

Land, Sovereignty, and Migration during an era of change: Manitoba,
1870s

by

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Abstract

Manitoba began the 1870s as an Indigenous province, entering Confederation in the aftermath of the well-studied period of the Red River Resistance of 1870. By the 1880s, Manitoba's power structures and land were largely in settler hands, and the province was being promoted as a fertile land of opportunity for immigrants. This dissertation is concerned with the years of transition during the 1870s where settlers immigrated to Manitoba and through the mechanisms of laws, immigration, and violence asserted control over the region. The newspapers and immigration literature downplayed the violence and dispossession that was occurring while depicting an optimistic view of Manitoba intended to recruit immigrants. Settler fears and anxieties about life in Manitoba shaped the newspaper coverage of the first decade of the new province. The myth of Canadian sovereignty over Manitoba in the 1870s was repeated until the settler population was large enough to make the claim believable. During the 1870s the small settler population in Manitoba worked to grow their numbers through immigration and to change how land was understood and claimed, and much of this work was done in the pages of the local newspapers.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This is a history about land and sovereignty in 1870s Manitoba, a time when white settlers were establishing a system of settler colonial control over Indigenous nations. Immigration was the mechanism by which the land would be taken, and this was clearly communicated in the newspapers and immigration materials from the time. The local politics in Manitoba shaped the discourse around immigration and the quest for control over the land. The conversations happening in Ottawa and among national newspapers were often not the same as the discussions in the local Manitoba media. They shared the goal of extending the empire across the prairie, but residents of Manitoba were intimately aware of the challenges facing this plan. This history of land and sovereignty and migration is also a personal history, to some extent, as I am a settler Mennonite who can trace every branch of my family back to the Mennonites who settled in Manitoba between the years 1874 and 1880. This story of the first decade of immigration to the province of Manitoba and how land changed hands is also the story of my family.

As I was writing this dissertation, the then premier of Manitoba, Brian Pallister, described the history of settlers in Manitoba by saying that “The people who came here to this country, before it was a country and since, didn’t come here to destroy anything. They came here to build. They came to build better.”¹ This comment was followed by calls for Pallister to educate himself about the history of Manitoba, but there is perhaps no better quote to explain the attitude of the settlers who moved to Manitoba during the 1870s, even though their actions were the opposite. Settlers in Manitoba were incredibly intentional in tearing down and destroying the Indigenous

¹Rachel Bergen, “Pallister ‘50 years out of date,’ professor says after premier’s comments on colonial history of Manitoba,” *CBC News*, July 10, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/brian-pallister-manitoba-chiefs-colonialism-first-nations-1.6094834>.

structures and systems that they found at Red River. As will be demonstrated in this project, that destruction was at times physical, as in the case of both military and mob violence, and at other times structural as laws and political mechanisms were employed to delegitimize Indigenous claims to land and legitimize settler occupation.

In contrast to Pallister's assertions about the lack of destruction in Manitoba's colonization by settlers, scholar Patrick Wolfe succinctly states that "Settler colonialism destroys to replace."² In the Canadian prairies, the violence of settler colonialism persists to the present day in terms of attitudes about land and sovereignty, through what Gina Starblanket and Dallas Hunt call "mythological tropes about the virtuousness of its people and the righteousness of its political and cultural formations."³ They explain that Indigenous people are subjected to tropes "that function to naturalize our exclusion, immiseration, and ultimately, death."⁴ The stories that immigrants told about themselves in the newspapers of Manitoba in the 1870s reveal a concerted effort to create and reinforce the mythology of the virtuous settler and immigrant. This extended to justifying the violent disputes over sovereignty and land, using the myth of virtuous settlement and land use. Travis Wysote and Erin Morton call this practice the "pioneer lies" or "white settler tautologies," that is "things that seem true by the very nature of their repetition and their logical irrefutability under settler colonialism."⁵ The pioneer lie "imagines a willing Indigenous subject rather than a wilful, resistant, and complex Indigenous person whose presence evokes a history that settlers no longer want to see."⁶ As will be examined throughout the seven chapters of this dissertation, the newspapers and immigration literature from the 1870s promoted an

² Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the elimination of the native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006), 388.

³ Gina Starblanket and Dallas Hunt, *Storying Violence: Unravelling Colonial Narratives in the Stanley Trial* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2020), 22.

⁴ Starblanket and Hunt, 22.

⁵ Travis Wysote and Erin Morton, "'The depth of the plough': White Settler Tautologies and Pioneer Lies," *Settler Colonial Studies*, 9, no. 4 (2019), 480.

⁶ Wysote and Morton, 480.

optimistic view of the Canadian prairie in order to recruit immigrants, while downplaying the violence and dispossession that this attempt to seize power and land from Indigenous people required. The goal of immigration discourse in the newspapers and in promotional materials was to repeatedly assert Canadian sovereignty over Indigenous lands and people until the repetition and growing settler population made that myth (or lie) believable.

This dissertation examines the public discourse around immigration in Manitoba in the first decade of provincehood. Specifically, I examined the newspapers published in the province of Manitoba in the 1870s to see how they promoted, disparaged, debated, and discussed immigration. I also examined immigration pamphlets published in the 1870s and early 1880s to look at how Manitoba was observed during the 1870s, and how it was promoted in more formal and wide-reaching promotional materials. I focused on pamphlets that had some direct connection to Manitoba, specifically the pamphlets produced by the provincial government, or written by Manitobans or people who had visited and lived in Manitoba.

The goal of this was to examine what Kenton Storey has called the “settler anxieties” that exist particularly at outposts of empire.⁷ He explains that settler anxiety is linked to race, gender, and class, and in spite of the limitations of the “taboo” of breaking from “Victorian scripts of manliness,” in public discourse, the newspapers “offer the best evidence of settler fears.”⁸ While the newspapers channeled the “settler fears” they were also part of the colonial project and “acts of settler violence, coercion, and dispossession” were directed against Indigenous peoples, which “bred fear.”⁹ The phenomenon of the imperial press means that the settler world was connected, as newspapers and immigration materials transmitted information about colonial outposts back to

⁷ Kenton Storey, *Settler Anxieties at the Outposts of Empire: Colonial Relations, Humanitarian Discourses, and the Imperial Press* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 13.

⁸ Storey, *Settler Anxieties*, 13.

⁹ Storey, *Settler Anxieties*, 13.

the more central imperial powers, be they in Ontario or in Britain. This dissertation does not examine what people in Ontario thought about the immigration processes in Manitoba, but rather what the concerns were for those who were more deeply rooted within the local community and producing local media.

Most of the material was digitized and the full extent of the local Manitoba media market in the 1870s proved to be unwieldy as this project developed. Initially, I began with skimming through pages and pages of digitized newsprint, but after working through months of content like that, I tried many keyword searches to see if that would be more or less effective than the earlier process of skimming. Early on, this involved a lot of trial and error with how to use search terms, but I was experimenting with the months of content I was already familiar with, so I had a good sense of if I was finding anything new or just duplicating my work. Keyword searching allowed me to find connections to immigration in articles that I had previously overlooked based on their headlines and subject matter. I would shorten each word enough to trigger the algorithm to show me results for immigration, immigrants, immigrant, etc. and did the same thing with emigration. I then looked at all of the articles on the same page and sometimes adjacent pages to see the larger context of these discussions. For example, were complaints of too many new arrivals connected to food shortages in the spring, or a bout of extreme weather, or an election, when emotions would have been heightened? This process provided more results than skimming, because I was not just looking for articles explicitly about immigration, but also for other important names, events, and policies that were repeatedly connected to immigration. Some of these interconnected ideas only became clear after the keyword searches kept directing me towards certain articles. This dissertation reflects a fraction of the larger materials that I compiled, and on many topics there were half a dozen articles that I did not use for every one

that I did. The interconnectedness of immigration with many other topics in Manitoba in the 1870s is what led to the organization of the following chapters.

Chapter 2 establishes the political and economic context as Manitoba was created as a province out of the Red River Settlement. In chapter 3 the regulations defining land are discussed, along with the reactions of settler and Indigenous communities to these policies and regulations. These land policies cleared the way for increasing immigration to the province, but the other prong of this initiative to draw settlers to the land was to inform settlers about the agricultural prospects and potential hardships they might encounter. Describing and promoting the physical landscape and environment to settlers, while dismissing Indigenous presence on that land is the subject of chapter 4. The Métis community was particularly impacted by the land policies and immigration push during the 1870s, and the impact of Métis land loss and French-speaking demographic changes are discussed in chapter 5. Chapter 6 explains the mechanisms for policing the intersections of race and gender in Manitoba, and the ways that violence and militarism were required in order to exert control over Indigenous peoples, which was also a selling point meant to draw settlers to the “controlled” and “safe” province. The final chapter takes a broad look at the narratives around immigration in the newspapers and promotional materials. As the land was being cleared of Indigenous peoples and challenges to Canadian sovereignty, and as the liberal homestead model was established, material was created to sell the idea of Manitoba to immigrants. All of these steps, from establishing laws and policies, to removing Indigenous claims to land, to promoting immigration, were required to fulfill the “settler colonial transition” of Manitoba.¹⁰

¹⁰ Adam Gaudry, “Fantasies of Sovereignty: Deconstructing British and Canadian Claims to Ownership of the Historic North-West,” *Native American and Indigenous Studies*, 3, no. 1 (Spring 2016), 47.

Establishing Manitoba

Manitoba was a small community in the 1870s, and Winnipeg, where most of the newspapers and pamphlets and general discussion around immigration was published, was even smaller. Manitoba's recorded population was nearly 90 percent Métis, according to the 1870 census that listed the population as 12,228 people, with 5,757 French Métis, 4,083 English Métis, and 1,565 identified as white.¹¹ First Nations people were only listed as "Indian" in the census if they "settled on lands" or "lived in houses," and so many were not enumerated in 1870.¹² The instructions clarified, "Indians living in tents or wandering from place to place without a settled home are not to be included."¹³ These numbers indicate that the Indigenous presence, despite being nearly 90 percent of the population, was underreported, since every white person was counted but potentially thousands of Indigenous people were excluded from the official count.

The province did grow over the 1870s, although the immigration boom did not arrive until the 1880s. According to Canadian census figures, Manitoba had a population of 62,260 in 1881.¹⁴ Alan Artibise, looking specifically at the population of Winnipeg, further complicates that narrative, as many homesteaders used Winnipeg as their home during the winter months, but officially had homes in other rural areas.

¹¹Gerhard J. Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing World of the Red River Métis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 140.

¹²"Instructions," *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 22, 1870, <https://digitalcollections.lib.umanitoba.ca/islandora/object/uofm%3A2692341/datastream/PDF/view>

¹³"Instructions," *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 22, 1870.

¹⁴ "Table 24.1: Population, by province and territory, selected years, 1861 to 2011," *Statistics Canada*, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-402-x/2012000/chap/pop/tbl/tbl01-eng.htm>.

**Table 1.1. Population Growth by Years:
City of Winnipeg, 1871-1881¹⁵**

Year	Federal census figures	City Assessment Office Figures
1871	241	700
1872		1467
1873		---
1874		1869
1875		2061
1876		---
1877		2722
1878		3180
1879		4133
1880		6178
1881	7985	6245
1882		13856

Manitoba was a fundamentally Indigenous space leading up to and during the 1870s.

Adam Gaudry explains, “contrary to the claims of European empires, Indigenous peoples in the North-West exercised more or less unconstrained political authority over most of their lands both before and after 1870.”¹⁶ Europeans used language of “discovery” to claim ownership on paper, but on a practical level, the recognized authority was Indigenous, until the 1870s when settlers arrived in large numbers and claimed control. He argues that this control over land was seized through an “impractical mythology” based on “raw assertion” and so the claims of settler sovereignty are based on language of discovery and attempts to obscure Indigenous governance which was in place.¹⁷ These initial claims of settler sovereignty did not make sense in the lived reality of Manitoba, but after a large settler colonial presence arrived in the province, they began to seem real. This was “not sound legal logic that turned fantasy into common sense, but rather a

¹⁵ Alan F. J. Artibise, *Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth, 1874-1914* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1975), 130.

¹⁶ Gaudry, 46.

¹⁷ Gaudry, 46-47.

large number of settlers that believed in it.”¹⁸ The 1870s is a significant decade, therefore, as it exemplifies this time period where the “fantasy of sovereignty” was being sold in the newspapers and immigration pamphlets, but before the large influx of settlers allowed for this myth to be perceived as reality. Immigrants to Manitoba during this decade were very aware of the Indigenous spaces they were occupying.

This tension between the mythology of Manitoba as a settler space and its lived reality as an Indigenous space influenced my choice in primary sources. While there is no shortage of print media about Manitoba from the 1870s and 1880s, my focus was on the newspapers and immigration pamphlets that were written, printed, and published in Manitoba. The authors of these sources lived in Winnipeg during the 1870s, were aware of the small population of settlers in and around Winnipeg, and were aware of the slow trickle of immigrants. Their writings were read across Canada, and some reached to the United States and Great Britain, but were also intended for a local audience, to support local talking points and debates. The writers of these sources were also aware that many more settlers would be required in order for the claims of sovereignty over the Canadian prairie to become “legitimate.”

Maps from 1870 and 1879 illustrate the population spread of Manitoba in the early 1870s, and how the land was transformed as part of the process of colonization, and how sovereignty and possession of land were shifting during this time.

¹⁸ Gaudy, 67.

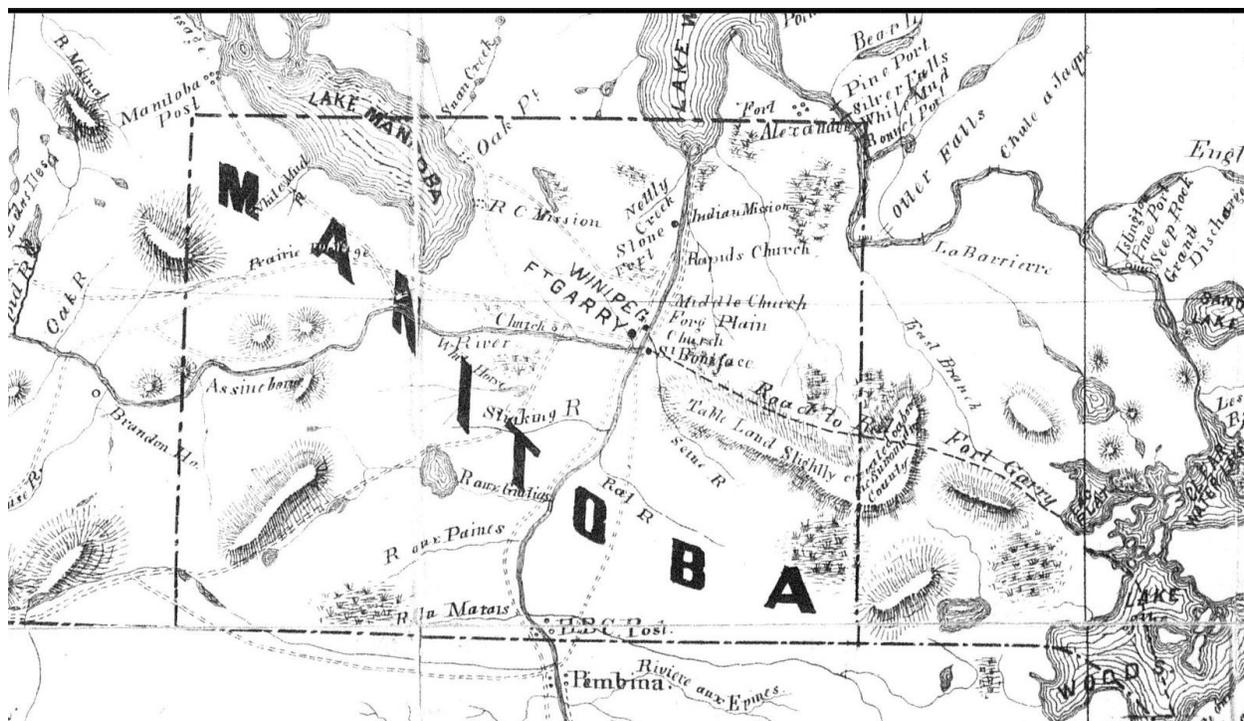


Figure 1.1. E. H. Charles Lionais, *Map of the Red River Territory* [map], Montreal: Dawson Bros. Roberts, Reinhold & Co., 1870. Accessed at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/manitobamaps/2086983828/>.

Figure 1.1 is a map from 1870 and reveals the Indigenous sovereignty and control over the land itself.¹⁹ The double-dashed lines show the Red River cart trails used by Métis bison hunters. “Table lands,” some of the most noticeable landmarks on an otherwise open prairie, are indicated. The settlements are generally located along the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, and are largely Métis communities with ties to the fur trade. The one road indicated is the “Road to Fort Garry,” extending from St. Boniface and Fort Garry to the Lake of the Woods.

¹⁹ E. H. Charles Lionais, *Map of the Red River Territory* [map], Montreal: Dawson Bros. Roberts, Reinhold & Co., 1870. Accessed at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/manitobamaps/2086983828/>.

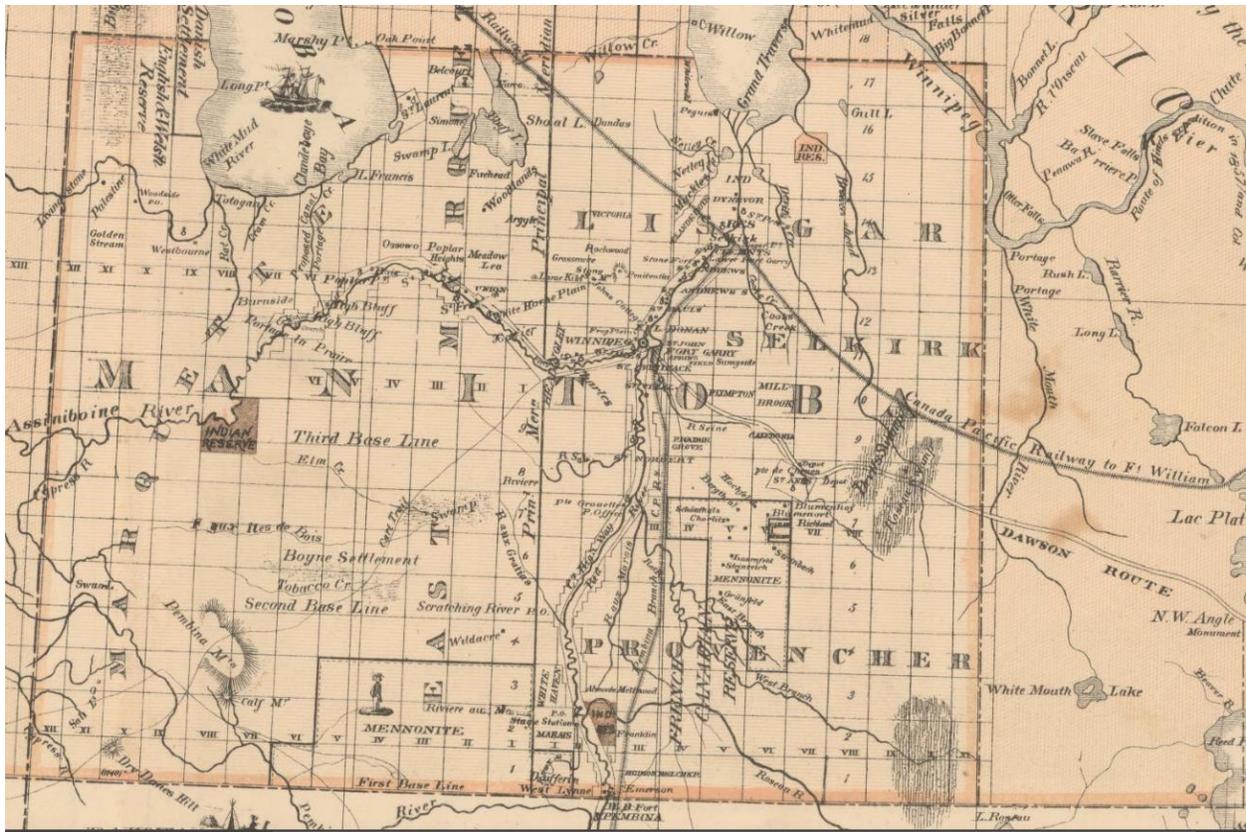


Figure 1.2. A. G. E. Westmacott and H. Belden, *Province of Manitoba and part of the District of Keewatin and the North West Territory shewing townships and settlements* [map], Toronto: H. Belden, 1879. Accessed via Peel's Prairie Provinces archive at https://archive.org/details/WCW_M000441/mode/1up.

By 1879, settler presence began to shape the landscape of Manitoba in easily identifiable ways, most notably, the grid system of surveyed agricultural land.²⁰ Figure 1.2 also shows the creation (and locations) of Indian Reserves and colonization reserves – lands reserved for the use of particular ethnoreligious immigrant groups. The cart trails are still indicated, but so are rail lines. New features are the location of swamps, the penitentiary, and a legend to show the locations of Mounted Police detachments, post offices, churches, and mills. Taken together, these maps reveal the change that occurred over the 1870s, as more institutions and markers of settler

²⁰ A. G. E. Westmacott and H. Belden, *Province of Manitoba and part of the District of Keewatin and the North West Territory shewing townships and settlements* [map], Toronto: H. Belden, 1879. Accessed via Peel's Prairie Provinces archive at https://archive.org/details/WCW_M000441/mode/1up.

colonialism were added into Indigenous territory, but the region itself was still understood as Indigenous, as indicated by the cart trails, and in the full map, the imagery of Indigenous peoples and bison outside of the surveyed area.

Historiography

This dissertation is about how newspapers and other print media perpetuated myths to shape relationships between various peoples and political structures during the 1870s in Manitoba. While my research addresses aspects of this history that have not received much attention, it has been grounded in the work of historians of the Red River Settlement and Manitoba, settler colonialism, land, indigeneity, and immigration history.

The history of Red River is fundamentally a Métis history, shaped by the fur trade and Indigenous peoples, and later, settlers. Fur trade history is an extensive field, but a few works are foundational to understanding the fur trade's role in shaping Red River society, namely, Sylvia Van Kirk's *Many Tender Ties*, which examines the role of First Nation, Métis, and white women in shaping the fur trade in western Canada.²¹ *Strangers in Blood*, by Jennifer S. H. Brown, is also important in understanding the formation of fur trade families within the company structures of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Northwest Company.²²

Fur trade families were also part of British colonial history, as examined by Adele Perry in *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World*, demonstrating that these mixed-race fur trade families were part of intimate connections

²¹ Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: J. Gordon Shillingford Publishing, 1980), 11.

²² Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1980), xxi.

between mobility and power.²³ The mobility and extensiveness of these family and imperial networks means that the fur trade can be understood as part of the global history of empire.

The Red River Settlement developed a unique culture in the nineteenth century, as missionaries, fur traders, merchants, and settlers began establishing a colonial outpost in an otherwise Indigenous space. Norma Jean Hall explores the economic and social development of Red River throughout the nineteenth century, and how the Métis community was dispersed “due to the application of external force, not to internal weakness.”²⁴ In *Homeland to Hinterland*, Gerhard Ens asserts that the Métis were shaped by the economic markets, but downplays the role that settler violence and colonial systems had in shaping life at Red River.²⁵ Scholars such as J. M. Bumsted, Frits Pannekoek, and Dale Gibson have each examined the history of early Manitoba, looking at a variety of court cases in the local legal system, and how the colonial influences of the fur trade, missionaries, and courts both united and divided Red River society.²⁶ The Red River Settlement remains important to Métis history, but does not encompass the Métis experience.

Expanding out of the Red River settlement itself and into the surrounding area, reveals the interconnectedness of life on the prairies. Red River in the 1870s was a borderland, more than a decidedly Canadian or American space, as explored by historians like Michel Hogue,

²³ Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 254.

²⁴ Norma Jean Hall, “A ‘Perfect Freedom’: Red River as a Settler Society, 1810-1870” M.A. Thesis., University of Manitoba, 2003), v.

²⁵ Gerhard Ens, 4.

²⁶ J. M. Bumsted, *Thomas Scott’s Body and Other Essays on Early Manitoba History* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2000), ix.

Frits Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Riel Resistance of 1869-70* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing, 1991), 4-5.

Dale Gibson, *Law, Life, and Government at Red River: Volume 1, Settlement and Government, 1812-1872* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015), xiv.

Brenda Macdougall, and Nicole St-Onge.²⁷ The importance of the bison hunt, and the larger fur trade economy, to the Métis nation meant that large segments of the population moved around the prairies, and so the concept of a “homeland” extended well beyond the Red River Settlement. Macdougall and St-Onge argue that the Métis experience was different on each side of the border, not because of the Métis nation itself or because of the environment, but because of the imposed colonial boundaries that created identities and policies which were enforced in different ways by each empire.²⁸ Dividing land for individual ownership and regulating racial identities is part of the colonial project and was evident in the Red River newspapers. Rigidly enforcing space and identity relies on systems that were created to suit the needs of the settlers moving into an Indigenous space and trying to control the unpredictable environment they had claimed as their own.

While the Métis nation extends beyond Red River, the large Métis community at Red River means that this focus on immigration to Manitoba in the 1870s frequently intersects with the simultaneously occurring history of violence against the Métis community and their intentional dispossession of land. While certainly many Métis did leave Manitoba during this decade, it is also important to be aware of “hiding” as a Métis survival strategy, “especially in the aftermath of the pitched conflicts at Red River.”²⁹ This “hiding” occurred simultaneously with Métis cultural and political organizing, although that organizing often, as historian Michel Hogue explains, “remained invisible to many historians, archivists, and others in the scholarly

²⁷Michel Hogue, *Métis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2015), 4.

Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall, *Contours of a People: Métis Family, Mobility, and History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 3.

²⁸ Brenda Macdougall and Nicole St-Onge, “Métis in the borderlands of the northern Plains in the nineteenth century,” in *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies*, eds. Chris Andersen and Jean M. O’Brien (London: Routledge, 2017): 262-263.

²⁹ Michel Hogue, “Still hiding in plain sight?: Historiography and Métis archival memory,” *History Compass* 18, no. 7 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12618>.

community.”³⁰ As such, much of Métis historiography uses 1885 as an end date, and more work is required to reform archives to effectively correct this absence of Métis sources after the late nineteenth century.³¹

Many Métis remained in Manitoba and navigated a series of structural challenges throughout the twentieth century. While some may have practiced the previously mentioned strategy of “hiding,” others did not, or could not, and faced continued efforts to further dispossess them of land. According to David Parent, the intersecting municipal, provincial, and federal apparatuses the Manitoba Métis found themselves navigating between were an extension of the dispossession begun in the nineteenth century.³² One of these examples is Rooster Town, where many Métis remained, maintaining their own community on the edge of Winnipeg and resisting integration into the larger city.³³ Urban indigeneity was shaped by racial capitalism, as discussed by Owen Toews. He explains that capitalist inequality used racist thinking to excuse the “straight up vilification of oppressed groups to more cunning ways of feeling that promote the sense that oppressed groups, perhaps through no fault of their own, are not quite ready to enjoy self-determination or a humane standard of living.”³⁴ In both the past and present, Indigenous peoples in Canadian cities navigate a complex set of racist structures, designed to create and then maintain a system of inequality, based on settler colonial ideas of sovereignty and who has a legitimate right to occupy certain spaces. This dynamic was an important part of life in early Winnipeg, as discussed in this dissertation.

³⁰ Hogue, “Still hiding in plain sight?”

³¹ Hogue, “Still hiding in plain sight?”

³² David Parent, “Governing Métis Identity: The Settler-Colonial Dispossession and Regulation of the Métis in Mid-Twentieth Century Manitoba (Phd diss., University of Alberta, 2021), ii.

³³ Evelyn Peters, Matthew Stock, and Adreian Werner, *Rooster Town: The History of a Urban Métis Community, 1901-1961* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2018), 8.

³⁴ Owen Toews, *Stolen City: Racial Capitalism and the Making of Winnipeg* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2018), 18.

The history of immigration to Manitoba is directly connected to the processes of dispossession and settler colonialism that were being enacted in the late nineteenth century. This type of settler colonialism was not unique to Manitoba and was part of a larger system of colonialism where settlers sought to displace Indigenous peoples for land. The taking of land is a violent act, and “Land is life—or at least, land is necessary for life. Thus contests for land can be—indeed, often are—contests for life.”³⁵ In other words, removing Indigenous peoples from land is always destructive, and due to interconnected relationships between people, land, and traditional knowledges, that destruction can have wide impacts, even though Wolfe differentiates settler colonial genocide from other “qualified” genocides with the term “structural genocide.”³⁶ Other scholars challenge this separation of settler colonialism from the harshness of genocide, as Lorenzo Veracini explains:

More than other political regimes, a settler colonial project, as it dispenses with the labour of colonised others, is predominantly about territory. While it is absolutely crucial, the territorialisation of the settler community is ultimately premised on a parallel and necessary deterritorialisation of Indigenous outsiders. There is no way to avoid a traumatic outcome.³⁷

Settler colonialism requires land, and requires settler immigration to fill that land, and this requires the taking of land from Indigenous peoples, fundamentally altering their lives, cultures, and laws.

Removing Indigenous peoples from land is a violent act not only in the initial dispossession, but also in the ongoing disruption to Indigenous cultural and legal systems. Aimee Craft and Lucas King explain that Anishnaabe *inaakonigewin* (water law) is understood as a series of levels learned over a lifetime, as part of relationships “which are part of Creation and

³⁵ Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism,” 387.

³⁶ Wolfe, 402-403.

³⁷ Lorenzo Veracini, “Settler Collective, Founding Violence, and Disavowal: The Settler Colonial Situation,” *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 29, no. 4 (November 2008): 367-368.

exist between all beings.”³⁸ They continue, “Anishnaabe people thus have responsibilities to themselves, others, the land, and all beings on the land.”³⁹ For peoples who are closely connected to specific areas of land as part of ongoing relationships to each other and laws, the intervention of the settler colonial state’s intervention and removal of people has particularly harsh consequences. These harsh consequences were often intentional, and viewed as both necessary and acceptable by the expanding settler state. The Métis nation was intentionally denied a legal homeland through government delays and inaction, as D. N. Sprague explains, “Ottawa withheld self-government from Manitoba until a preferred [non-Indigenous] majority was established.”⁴⁰ First Nations were forced to submit to unacceptable treaty conditions through an intentionally created policy of starvation as the economic system of the fur trade was depressed by new types of economic growth. In Manitoba, the decline in the fur trade economy left many First Nations people indebted to fur trade companies, and turning to fur trade posts to avoid starvation.⁴¹ In the western prairie, the starvation was intentional, and described as “cruel but effective,” James Daschuk explains, as by 1883 “only a few hundred desperate holdouts were still not on reserves and under the control of the Department of Indian Affairs.”⁴² Resistance to the Canadian government taking land for settlers, such as the 1885 Northwest Resistance, was severely punished. Any attempt to hold onto land was unacceptable for the settler colonial state.

Settler communities in the prairies have an extensive historiography, much of it centred around how they interacted with the land and environment in their new homes. In 1999, Royden Loewen argued that from the 1980s to 1990s, Canadian historiography highlighted the

³⁸ Aimee Craft and Lucas King, “Building the Treaty #3 Nibi Declaration Using an Anishnaabe Methodology of Ceremony, Language, and Engagement,” *Water* 2021, 13, 532, <https://doi.org/10.3390/w13040532>.

³⁹ Aimee Craft and Lucas King, “Building the Treaty #3.”

⁴⁰ D. N. Sprague, *Canada and the Métis, 1869-1885* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988), ix-x.

⁴¹ Frank Tough, *‘As Their Natural Resources Fail’: Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996), 69.

⁴² James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013), 184.

“polyethnic landscape of rural Canada [and] the rich, ethnically derived components of its agriculture,” among other questions.⁴³ While this approach to rural ethnic communities was not explicitly environmental history, it did rely heavily on the physical landscape as a factor in narratives of immigration and settlement. Robert Irwin wrote about the connection between people and their environment on the prairies, with reference to the “conflict between environmental and cultural determinism, between the west as place and as process,” that has so defined prairie historiography.⁴⁴ The discussion around immigration in the local newspapers and pamphlets during the 1870s demonstrates that tension between the existing environment and landscapes, and the ambitions of what new immigrants and settlers hoped it would become.

Regionalism has its limitations, as Merle Massie cautions that the overuse of regionalism within Canadian history can lead to a form of generalized storytelling that assumes homogeneity between large areas, simply because they share some regional attributes.⁴⁵ There is still value in taking a closer look at regions, particularly in a nation as geographically large as Canada, as long as it is understood that the “prairie,” for example, is not just one place. Looking at Manitoba as one section within the larger prairie region, Gerald Friesen explains that a “local culture” developed.⁴⁶ Debates around bilingualism, First Nations and Métis and history, the divide between Winnipeg and rural Manitoba, and the histories of ethnic immigration and cultural development all shaped Manitoba’s history in unique ways.

The physical environment and landscape further shapes the history of place, as agricultural Manitoba is unique within the larger prairie (and the larger provincial boundaries), as

⁴³ Royden Loewen, “On the Margin or in the Lead: Canadian Prairie Historiography,” *Agricultural History* 73, no. 1 (Winter, 1999): 39.

⁴⁴ Robert Irwin, “Breaking the Shackles of the Metropolitan Thesis: Prairie History, the Environment and Layered Identities,” *Journal of Canadian studies* 32, no. 3 (1997), 102.

⁴⁵ Merle Massie, *Forest Prairie Edge: Place History in Saskatchewan* (Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2014), 6-7.

⁴⁶ Gerald Friesen, *River Road: Essays on Manitoba and Prairie History* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1996), xii.

a distinctive geographical region less prone to drought and with more flood risk than the rest of the Canadian prairie, despite not receiving significantly more precipitation.⁴⁷ Shannon Stunden Bower argues that this difference in land, particularly agricultural land, influenced the development and settlement of the province, as the nature of drainage and flooding required cooperation between municipalities and the province itself.

The idea of “utopianism,” first discussed by W. L. Morton, connects the structures of settler colonialism to the prairie region, as Manitoba was perceived and promoted as a “promised land” for settlers.⁴⁸ Not all ethnic and racial groups were welcome within this “utopia,” but this early portrayal of the prairie continues to shape a contemporary understanding of the prairie, even though its roots are in the mid-nineteenth century. For some Canadians in the mid-nineteenth century, “the possession and development of the Hudson’s Bay territories were essential to the future of Canada.”⁴⁹ They dedicated their careers to promoting the idea of the West and used the “rhetoric of patriotism” to describe their efforts, saying that “they were the ‘true Canadians’ or the ‘far-sighted patriots’ who, they argued, understood the destiny of Canada in a way that others did not.”⁵⁰ Historian Doug Owram writes that “Realistic or delusory, noble or selfish, these perceptions determined the evolution of the expansionist movement and of Western Canada as surely as did the harsh economic realities faced by the would-be farmer or merchant on the new frontier.”⁵¹ The Canadian expansionists had a distinctive vision of the Canadian prairie in mind, and much of prairie immigration history about the nineteenth century addresses the lengths taken to achieve that vision.

⁴⁷ Shannon Stunden Bower, *Wet Prairie: People, Land, and Water in Agricultural Manitoba* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press), 3.

⁴⁸ R. Douglas Francis and Chris Kitzan, *Prairie West as Promised Land* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007), xiv.

⁴⁹ Doug Owram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980, reprinted 1992), 3.

⁵⁰ Owram, 3.

⁵¹ Owram, 6.

Race, gender, and ethnicity were all factors impacting immigration to the Canadian prairies. The ideal settler for the Canadian prairie was a white, landowning man (or family), preferably of British Canadian descent, in order to aid in expanding the empire. While initial homestead law based on the American model allowed single women to apply for land, by 1876, Canadian homestead laws had been amended to ensure that only women who were “*bona fide* the independent head of a family” (widowed with underage children) were able to get land.⁵² African-American immigration was limited, and Sarah-Jane Mathieu explains, “between 1870 and 1940, every prime minister, whether running on the Liberal or the Conservative ticket, insisted that the Dominion of Canada would be a white man’s land toiled by brawny Europeans and Americans, without elbow room for people of colour.”⁵³ This resulted in both official and unofficial policies to limit the immigration of African Americans and Asians to Canada and so “the first Chinese to reach western Manitoba, according to the accounts that survive, arrived in 1884.”⁵⁴ While the immigration of people of colour was intentionally limited, the immigration of European ethnic groups was promoted, and much has been written about the experiences of these religious and ethnic groups who shaped the Canadian prairie. In particular, many of these groups immigrated as large family units, and the presence of women and families has been an important part of prairie history.⁵⁵ These histories of ethnic groups that were seen as white or in close proximity to whiteness are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

⁵² Sarah Carter, *Imperial Plots: Woman, Land, and the Spadework of British Colonialism on the Canadian Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2016), 71.

