed up some of the children. With varying degrees of success, but equal enthusiasm, the children threaded their needles and sewed their little pouches. Now in her third year as a teacher, she is again using beadwork as a means to engage children. Last winter, my stepdaughter Gaylene had a choice between an experiential project and writing a paper. She chose to do a project on beadwork. Earrings and small bags are excellent learning projects, but I showed Gaylene the pictures I had of women's sewing bags and she decided that she would tackle one. I decided to teach her as Granny McAuley had taught me, sitting side by side, with her following my stitches as I sewed a bag of my own. I gave her size ten and eleven beads, but I chose size thirteen and fifteen, setting myself a little challenge. Because she wanted to explore traditional designs, we chose a design from Cumberland House that I had learned from Granny McAuley and another from Ile à la Crosse. I showed Gaylene the moccasins that I had learned on, one made by my teacher, the other made by me. We got together several times and sat at my kitchen table. We laughed and made discoveries together. She learned how to manage her needle and beads and we had the opportunity to see the difference that bead size makes in both design and execution as we saw both bags reach completion. But there was a lot more than technique in our conversation. As we beaded, we visited and I found myself telling her things that I hadn't told her before, teaching her things that I thought I had already taught her. I realized that the context had never been right. Afterwards, I spoke to my mother about sewing together and way it connects people. The experience of sewing together creates the environment for certain kinds of sharing. The process provides opportunities for teaching values and the 'right way' of doing things. The silent spaces between the stitches invite confidences and stories. I

realized that when we sew with our children, we are really passing on generations of accumulated women's knowledge and strengthening the bonds between ourselves.

Last summer, my daughter Riva got married. There was never any doubt that her father would walk her down the aisle wearing a tuxedo and a sash. When we arrived, three generations of Racette men were wearing sashes with their suits (plate 75). Months later, my granddaughter Kayla and I were looking at the pictures, when she said in a sad voice, "Girls don't wear sashes." So I pulled out my old pictures of girls and women in traditional dress and recent pictures of women wearing sashes across dark dresses. She has picked the outfit she wants. It's my next project, right after I finish Derek's capote. For this is the next stage of the journey, to take what I have learned and apply it to my own work and to share it with others. I have already had a friend ask me to send her the capote pattern after I'm finished with it. She wants to make one out of leather for her son. Sewing for and sewing with are the means that we have to "stitch" ourselves together.

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PLATE 1: Cree Dolls and Early Fingerwoven Sashes



English dolls circa 1790, dressed in Cree clothing.
1976.459 & 460 Horniman Museum



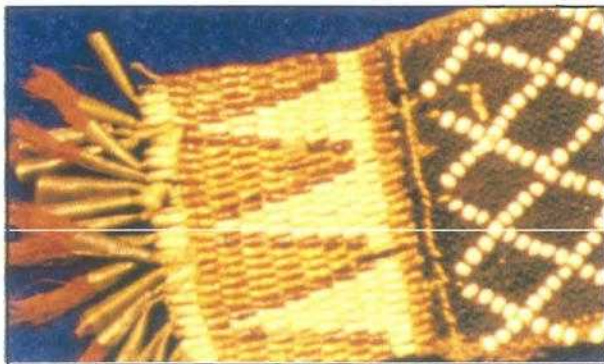
Sash woven from brown wool and white beads, with quillwork and red cloth fibres on the fringe. 18812.3879B NMI



Netted sash made of dark brown worsted with quillwork, red deer hair and iron cones. 6990 BM



Detail of sash woven in three sections out of wool with white beads.
Jasper Grant Collection 1902.514 NMI



Detail of garter collected by De Peyster at Michilimackinac circa 1775. 1880.1899 NMI



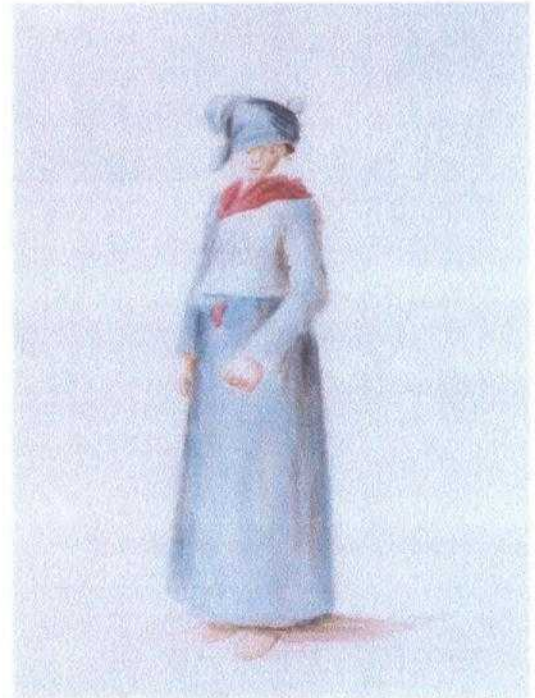
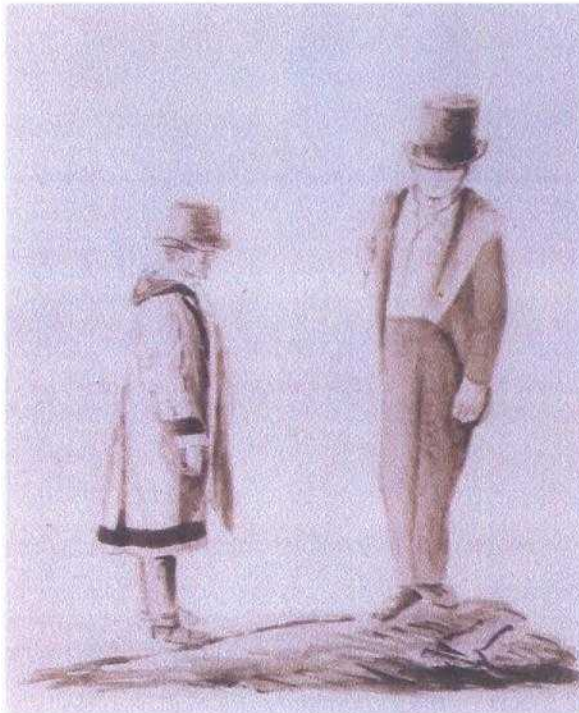
Sash made from dyed natural fibres woven in black and yellow lightning design.
N.N. 458 NMI

PLATE 2: Hybrid Garments and Creole Dress



Collar and shoulder detail from a fur trader's toggy collected before 1832 by William Woodthorpe when he worked for the Hudson's Bay. 1934.151 MAA

Blanket capote with elaborate, non-functional hood, red wool trim and fringe. 856 SHSND



Anne Marie von Phul, an amateur painter visiting her brother in St. Louis in 1818, painted men wearing top hats, blanket capotes and moccasins and a young woman wearing scarves on her head and around her shoulders. She also wore moccasins. *Study of Two Men* (1953.158.0014) and *Creole Woman* (1953.158.004) MOHS.

PLATE 3: Peter Rindisbacher and George Winter



a.



b.



c.



d.

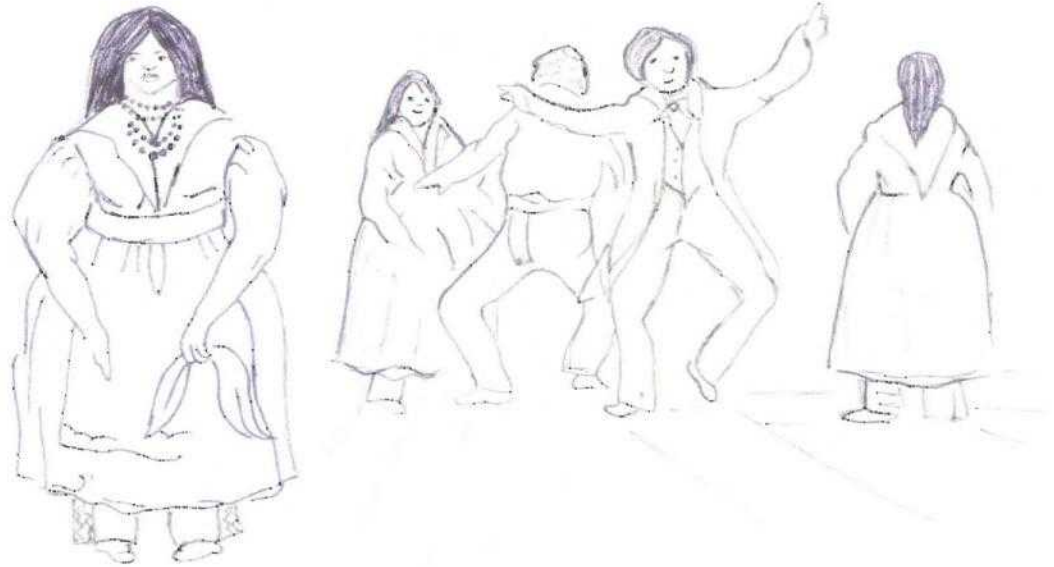


e.

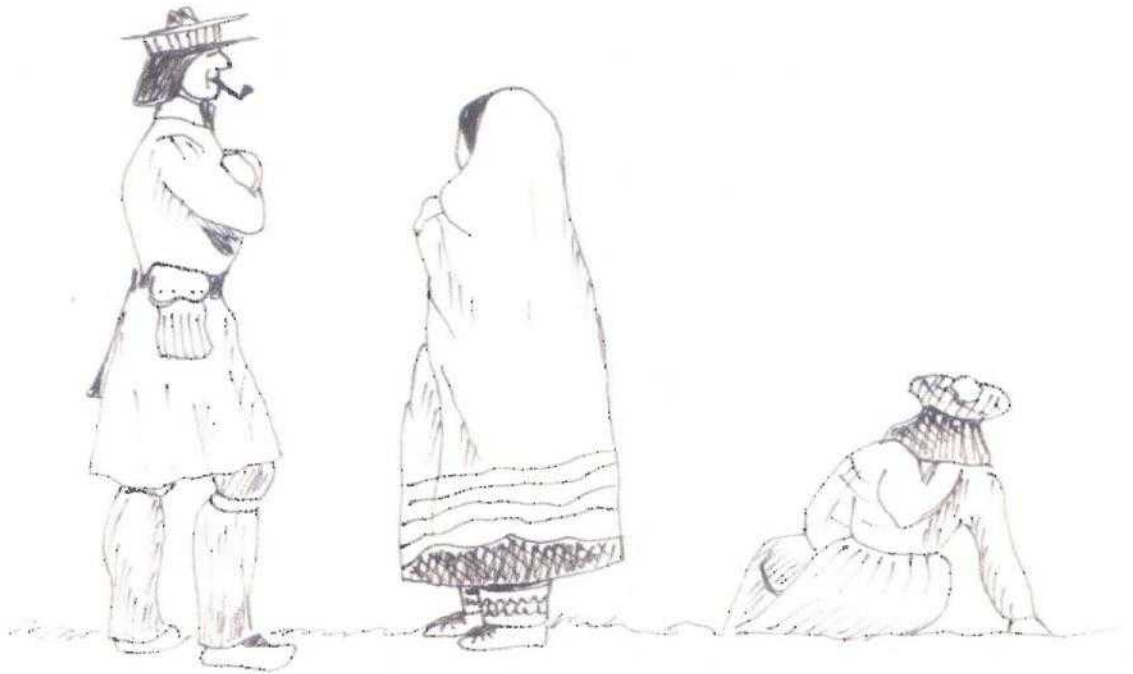
a-c Drawings based on Peter Rindisbacher's paintings of 'Half Castes' at the Red River Settlement in 1825.

d-e Pea-walk-o Robb Reed and Jean Baptiste Brouillette, painted by George Winter in 1837 in the southern Great Lakes region.

PLATE 4: Henry James Warre and George Finlay



a. *b.*
Henry James Warre's sketches from a ball at Fort Victoria in 1848 show men wearing sashes and women wearing mid-calf skirts and leggings with wide bands of ribbon work. (a) shows the front view with apron, shoulder scarf and necklace, (b) shows the rear view. Drawings based on Warre's sketches No. 1971-86 NAC.

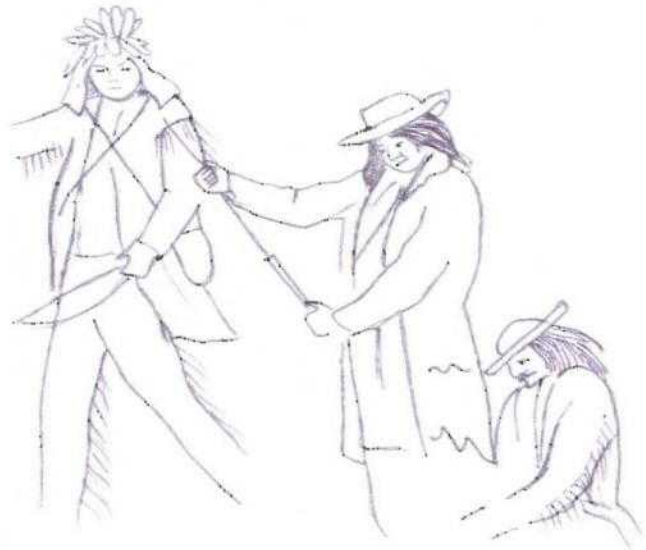


The 'Half Breed' men drawn by George Finlay circa 1848, typically wear large plaid bonnets or caps, sashes and capotes. A firebag is tucked in the folds of one man's sash. The woman is covered with a Hudson's Bay blanket, but her leggings with their bands of ribbonwork are visible. Drawing based on *Half-Breeds-Red River-Hudson Bay*, George E. Finlay collection 69 circa 1848, Fig. 58.24.7. AM

PLATE 5: Karl Bodmer and Alfred Miller



a.



b.



c.

Drawings based on Bodmer's sketches done at Fort Clark in 1833 of their interpreter, and Miller's drawings of "half breed" engages making camp (b) and Antoine Clement (c) a "Canadian half breed" made on his journey up the Missouri in 1837.

The man drawn by Bodmer (a) wears plain cut hide clothing with raw edges and little or no fringe. His shirt cuffs and hood are made of fur. The men drawn by Miller (b,c) wear plain cut hide clothing with raw edges, but the shoulders, arm and outside leg seams of their coats and pants are heavily fringed. Bodmer's interpreter and one of the men in the group sketch are wearing hoods made from the headskins of animals, retaining the ears and further embellished with feathers.

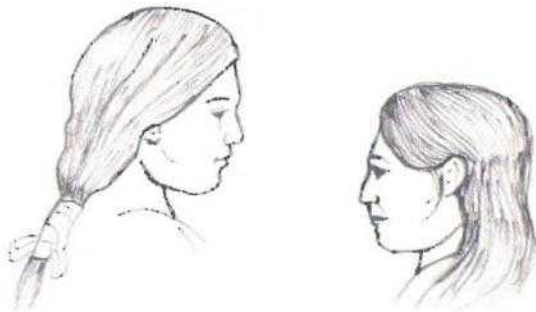
PLATE 6: Rudolph Kurz



a.



b.



c.



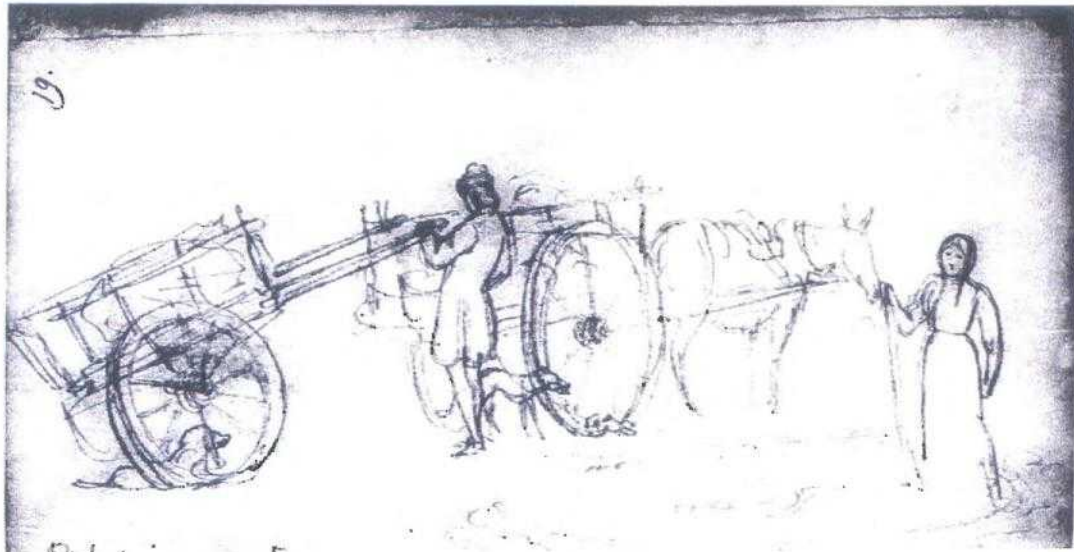
d.



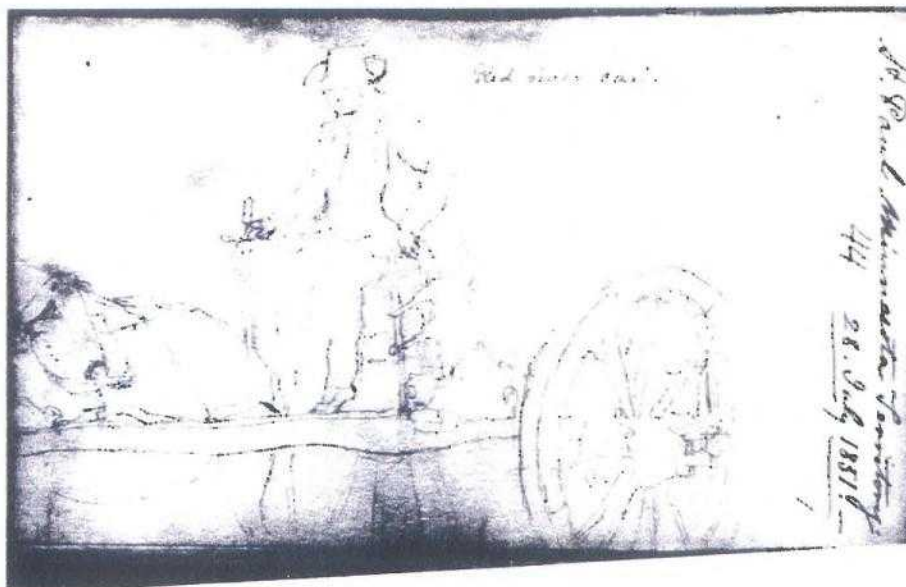
e.

Drawings based on those made by Rudolph Kurz at Fort Union between 1851 and 1852 while he worked there as a clerk. Owen Mackenzie and his wife (a), Alexis Labombarde (b) and his stepdaughters Domitilde (c) and Margeurite (d) were among his Metif subjects. "Ball at Fort Union" (e) shows the residents of the post enjoying a dance.

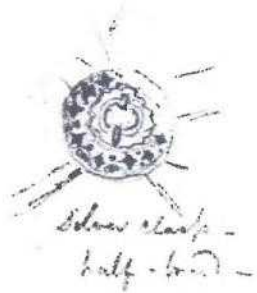
PLATE 7: Frank Blackwell Mayer



a.



b.



c.

Frank Blackwell Mayer made several sketches of Red River Half Breeds camped at St. Paul, Minnesota in 1851 (a,b). The men wore tailored capotes, sashes, pointed toe moccasins and a variety of headgear. The only woman drawn at St. Paul wore her long hair in braids and a plain cloth dress (b). Mayer also made sketches of details of their clothing and items they had for sale, among them a 'silver clasp' (c) similar to the common trade silver items worn and traded across a broad area.

PLATE 8: Paul Kane's Oil Sketch of François Lucier



François Lucier, sketched at Fort Edmonton in 1844, wearing the brightly coloured accessories and ribbons associated with “Saskatchewan style”.

Lucier’s pouch appears to be embellished with loom woven quillwork strips and looped quill-wrapped fringe. The red straps of his shot pouch and powder horn that crossed his chest were documented from the Red River valley to the upper Missouri and Saskatchewan regions.

The original is in the Stark Museum of Art, Orange, Texas.

PLATE 9: First Photographs 1855 - 1860



a. Pierre Bottineau wearing a fur cap with peak and double-breasted wool coat, 1855. †Neg. 9323 MNHS.

b. Red River carts in camp, 1858. Note the beaded pad saddles displayed on the cart wheels and the pill box cap and fringed hide pants worn by the driver. Neg. 11408 MNHS.

c. "Red River cart at rest stop, Metis Indians, 1860." Benjamin Franklin Upton. Neg. 28555 MNHS.

a.



b.

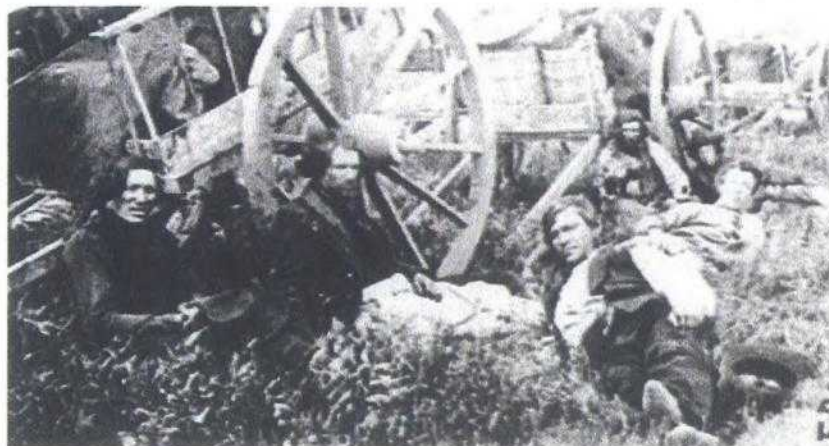


PLATE 10: Humphrey Lloyd Hime 1858



a.



b.



a-c Photographs taken at the Red River Settlement by Humphrey Lloyd Hime in the fall of 1858. John McKay, identified as a Cree half breed guide, wearing a dark wool capote, sash, cloth or hide leggings (*a*), Susan or Jane L'Adhemar (*b*) and Letitia Bird (*c*) wearing fashionable dresses with moccasins and leggings. Hime collection, AM.