⁵³ Sarah-Jane Mathieu, *North of the Color Line: Migration and Black Resistance in Canada, 1870-1955* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 14.

⁵⁴ Allison Marshall, *The Way of the Bachelor: Early Chinese Settlement in Manitoba* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 1.

⁵⁵ For further reading about immigration and ethnicity, see Frances Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes: Ethno-Religious Identity and the Canadian Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010).; Royden Loewen and Gerald Friesen, *Immigrants in Prairie Cities: Ethnic Diversity in Twentieth-century Cities* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).; Marlene Epp, Franca Iacovetta, and Frances Swyripa, *Sisters or Strangers? Immigrant, Ethnic, and Racialized Women in Canadian History*. Second Edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).

Primary Sources: Newspapers and Promotional Materials

Newspapers are the main primary sources used throughout this dissertation, and were an important part of late-nineteenth century life. They were not apolitical or passive actors, but an important part of national mythmaking and narratives. Paul Rutherford, in his book *A Victorian Authority: The Daily Press in Late-Nineteenth Century Canada*, emphasizes the importance of the daily press, writing that

Every leading authority, from the school to the church and party, sponsored myths. But the daily press was the prime mythmaker [...] During the last decades of the nineteenth century, editorials elaborated a series of mythologies of nationhood which sometimes challenges but usually justified the existing or emerging patterns of dominance in the country at large.⁵⁶

These myths generally supported the “eternal law of progress” and the role of the state in making a modern, progressive society.⁵⁷ Michael Eamon makes the connection between colonial presses in Halifax and Quebec City in the late-eighteenth century and the performance of sociability and progress in the colonial world. Although my time frame is a century later, the removed nature of the prairies makes the connections applicable to Red River. Eamon writes that the “colonial print community used the presses as a tool to facilitate their advancement in colonial society.

Members of this community saw an inherent and progressive power in print and turned to the press in their pursuit of refined sociability, self-betterment, and societal improvement.”⁵⁸ The newspapers at Red River and Winnipeg generally followed this model of upholding national myths and advancing “progressive” ideas of liberal land use.

⁵⁶ Paul Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority: The Daily Press in Late Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 156.

⁵⁷ Rutherford, 157.

⁵⁸ Michael Eamon, *Imprinting Britain: Newspapers, Sociability, and the Shaping of British North America* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015), 13.

Prairie newspapers provided an opportunity for new or potential settlers to have their questions answered by people that they perceived to have knowledge about the environment. Along with answering questions, prairie settlers also simultaneously worked through their fears and perceptions about their climate and environment. In doing so they attempted to frame their environment as a promised land. The prairie west region was portrayed as an “Edenic paradise,” a place where “the perfect society could be created,” and a secular promised land where an individual could make his mark on a “blank sheet.”⁵⁹ Immigration was an important aspect of creating a promised land, specifically the right kind of immigration. Settling the west was “regarded as an essential check upon American expansionist impulses,” and a way to increase Canada’s role in the British empire, if they could become an “international leader in grain production.”⁶⁰ Recruiting immigrants was the role of the Department of Agriculture, advertising the financial inducements for certain immigrants, the “abundant natural resources, good soil, healthy climate, and stable political institutions.”⁶¹ The newspapers published some of these official reports, but generally used their firsthand knowledge and presence to work towards to the same goal of immigration. Sometimes they agreed with official advertising, but often they added their own flair, reassuring intending immigrants about any uncertainties, often related to weather. Some newspapers during this time were published by political parties, and openly critiqued or promoted policies from this angle. Others were published as separate businesses and claimed to be less biased. Depending on who was the owner or editor, they were viewed as potentially more honest than government propaganda, even though regardless of publisher, the goal of the newspapers was still to describe the land as an idyllic promised land.

⁵⁹ R. Douglas Francis and Chris Kitzan, “Introduction,” in *The Prairie West as Promised Land*, R. Douglas Francis and Chris Kitzan, eds. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007), x-xi.

⁶⁰ Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy, 1540-1997* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 63.

⁶¹ Kelley and Trebilcock, 63.

Gerald Friesen's *Citizens and Nation* examines the connection between print culture and nationalism in Canada, arguing that they were one medium through which a Canadian identity developed, and where the new nation of Canada began to understand itself.⁶² Canadians were informed of the local, national, and international news through the papers, but the papers also cultivated a sense of community for those living within a given area, who may or may not have had anything else in common. There was also a connection between the prevalence of newspapers and the larger push for literacy and political engagement in Canada.⁶³ In Manitoba in the 1870s, the newspapers did not just cater to a literate audience. Many of them summarized the main newspaper stories in a sentence or two and interspersed the summaries with small bits of information or observations too short for a full column in the "Local and Provincial" sections. These sections can be read in a manner similar to a social media thread, where political news or criminal court proceedings were followed or preceded with weather reports or jokes. Many of these jokes were most effective when read aloud.⁶⁴ Literacy was asset, but even those with a low literacy level would be able to appreciate these snippets of stories, or laugh along as the paper was read aloud.

Newspaper editors shaped their papers in distinctive ways during this era, as they often occupied multiple roles within their communities, as politicians and businessmen, and "they took on personas of authority, seeking to educate both local subscribers and policy-makers abroad."⁶⁵ Kenton Storey describes their "acclaimed public role as representatives of the fourth estate" by explaining that their goal was to "reflect public opinion and mediate relations between the ruling

⁶² Gerald Friesen, *Citizens and Nation: An Essay on History, Communication, and Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 148.

⁶³ Friesen, *Citizens and Nation*, 151.

⁶⁴ Shelisa Klassen, "'Recruits and Comrades' in a 'War of Ambition': Mennonite Immigrants in Late 19th Century Manitoba Newspapers" (M.A. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 2016), 5.

⁶⁵ Kenton Storey, "Aboriginal Title in the Press at Red River and New Westminster," *The Canadian Historical Review* 101, no. 2 (June 2020), 244.

and ruled classes.”⁶⁶ Because newspapers at this time were largely composed of “cut-and-paste” stories from other papers, the editors revealed what stories they thought were worth mentioning and passing along to their readers.⁶⁷ They were printing newspapers to educate their readers, but also to reflect local discussions to readers abroad.

Newspapers and immigration pamphlets both offered advice to immigrants, which developed as a genre of literature in the late nineteenth century all over the British empire. Jenny Coleman examines New Zealand “emigrant advice manuals” which gave detailed information about “exports and markets, agriculture and horticulture, pastoral pursuits, and general investments, as well as detailed advice for intending emigrants to assist them in appropriate preparation for their voyage, arrival, and settlement of this ‘new’ land.”⁶⁸ The overarching theme of this genre of literature was “New Zealand as an ideal society for European settlers” where authors hoped to “persuade various categories of individuals and families firstly to emigrate and secondly to choose New Zealand as their destination.”⁶⁹ These are the same themes and goals present in the newspapers and pamphlets trying to entice emigrants to Manitoba. As Coleman explains, this genre of emigrant advice literature “appealed to women writers” and this literature was often focused on the tension of being away from one’s home, and yet the connection to a newly established home.⁷⁰

In a Canadian context, Patrick A. Dunae explains that while advertising “was a major part of Canada’s immigration programme during the boom years of settlement” so far “Scant attention has been paid to the agencies and the individuals who were responsible for distributing

⁶⁶ Storey, “Aboriginal Title,” 244.

⁶⁷ Storey, “Aboriginal Title,” 244.

⁶⁸ Jenny Coleman, “Relocating Lives in the ‘Britain of the South’: The Influence of Emigrant Advice Manuals on the Public Writings of Nineteenth-Century Female Emigrants,” *Life Writing* 14, no. 4 (2017), 532.

⁶⁹ Coleman, 532-533.

⁷⁰ Coleman, 538.

this material.”⁷¹ He argues that these government immigration advertisements were “generally well-designed, well-defined documents: not only were they an important part of a carefully orchestrated recruiting campaign, but they were also key elements in a communications network that was crucial to the growth of the Dominion.”⁷² As will be explored in future chapters, not all of these efforts in recruiting immigrants were successful. Many of the immigrants to Canada were hardly the ideal types the government and immigration agents were trying to recruit, as, “most continued on to America; the remainder, in too many cases, were paupers, unskilled labourers, and other types deemed to be “unsuitable” immigrant stock.”⁷³

The Canadian immigration system was largely federal in the early years, despite the official 1867 structure setting up “concurrent responsibility for immigration.”⁷⁴ The structure changed in 1893, when the Department of the Interior officially handled federal immigration. Immigration agents were given a standard set of promotional materials “formulated by the policy-makers in Ottawa [which] varied little from location to location.”⁷⁵ Agents also spent their time giving speeches, as one agent “gave twenty-six lectures and spent eighty-four days travelling” in his first year hired.⁷⁶ Despite this labour, Marjory Harper explains that “Canadian government agents did not usually generate emigration fever—that was the preserve of friends and family.”⁷⁷ Recruiting British immigrants was often ineffective, and most immigration to Manitoba came from Canada, specifically Ontario. The promotional materials created in Manitoba often addressed the concerns emigrants from Ontario brought to the new province,

⁷¹ Patrick A. Dunae, “Promoting the Dominion: Records and the Canadian Immigration Campaign, 1872-1915,” *Archivaria* 19 (1984), 73.

⁷² Dunae, 73-74.

⁷³ Dunae, 74.

⁷⁴ Marjory Harper, “Enticing the Emigrant: Canadian Agents in Ireland and Scotland, c.1870-C.1920,” *Scottish historical review* 83, no. 1 (2004), 41.

⁷⁵ Harper, 43.

⁷⁶ Harper, 44.

⁷⁷ Harper, 58.

with less focus on appealing to an overseas audience, the way that the federal materials attempted. In the Manitoban pamphlets and newspapers there was less importance in explaining Canadian land laws or its location, and more attention paid to comparing the land, climate, and social structure of Manitoba to Ontario.

The first “Manitoban” newspaper was called the *Nor’Wester*, and was first printed in Red River on 28 December, 1859. In the first column on the first page, William Buckingham and William Coldwell introduce their paper by saying “The printing press will hasten the change, not only by stimulating the industrial life of the Red River Settlement, but by [...]conveying to more distant observers the accurate knowledge of the position, progress, and prospects of affairs.”⁷⁸ From the beginning of the newspaper industry, the focus was on changing Red River life and society, and on educating outside readers about life at Red River. This is reflected by the biographies of many of the men involved in creation of newspapers and print media in Winnipeg during the 1870s. Many of the early newspapermen arrived in Red River in the late 1850s and throughout the 1860s. These men were largely “free traders” who “eventually came to call their collection of stores, residences, and warehouses to distinguish themselves collectively” from the earlier Red River population.⁷⁹ They were invested in local businesses as well as newspapers, and so this perspective coloured much of the news coverage. Some of these men connected themselves to merchants like Andrew Bannatyne and Andrew McDermot, who were “more closely linked with the local Red River [and Métis] community,” but others prioritized their connections to Canadian or American communities.⁸⁰

⁷⁸“Prospectus of ‘The Nor’Wester’: A Journal Published at Red River Settlement,” *Nor’Wester*, December 28, 1859.

⁷⁹ Kurt Korneski, “Reform and Empire: The Case of Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1870s-1910s,” *Urban History Review* 37, no. 1 (Fall 2008), 49.

⁸⁰ Korneski, “Reform and Empire,” 49-50.

As more merchants from Ontario and America moved to Manitoba, they joined this class of “free traders” who developed into the group of “reformers.” Kurt Korneski describes the reformers as individuals who took it upon themselves to try and restructure the social order away from pure individualism and towards a concern for the “condition of the people” and the social order.⁸¹ While this involved creating institutions and extending state authority in many cases, they were “sustaining the liberal order” by “supposedly serving the needs of the masses to whom [the state] was responsible.”⁸² This meant supporting nation-building projects and state intervention for the poor or working class, while still adhering to liberalism and capital markets. For the reformers in Manitoba, this also meant extending the British empire and its values into places that were not British. Put succinctly,

The men and women at the core of Winnipeg’s reform movement were adamant that they were among the finest examples of the ‘British race,’ and yet they were woefully aware that life in the territory they inhabited differed markedly from the one implied in prevailing standard of Britishness.⁸³

The reformers who ran the newspapers brought this “woeful awareness” to their coverage of Manitoba, trying to assert the sovereignty of the British-Canadian empire in a place that was decidedly not British.

The following table lists the main Manitoban newspapers in the 1870s, including the years they were published, the language of publication and frequency (which could ebb and flow throughout the decade). Where possible, the intended readership and audience of the newspaper is indicated. During this era, the writers of newspaper articles were seldom given bylines, and so the actual voices we are reading in the newspaper archive are unclear, but the main editorial staff are noted, when known.

⁸¹ Korneski, “Reform and Empire,” 51.

⁸² Korneski, “Reform and Empire,” 52.

⁸³ Korneski, “Reform and Empire,” 53.

Newspaper	Years Published	Language	Frequency	Readership	Editor/Staff* *not conclusive
Le Métis	May 27, 1871- September 29, 1881	French	Weekly	Conservative paper, defending Métis land rights, French Canadian immigration, federalism, and the French Catholic cause. Replaced by <i>Le Manitoba</i> in 1881, reflecting shift to general Franco-Manitoban readers.	Joseph Royal ⁱⁱ established the newspaper, and sold it to Alphonse-Alfred-Clément La Rivière ⁱⁱⁱ as <i>Le Manitoba</i> in 1881.
Manitoba Free Press	November 30, 1872- May 18, 1878	English	Weekly	Liberal paper, circulated throughout the province- after 1878 called the <i>Manitoba Weekly Free Press</i> and later the <i>Winnipeg Free Press</i> .	William Fisher Luxton ^{iv} and John A. Kenny started the paper. John R. Cameron was the first news editor. ^v Charles Acton Burrows joined in 1879. ^{vi}
Manitoba Gazette	October 12, 1878- March 15, 1879	English	Weekly	Liberal-Conservative, and opposed provincial government. They were sued for libel and so ceased publication.	Published by Frank J. Abjon
Manitoba Herald	January 11, 1877-August 2, 1877	English	Daily	Defended interests of Manitoba-monitored province's representatives.	Alexander Begg with Walter R. Nursey. ^{vii}
Manitoban and Northwest Herald	October 15, 1870- November 21, 1874	English	Weekly	Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, continued by <i>The Standard</i> .	Published by William Coldwell ^{viii} and Robert Cunningham ^{ix} using <i>The New Nation's</i> repaired equipment and

					location in Andrew Bannatyne's building. ^x
The New Nation	January 7, 1870-September 3, 1870	English and French	Weekly	Formed by merger of the <i>Red River Pioneer</i> and the <i>Nor'Wester</i> and was an organ of the Louis Riel provisional government.	William Coldwell's "yet unborn" <i>Red River Pioneer</i> became the <i>NN</i> , but by the first publication, Henry Robinson ^{xi} was the editor. ^{xii} Thomas Spence ^{xiii} then took over and was seen as "more malleable." ^{xiv}
The Nor'Wester	December 8, 1874-April 5, 1875	English	Daily	Supported the Davis government, elected December 1874.	Edited by Alexander Begg. ^{xv}
The Nor'Wester	December 28, 1859-September 28, 1869	English	Weekly/Bi-Weekly	Suppressed by Louis Riel's supporters and became <i>The New Nation</i> .	Published by William Coldwell and William Buckingham. ^{xvi} Later, Coldwell was joined by James Ross ^{xvii} , until 1863, and Dr. John Schultz ^{xviii} who joined Coldwell in 1864. Thomas Spence was an editor while Schultz was an owner. Schultz sold it to Walter Robert Bown ^{xix} in July 1868.
Standard	November 28, 1874-August 30, 1879	English	Weekly	Previously the <i>Manitoban</i> and <i>Northwest Herald</i> -wrote mostly about the route of the CPR and Métis land grants	Managed and edited by Frederick Edward Molyneux St. John. ^{xx}

The front page of the first issue of the *Nor'Wester* also featured several advertisements for stores and services in St. Paul, Minnesota, with one advertisement for a furrier in Toronto, and an advertisement for Buckingham and Coldwell's own printing services. In addition to the advertisements, the front page also summarized the recent Council of Assiniboia meeting.⁸⁴ The next page endeavoured to accomplish the claims made in the opening statement. There was a longer introductory article, explaining that they had many subscribers from Canada and Minnesota and many people were interested in the region. There was also an explanation of the Lake Superior Route and a description of the recent cold snap but generally mild winter weather.⁸⁵ Page 3 included some coverage of a recent alleged murder, a letter from Toronto providing some general updates and asking for more information about the "resources of the Red River Valley and that of the Saskatchewan, and the *Nor'Wester* will be the great authority on the subject."⁸⁶ There was also a report about Red River crop yields and the amount of land being cultivated, as well as the current rates for furs and skins.⁸⁷ The final page featured announcements of the new paper, as reported in Toronto, Hamilton, and Montreal, and a few American papers. The majority of the page contained the coverage of the "usual bi-mensal meeting" of the Lower District Court, which featured many cases, including a Saulteaux man suing William Bunn for lost wages, and Catherine and Mary Daniel, 15 and 16 years old, respectively, who were charged in a robbery at the Stone Fort.⁸⁸ This first issue of the *Nor'Wester* is an effective example for the general pattern Manitoba newspaper coverage. By the 1870s advertisements were primarily from Winnipeg-based businesses, but other than that newspapers included transcriptions of government meetings, descriptions of court proceedings,

⁸⁴ "Council of Assiniboia," *Nor'Wester*, December 28, 1859, page 1.

⁸⁵ "Preliminary," "The Lake Superior Route," and "The Weather," *Nor'Wester*, December 28, 1859, page 2.

⁸⁶ "Agricultural & Commercial," *Nor'Wester*, December 28, 1859, page 3.

⁸⁷ "Agricultural & Commercial," *Nor'Wester*, December 28, 1859, page 3.

⁸⁸ "Lower District Court and General Quarterly Court," *Nor'Wester*, December 28, 1859, page 4.

and a smattering of articles about the weather, agricultural prospects, and reflections on life at Red River. Red River newspapers were aimed at not only a local readership but also for curious potential immigrants in far-away places, which would continue into the 1870s.

A glimpse of the early local reception of the *Nor'Wester* appeared in the opening remarks of Archdeacon Cochran on 10 January, where he joked that “the editors of the *Nor'Wester* must not tell of our faults all at once. They must give you a whole year’s time to reform—to clear away the dunghills from the river banks, to finish the sowing of your wild oats, and to root out the thistles.”⁸⁹ This was followed by an anecdote about a conversation with a local man where they laughed about needing to be careful, saying “if we are found doing anything wrong it will get into the newspaper!”⁹⁰ Despite the interest and humour, Cochran said they should support the paper, as he had heard of eight men subscribing for one copy together, and that would not support the paper for long.⁹¹

The early *Nor'Wester* published correspondence that was generally anti-Canada, as became clear in the 28 January letter from F. W. Chesson, Assistant Secretary of the Aborigines Protection Society. Chesson discouraged those looking for Red River’s annexation, saying that joining Canada before developing their own systems of responsible self government could result in losing freedoms, since Canada did not seem motivated to establish this process. He wrote, “It is obviously of the highest importance that you should concentrate all your efforts to obtain for the entire Settlement, whether French Canadians, Scotch, English, Half-breeds, or Indians, the largest measure of political freedom.”⁹²

⁸⁹ “Archdeacon Cochran on Our Present Position,” *Nor'Wester*, January 28, 1860, page 1.

⁹⁰ “Archdeacon Cochran on Our Present Position,” *Nor'Wester*, January 28, 1860, page 1.

⁹¹ “Archdeacon Cochran on Our Present Position,” *Nor'Wester*, January 28, 1860, page 1.

⁹² “As Others See Us,” *Nor'Wester*, January 28, 1860, page 4.

As other papers received the first issues of the *Nor'Wester*, they published their feedback, which the *Nor'Wester* also published. Most papers praised the appearance and the typography of the paper, and the usefulness of the advertisements for the St. Paul area. The *Dumfries Reformer* said that Canadian readers would find it useful to learn local news, and that the Red River country is “ultimately destined to become a thriving Province.”⁹³

The *Nor'Wester* paused publication for a number of years, but returned on 29 June 1874. The front page of that first issue promised a weekly publication, every Monday. The “manager” was E. L. Barber, and the paper expected to cover the British, Canadian and American markets, with special attention on Winnipeg.⁹⁴ The rest of the front-page featured advertisements, mostly for Winnipeg businesses, reflecting the rapidly changing the economy, compared to the 1859 first issue. The majority of the front page was a fictionalized story about sailing called “A Midshipman’s Yarn,” which also reflected the changing interests, as short stories of fiction often took front page positions on newspapers during these years.⁹⁵

In 1870, a new newspaper was established by Louis Riel’s provisional government. The first edition of the *New Nation* explained the purpose of a newspaper using a quote from Henry Ward Beecher that reads:

A newspaper is a window through which men look out on all that is going on in the world – without a newspaper a man is shut up in a small room, and knows little or nothing of what is happening outside of himself. In our day, newspapers keep pace with history and record it. A good newspaper will keep a sensible man in sympathy with the world’s current history. It is an ever unfolding encyclopedia; an unbound book forever issuing and never finished.⁹⁶

That same page showed the divide between the *Globe* and the people at Red River, as they tell the “most amusing scare” of the arrival of the correspondent, who was visited by the

⁹³ “Opinions of the Press,” *Nor'Wester*, April 14, 1860, page 4.

⁹⁴ “The Nor'Wester Published Every Monday,” *Nor'Wester*, June 29, 1874, page 1.

⁹⁵ “A Midshipman’s Yarn,” *Nor'Wester*, June 29, 1874, page 1.

⁹⁶ “The Newspaper,” *New Nation*, June 3, 1870, page 1.

“neighbouring Indians” hoping to receive a welcome or maybe some tobacco. The correspondent, “under some delusion of a scalpy nature, presented a revolver instead of a piece of tobacco” and so they laughed at him and fired a few shots to scare him⁹⁷. He ran for help and returned with “the Half-breed mail carrier, who highly enjoyed the joke played on our friend of the quill.”⁹⁸ The journalist then wrote a story to the *Globe* about this encounter, telling the world about the “hairbreadth escapes of a newspaper correspondent.” The *New Nation* story concludes that perhaps the *Globe* should take more care to learn about the local Indigenous peoples, as it seemed he was “slightly inexperienced in ‘Indian affairs.’”⁹⁹

The *New Nation*’s stated intentions for their newspaper would represent the voices of the Red River Métis to the outside world. This led them to spend a significant amount of space refuting how other newspapers, especially in Ontario, were reporting on their actions. They explained that

it is our duty to tell all intending settlers that Red River Half-breeds, while they are ready to extend the right hand to strangers, at the same time do not mean to give way in the least in their position as natives of the country, and therefore having the best right to it. [...] Our duty will ever lead us to support the people of this country against all outsiders. The welfare and interest of our own little community here in Red River, will have our first attention.¹⁰⁰

The *New Nation* continued its fight against the Canadian newspaper correspondents, publishing a letter from Colin Inkster, Esq., “repudiating statements said to have been made by him to the *Telegraph*’s Correspondent.”¹⁰¹ That article is then included, with the *New Nation* commentary and it was clear to them that the correspondent was trying to stir up dissent between Riel, the French Métis, and Inkster, “an English native of Red River” and “a thorough Canadian in

⁹⁷ “An Indian Scare,” *New Nation*, June 3, 1870, page 1.

⁹⁸ “An Indian Scare,” *New Nation*, June 3, 1870, page 1.

⁹⁹ “An Indian Scare,” *New Nation*, June 3, 1870, page 1.

¹⁰⁰ “Our Duty as Journalists,” *New Nation*, July 16, 1870, page 2.

¹⁰¹ “The Toronto Telegraph’s ‘Own Correspondent,’” *New Nation*, July 23, 1870, page 2.

feeling.”¹⁰² The *Telegraph*'s article, at least as quoted in the *New Nation*, was disparaging to French Métis, describing them as being seduced to action by (“the murderous exhortations” of) Riel and the priests. Inkster described the sentiments credited to him as “totally and utterly false.”¹⁰³

The first issue of the *Manitoban* stated they would summarize interesting news from other provinces, cover “all local matters of interest,” and “collate all facts that may be of use to the intending immigrant.”¹⁰⁴ The *Manitoban* advertised itself as a weekly journal, and regularly posted the rates for advertisements, and listed Coldwell and Cunningham as that “Editors and Proprietors,” which was the only place their names appeared.¹⁰⁵ In 1871, they requested information from “reliable sources” and farmers with news worth recording, so they could have a weekly column dedicated to “agricultural matters.” They stated they wanted “results and facts, not theories and fine writing. Information fitted to enlighten farmers here and give useful information to intending emigrants is the desideratum.”¹⁰⁶

Another trend from *The Manitoban* was their focus on correcting and critiquing the coverage of Manitoba from Canadian correspondents. In one instance, they published excerpts from a Toronto correspondent, which were generally praising Manitoba, but took issue with his lack of understanding of the people. The correspondent, Mr. Irish, stated that “Instead of finding myself among half-breeds, as I anticipated, I am pleased to find that the inhabitants of the town are chiefly from Ontario, well-dressed, and apparently well-to-do, respectable people.”¹⁰⁷ The *Manitoban* responded “How pleasant it is to think that Mr. Irish was so pleased to find that the

¹⁰² “The Toronto Telegraph’s ‘Own Correspondent,’” *New Nation*, July 23, 1870, page 2.

¹⁰³ “The Toronto Telegraph’s ‘Own Correspondent,’” *New Nation*, July 23, 1870, page 2.

¹⁰⁴ “The Manitoban,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 15, 1870, page 2.

¹⁰⁵ “This One and That One,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, November 26, 1870, page 2.

¹⁰⁶ “The Farm,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, September 23, 1871, page 2.

¹⁰⁷ “The ‘Globe’ Again,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, September 9, 1871, page 2.

people of the town were chiefly from Ontario instead of half-breeds in blankets. We think, however, that Mr. Irish is a little out there. Let us run over the names of the householders in the town and see how many are Ontarians,” which was followed by a list of names of prominent Manitoban families (many of whom were Métis) and the question “Will Mr. Irish tell us how many of these are what he terms *Ontarians*?”¹⁰⁸ The article discusses several more excerpts from his articles, but as he attempted to explain the political differences and feuds between the whites and Métis, the *Manitoban* made it clear that since he did not even know who the Métis were, his analysis of the local conflicts could not be that accurate.¹⁰⁹

This would be an ongoing theme in the *Manitoban*, as in 1873 there was another article about the *Globe*. The *Manitoban* said that the *Globe* had kept Manitoba in the news for the last three years, but “For a time Manitoba affairs, as they were treated in the *Globe* were somewhat interesting, perhaps more interesting than edifying, as facts have proved.”¹¹⁰ The claim was that he reported based on personal grievances and his grasp of facts was complicated as he had recently reported on a riot that that he did not see, implying that he had been there.¹¹¹

Newspapers in Ontario were not the only problem when it came to false reporting about Manitoba; international papers made their share of mistakes. In 1873 the London *Times* reported that Fort Garry had been attacked by 7000 “Indians” and in another unnamed paper, it was the American troops at Fort Garry who had been attacked, and there were “Seven thousand Yankton and Touton Indians threatening the settlements.”¹¹² The *Manitoban* noted that while locals might laugh at that sort of rumour spreading around the empire, it could deter immigrants to hear of such violence. They argued that “there is little chance of Manitoba interests having fair play, or

¹⁰⁸ “The ‘Globe’ Again,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, September 9, 1871, page 2.

¹⁰⁹ “The ‘Globe’ Again,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, September 9, 1871, page 2.

¹¹⁰ “Manitoba Affairs,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 11, 1873, page 2.

¹¹¹ “Manitoba Affairs,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 11, 1873, page 2.

¹¹² “The London ‘Times’ and Manitoba,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 3, 1873, page 2.

of her immense stretches of prairie land being properly appreciated in England” unless there was a better system for reporting correct information.¹¹³

The *Manitoban* announced a temporary suspension on 8 August 1874, as “the sudden and melancholy death of Mr. Cunningham, one of the joint proprietors of this journal” impacted the immediate future of the paper. Cunningham was a politician (in good company, since Royal, who ran *Le Métis* was also a newspaperman and politician¹¹⁴), with a number of enemies, as he tended to support the rights of old settlers and the Métis, when it came to hay privilege and other political interests.

When *Le Métis* began printing in 1871, the *Manitoban* made an encouraging statement about the “first French newspaper ever published in the North-West Territories” in its pages, saying that the Hon. Mr. Royal had a “neat-looking” paper, and it “will be edited with a great deal of ability.”¹¹⁵ The *Manitoban* again covered local newspaper business in 1872, first commenting on how other newspapers were begging for subscription money since they sent papers first and asked for money later, and explaining that the *Manitoban* had grown and had moved from the Bannatyne building to the McDermot building, and had an “extensive and varied” set of type and could take on additional printing business.¹¹⁶

The *Manitoba Free Press* started printing in 1872, and is still published today as the *Winnipeg Free Press*. Unique to other papers at this time, after three months the *Free Press* published the numbers of their subscriptions according to location. There were several hundred subscribers, mostly around Winnipeg and Manitoba, but also 144 that were “abroad.”¹¹⁷ There

¹¹³ “The London ‘Times’ and Manitoba,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 3, 1873, page 2.

¹¹⁴ A. I. Silver, “Royal, Joseph,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/royal_joseph_13E.html.

¹¹⁵ “Le Métis,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 3, 1871, page 2.

¹¹⁶ “A Word about Ourselves,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, August 17, 1872, page 2.

¹¹⁷ “The Free Press,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 22, 1873, page 4.

was also appeal for advertisers, saying that “we can properly claim the largest circulation in Manitoba.”¹¹⁸ Later that year, they claimed to have circulation “greater than that of any other two papers in Manitoba.”¹¹⁹

In keeping with that attempt at disclosing the complications of the printing business, the *Free Press* explained their shorter paper published on 1 November 1873, saying that it was only half of their expected length. This was because their “full winter’s supply of paper, ink, etc., was shipped from Toronto” and was delayed.¹²⁰ This was an opportunity for the *Free Press* to critique the Red River steamboat monopoly and call for greater competition. That week’s paper could only be published at all because the *Manitoban* and the *Gazette* gave them the supplies for a half-sheet.

In 1873, *Le Métis* described the history of the last three years of their newspaper. They explained their role as explaining to “la population native” the new political system and working to support their interests. The paper was apparently quite successful and had a variety of uses, as “La plupart des familles d’origine française de la Province reçoivent le *Métis* et suivent attentivement les sujets d’actualité qui y sont traités. Par ce moyen les enfants s’accoutument à lire, les grandes personnes s’instruisent des choses du jour, et l’éducation politique se fait parmi la population.”¹²¹ They were asserting their value as a paper that catered to the French Métis population and had an attentive audience of people looking for information on treaties, land, and politics.

The large number of newspapers operating in Winnipeg did not mean they could accommodate all printing requests. In 1875 the five printing offices in Winnipeg were asked by

¹¹⁸ “The Free Press,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 22, 1873, page 4.

¹¹⁹ “Manitoba Free Press,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 27, 1872, page 4.

¹²⁰ “Our Half Sheet,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 1, 1873, page 1.

¹²¹ “Le Métis,” *Le Métis*, May 31, 1873, page 2.

the city clerk to print something in “*Bourgeois* type.” This would be a problem, as “in the five printing offices in Winnipeg not one line of bourgeois type can be found.”¹²² This resulted in a bit of chaos at a city meeting, and a joke about the pronunciation of “bourgeois” as “bujoy’s” type, and what that might actually mean.

By the middle of the 1870s, there were fewer feuds between the newspapers, and Winnipeg was becoming a large enough city that people were not competing quite as much, although the local newspapers continued to hold each other accountable through copying and commenting on articles against their political perspective. Largely the newspapers were united in their interest in immigration and the rest of Canada. The *Free Press* reported that the “Interest in Manitoba is reviving in the older provinces. We receive applications for copies of the *Free Press* by parties down east, by almost every mail.”¹²³ This popularity also extended to the large numbers of immigrants moving to Manitoba, which encourages the *Free Press* to request local correspondence, as the “most important feature of any newspaper outside the large cities is the local news columns, and no local newspaper of any standing will fail to keep its readers well informed upon all matters of importance that are transpiring, not only in the town in which it is published, but throughout the whole district in which it circulates.”¹²⁴ They wanted regular correspondents but also people willing to report on a casual basis. The *Free Press* specified that they were looking for facts, not private or personal matters that do not concern the public.

Newspapers competed for readership, and the large number of papers emerging during the 1870s was not sustainable. Many papers did not survive more than a year, and as Paul Rutherford explains, this was not necessarily unique to Manitoba, as both Montreal and

¹²² “City Printing,” *Nor’Wester*, March 15, 1875, page 3.

¹²³ “Local and Provincial,” *Manitoba Free Press*, January 15, 1876, page 2.

¹²⁴ “Local Correspondence,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 24, 1877, page 1.

Winnipeg “became newspaper graveyards because of the rivalry of too many dailies.”¹²⁵ The main survivor of the “graveyard” of these early years was the *Free Press*, as by the end of the decade its reputation was well-established. In 1879, observers from London noted that the *Free Press* was “ably conducted by Mr. Luxton, formerly of Strathroy. It has been truly said that this man has a greater influence in Manitoba than any other man.”¹²⁶

Newspapers featured heavily in immigration pamphlets, with excerpts from articles frequently being copied by the compilers of the pamphlets, but also the very presence of newspapers was a selling point. Alexander Begg’s *Practical Hand-book and Guide to Manitoba and the North-West* listed the presence of the two daily papers, the two weekly papers, and the French newspaper in between describing the various factories and hotels found in Winnipeg.¹²⁷ Later in that same pamphlet, Begg included 37 pages of newspaper quotes, under the section title “Extracts from Local Papers and Correspondence: To prove the correctness of the Pamphlet.”¹²⁸

Alexander Begg and Walter Nursey wrote a history of ten years of Winnipeg, published in 1879, and he covered the newspaper riots of 1872, and how most papers had to “import new plant and material to replace that which was destroyed.”¹²⁹ By November the *Manitoba Free Press* was printing, and the *Gazette*, *Manitoban*, and *le Métis* all “made a fresh start.”¹³⁰ He also reported on the progress of the newspapers, writing that by 1879 the *Free Press* and the

¹²⁵ Paul Rutherford, “The People’s Press: The Emergence of New Journalism in Canada, 1869-99,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 56, no. 2 (June 1875): 172.

¹²⁶ “A Lively Picture of Winnipeg,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 19, 1879, page 1.

¹²⁷ Alexander Begg, *Practical Handbook and Guide to Manitoba and the North-West* (Toronto: Belford, 1877), <https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.24178/6?r=0&s=1>, 19.

¹²⁸ Begg, *Practical Handbook*, 73-110.

¹²⁹ Alexander Begg and Walter R. Nursey, *Ten Years in Winnipeg: A Narration of the Principal Events in the History of the City of Winnipeg* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Times Printing & Publishing House, 1879), <http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/860.html>, 72.

¹³⁰ Begg, *Ten Years in Winnipeg*, 73.

Winnipeg *Daily Times* were competing, which “had the effect of stimulating our other journals to greater efforts.”¹³¹

When W. Fraser Rae described Manitoba in his 1882 pamphlet, he also noted the importance of the newspapers, writing that he was “more struck with [the Manitoba Club] than with the fact that Winnipeg possesses two excellent daily newspapers, the *Manitoba Free Press*, and the *Daily Times*. A clubhouse is regarded as a luxury in the Far West, whereas a newspaper is held to be a necessary of life.”¹³² The print culture established in the 1870s (and earlier) in Manitoba set the stage for the later immigration booms, not only in their efforts to shape local political discussions and promote their home province abroad, but also by establishing a marker of a “civilized” place- a steady, reliable stream of daily and weekly newspapers.