PLATE 11: Men's Dress 1860 - 1870



a. George Racette AM



b. HE2.1p26 MHHS



c. HD2.3lr7 MNHS



d. por15345p1 MNHS

George Racette (*a.*) photographed in 1870 wearing a hide jacket with fringe at the shoulders and along the sleeves, fur cap and fur mittens with braided leather strings around the shoulders, full-length blanket leggings and sash. A Red River cart driver photographed in 1860 (*b.*) wore a shirt with a similar floral beaded placket. Joseph Rolette (*d.*) and an unidentified 'Mixed Blood Fur Trader' (*c.*), photographed in 1860, wore white shirts, black silk ties and capotes trimmed with fur. Rolette tucked a pouch into the folds of his sash. The other man wore a fur cap with a black foptail plume and simple hoop earrings.

PLATE 12: Capotes



a. Unidentified Couple, NA-4405-17 GAI



b. Elzear Goulet, SHSB 229

These three men are wearing variations of the basic capote. The man in (*a*) has a double breasted capote with brass buttons. He wears it with a solid coloured sash. (*b*) Elzear Goulet's capote has wide lapels and ribbon ties. (*c*) John Rowand Jr. wears a heavy blanket capote and sash, without visible fasteners. He wears a pair of embroidered leather mittens suspended from a strip of gartering worn around his neck.



c. John Rowand Jr., Bannatyne Family 100 AM

PLATE 13: Men's Hair Styles



Red River cart driver from Pembina, 1858
HE2.1p26 MNHS.

Detail showing a man with shoulder length hair, peaked hat with a scarf or handkerchief tied around the cap.



Plainsman, hunter, trapper 945-558 MTHS

Edward 'Neddy' Wells of Lewistown, Montana, with his hair in a 'broom-cut' and an overcoat, jacket, shirt and what appears to be white handkerchief tie.



Antoine Blandoin, P978.07.01 MHM

Antoine Blandoin of St. Albert, one of the Earl of Southesk's guides in 1859, wearing a shoulder length 'broom-cut', white shirt, striped silk handkerchief tie and a dark jacket.

PLATE 14: Men and Women's Dress circa 1870



a.
Michel Chartrand, his wife Isabella Ledoux,
and his brother Magliore Chartrand, courtesy
of Paul Chartrand.



b.
Jean Baptiste L'Hirondelle Jr. and Elise Beaudry
of St. Albert, 1989.02.46 MHM.

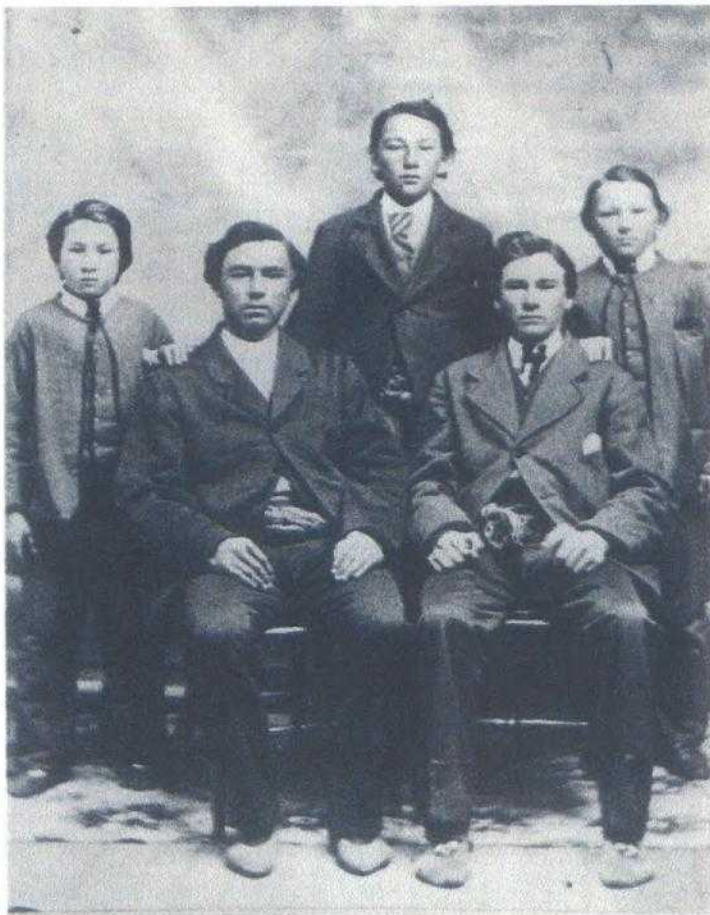


c.

Two photographs (*a & b*) taken circa 1870, show young adults from communities in Manitoba and Alberta. The men wore shirts with narrow band collars, capotes, pointed toe moccasins, and sashes with the fringe hanging down the front. The women wore skirts with tucks or ribbon around the bottom of the skirt, shoulder shawls, with their hair parted in the middle and pulled back into a low bun or pony tail. Isabella Ledoux wears a large cross, unusual for a young woman. Both women wore ball and cone earrings.

The woman in (*c*) wore a plaid dress. She is also wearing a shoulder shawl in a heavier plaid fabric. All three women have broaches holding their shawls in place.

PLATE 15: The Sash and Pointed Toe Moccasins



George Setter and his four sons.
Setter, George and sons 2, AM

As clothing styles gradually absorbed more contemporary trends, the sash and moccasins retained their importance in men's dress.

John Gaddie, Crooked Lake
1906, RA 253 SAB



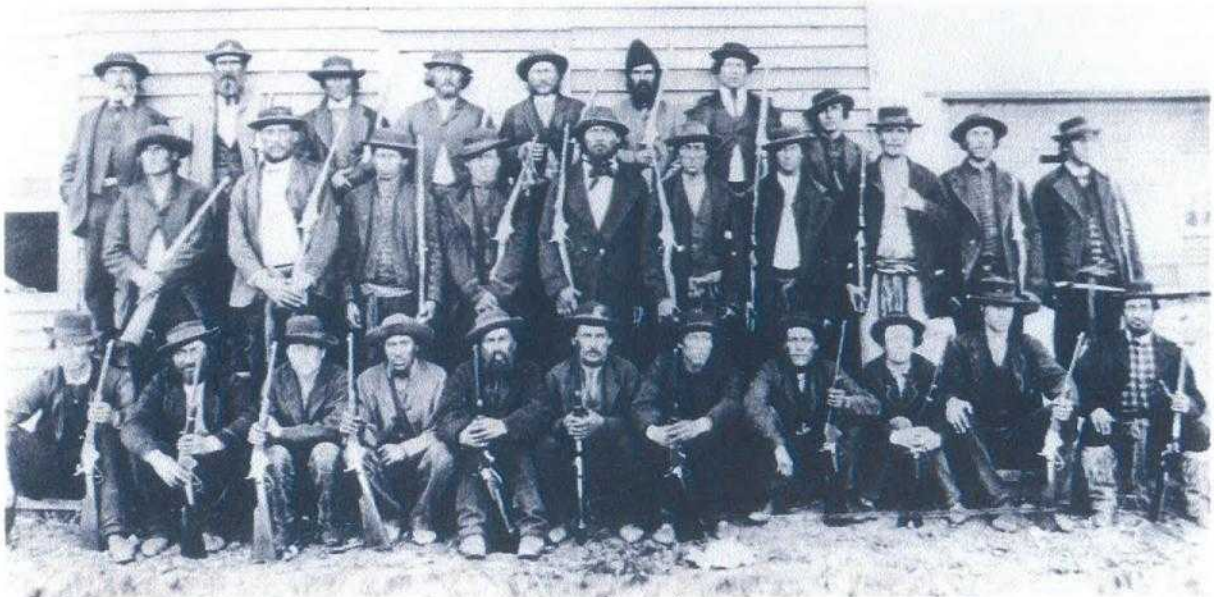
Peter Erasmus, Edmund Morri
Collection 252 AM



PLATE 16: Men on the Prairie



Men and boys from a plains camp wearing Crimean shirts in a variety of colours and prints, soft silk bow ties and a variety of coats and hats. ("French half breeds hunters and traders on the plains," Boundary Commission (1870-1874) 215, AM)

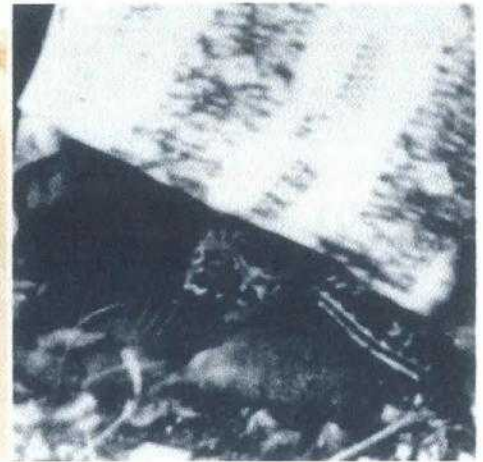


Scouts employed by the Boundary Commission. Most are wearing pointed toe moccasins and sashes. The man on the far right is wearing fringed hide leggings. (R-A2536 SAB)

PLATE 17: Women's Leggings



Leggings collected from the Venne family near Batoche, Saskatchewan. JA 60.175 a & b Parks Canada



Floral beaded leggings cuff, detail from Hime portrait of Jane L'Adhemar. Hime Collection 29, AM



Floral beaded leggings cuff, detail of two girls standing beside a Red River cart in 1882. NA-239-20 GAI



Detail of floral beaded leggings cuff in group portrait taken circa 1890. B.7257 PAA.



Leggings (les mitasses) belonging to Mathilde Carriere Perreault. EE-323 MSB

PLATE 18: Shoulder Shawls and Aprons



Women wearing multiple plaids and print fabrics, Manitoba.
Pascal Breland Family 5 AM



Margeurite Parenteau, Mrs.
Xavier Letendre dit Batoche
circa 1885. R-A 12117 SAB



Women wearing full skirts with matching aprons and shoulder shawls, trimmed with fringe and ribbon. Bead necklaces, broaches and earrings are worn as accessories. NA-2631-19&20 GAI

PLATE 19: Tartan Shawls



Margeurite Genthon Dease, Pembina circa 1875.
Dease, Mrs. William AM



Sophie Chatalain Rowland, St. Albert. MHM.



Cauronne Maurice, Ile a la Crosse. R-A 24444 SAB

Tartan shawls were worn as outer garments by women for more than a century. Their use persisted among older women, such as Cauronne Maurice, well into the twentieth century.

PLATE 20: Philomene Hodgson and Her Sisters



George Hodgson, Madeleine Bruneau Hodgson and children circa 1880. Note the variety of floral prints, shoulder shawls, moccasins, mittens and ball and cone earrings worn by the girls. P974.185.07 MHM



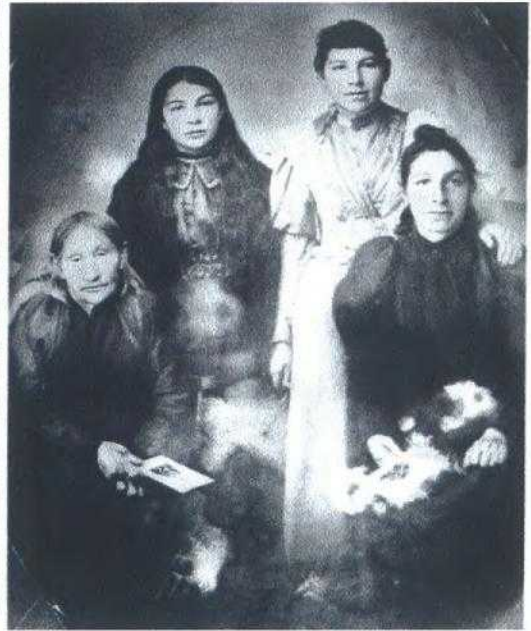
The dress of Philomene Hodgson, one of the young girls in the 1880 photograph, changed dramatically within a ten year period.

Philomene Hodgson circa 1890. She is wearing a corset and fashionable two piece dress. NA 3496-9 GAI

PLATE 21: "Les Vieilles" – Older Women



Three daughters of Norbert Larence and Marie Parenteau: Marie, Rose and Clarisse wearing the fashionable dress of their youth, courtesy Paul Chartrand.



Madeleine Beauchemin Klyne's dress and unbound hair stands in marked contrast to the fashionable dress of her daughter and granddaughters. R-A8823 SAB.



Isabelle Fagnant, widow of Angus McGillis, taken at St. Victor, Saskatchewan circa 1930. R-A21933 SAB

Marie Eliza Welsh Mozzine wears a shoulder shawl, blouse, old fashioned prints and braids. Her granddaughter, Mrs. Pierre Poitras Jr., wears the current fashion, courtesy of Pauline Bellegarde family.



PLATE 22: Women, Crosses and Crucifixes



a. Marie Grant Breland, M. A. MacLeod 20 AM.



b. Detail of elderly woman, A.3487 PAA



c. Family at Auvergne, Saskatchewan in 1908. R-A 19719 SAB



d. Rose Plante Normand
Biography, Normand MHM

The women in *a*, *b* and *d* appear to be wearing pectoral crosses that depict the crucifixion with a skull and cross bones at the base of the cross representing Golgotha. These crosses were more commonly worn by members of religious orders. The elderly woman on the right in *c* wears a cross of Lorraine, distinct because of its double bars. These were once popular items of trade.

PLATE 23: Early Twentieth Century



Napoleon Lavallee and family at Crooked Lake circa 1906. RA-253-7 SAB



Mercedes Calihoo and Adelaide Gouin at the Lac Ste. Anne pilgrimage circa 1930. Adelaide was born in 1856 at Fort Pitt. P984.02.03 St. Albert Heritage Society Collection, MHM

This elderly woman was living in the home of Jean Caron of Batoche in 1948. Slides No. 367 and 369, Everett Baker Collection, Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society



PLATE 24: Tent Pegs



Beaded vest made by an "old Metis woman" in Lestock, SK.
Acquired in 1981 (V-Z11 CMC)



Fingerwoven sash "made by half-breeds, French - Indian cross" according to the acquisition notes.
(Z.114.71 MAA)



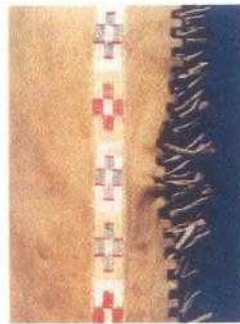
Above: Quills and quillwork tools used by Rosalie Laplante Laroque circa 1890 in Lebret, SK.

Left: Sash belonging to Pierre Bottineau circa 1860.
13341 SHSND

PLATE 25: Quilled and Painted Coat and Pants



The coat has painted bands around the skirt and down the front openings (see detail *b*) with quillwork at the shoulders. The detail of the coat painting shows incised lines, curving floral elements and rows of blue dots. Coat collected by John Halkett at Red River circa 1820 (34-30 a, Hudson's Bay Company Collection, MM)



a.



b.

The pants that were accessioned with the coat have quillwork strips sewn down the outside of each leg. The quillwork (detail *a*) is a repeating cross motif. (34-30 b, Hudson's Bay Company Collections, MM)

PLATE 26: Tailored Coats with Quillwork



a) V-X-382 b Canadian Museum of Civilization



b) 86.3147.24 Alabama Historical Society

Four coats with similar cut and decorative elements. Coat (a) was identified as "Early Saskatchewan Cree" circa 1840. Coat (b) was acquired by Edward Harris at Fort Union in 1843. Coat (c) was acquired by Alexander Ramsey circa 1851. Coat (d) has the name "Lucien Dumaine" embroidered on the lapels.



c) 8303.2 Minnesota Historical Society



d) 1888:174 National Museum of Ireland

PLATE 27: Quilled and Painted Coats from the Red River Colony



Painted coat, front and back 1954 WAM 5965 British Museum



Painted coat, front and back 1951.2.19 Wellecome, Pitt Rivers Museum

PLATE 28: Painted Coats with Fur Trim



Painted coat with fur trim (V-Z-15 CMC)



Winter Dress of Red River Half Breeds
Frederick Blackwell Mayer, 1851
Ayer Collection, Newberry Library



John C. Quinney coat
16/561 Smithsonian Institution

PLATE 29: Comparing the John Quinney Coat and the Frederick Blackwell Mayer Sketches

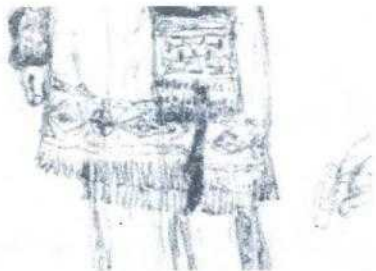
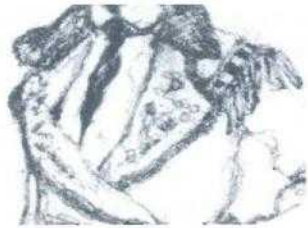


PLATE 30: Jackets with Decorative Plackets



a. "Louis Riel" jacket with floral beadwork on black cloth. (E-111 CMC)



b. "Half Breed" jacket (H.4.0.26 MM)
Details from the loom quillwork trim on the shoulder (d) and cuff (e)

c. Jacket made by Flora Loutit for Frederick Bell with silk embroidery and quill wrapped fringe. (VI-Z-249 CMC)



d)



e)

PLATE 31: Early Bags

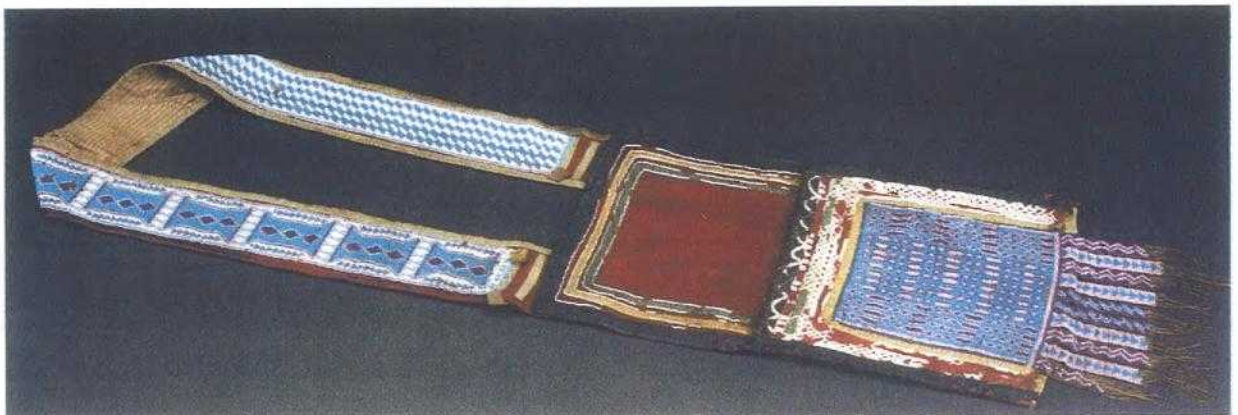
Cree bags from the late 18th century, *left* G.126, *right* 1998.H266 Hancock Museum



Edward Harris bag, Fort Union
86.3147.1 Alabama Historical Society



Metis, Manitoba 96.787 British Museum



"Old Half Breed bag from the prairies" Bell collection V-Z-5 CMC

PLATE 32: Tabbed Firebags Collected by the Earl of Southesk



Bag 1 front



Bag 1 back



Bag 2 front



Bag 2 back

PLATE 33: Firebags from Fort Simpson, St. Peter's and Fort Resolution



"Smoking Bag made by Half Breed Indians", Fort Simpson 1862 848.41 RSM



Two similar bags collected thousands of miles apart. The one on the left (57.453 HMA) was collected at St. Peter's, Manitoba. The one on the right (VI-Z-210 CMC) was collected at Fort Resolution, Northwest Territories.

PLATE 34: Firebags and Tobacco Pouches



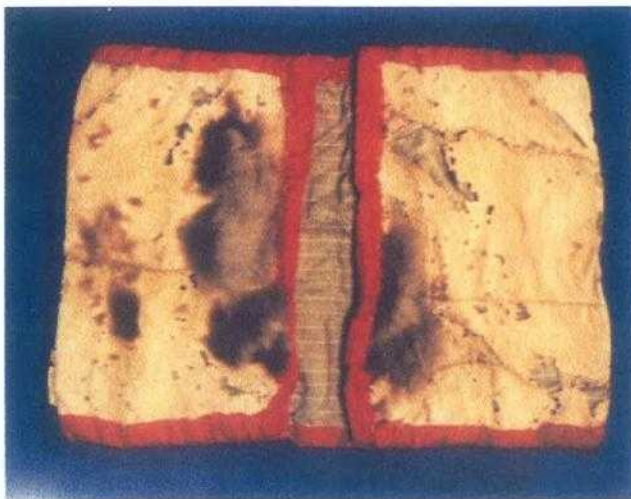
Tobacco pouches made for Fred and Leon Gaudet by their sisters at Fort Good Hope. ME988.136.15 MMM



Bell collection VI-Z-199 CMC



"French Half Breed, Fort McMurray" 60-45-89 HMA



Louis Riel fire bag EE 357 MSB



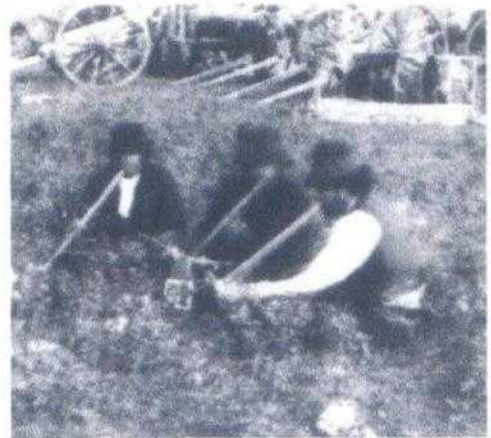
"French half breed", Fort Simpson 71-5007 HMA

PLATE 35: Long Firebags



Detail from N14134 AM
1872-1874

Detail from NA 1905-26
GAI



Detail from PA 39926 NAC



Fire bag, Pruden family
H88.94.26 PMA



Fire bag, Fort Gary, Manitoba
1870.44.2 /RSM



Fire bag, Batoche,
Saskatchewan 1968.687 RSM

PLATE 36: Watch Pockets



Watch pockets collected by the Earl of Southesk at Red River 1859-1860



Watch pocket (VI-Z-203 CMC) collected by Frederick Bell in 1905 when traveling with the Treaty 8 party from Edmonton to Fort McPherson.