¹³¹ Begg, *Ten Years in Winnipeg*, 214.

¹³² W. Fraser Rae, *Facts About Manitoba*, (London: Chapman & Hall, 1882)

https://swift.canadiana.ca/v1/AUTH_crkn/repository/occihm.30646/data/sip/data/files/occihm.30646.pdf?temp_url_expires=1594496545&temp_url_sig=d90752db4ac6ec1e3cfef0616e484e553657e5dc, 30.

Table Citations: Manitoba Newspapers, 1870s

- ⁱ An earlier version of this table was originally published in “‘Recruits and Comrades’ in ‘a War of Ambition’: Mennonite Immigrants in Late 19th-Century Manitoba Newspapers,” (M.A. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 2016), with information from https://digitalcollections.lib.umanitoba.ca/islandora/object/uofm%3Amanitoba_newspapers.
- ⁱⁱ Joseph Royal helped found *Le Nouveau Monde* in Montreal, before being recruited to run the Franco-Métis newspaper in Manitoba. He quickly became involved in public life, supporting the Riel government, and rallying the Riel supporters. Through the newspaper and his politics, he tried to unite the French Canadian cause with the Métis cause, despite the distinctions between these communities. A. I. Silver, “Royal, Joseph,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/royal_joseph_13E.html.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Alphonse-Alfred-Clément La Rivière was a politician-turned-newspaperman who came to Manitoba in 1871 to work at the Dominion Lands Office in Winnipeg. He became a leading figure in the French-speaking community, and when he took over the paper, prioritized not only the French language, but also the “ethnic and religious conception of nationality” that led his advocacy for French-Canadian settlement. A. I. Silver, “La Rivière, Alphonse-Alfred-Clément,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/la_riviere_alphonse_alfred_clement_15E.html.
- ^{iv} William Fisher Luxton received a \$4000 loan from John A. Kenny, a retired farmer from Ontario, to start the newspaper. Within two years, it had over 1000 subscribers, and by 1882 he had more than 60 employees. He was a Liberal who was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1874-1875 and 1886-1888. T. Peterson, “Luxton, William Fisher,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/luxton_william_fisher_13E.html.
- ^v John Robson Cameron arrived in Manitoba in 1870 as part of the Wolseley Expedition and joined a survey party before joining the *Free Press* as the general foreman. He was also on the Winnipeg city council from 1874-1875 and 1882-1883 and then returned to Ontario. Gordon Goldsborough, “Memorable Manitobans: John Robson Cameron (1845-1907),” *Manitoba Historical Society*, http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/cameron_jr2.shtml.
- ^{vi} Charles Acton Burrows came to Canada from England in 1873, where he worked for an Ontario printing company and became editor of the *Guelph Herald* in 1875. In 1879 he moved to Winnipeg, working for the *Manitoba Free Press* and other smaller papers, and eventually publishing *The Manitoban*, *Canadian Transportation*, *The Morning Call*, and *The Western World* under the Acton Burrows Company. He became involved in local Manitoba politics in the 1880s, and other organizations like the Winnipeg Sanitary Association and the Winnipeg General Hospital, among others. Gordon Goldsborough, “Memorable Manitobans: Charles Acton Burrows (1853-’948),” *Manitoba Historical Society*, http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/burrows_ca.shtml.
- ^{vii} Walter Reginald Nursey worked for the Royal Navy, then as a civil servant in India, then came to Canada and eventually moved west to work with the Hudson’s Bay Company and with Alexander Morris and treaty negotiations. He was Manitoba’s deputy minister of agriculture in 1878, and was appointed chief health officer during the 1877 smallpox epidemic at Gimli. He worked as a reporter, and “constantly tried to start new newspapers in Winnipeg” but none found success, although he did work with Alexander Begg, co-authoring *Ten Years in Winnipeg*. Gordon Goldsborough, “Memorable Manitobans: Walter Reginald Nursey,” *Manitoba Historical Society*, http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/nursey_wr.shtml.
- ^{viii} William Coldwell was a journalist and newspaperman who married Jemima Ross, the youngest daughter of Alexander Ross and Sarah Ross, an Okanagan woman, thus marrying into a well-established and important mixed-race fur trade family. He published several newspapers, from the *Nor’Wester*, to the *Manitoban* and then worked as a parliamentary reporter for the *Free Press*. Gordon Goldsborough, “Memorable Manitobans: William Coldwell (1834-1907),” *Manitoba Historical Society*, http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/coldwell_w.shtml.
- ^{ix} Robert Cunningham was a journalist and politician who co-published the *Manitoban* and formed a close relationship with the French-speaking community, and was elected as Member of Parliament for Marquette in 1872. Before his death in 1874, he was dedicated to fighting for amnesty for Riel supporters, settling Métis land claims, and supporting the hay privilege in the Dominion Lands Act of 1874. J.E. Rea, “Cunningham, Robert,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cunningham_robert_10E.html.
- ^x Dale Gibson, *Law, Life, and Government at Red River: Volume 1, Settlement and Government, 1812-1872* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015), 296.
- ^{xi} Henry Robinson was briefly editor of the *New Nation* from January to March of 1870, and was fired by Riel because of his strong support of American annexation. Gordon Goldsborough, “Memorable Manitobans: Henry Martin Robinson (1845-1907),” *Manitoba Historical Society*, http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/robinson_hm.shtml.

^{xii} Dale Gibson, 251.

^{xiii} Thomas Spence was involved in many aspects of life in Manitoba, but for this dissertation, he was an editor of the *Nor'wester*, and during 1869-70, Spence was arrested at least three times for suspicion of working in opposition to Riel. Eleven days after one of these arrests, Spence was appointed editor of the *New Nation*, and in the 1870s and 1880s he worked with the census in Manitoba and the North-west Territories. He published a number of immigration pamphlets promoting Manitoba to potential settlers. Bruce Peel, "Spence, Thomas," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/spence_thomas_1832_1900_12E.html.

^{xiv} Dale Gibson, 260.

^{xv} Alexander Begg was a new arrival to Red River in 1867, but his business connections to Andrew Graham Ballenden Bannatyne meant that he was closely connected to established Red River families and society, and was initially sympathetic to the Métis cause. As an English-speaking moderate, by the 1870s, he was invested in the business and political world of Winnipeg, along with a few short-lived newspaper ventures. He found some success as an author and historian of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, with a number of fiction and non-fiction publications. D. R. O'wram, "Begg, Alexander," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/begg_alexander_1839_97_12E.html.

^{xvi} William Buckingham only spent two years in Red River with the *Nor'Wester*, but worked for Ontario newspapers for the remainder of his career, including a series in the *Toronto Globe* in 1881 promoting Manitoba's agricultural potential. Gordon Goldsborough, "Memorable Manitobans: William Buckingham (1832-1915)," *Manitoba Historical Society*, http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/buckingham_w.shtml.

^{xvii} James Ross was the son of Alexander Ross, the former chief trader of the Hudson's Bay Company, and Sarah Ross, and so was a prominent figure in Red River. He joined his brother-in-law (William Coldwell)'s newspaper in 1860, and was vocally opposed to the HBC and the structure of government at Red River. W. D. Smith, "Ross, James," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ross_james_1835_71_10E.html.

^{xviii} Dr. John Schultz was one of the most controversial and antagonistic of Red River's settlers in the 1860s. In 1865, he became sole owner of the *Nor'Wester*, intensifying its critique of the HBC rule. At the same time, he did not want independence or democracy for the Métis and wanted Canadian immigration to overrule the Red River population. Lovell Clark, "Schultz, Sir John Christian," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/schultz_john_christian_12E.html.

^{xix} Walter Robert Bown was the editor of the *Nor'Wester* when Schultz was absent, and purchased the paper in 1868. Bown regularly condemned the actions of the Métis in 1869, and so Riel commandeered the press, while he fled north and remained in hiding during the Red River Resistance. He was largely seen as simply an extension of whatever Schultz was interested in at any given moment. James David Mochoruk, "Bown, Walter Robert," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/bown_walter_robert_13E.html.

^{xx} Frederick Edward Molyneux St. John was a special correspondent for the *Toronto Globe* with the Wolseley Expedition, and later a failed political candidate in Winnipeg. He edited the *Standard*, after taking over from the *Manitoban and Northwest Herald* and later was appointed Sheriff and Indian Commissioner of the North-West Territories, and worked for the Canadian Pacific Railway. Gordon Goldsborough, "Memorable Manitobans: Frederick Edward Molyneux St. John (1838-1904)," *Manitoba Historical Society*, http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/stjohn_fem.shtml.

Chapter 2:

Government, Politics, and the Economy of Red River

To understand how becoming a Canadian province in 1870 and the subsequent push to colonize land and Indigenous people through immigration impacted Manitoba, it is helpful to begin a few decades earlier. Red River was a meeting place for Indigenous nations for thousands of years, and a place where fur traders and white settlers had made their homes after 1812. It was a small, close-knit place, but one with longstanding relationships and tensions between various groups. A key factor in these relationships was the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), as according to a charter granted by the British Crown, they were the governing authority for the Hudson Bay drainage, which they called "Rupert's Land." The HBC may have initially tried to adopt a hierarchical structure patterned on the military, but in reality the "company men" and fur traders were tied to local Indigenous communities and families.¹ Over many generations, this resulted in fur trade hubs like Red River becoming part of a large, interconnected family network of Indigenous wives and children.²

Red River in the 1860s was a close-knit place, but one that was in transition, from "a relatively quiet backwater [to] the confluence of the northward frontier of the American Republic and the western frontier of the Canadian colonies."³ The Red River settlement was growing, although the population of non-Indigenous settlers remained relatively small. Most growth from the 1840s to the mid 1850s was internal, due to large families and high birth rates.⁴ Frits Pannekoek explains that as Canada and Great Britain began to show interest in Red River in the

¹ Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1980), 17, 19.

² Brown, 78-79.

³ Frits Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Riel Resistance 1869-70* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer, 1991), 143.

⁴ Pannekoek, 143.

late 1850s, “Red River, of course, chased every rumour of change and there were as many factions as there were alternatives.”⁵ It was becoming clear that soon Red River would transition out of HBC control and into some sort of government of its own, but unclear how long that would take, or which nation or empire Red River would join. The introduction of the printing press in 1859 allowed some of these factions to spread their ideas about governance and Red River within the settlement and beyond.

From the earliest days of a local printing press, newspapers commented on the larger Canadian media coverage of what they thought about the annexation and future of the North-West. In January of 1860, a letter from 1859 was printed in the *Nor'Wester* from F. W. Chesson, the Assistant Secretary of the Aborigines Protection Society, and friend to Alexander Isbister, originally from Red River, to Rev. G. O. Corbett, which included the statement that “It is obviously of the highest importance that you should concentrate all your efforts to obtain for the entire Settlement, whether French Canadians, Scotch, English, Half-breeds, or Indians, the largest measure of political freedom.”⁶ Corbett was an important figure at Red River in the 1860s, and this letter from Chesson in 1860 arrived at a time when religious divisions were on the rise, instigated and exasperated by the actions of Corbett and other clergy. Corbett was decidedly anti-Métis, and envisioned a future for Red River with a parliamentary system, out of the authority of the Catholic Church and the HBC. According to Frits Pannekoek, he “stirred up” the English Métis, or “Halfbreeds” and “directed their energies against both the Company and the Catholics, convincing them that their future lay within a Protestant Crown Colony firmly affixed to the British Empire.”⁷

⁵ Pannekoek, 145.

⁶ “As Others See Us,” *Nor'Wester*, January 28, 1860, page 4.

⁷ Pannekoek, 146.

Corbett was a leader for this movement, but at the same time as his influence was growing, he was arrested for the charge of “attempting to induce an abortion on his servant-girl, Maria Thomas.”⁸ Thomas was 16 years old during the trial in 1863, and testimony revealed that Corbett not only tried to induce an abortion, but also “repeatedly committed adultery” with Thomas, and so he was convicted and imprisoned for six months (though due to a number of jailbreaks, did not serve this time).⁹ J.M. Bumsted explains that this was rather scandalous for the time, as “a young, mixed-blood servant girl accused her master of rape, seduction, and attempted abortion,” challenging the race and class structure of Red River.¹⁰ Corbett’s trial set the stage for later conflicts, as it “exposed the underlying tensions of Red River society, most of which would emerge again in the insurgency led by Louis Riel a few years later.”¹¹

This trial, and the actions of the church leaders, impacted the role of protestant clergy at Red River, as “because of the actions of the majority of the clergy and the Bishop himself, the Church of England in Red River was no longer the primary source of identity or direction for Anglican Red River.”¹² Dale Gibson explains that the Corbett trial of 1863 “cleaved the anglophone population at least as sharply as had *Foss v. Pelly* in 1850.”¹³ Corbett’s supporters claimed that the case was “fabricated by the HBC in an effort to silence him” and was “forcibly

⁸ Thomas G. Boreskie, “Corbett, Griffith Owen,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio.php?BioId=40766>.

⁹ Thomas G. Boreskie, “Corbett, Griffith Owen,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio.php?BioId=40766>.

¹⁰ J. M. Bumsted, *Thomas Scott’s Body and Other Essays on Early Manitoba History* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2000), 128.

¹¹ Bumsted, 129.

¹² Pannekoek, 154.

¹³ Dale Gibson, *Law, Life, and Government at Red River: Volume 1, Settlement and Government, 1812-1872* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015), 178. *Foss v. Pelly* has been written about extensively by Sylvia Van Kirk and Jennifer S. H. Brown, and was a trial attempting to clear the names of Christopher Foss and Sarah Ballenden, the wife of HBC chief factor John Ballenden, who had been accused of “questionable behaviour,” by Anne Pelly, who “by race and reputation, she did not consider her social equal.” This trial exposed the racism and division between the white women at Red River and the Métis women who held elite positions in the HBC social hierarchy. See also: Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: J. Gordon Shillingford Publishing, 1980, Reprinted 2014), 190.

freed from jail on 20 April [1863] by a mob led by the schoolmaster of St. James parish, James Stewart, who, in turn, was liberated by a party of armed men which faced down the governor's special constables."¹⁴ The aftermath of the Corbett trial proved that mob rule was effective, as Corbett was allowed to remain free after the jailbreak, and the Church of England "had actually encouraged Corbett to become a fugitive from justice rather than expose himself (and his Church) to public obloquy."¹⁵ The limitations of the power of the Red River institutions had now been challenged. Bumsted concludes that "If Red River had ever been a place of utopian harmony, as some of its residents had liked to believe, it clearly was no longer."¹⁶

These tensions were centred on the Assiniboine River settlements, but the widely-read *Nor'Wester* coverage meant that these racial, social, and religious divisions and question about who should lead the governing institutions spread throughout all of Red River.¹⁷ The newspaper was "particularly effective" in promoting these divisions, and "Every imagined slight was well publicized and exaggerated out of all proportion."¹⁸ This was particularly true regarding the rising anti-Catholic sentiment, and the tensions between the various social classes. As Pannekoek explains, "To the lower-class Halfbreed the virtues of Protestantism and allegiance to the British Empire were not associated with Canadian immigration or even increased material well-being, but rather a status higher than that of the Métis."¹⁹ The Protestant clergy became leaders for one side of this faction, often supported by the HBC leadership. Compared to this, Pannekoek explains, the Métis "were deeply Catholic and religious, but not amenable to persuasion by their clergy unless it suited their purposes. They would, as they had in the past, turn on the Company

¹⁴ Thomas G. Boreskie, "Corbett, Griffith Owen," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio.php?BioId=40766>.

¹⁵ Bumsted, 148.

¹⁶ Bumsted, 148.

¹⁷ Pannekoek, 160.

¹⁸ Pannekoek, 160.

¹⁹ Pannekoek, 163.

at the slightest provocation.”²⁰ This trial, and the lack of consequences for even those found guilty, had not only exposed the limitations of law and order at Red River, but also the trust in the Church of England. Pannekoek theorizes that had a popular Catholic leader emerged at Red River earlier, “there would have been serious civil disorder, probably resulting in the intervention of the Imperial government and, in the end, Crown Colony status in the 1860s.”²¹

Internal conflicts at Red River were only one part of the challenges facing the little community. Their relationship with the rest of Canada was uncertain, and the local newspaper coverage regularly discussed what options were available to them. The Upper Canada Liberal Convention had a debate that was printed in the *Nor'Wester* where some advocated for a “great North American Confederacy stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific” while others “advocated dissolution of the union of Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, *pure et simple*, as opposed to federation.”²² About a month later, after printing perspectives from four different newspapers from Ontario (Canada West), the *Nor'Wester* stated that they were “persuaded that in spite of all the ‘Canadian interference’” a bill would soon come forward to create the North-West Territory as an “independent colony.”²³

Some of this push for independence came from within. Alexander Sutherland wrote a letter to the editor with concerns that the Council of Assiniboia, the HBC-appointed government of the Red River Colony, did not represent the people, and that the “Councillors are not elected by the people, and hence they can do as they please, uncontrolled.”²⁴ He also expressed concern that they were secretive and would not let anyone on the Council who was not part of their

²⁰ Pannekoek, 166.

²¹ Pannekoek, 166-168.

²² “British North America in the Future,” *Nor'Wester*, February 14, 1860, page 3.

²³ “Annexation to Canada: What Canadian Papers Say on the Subject,” *Nor'Wester*, March 28, 1860, page 2.

²⁴ “A Voice from the People,” *Nor'Wester*, March 14, 1860, page 3.

secretive group. The 1860s was a time of gradually growing distrust in the HBC political and legal authority.

When word came that the “long night of doubt and uncertainty which enveloped the future of this country” had passed, and that the Imperial Government had announced a bill to make Red River a Crown Colony, the *Nor’Wester* published a commentary on what that might mean. They admitted that “we have no details as yet” but that did not stop the speculation. The general tone was one of anticipation, and that the “intended change [would be] a great and lasting benefit to this country” and that “from the Atlantic to the Pacific, Great Britain will have an unbroken series of loyal and promising Colonies.”²⁵ While governments considered the political future of Red River, locally, the Red River press was promoting the idea of an expanding British empire to its readers.

Political change at Red River in the 1860s was a sort of “slow progress,” as explained by Dale Gibson, where the early push towards Confederation gradually began to impact the political situation of life at Red River.²⁶ Plans for the British North America colonial project were underway, and Red River was part of these plans.²⁷ Control still remained in the hands of the HBC and the Council of Assiniboia, but this did not prevent Red River from developing in its own way. Norma Jean Hall asserts that “If the appearance of economic stasis was to some degree unavoidable, given the necessity of waiting on technological advances that could overcome transportation difficulties and production problems, there were indications of self-directed progress occurring wherever and whenever it could be accomplished.”²⁸ In her analysis, Hall challenges the idea that “development was dependent upon the arrival of non-Aboriginal ‘actual’

²⁵ “Red River A Crown Colony,” *Nor’Wester*, February 28, 1860, page 2.

²⁶ Dale Gibson, 172-173.

²⁷ Gibson, 174.

²⁸ Norma Jean Hall, “A ‘Perfect Freedom’: Red River as a Settler Society, 1810-1870” M.A. Thesis., University of Manitoba, 2003), 114.

settlers” arguing for a counter interpretation that large numbers of white settlers “did not occur until conditions inspired a sufficient level of confidence to overcome resistance to the idea of migration.”²⁹ That being said, from the late 1860s, “incoming settlers displayed enthusiasm for, and vigour in, displacing the Red River Métis, especially those identified as cultural ‘enemies’.”³⁰ This adversarial relationship is important to understand to contextualize the political dynamics of life at Red River throughout the 1870s. The foundation had been set in these earlier decades, and once Canadian expansionists set their sights on Red River, those tensions flared.

Empire and Government at Red River

When discussing the Red River government prior to joining Canada, Alexander Begg, in the fictional section of his book *“Dot It Down”: A Story of Life in the North-West*, which was part novel and part immigration pamphlet, wrote that the government was “weak and unsatisfactory” and “tended to prevent immigration to the country.”³¹ This criticism did not come from Begg directly, as it was couched in dialogue between two fictional characters, but the sentiment was common in newspapers at the time. The “weak and unsatisfactory” description would continue to apply to the early government in Manitoba. Dale Gibson explains that Adams Archibald, appointed as Lieutenant-Governor to Manitoba from 1870 to 1872, struggled with establishing responsible government at Red River as for some time there was no recognized premier so he “continued to lead the province personally, and met mounting criticism for doing

²⁹ Hall, 115.

³⁰ Hall, 115-116.

³¹ Alexander Begg, *“Dot It Down”: A Story of Life in the North-West* (Toronto: Hunter, Rose & Company, 1871), 335.

so.”³² By 1871, Gibson describes politics at Red River as, “If it wasn’t fully democratic, the new administration was providing effective day-to-day governance.”³³ As will be discussed in future chapters, much of the “effectiveness” of this government depended on whether or not one considered land, immigration, or treaties to be important to government, as all of these went largely unresolved in the first years of provincehood.³⁴ This left First Nations, Métis, old settlers and new immigrants in an uncertain situation about where and how they would live. The Red River Resistance had changed many things about Manitoba, but in both the 1860s and early 1870s, disdain for the “weak” leadership remained.

The political situation at Red River in the 1870s was tumultuous to say the least, especially in the early part of the decade, as Manitoba entered confederation in conflict. 1870 was defined by tensions, violence, and resistance. As early as January of 1870, the *New Nation*, the newspaper run by Louis Riel’s government, was involved shaping the Red River political climate. Their coverage introduced a series of excerpts from newspapers across the continent by saying that it was “now apparent” that Red River “will never go under the authority of the Dominion.”³⁵ This was generally not well-received, and the newspaper was given new leadership in the months that followed. By February, the *New Nation* reported (in French) that the American system of government was already accommodating to the French-speaking population, and that the Métis were the “colons primitifs du pays” in places like “Minisotta,” “Saint-Paul” and Pembina.³⁶ Following that article promoting American annexation of Red River there was an excerpt from the *Montreal Nouveau Monde* about the sympathy the Red River Métis and settlers

³² Gibson, 298.

³³ Gibson, 302.

³⁴ Gibson, 304-305.

³⁵ “Consolidation! The Future of the American Continent : One Flag! One Empire!” *The New Nation*, January 21, 1870, page 1.

³⁶ “États-Unis,” *The New Nation*, February 4, 1870, page 1.

were finding in Canada, “even in Ontario.”³⁷ Canadians were “astonished to find so much resolution and moderation in those whom they style semi-savages [and] ‘pemmican eaters’.”³⁸ The article presented the case that the Red River residents should not be treated as rebels simply for opposing the Canadian government, because they had not been given the opportunity for consultation and consent in Canada’s plans. The *Nouveau Monde* wrote that “Canada has treated the Red River settlers as a population of semi-barbarous individuals, having no political ideas, and whom it was necessary to civilize before making citizens of them. We have been greatly mistaken.”³⁹ This support from the *Nouveau Monde* printed in the *New Nation* is perhaps unsurprising, since one of its founders was Joseph Royal, who would soon move to Red River to support the Métis cause.⁴⁰

The political situation extended into international newspapers, as the *New Nation* printed a response to a letter from Alexander Kennedy Isbister, who was connected to both Imperial government circles and Red River.⁴¹ His letter was published in the *London Standard* in March of 1870. This response compared the situation at Red River to conflicts in other parts of the British empire, specifically the Maori, and what it might mean to both the rights of British subjects as well as the “immediate interests of the British taxpayer.”⁴² Isbister was regularly involved in conversations around immigration and expanding the British empire. He embodied the middle-class educated Victorian man, attending prestigious universities in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and London, and regularly corresponding with the Aborigines’ Protection Society.⁴³

³⁷ “The North-West Question,” *The New Nation*, February 4, 1870, page 1.

³⁸ “The North-West Question,” *The New Nation*, February 4, 1870, page 1.

³⁹ “The North-West Question,” *The New Nation*, February 4, 1870, page 1.

⁴⁰ A. I. Silver, “Royal, Joseph,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/royal_joseph_13E.html.

⁴¹ Barry Cooper, “Alexander Kennedy Isbister, A Respectably Victorian,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies* Vol 17, No 2 (1985), 44.

⁴² “Imperial Responsibility,” *The New Nation*, March 16, 1870, page 1.

⁴³ Barry Cooper, 44-45.

He wrote from the perspective that “when Europeans made contact with natives on terms set by the Indians, the Europeans prospered and the natives were not harmed.”⁴⁴ Isbister was raised by a prominent Red River fur trade family, with a Cree grandmother, and argued against HBC control and exploitation of his countrymen.⁴⁵ At the same time, he fully participated in Victorian society and dedicated his life to educational reform at Red River, specifically by promoting a liberal pedagogy.

The *New Nation*'s perspective of the international coverage of the Red River Resistance was generally hopeful in April of 1870, as a summary of recent months said that their concerns had been ignored because they had been seen as “demi-savages” and isolated from most of the world, but now that Confederation with Canada seemed likely, there was a chance to gain a more dignified position and “our rights as British subjects will be respected [...] We now stand as a people united; a Government formed in which we have a direct voice.”⁴⁶ This article was full of hope for the future and concluded with a call to “forget the *past* and moderate the *present*, that our future may be blessed to ourselves and our children's children.”⁴⁷

From May of 1870, as negotiations were underway between Riel's government and Canada, the *New Nation* asserted that the “duty of the hour” was for all parties to come together for the good of the future of the new province. There was an acknowledgement of the “severe trial that we have gone through this winter” but also an awareness of the racial and cultural factions that were dividing Red River.⁴⁸ At times this call for unity included characterizing Red River settlers as harbingers of “civilization” in the Northwest with the statement:

⁴⁴ Cooper, 45.

⁴⁵ Sylvia M. Van Kirk, “Isbister, Alexander Kennedy,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/isbister_alexander_kennedy_11E.html.

⁴⁶ “The Past and the Present,” *The New Nation*, April 22, 1870, page 2.

⁴⁷ “The Past and the Present,” *The New Nation*, April 22, 1870, page 2.

⁴⁸ “The Duty of the Hour,” *The New Nation*, May 20, 1870, page 2.

It is not a questions as to whether Irishmen, Englishmen, or Frenchmen are the superior race; it is simply this—Are people who have been reared in a country, and who have converted it from a vast waste into a cultivated garden, to be now forgotten or laid aside, in the advent or a new class of settlers, who are to reap the advantages brought about by their long years of toil and hardship, -- or are they to be at last understood and appreciated?⁴⁹

The early Red River settlers did not appreciate having their claim to land in Manitoba belittled by new Canadian expansionists.

In the immediate transition between the provisional and provincial government, in July of 1870, the *New Nation* reflected upon the year’s politics. The tone was hopeful, and the provisional government was praised for their accomplishments, and now was the time for “laying aside all reference to nationalities and creeds, let them remember only the common cause of Confederation which, to be successful, must be in feeling as well as name.”⁵⁰ Immigration would be part of this, but the *New Nation* tone was hopeful about cooperation between the old and new residents of Manitoba.

A few months later, that hope was diminishing. By October, political tensions were again high and the hope for a peaceful and cooperative future seemed far away. In the introductory issue of the *Manitoban*, there was coverage of the excavation of the body of Thomas Scott, which, when the coffin was discovered to be empty, prompted an excitement that “was turned into something like a disappointed rage.”⁵¹ Around the same time, Colonel Wolseley, known for leading the Red River Expeditionary Force which brought unprecedented colonial violence to Manitoba, was being celebrated and had his speech about his time printed in the *Manitoban*.⁵² His speech, which called for a police force of 100 armed men to keep the peace, concluded with

⁴⁹ “The Duty of the Hour,” *The New Nation*, May 20, 1870, page 2.

⁵⁰ “The Past—The Future,” *The New Nation*, July 30, 1870, page 2.

⁵¹ “The Late Thomas Scott,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 15, 1870, page 2.

⁵² Jean Teillet, *The North-West is Our Mother: The Story of Louis Riel’s People* (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers, 2019), 240.

“cheers, which rang out again and again with increasing heartiness.”⁵³ Wolseley refused to discipline the men who were under his command, or do anything that would deter the violence they were perpetrating, so his call for this force to “keep the peace” was directly at odds with how he operated his own forces.⁵⁴ Wolseley’s presence and statements were only one part of the tensions present in Manitoba, as an election meeting in Kildonan became heated over accusations of treason and the role of the Red River Resistance and James Ross and his place on Riel’s council. There was a debate about whether or not members of the previous government were complicit in the murder of Thomas Scott.⁵⁵ A Winnipeg-published paper called the *News-Letter* was reported in the *Manitoban* as promoting “mob law” partially as a result of this Kildonan meeting. The *Manitoban* acknowledged that perhaps the government had gone too far in their “audacity so far as to commit cold-blooded murder,” referring to the execution of Thomas Scott, but that supporting “the principle of Lynch law” meant that the critics had “abandoned all the vantage ground adventitiously secured previously.”⁵⁶ In attempting to find a middle ground, the *Manitoban* tried to condemn both the actions of the Riel provisional government and the mobs of unrestrained soldiers terrorizing the Métis community.

While this dissention remained, an early sign of increasing stability was in the instructions for the enumeration of Manitoba, which were published bilingually and provided clear, albeit colonialist and exclusive definitions of race and categories of citizenship.⁵⁷ This expected stability was written about by Mr. St. John, the special correspondent for the *Toronto Globe*, who was also the candidate for St. James’s parish. The *Manitoban* published excerpts of his articles to inform his potential voters of the racist views held by this correspondent- who

⁵³ “Col. Wolseley,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 22, 1870, page 1.

⁵⁴ Jean Teillet, *The North-West Is Our Mother*, 240.

⁵⁵ “The Elections: Meeting in Kildonan,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, November 12, 1870, page 2.

⁵⁶ “Mob Law,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, November 12, 1870, page 3.

⁵⁷ “Instructions,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 22, 1870, page 3.

found himself very surprised by the “civilized” Métis and how they were found in nearly all locations and positions.⁵⁸ His articles showed a woeful misunderstanding of the Métis, and the *Manitoban* mocked his descriptions of the Métis presence in most professions and work at Red River, saying:

This is truly wonderful, and we can imagine a half-breed going as a special correspondent to England say, and writing that he saw work done there, and when he asked the question ‘by whom is the work done,’ and on receiving the reply ‘by Englishmen,’ he felt himself completely staggered.⁵⁹

Despite alienating himself from the locals with his ignorance, St. John would go on to have a career as Sheriff and Indian Commissioner of the Northwest Territories during the 1870s.⁶⁰

The *Globe* dedicated a great deal of coverage to Manitoba’s election, as the bilingual nature of the divisions and the way the population was being divided up prompted speculation about whether or not that would add to or alleviate the tensions.⁶¹ The election in March 1871 “shook the French-speaking, Halfbreed, and moderate populations,” as there were strong opposition victories in the defeat of Colin Inkster by Dr. John Schultz, and “Schultz’s crony Dr. James Lynch tied with English Halfbreed Angus MacKay in Marquette.”⁶² According to the *Manitoban*, when the elections were held in Marquette, “the proceedings were of a very violent, disgraceful character” in the English districts.⁶³ The electors in these regions “were going about armed” and insisted that Dr. Lynch “must go in at all hazards.” They reported that “Mr. McKay, the other candidate, was chased from the High Bluff for a long way, he was not allowed to object to any votes, and hence the number polled is said to be largely in excess of the legal votes in the

⁵⁸ “The Half-Breeds and the Candidate for St. James,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, November 26, 1870, page 1.

⁵⁹ “The Half-Breeds and the Candidate for St. James,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, November 26, 1870, page 1.

⁶⁰ Gordon Goldsborough, “Memorable Manitobans: Frederick Edward Molyneux St. John (1838-1904),” *Manitoba Historical Society*, http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/stjohn_fem.shtml.

⁶¹ “The ‘Globe’ Is Anxious,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, December 22, 1870, page 1.

⁶² Gibson, 303.

⁶³ “Marquette District,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, March 4, 1871, page 2.

English Divisions.”⁶⁴ Despite this, Gibson says that “Lynch’s strong showing testified to how rapidly the political landscape was changing.”⁶⁵ Lynch did not end up with the seat, but “Schultz’s victory gave him a parliamentary base from which he waged political war against Manitoba moderates until he was appointed lieutenant governor of the province in 1885.”⁶⁶

To add to all of this political chaos, Riel was elected by acclamation, sparking confusion in the province, particularly among the English settlers who thought his leadership was diminished. The *Manitoban* noted that due to the united vote, “we must therefore conclude that Riel is the chosen representative of the French speaking population.”⁶⁷ This may seem strange to the outside world, as “while a large portion of our people elect a man to represent them the other portion is busily engaged in hunting him from place to place” which described the divided political world of Manitoba.⁶⁸

When the Manitoba Legislative Council met in February of 1873, the newspaper coverage of the discussions centred around two main topics: the Métis land grant and how to encourage immigration to the province.⁶⁹ Among the motions were requests to address “respecting the grants of lands to old settlers and their children of unmixed blood” as there was some debate about whether or not the *Manitoba Act* provisions applied only to Métis.⁷⁰ Regarding immigration, the concerns were largely about how to get information about Manitoba to intending immigrants, in both Canada and the “old world.” Standing committees were

⁶⁴ “Marquette District,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, March 4, 1871, page 2.

⁶⁵ Gibson, 303-304.

⁶⁶ Gibson, 304.

⁶⁷ “Riel’s Election,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 28, 1873, page 2.

⁶⁸ “Riel’s Election,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 28, 1873, page 2.

⁶⁹ “The Parliament: Legislative Council,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, February 15, 1873, page 3.

⁷⁰ “The Parliament: Legislative Council,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, February 15, 1873, page 3.

organized to oversee “Printing” and “Colonization and Emigration” to ensure pamphlets would be assembled and distributed effectively.⁷¹

In May of 1873, the Bowmanville *Statesmen*, in Ontario, received a letter from “Bondhead,” a Manitoban who wanted to explain the local politics to the Ontario readers. He explained that that Donald A. Smith, governor of the HBC, Dr. John Schultz, Sir George Cartier, and Robert Cunningham were the four men elected to represent Manitoba in the House of Commons.⁷² Bondhead was concerned that none of these men would represent their constituents, since Schultz only worked for himself (and made some aspersions about how he must live entirely on eels since he was slippery like one), and Cartier was loyal to Riel.⁷³ Cunningham was also loyal to Riel and Bishop Taché, and only “has a lucid interval occasionally ‘between drinks’” while also running the *Manitoban*, and of course Smith was looking out for HBC interests.⁷⁴ The writer said that “in plain English, the uneducated and stupid majority are led by the nose by the educated and cute Ministry, which latter are in their turn managed by the Hudson’s Bay company [sic], so that our local affairs are controlled by these unscrupulous monopolists, whose interest it is to retard the advancement of the country as much as they can, so as to retain their sway.”⁷⁵ Bondhead then explained that the real need was immigration, and since these men may not be focused enough on that issue, he would be happy to answer any inquiries into the “advantages of the country” if people had questions about Manitoba.⁷⁶

The *Manitoba Free Press* explained the careers of these elected officials in early 1874 in similar ways, namely that there was “very little they have done.”⁷⁷ Schultz had been in his seat

⁷¹ “The Parliament: Legislative Council,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, February 15, 1873, page 3.

⁷² “Manitoba Affairs,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 10, 1873, page 4.

⁷³ “Manitoba Affairs,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 10, 1873, page 4.

⁷⁴ “Manitoba Affairs,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 10, 1873, page 4.

⁷⁵ “Manitoba Affairs,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 10, 1873, page 4.

⁷⁶ “Manitoba Affairs,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 10, 1873, page 4.

⁷⁷ “Our Representatives,” *Manitoba Free Press*, January 10, 1874, page 4.

for three years, but “for all he has done for this Province, it strikes us his place might as well have been vacant.”⁷⁸ According to the *Free Press*, Smith had been “assiduously laboring for [the welfare of] the Hudson’s Bay Company” and Schultz was working only for himself.