Watch pocket collected at White Earth, Minnesota circa 1870. SHSND 12421



"La Prairie" Lagimodiere's watch pocket
Red River Settlement (PA247 MStB)

PLATE 37: Ladies' Bags



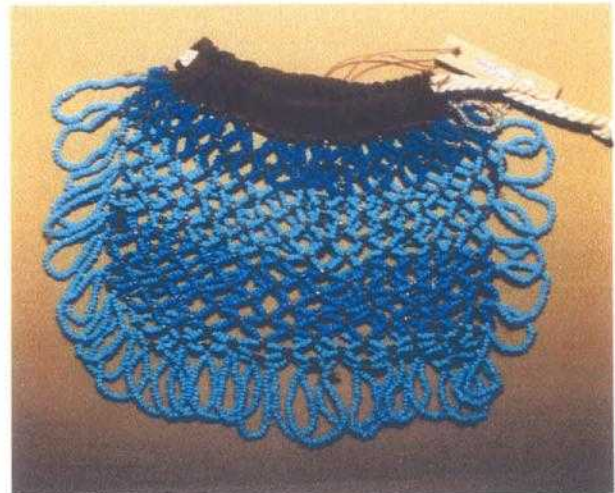
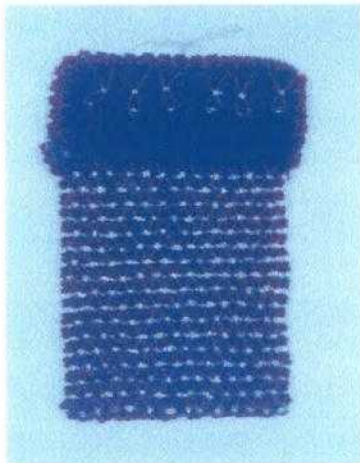
a. Identified as Bella Gaudet's purse. Floral beadwork on black velvet, attached to a metal clasp. ME988.136.6 MMM

b. Small purse made from netted beadwork on a red velvet foundation. Made by Mary Calihoo. 974.02.52 MHM

c. Small purse made from blue netted beadwork on a brown velvet foundation. Made by Bethsey Fraser Borwick at Fort Edmonton, circa 1900. H95.75.2 PMA

a.

b.



c.

PLATE 38: La Robe Métisse



EE 344 MSB

PLATE 39: Crazy Quilts

Rosaline Ducept Bruce, Pembina
Crazy quilt 81.93.1 SHSND



Detail from the Martha Gervais Bottineau
Crazy quilt 8945.3 MNHS



Detail from Rosalie Ducept Bruce quilt



Martha Pruden Fraser, Fort Edmonton
Cotton crazy quilt detail H83.102.4 PMA



(left) Thistle and Heron details from Ross quilt
988.1.98 Ross House Museum

PLATE 40: Block Quilts



Mary Victoria Mercredi Loutit, Fort Chipewyan cigar silk quilt H88.158.1 PMA

Detail of cigar silks and feather stitch embroidery



(right) Block quilt with embroidery given to elder Adrian Hope to commemorate an anniversary.
H88.30.3 PMA

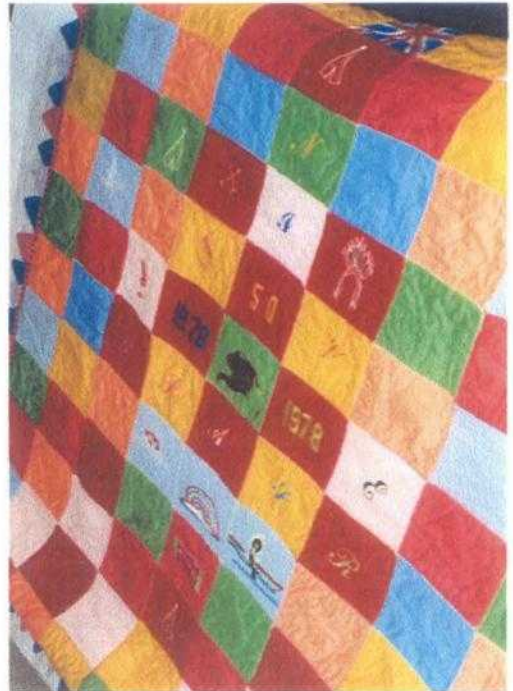
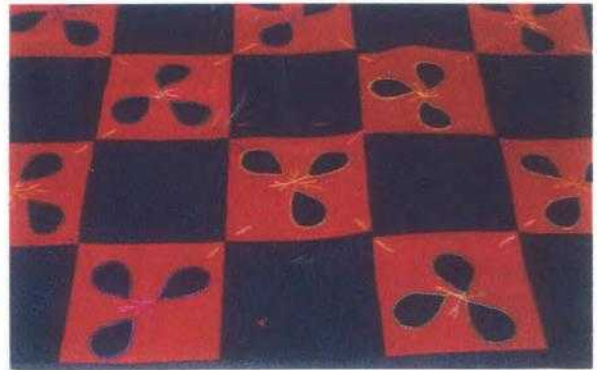
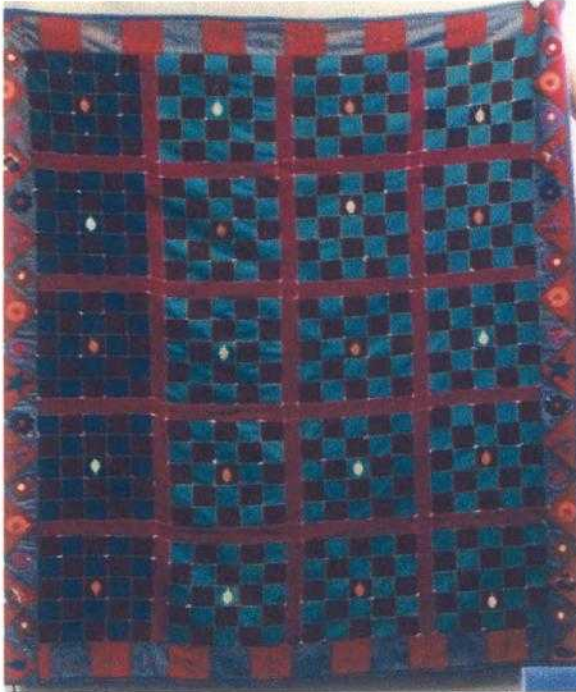


PLATE 41: Marie Renville Poitras and Maggie Pruden Fraser Quilts

Marie Josephine Renville Poitras quilt

94.82.1 SHSND



Margaret "Maggie" Pruden Fraser quilt

H83.102.2 PMA



Pruden Fraser quilt details



(right) Pruden Fraser, matching pillow H83.102.3

PLATE 42: Beaded and Embroidered Pillows



Mathilde Carriere Nault pillow and detail
EE 119, MSB

Caroline Pruden Sinclair pillow and detail
HG 67.13.17 Parks Canada



Wedding Pillow, Turtle
Mountain, Lewistown
Museum.

Unfinished pillow cover,
EE 118, MSB



Marie Grant Breland pillow H.4.1.537 MM



Lacasse family pillow, EE 120 MSB

PLATE 43: Hooked and Braided Rugs



Marie Grant Breland hooked area rug. DA 330 MSB



Margarette Blondeau Clendenan braided rugs, private collection.



PLATE 44: Birchbark Baskets and Trays



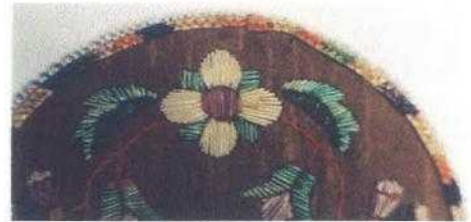
Birch bark basket with dyed floral motifs, collected before 1871 from the Red River Settlement. 1871.18 RSM



Two birch bark trays made by "Mrs. Renville" of Pembina.

Renville 505 SHSND

Renville 9906 SHSND



Two views of birch bark basket made by "Mrs. Lavoie" H4.1.530 a&b



PLATE 45: Tea Cozies



a.
Tea cozy, Melanie Blondeau
Quillwork on hide, with fur
trim and quilled hide loops at
the top.



b. Unassembled tea cozy
pieces belonging to Caroline
Pruden Sinclair.
HG.67.13.31 PC

c. Unassembled tea cozy
pieces. H4.1.39.a & b MM



b.

c.

PLATE 46: Shelf Valences



McMurray family shelf valence
with details of netted quill
wrapped fringe. HBCL-66 MM



Gaudet family shelf valence circa 1890. ME988.136.8 MMM



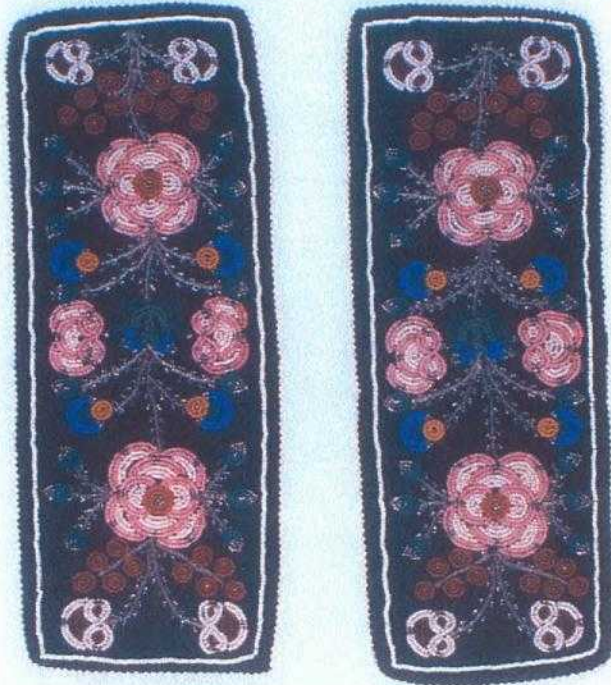
PLATE 47: Gaudet Family Collection 1



Wall pocket ME988.136.9 MMM



Wall pocket ME988.136.10 MMM



Beaded strips, probably for leggings
ME988.136.23 MMM



Embroidered mittens ME988.136.30A-B

PLATE 48: Gaudet Family Collection 2



Fringed valence with unusual floral details Gaudet collection ME988.136.7



Wall pocket with drooping petal detail
Gaudet collection ME988.136.11 MMM



Detail from beaded wall pocket
Gaudet collection ME988.136.12 MMM



PLATE 49: Mary Monkman Tait and the Southesk Moccasins



Mary "Florida" Monkman Tait, silk embroidered moccasins, Earl of Southesk Collection.