Cunningham had achieved notoriety for generally not holding firm beliefs or loyalty, but “in one matter Mr. Cunningham has been consistent: his attempts to justify the rebellion of ’69-70 have been unremitting.”⁷⁹ The conclusion was that none of these politicians were looking out for the best interests of white settler Manitobans.

When there was confusion over voting locations for the English-speaking Boyne settlers, the *Free Press* blamed Cunningham. Various reports had put Boyne in the Provencher or Selkirk constituencies, but at the last minute, they were made aware they would vote in Marquette, which would mean their votes would not matter as much in a majority-French constituency. The *Free Press* said that this was on purpose, as “His aim has ever been to deprive the English-speaking people of the rights and privileges of citizenship and keep the ruling power in the hands of the French, whose tool he is.”⁸⁰ The animosity in the *Free Press* over Cunningham was also connected to the newspaper business in Winnipeg, as Cunningham was one of the owners and editor of the *Manitoban*. Cunningham was loyal to the French Métis cause, in many cases, which made him one of the only newspapermen occasionally challenging the rights of Canadian settlers.

One of the first political debates in the new province of Manitoba was whether or not to enlarge the borders of Manitoba. The *Manitoban* printed an article from the *Globe* which referenced a paragraph from *Le Métis* advocating for the enlargement of Manitoba, which had

⁷⁸ “Our Representatives,” *Manitoba Free Press*, January 10, 1874, page 4.

⁷⁹ “Our Representatives,” *Manitoba Free Press*, January 10, 1874, page 4.

⁸⁰ “Who is to Blame for It?” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 14, 1874, page 4.

been intentionally made small by the Cabinet in Ottawa.⁸¹ The *Globe* wrote that “We are at one with our contemporary in thinking that it is of the first importance that Manitoba should be made ten times larger than it is, and that it should have ports on Hudson Bay if not also in Lake Superior.”⁸² This would have enabled Manitoba to take greater control over its economy, not to mention the increased land base would have reduced tensions over the size of the Métis land grant, and attract more settlers.⁸³ A few weeks later, when the bill to enlarge Manitoba was brought to the House of Commons, the *Manitoban* explained that this was “one of the most important measures ever brought before the House by our Government.”⁸⁴ This was because a larger province would attract more immigrants, but if Manitoba was not enlarged, other provinces may be created to hem it in, and cut it off from ports, other land, and waterways.⁸⁵ There had been some “unnecessary” conflict in the House, as “some English members undertook to throw the onus of the unsatisfactory state of the Province upon the shoulders of the French people” which stirred up tensions. The *Manitoban* warned that “there is nothing to be gained by making or widening a breach between the two nationalities in this province.”⁸⁶ Further coverage of the enlargement issue explored themes of how isolated Manitoba was from the rest of the world. The population was growing, but the Dominion government was preventing them from being profitable because they were cut off from railways and good water routes to the rest of Canada. Goods were expensive, mail was late, and the province was generally isolated.⁸⁷

This concern over the federal government limiting Manitoba’s options is supported by evidence, as within months of Manitoba joining confederation, Prime Minister John A.

⁸¹ “Enlargement of Manitoba,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 18, 1873, page 2.

⁸² “Enlargement of Manitoba,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 18, 1873, page 2.

⁸³ “Enlargement of Manitoba,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 18, 1873, page 2.

⁸⁴ “Enlargement of Manitoba,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 18, 1873, page 2.

⁸⁵ “The Enlargement of Manitoba,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, November 8, 1873, page 2.

⁸⁶ “The Enlargement of Manitoba,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, November 8, 1873, page 2.

⁸⁷ “What We Want,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 17, 1874, page 2.

Macdonald was considering his options for adjusting the terms of the new province. According to D. N. Sprague, Macdonald wanted to change the borders “once it was certain that the province was not developing into ‘a new Quebec.’”⁸⁸ He expected that “newcomers to the ‘postage stamp’ province would soon outnumber the ‘half breed’ population so completely it would be expedient to enlarge the boundaries of the miniscule province to a more respectable size.”⁸⁹

The North-West Committee was formed by the House of Commons to investigate the events of the Red River Resistance, or as the *Nor'Wester* stated “the causes of the difficulties in this country during '69 and '70.”⁹⁰ There were concerns that the investigation was not thorough, as the only witnesses were those called by the Honourable Donald Alexander Smith, a long-time HBC officer and chief commissioner for Canada in 1870.⁹¹ While some of the witnesses may have presented good insights, the investigation was not as thorough as needed, and clearly represented the HBC narrative.⁹² Adding to the confusion were the ongoing debates about whether or not a “general amnesty” had been promised by Sir John A. Macdonald during the *Manitoba Act* negotiations.⁹³

Tensions between Canada and Manitoba continued as the new province wanted to readjust the financial relationship with Canada. Manitoba wanted to be able to incur some debt to promote themselves and build infrastructure so that the province could grow.⁹⁴ In further coverage of these “Better Terms,” Manitoba was compared to Prince Edward Island, in terms of its admission to Confederation, and, according to the *Free Press* coverage, the *Manitoba Act*

⁸⁸ D. N. Sprague, *Canada and the Métis, 1869-1885* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988), 62.

⁸⁹ Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 62.

⁹⁰ “The North-West Committee,” *The Nor'Wester*, August 31, 1874, page 2.

⁹¹ Alexander Reford, “Smith, Donald Alexander, 1st Baron Strathcona and Mount Royal,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/smith_donald_alexander_14E.html.

⁹² “The North-West Committee,” *The Nor'Wester*, August 31, 1874, page 2.

⁹³ “The North-West Committee,” *The Nor'Wester*, September 7, 1874, page 2.

⁹⁴ “Better Terms- What Manitoba Wants and Why,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 24, 1875, page 4.

needed to be re-negotiated now that the Métis were not in charge of the province.⁹⁵ This debate around “Better Terms” federally occurred around the same time as the provincial government was in its own time of transition, as the “Reconstruction” of the government in 1875 created new alliances and shifted power towards the English-speaking population. The *Free Press* concluded that “the legislation will be so much nearer what it should be, where the English-speaking people are in the majority that they are in this Province.”⁹⁶ This concern that Manitoba had not been set up for success with how the *Manitoba Act* was initially created, and how it was being re-interpreted, was well-founded. White settlers found the promises of land and rights for the Métis to be too restrictive (which will be discussed extensively in later chapters), and the Métis land claims were delayed and ignored, so they were also unhappy. Even Macdonald “the parliamentary champion of the Manitoba Act in 1870, was not prepared to defend his creation in 1874, or later.”⁹⁷

A pamphlet published in 1876 commented on the state of politics in Manitoba, under the title of *Manitoba Matters: Being A Short Chapter Devoted and Dedicated to the Davis-Royal Administration*. In an additional subtitle, the thesis of the piece was made clear: “The autonomy of Provinces no longer respected. Ottawa dictates, Manitoba obeys.”⁹⁸ The writer, J. H. O’Donnell, specifically wrote against the actions of Ottawa in siding with the “minority” in Manitoba, rather than letting the province make its own decisions regarding everything to the *Manitoba Act*, land policies, and the use of French. O’Donnell called out several local politicians by name, saying that “It is not difficult for the central Power to manipulate the people’s

⁹⁵ “Better Terms Secured,” “Who Oppose Better Terms and Why,” and “More About Better Terms,” *Manitoba Free Press*, page 4.

⁹⁶ “The Reconstruction,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 6, 1875, page 4.

⁹⁷ D.N. Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 111.

⁹⁸ J. H. O’Donnell, *Manitoba Matters: Being a Short Chapter Devoted and Dedicated to the Davis-Royal Administration* (Winnipeg: Herald Office, 1876).

representatives, especially when they comprise such easy virtue as that possessed by a Davis, a Royal, or a Norquay.”⁹⁹ A few pages later, O’Donnell writes that the province is full of “iniquity in which treachery, dishonesty, and extravagance struggle for the mastery.”¹⁰⁰ This was because of the actions of Davis, who,

with a handful of political turncoats united with a solid French contingent of nine members, rules the country at the dictation of that unseen but not unfelt power which has ruled Canada for many a day. Though professing to be a British Province, Manitoba to all intents and purposes is eminently French. Not that a majority or anything like a respectable minority of the people are French, but because there is a Richelieu pulling at the wires, and a Louis to dance attendance.¹⁰¹

Even English representatives could not be relied upon, as although “five-twelfths” of the 24 member Legislature were French or “recognized as representatives of the French” while 14 were “supposed to represent the English speaking interests of the Province,” they did not. He accused them of winning their seats by “pretending to champion the rights of the English-speaking people [but] a majority of them turned traitors to their allegiance, forming an alliance with nine out of ten out of the French contingent.”¹⁰²

Despite these concerns that the “French contingent” was maintaining power in 1876, the shift in political power towards the English-speaking population continued. A Redistribution Bill was introduced in Manitoba’s Legislative Assembly in 1877, which absorbed the Lake Manitoba French division into Baie de St. Paul, and created the Pembina district, which included the Boyne and Pembina Mountain settlers.¹⁰³ A few other districts were shifted around, and this created “sixteen English and eight French-speaking constituencies” and this was a more “equitable”

⁹⁹ O’Donnell, *Manitoba Matters*, 3.

¹⁰⁰ O’Donnell, *Manitoba Matters*, 14.

¹⁰¹ O’Donnell, *Manitoba Matters*, 14-15.

¹⁰² O’Donnell, *Manitoba Matters*, 14-15.

¹⁰³ “The Redistribution Bill,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 24, 1877, page 4.

representation of which that the *Free Press* approved.¹⁰⁴ Further, the English constituencies were divided to balance old and new settlers.¹⁰⁵

By 1880, *Le Métis* was expressing concern that they were continuing to lose power, as every few years they were losing more and more French constituencies within municipal politics.¹⁰⁶ The representatives that remained were not always strong fighters for French rights, and *le Métis* warned:

Il ne manque pas d'homme d'expérience dans chaque municipalité, qui saurent, s'ils sont élus, tirer avantage de la loi actuelle, sans tout fois imposer de fortes taxes sur les contribuables; ce sont ces hommes là qu'il faut élire. Qu'on n'aille pas mêler les ambitions, et encore moins les rencunes personnelles, a ces élections; car alors il s'en suivrait des divisions qui sont toujours un sujet de faiblesse et finissent invariablement a notre désavantage.¹⁰⁷

The problem was not that there were not French-speaking men in government, but rather that those elected were not willing to fight, and so they hoped that “ce sera pour nous une leçon salutaire.”¹⁰⁸ If anything could be a lesson for the French Métis population in Manitoba during this time, it was that political power was quickly changing hands. Manitoba's first election had resulted in a “triumph” of the “Rielites,”¹⁰⁹ but by 1880, a series of political changes in both Manitoba and Ottawa and resulted in a loss of Métis land, and subsequently their voting power, as they were dispersed throughout the prairie.

Manitoba vs. Canada

The difficulties in the politics within Red River and Manitoba were shaped by internal conflict, but also by Manitoba's relationship with Canada, which went back to the establishment

¹⁰⁴ “The Redistribution Bill,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 24, 1877, page 4.

¹⁰⁵ “The Redistribution Bill,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 24, 1877, page 4.

¹⁰⁶ “Les Municipalités,” *Le Métis*, March 13, 1880, page 2.

¹⁰⁷ “Les Municipalités,” *Le Métis*, March 13, 1880, page 2.

¹⁰⁸ “Les Municipalités,” *Le Métis*, March 13, 1880, page 2.

¹⁰⁹ Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 75.

of Manitoba as a province. Canada viewed the prairies as inevitably part of their nation and was unprepared to address the local concepts of nation and sovereignty that contradicted their own. In particular, the actions of the Métis nation in the Red River Resistance should be understood as a Métis claim of control over the fate of Red River. They were resisting entering Canada as a colony and standing up against the HBC's decision to sign over the Métis land to Canada without negotiations. As Chris Andersen explains,

It is crucial to understand the formation of Métis nationalism in the Red River area as (at least in part) a resistance to the changing values of new shareholders in the new Hudson's Bay Company, many of whom were far less interested in profiting from a commercial fur trade than from colonization opportunities through speculation of the land the HBC claimed as its territory.¹¹⁰

The Red River Resistance, therefore, is part of the long history of Indigenous challenges to the idea that "British sovereignty could be asserted successfully through an act of imperial legislation half a world away, even if it conflicted with local proprietary claims."¹¹¹ British ideas of land and sovereignty assumed that "title" was solely part of settler colonial law, but the reality on the ground demonstrated the limitations of that understanding.

Initial discussion of extinguishing the HBC charter rights took place in the summer and fall of 1869 between the HBC representatives in London and the Canadian government, but the voices of the residents of Red River were absent.¹¹² When surveyors began to enter Manitoba, the Métis National Committee declared a provisional government, led by President Louis Riel, and a council of English and French representatives. This was a complicated political situation, and over the 10 months of the resistance various factions within Red River supported and

¹¹⁰ Chris Andersen, *"Métis": Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 113.

¹¹¹ Adam Gaudry, "Fantasies of Sovereignty: Deconstructing British and Canadian Claims to Ownership of the Historic North-West," *Native American and Indigenous Studies*, 3, no. 1 (Spring 2016), 46.

¹¹² Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 117.

opposed the movement.¹¹³ The death of Thomas Scott was perhaps the most significant development in the Red River Resistance, and how it ended, and more importantly, how it was remembered in the immediate aftermath. Jean Teillet explains that Scott was in the group that captured Norbert Parisien, and as she describes, “Cooler heads prevented Scott from lynching Parisien, but it was hardly a merciful intervention. It condemned Parisien to die slowly from Scott’s strangling and vicious beating.”¹¹⁴ Scott and others were arrested after the February attack, but “According to the Métis guards, Scott was inciting the other captives to violence and infecting the other prisoners and everyone else in the fort.”¹¹⁵ Scott had a trial, and was executed by firing squad, and as Teillet explains, “It was not a trial in the style of British justice. This was a Métis trial. It was the way they meted out justice according to the Laws of the Prairie.”¹¹⁶ This was legitimate according to the members of Riel’s government, many of whom were bison hunters and accustomed to this governance. For the Canadian population, back in Canada and at Red River, who did not recognize Indigenous authority and saw Scott’s death as a murder, this was an outrage. The sovereignty of Canadian law was challenged in this assertion of Métis law and governance.

By April 1870, Riel was negotiating the *Manitoba Act* with the Canadian government, and it was signed on 12 May, to come into effect on 15 July 1870.¹¹⁷ The *Act* agreed to many of the rights demanded by the Métis, including responsible government, provincial status, bilingual institutions, denominational schools, and guarantees for land title.¹¹⁸ D. N. Sprague, after explaining the debate about the wording and provisions of the *Manitoba Act*, said that in Ottawa

¹¹³ Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 119.

¹¹⁴ Jean Teillet, *The North-West Is Our Mother*, 213.

¹¹⁵ Teillet, 214.

¹¹⁶ Teillet, 216.

¹¹⁷ Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 125.

¹¹⁸ Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 126.

the statute was seen as a “temporary measure” that would soon be replaced by a more beneficial statute by the Manitoba government. John A. Macdonald and “the majority of the Canadian Parliament” thought that “the future population of Manitoba could be trusted to secure what was needed.”¹¹⁹ This would set the stage for future conflict between Ottawa and Manitoba, as “it became more important than ever that the ‘Riel party’ and its sympathizers were displaced from all positions of real power in the fledgling ‘half breed’ province of Manitoba.”¹²⁰ And yet, in Manitoba, newspapers covered the passage of the *Manitoba Act* with hope and optimism, despite the lingering tensions and early signs that the pro-Canada factions were causing trouble.

After the Red River Resistance and the signing of the *Manitoba Act*, the dust began to settle and newspapers began to offer commentary on what this meant for the future of Manitoba within the larger nation of Canada. In the *Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, coverage from January of 1871 was initially focused on the internal tensions between the local political factions, with the role of the HBC in the history of the Red River Settlement being maligned while the Protestants, largely led by Dr. John Schultz and his friends, publicly celebrated the political divides.¹²¹ As tensions rose, the *Manitoban* portrayed Schultz supporters as irrational and joked that the Legislature would quickly establish a “Provincial Lunatic Asylum” to address the boisterous supporters.¹²²

By April of 1871, the local press was fighting back against Ontario-based coverage, as the *Globe* regularly accused Riel and the people of Manitoba as being “murderous rebels.” The *Manitoban* made the point that “the guilty parties may be murderers, but the act does not make

¹¹⁹ Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 63-64.

¹²⁰ Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 64.

¹²¹ “The Cause,” *The Manitoban and the Northwest Herald*, January 4, 1871, page 1.

¹²² “A Street Scene,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 14, 1871, page 2.

them rebels,” while asserting that Manitoba was now a loyal province of Manitoba.¹²³ The *Globe* coverage continued to be a problem, as according to the *Manitoban*, they wrote about Manitoba as if it “stood in the same relation to Ontario that Ontario does to England—forgetting all the time that this Province in all its rights and privileges, just occupies as independent a position in the Dominion, as Ontario or Nova Scotia does.”¹²⁴ This was largely done through Ontario’s complaints about the Métis rights and presence, and the *Manitoban* pushed back against this racism, saying “The land which the natives of the country have obtained, they have obtained from the Queen of England as directly as the people of the other Provinces obtained their lands from the Queen.”¹²⁵ Continuing their coverage of Manitoba, the *Globe* also insisted that Governor Archibald was favouring the Métis land concerns, with the *Manitoban* commenting that it was “losing all indications of the common sense which used to characterize its articles.”¹²⁶

In a reflection on the first year of the new province, the *Manitoban* presented a hopeful analysis of local politics, but was less optimistic about Canada and Manitoba’s dynamic. Governor Archibald’s actions in achieving peace and establishing political order were praised. Despite ongoing tensions, the *Manitoban*’s article took on a hopeful tone, that religious and linguistic tensions were generally settled, at least between the long-term residents of Red River. Within a year, Manitoba had established a fully-functioning political system, “almost as complete as any Province in the Dominion.”¹²⁷ Despite the praise for local politics, Manitoba’s position within the Canadian nation remained a point of tension, as the new province of British Columbia received far more money and favouritism from Ottawa than Manitoba. Putting it plainly, “In fact on every hand British Columbia is petted and pampered, while Manitoba is

¹²³ “Manitoba A Province,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, August 26, 1871, page 2.

¹²⁴ “Manitoba A Province,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, August 26, 1871, page 2.

¹²⁵ “Manitoba A Province,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, August 26, 1871, page 2.

¹²⁶ “Rhapsody,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 7, 1871, page 2.

¹²⁷ “A Year’s History,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, September 2, 1871, page 2.

treated as something like an incubus.”¹²⁸ Adding to the complaints about how Manitoba was treated was that Ontario newspapers continued to represent the *Manitoba Act* as something that could, and should, be ignored, because it was against Ontario’s interests- something which the *Manitoban* called “Ontario supremacy.”¹²⁹ The *Globe* apparently framed the discussion in the terms that because Ontario was larger and had more House of Commons representation, Manitoba’s laws could be overwritten. This debate around “better terms” continued for the first half of the 1870s, as Manitoba continued to feel slighted by Ontario and less equal than other provinces.

Unsurprisingly, *le Métis* shared some of the English newspaper’s concerns about Ontario and the way it perceived Manitoba, yet the coverage was far more explicit about the violence from Ontario. A story called “Ontario et Manitoba” stated “La plus populeuse des provinces canadiennes, Ontario, s’attaque à sa jeune sœur Manitoba avec une violence et un acharnement qui fait mal à voir, pour tout canadien qui aime son pays et en désire la prospérité et la force.”¹³⁰ This “relentless violence” in the way Ontarians thought about Manitoba was attributed to “Indignation Meetings” that stirred up sentiments about Thomas Scott and continued the violent rhetoric.¹³¹ As Ontario tried to expand north and annex more territory, *le Métis* commented that they could add millions of acres of former HBC land.¹³² Ontario was creating an empire larger than some European countries, while Manitoba and the North-West were limited from expanding and gaining provincial rights. This is not surprising, of course, when we consider Sprague’s

¹²⁸ “The Difference,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 22, 1872, page 2.

¹²⁹ “The Globe Has Begun Again,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, December 14, 1872, page 2.

¹³⁰ “Ontario et Manitoba,” *Le Métis*, May 29, 1872, page 2.

¹³¹ “Ontario et Manitoba,” *Le Métis*, May 29, 1872, page 2.

¹³² “L’Empire d’Ontario,” *Le Métis*, September 5, 1878, page 2.

analysis, mentioned earlier, since, as Sprague demonstrates, Canada was attempting to limit the “Riel party” from maintaining power.¹³³

In an anonymously published 16-page pamphlet from 1872, the author, calling themselves, “A Canadian who has Visited Manitoba to Discover the Truth,” wrote that it is “alarming to see the Province of Ontario coming forward as queen and arbitress of Manitoba. The press of Ontario aims at having Manitoba treated as a subordinate, that should be directed and domineered.”¹³⁴ They went on to say that “Certain immigrants, from the mere fact that they come from Ontario, consider themselves entitled to everything in Manitoba, and justifiable in violating the laws, and insulting the authorities, when all does not meet their views.”¹³⁵ The pamphlet concluded that “Ontario *versus* Manitoba is nothing less than the violence of the strong used against the weak; the iniquitous covetousness of the rich to ruin the poor.”¹³⁶

While many of the published complaints about the mistreatment of Manitoba by Ontario were made by white settlers, it is important to establish that much of this stemmed from systems of Métis land and treaty administration set up by Ottawa that were intended to punish Indigenous resistance and stir up conflict with settlers. The systems of reserving land for groups other than “bona fide settlers” were viewed as the actions of an out of touch federal government who was purposely trying to limit immigration and stifle Manitoba’s growth. It did not help that in the case of the Métis land reserves, the land was set aside in theory, but not effectively resolved, as by March 1873, the system was in chaos and “Not one of the promised 1.4 million acres had been allotted.”¹³⁷ This neglect was continued in the implementation of Treaty One, as Aimee

¹³³ Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 63-64.

¹³⁴ Anonymous, *Ontario and Manitoba*, (Toronto, 1872), <http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/547.html>, 1.

¹³⁵ Anonymous, *Ontario and Manitoba*, (Toronto, 1872), <http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/547.html>, 1.

¹³⁶ Anonymous, *Ontario and Manitoba*, (Toronto, 1872), <http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/547.html>, 14.

¹³⁷ Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 106.

Craft explains, the Portage band in 1874 sent messengers “twice to Qu’Appelle to tell Indians in that area not to make a treaty with the Crown.”¹³⁸

Settlers from Ontario acted as though any laws limiting their own actions or land acquisition in Manitoba did not apply to them, but rather only to the Métis and “old settlers” and Indigenous peoples. This caused concern for those administering the land, as there was “the probability of severe conflict” since the Ontarians were “asserting that they were ‘free to go where they choose, to take possession of any land that suits them.’”¹³⁹ This conflict over land defined the decade of the 1870s, as disputes over land and policy combined with increased immigration set the stage for escalating violence.

Red River Economy

From the early 1870s, the local economy was a concern discussed in the press. Immigrants were advised to bring supplies with them as well as their own cattle, horses, and any other animals they would need, since prices were so high in Manitoba.¹⁴⁰ The *Manitoban* noted that while people may think that in a prairie with a lot of land, and in an out of the way place, there would be a cheap market, but that was not true. They claimed that “one who has to buy everything, can live far cheaper in Toronto or Montreal and in better style, than he can in Winnipeg!”¹⁴¹ This was because between frosts and grasshoppers, the crops could be uncertain and many of the recent arrivals were consumers rather than producers- more of the latter would help alleviate the scarcity in the local markets.

¹³⁸ Aimee Craft, *Breathing Life into the Stone Fort Treaty: An Anishinabe Understanding of Treaty One* (Vancouver: Purich Publishing, for UBC Press, 2013), 104.

¹³⁹ Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 95.

¹⁴⁰ “High Prices and Immigration,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 3, 1871, page 2.

¹⁴¹ “High Prices and Immigration,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 3, 1871, page 2.

From the earliest arrival of immigrants to Manitoba, their assets were reported in the newspaper so readers would be informed of the economic development of the province. Newspaper articles would list the date of arrival, how each group arrived (in 1871 this was limited to flat boats, steamers, and a few wagons) and the number of people in each party. Each immigrant was said to add \$1500 in value to the province, so in July of 1871 the *Manitoba Liberal* reported that since the opening of navigation, Manitoba had added \$922,500.¹⁴²

Despite Winnipeg not yet being incorporated as a city in 1873, residents of Manitoba boasted about the improvements that had already been made. Praising the “private enterprise and the good sense of the people” the *Manitoban* reported that “sidewalks have been extended in all directions, neat fences put round the dwellings, and some attempt even has been made to drain the streets and make them passable during wet weather.”¹⁴³ Part of Mr. Bannatyne’s property and the Ross estate had set as a market square, and there were proposals for avenues and parks, if some other residents would turn over sections of their estates.¹⁴⁴

Potential immigrants were becoming interested in Manitoba, and residents, sometimes presenting themselves as immigration agents, like W. Frank Lynn, answered letters from immigrants asking about Manitoba. While he touched on a variety of topics, he explained the economic opportunities for potentially establishing a fishery on Lake Manitoba or Lake Winnipeg, and that a man with a few hundred pounds would indeed be able to make money by farming, if he was able to do the work himself.¹⁴⁵ As will be discussed more in chapter 7,

¹⁴² “Immigration,” *Manitoba Liberal*, July 26, 1871, page 2.

¹⁴³ “Improvements in Winnipeg,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 14, 1873, page 2.

¹⁴⁴ “Improvements in Winnipeg,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 14, 1873, page 2.

¹⁴⁵ “Immigration: Mr. Lynn’s Answer to Immigrant Correspondence,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, April 11, 1873, page 2.

immigration agents were specifically tasked with trying to promote Canada as a destination for agriculturalists, or any potential immigrants with means.¹⁴⁶

By the end of 1873, newspapers like the *Free Press* were lamenting the lack of immigrants and railways, saying that both were necessary to improve the quality of life in Manitoba.¹⁴⁷ A year later, Winnipeg's growth was praised by the *Free Press*, as they wrote that "We venture to assert that there is no town in the Dominion which in so short a time from its real commencement has made such rapid strides and has acquired such publicity as this city of ours."¹⁴⁸ The article acknowledged that "there have been many things to deter worthy people from coming to the place, and to encourage lawless people to flock to it" but insisted that since "the country came properly under the control of the Dominion Government, there have been none of those acts of lawlessness which have distinguished such places like Omaha, Cheyenne, Moorhead, Bismarck or Benton."¹⁴⁹

The growth of the Winnipeg economy was often praised with the understanding that it was a newly-established settlement, and that label of "real commencement" used by the *Free Press* belied the actual, long history of Red River as an economic centre. Even if one ignores the long history of Indigenous fur trade economies, by the 1830s many Métis had chosen to establish the Red River Settlement as an agricultural site.¹⁵⁰ Norma Jean Hall explains that while the Métis did raise animals and practice agriculture, they were not settlers as understood by the colonial Canadian concept of "homesteader," which implies a specific sociopolitical (often Anglo Saxon)

¹⁴⁶ Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy, 1540-1997* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 78.

¹⁴⁷ "Immigration," *Manitoba Free Press*, December 27, 1873, page 4.

¹⁴⁸ "The Growth of Winnipeg," *Manitoba Free Press*, November 7, 1874, page 4.

¹⁴⁹ "The Growth of Winnipeg," *Manitoba Free Press*, November 7, 1874, page 4.

¹⁵⁰ Norma Jean Hall, "A 'Perfect Freedom': Red River as a Settler Society, 1810-1870" M.A. Thesis., University of Manitoba, 2003), 89.

group.¹⁵¹ The Red River Métis were not moving into a new area assuming they had the right to occupy it, but were rather experimenting with new ways of living and habitation within their homeland.¹⁵² Some of these Métis settlers looked to generate surplus goods that could be sold in larger markets, but lack of transportation limited this option. Hall also explains that Red River elite settlers often struggled to push for greater economic participation, as efforts to expand “foundered when neighbours, not behaving as desired, declined to accept the station of underling labour force.”¹⁵³ Wages for labourers were lower than fur trade wages, after all, and so limitations to settler agriculture should be understood within the context of Red River as a diverse economy where the “numerous opportunities for settlers to try alternate economically promising pursuits, [where] large scale agriculture production was not practicable.”¹⁵⁴ Gerhard Ens, in his analysis of the Red River economy, argues that by the mid-19th century capitalist markets were developing, and divides were beginning to form along class lines. He writes that by 1868 “Some Métis were taking on the manners of the whites, others were becoming more hostile to the incoming Ontario settlers, and divisions among the population were increasing. The poorer families [observed Johnny Grant, a Métis man who moved to Red River from Montana in 1867], mingled less and less with the well-to-do.”¹⁵⁵ This downplays the importance of Métis kinship networks, which will be discussed more in chapter 5, but the shifting economy Hall and Ens describe reveals that contrary to settler observations in the 1870s, the Red River economy had been developing for decades and was not really as young as Winnipeg itself.

¹⁵¹ Hall, 22-23.

¹⁵² Hall, 23-24.

¹⁵³ Hall, 90.

¹⁵⁴ Hall, 91.

¹⁵⁵ Gerhard J. Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing World of the Red River Métis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 122.

In a letter entitled “Observations by an Immigrant,” the development of Winnipeg was praised by saying that it had

people with all the vim and daring of the Western American, but retaining also the solid and substantial qualities of the Eastern Canadian, so that in the building of our city, though rapid in progress, a certain degree of regard for durability is also observable, as manifested in the character of the sidewalks already laid down, the solid oak walls of our Court House, and the proportion of brick buildings being erected so soon as brick could be obtained. That this improved type of Canadian is equal, if not superior, to the Western American in all the qualities which tend to build up a new country may be discovered by a comparison of the settlement along the route of the Red River either by stage or boat.¹⁵⁶

Winnipeg was compared to Western American cities that were also developing in the 1870s, but unlike most other towns and cities, Winnipeg had a long history of settlement, with settlers and fur traders from 1812, and First Nations gatherings for centuries prior. Artibise explains that while commercial trade and development was largely controlled by the HBC, after the Sayer trial in 1849, that monopoly was no longer enforced.¹⁵⁷ Throughout the 1850s, Red River traded extensively with St. Paul, which, combined with access to Hudson Bay and Indigenous trade routes, meant that Red River, though isolated from “Canada” and other empires, had numerous trade opportunities.¹⁵⁸ Compared to a city like Chicago, whose “metropolitan story” did not begin until 1833, and whose boosters worked hard to sell Chicago as a transportation hub, Red River had a several decade head start, and centuries of being an established economic nexus.¹⁵⁹

Winnipeg’s ability to develop into a major supply hub was seen as delayed by the reliance on the HBC for all the shipping needs. The *Nor’Wester* proposed that the province encourage competition to end the HBC monopoly and increase the opportunities for merchants to

¹⁵⁶ “Observations by an Immigrant,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 22, 1874, page 7.

¹⁵⁷ Alan F. J. Artibise, *Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth, 1874-1914* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1975), 7.

¹⁵⁸ Alan F. J. Artibise, *Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth, 1874-1914* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1975), 7-8.

¹⁵⁹ William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), 53, 66-67.

come to Winnipeg from across the continent.¹⁶⁰ Despite these limitations to shipping and the continued HBC monopoly, generally the economic outlook in the newspapers was positive, despite the logistical challenges. While newspapers acknowledged that Manitoba was “shut out [...] half the year from commercial intercourse with the business world by water and year round by rail” things still seemed hopeful.¹⁶¹ The delays around the Métis land grant would soon be sorted out and “will have the effect of converting the waste spaces of the Province into waving fields of grain in the near future.”¹⁶² In addition to this, the Mennonites were planting, as they “do not share the fear of grasshoppers which may deter the older settlers” and were “disposed to plant and show fight should the hoppers come upon them.”¹⁶³ The indications were that “the country will produce, for the first time in its history, sufficient to meet the demand for home consumption, and perhaps have something left to export.”¹⁶⁴

The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* reported in 1875 that Emerson had “blossomed into existence in June last, and promises to be an important town.” It was the “chief town of the Wisconsin and Minnesota colony” and had the Dominion land office, custom house, telegraph and postal facilities, as well as being the headquarters for the Boundary Commission and mounted police.¹⁶⁵ Immigrants were encouraged to move to this new city, as the farmland also seemed profitable. It was praised as “just the place for which thousands of poor men are looking, and that in Southern Manitoba any person of ordinary intelligence and industry may become independent in a few years.”¹⁶⁶ That same year, the *Moorhead Star* reported that Winnipeg society “is as refined and intelligent as that of cities of more note and nearer the centre of civilization” and that

¹⁶⁰ “Winnipeg as a Depot of Supplies for the North-West,” *The Nor’Wester*, August 17, 1874, page 2.

¹⁶¹ “City and Provincial Outlook,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 27, 1875, page 4.

¹⁶² “City and Provincial Outlook,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 27, 1875, page 4.

¹⁶³ “City and Provincial Outlook,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 27, 1875, page 4.

¹⁶⁴ “City and Provincial Outlook,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 27, 1875, page 4.

¹⁶⁵ “Southern Manitoba- The Emerson Colony,” *The Standard*, January 9, 1875, page 3.

¹⁶⁶ “Southern Manitoba- The Emerson Colony,” *The Standard*, January 9, 1875, page 3.

“commercially, Winnipeg and Manitoba are great beyond comparison.”¹⁶⁷ The merchandise shipped via Moorhead for Winnipeg was described as “simply mammoth,” and the trade with Manitoba was “one of the principal sources of our importance, commercially, and as such we prize it.”¹⁶⁸ The *Free Press* republished an article from the *Minneapolis Tribune* stating, “the British Provinces, on our northern border, is increasing every year” and there were suggestions to improve the channel of the Red River from Moorhead to Pembina to allow for better and easier travel.¹⁶⁹ In 1877, the *Free Press* re-printed an article from the *Pioneer Press*, which explained that Manitoba’s crops had been excellent, and that “a large force of laborers will soon be engaged in deepening and improving the channel of Rainy Lake and the Lake of the Woods, which would increase access for supplies and materials for building the Canadian Pacific Railway, and lumber was quickly bought up by the Manitoba markets.”¹⁷⁰ The waterways between Minnesota and Manitoba continued to be developed, and in 1879 the *Free Press* claimed that once improvements were made, the Red River would be “as reliable a channel of commercial transit as the Erie Canal” and that similar improvements should be made by the Canadian authorities on the stretch of the river from Emerson to Selkirk.¹⁷¹ All of these observations of the economic potential and promise of Manitoba made it into the local newspapers, reprinted to promote the progress being made, despite the political tensions and land disputes.

The Manitoban papers did not always appreciate the coverage of the American newspapers. In one article, the *Moorhead Star* had said that “the ‘original Manitobans’ and Half-breeds are of the ‘poor class’,” to which the *Nor’Wester* responded that if he had stayed longer,

¹⁶⁷ “Winnipeg and Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 27, 1875, page 3.

¹⁶⁸ “Winnipeg and Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 27, 1875, page 3.

¹⁶⁹ “Our Trade with Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 26, 1876, page 3.

¹⁷⁰ “Manitoba News,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 7, 1877, page 7.

¹⁷¹ “Manitoba Interests in Northern Minnesota,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 29, 1879, page 4.

“he would have found out that this class of our community are richer and more intelligent than a mere casual glance would lead a traveller to believe. Amongst the Half-breeds and old settlers we number some of our leading men and most influential merchants.”¹⁷² This rebuttal was correct, and of course many of the leading Manitobans were Métis during the 1870s, but there were many other Métis who were being denied land and terrorized by white settlers.

American settlers in Minnesota monitored the development of railways and economic developments on both sides of border, as noted by a letter to the editor of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* printed in the *Manitoba Free Press*, which said that new railway developments in Canada would make “the Canadian north-west territories independent of American transportation routes to the ocean” by building a railway from Lake Winnipeg to York Factory.¹⁷³ The letter expressed that Americans should not be behind the Canadians in innovation.¹⁷⁴

Canadian newspapers also occasionally commented on the success of Winnipeg, as in the case of the Kingston *British Whig*, which wrote that “Winnipeg must surely be the city of progress” and that while there were many drawbacks, such as “isolation from the outside world, the grasshopper plague, diversion of the railway system, and the ‘tying up of the very heart of the Province in reserves of various kinds’,” it was still developing into a “metropolis of the great North-West.”¹⁷⁵ Employing racist stereotypes and imagery less often found in the local papers or the western American papers, the Kingston paper wrote that while recently the city was

a wide prairie, where the Indian erected his teepee and the Indian trader his tent; where each summer night the sound of the Indian drum was heard and gleam of the his camp fire seen. Now the busy sound of the factory and mill, the ringing anvil and shrill steam whistle form a contrast so great as to appear almost miraculous.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² “Winnipeg,” *The Nor’Wester*, August 2, 1875, page 2.

¹⁷³ “The Manitoba Border,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 24, 1877, page 8.

¹⁷⁴ “The Manitoba Border,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 24, 1877, page 8.

¹⁷⁵ “The North-Western Metropolis,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 15, 1877, page 3.

¹⁷⁶ “The North-Western Metropolis,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 15, 1877, page 3.

Winnipeg's economic development was occurring in a space that was still Indigenous, and that "contrast" was seen as unique to many visitors.

When a correspondent from the *Pioneer Press* visited Winnipeg in 1878, he noted that Winnipeg was an impressive city, with merchants and businessmen from many places creating a unique culture. He wrote that the citizens "have come from the cities of Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa, and from England itself, and have brought with them civilities and customs from home."¹⁷⁷ In this well-established and busy city, he noted that there were also "sights on the streets which seem queer to a stranger," namely the "Red River sledges drawn by oxen, and the dog trains."¹⁷⁸ The visitor was a correspondent from the St. Paul *Pioneer Press*, and St. Paul was a major trading partner with Winnipeg, so presumably this correspondent was somewhat familiar with Winnipeg before his visit. Artibise explains the early 1870s optimism used to describe Winnipeg as "the need of the city's new citizens (and that included nearly everyone in 1873) to justify the decision they had made to establish themselves in Winnipeg." In other words, "they felt compelled to defend and justify their actions" because they had bought into the propaganda about the potential of the region, and the "patriotic duty of adding a new frontier to Canada."¹⁷⁹ Accounts from private citizens like Emma Louisa Averill, who arrived in Winnipeg from Liverpool in 1881-1882 described Winnipeg as "a collection of often shabby wooden and brick or brick-veneered buildings that were connected by streets that appeared as rivers of thick, greasy mud bordered by partially submerged plank sidewalks."¹⁸⁰ Descriptions like this contrast with the overly optimistic tone of the immigration propaganda in the newspapers during this time. Winnipeg was growing quickly and certainly by the 1880s the "boom" had begun, but

¹⁷⁷ "As Viewed by a Visitor," *Manitoba Free Press*, December 27, 1878, page 1.

¹⁷⁸ "As Viewed by a Visitor," *Manitoba Free Press*, December 27, 1878, page 1.

¹⁷⁹ Artibise, 14-15.

¹⁸⁰ Kurt Korneski, *Race, Nation, and Reform Ideology in Winnipeg, 1880s-1920s* (Lanham, Maryland: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2015), Chapter 1, Kindle.

much of the 1870s description of Winnipeg as exceedingly prosperous was a way of justifying the hardship, supporting the colonial propaganda to recruit immigrants, and hoping that one day soon these descriptions would be accurate.

The Iowa press noted that Winnipeg was a booming city, and that it had “all the advantages of churches, schools, colleges, refined and cultivated society,” and that the business community was “somewhat more conservative in its methods and less characterized by impetuous dash and energy than those of our own country [but] still has abundance of the sturdy enterprise necessary to carry on the contest for civilization and progress.”¹⁸¹ Business was good, and there were “quite a number of Indian camps” just outside of the city, and they observed that “Although the Indians are placed on reservations by the Canadian Government, and are in receipt of annuities, they still persist in wandering from one place to another without the shadow of an object in view beyond gratifying their natural passion to be on the move.”¹⁸² The booming settler economy had not erased the Indigenous presence within and around the city of Winnipeg. Kurt Korneski explains that even during the boom of 1881-1882, most observers of Winnipeg noted that the “gateway city” was a blend of the old and new. Winnipeegers themselves included fashionable men and women, as well as people in the “various costumes of the natives.”¹⁸³ At the time of Winnipeg’s incorporation in 1874, “within city boundaries the old buffalo trails that older traders had used for many years prior” were still visible.¹⁸⁴

Alexander Begg and Walter Nursey’s *Ten Years in Winnipeg* dedicated a large amount of space to commenting on the decade of economic development at Red River. He noted that in 1871 “The first fresh oysters ever received into Manitoba, were imported on the first of

¹⁸¹ “The Hawkeye Editors: The Iowa Press on Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 9, 1879, page 3.

¹⁸² “The Hawkeye Editors: The Iowa Press on Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 9, 1879, page 3.

¹⁸³ Korneski, *Race, Nation, and Reform Ideology in Winnipeg*, Chapter 1, Kindle.

¹⁸⁴ Korneski, *Race, Nation, and Reform Ideology in Winnipeg*, Chapter 1, Kindle.

February, by Bannatyne and Begg, and it is needless to say that they were all sold in a day or two.”¹⁸⁵ When writing about 1879 he again discussed oysters, saying that “Shell oysters loomed up this month also, the first ever brought into Winnipeg, which was universally accepted as proof positive of progressiveness.”¹⁸⁶ Begg was obviously praising himself and his own business with that statement, but still, by the end of the 1870s, Manitoba’s economy was finally integrating itself into larger transportation networks.

Labour and Immigration

The labour market and the lack of available labour was a point of contention in the *Manitoban* in December of 1870. The solution for this was proposed to be an increase in immigration and there was a particular shortage of young men and women. There were plenty of “poor boys” in Ontario and Quebec, but more should be imported into Manitoba.¹⁸⁷ Immigration agents generally worked against the idea of bringing in “poor boys” and sought immigrants that would be able to set up farms and businesses of their own, but Manitoba was desperate. As David Gouter explains, “Immigration was seen as essential for Canada’s territorial development, particularly the settling of its vast open spaces of the Prairies.”¹⁸⁸ Of course, there were specific types of labour that were in demand, and “throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Canadian farmers continually claimed they faced a crisis in the supply of agricultural labour.”¹⁸⁹ This lack of agricultural labour was certainly part of the newspaper coverage of immigration in the 1870s, but as Gouter explains, Canada was specifically looking for

¹⁸⁵ Alexander Begg and Walter Nursey, *Ten Years in Winnipeg: A Narration of the Principal Events in the History of the City of Winnipeg* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Times Printing & Publishing House, 1879), 21.

¹⁸⁶ Alexander Begg, *Ten Years in Winnipeg*, 203.

¹⁸⁷ “The Labour Market,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, December 17, 1870, page 2.

¹⁸⁸ David Gouter, *Guarding the Gates: The Canadian Labour Movement and Immigration, 1872-1934* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 21.

¹⁸⁹ Gouter, 29.

immigration that would help “establish the white and British character of the Dominion,” and thus was competing with the United States, Australia, and New Zealand for the limited supply of British workers willing to emigrate.¹⁹⁰

From early in the 1870s labour continued to be an issue that sparked debate, with race often playing a factor. When a road was developed to the Lake of Woods so that Colonel Wolseley’s troops could come to Winnipeg, some newspapers alleged that there was favouritism and that “one hundred French” had been hired for that work. The *Manitoban* offered clarification saying that “the employees consist of four gangs of Swampies and Indians; four gangs of Mr. Dawson’s voyageurs and Canadians; and two gangs of Half-breeds.”¹⁹¹ The labour to build the road was balanced between First Nations, Métis, and voyageurs and Canadians.

Within a few years, there were many immigrants coming to Winnipeg for work, and the *Free Press* reported that for wage labourers, wages ranged from \$2.50 to \$4.00, largely due to the scarcity of mechanics and other skilled labourers.¹⁹² The economy was relatively small, so from year to year the demand for mechanics and other types of labourers could shift drastically, as by 1873 there were concerns that the immigration agents would not recruit the right type of immigrants for Manitoba. When the government proposed sending “British emigrants from Quebec free to Manitoba” the *Free Press* wrote that “at this stage in our history few things could be more undesirable or untimely” and that no one needing to be hired should be sent.¹⁹³ The labour market was “if not positively overcrowded, at least fully supplied” and until construction increased there was no need for hired labourers. Immigrants were still wanted, but “until railway construction commences in this country, it will be no field for an extensive immigration of any

¹⁹⁰ Gouter, 29.

¹⁹¹ “Favoritism,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 28, 1871, page 2.

¹⁹² “Winnipeg: Size, Growth, and Development of the Metropolis of Manitoba and the North-West,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 30, 1872, page 6.

¹⁹³ “Immigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 14, 1873, page 4.

class save agriculturalists.”¹⁹⁴ The demand for mechanics and labourers from 1872 had quickly dried up, and again, the discussion focused on the demand for agricultural labourers and farmers.

The Canadian government set aside \$70,000 to help support immigrants in 1872, but none had been allocated to Manitoba. The *Manitoban* wrote that this was fine, since unlike Toronto, people in Manitoba were not looking for handouts, but rather were wanting to be told

what lands they can take and what lands they cannot take. That’s all. If the Dominion Government and their agents will only put themselves to the trouble to give some information on these points, they may keep their \$70,000 without fear or favor. People come here not to loaf around Emigration offices; they want to work.¹⁹⁵

The confusion surrounding land policies in Manitoba were blamed for the slow economic growth in the early 1870s, and so local demands for labour were shaped by the availability of land.

As the Canadian government began investing in public works in Manitoba, and structures like the Red River Bridge (no bridge would be successfully built until the 1880s), the penitentiary, post office, customs house, and land office were proposed, the *Free Press* urged them to be built as quickly as possible, to “provide work for the mechanics and laborers who are arriving in such large numbers almost daily.”¹⁹⁶ For that reason alone, building should commence, so that these men would have something to do. This influx of immigration had additional logistical challenges, as new arrivals to Manitoba were not greeted by reception agents, as was apparently the practice in the United States. The *Free Press* suggested that the government should address this, and “appoint a person of the proper qualifications” to meet new arrivals and “take new comers by the hand and inform them on the multitude of subjects, upon which they require enlightenment.”¹⁹⁷ The Dominion Lands Office did provide this sort of service, if a new arrival was seeking information about acquiring land, but for many people the

¹⁹⁴ “Immigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 14, 1873, page 4.

¹⁹⁵ “Help to Immigrants,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 15, 1872, page 2.

¹⁹⁶ “Public Works,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 7, 1873, page 4.

¹⁹⁷ “Necessities of the Hour,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 7, 1873, page 4.

first information they wanted was about lodging, and “working men want to know the current rates of wages and where they will probably find employment.”¹⁹⁸ In a post-script to this article, the *Free Press* reported that since they had put the article in type, Mr. Hargrave had been appointed to fill this position and they believed him to be fully qualified.¹⁹⁹

By 1874, the *Free Press* was starting stories about immigration with statements like “It is pretty evident that the immigration of laborers and mechanics to this Province this season is too great, or two [sic] early. We think the latter.”²⁰⁰ Several hundred had arrived, and it was not possible for all of them to find employment. The article did not blame the labourers themselves, concluding that it was hardly their fault, and instead the fault could be found with “the man who wants to farm” but found it too difficult and was too “hard to please.”²⁰¹ These concerns continued, as the *Free Press* claimed delays with land reserves meant that there were too many labourers out of work, and people could not find land available to farm. The only solution, according to the *Free Press*, was to start building the railway.²⁰²

While labourers and mechanics struggled to find work, many people were complaining about the “scarcity of domestics” and the *Nor’Wester* reminded “servants who are in the habit of breaking their engagements when they are offered higher wages than those agreed on, that they are liable to arrest and imprisonment.”²⁰³ They concluded that “some irate master or mistress will set the example some day.”²⁰⁴ In 1876 at a City Council meeting there was a discussion about the shortage of labour that was preventing the building of the William street sewer.²⁰⁵ The *Free Press* said that it was good the labour market was not oversaturated, but also that “Winnipeg is

¹⁹⁸ “Necessities of the Hour,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 7, 1873, page 4.

¹⁹⁹ “Necessities of the Hour,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 7, 1873, page 4.

²⁰⁰ “Immigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 20, 1874, page 4.

²⁰¹ “Immigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 20, 1874, page 4.

²⁰² “The Out-Look,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 13, 1874, page 4.

²⁰³ “Local News,” *The Nor’Wester*, July 27, 1874, page 3.

²⁰⁴ “Local News,” *The Nor’Wester*, July 27, 1874, page 3.

²⁰⁵ “Labour Conquers Everything,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 18, 1876, page 5.

somewhat overstocked with hangers on round saloons and boarding-houses who are always professing to be ‘on the look-out for a job.’”²⁰⁶ This was followed by a complaint that so many people were averse to manual labour, as evidenced by a recent story in an English paper, where a lady could not find a nursemaid for her children, but when she offered the same salary but called the position a “nursery governess” she was “immediately inundated with applications.”²⁰⁷

Large numbers of immigrants were expected in 1877, but there were some economic concerns about so many people arriving. There were opportunities for agriculturalists, but the *Free Press* warned that “there is no prudence in anyone coming to Manitoba with only a few dollars in his pockets after landing” and that many arrived looking for a “soft job” and when that could not be found, they left, saying that the country was “too hot, too cold, too wet, too dry, too muddy, too sparsely populated, too much monopolized, or too something or another.”²⁰⁸

When Bishop Albert Carman, a Methodist minister trying to spearhead the denomination’s expansion into western Canada,²⁰⁹ visited Manitoba, he concluded that Manitoba had a need for young, hard-working men, but that

What Manitoba wants to-day is not speculators or idlers or gamblers or loafers, but working men and women. Nor does it need just now fancy men and ornamental women, ring and cane and ribbon paraders, the devotees of puppies, gloves, and smelling bottles. That style of people better wait a little longer in Ontario, till the Manitoba settlers move in and get up their beds and stoves.²¹⁰

He, like so many other observers, wanted to emphasize the hardships awaiting people in Manitoba, particularly the labour required.

²⁰⁶ “Labour Conquers Everything,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 18, 1876, page 5.

²⁰⁷ “Labour Conquers Everything,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 18, 1876, page 5.

²⁰⁸ “Immigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 16, 1877, page 4.

²⁰⁹ Goldwin S. French, “Carman, Albert,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/carman_albert_14E.html.

²¹⁰ “Bishop Carman on Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 17, 1877, page 3.

As immigrants continued to find their way to Manitoba, the *Free Press* reported that the government should shift their policy to only encourage the immigration of two groups, namely “agriculturalists and female domestic servants, the demand for mechanics being at present fully supplied.”²¹¹ In another article, the *Free Press* lamented that “the immigration of past years has possessed far too little of the agricultural and far too much of the would-be ‘genteel’ element.”²¹² When the *Globe* suggested that the Canadian government should limit immigration, and specifically “none should be encouraged to immigrate from Europe or elsewhere to Canada” the *Free Press* pushed back and said that there was still plenty of room for immigrants from Europe in Manitoba and the North-west Territories, as long as they would be as good as investment as the Mennonites and Icelanders had proven to be.²¹³ When offering advice to intending immigrants in 1878, the *Free Press* suggested that those wanting genteel employment should not come to Manitoba, and as for farmers, they should endeavor to follow the Mennonite example and immigrate with a family and “suitable helpmate” if they wanted to be successful, as single men often struggled to make ends meet. For most people, having additional family members to earn extra wages would be necessary, and “the demand for domestic servants is always great, and good girls command excellent wages and comfortable situations.”²¹⁴

By 1880, new immigration regulations had been imposed, with an article from the *Globe* stating that “a new order in council of the Dominion Government prohibits the landing of any immigrant who has not twenty dollars in his pocket on reaching a Canadian port. The intention is to prevent the influx of pauper immigrants.”²¹⁵ An article from the *Free Press* responded to inquiries about which immigrants were wanted in Manitoba by saying that farmers with “not less

²¹¹ “Immigration to the North-West,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 7, 1877, page 4.

²¹² “Immigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 19, 1877, page 4.

²¹³ “Immigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 24, 1877, page 2.

²¹⁴ “Who Should Come to Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 23, 1878, page 4.

²¹⁵ “The New Immigration Regulations,” *Manitoba Free Press*, January 26, 1880, page 3.

than \$500” were always welcome “in unlimited numbers” and that “for capitalists there are many most inviting opportunities for safe, profitable, and advantageous investments.”²¹⁶ There was no need for “professional men” and limited need for mechanics and laborers, and of course many opportunities for “good domestic female servants in the city.”²¹⁷

In conclusion, the 1870s was a decade of economic and political change in Manitoba, marked by both optimism and frustration. There were hopes that Manitoba would be prosperous, but the newspapers reflect a concern that Canada did not view Manitoba as an equal partner in Confederation in the same sense as the other provinces. Settlers arriving to the new province wanted to reform Manitoba into an English province resembling Ontario as quickly as possible, but found themselves in an Indigenous space that was reeling from entering Canada in conflict. The quotidian violence that defined this decade meant that just maintaining political and legal systems was a challenge, and land claims and disputes were a secondary priority for the government, which only added to the tension between the various communities in Manitoba.

²¹⁶ “Immigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 17, 1880, page 2.

²¹⁷ “Immigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 17, 1880, page 2.

Chapter 3:

Land and Government

The Dominion government surveyed and sub-divided lands in Manitoba in the 1870s, and nothing caused more conflict between settlers and Indigenous peoples. This chapter examines the various regulations governments used to establish legal sovereignty over land, from treaties to homestead policies. Land reserves were a unique feature of Dominion Lands policy, and the Métis reserve lands were a significant point of tension in Manitoba. Central to these concerns of Métis land was also the shifting approach to hay and timber lands, eliminating the common lands which both Métis farmers and early white settlers required to make their system of narrow river lot agriculture successful. These rights had been guaranteed by the Hudson Bay Company, but their future in the new province was uncertain. Each of these policies sparked reactions within the Indigenous and white settler communities. Control of land in what is now Manitoba had long been negotiated between many parties, first between Indigenous nations, and after the Selkirk Treaty of 1817, with European settlers as well. Adam Gaudry explains that “Mere assertion of the possession of land by Selkirk and the [Hudson’s Bay] Company did not convince the local Indigenous peoples of the Company’s right to possess and occupy the land.”¹ Whatever the British or Canadian courts decreed about the land in Manitoba mattered little to the people on the ground if those courts did not represent an actual claim to sovereignty. Throughout the 1870s, the federal and provincial governments attempted to use Dominion Lands policy to assert effective control over the land and solidify their place in Manitoba by dispossessing Indigenous peoples and transferring land to settlers. The settlers who were the beneficiaries of these policies at times followed the laws, but at other times protested that the government was working against

¹ Adam Gaudry, “Fantasies of Sovereignty: Deconstructing British and Canadian Claims to Ownership of the Historic North-West,” *Native American and Indigenous Studies*, 3, no. 1 (Spring 2016), 55.

them by placing restrictions on their ability to take whatever land they wanted, especially when governments attempted to honour treaties or legal obligations to Indigenous peoples.

Land and discussions about who could claim legal title over lands predated the expansion of Canadian imperial control, as Kenton Storey explains in his examination of Aboriginal title in the 1860s. He argues that by publishing debates “about the authenticity of the Selkirk Treaty and the demands of local Métis, the *Nor’Wester* drew attention to a decades-old issue, with serious implications for the security of settler property rights.”² Throughout the 1860s, letters of support from local Métis residents and First Nations leaders confirmed that the Selkirk Treaty was not accepted as valid, at least not the way it was understood by non-Indigenous settlers.³ This issue of HBC governance, treaties, and Indigenous protestations resonated in Great Britain, where Frederick William Chesson, secretary of the Aborigines’ Protection Society supported the *Nor’Wester’s* critique of HBC policy.⁴ While the editors of the *Nor’Wester* still supported the expansion of the Canadian empire into Red River and the Northwest, their coverage in the 1860s revealed the “necessity to negotiate treaties to extinguish Aboriginal title” as the assumption that title belonged to Indigenous peoples was a “common sense” assertion.⁵ They did not refer back to the Royal Proclamation in order to assert precedent, but rather on the contemporary need for diplomacy, as Indigenous authority over the land was the lived reality.⁶ The land policies imposed during the 1870s were necessary not just for legal reasons, but because the Canadian government’s claim to land in Manitoba was not assumed.

² Kenton Storey, “Aboriginal Title in the Press at Red River and New Westminster,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 101, no. 2 (June 2020), 247.

³ Storey, “Aboriginal Title,” 247.

⁴ Storey, “Aboriginal Title,” 248.

⁵ Storey, “Aboriginal Title,” 261-262.

⁶ Storey, “Aboriginal Title,” 261-262

Land Policies and Regulations

There is no clearer example of the role of government and land administration in the Canadian prairie than in treaty negotiations. In this dissertation, the most important treaties to consider are the Manitoba Act and Treaty One, signed in 1870 and 1871, respectively. The Manitoba Act created the province of Manitoba, and in sections 31, specifically set aside 1.4 million acres of land for the Métis heads of families and their children.⁷ The original intent of the Manitoba Act was to preserve the Red River settlers' land tenure and the existing parishes, and the 1.4 million acres as a 2 million acre homeland for the Métis.⁸ Canada did not administer this land efficiently, and much of that was intentional, resulting in land speculators doing what Owen Toews calls a "thinly-veiled form of looting," capitalizing off of the Métis in Manitoba and ending up with 800,000 acres of Métis land.⁹

Treaty One was signed in 1871 but was negotiated in 1870 as the military force marching from Canada to Red River addressed the "threat" of First Nations along the route to Red River. Following the announcement of the military force, there was "great unrest among the Saulteaux groups in the woodlands in and adjacent to the North West angle."¹⁰ Aimee Craft explains that the Anishinabe who negotiated Treaty One were doing so as part of a long history of treaty-making and negotiating, as the inland fur trade routes had navigated through their lands for centuries.¹¹ There were initial negotiations, concluded in August 1870 that allowed the soldiers

⁷ D. N. Sprague, *Canada and the Métis, 1869-1885* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988), 89.

⁸ D. N. Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 89.

⁹ Owen Toews, *Stolen City: Racial Capitalism and the Making of Winnipeg* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2018), 46.

¹⁰ J. R. Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 145.

¹¹ Aimee Craft, *Breathing Life into the Stone Fort Treaty: An Anishinabe Understanding of Treaty One* (Vancouver: Purich Publishing, for UBC Press, 2013), 20, 26.

through the territory, but no permanent treaty was agreed upon.¹² This uncertainty that plagued Red River in 1871 was part of public record, as a *Manitoban* editorial expressed concern that a lack of treaty would result in loss of life, and was an “impediment to immigration” as most would not risk moving to a place where, according to the *Royal Proclamation*, the land could not be purchased without a treaty.¹³

The treaty negotiations were again held at Fort Frances in 1871 and were extensively covered in the newspapers in Manitoba as well as the *Globe*.¹⁴ In the aftermath of the treaty negotiations, it became clear that the Canadian government had a very different perspective on what had been decided, particularly around reserves. Craft explains that “the record does not mention discussions about concepts such as cession, release, or surrender, terms that were later used in the treaty text to effect the purported surrender of land.”¹⁵ Until the last day of treaty negotiations, evidence was clear that the Anishinabe “were prepared to walk away,” and there is no record of the Anishinabe agreeing to a “complete surrender of land.”¹⁶ Correspondence with Anishinabe leaders from the period after the treaty reveals their understanding of the treaty, and it was not surrender, although they did express concern at government attempts to regulate their land use.¹⁷ Based on the numerous complaints filed in the years after the treaty, the originally negotiated treaty “was likely far more nuanced than the reported terms of a treaty rooted in surrender of land in exchange for annuities and goods.”¹⁸

Manitoba’s land policy was announced in March of 1871, and set aside 1,400,000 acres for “the benefit of the families of half-breeds,” which included every Métis resident in the

¹² Sheldon Krasowski, *No Surrender: The Land Remains Indigenous* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2019), 39.

¹³ Craft, *Breathing Life into the Stone Fort Treaty*, 44.

¹⁴ Krasowski, 56.

¹⁵ Craft, *Breathing Life into the Stone Fort Treaty*, 102.

¹⁶ Craft, *Breathing Life into the Stone Fort Treaty*, 103.

¹⁷ Craft, *Breathing Life into the Stone Fort Treaty*, 103.

¹⁸ Craft, *Breathing Life into the Stone Fort Treaty*, 106.

province of Manitoba at the time of joining Canada, as well as “every child of such half-breed resident.”¹⁹ This was followed with a statement that “the most liberal construction shall be put on the word ‘resident.’”²⁰ While the *Manitoban* was optimistic for a generous interpretation of the definition of “resident,” the form of liberalism that would soon be implemented in Manitoba by the white settlers would directly work against that outcome. Ian McKay explains that our concept of the Canadian nation in Canadian history should be understood as an “arrestingly contradictory, complicated, and yet coherent process of liberal rule.”²¹ Instituting a “liberal order” has meant a constant effort to extend and promote the “primacy of the category ‘individual,’” where a person’s freedom “should be limited only by voluntary obligations to others or to God.”²² Establishing settler colonial systems of land ownership and sovereignty was part of this liberal order, and the “arresting contradiction” that this chapter proves is that intense levels of government control, surveillance, and forced assimilation were required in order to create a “liberal order” for white settler Canadians.

This liberal ideal shaped immigration and Canadian expansion in the late nineteenth century, as discussed by Ryan Eyford, using the example of settler reserves, specifically the Icelander reserve, as a model for creating a liberal nation. In general, Canadian land policies in the late nineteenth century should be understood as being about race and liberalism, specifically liberalism as defined by Ian McKay and used in Eyford’s book with the three core principles of the liberal model: “liberty, equality, and property.”²³ One of the men supporting Canadian

¹⁹ “Lands in Manitoba: The Government Policy, the System of Survey,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, March 25, 1871, page 3.

²⁰ “Lands in Manitoba: The Government Policy, the System of Survey,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, March 25, 1871, page 3.

²¹ Ian McKay, “The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History,” *The Canadian historical review* 81, no. 4 (2000), 623.

²² Ian McKay, 623.

²³ Ryan Eyford, *White Settler Reserve: New Iceland and the Colonization of the Canadian West* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 14.

expansionism, and the role that Icelanders would play in that goal, was Robert Grant Haliburton, and his vision was that “the racially mixed society of the Red River Colony and the greater Northwest was part of the ‘dead past’ to be swept away.”²⁴ Métis organization during the Red River Resistance complicated this vision for the future, but as the land policies of the 1870s were developed, it is important to keep in mind that the goal was racial assimilation and replacing Red River society with the liberal, Canadian model of settler colonialism.

As the land policy was made public in 1871, there were also instructions for who could apply for homestead rights, with specific provisions given to the “officers and men of the 1st or Ontario and of the 2nd or Quebec battalions of rifles now serving therein [...] who may become settlers in Manitoba, shall be entitled to an additional free grant without actual residence thereon of a quarter section. No other person shall be entitled to more than one homestead right.”²⁵ There were also lands to be set aside for the Crown, for the HBC, schools, “wood lands set apart as such for supplying settlers with fuel and fencing,” as well as lands set aside for townships, mineral lands, and lands reserved for the railway.²⁶ Ensuring that Canadian militia members could easily become settlers, and that land reserves were set aside for common purposes was a first step in dispossessing Indigenous peoples of their land. Describing early 1870s land policy more broadly, Gerald Friesen writes, “The fertile lands of the western interior were intended to attract immigrants, it is true, but they were also used to pay for railways, schools, swamp drainage, military service, and the extinguishing of Indian title and the Hudson’s Bay Company charter.”²⁷

²⁴ Eyford, 33.

²⁵ Eyford, 33.

²⁶ Eyford, 33.

²⁷ Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 184.

One of the most complicated (and controversial, for the pro-Canada factions) aspects of early Manitoba land policy was Governor Archibald's attempt to fulfill Section 31 of the *Manitoba Act*, which set aside 1.4 million acres for the Métis. Archibald's plan went to Ottawa by the end of 1870, but the federal government "developed a Dominion Lands Policy that delayed the process interminably, and gradually modified Archibald's straightforward approach in ways that ultimately subverted the purposes of the guarantee altogether."²⁸ D. N. Sprague argues that this delay was directly a result of John A. Macdonald's hostility towards the Métis and used to transfer land to settlers. Explaining the conflict between Archibald and Macdonald's approach to Section 31, he writes "Archibald believed that such local adjudication of the question could settle all the claims to the occupied land perhaps in one year, or two at the most," and he believed that "adjudication of native land claims had to be a priority of the Macdonald government, even though [Macdonald wrote that] all he wished to accomplish quickly was the settlement of as many Canadians as possible in Manitoba."²⁹ As the debates and confusion over land policies and regulation unfolded in Manitoban newspapers, it is important to keep in mind that much of this confusion was intentionally created by the Canadian government. Describing this process, Sprague says "By the end of March 1873, it had become clear that the entire question of land claims under the Manitoba Act was in total chaos. Three years had passed. Not one promised patent to a river lot had emerged. Not one of the 1.4 million acres was allotted."³⁰ The chaos was intentional and lasted until the mid-1870s, which is reflected in the newspaper coverage of these policies.

²⁸ Dale Gibson, *Law, Life, and Government at Red River: Volume 1, Settlement and Government, 1812-1872* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 306-307.

²⁹ Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 93.

³⁰ Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 107.

The *Manitoba Liberal* fulfilled their mandate as the newspaper of the opposition party by re-printing critiques of the land policy that had appeared in the Toronto *Telegraph* and Chatham *Planet*. According to the *Telegraph*, “The red tapeism about the Manitoba survey has done a vast, and probably an irremediable, injury to that Province [as] the French half-breeds have taken every acre of available land between Fort Garry and Pembina- 1,800,000 in all- leaving the English half-breeds and immigrants without land enough to sod a lark.”³¹ This was resulting in immigrants choosing the United States instead of Canada and “great dissatisfaction exists on all sides, except among the grab-all French.”³² The *Planet* said that a recent Order in Council “assures to the settler or squatter his lot, no matter where he settles, whether on land claimed by French half-breeds or not.”³³ The *Liberal* responded that “here is a leading ministerial paper telling immigrants to settle on lands whether claimed by French half-breeds or not. We have an Order of Council dated the 26th of May last, virtually telling immigrants the same thing. Even the Government papers sustain the settlers in their rights to settle upon any unoccupied lands.”³⁴ This was all happening while Governor Archibald was saying that the Métis lands were confirmed for them. The *Liberal* concluded that “if he perseveres in carrying out his policy of preventing immigration to this country by parcelling out the lands to the French, his recal [sic.] may be looked for at an early day, and the sooner the better for the Province.”³⁵

That 26 May Order in Council was referenced by the *Manitoban* when they explained that settlers claiming land should “leave his neighbour space for a quarter section” but that “selection and public notification thereof are all the law requires him to do.”³⁶ If a settler made

³¹ “Governor Archibald Land Policy Condemned,” *Manitoba Liberal*, August 30, 1871, page 2.

³² “Governor Archibald Land Policy Condemned,” *Manitoba Liberal*, August 30, 1871, page 2.

³³ “Governor Archibald Land Policy Condemned,” *Manitoba Liberal*, August 30, 1871, page 2.

³⁴ “Governor Archibald Land Policy Condemned,” *Manitoba Liberal*, August 30, 1871, page 2.

³⁵ “Governor Archibald Land Policy Condemned,” *Manitoba Liberal*, August 30, 1871, page 2.

³⁶ “Crown Lands,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 24, 1871, page 2.

the public notice of claiming a section of land, “he has done sufficient to give him the preference, even though an Act of Parliament on which his claim is founded, should not be construed to take precedence of an Act of the Executive.”³⁷

At the same time, *Le Métis* was reporting about the new immigrants and was concerned that immigration should be delayed until Métis reserves could be established.³⁸ One article began, “les immigrants qui arrivent ne sauraient avoir des informations trop exactes sur le droit qu’ils peuvent avoir en s’établissant dans la Province.”³⁹ It continued, “Tout le monde sait que les Métis ont le premier droit à la possession d’une partie du pays, droit qu’ils possèdent eu vertu de leur origine, et qui leur a été reconnu et garanti par l’Acte de Manitoba.”⁴⁰ The settlers needed to be informed that the Métis had the first right to the land, but many settlers were arriving and claiming land without understanding the legal obligations that had allowed for Manitoba to exist. The Manitoba Act section 31 set aside 1.4 million acres for Métis at Red River, to “extinguish their share of ‘Indian Title’ in the area.”⁴¹ Essentially, this was a treaty that guaranteed a Métis land base on paper, although in interpretation, resulted in “the eventual dispossession of 85 percent of the original 1.4 million acres,” and the “exodus of more than 80 percent of the original Red River Métis population into what is today the United States, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, and the Northwest Territories.”⁴² From 1871 there was already a concern that the new settlers were not being given accurate information about the Manitoba Act and the land owed to the Red River Métis.

³⁷ “Crown Lands,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 24, 1871, page 2.

³⁸ “Les Emigres,” *Le Métis*, June 22, 1871, page 2.

³⁹ “Les Emigres,” *Le Métis*, June 22, 1871, page 2.

⁴⁰ “Les Emigres,” *Le Métis*, June 22, 1871, page 2.

⁴¹ Chris Andersen, *“Métis”: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 112.

⁴² Andersen, 112.

As land was gradually claimed, newspapers printed public notices of land claims, ranging from soldiers claiming their sections of land, to a large section claimed by “the Half-Breed Parishioners of St. Mary’s, Portage la Prairie,” that extended from Lake Manitoba to the Assiniboine River.⁴³ Individual sections were also claimed by Métis as part of the “Half-Breed Grant” and on one page Thomas Bunn, James Stewart, Peter Flett, William and James Tait, Charles Tait, and William Tait, all placed Public Notices to confirm their lands.⁴⁴ Many of these notices referred to the land claimed by the others, suggesting that these were pre-existing relationships and neighbours may have been chosen intentionally.

The *Manitoban* attempted to clarify some of the confusion around the Métis land grants by responding to questions from a correspondent, answering concerns that adults had no land rights by saying that according to a direct reading of a March 1st Order in Council, “it must be obvious to everyone, that not only every child of every Half-breed; but every Half-breed, male and female is entitled to share in the grant of 1,400,000 acres.”⁴⁵ Months later, the confusion persisted, as when it came to how land could be claimed and used, some referred to the *Dominion Public Land Act* while others thought that “the old laws of Assiniboia are still in force” and referred to laws from 1862 and 1867.⁴⁶ Some of this confusion stemmed from the actual chaos of trying to work through the HBC land title records, which were “made worse by a loss of documents under Provisional Government control.”⁴⁷ Governor Archibald also needed to sort out which laws were still in effect in the new province, and rather than waiting for legal rulings, in early 1871, “simply ordered the entire 1862 Assiniboia consolidation, followed by all

⁴³ “Land Notices,” *Manitoba Liberal*, November 10, 1871, page 4.

⁴⁴ “Land Claims,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, July 29, 1871, page 3.

⁴⁵ “The Land Question: The Half-Breed Grant,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, April 20, 1872, page 2.

⁴⁶ “Land Question Again,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, July 20, 1872, page 2.

⁴⁷ Gibson, 297.

post-1862 Council of Assiniboia amendments to be reprinted.”⁴⁸ This did not set up the early government or people, for success, as “No effort was made to integrate the amendments with the original text or improve the laws substantially” even though the Riel government had passed amendments that already addressed that.⁴⁹ The Riel improvements to the laws were ignored as the new government could not be seen as giving any credit to what the provisional government had accomplished, and so the people of Manitoba muddled through, unsure of which laws were in effect.

Towards the end of 1872, the text of the Dominion Lands Act was published in full in the *Manitoba Free Press*.⁵⁰ Métis lands were not specified in this Act, but it clarified laws that governed “Indian Title,” coal lands, town plots, timber lands, homestead rights, military bounty land claims, and other aspects of how land could be claimed and used. These regulations were published in almost every issue of the *Free Press* from the winter of 1872 to the spring of 1873.⁵¹ In 1874, the text of the Dominion Lands Act was changed to allow men to claim their land at 18 instead of waiting until 21, and there were additional amendments “to facilitate colonization” and ensure that settlers could apply to withdraw townships from public sale and develop them by selling them, “at a reduced price.”⁵²

Canadian land policy in 1872 was closely modelled after the United States homesteading model, and as such it initially allowed single women to file for homesteads, as long as they were over twenty-one, and a British subject.⁵³ The policy was not intended for Indigenous peoples in either the Canada or the United States, but by 1876, Canada’s Indian Act would officially

⁴⁸ Gibson, 297.