PLATE 50: Dog Drivers and Runners

Men dressed for winter travel and dog driving.



a.

NA-4405-18 GAI



b.

#HE.8/p10 MNHS

(a) Mr. Anderson, Red River and Pembina dog drivers Tarbell (l) and Campbell (r) were photographed in 1856 wearing similar white capotes (b).

Dark capotes, fur pill box hats and caps were worn by the dog drivers at Crow Wing in 1858 (c) and Jasper (d) in 1872.



Humphrey Lloyd Hime 33 AM

d. Horetzky NA-382-2 GAI



PLATE 51: Scout Clothing



Jerry Potts in his scout outfit.
NA-1237-1 GAI

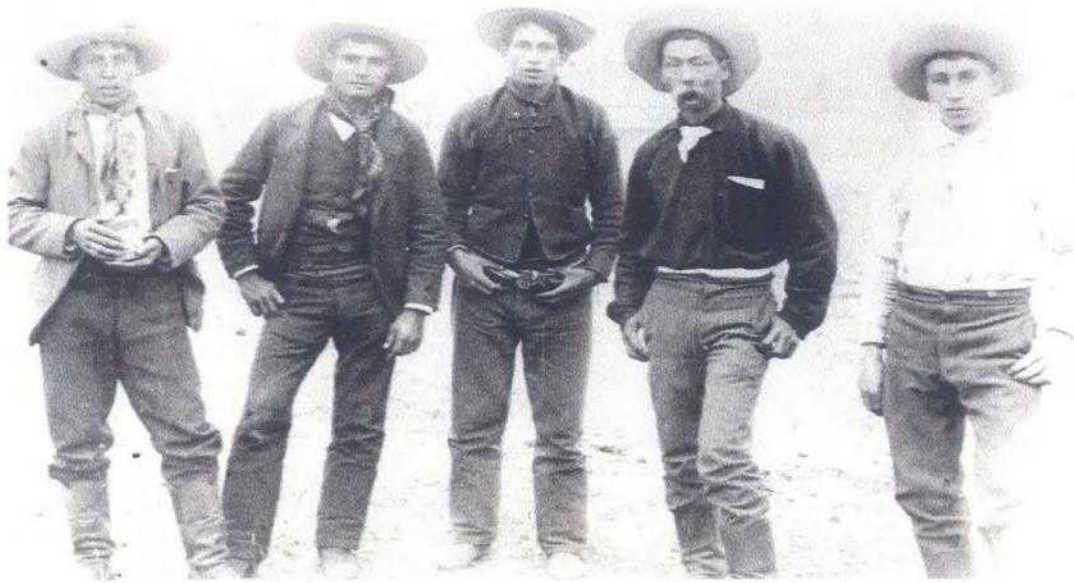


Scouts for the Alberta Field Force 1885, J. Whitford, C. J. Whitford, A. B. Spence, Batchie Laroque. NA-4154 GAI



Jacket identified as a "scout" jacket in the collection of the Minnesota Historical Society. 6585.1 MNHS

PLATE 52: Clothing Transitions in the Twentieth Century



Men in the Maple Creek area circa 1900: (l-r) Gabriel Lavelle, Joseph La Ronge, John Spence, Louis Haggie, Lugler Lavelle. Only John Spence wore moccasins and a sash. NA-1368-6 GAI



Fred Gairdner, Tom Bellerose, Pat Callihoo, and Aileen Callihoo of St. Albert. Two of the men wore denim work clothes, while one wore a suit and tie. 1988.47.305 MHM



John Thomas standing on the dock at Cumberland House wearing a sash over his overalls. RA-1008 SAB

PLATE 53: Celebrating Weddings



a.



b.

RA-9922 SAB



c.

1988.47.300 MHM

Three well-dressed brides in different times and locations: a) Sophie Therese Rankin's wedding ensemble worn in 1802 b) Rosina Desjarlais' feathered straw hat and ruffles circa 1890 at Fort Qu'Appelle c) Justine Beaudry at her wedding at St. Albert in 1903.



Halfbreed Red River Jig: Celebrating the Wedding by William T. Sabel

W. T. Sabel Collection 14 AM

PLATE 54: Brigade Captains and Beaded Saddles



Gabriel Dumont's saddle (a) mounted on a beaded saddle blanket (b).
(a) X1964.16.01 MTH (b) X8218.12 MTHS



Camp captain, John McKay, as drawn in 1860, wearing the beaded straps of his powder horn and shot pouch across his chest and carrying a quirt. (Harper's New Monthly Magazine 21)

PLATE 55: Diplomacy and Alliance



JEAN BATTISTE WILKIE

A drawing of Jean Baptiste Wilkie wearing the clothing he received during peace negotiations with the Sioux.

The drawing was published in an 1861 issue of Harper's New Monthly Magazine with the caption: "Jean Battiste Wilkie: President's of St. Joseph in Sioux warrior's dress." (Harper's Magazine 22)



Harry Daniels taking his jacket off and placing it around the shoulders of Pope John Paul II during the papal visit at Fort Simpson in 1987.

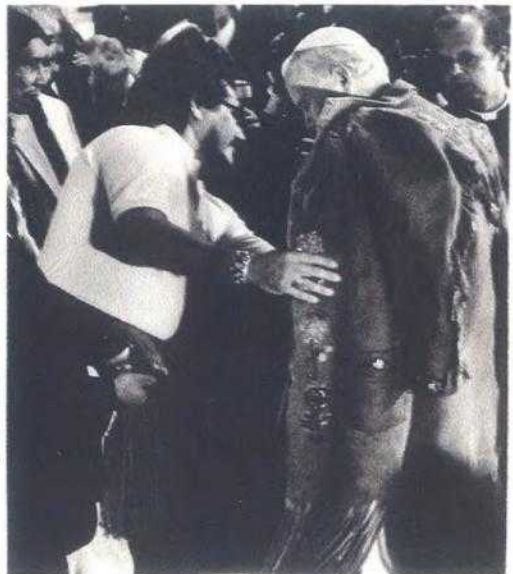
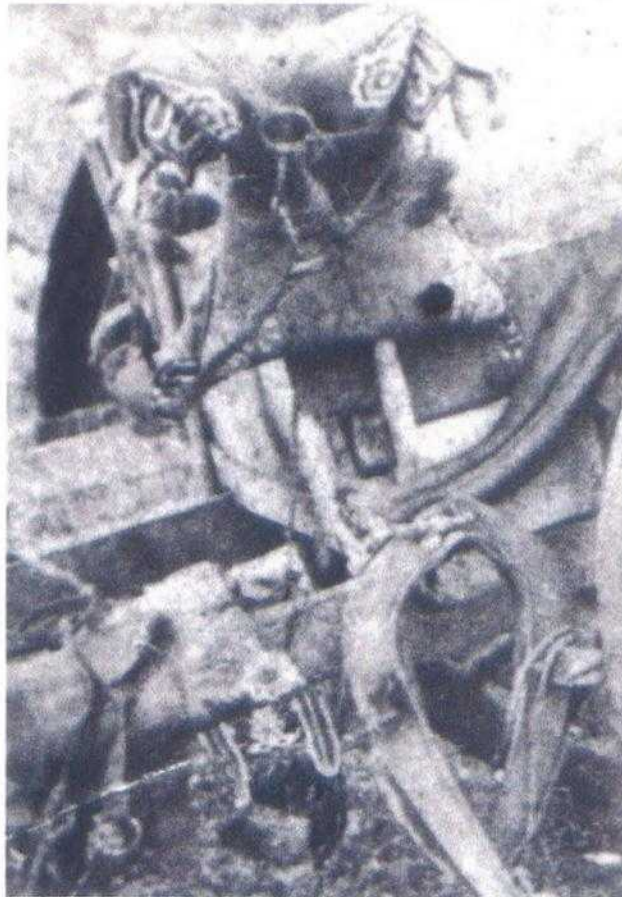


PLATE 56: Consumers and Marketing



Saddles displayed on Red River cart at St. Paul camp, 1858.
Detail from #HE2.1/r28 MNHS

Two consumers of "Half Breed Style": the Earl of Southesk (left) wearing his outfit acquired in 1859 for hunting and travelling and Charles Napier Bell "in Prairie Hunter's costume" in 1871.

Earl of Southesk, private collection



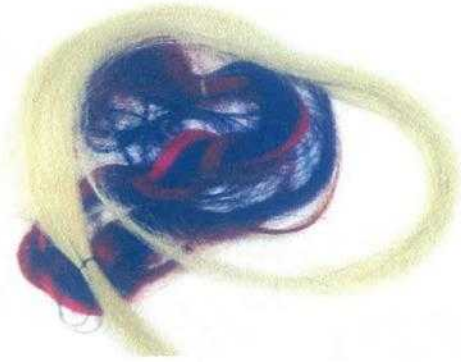
Bell, Charles Napier 2 AM



PLATE 57: Preparing Materials for Art Making



The late Agnes Carriere of Cumberland House with a hand tanned moose hide. Calvin Racette, photo credit