⁴⁹ Gibson, 297.

⁵⁰ “Dominion Lands Act,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 30, 1872, page 1.

⁵¹ “Dominion Lands Act,” *Manitoba Free Press*, January 11, 1873, page 6.

⁵² “Amended Dominion Lands Act,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 6, 1874, page 4.

⁵³ Sarah Carter, *Imperial Plots: Woman, Land, and the Spadework of British Colonialism on the Canadian Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2016), 57.

exclude all those defined as “Indian” from the right to homestead.⁵⁴ The changes to land policy in 1876 also “rather quickly and deliberately took away the privilege of homesteading from single women,” a significant distinction between the Canadian and United States legislations.⁵⁵ The goal of both nations’ policies was to quickly provide a large population of “fit and preferably youthful males” specifically to employ settlers as a counter to Indigenous claims and extinguish control over land.⁵⁶ Settler colonial nations require sovereignty over land in order to expand, and settlers were seen as a cost-saving mechanism, as opposed to funding a full military occupation and takeover.⁵⁷ Understanding this as the primary goal of settler land policy explains why the land was advertised as “cheap” or “free,” and also why men, especially those willing to take up arms for a patriotic cause, were the preferred settlers, particularly in Canada, where there was no standing military presence in the prairies until the North West Mounted Police.

More changes to the land laws were reported in 1876, when the *Free Press* clarified that “the right of a squatter on unsurveyed lands will not be recognized unless he makes application and tenders proof of a settlement and improvement within three months after notice has been received at the Local Lands Agency.”⁵⁸ Any person over 18, regardless of gender, was able to enter for a quarter section or less of Dominion lands for a claim for “forest tree planting. By 1873, squatting was so common that the government was proposing a commission to “determine the nature of the claims to unpatented lands, and would prove a convenience and saving of expense to the settlers.”⁵⁹ Squatting was so common in part because, as Sprague explains, an 1871 Order-in-Council “encouraged prospective settlers from Canada to emigrate to Manitoba to

⁵⁴ Carter, *Imperial Plots*, 57.

⁵⁵ Carter, *Imperial Plots*, 61.

⁵⁶ Carter, *Imperial Plots*, 61-62.

⁵⁷ Carter, *Imperial Plots*, 62.

⁵⁸ “Changes in Dominion Land Laws,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 13, 1876, page 4.

⁵⁹ “Manitoba Land Claims,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 5, 1873, page 4.

take up land as squatters. They were told that a homestead law was forthcoming and in the meantime, in the event of trespass, interlopers were promised protection and the full support of the government.”⁶⁰ This obviously added to the chaos over land regulations in Manitoba, as Archibald and other local officials tried to administer land according to the Manitoba Act and now had settlers establishing illegally setting up homes. Section 32 of the Manitoba Act stated that Manitobans who already occupied land would not have it taken away during the transfer of Manitoba to Canada, and this was one tactic for addressing squatters. This was also delayed, adding to the chaos, because now the those “already occupying land” were not just settlers who had arrived prior to 1870. Sprague notes that in 1873 people with Section 32 claims were supposed to make their claims, and “More than 2,000 claimants came forward at once.”⁶¹ This system was rife with inequality, as “In order to come close to gaining the full claim, a recognized settler had to be white and have at least twenty-six acres of his land under cultivation. Métis [who were] recognized [as] settlers received about half as much [land] as the whites, regardless of the number of acres they cultivated.”⁶² Squatters could be Métis or white, although white squatters tended to be new arrivals, while many Métis squatters had simply not had their claims recognized by the HBC prior to 1870, because they moved onto land that nobody objected to, or they only resided at Red River during the winter.⁶³ Métis squatters, particularly those who set up shelters for the winter, planted gardens in the spring, and then returned to harvest in the fall after a summer on the plains, were seen as having “no place for them in a commercially agricultural Manitoba,” and efforts were made to evict them.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ D. N. Sprague, “The Manitoba Land Question, 1870-1882,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 15, no. 3 (Fall 1980), 75.

⁶¹ Sprague, “The Manitoba Land Question,” 80.

⁶² Sprague, “The Manitoba Land Question,” 81.

⁶³ Sprague, “The Manitoba Land Question,” 80.

⁶⁴ Sprague, “The Manitoba Land Question,” 81.

Settlers choosing to occupy lands in direct opposition to federal policy and laws were not unique to Canada. John C. Weaver compares the parallel structural factors that led to squatting in Australia and the United States, and explains that while “bottlenecks in the official allocation processes provided unauthorized occupants with excuses for their actions [but] most squatters required none.”⁶⁵ In Manitoba, many Canadian settlers arrived to the area and, finding that the land they wanted was not surveyed or available for settlement, would simply decide it was theirs, despite the Métis “right of first selection.”⁶⁶ These “squatters” would fall into the category of “true settlers” that Weaver describes, as one of the two common types of settler-squatters. The other was “restless people with short-term intentions toward the land.”⁶⁷ According to Weaver, this short-term squatting for the purposes of selling it or quickly exploiting it often placed them in conflict with Indigenous peoples or governments who had longer-term plans.⁶⁸ Weaver does not mention it, but presumably the “true settlers” who squatted were also in conflict with Indigenous peoples at least some of the time, and that was certainly the case in Manitoba.

Adding to the confusion over land regulation were claims made under Section 32 by “assignees producing quit claim deeds alleging that 1870 applicants had sold out and moved on.”⁶⁹ Sprague complicates this by explaining that this must have been a small group, because “As late as 1875, nine tenths of the 1870 population had not yet moved. They remained on their river-lot farms patiently awaiting the patents which Section 32 so clearly promised.”⁷⁰ The population of Red River was not about to leave their community and land base, despite the legislative delays and chaos.

⁶⁵ John C. Weaver, “Beyond the Fatal Shore: Pastoral Squatting and the Occupation of Australia, 1826 to 1852,” *American Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (1996), 982.

⁶⁶ Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 95.

⁶⁷ Weaver, 982.

⁶⁸ Weaver, 932.

⁶⁹ Sprague, “The Manitoba Land Question,” 80.

⁷⁰ Sprague, “The Manitoba Land Question,” 80.

Despite the ongoing issues with Manitoba land laws, the *Free Press* covered the report from Surveyor-General Lieutenant Colonel Dennis, who said that the spring floods had delayed surveying in the previous year, but that “the survey of the settled portions of the Province [had] progressed satisfactorily.”⁷¹ He insisted that the land “set apart under the Manitoba Act for Half-Breeds, is now on the point of being commenced,” and that “there is every prospect that during the coming year not only this allotment but all other land claims created or provided for under the Manitoba Act will be settled and finally disposed of.”⁷² In 1872 there were 45 surveyors who had been working in Manitoba, which was “the largest number ever employed in Canada on one work” and that this required a “force of about 400 men, with 100 horses and carts for transport service.”⁷³ This gave many immigrants the opportunity for temporary employment and to learn about the land as they traveled with the surveyors. They said that “The benefit of the expenditure for transport was chiefly reaped by the Half-breed farmers, who are generally possessed of numbers of horses and carts suitable for prairie travel.”⁷⁴ In that same issue, the list of recently allocated townships was reported.⁷⁵ These surveys were seen as incredibly important and their progress was monitored closely by all parties at Red River, due to the complicated way the federal and provincial governments had decided to interpret Section 31 and the reserved Métis lands. In April of 1872, the point was raised that Métis lands could not be selected until surveys had been completed, or were at least “sufficient.”⁷⁶ This did not make much sense, as the Métis people were swamped by a tide of new settlers” and the government “decided to make the [Métis] allotments from sections of bald prairie rather than near the settlement belt, to award

⁷¹ “Surveyor General’s Report,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 31, 1873, page 8.

⁷² “Surveyor General’s Report,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 31, 1873, page 8.

⁷³ “Surveys on Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 31, 1873, page 5.

⁷⁴ “Surveys on Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 31, 1873, page 5.

⁷⁵ “Surveys on Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 31, 1873, page 5.

⁷⁶ Sprague, “The Manitoba Land Question,” 77.

lands where the Métis people never settled, rather than from territory adjacent to the parishes in which they were already comfortably settled.”⁷⁷ This would have already removed the Métis nation from their original homes, even if this policy of allotment had been enacted. Instead, the confusion continued.

The Métis land grant continued to spark debate, as the *Free Press* reported that scrip needed to be settled, as “what the country needs is *development*, not *stagnation*,” and claimed that the entire white population and “a majority of Half-breeds themselves” agreed to “the modification we suggest,” which was that the Métis should be allowed to sell their land and scrip, as “when the intending settler looks at one of our newly coloured maps he sees that fully five-eighths of the Province is tied up more or less in reservations.”⁷⁸ The *Free Press* insisted that “If we had no Hudson Bay and no school reserves, and other reserves too numerous to mention, it would be less objectionable to have these children reserves lying locked up and fallow.”⁷⁹ The blamed land reserves for stagnating immigration, but the scrip process was not only complicated, it was also rife with fraud that was locking up land. Sprague explains that while scrip was (intentionally) complicated, when scrip changed hands, it was “signed with a claimant’s mark, an X, almost never a signature, and they were witnessed by two speculators rather than some disinterested third party.”⁸⁰ There is suspicion of fraud in many of these cases, and “since the civil servants and elected officials who were closest to these proceedings knew well that it was almost impossible to prove fraud under the accepted forms, they seized upon the opportunity and joined in the bonanza themselves.”⁸¹ As reserves were gradually opened, advertisements began to appear in the newspapers for people looking to purchase scrip, such as one from a J. M.

⁷⁷ Sprague, “The Manitoba Land Question,” 77.

⁷⁸ “The Half-Breed Land Question Again,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 15, 1874, page 4.

⁷⁹ “The Half-Breed Land Question Again,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 15, 1874, page 4.

⁸⁰ Sprague, “The Manitoba Land Question,” 79.

⁸¹ Sprague, “The Manitoba Land Question,” 79.

Macgregor, whose advertisement read “Wanted, SCRIP! Half-breed, Hay Privilege, or White Settlers’ Scrip will do. The highest CASH PRICE will be PAID.”⁸² These advertisements reveal that there were many buyers, waiting and willing to pay cash for any scrip that was on the market. Some of this scrip was certainly purchased fairly, but the presence of fraud calls this system of land allotment into question.

The concept of “scrip” did not originate in Manitoba, and had been used to settled Métis land claims in the United States in earlier decades.⁸³ Scrip was seen as a means of concluding the land allotment quickly, even though the process took the entire decade of the 1870s due to delays. Some of the delay was due to a conservative reinterpretation of the *Manitoba Act* to exclude heads of households from the scrip process, as the government argued that the intention was only to preserve land for the children of Métis households. Redrawing all of the maps with this interpretation only began in 1873.⁸⁴ The policy of scrip moved west as the Canadian nation expanded, and by 1878 when John A. Macdonald’s Conservatives were back in power, they “backtracked” from the idea that Métis scrip was connected to recognizing Indian title.⁸⁵ The *Manitoba Act* was significant because it put the Canadian government in a difficult position, where “Having let the genie of Indian title out of the bottle in the Manitoba Act, Macdonald and the Conservatives would try valiantly to stuff it back, at least partially, after 1878.”⁸⁶

When *Le Métis* commented on the land policy, they expressed concern that the Land Office “a laisse une quantité considérable de lots tomber entre les mains d’une nuée de spectateurs qui n’ont pas hésiter à s’intituler colons de bonne foi.”⁸⁷ Concern over land ending up

⁸² “Wanted, Scrip!” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 16, 1878, page 7.

⁸³ Gerhard J. Ens and Joe Sawchuk, *From New Peoples to New Nations: Aspects of Métis History and Identity from the Eighteenth to the Twenty-First Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 137.

⁸⁴ Ens and Sawchuk, 143.

⁸⁵ Ens and Sawchuk, 151.

⁸⁶ Ens and Sawchuk, 151.

⁸⁷ “Homesteads de Bonne Foi,” *Le Métis*, October 3, 1874, page 2.

in the hands of the speculators, rather than the people to whom it was intended was not unwarranted, as “virtually all of the money scrip which was supposed to have been awarded to Half-breed heads of families never reached the claimants. As soon as it arrived at the Dominion Lands Office in 1876, assignees and attorneys picked it up instead.”⁸⁸

The *Manitoban* expressed concern that the Land Office was not diligent in recording lapsed homesteads, but concluded:

the burden rests and must rest, with the settlers or immigrants to discover whether the lands they seek have actually been abandoned by the original claimants for a period longer than allowed; and to prove it at the Land Office should they desire to re-enter them for themselves.”⁸⁹

The blame was generally placed on the speculators, as Land Officers had limited means of enforcing this, and “the present Land Agent has a reputation for honesty and sincerity in the performance of his duties—which we are happy to be able to endorse so far as our own knowledge extends—and we have little doubt he will act with fairness and an impartial administration of the law.”⁹⁰ This was not the opinion of many Métis in Manitoba, but the *Manitoban* coverage suggested the land agent, Donald Codd, could be trusted. *Nor’Wester* coverage expressed frustration with the delays, saying that “the intended recipients of these lands have quite lost patience at the repeated delays, and little wonder when we consider that the Manitoba Act was passed nearly four years ago.”⁹¹ The Métis nation had been left waiting for four years for land in a space that was increasingly hostile to their presence.

The *Standard* reported in 1875 that “The Half-breed grant reserve is to be opened out at last” and scrip was finally going to be issued. They claimed that “the reserve never ought to have been made” and that “holding it so long as a reserve, unless for the purposes both of old settlers

⁸⁸ Sprague, “The Manitoba Land Question,” 79.

⁸⁹ “Lapsed Homesteads,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, September 26, 1874, page 2.

⁹⁰ “Lapsed Homesteads,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, September 26, 1874, page 2.

⁹¹ “Government Sale of Lands on Red & Assiniboine Rivers,” *The Nor’Wester*, October 5, 1874, page 2.

and new, was an additional outrage.”⁹² The article insisted that the Métis may complain after miscommunications “and then [squash] the whole arrangement as an official blunder, after the interposition of several years’ suspense” but that few of them “will feel inclined to grumble at the substitution of a tangible reality, in place of an intangible and inextricable theoretic claim.”⁹³ The assumption was, of course, that even loss of land was better than being left in the unresolved state of the previous years.

This pace of land loss is clearly seen in the advertisement sections of the newspapers. Not only were available lots posted for sale, but also local businessmen like A.W. Burrows had regular advertisements offering the services of “The General Land Office,” where he was “Real Estate Agent, Valuator, etc.”⁹⁴ The advertisement explained that he would buy and sell “section and river front lands, Scrip and Half-Breed Reserve allotments” as well as city property.⁹⁵ A. W. Burrows’s land office also boasted “a commodious reading and map room for immigrants, where every information respecting Manitoba and the North-West may be had.”⁹⁶ A few pages earlier, Lieutenant Governor Alexander Morris, acting as land commissioner, placed a notice explaining that there was an upcoming meeting for the Marquette West region, where occupants of land could discuss conflicting claims as well as the “state of the roads.”⁹⁷ The conflicts about how land was changing hands were well-documented by the late 1870s, and the government was aware of at least some of the impact of their policies. The goals of the federal government were achieved, as “The dispersal of the Métis and native English from Manitoba was gradual but perceptible between 1871 and 1876; it became remarkable from 1877 to 1880.”⁹⁸

⁹² “Half-Breed Grant Settlement,” *The Standard*, March 27, 1875, page 2.

⁹³ “Half-Breed Grant Settlement,” *The Standard*, March 27, 1875, page 2.

⁹⁴ “The General Land Office,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 16, 1877, page 6.

⁹⁵ “The General Land Office,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 16, 1877, page 6.

⁹⁶ “The General Land Office,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 16, 1877, page 6.

⁹⁷ “Notice: Conflicting Claims to Land of Occupants,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 16, 1877, page 2.

⁹⁸ Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 139.

Land Reserves

Newspapers regularly warned about the overuse of the colony system and that while it had benefits in some cases, it was resulting in far too much land being “locked up.”⁹⁹ According to immigration historians Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, “the government’s practice of reserving lands for colonization companies was an unqualified disaster” although there is some academic dispute about whether or not the railway reserves were useful or not.¹⁰⁰ Immigration reserves that catered to ethnic block settlement generally proved to be a good investment for governments, but the “philanthropic” schemes (often undertaken by friends of Macdonald) to settle poor British people on reserves of their often were rarely successful.¹⁰¹ Immigrant colonization reserves, argues Ryan Eyford, “were an integral part of the creation of a new liberal order in the Canadian Northwest. As a state policy, they reflected the various ‘systematic’ approaches to colonization that liberal thinkers developed during the nineteenth century.”¹⁰² In hindsight we can see that some of these land reserves were useful to the goals of the Canadian colonization project and others were not, but throughout the 1870s these systems faced similar types of critique and newspaper coverage.

Early immigration to Manitoba was not as fast-paced as anticipated, and one of the proposals for facilitating successful immigration was to bring in settlers and give them land reserves of their own. Scottish emigration promoter Colonel David Shaw had one of these proposals, where he would bring in around 1000 settlers and give them assistance to be successful. This was not seen as being benevolent, but rather was based on commercial

⁹⁹ “The Colony System.” *The Nor’Wester*, August 31, 1874, page 2.

¹⁰⁰ Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy, 1540-1997* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 71.

¹⁰¹ Kelley and Trebilcock, 72-73.

¹⁰² Eyford, 9.

calculations and that people needed support to be successful settlers.¹⁰³ Mr. A. Spencer Jones proposed a similar immigration plan, where he would create a reserve of four townships for Welsh and English farmers.¹⁰⁴ The problem was that generally those interested in immigrating were not farmers, and “giving people the opportunity to homestead simply on the basis of their impecuniosity was not, in the long run, beneficial. Poverty did not in itself mark a person with the characteristics necessary to become a successful settler.”¹⁰⁵

The Canadian immigration system in the 1870s relied upon private immigration companies and community settlement schemes to try and attract immigrants to the Canadian prairies. Canada’s reputation as an agricultural destination would not be established until later immigration booms. While the community settlement schemes did have some success in the cases of the Mennonites and Icelanders, “most of the colonization companies of the 1880s were in fact paper schemes generated in the capital markets of England and the United States, and calculated to reap short term gains.”¹⁰⁶ Canada was drawn to this system because it was familiar, as the Canada Land Company “had peopled the western peninsula of Upper Canada,” a generation or two earlier and so there was a romanticization of these private systematic colonization companies.¹⁰⁷ Many of these types of colonization reserves in Manitoba would be dissolved or sold off, without fulfilling the promised group settlement.

By 1875, the Manitoba Legislative Assembly was debating the future of immigration to the province, including whether or not more immigration reserves and societies would be helpful. Mr. Luxton said that “He did not believe in having Germans here, French there, and Irish

¹⁰³ “Col Shaw’s Colonization Scheme,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 13, 1875, page 5.

¹⁰⁴ “Another Colonization Scheme: A Reserve for English and Welsh Agriculture, Mr. A. Spencer Jones’ Doings,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 12, 1876, page 6.

¹⁰⁵ Kelley and Trebilcock, 72-73.

¹⁰⁶ Anthony W. Rasporich, “Utopian Ideals and Community Settlements in Western Canada, 1880-1914,” in *The Prairie West as Promised Land*, ed. R. Douglas Francis and Chris Kitzan (Calgary, University of Calgary Press, 2007), 128.

¹⁰⁷ Rasporich, “Utopian Ideals and Community Settlements,” 128.

and Scotch somewhere else—he believed in the mixing up of the different elements [...] he did object to the locating of [distinct groups] in certain select localities, because it would tend to the retention of distinct nationalities to the end of time.”¹⁰⁸ If the goal of Canadian colonization in Manitoba was to create a “deluge of immigrants that would shift the region’s racial, linguistic, and religious balance against the French and Métis population, and assist in the founding of British institutions,” then it would not be helpful for each group to retain their own identities and institutions.¹⁰⁹

The *Free Press* was decidedly against reserves by 1876, as when a Mr. J. W. Down suggested creating a reserve to bring Englishmen to Manitoba, beginning with around 750 single men and 250 married couples, they “expressed a hope that the Dominion Government would not grant any additional reserves *within this Province* to the promoters of colonization schemes, unless and until an extension of the boundaries of Manitoba be granted by Parliament.”¹¹⁰ Down’s immigration plan was not always derided, it was just the location where he was hoping to establish his reserve. The *Free Press* acknowledged in July,

we protest against any more reserves being made within the Province, for any purpose. West of Manitoba there are millions upon millions of acres of as fine lands as any within it, and from these should future colonization reserves be made. Colonies can with very much less inconvenience locate at distances from centres of population than individual settlers.¹¹¹

While people in Ottawa may have been concerned with the ethnic makeup of future immigration reserves, the more local concerns focused on proximity to large population centres, arguing that individual homesteaders would need to be close to the conveniences of Red River and the growing city of Winnipeg.

¹⁰⁸ “Manitoba Parliament,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 8, 1875, page 6.

¹⁰⁹ Eyford, 33.

¹¹⁰ “A New Colonization Scheme,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 2, 1876, page 4.

¹¹¹ “Another Colonization Project,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 8, 1876, page 4.

George Bryce, identified only as a settler recently returned from visiting Ontario, wrote in a letter to the editor of the *Free Press* that in Ontario “the only drawback spoken of in connection with our young province is that of the land being so largely reserved.”¹¹² George Bryce would become a prominent Manitoban, as a leader in the Presbyterian Church, one of the founders of the University of Manitoba, and a prolific historian.¹¹³ He spoke to several men who had returned to Ontario after not finding land in Manitoba, and expressed that the Métis reserves should be opened, and that “intelligent half-breeds to whom I have spoken” agreed with him.¹¹⁴ He did concede that the Mennonite and Icelandic reserves had been beneficial as “the Mennonites have settled upon two great plains, on which Canadians are very loathe to settle—and only in one or two instances have these settlements interfered with others” and “as to the Icelanders, they have taken up a region where others had not begun to settle.”¹¹⁵ He concluded that settlers were facing hardships because of reserves, and that “if ‘Canada First’ is not to be our motto, at least it should not be ‘Canada Last.’”¹¹⁶

The *Free Press* expressed their frustration with the reserve system by writing a fictional story about an immigrant searching for land in Manitoba. In this story, the new immigrant is “pleased with the City of Winnipeg, and astonished at its growth and business activity,” but then is told that “the magnificent land, bursting with fertility and stretching as far as your eye can reach in every direction, is mostly reserved and you cannot be permitted to cultivate *that*.”¹¹⁷ He then drives over miles of land and selects a quarter section and “hastens back to the city to get his family and effects upon it, because living is expensive in Winnipeg and will soon eat up his

¹¹² “Land Reserves,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 12, 1876, page 5.

¹¹³ Jim Blanchard and Gordon Goldsborough, “Memorable Manitobans: George Bryce (1844-1931),” *Manitoba Historical Society*, http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/bryce_g.shtml.

¹¹⁴ “Land Reserves,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 12, 1876, page 5.

¹¹⁵ “Land Reserves,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 12, 1876, page 5.

¹¹⁶ “Land Reserves,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 12, 1876, page 5.

¹¹⁷ “The Land Reserves,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 17, 1876, page 4.

little capital.” He then is informed by the Land Office that his land is on the Métis land reserves. He does this again, and again, but is told the land belongs to the HBC, and then is “within *twenty miles* of a prospective line of railway” and so is reserved. He tries again, but “this time it is a French colonization, a Mennonite, Icelandic, English, or Indian reserve, the ‘outer two miles,’ or Hay Privilege, or some township set apart for some private individual or company.”¹¹⁸

Discouraged, the man returns to the city “and if he does not leave the country, or has not means enough to get out, he goes into teaming and his family opens a cheap boarding house.”¹¹⁹ This was told as a warning that if the land reserve policies were not changed, Manitoba would lose out on settlers who would give up on agricultural homesteading aspirations and instead find themselves stuck in a city.

When an increase in immigration to Manitoba was predicted, the *Free Press* again raised the concern that there was simply not enough land that was not in reserves. They suggested that the government immediately open up the railway reserves, some of the school reserves, address the Métis reserves as soon as possible, and the colonization reserves “should at once be thrown open for location by actual settlers.”¹²⁰ The *Free Press* said that they believed that the government intended to address the Manitoba land question in the House, “but we are inclined to think that to the *urgency* of the situation due weight is not given.” They did defend claims that Governor Morris was engaged in “vast land speculation,” insisting that their investigations showed that he “has bought no lands of any kind since being appointed commissioner on disputed claims; nor has he any interest, direct or indirect, in scrip or half-breed land claims.”¹²¹

¹¹⁸ “The Land Reserves,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 17, 1876, page 4.

¹¹⁹ “The Land Reserves,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 17, 1876, page 4.

¹²⁰ “Next Spring’s Immigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 4, 1876, page 4.

¹²¹ “The Land Question,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 3, 1877, page 4.

A letter to the editor of the *Free Press* from “B” wrote that there was “great anxiety” in Manitoba about “whether the reserved lands will be released for sale and settlement in time to meet the requirements of the expected large immigration of next spring.”¹²² He also said that “the granting of these reserves instead of a commutation in scrip was an unmixed evil, chargeable to the former Administration of the Dominion, but the holding of them so long is partly the fault of the present one.”¹²³

Letters to the editor continued to address land reserves, as one from Dominion Lands official George F. Newcombe wrote that he wanted to correct the complainers, and “state to these people that all the *best* lands are *not* locked up.”¹²⁴ He described many areas of the province that were having much agriculture success, and said that there was plenty of land in those regions available, for people willing to work hard and not complain about what they could not have.¹²⁵ His letter was followed by one from “Settler” who said that Newcombe was a government officer, and while he gave some useful information, those lands were further away than most Ontarians wanted to settle. He wrote that what Ontarians objected to was that “he alone of all nationalities is left to pioneer” and they are “isolated by reserves from the neighbours whom they encouraged to join them in the promised land.”¹²⁶

The *Free Press* could hardly contain their frustration when Dr. William Henry Brouse, representing South Grenville in Parliament, proposed to the government:

The volunteers of 1837-38 should each receive as a bounty from the country 160 acres of Dominion lands in [Manitoba] or the North-West. The plea upon which this suggestion is made is, that those who fought for the flag of their country at a time when its safety was

¹²² “Emigration and Reserves,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 16, 1876, page 5.

¹²³ “Emigration and Reserves,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 16, 1876, page 5.

¹²⁴ “Progress,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 9, 1876, page 5.

¹²⁵ “Progress,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 9, 1876, page 5.

¹²⁶ “The Reserves Again,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 9, 1876, page 5.

imperilled are just as much entitled to free land grants as the Mennonites, Icelanders, or other foreigners.¹²⁷

They agreed that of course, these volunteers were entitled to land, but not a reserved scrip. They compared them to the other military and Mounted Police who received scrip, saying that “it would be better that a cash bounty should be given on the termination of the period of enlistment than that warrants or scrip of any kind should be promised.”¹²⁸ This ultimately did not become policy, but reveals how many land reserves were proposed during the 1870s, and how those ideas were perceived by Manitobans.

In a report of a meeting in the Senate, where the government was asked about the land issues in Manitoba, the *Free Press* reported that Hon. Mr. Girard said that “the great difficulty in settling the Province had been these reserves. The half-breed reserves should have been allotted as soon as possible, but after seven years they were unsettled yet.”¹²⁹ Discussing all the other various types of reserves, Girard said that settlers were squatting on all the reserves, and “thousands of emigrants were preparing to go to Manitoba in the spring.”¹³⁰

When the railways were opened for settlement and the rules were announced, the *Free Press* noted that while the rules for applicants suggested squatters would have to apply for lands and pay just like anyone else, “we can scarcely imagine, on the other hand, that the Government will be disposed to intensify their unpopularity in this Province by even attempting to eject squatters with *bona fide* settlement intentions from their locations, because they are unable to pay down one dollar an acre.”¹³¹ The assumption for many of the newspaper writers was that

¹²⁷ “The Land Grant System,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 10, 1877, page 4.

¹²⁸ “The Land Grant System,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 10, 1877, page 4.

¹²⁹ “Manitoba Half-Breed and Other Reserves,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 7, 1877, page 7.

¹³⁰ “Manitoba Half-Breed and Other Reserves,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 7, 1877, page 7.

¹³¹ “The Railway Reserve Thrown Open,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 1, 1877, page 4.

settlers had suffered enough and the government should do everything in its power to accommodate them.

In a December 1877 letter to the editor, A.W. Burrows wrote that the government “should have allowed the *bona fide* settler and cultivator” to pay a different price to buy land than speculators, and that due to hardships faced by settlers, “in return for *bona fide* settlement and improvement there is no apparent future except the abandonment of his farm” and they would move to Dakota or Minnesota.¹³² This entitlement to land was part of the Canadian nation building project. After all, settler colonialism required settlers, not just speculators and corporate land holdings. Those settlers did not appreciate being made to wait for Indigenous peoples, corporations, and speculators to claim land.

In another letter to the editor, someone called “Looker-On” expressed his feelings about the incompetence of the Dominion Land Department. He wrote “they took seven years in which to settle our land affairs, and so far have made nothing but blunders.”¹³³ He continued,

They are acting like children, and foolish ones at that. Old Tabeshaw, of Pembina—a full blooded Chippewa women—would, I declare, be more competent to settle our land questions than those who have had their management so far. In the first place, as your paper has often remarked, the first blunder was making so many reserves, for railroad purposes, for Mennonites, for English, French, Icelanders, settlers, river lots reserved for a good speculation, Half-breed reserves—reserves, in face, till they could not rest.¹³⁴

According to Looker-On, the result of the reserve system was “general dissatisfaction, jealousy excited between races, conflicts between the Mennonites and the first English settlers in the Boyne settlement, [and] delays in the settlement of our province.”¹³⁵ Despite his general racism, he pointed out that “I often hear the Dominion Government boast of their good treatment of the

¹³² “The Reserved Lands: The Recent Orders in Council, The Land Policy of the Government,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 8, 1877, page 6.

¹³³ “The Land Question,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 29, 1877, page 1.

¹³⁴ “The Land Question,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 29, 1877, page 1.

¹³⁵ “The Land Question,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 29, 1877, page 1.

Indians. It may be true as to Indians, but the poor Half-breeds have never been treated with so little regard to their just rights in the States as they are treated here.”¹³⁶ His solution was to dissolve or open up all reserves, and distribute the Métis reserve land no later than in the next seven years.

Squatters on the Settlement Belt in the Parish of St. Norbert held meetings in December of 1877 in an attempt to draft a resolution and organize themselves. Their first concern was that they had been led to believe that if they came to Manitoba, there would be land for them. Instead, the only option for “British subjects” was to “go far beyond the limit of settlement, and isolate ourselves for years from schools, churches, and other accompaniments of civilization.”¹³⁷ They said that “unless we can obtain the lands now settled and improved, at a reasonable price, with a fair credit [...] the only alternative which will remain to us will be to take advantage of the greater inducements offered us to settle in the United States.”¹³⁸

Reflecting on the land reserve system, specifically as it related to the Métis reserves, Sprague writes that by 1880 “amending the Manitoba Act had become a nearly annual exercise in the ongoing process of repudiating the promises of 1870.”¹³⁹ He argues that “Canada had disingenuously committed itself to distribute approximately two and one half million acres of land among the 1870 population” and that “a massive research project is still underway to determine the full story of the distribution of the 1870s.”¹⁴⁰ Most of the land ended up in the hands of speculators, and much of the process for how this happened was intentionally confusing.

¹³⁶ “The Land Question,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 29, 1877, page 1.

¹³⁷ “Settlement Belt Lands,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 15, 1877, page 1.

¹³⁸ “Settlement Belt Lands,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 15, 1877, page 1.

¹³⁹ Sprague, “The Manitoba Land Question,” 83.

¹⁴⁰ Sprague, “The Manitoba Land Question,” 83.

Hay and Timber Regulations

The right to common hay and timber lands had been part of HBC laws around land for decades, and had been negotiated by Louis Riel's provisional government, as something that was incredibly important to settlers and Métis alike.¹⁴¹ Land had been used this way since the establishment of the "commons" based on the French "rang" system of riverside settlement.¹⁴² Surveyors did not always understand this, as when one survey was based off of the "two-mile limit delineated by the Hudson's Bay Company in its survey of the mid-1830s," they failed to recognize that "everyone in the colony observed a four-mile limit: an inner two miles of cleared and wooded land from which people took their fuel, crops, and building timber, and an outer two miles left in prairie sod as hay land."¹⁴³ Jean Teillet explains that this was told to Cartier and Macdonald during the negotiations of the Manitoba Act, and that the hay privilege "could not be severed without destroying the Métis system."¹⁴⁴ However, Canada wanted to impose the American township model at Red River, with large square blocks of settlements.¹⁴⁵ As confusion persisted around the ways that lands could be used and allocated, meetings were held where the delay in Métis land distribution was discussed, along with how to interpret the hay privileges. At these meetings, many community leaders spoke passionately about "their insistence of their rights as assured to them under the Manitoba Act, and by Lieutenant-Governor Archibald in the year past."¹⁴⁶

The timber land was not a major part of newspaper coverage until 1873, when it became a topic of discussion. In January, the Agent for Dominion Lands, Mr. McMicken issued a notice

¹⁴¹ Gibson, 63, 85, 127, 261.

¹⁴² Hall, 80.

¹⁴³ Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 37.

¹⁴⁴ Teillet, *The North-West Is Our Mother*, 285.

¹⁴⁵ Teillet, *The North-West Is Our Mother*, 285.

¹⁴⁶ "The Hay Privilege: Meeting at St. James," *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, July 20, 1872, page 2.

“forbidding the cutting of timber, saw logs, fencing, or wood for fuel, on any unsettled Dominion lands in Manitoba, without a permit.¹⁴⁷ Settlers were instructed to acquire a permit, and there was no fee. There were very specific regulations around how much could be cut if they were attempting to sell it in cities and towns.¹⁴⁸ This resulted in letters to the editor and general outrage from settlers, who had thought they would get 25 acres of timber to use how they wanted.¹⁴⁹ Under the parish system of river lot agriculture, Métis and Red River farmers (the “Old Settlers” in question) had developed methods of land use that relied upon common sections of hay and timber. Shannon Stunden Bower explains that the hay privilege mobilized and united people because while people also advocated to cut hay on the open prairie, the hay privilege was much more significant for river lot farmers.¹⁵⁰ There was no scarcity of hay in the open prairie in the 1870s, but “the hay privilege became a rallying point in a way that the open prairie did not” and essentially “the hay privilege was equivalent to land ownership.”¹⁵¹ Without the “privilege” to cut hay, the river lot system of agriculture simply would not be productive.

Like the hay privilege, common timber lands were also important for the parish system of agriculture. In the predominantly Métis area known as Sunnyside (present-day R.M. of Springfield, just east of Winnipeg), there were around fifteen settlers who were notified that their licences to cut timber could not be used within ten or fifteen miles, as all the wood lands were set aside as part of the Métis land reserve. The *Free Press* was upset with the government’s neglect of settlers, but in a postscript said that they had received information that the settlers would be provided access to wood lots.¹⁵² In the next issue, the *Free Press* said that “from every section

¹⁴⁷ “Timber Regulations,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 11, 1873, page 2.

¹⁴⁸ “Timber Regulations,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 11, 1873, page 2.

¹⁴⁹ “The Timber Question,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 22, 1873, page 8.

¹⁵⁰ Shannon Stunden Bower, “The Great Transformation? Wetlands and Land Use in Manitoba During the Late Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 15 no. 1 (2004), 39.

¹⁵¹ Stunden Bower, “The Great Transformation?” 39.

¹⁵² “The Timber Question,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 15, 1873, page 4.

we have complaints pouring in on the matter of the timber lands,” before presenting complaints from their High Bluff correspondent and a settler from Victoria.¹⁵³ There were some varying ideas about how to address settler concerns with accessing timber lands, but the article concluded that the valuable land should not be wasted through the “recklessness of timber speculators” and that “decided, and conclusive action is absolutely essential in the interest, not only of the present settlers, but of the country at large.”¹⁵⁴

A letter to the *Free Press* from “A Lover of Justice,” claimed that settlers were being oppressed by their government because they had been told they would have access to wooded lands and were now being asked to pay a dollar per acre.¹⁵⁵ The *Free Press* continued to express concerns that Manitoba should “return to the old plan of accompanying each homestead with a reasonable quantity of timber land free of cost. The actual settlers must be guaranteed to timber, and there is no difficulty of doing this in our Province.”¹⁵⁶

When there was confusion about the rights of common lands for cutting wood, *Le Métis* said that the Lands Office was not telling settlers about their rights to wood lands, and the regulations around that. This caused tensions, as “Et s’ils ont un droit sur les bois coupé sur leurs propriétés? Et si les colons en question n’ont pas encore leurs Patentes, est-ce leur faut.”¹⁵⁷ Land agents seemed to have no idea about how to navigate competing claims about wood lots and how they could be used. The Minister of the Interior needed to take action quickly as “the first symptoms of mischief are already appearing” and “settlers must and will constitute themselves

¹⁵³ “The Timber Question,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 22, 1873.

¹⁵⁴ “The Timber Question,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 22, 1873.

¹⁵⁵ “The Timber Question,” *Manitoba Free Press*, January 10, 1874, page 2.

¹⁵⁶ “Land and Timber,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 28, 1874, page 4.

¹⁵⁷ “La Coupe de Bois,” *Le Métis*, June 28, 1873, page 2.

the interpreters of the country's intentions."¹⁵⁸ Leaving the hay and timber policy up to settler interpretation was a recipe for exploitation and conflict.

Based on an Order in Council from November 4th, 1874, wood lots were not allowed to be sold, "but the settler [should] receive a license good for five years, to authorize him simply to remove the timber thereon."¹⁵⁹ The announcement continued, "Any person guilty of selling timber upon or taking from his lot, other than to a prairie settler without timber, to forfeit his license forthwith, such wood or timber to be confiscated to the Government, and such person not to be allowed to have a second wood lot."¹⁶⁰

As the province developed and took on new construction projects, the wood shortage pitted settlers against developers. There was conflict between settlers and Morrison and Barclay, who had been contracted to build the penitentiary, and therefore had "gangs of men employed in cutting the timber on the road allowances, through the settlements in the neighbourhood of their work."¹⁶¹ They claimed a clause in their contract allowed this, but settlers were upset because "the interests of actual settlers should be regarded as paramount to those of public contractors."¹⁶² The *Free Press* encouraged settlers to let the government, specifically the Minister of the Interior, know what they thought of this.¹⁶³

The timber grievances were not resolved by 1876, as public meetings were held to discuss the "Dominion Lands Agent having sold all our wood lands *en bloc*, to two or three parties."¹⁶⁴ Many settlers said that they could not erect fences around their cleared land, as they did not even have enough wood to burn, let alone to use to build. Later that year, the *Free Press*

¹⁵⁸ "The Wood Lots," *The Standard*, February 6, 1875, page 2.

¹⁵⁹ "Wood Lots," *Manitoba Free Press*, January 30, 1875, page 3.

¹⁶⁰ "Wood Lots," *Manitoba Free Press*, January 30, 1875, page 3.

¹⁶¹ "Another Timber Greivance [sic]," *Manitoba Free Press*, November 21, 1874, page 4.

¹⁶² "Another Timber Greivance [sic]," *Manitoba Free Press*, November 21, 1874, page 4.

¹⁶³ "Another Timber Greivance [sic]," *Manitoba Free Press*, November 21, 1874, page 4.

¹⁶⁴ "The Timber Nuisance," *Manitoba Free Press*, January 29, 1876, page 8.

published an article calling for farmers in Manitoba and the North-West to “follow the example of agriculturalists in Minnesota and Dakota in their efforts at forest culture.”¹⁶⁵ The new law allowed settlers to secure an additional quarter section [...] upon the simple condition of their planting twenty-four acres by successive instalments.” This was working well in St. Paul, as Michael Smith reported that “two years ago last spring he covered seventy-two acres with cuttings of cottonwood, Lombardy poplar, and white willow, which have flourished finely, and are now ten to fourteen feet high.”¹⁶⁶ In another article, the *Free Press* explained the details of this amendment to the Dominion Lands Act and gave specific instructions for how trees needed to be planted to meet the requirements of acquiring the patent for the quarter section. The instructions stated that at least eight acres of land needed to be cleared for tree planting within one year, and trees planted “not less than twelve feet apart each way” and that a sufficient amount of the land was planted and protected.¹⁶⁷

The question of how to fuel non-Indigenous settlement on the prairies was further addressed by investigating how Mennonites heated their homes, being so far from wood lands. It was already common knowledge that many burned cattle manure, but hay could be braided and compressed and burned effectively for heating and cooking. The article concluded that “many of the settlers have stoves specially adapted to burning hay-fuel, and the Mennonite settlers have put in furnaces for this special purpose.”¹⁶⁸ The knowledge of ethnic immigrants, particularly those seen as successful, was held up to advise new immigrating settlers and provide some hope that these difficulties could be overcome.

¹⁶⁵ “Tree Planting on the Prairie,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 29, 1876, page 4.

¹⁶⁶ “Tree Planting on the Prairie,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 29, 1876, page 4.

¹⁶⁷ “Forest Tree Culture,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 22, 1876, page 4.

¹⁶⁸ “The Fuel Question,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 26, 1876, page 4.

Immigrants arriving to Manitoba were encouraged to plant trees as part of developing their homesteads. This had many benefits in increasing the amount of land that could be comfortably settled and “the only risk to be encountered being the danger of fires” which could be addressed through cutting down grass.¹⁶⁹ Planting trees and cutting down prairie grasses was also a means of signalling fertility and prosperity, at least from a settler perspective. It was a means of visually communicating the end of the bison hunting era and the new era of settler colonial agriculture, with no more settler confusion about vast sections of treeless grasslands.¹⁷⁰ Changing the land as a means of asserting settler colonial sovereignty over a space was not a new idea, as William Cronon demonstrated in the context of New England. Establishing individual property and boundaries based on livestock needs (rather than grazing herds of bison, for example) required more land for each person and family, and made a larger, transformative ecological impact. This process also “provided one of the chief reasons for extending those boundaries onto new lands.”¹⁷¹

In 1880, a letter to the editor from someone calling himself “A Conservative” suggested that the current system of regulating timber lands needed to be changed, as it was hard enough for settlers to have to “draw timber rails and firewood so far in the cold weather” but then they also had to “help maintain a lot of Government pap-suckers” who made money off of the current system. He suggested that the government should simply sell twenty acres of woodland to each settler. He wrote that “we want fair play, and if we are not listened to by those in authority, we

¹⁶⁹ “Encouragement of Tree Planting,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 5, 1877, page 4.

¹⁷⁰ Molly P. Rozum, *Grasslands Grown: Creating Place on the U.S. Northern Plains and Canadian Prairies*, (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2021), 25-27.

¹⁷¹ William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983 and 2003), 138-139.

will raise such a clatter that they will not be troubled with as many settlers as they expect next season.”¹⁷²

The laws around the hay privilege were clearly indicated in 1871, with a warning that July 25th was “permanently fixed for the commencement of hay cutting” and that after August 15th (or two weeks after the commencement of hay cutting) all “exclusive privileges shall be thrown open to all.”¹⁷³ By 1873, enough new settlers had arrived for the hay privilege to be debated in the newspapers. A letter to the *Manitoban* from someone called “Patriot” explained the history of the hay privilege, and invoked specific clauses in earlier legislation as well as the Manitoba Act to confirm that this right was confirmed in the Manitoba Act, although settlers’ rights had been “for many years extended, far, far, beyond the two miles already mentioned.”¹⁷⁴ In a letter to the editor from “Carlisle,” the writer explained that the hay privilege, which gave people the right “to cut their hay upon the outer two mile limits” was part of the original HBC charter from 1670.¹⁷⁵ This was based on the “right of the common” which was described as “a vested right in an individual to exercise certain privileges on real estate such as the right to pasture cattle or cut hay” and was protected by the “common law of England.”¹⁷⁶ There was some confusion about whether or not that privilege had been negotiated as part of the *Manitoba Act*.¹⁷⁷

The hay privilege was confusing in part because regulations set in place by the Council of Assiniboia during the 1840s had evolved over time, and then were not effectively transferred into new provincial laws. The regulations set up in 1841 concerning hay harvesting, theft, fences,

¹⁷² “Our Timber Regulations: A Settler’s Growl, A Matter That Needs Looking Into,” *Manitoba Free Press*, January 17, 1880, page 1.

¹⁷³ “Hay Privilege,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, July 29, 1871, page 3.

¹⁷⁴ “The Two Mile Limit—The Hay Privilege—and Right of Common,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, February 15, 1873, page 2.

¹⁷⁵ “The Hay Privilege,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 15, 1873, page 3.

¹⁷⁶ “The Hay Privilege,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 15, 1873, page 3.

¹⁷⁷ “The Hay Privilege,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 15, 1873, page 3.

trespassing, and a number of other subjects were declared to apply “extending, in all directions, fifty miles from the forks of the Red River and the Assiniboine,” although even that was confusing as the Selkirk settlers were supposed to be under the “domains of Her Britannic Majesty” not the HBC.¹⁷⁸ It seemed even at the time the laws were created, their jurisdiction was in question.

What was less confusing was that hay lands were an essential part of the Métis river lot agriculture system. The long and narrow farm lots were supported by having both private and common hay lots beyond the two-mile river lots, meaning the small lots did not have to supply all the hay needs for each household. Regulating “the perennially troublesome hay privilege lands” was early in the agenda of the provisional government, and was addressed in the first session, with three legislative committees tasked with examining the hay privilege (among other things).¹⁷⁹ The “privilege” of using common hay lands was needed to support the river lot system, but that was not a priority for the surveyors or the outsiders attempting to reconcile Red River laws with settler colonial homestead laws. In 1871, Governor Archibald dismissed the “right to hay lands [...] ‘only an easement’ that might be commuted easily with compensation in land elsewhere,” but he was wrong.¹⁸⁰ The Red River settlers insisted that “without [hay lands] their use of the inner lot was nullified. The two strips [river lot and hay land] were two together or nothing at all.”¹⁸¹ Archibald had set aside the hay lands as part of the Métis reserve lands, and Gilbert McMicken and the surveyors had given the river lots to the Red River settlers, but this

¹⁷⁸ Dale Gibson, 63-64.

¹⁷⁹ Gibson, 261.

¹⁸⁰ Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 102.

¹⁸¹ Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 103.

made the entire agricultural system unsustainable.¹⁸² Both sections were required in order to sustain their agricultural practices.

A letter to the editor explained the minutes and details about a meeting chaired by Dr. Curtis James Bird, a local physician and politician, representing St. Paul's in the Legislative Assembly.¹⁸³ The meeting took place in St. Paul's Parish, and was specifically about the hay privilege, attended by "old settlers exclusively, and like [Bird], natives of the country."¹⁸⁴ Bird said that "the attempt of the government to deprive the old settlers of the outer two miles [was] a species of legalized robbery."¹⁸⁵ This same meeting expressed concern about the Métis rights under the *Manitoba Act* and that "The object as stated in the Act was 'to extinguish the Indian title in the Half-breed'" and that it was being defined so narrowly and depriving many children of their right to land.¹⁸⁶

The *Manitoba Free Press* said that "From the plain reading of the thirty-second clause of the Manitoba Act, the conclusion cannot be otherwise than that the Government recognized the hay privilege possessed by the settlers under the old regime as some sort of a right."¹⁸⁷ They did not form an opinion themselves, other than to say that "it is high time that the Government was enunciating itself somewhat distinctly on this matter" and it "has been pending a great deal too long."¹⁸⁸ Hay privilege and its denial was directly related to the destruction of Métis

¹⁸² Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 103.

¹⁸³ W. D. Smith, "Bird, Curtis James," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio.php?BioId=38959>. Just months before this meeting, in March, Bird had been attacked, dragged behind his cutter, and doused with tar or heated oil, probably in response to his ruling as Speaker of the House regarding a bill to incorporate the city of Winnipeg. His assailants were never found, and he never fully recovered.

¹⁸⁴ "The Hay Privilege," *Manitoba Free Press*, June 21, 1873, page 5.

¹⁸⁵ "The Hay Privilege," *Manitoba Free Press*, June 21, 1873, page 5.

¹⁸⁶ "The Hay Privilege," *Manitoba Free Press*, June 21, 1873, page 5.

¹⁸⁷ "The Hay Privilege," *Manitoba Free Press*, May 24, 1873, page 4.

¹⁸⁸ "The Hay Privilege," *Manitoba Free Press*, May 24, 1873, page 4.

communities and their way of life and agriculture in favour of creating the American model of surveying land at Red River.¹⁸⁹

Settler Land Concerns

Settlers raised specific concerns with Manitoba's land policy and government action or inaction, depending on the impact on their interests. In June of 1871, the *Manitoban* said that they felt "bound to record our conviction that any British subject who shall select 160 acres of public land within the Province of Manitoba, and actually occupy and improve it, has a claim paramount to Indian title, and paramount to any future allotments to the HBC or under the 1,400,000 Half-breed grant."¹⁹⁰ They said that "the experience in the States should reassure our Canadian emigrants, if they stand firmly on their rights as actual settlers," and should not be concerned about the government taking the land they said they claimed prior to the surveys.¹⁹¹

The land question was causing uneasiness in both the Métis and settler populations, as the government announced the lands set aside for the Métis land reserves. The *Manitoban* reassured settlers that the Métis parishes had likely already chosen their lands and "this will simplify enormously the allotment of the 1,400,000 acres. Once that was settled, settlers would be able to claim any unclaimed sections."¹⁹² On that same page, there were some concerns raised by a letter-writer called "Canvas" that the absence of surveyors was not a good sign. After looking into what the surveyors had been doing, or if there was any news about their developments, he had discovered that the Surveyor General, Colonel Dennis "actually put himself to the trouble to telegraph from Ottawa to St. Paul, inquiring whether canvassed hams could be had handily in

¹⁸⁹ Teillet, *The North-West Is Our Mother*, 285.

¹⁹⁰ "Settlers' Rights," *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 10, 1871, page 2.

¹⁹¹ "Settlers' Rights," *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 10, 1871, page 2.

¹⁹² "Crown Lands," *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 17, 1871, page 2.

that city. But that is all I have, after much enquiry, been enabled to discover the surveyors have done.”¹⁹³ By December, the surveyors had arrived, and “the remainder of the party will arrive within a week *via* North-West Angle. The survey will be composed of thirteen parties. Six of these will, immediately that they arrive, go to work on the settled lands of the Province; the remaining seven will take the unsettled portion.” The *Manitoban* was hopeful that the leaders of each party “will vie with each other in pushing the work ahead as speedily as possible.”¹⁹⁴

The *Manitoba Liberal* made this land question political by arguing that “the claims of the old settlers in this country were ignominiously treated with indifference” by the current government.¹⁹⁵ They quoted the *Gazette* in saying that “*not one word has ever been said with regard to the old settlers, whose forefathers through the toils and privations very materially helped to make this country what it is to-day.*”¹⁹⁶ This was followed with a call to the *Manitoban* to correct its contradictions when it said that the government would respect settler land rights.¹⁹⁷

Others expressed concern that the Minister of the Interior should adjust homestead policy to include exceptions for “bona fide settlers” who could not meet all the requirements due to legitimate reasons, such as if “the owner is compelled by the grasshoppers to temporarily leave his home to obtain work.”¹⁹⁸ Other requests for government intervention included federal and provincial government investments in roads to interior settlements, as settlers had a challenging time accessing that land.¹⁹⁹ According to the settlers, there were many barriers to their success, and the government should take that into consideration when assessing claims.

¹⁹³ “The Surveyors,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 17, 1871, page 2.

¹⁹⁴ “Provincial Survey,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, July 8, 1871, page 2.

¹⁹⁵ “The Old Settlers,” *Manitoba Liberal*, April 5, 1872, page 2.

¹⁹⁶ “The Old Settlers,” *Manitoba Liberal*, April 5, 1872, page 2.

¹⁹⁷ “The Old Settlers,” *Manitoba Liberal*, April 5, 1872, page 2.

¹⁹⁸ “Homesteads,” *The Standard*, July 19, 1875, page 2.

¹⁹⁹ “The Homestead Question” and “Roads to the Interior Settlements,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 26, 1875, page 4.

By 1875, settlers were concerned that speculators were taking up land and denying “bona fide settlers” the right to purchase or claim it. The *Free Press* said that there were also likely hundreds of cases where settlers had to leave their homesteads to work in the city, as the past several years of grasshoppers had reduced crop income.²⁰⁰ The government was forcing homesteaders to adhere to regulations that were causing them harm, while speculators were seen as being privileged. In a letter to the editor addressed to the Honourable Mr. Laird, Minister of the Interior, James Cowan gave five different examples of situations where homesteaders would be unable to fulfill their homestead requirements. After giving details about each of circumstances of Mr. A, B, C, D, and E, he concluded:

I trust sir, that you will see the necessity of encouraging these *bona fide* homesteaders, although from various causes they are as yet unable to reside on their homesteads. The chief of these causes are the difficulties of getting settled in a new country, losses from fire and the death of animals, but more especially the ravages of the grasshoppers.²⁰¹

The homestead model was proving difficult to implement effectively on the Manitoban prairie, between the bureaucratic barriers, environmental factors, and Indigenous peoples who settlers viewed as standing in their way.

Beyond homestead policy, settlers wrote letters complaining about delays in surveying, noting that “It is only now that some actual steps are being taken to distribute the Half-breed Land Grants which should have been done some years ago.”²⁰² After taking into account the 20 mile limit on railway lands, the Métis reserve, the school reserves, townships for Mennonites, and lands for soldiers, “there is in reality scarcely a quarter-section of land left available for settlement.”²⁰³ The writer concluded by asking how it was possible that as a “consequence of the

²⁰⁰ “Homesteads,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 1, 1875, page 5.

²⁰¹ “Homesteads,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 12, 1875, page 4.

²⁰² “Manitoba Surveys,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 26, 1875, page 5.

²⁰³ “Manitoba Surveys,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 26, 1875, page 5.

present lethargy on the part of the Government” people were left “without even the means of sustenance.”²⁰⁴

A letter to the *Free Press* from “A Homesteader” expressing frustration with the Red River claims on the Settlement Belts. He explained that he, a homesteader, had to pay for his land and for timber access, while a squatter identified as “S” “squatted on a river lot, cut down trees and built a log shanty and stable. I had to pay cash for lumber.” This was followed by a list of other ways “S” had taken wood for free when law-abiding homesteaders could not. He said, “Now S. is a ringleader among those who are petitioning to get their lots for \$2 *per acre and 3 years to pay it.*”²⁰⁵ Claims for similar lands were bought for closer to \$5 per acre, so S not only got free lumber, but was now “buying” his squatted land for less than half price. He attempted “with others, to ‘bulldoze’ the government into letting them have the land at their own price.”²⁰⁶ Complications around settlers and squatters and land policy have already been discussed in this chapter, but something that remained fundamental to the settler concerns at Red River was that it seemed that laws were enforced unequally and without clear justification. As Sprague has discussed, it is hard to see these increasing tensions between settlers and the government or Indigenous lands as anything but intentional, when one considers the official policy from 1870 to 1873 was to open the territory for settlement. As Sprague writes, “In the spring of 1873 Macdonald informed the Lieutenant Governor that future conflicts between ‘actual settlers’ and ‘former occupants’ ought to be handled by local militia. He encouraged Morris to ‘stir up the people to form volunteers or active militia corps... to protect themselves.’”²⁰⁷ If settler frustrations were meant to encourage them to give up on waiting for the government to act and

²⁰⁴ “Manitoba Surveys,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 26, 1875, page 5.

²⁰⁵ “The Red River Claims,” *Manitoba Free Press*, January 5, 1878, page 8.

²⁰⁶ “The Red River Claims,” *Manitoba Free Press*, January 5, 1878, page 8.

²⁰⁷ Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 107.

instead to take action (even violent action) for themselves, then the tensions between settler and Indigenous land use as seen in the newspapers can be understood as part of this larger structure of colonial violence and displacement.

Métis and First Nations Land Concerns

While settler concerns about land centred around an intentionally slow and frustrating bureaucracy that was stifling the local economy, for Indigenous residents of Manitoba, the concerns were life-threatening. When the Red River Expeditionary Force, led by Colonel Garnet Wolseley, arrived in Winnipeg, they were reportedly paid off and given “three days licence” where they partnered with their Canadian settler allies and “carried out armed raids and evictions while raping, assaulting, abducting, and lynching Métis residents of Red River with impunity for years after the invasion.”²⁰⁸ The rampant violence had very real consequences for land claims and administration, particularly for the Métis. During the military occupation, the Métis were forced out of sections of Winnipeg, in a “system of urban apartheid” that left the Métis confined east of the Red River and south of the Assiniboine.²⁰⁹ They did form armed groups of up to 200 people to try and resist, but there was more than one Canadian soldier for every 10 residents, which Owen Toews explains “would take an occupation of 80,000 troops to achieve that ratio in Winnipeg today.”²¹⁰ This apartheid and violence divided Winnipeg, and violent clashes between the Métis and Canadian soldiers became commonplace, but one of the largest barriers to Métis land access came from the location of the Dominion Lands Office itself. The Lands Office was located in Fort Garry, where the Red River Expeditionary Force was also stationed. All the

²⁰⁸ Owen Toews, *Stolen City*, 44.

²⁰⁹ Toews, 45.

²¹⁰ Toews, 45.

government offices and the military base were in the area where the Métis had been forced to leave, and many of the violent clashes regularly occurred. Fred Shore explains that access land information was challenging, as the soldiers were “liable to assault any Métis who came to the fort.”²¹¹ The Lands Office was also often staffed with former Red River Expeditionary Force soldiers, and even if a Métis claimant managed to face down the risk of violence and managed to get assistance to look into their claim, many found that their claims had already been fraudulently claimed by settlers or speculators who had forged their signatures.²¹²

The situation of Métis and First Nations land was clearly fraught with conflict from the start, but newspaper coverage rarely reflected the levels of fear and violence, or fraud, that were rampant. Instead, the reform-minded newspapermen made commentary on Indigenous land use, like in the *Manitoban* which suggested that more Indigenous peoples should take up agriculture. One article began by saying that it was important for humanity and justice and also for “good policy, that every possible means should be made use of to induce the wild natives of the soil to give up their wandering and predatory habits and to settle down to the practice of industry and civilization.”²¹³ While the writers at the *Manitoban* expressed the desire to promote agriculture among Indigenous peoples in Manitoba, there were complications, namely that very little land remained in Indigenous hands. This was an ongoing challenge at the land office, as “Indian claims” were often overwritten and given to soldiers. The article excuses it, saying,

We would suppose that the affair is the result of an oversight and that it only requires the attention of the authorities to be drawn to it in order to have the matter set right both with the consent of the gentlemen who may not be aware that his soldiers’ warrants cover the ground belonging to a poor Indian, and the Dominion land agent who may have overlooked his prior claim in the press and hurry of business of the department.²¹⁴

²¹¹ Fred J. Shore, *Threads in the Sash: The Story of the Métis People* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications Inc., 2017), 86.

²¹² Shore, 86.

²¹³ “Indians and the Land Office,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, May 24, 1873, page 2.

²¹⁴ “Indians and the Land Office,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, May 24, 1873, page 2.

It was important that this issue be settled quickly, as “if cases of this kind are allowed to pass without justice being rendered, they will soon add to their natural dislike of settled life,” and would think that “even if they did try to become settled and civilized, the whites would never permit them to retain the fruits of their industry, and that the land tenure of an Indian would only be that of sufferance.”²¹⁵ This article reveals the self-serving nature of this advocacy for Indigenous agriculture, first excusing the claiming of “Indian” land by a soldier as an “oversight,” and then insisting that justice was needed because otherwise Indigenous peoples would not choose settled life. The reality was that Indigenous agricultural efforts were undermined and restricted, despite their “positive response” to agriculture in early years of Canadian government administration, as historian Sarah Carter concludes.²¹⁶

Tensions around Métis lands were exacerbated by newspapers like the *Manitoba Liberal*, who published letters to the editor like one from B.Z., who insisted that the Métis land grants would be going to “hundreds [who] have no more right to, by virtue of it belonging to their ancestors, than have the Esquimaux.”²¹⁷ The letter also called Louis Riel “that arch rebel and murderer” and referred to his often-used expression, “Red River for the Half-breeds” to point out that they did not seek the prosperity of all of Manitoba and all these “privileges” from the HBC era were chasing away commercial development.²¹⁸

The newspaper that focused on providing news coverage to the French Métis community, *le Métis*, pushed back against this type of coverage, by referring to the *Globe* and their concerns about the Manitoba land questions. The *Globe* had said the Métis land grant was absurd, and *le*

²¹⁵ “Indians and the Land Office,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, May 24, 1873, page 2.

²¹⁶ Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy*, 2nd ed. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2019), 258.

²¹⁷ “A Question of Privilege,” *Manitoba Liberal*, July 26, 1871, page 1.

²¹⁸ “A Question of Privilege,” *Manitoba Liberal*, July 26, 1871, page 1.

Métis responded, saying “Comment, ces vilains métis, en négociant l’entrée de leur pays dans la confédération Canadienne, ont eu la perfidie de demander quelques morceaux de terre pour assurer un patrimoine à leurs enfants.”²¹⁹ The article continued to express outrage over how the Ontarians understood Métis rights. There were many other claims in that article that they wanted to respond to, but “ce sera pour une autre fois.”²²⁰ The Métis continued to insist that they were entitled to a homeland for themselves and their children, despite the English Canadian press suggesting that it was time to move on and give land to settlers.

The next week, *le Métis* dedicated an article to exploring the importance of the right of the Métis to land of their own. Specifically, “les métis ont pris des mesures pour s’assurer des terres dans les endroits où ils désirent se fixer et se grouper ensemble. C’est pour cette raison qu’ils ont choisi leurs réserves par paroisse.”²²¹ These parish reserves would allow for communities to claim land as a group, and not end up scattered amidst settler populations. After all, the goal was to preserve a homeland, and that would be easier if the Métis established land claims in close proximity.

There were ongoing concerns about Métis land issues, as in 1872, Joseph St. Germain and Maxime Lepine presented a series of resolutions from “l’Assemblée de St. Norbert” to the Governor General and Lieutenant Governor, insisting that Métis land rights needed attention as soon as possible, and that the Métis population was against “des étrangers” cutting wood on the Métis reserves.²²² In the following article, *le Métis* explored why there had been such delays in the land office. There were concerns about possible “agents de police secrète pour administrer le

²¹⁹ “La Question Des Terres,” *Le Métis*, August 3, 1871, page 2.

²²⁰ “La Question Des Terres,” *Le Métis*, August 3, 1871, page 2

²²¹ “Le Droit Des Métis,” *Le Métis*, August 10, 1871, page 2.

²²² “Reserve Des Métis,” *Le Métis*, April 3, 1872, page 2.

département des terres de la Couronne dans cette Province.”²²³ The article concluded with a call that “Métis, Sauvages, anciens, et nouveaux colons, tous s’uniront et trouveront moyen de résoudre promptement une question aussi simple, bien qu’elle paraisse dépasser l’intelligence des officiers des Terres.”²²⁴ The newspaper called for all interested parties to pay attention to the actions of the land agents, because they did not seem like they were answering questions or engaging Métis concerns.

The *Manitoban* expressed frustration about the Métis land grants by saying that it was generally a blunder, and that

our opinion always has been, that the people of Manitoba would have been perfectly justified in repudiating Confederation altogether and resisting Confederation being forced upon them until they were guaranteed their natural rights- not the 1,400,000 acres, but the whole of the lands of the Province.²²⁵

However, since that time for negotiation was passed, where were the Métis supposed to go from there? They were concerned that “History teaches this lesson in a thousand cases, and so does common sense,” and that refusing equity and rights to the Métis and “twelve thousand men, women, and children” would be “bad for all parties.”²²⁶

Métis concerns over the fate of their homeland continued as more and more settlers arrived in Manitoba and filed for homesteads, but the Métis land reserves had still not been chosen and given. An article expressed that the Métis land would be chosen soon, and that would soon make it easier for settlers, and that they hoped that “nos compatriotes, des autres provinces, profiteront des avantages qu’offre notre pays et que nous verrons le printemps prochain une immigration considérable nous arriver.”²²⁷ The article writers suggested that surely everyone

²²³ “La Question des Terres,” *Le Métis*, April 3, 1872, page 2.

²²⁴ “La Question des Terres,” *Le Métis*, April 3, 1872, page 2.

²²⁵ “The Half-Breed Grant,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, July 13, 1872, page 2.

²²⁶ “The Half-Breed Grant,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, July 13, 1872, page 2.

²²⁷ “Immigration,” *Le Métis*, September 4, 1872, page 2.

would benefit from having this uncertainty about Métis land settled, including immigrants who had not yet arrived.

The *Manitoban* reported that Colonel Dennis intended to allot the land for scrip in the near future and that “We are further enabled to state that the Dominion will confirm occupants on that portion of the territory when the Indian title had not been settled [...] to the Selkirk settlers and their children, this placing these early pioneers on the same footing with the Half-breed population.”²²⁸ The *Manitoban* also cautioned the Métis to hold onto their lands. They warned about the risk of fraud, saying:

We are perfectly aware that strenuous efforts are being made, and have been made, and will be made to deprive you of these lands. Already it is openly boasted that one speculative genius in the town of Winnipeg holds, or imagines he holds, some forty thousand acres of these lands. And how has he procured them? First by an application of rum, and then by an application of very little money or dry goods.²²⁹

The *Manitoban*, in a statement of incredible optimism, implied that there was a chance that these sales made by swindlers would be overturned, so for now, even if they wanted to sell later, they should avoid being defrauded.

Upon hearing that the Métis land question appeared settled, including old settlers receiving scrip, *Le Métis* concluded “Félicitations nous de voir enfin l’horizon s’éclaircir, et reconnaissons les efforts de qui de droit dans cet heureux changement de notre situation.”²³⁰ They also said that those looking to claim Métis townships in the reserves should “venir immédiatement faire entrer leur nom au bureau des Terres.”²³¹ It was important to get these townships protected as soon as possible, and perhaps a brighter future was on the horizon for the Métis nation, who had waited so long for this land.

²²⁸ “The Half-Breed Grant,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, December 7, 1872, page 2.

²²⁹ “Caution,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, December 7, 1872, page 2.

²³⁰ “La Question des Terres est reglee,” and “Reserves des Métis,” *Le Métis*, December 7, 1872, page 2.

²³¹ “La Question des Terres est reglee,” and “Reserves des Métis,” *Le Métis*, December 7, 1872, page 2.

In 1873 the *Manitoban* reported that “it is a fact, and we can prove it, that last Saturday night, in the Town of Winnipeg, Half-breed lots were offered for sale and bought at fifteen shillings, that is to say, about three-and-a-half cents an acre.”²³² This was not moral, as “the man who sold was a fool” and the purchaser may have also been a fool, as according to how the law was interpreted, “the 1,400,000 acres are the property of the children and the children only” and therefore could not be sold by the parent.²³³ Other articles on that same page argued that this land distribution needed to be done carefully, as if this was done correctly, “might be of lasting and substantial benefit to the Half-breed population for ages to come. This portion of the community have in their hands now a large and valuable patrimony. Those who struggled for their obtaining it, did so with the notion that it would remain with them.”²³⁴ A number of people, including at least twenty-two named politicians and community leaders, had met with the Attorney-General and expressed the hope that “some action should be taken with regard to the wholesale buying up of Half-breed claims in the Province. They regarded this traffic as utterly antagonistic to the spirit of the Grant, and as carried out was nothing more nor less than a system of gambling and knavery.”²³⁵ The *Manitoba Free Press* did not share the opinion that Métis lands could not be sold, as they reported that “a lively business in the transfer of claims is now going on. Hundreds of assignments have already been made by power-of-attorney. The considerations have averaged about twenty dollars each.”²³⁶ These different approaches to the sale of Métis land reflected the different readerships of the newspapers, and the different loyalties of their editors and owners.

²³² “The Half-Breed Grant,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, February 15, 1873, page 2.

²³³ “The Half-Breed Grant,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, February 15, 1873, page 2.

²³⁴ “The Half-Breed Grant,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, February 15, 1873, page 2.

²³⁵ “The Half-Breed Grant,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, February 15, 1873, page 2.

²³⁶ “Local and Provincial: Half-Breed Claims,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 1, 1873, page 5.

The *Manitoba Free Press* expressed their complaints about the land policy, Métis rights, and who they thought these rights should apply to in their January 11 coverage.²³⁷ In later months, the *Free Press* went so far as to say that “the Half-breed land grant was asked and made to serve political ends.”²³⁸ They claimed it was never created because people “were in need of land” but rather it was because Bishop Taché “sought this land for the Half-breeds, expecting that in so doing he would be enabled to control a large section of the country.”²³⁹ The land claims were apparently part of a catholic conspiracy, although they acknowledged that “we are quite alive to the fact that all the participants are not Roman Catholics, but it was a stroke of policy to rope in others to serve as a shield from the charge we now make.”²⁴⁰ They also objected to the *Manitoban* and other pro-Métis land rights perspectives, which suggested that “the half-breeds be kept under a system of tutelage for five years after the law has ordained they shall come into possession of their lands! This is a gross insult to the entire half-breed population. It is precisely equivalent to telling every one of them that they are incapables.”²⁴¹ Showing a real misunderstanding of the Métis land concerns and the potential reasons for wanting to delay sales for five years, the *Free Press* said that “One day the half-breeds are fawned, and flattered, and the next it is hinted that they are not fit to exercise the rights of ordinary men, but should be kept in minority, some years longer than other people.”²⁴²

²³⁷ “The Land Question,” *Manitoba Free Press*, January 11, 1873, page 4.

²³⁸ “The Half-Breed Land Grant,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 29, 1873, page 4.

²³⁹ “The Half-Breed Land Grant,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 29, 1873, page 4.

²⁴⁰ “The Half-Breed Land Grant,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 29, 1873, page 4. This anti-Catholic sentiment would continue into 1876, when the Archbishop of St. Boniface had to write a letter to the editor of the *Free Press* defending the Métis land reserves, and arguing that the largely Protestant Cabinet of Manitoba’s government had promoted the idea of the reserve. “The Land Reserve Question,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 12, 1876, page 5.

²⁴¹ “What Next?” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 22, 1873, page 4.

²⁴² “What Next?” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 22, 1873, page 4.

Le Métis pushed back against the *Free Press* and their insistence that the Métis did not have guaranteed rights to land. They explained the history of how these rights had been negotiated, and then concluded:

Ce fut alors que les ministres offrirent de faire un octroi gratuit de terres aux Métis, a raison de leur descendance indienne. Quant aux Ecosais et autres colons, ils refusèrent de leur faire un semblable octroi. Mais nous savons que depuis ils ont changé cette décision. L'octroi aux Métis fut alors pris en considération, et après beaucoup de discussion, la quantité en fut fixée à 1,400,000 acres.²⁴³

The Métis right to a homeland was asserted in their newspaper, and while some other settlers had since been offered land, that did not change the Métis land promised.

As disputes over land claims continued, the *Manitoban* reported that Mr. LaRivière, the Chief Clerk in the Land Department had been “suspended from his official duties, and treated with a harshness for which there could be no justification, unless indeed it could be proved that he had been guilty of some very great offence in an official point of view.”²⁴⁴ He returned to Ottawa and received his old job back, but this was a loss to the local Dominion Lands office, where “his complete knowledge of both French and English Languages rendered him so publicly useful” as many of the Métis applicants were “unable to speak a word of English, and a French official to communicate with them is absolutely a necessity of the bureau.”²⁴⁵ This did indeed cause problems, as a letter to the editor in *Le Métis* said that there continued to be problems with the land office. There was “une seule personne capable de parler la langue française, et nous Métis, pour la plupart pas habitues aux affaires, nous sommes incompris, bouscules, et souvent renvoyés sans pouvoir obtenir satisfaction.”²⁴⁶ He said that “la correspondance est exclusivement en anglais” and that only Roger Goulet and Mr. LaRivière spoke two languages, but that

²⁴³ “L’Octroi Des Terres,” *Le Métis*, April 5, 1873, page 2.