Horse hair belonging to Mary Hodgson Cunningham. MHM



Mrs. Lavallee of Waskesiu, Saskatchewan preparing sinew. NA-4868-17-5 GAI

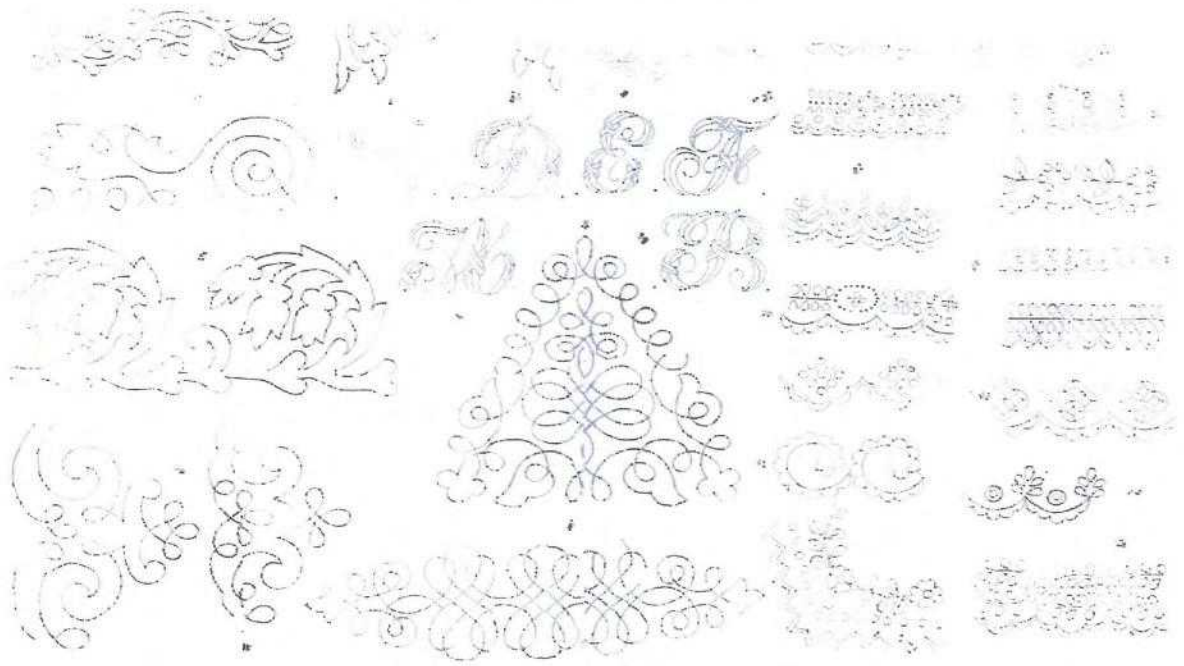


Sinew prepared by Joseph Bouvier



Pair of ulus used for preparing hide belonging to Marie Houle Gaudet of Fort Good Hope. ME988.136.26 MMM

PLATE 58: Patterns and Templates



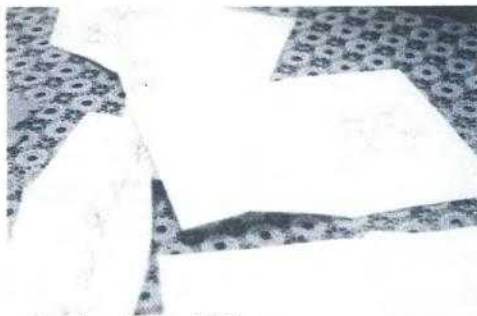
Margaret McKenzie Anderson Embroidery Patterns

HBCA 3.37/28 fo. 16



Louise Rowland Belcourt Beadwork Templates

Belcourt Fonds GAI



Jennine Krauchi Patterns



**Christi Belcourt
Templates and
Pattern**



**White paste underdrawing on Rosalie
Lepine's sewing bag.**

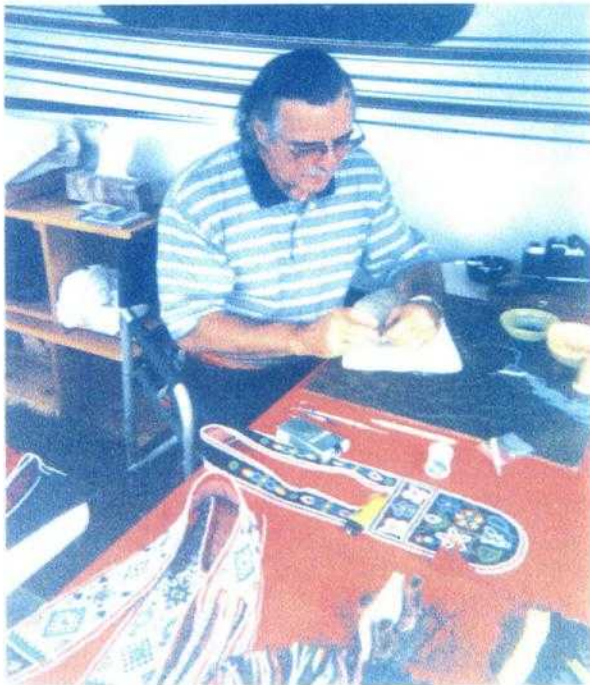
PLATE 59: Artists' Work Spaces



The late Margaret McAuley at work in her home in Cumberland House in 1990. Calvin Racette photo credit.



Jennine Krauchi's beading chair and table in her home.



Gary Johnson at work at his booth at a Metis gathering at Lewistown Montana.



Margaret Blondeau Clendenan's kitchen table work space.

PLATE 60: Sewing Bags and Scissor Case



Sewing bag AR 235 GAI



Caroline Pruden Sinclair
scissor case.

HG.67.13.20 PC



Caroline Pruden Sinclair
sewing bag.

HG.67.13.34 PC



Louise Boushie of Rocky Mountain House pinned a four leaf clover and a Catholic medal on her beaded sewing bag.

H97.115.1 PMA



PLATE 61: Frank Blackwell Mayer Sketches from Traverse des Sioux



Michael Renville "half breed courier" 1851



George Provencalle dit LeBlanc

Michel Renville and Dakota man at treaty proceedings



Fred Faribault



Narcisse Frenier wearing cap and sash.

PLATE 62: Nancy McClure Faribault and Examples of Artistic Production

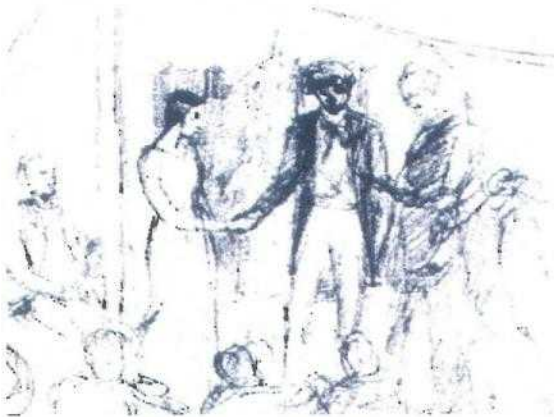


Quilled bag attributed to Mrs. David Faribault circa 1880. No. 5653 MNHS

Nancy McClure Faribault, 1851 (right)

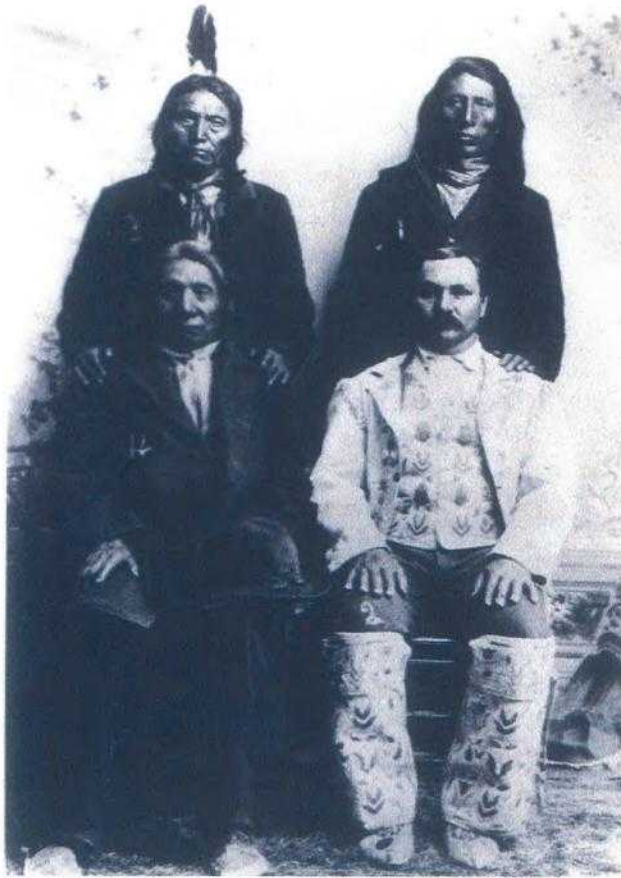


Wedding of Nancy McClure and David Faribault, Traverse des Sioux, 1851



Beaded red bag made by Margeurite Metivier Godfrey circa 1860. No. 8576.2 MNHS

PLATE 63: Baptiste and Lallee Garnier

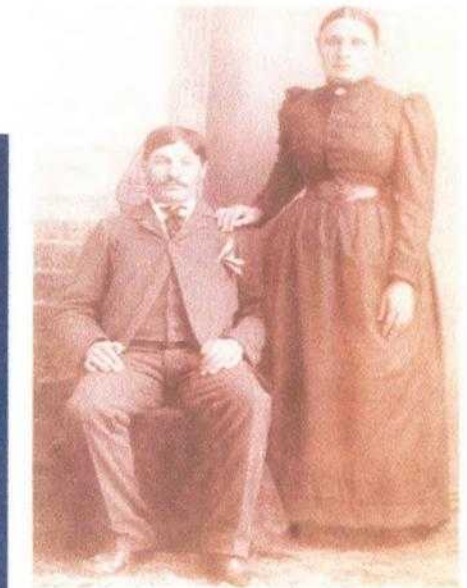


Baptiste Garnier sitting beside Red Cloud
Baptiste Garnier File, AHC



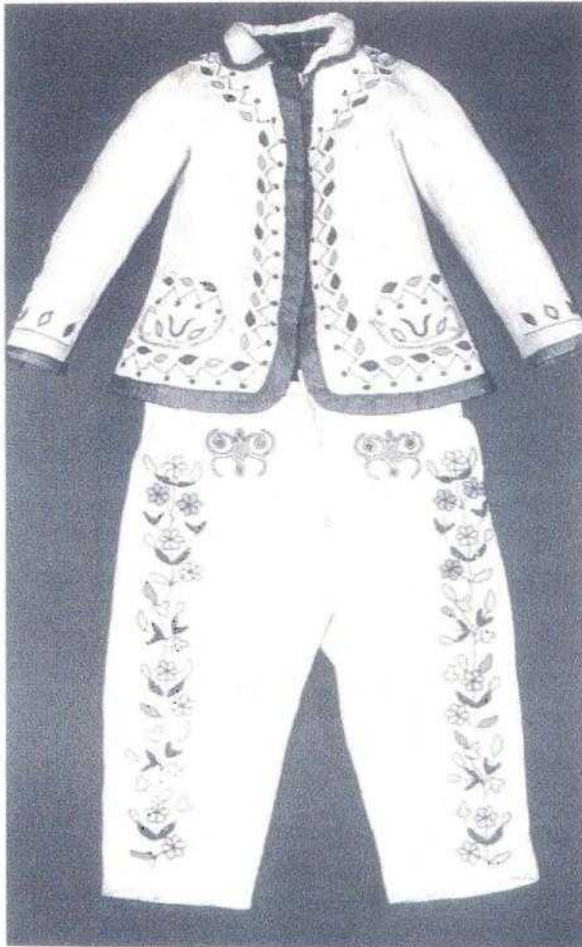
Lallee Garnier as John Hunton knew her.
John Hunton Papers, AHC

Lallee Garnier with her husband Pete
Keeney, Agate Fossil Ranch Coll.



Beaded gauntlets made by Lallee
Garnier, Agate Fossil Ranch Coll.

PLATE 64: Beadwork Attributed to Julia Mousseau Garnier and Lallee Garnier



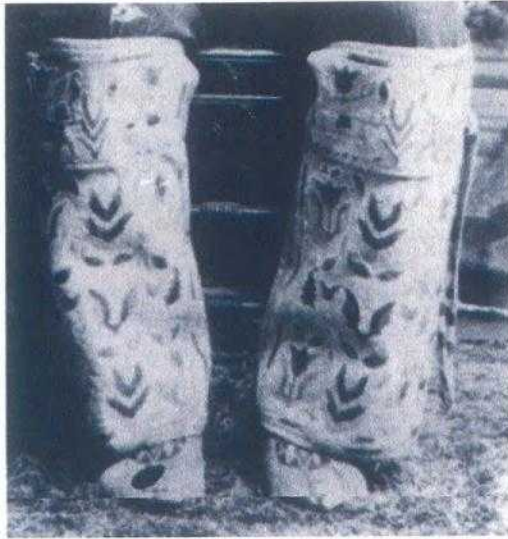
These moccasins are attributed to Lallee Garnier. AGFO 300



Julia Mousseau Garnier did the beadwork on this child's outfit for Harold Cook. It was given as a gift from the Short Bull family. AGFO 345.
Julia also made Harold Cook's moccasins. AGFO 280



PLATE 65: Leggings and Moccasins From the Fort Robinson Area



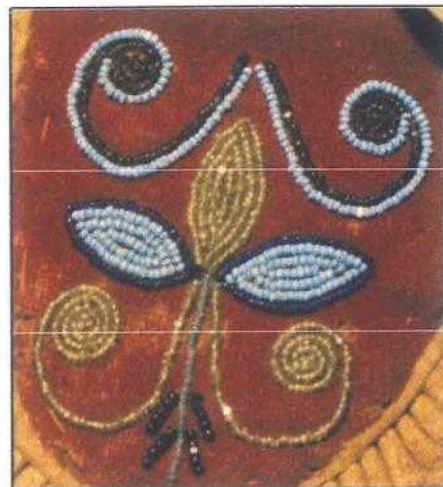
1947.134a&b DM



1947.135a&b DM



Leggings 1950.92a&b DM

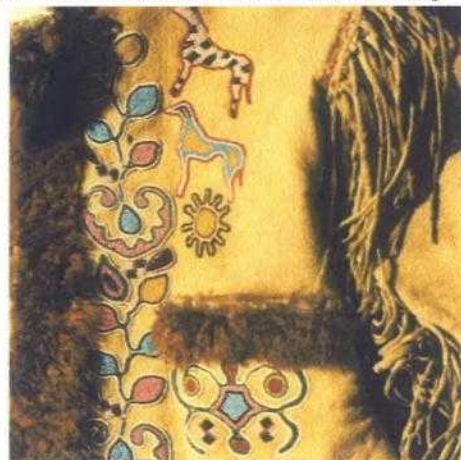


Detail of leggings
1947.136 a&b DM

PLATE 66: Baptiste Garnier Family and Floral Beaded Jackets



Baptiste Garnier (Little Bat) with family. RG 4405-1 Nebraska State Historical Society



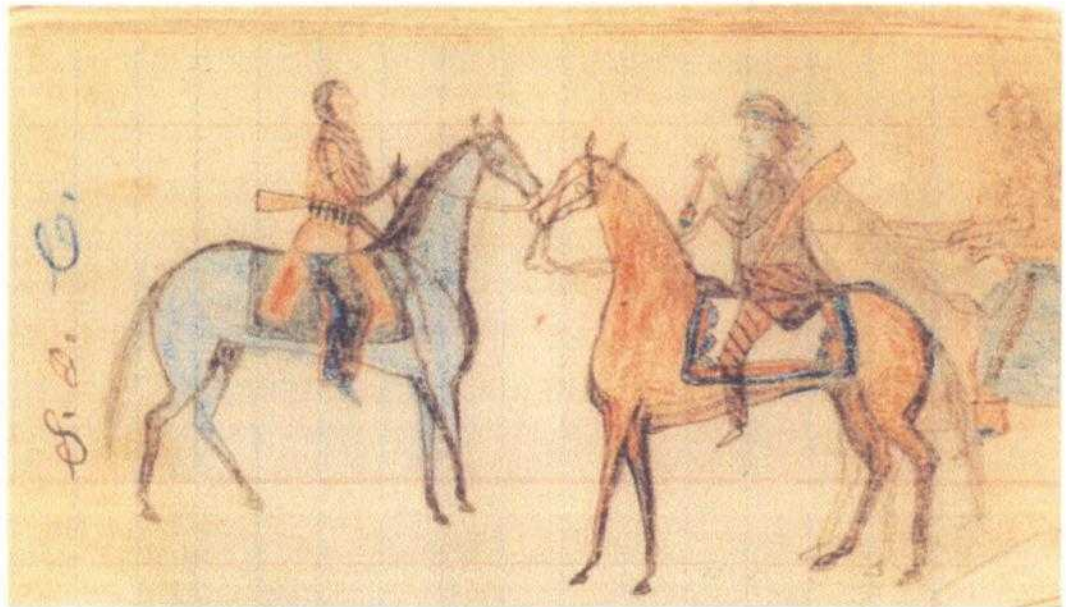
Boy's beaded coat 1941.50 DM



Coat made by Cecilia Benoist Narcelle
L93.1519 Minnilusa Pioneer Museum,
Journey Museum



PLATE 67: Nez Perce Ledger Drawing and Rosalie Laroque's Wall Pocket



Half Bloods On Milk River , cash book drawing by Yellow Wolf. IHS



Large wall pocket with realistic, stylized and pictorial elements.
Rosalie Laplante Laroque, Le Bret Museum

PLATE 68: Floral Beadwork Styles



Two men's leggings of similar cut with different styles of floral beadwork.
(left) "Half Breed legging, Terry's Landing, Montana 1881.3.59 Read Collection, RHFM
(right) La Prairie Lagimodiere's leggings from St. Boniface . EE 153 SHB



Upper Missouri / Fort Union

Julie Ereaux Shultz moccasins
81.67.3 MTHS



Shot pouch from Cowan set
collected at Fort Union
X69.17.01 MTHS

Shot pouch H92.99.48 PMA



PLATE 69: The Flowering Vase



Detail from Rosaline Ducept Bruce crazy quilt, Pembina 81.93.1 SHSND

Detail from Marie Grant Breland rug, St. Francois Xavier DA330 MSB



Detail from fire bag collected at St. Peter's, Manitoba 57453 HMA



Detail from tobacco bag, Fort McMurray, 1894 60-4589 HMA



Detail from tabbed firebag collected by the Earl of Southesk between 1859 and 1860.

PLATE 70: Object Stories



Rosalie Lepine's
Sewing bag



Mrs. Fred Rowland's gift GDI



Marguerite Riel's baby cuffs X58.02.01 a&b MTHS



A gift to Anna Isabelle Fleury.



In loving memory, Flora Gardiner
Bouvier



PLATE 71: Cowgirls and Cowboys



a.



b.



c.

Minnie June and Eliza Wood wearing their beaded leather vests, skirts and gauntlets at the Calgary Stampede. Detail (a) showing complete outfits from NA-2365-8 and (b) close-up from NA-2365-5 GAI.

Women competing at the 1926 Calgary Stampede (c).
NA-2365-5 GAI

(d) Willie Dumont wearing white woolies at a round-up.
Milk River, Alberta 1911.

NA-777-7 GAI



d.

PLATE 72: Louise Belcourt Brazeau Outfit



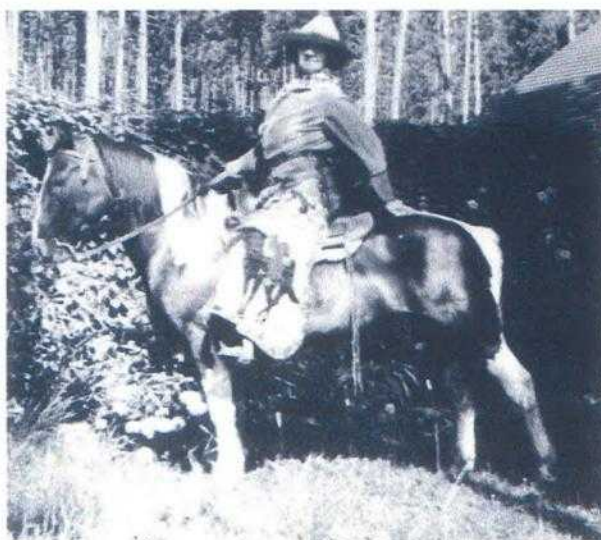
Riding Skirt and Vest circa 1922; Riley & McCormick Co. Ltd. Beadwork by Louise Belcourt Brazeau.

CN:C-1382A-B Collection of Glenbow Museum



Maggie Brazeau Fry wearing the outfit made by her mother at the Calgary Stampede in 1926. Detail from NA-2365-5 GAI

PLATE 73: Etta Brown Platt Outfit



Embroidered outfit made by Etta Brown Platt for her friend who wore it when they performed and at the Calgary Stampede.

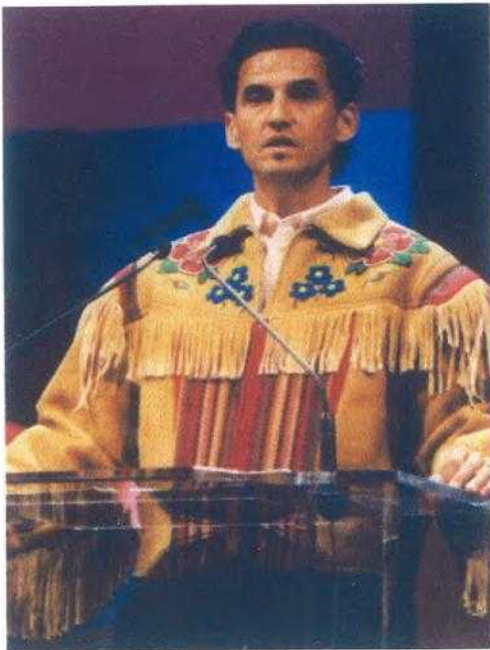
Riding Outfit, circa 1912.
CN:C-3584 Collection of the
Glenbow Museum.

Etta Brown Platt wearing her
matching embroidered chaps.
NA-4633- GAI.

PLATE 74: Contemporary Métis Style



Tony and Christi Belcourt, Krystle Pederson (left) and Nicholas Vrooman at "The Metis in the 21st Century" conference in Saskatoon 2003.



Greg Coyes wearing his beaded jacket with sash inserts at an important event.



Child's vest made by Aveline De Laronde Fiddler for her granddaughter, Merelda Fiddler.

Collection of decorative objects embellished with the blue and white infinity flag exhibited at a "The Metis in the 21st Century" banquet, Saskatoon, June 2003.



PLATE 75: Celebrating Weddings Today



Three generations of Racette men wearing sashes at Riva Farrell Racette's wedding, June 28, 2003.



Beaded leather clothing worn by the bride, groom and bridesmaid at Lily McKay and Clifford Carriere's wedding at Cumberland House in 1986.