²⁴⁴ “Mr. LaRiviere,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 7, 1873, page 2.

²⁴⁵ “Mr. LaRiviere,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 7, 1873, page 2.

²⁴⁶ “Correspondance: Le Bureau Des Terres,” *Le Métis*, June 21, 1873, page 2.

LaRivière “n’est plus visible au bureau.”²⁴⁷ The writer passionately accused “MM,” likely referring to Gilbert McMicken, who was the Dominion Police Commissioner, agent of the dominion lands branch, an immigration agent and member of the Intercolonial Railway Commission of tyranny against the Métis.²⁴⁸ With so many roles and positions of authority that placed McMicken’s interest directly in opposition to the Métis, from law enforcement to land patents, it is unsurprising that “cette tyrannie” was the phrase used.²⁴⁹

When the Minister of the Interior David Laird visited Manitoba in 1874, the *Manitoban* wrote that he should turn his attention to the Métis lands. The land around Winnipeg that was part of the Métis reserves “is a desolate waste” and was not able to produce goods for market. They wrote, “Why the Canadian Government should have made such a complicated affair out of the comparatively simple business of giving 1,400,000 acres to a certain number of people, we cannot understand.”²⁵⁰ There was clearly a need for this, as when a rumour went around that scrip was “actually going to be given [...] the Land Office was literally crowded with members of the Half-breed [illegible], each anxious to be the first to put in an application for his scrip.”²⁵¹

When regulations for claiming scrip were announced in April of 1876, *le Métis* provided detailed information about how to access scrip and who was eligible to claim it, including how old children had to be before they could file for scrip in their names.²⁵² This was also explained in the *Free Press*, with the same explanations about how to file.²⁵³ At least in an official statement, there were efforts to communicate the scrip claiming process in both languages.

²⁴⁷ “Correspondance: Le Bureau Des Terres,” *Le Métis*, June 21, 1873, page 2.

²⁴⁸ “Correspondance: Le Bureau Des Terres,” *Le Métis*, June 21, 1873, page 2.

²⁴⁹ Carl Betke, “McMicken, Gilbert,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcmicken_gilbert_12E.html.

²⁵⁰ “Half-Breed Grant,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, August 15, 1874, page 2.

²⁵¹ “Half-Breed Grant,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, August 15, 1874, page 2.

²⁵² “Emission des Patentes ou ‘Scrips’,” *Le Métis*, April 20, 1876, page 1.

²⁵³ “Half-Breed Lands and Scrip--Conditions of Distribution,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 22, 1876. Page 4.

When a “Settler” wrote a letter to the editor of the *Free Press* saying that they first read about the Métis land being distributed in 1873 and now it was 1876 and only just being sorted out, they asked if the earlier account was “merely an invention” or if the Land Office had “fallen into incompetence, or if “the delay ever since is in consequence of a deliberate intent to stifle our growth and prevent emigration.”²⁵⁴ The *Free Press* answered this question by blaming Robert Cunningham, M.P. for Marquette and editor of the *Manitoban*, for telling the government to interpret the reserve lands as being only distributed to children, and that it had taken these years to debate the details of the spirit and letter of the law.²⁵⁵ They did not place blame on the surveyors or the Canadian government who had ignored the Manitoba Act and tried to avoid allotting land.

By 1877, the *Free Press* reported that scrip had been allotted and that “many of them will be purchasable at moderate prices during the next twelve months.”²⁵⁶ A. W. Burrows advertised in the *Free Press* that he had Métis claims “of minors, over age, purchased on commission, by the only safe form of Deed of conveyance. I have a number of the old assignments and power of attorney placed in my hands, to be replaced by the regular conveyance, and will at the same time attend to others if required.”²⁵⁷ In September, the *Free Press* reported that “An important sale of land made recently will serve to fix partly the value of unoccupied land at this season under the conditions that the market is overdone with scrip, half-breed minor claims, etc.”²⁵⁸ A Mr. Kelly from Ontario, an agricultural implement dealer, had “completed the purchase of thirteen lots (2,400 acres) on both sides of Red River.”²⁵⁹ These lots were described as “in some cases slightly

²⁵⁴ “Half-Breed Reserves,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 29, 1876, page 3.

²⁵⁵ “Half-Breed Reserves,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 29, 1876, page 3.

²⁵⁶ “A Pleasant Outlook,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 28, 1877, page 4.

²⁵⁷ “Half-Breed Claims,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 21, 1877, page 2.

²⁵⁸ “A Land Sale,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 29, 1877, page 3.

²⁵⁹ “A Land Sale,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 29, 1877, page 3.

improved by small fields and log houses, they being mostly the holdings of half-breeds under the Manitoba Act and sold by them as a preparation for removal to the farther west.”²⁶⁰

A meeting held at St. Norbert was covered by both *le Métis* and the *Free Press*. This meeting was attended by both Métis and old settlers, or as stated by the *Free Press*, those “of unmixed blood”, all of whom were concerned that they were unable to keep their land that they had been using for more than seven years, since they had not been informed that their lands had been sold to “*bona fide* purchasers.”²⁶¹ The French coverage was far more detailed. There were in-depth proposals asserting land rights for those who had resided in the area in the years prior to 15 July 1870, and also to point out that the government had ignored those rights in recent years.²⁶² In some cases, people had never been notified about their land rights and now, “sans autre notification, et se considérant légitimement possesseurs de ces terrains, plusieurs ont vendu leurs lots a des acheteurs de bonne foi, et un bon nombre de ces lots ont ainsi passe en plusieurs mains, et sone maintenant la propriété de personnes qui ont payé pleine et entière considération pour le dit terrain.”²⁶³ When they went to the land office to inquire about their lands, they found that their lands had been sold several times, without consideration of whose land it was originally.

As the 1870s came to a close, *le Métis* focused more on the challenges facing Métis in the North-West Territories, reporting in 1879 that there were problems between the Métis and the nearby First Nations, and their neighbours. One of the problems was that they were not allowed to freely cross the border, and most of the bison were south of the border.²⁶⁴ The Métis had long viewed the border as something that had to be navigated on both sides in order to maintain

²⁶⁰ “A Land Sale,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 29, 1877, page 3.

²⁶¹ “The Red River Lands,” *Manitoba Free Press*, January 19, 1878, page 6.

²⁶² “La Question Des Terres,” *Le Métis*, January 11, 1878, page 2.

²⁶³ “La Question Des Terres,” *Le Métis*, January 11, 1878, page 2.

²⁶⁴ “Territoire Du Nord Ouest,” *Le Métis*, March 13, 1879, page 2.

control over and access to their homelands.²⁶⁵ There were a number of strategies employed, but one involved participating in treaty negotiations with both the Canadian and American governments, even though to treaty observers this was viewed with cynicism.²⁶⁶ As the 1870s came to an end, Canadian officials had been notified that Métis bands were not to be admitted into treaties, and set up a system to avoid establishing Métis reserves based on “the presumed racial differences between Métis and Indians.”²⁶⁷ The increasing regulations of the bison hunt combined with this system of trying to enforce the legally distinctive categories of “Métis, Indians, and whites” meant that there were few options left for Métis who wanted to continue to hunt. Hogue explains, “In crossing into the United States, Métis hunters not only enhanced their chances of finding buffalo but also took advantage of the different political calculations regarding buffalo conservation south of the line.”²⁶⁸ Because the era of freely crossing the border was coming to a close, Métis families were left with difficult options of choosing one side of the border, something they had worked hard to avoid for decades.

Throughout the 1870s, the Canadian and Manitoban government attempted to assert their legal authority over the land in Manitoba, regulating who could use it and how it could be used. In delaying the Métis land claims set aside in the Manitoba Act, the Métis were left exposed to harassment, violence, and fraud as they waited for their land. The discussion of land policies and the many types of land reserves was generally seen as a barrier to “bona fide” settlers, who often viewed themselves as the victims in this confusion over land policy. Coverage of these disputes dominated the newspapers during this time, in part because so many of the newspapermen were personally invested in creating policies or encouraging immigration. While it was true that

²⁶⁵ Michel Hogue, *Métis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2015), 112.

²⁶⁶ Hogue, *Métis and the Medicine Line*, 112-113.

²⁶⁷ Hogue, *Métis and the Medicine Line*, 125.

²⁶⁸ Hogue, *Métis and the Medicine Line*, 126.

aspects of the homesteading system made life more challenging for white settlers, their struggles were overrepresented in the newspapers. At the end of the decade white settlers had an amended Dominion Lands Act, and many of the reserved lands were open to settlement, while the Métis who remained still faced fraudulent claims and barriers to claiming their homeland.

Chapter 4- Land and Environment:

In establishing the settler colonial system of agriculture, immigrants to Manitoba struggled to understand the landscape and environment of their new home. They were tasked with transforming and cultivating their homesteads into extensions of the British and Canadian empire, and with erasing Indigenous ways of using land. They made observations about their environment to help future immigrants, and to promote an idealized version of the Canadian prairie. When natural disasters inevitably struck, the liberal homesteading model was challenged, and the weaknesses of the land policies and homestead structure were exposed. Newspapers tried to promote the narrative of the self-sufficient settler, struggling but ultimately thriving in the land of promise, hoping that describing it would result in more settlers and create those thriving communities. Manitoba in the 1870s remained a diverse, Indigenous space, and yet in describing the land and agriculture, the presence of anyone who was not participating in settler colonial agriculture was erased. The land was portrayed as a vacant territory upon which settlers could prove themselves.

This chapter draws upon environmental history to explain the significance of the settler observations of their surroundings to the larger history of immigration and settler colonialism examined in this dissertation. Ramsay Cook in his chapter “Making a Garden out of a Wilderness,” concludes with reference to the imposition of and resistance to gardens in Acadia, that “We all call wilderness anything that is not *our* idea of a garden.”¹ The Canadian prairie in the 1870s was often seen as a “wilderness” by settlers, who found it intimidating and challenging, but Indigenous peoples maintained a different relationship with the land. Settlers struggled to impose their ideas of agriculture on the Canadian prairie, and this chapter explores

¹ Ramsay Cook, “Making a Garden out of a Wilderness,” in *Canadian Environmental History: Essential Readings*, ed. David Freeland Duke (Toronto: Canadian Scholar’s Press, 2006), 170.

the advice and knowledge given to new immigrants in order for them to survive, achieve agricultural success, and cope with a variety of disasters that they encountered. This advice was typically given from white settlers to other settlers, and so neglected Indigenous knowledge about the land, and was intended to present Manitoba in the most optimistic terms.

The physical environment and land of Canada was important to late nineteenth century proponents of Canadian expansionism. Ryan Eyford explains that Alexander Morris and other supporters of Canadian expansion “maintained that the country’s geographical position would help shape the character of its people. The biggest perceived drawback of northern North America as a field for European colonization, its climate, was thus presented as the very factor that would guarantee its future greatness.”² According to historian Carl Berger, the northern landscape of Canada was directly connected to the Canada First movement, and to ideas about racial superiority more broadly. Specifically, Berger explains that place, environment, and race became connected to nationalism:

The adjective “northern” came to symbolize energy, strength, self-reliance, health, and purity, and its opposite, “southern,” was equated with decay and effeminacy, even libertinism, and disease. A lengthy catalogue of desirable national attributes resulting from the climate was compiled. No other weather was so conducive to maintaining health and stimulating robustness.³

This nationalism has been further explored by Eva Mackey, who draws upon Berger’s work and labeled this racialized understanding of what it meant to be “Canadian” as “ice white nationalism.”⁴ The topic of land and the environment in newspaper coverage and larger public immigration discourse of the 1870s should be understood within this larger context of racial

² Ryan Eyford, *White Settler Reserve: New Iceland and the Colonization of the Canadian West* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 32.

³ Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 129.

⁴ Eva Mackey, “Death by Landscape: Race, Nature, and Gender in Canadian Nationalist Mythology,” *Canadian Woman Studies*, 20, no. 2 (2000): 126.

thinking and nationalism. Commenting on climate is therefore part of the nation-building and race-making project of Canada.

Seeing the Land

Newspapers reported on the lands and climate of Manitoba and the North-West Territories, hoping the right sort of coverage would entice immigrants, or at least clear up misconceptions. Descriptions of Manitoba and its land were interesting to readers outside of Manitoba, but in the local press, Manitoban readers were interested in their own “far west,” as evidenced by coverage of travels into the Saskatchewan Valley. In 1871, local businessman and future real estate agent A.W. Burrows (not to be confused with newspaperman Charles Acton Burrows) traveled west of Red River, into the Saskatchewan Valley, and wrote to the *Manitoban* with detailed descriptions of the land and environment of the region. Describing the soil west of Portage la Prairie and into the Fort Pitt region, he wrote that “At all the posts and settlements of this valley, grain grows luxuriantly, and cattle wallow in the richest and most succulent grasses.”⁵ Regarding the climate, he writes:

All testimony agrees that the winter is not nearly so severe as in Manitoba or Canada, nor do they have much snow, often being without sleighing until the middle of January, and sometimes having only two or three inches of snow all winter. The settlers and missionaries have often been able to plough as early as the 10th and 12th of April. But, what is more strange than all, is the fact that cattle and horses may and do graze all winter on the rich and heavy grasses which overtop the thin snow and come out even fatter than those which for domestic purposes have been housed all winter.⁶

⁵ “Saskatchewan Valley: Its Climate and Resources, Interesting and Valuable Communication,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, November 25, 1871, page 1.

⁶ “Saskatchewan Valley: Its Climate and Resources, Interesting and Valuable Communication,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, November 25, 1871, page 1.

The winters were described as better than “Canada or New York State” but in summer, “the weather is not nearly so hot and the nights are always cool.”⁷ Burrows also claimed that “Gold is found in almost all the rivers in some quantities” and that there were probably other minerals to be found.⁸ He then said that while he had “seen the rich prairie lands of all the Western States, and allowing for their exceeding riches, though not forgetting their many disadvantages also, I consider even our park-like rolling country more valuable for settlement.”⁹ The main barrier for settlement was that “There are four different interests which are apt at any moment to become antagonistic for a slight cause, unless overruled by some governing power in law; viz. the H. B. Co., the French Half-Breeds, the miners and white settlers, and Ecclesiastical bodies.”¹⁰ Once a government or some sort of governing body was established, there was no reason for the region not to attract settlers, since, according to Burrows, the land and environment were not the barrier to immigration, but rather the local political situation.

Descriptions of land and environmental factors were not always so positive. In January of 1873, the *Manitoban* reported that settlers had been struggling with how to find sufficient fuel and water in the depths of winter. They wrote that “The cold has been intense and continued. Out door [sic] communication has this week been all but suspended. We have been living in a worse than Siberian climate—but, alas, without possessing Siberia’s luxuriant timber forests.”¹¹

Heating a home was an expense that most workers struggled to afford with the high prices of wood, and a real solution would need to be created before people were able to live comfortably

⁷ “Saskatchewan Valley: Its Climate and Resources, Interesting and Valuable Communication,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, November 25, 1871, page 1.

⁸ “Saskatchewan Valley: Its Climate and Resources, Interesting and Valuable Communication,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, November 25, 1871, page 1.

⁹ “Saskatchewan Valley: Its Climate and Resources, Interesting and Valuable Communication,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, November 25, 1871, page 1.

¹⁰ “Saskatchewan Valley: Its Climate and Resources, Interesting and Valuable Communication,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, November 25, 1871, page 1.

¹¹ “Fuel and Water,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 11, 1873, page 2.

in Manitoba. In 1874, the prevalence of wood and water in certain townships increased their appeal for settlers, as a report from the Lands Office in the *Manitoban* said that “Quite a number of settlers have gone into Township 9, Range 7 E lately, where it is said they have fine land and abundance of wood and water.”¹²

This had been an issue since at least 1871, when the *Manitoban* reported on the topic of scarcity of fuel on the prairies from Governor Austin of Minnesota. He recommended, from the “suggestion of the State Horticultural Society” that “if we should not succeed in discovering coal within the limits of the State, our extensive prairies will never be thickly peopled; unless the cultivation of trees be made successful.”¹³ There were also the needs for timber for other reasons, and for a general improving of the appearance of the state, as there was a “want of attractiveness resulting from the absence of trees.”¹⁴ He recommended instituting a system of rewards or premiums to encourage settlers to plant trees along roads for “both shelter and ornament.”¹⁵

By 1873, encouraging tree planting was discussed in Manitoba, as the Legislature passed “an Act to encourage and protect the planting of trees in Manitoba.”¹⁶ The full text of the Act was published, and then there were excerpts from papers across the continent with instructions about how to transplant trees and how to use willow cuttings to create “live fence posts.”¹⁷ A few months later, the *Manitoban* published an article from the *New York Observer* about the importance of “adorning the homestead.” The article said that “it is pleasant to have something to mark your boundary, and an evergreen hedge is cheap and beautiful” and that “Farmers miss more than they realize by neglect of these homestead adornments. They really cost little in

¹² “Local and Provincial,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, April 11, 1874, page 3.

¹³ “Timber Planting,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 28, 1871, page 1.

¹⁴ “Timber Planting,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 28, 1871, page 1.

¹⁵ “Timber Planting,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 28, 1871, page 1.

¹⁶ “Planting Trees,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, March 15, 1873, page 4.

¹⁷ “Planting Trees,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, March 15, 1873, page 4.

money, while as a matter of business merely they add largely to the selling value.”¹⁸ These “adornments” such as trees and flower-beds were also important for children, to inspire them “with a taste for such work which will have a powerful influence in attaching them to the place and the business when they grow up.”¹⁹ If children were taught to tend gardens and prune trees and given responsibility, their “tastes will be formed and attachments developed which the glitter of city of attractions a few years later may not overcome.”²⁰ The article speculated that “The desertion of farming by farmers’ boys is probably due quite as much to the untidy dreariness which surrounds so many homes.”²¹

This concern over physical landscapes, not only for the sake of creating treed spaces, but also for capturing the hearts and minds of children, is explored by Molly Rozum’s analysis of how the first generations of settlers on the northern plains and Canadian prairies created a sense of place in their reflections. She notes that “Most children of grasslands settler society grew up in different environments than their parents, which gave them unique associations with nature, including animals and climate.”²² They also experienced the same places in different ways, due to the “small worlds” and imaginations of children. In her observations of trees, she says “Woods—even a single tree—proved a special place of comparative natural luxuriance for grasslands children. A solitary tree emphasized the comparative lack of trees.”²³ The general treelessness meant that when there were trees around, they were not only significant for practical agricultural reasons, but also for creating familiar settler worlds. Susie Fisher explains that cultivating familiar seeds and plants in new locations was a way for settler groups like the

¹⁸ “Adorning the Homestead,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 7, 1873, page 4.

¹⁹ “Adorning the Homestead,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 7, 1873, page 4.

²⁰ “Adorning the Homestead,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 7, 1873, page 4.

²¹ “Adorning the Homestead,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 7, 1873, page 4.

²² Molly P. Rozum, *Grasslands Grown: Creating Place on the U.S. Northern Plains and Canadian Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2021), 58.

²³ Rozum, 109.

Mennonites to preserve their cultural identity as part of a “complex settler-colonial longing for genesis and rootedness.”²⁴ Much of the language about the “empty” or “uncultivated” land was due to settlers not feeling a sense of familiarity in the land they now occupied, and so tree planting was part of this process of transforming the landscape into a settler space.

In a lecture about Manitoba given by the Anglican Archdeacon John McLean in Ottawa, he described the agricultural potential by saying that “it was the most fertile land in the world” and that he “never saw better vegetables than he saw there, strawberries and other fruit grew wild in profusion, and it was certainly to be supposed that fruit would grow well when cultivated.”²⁵ Referring to the climate, he said that the average temperatures in winter ranged from 10 to 20 degrees below zero, “and sometimes as low as 35 and even 40 or 41 below zero” but he said that after living there for seven years, “the cold weather of Manitoba was not unpleasant. He would rather have 30 or 35 degrees below zero there than 10 below here in this province. There was no dampness accompanied by cold” so it did not feel quite so severe.”²⁶

While the cold could certainly be a barrier for intending settlers who balked at reading average temperatures, it was also often exaggerated, as discovered by two young men, who had recently arrived from England. They arrived in the middle of May but had been warned in England that “Manitoba was a kind of polar region, too cold for any but savages to exist in” and had been pleasantly surprised to arrive on a warm spring day.²⁷ The *Manitoban* used this example to push for greater investments in immigration pamphlets and information, assuming that sort of idea was not challenged, no one would move to Manitoba.²⁸

²⁴ Susie Fisher, “(Trans)planting Manitoba’s West Reserve: Mennonites, Myth, and Narratives of Place,” *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 35 (2017), 130.

²⁵ “Manitoba: A Lecture by Archdeacon McLean,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 5, 1873, page 2.

²⁶ “Manitoba: A Lecture by Archdeacon McLean,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 5, 1873, page 2.

²⁷ “Manitoba Immigration,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, May 17, 1873, page 2.

²⁸ “Manitoba Immigration,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, May 17, 1873, page 2.

Certain regions were described with specific attention to their geographical history. In an article entitled “Southwestward Ho!” the *Free Press* special correspondent wrote that “The Pembina Mountain is, in fact, no mountain at all, nor yet a hill, It is a terrace of table land, the ancient shore of the great body of water that once filled the whole of the Red River valley.”²⁹ This stretch of land was praised for having fertile soil, shelter from the prevailing winds, as well as access to a good amount of wooded land that was not caught up in the reserved lands along the rivers.³⁰ For this reason, “the district is destined to play no unimportant part in the future of this Province.”³¹

The rivers were also an important part of the environment and geography of Manitoba, especially in the years preceding the railway. A letter to the *Free Press* from A. McArthur was published to draw attention to an important piece of information: “Few of those who have recently come to this Province are aware of the fact that the city of Winnipeg is in close proximity to the Lake of that name.”³² Lake Winnipeg could be “reached by steam in about four hours.” According to the writer, this region was under-utilized, and more settlers should consider developing that area, for timber, fishing, as well as shipping, as it was the “cheapest transportation route to Edmonton House and all points on the Saskatchewan.” There were some parts of the Red River connecting to Lake Winnipeg that could be developed by “deepening the channel” and building a stone dam.³³

Developing waterways to build up transportation systems and prairie economies was part of a much larger history, extending back at least until the fur trade. Eric W. Morse’s *Fur Trade*

²⁹ “Southwestward Ho! The Boyne Settlement and the Pembina Mountains,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 28, 1874, page 6.

³⁰ “Southwestward Ho! The Boyne Settlement and the Pembina Mountains,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 28, 1874, page 6.

³¹ “Southwestward Ho! The Boyne Settlement and the Pembina Mountains,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 28, 1874, page 6.

³² “Red River Navigation,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 4, 1874, page 2.

³³ “Red River Navigation,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 4, 1874, page 2.

Canoe Routes of Canada explains that the vast amount of fresh water in Canada meant that “The rivers are not only closely connected but, for a portable craft adapted to the interrupted navigation, are entirely navigable.”³⁴ He explains that this did not rely on canals like in Europe or Asia, but instead there were three drainage patterns that allowed everything east of the Rocky Mountains to be navigated.³⁵ This system of interconnecting rivers, streams, lakes, and relatively short portages allowed for a regional economy (and also kinship network) to be developed. As settlers brought their own economic demands, they adapted that system for their own standards of economic productivity.

By 1878, the concern about Manitoba being misrepresented to newspaper readers in Ontario continued, as H.C. Graham from Rockwood, Manitoba, wrote to the *Chatham Banner* to challenge their recent article “expressing Mr. Mitton’s opinion of Manitoba” which was “not very flattering.”³⁶ The *Free Press* published this letter from the *Banner*. The original observations from Mitton had not been positive, and Graham said that he had traveled through the “wettest in the Province, [the region] being a vast open prairie, unsettled and unimproved until the Mennonite settlement.” Graham also challenged Mitton’s claim that people had to leave the province because it was too wet, and that the climate was “so severe that building are necessary for man and beast.” Graham said that there was nothing particularly unique about needing buildings to protect from the climate. Mitton had said that “he met scores of people who would be glad to go back to Ontario.” Graham said that he had met them too, “but the majority

³⁴ Eric W. Morse, *Fur Trade Canoe Routes of Canada: Then and Now* (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1989), <http://parkscanadahistory.com/publications/fur-trade-canoe-routes.pdf>, 27.

³⁵ Morse, *Fur Trade Canoe Routes of Canada: Then and Now*, 27.

³⁶ “About Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 5, 1878, page 1.

of them are men who expected to find gold in the streets. To such Manitoba is perfectly willing to bid a final farewell.”³⁷

While Graham tried to challenge Mitton’s observations about the wetness of Manitoba, those observations were largely accurate. Shannon Stunden Bower describes Manitoba as a “wet prairie” where settlers “found their agricultural ambitions in conflict with the region’s environmental realities.”³⁸ Whether land is seen as “wet” or “dry” is largely shaped by what settlers perceive to be optimal for their own purposes.³⁹ Early Manitoba settlers involved various levels of government in the work of drainage and water management. Stunden Bower writes that “liberalism is part of the explanation for why the Manitoban government undertook drainage, [and] it is also part of the reason drainage was controversial.”⁴⁰ As has been explored in previous chapters, settler colonialism was a liberal project, with a focus on individual rights and liberties, something which was limited in the cooperative work of water management. While each farmer envisioned private property where they could do whatever they wanted, attempting to change water flow impacted neighbours, particularly those at lower elevations.⁴¹ Drainage projects also required public (taxpayer) investment in developments that would sometimes not appear to have a direct influence, and persuading settlers to pay for drainage efforts that did not impact their own land directly required a break from a strict liberal understanding that each person need only be concerned with what they could claim to own.⁴²

In keeping with the idea that the harsh, northern climate was connected to racial superiority, the idea that certain settlers would be deterred or would choose to leave due to

³⁷ “About Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 5, 1878, page 1.

³⁸ Shannon Stunden Bower, *Wet Prairie: People, Land, and Water in Agricultural Manitoba* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 2.

³⁹ Stunden Bower, *Wet Prairie*, 4.

⁴⁰ Stunden Bower, *Wet Prairie*, 12.

⁴¹ Stunden Bower, *Wet Prairie*, 12-13.

⁴² Stunden Bower, *Wet Prairie*, 12-13.

finding the climate too difficult becomes framed as a positive development. Manitoba's climate would ensure only the most worthy and ideal immigrants would remain. The climate was a racial proving ground, leaving the ideal colonizers behind; of course, all of these observations and racial rhetoric required the erasure of Indigenous peoples who were still active and present in what had always been Indigenous spaces.

Hints to Immigrants

In a series of articles from the *Manitoba Liberal* in January and February of 1872, hints were given to immigrants. In a time when immigration pamphlets about Manitoba were rare, this series provided helpful information, and was the opposition party's attempt to undermine the current Archibald government's authority. In the 19 January article, the series is introduced as an effort to "reply to a vast amount of correspondence which we have received from all parts of Ontario, containing interrogatories about the country."⁴³ The purpose was also to "lay before our readers in Ontario, and elsewhere, as much information bearing on the questions asked as we can conveniently procure."⁴⁴ They did offer the caveat that many questions were hard to answer with a simple 'yes' or 'no,' as "Much of a man's prosperity in any country depends on his own conduct, industry, and enterprise."⁴⁵ They advised that men who had "good farms in Ontario" should "rest content with their lot, and let well enough alone."⁴⁶ However, for men who "have to eke out an existence, by day's labor, or to those who have not farms of their own, we would say

⁴³ "Manitoba: Hints to Immigrants," *Manitoba Liberal*, January 19, 1872, page 1.

⁴⁴ "Manitoba: Hints to Immigrants," *Manitoba Liberal*, January 19, 1872, page 1.

⁴⁵ "Manitoba: Hints to Immigrants," *Manitoba Liberal*, January 19, 1872, page 1.

⁴⁶ "Manitoba: Hints to Immigrants," *Manitoba Liberal*, January 19, 1872, page 1.

that there is not to be found on the American continent a place where a man can, in such a short time, make for himself and family as comfortable a home.”⁴⁷

The soil was described in great detail, and potential settlers were advised that contrary to the “wild woods” in Ontario, in Manitoba, “a man can burn off the grass, put his plough into the soil, and in the second year the land so turned out will produce from thirty to forty bushels to the acre.”⁴⁸ After this, settlers were advised to bring their own cows and horses with them, as in the previous year, farmers “were reluctant to sell, and if they did they would ask such a high price that it would be more profitable for immigrants to bring stock with them from Minnesota.”⁴⁹ The main barriers, apart from a limited supply of livestock for immigrants, was the “scarcity of wood and water.” There were still small sections of land along rivers and creeks that had both wood and water, but the amount of land was misleading for intending settlers, as most of it would not be easy to settle before roads and local transportation made the supply of water and wood less of a barrier.⁵⁰ In addition to this advice, settlers were advised which regions would be the most desirable for settlers, based on their agricultural potential as well as their proximity to Indigenous communities and the level of “difficulty” between settlers and Indigenous neighbours.⁵¹

In the next issue, from 26 January 1872, the *Liberal* said that there was already 30,000,000 acres where “Indian title has been extinguished last fall, a great portion of which will be found to be well wooded, gently undulating prairie covered over with a flowery meadow stretching away to the distant horizon, and watered by numerous streams and rivers, the banks of which are skirted with timber.”⁵² The climate was a main focus of this second article in the

⁴⁷ “Manitoba: Hints to Immigrants,” *Manitoba Liberal*, January 19, 1872, page 1.

⁴⁸ “Manitoba: Hints to Immigrants,” *Manitoba Liberal*, January 19, 1872, page 1.

⁴⁹ “Manitoba: Hints to Immigrants,” *Manitoba Liberal*, January 19, 1872, page 1.

⁵⁰ “Manitoba: Hints to Immigrants,” *Manitoba Liberal*, January 19, 1872, page 1.

⁵¹ “Manitoba: Hints to Immigrants,” *Manitoba Liberal*, January 19, 1872, page 1.

⁵² “Manitoba: Hints to Immigrants,” *Manitoba Liberal*, January 26, 1872, page 1.

series, with the *Liberal* stating that “No doubt this country in winter is colder than Ontario, but still we maintain that it is far more salubrious.”⁵³ The dryness of the cold was noted, as was the potential health benefit to breathing in the “constant bracing air,” as they claimed that “Fever, ague, or other disorders arising from miasmatic influences are not to be met with in this country. This is owing to the total freedom from marshes, swamps, or stagnant waters to be found in more southern climes.”⁵⁴

When it came to how to know when to plant in this cold climate, the writer said that he asked a local farmer, who said that “he never kept dates, but from experience he found that when he saw yonder poplar wood fully clothed in summer verdure, it was then time that his wheat crop was in.”⁵⁵ To avoid prairie fires catching hay on fire, farmers “generally plough around them furrows six or eight feet wide. Often the fires break through and burn up large quantities of hay. Last fall it has been estimated that at least 10,000 tones have been consumed in this way.”⁵⁶

After describing these techniques for harvest, readers were advised that there was very little rain in summer, nor in winter, and “the only reason in which they fall being chiefly in the month of June.” This did not delay ploughing, as because of the “rich loamy soil of this country being mixed in some places with sand, what makes it very peculiar is that after a day’s rain farmers can go out and commence to plough, the soil is so dry.”⁵⁷ This was particularly true in the regions of Poplar Point and Portage la Prairie, where “after six or seven hours constant rains one could almost travel in slippers, the roads being so soon dried up.”⁵⁸ However, “after a

⁵³ “Manitoba: Hints to Immigrants,” *Manitoba Liberal*, January 26, 1872, page 1.

⁵⁴ “Manitoba: Hints to Immigrants,” *Manitoba Liberal*, January 26, 1872, page 1.

⁵⁵ “Manitoba: Hints to Immigrants,” *Manitoba Liberal*, January 26, 1872, page 1.

⁵⁶ “Manitoba: Hints to Immigrants,” *Manitoba Liberal*, January 26, 1872, page 1.

⁵⁷ “Manitoba: Hints to Immigrants,” *Manitoba Liberal*, January 26, 1872, page 1.

⁵⁸ “Manitoba: Hints to Immigrants,” *Manitoba Liberal*, January 26, 1872, page 1.

season's drought you could take up a handful of the soil and examine it and find that the drought did not penetrate more than an inch in the soil."⁵⁹

The heat of summer was tempered by cool nights, and the generally windy nature of the prairie, as "Even the hottest day in summer is tempered by the exhilarating winds which sweep across the verdant prairie."⁶⁰ However, readers were advised that Manitoba had "only two seasons, winter and summer. The former may be said to commence on the 1st of December and lasts till April; and the latter from the 1st of April to the 1st of December."⁶¹

When outsiders commented on the climate and environment of Manitoba, there were a few commonalities in their observations. One was that the winter was not as bad as expected, as the *Nor'Wester* reported in November of 1874. They noted that "Those who are spending their first winter in Manitoba—and they are not a few—seem to be delighted with the weather, which is clear, dry and frosty with plenty of snow, making excellent sleighing. The temperature has been already lower than the average in Ontario, yet the cold is not felt here as there at the same temperature."⁶²

In 1880, the climate was still considered to be important information for potential immigrants to Manitoba. An letter to the *Montreal Spectator* was re-printed in the *Free Press*, stating that based on several years of observations, winters were severe from around the end of November to the middle of March, with the snow disappearing in April and the rivers melted by the end of April.⁶³ The cold was indeed severe, but "the readings of the thermometer are by no means a true index of the intensity of which the cold is felt, for in this intensely dry climate a

⁵⁹ "Manitoba: Hints to Immigrants," *Manitoba Liberal*, January 26, 1872, page 1.

⁶⁰ "Manitoba: Hints to Immigrants," *Manitoba Liberal*, January 26, 1872, page 1.

⁶¹ "Manitoba: Hints to Immigrants," *Manitoba Liberal*, January 26, 1872, page 1.

⁶² "City and Vicinity," *Nor'Wester*, November 30, 1874, page 3.

⁶³ "The Climate of Manitoba: Its Bearings upon Settlement and Agriculture," *Manitoba Free Press*, February 7, 1880, page 1.

degree of cold which in England or even Ontario would be almost unbearable, will be endured without any sensation of suffering.”⁶⁴ This did not mean that winters were harmless, as the winter storms could be deadly. The blizzards were described as “The wind sweeping over many miles of treeless plains, at the rate at times of forty or even fifty miles an hour, gathers a terrible power in its unchecked course. It is indeed a truly frightful experience for any one who may happen to be caught in one of these ‘blizzards’ in the open plain. The wind drifting the snow in his track, confuses his horse, and chills him to the very bone. Nearly all the cases of freezing to death which have occurred in this country (and, all told, they have not been many) have happened during one of these sudden storms.”⁶⁵ These storms were relatively rare, with only four or five in a winter. Generally, “the atmosphere [was] clear and dry, the temperature sharp but bracing, the bright sunshine, and the crystal skies all combine to render the very fact of existence a pleasure.”⁶⁶ The article then described August as the “pleasantest season of the year” and May and June as the rainy months, prone to mud:

It is certainly, par excellence *the* mud of the continent. It is a kind of compromise between grease and glue, being so exceedingly slippery that it is no uncommon sight to behold some of our grave Senators, or city magnates ‘sitting down to rest’ in the middle of our street crossings, and so very sticky that there is a considerable rise in real estate each time one lifts one’s feet from the ground.⁶⁷

Following this description of the annual climate of Manitoba, the article said that Manitoba’s climate was particularly well-suited to its “future as a great cereal producing country.” The theory for this was that there was not too much snow, so it melted earlier than it otherwise might, and then heavy spring rains helped the crops to grow well at their roots. Then, the “great heat” in

⁶⁴ “The Climate of Manitoba: Its Bearings upon Settlement and Agriculture,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 7, 1880, page 1.

⁶⁵ “The Climate of Manitoba: Its Bearings upon Settlement and Agriculture,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 7, 1880, page 1.

⁶⁶ “The Climate of Manitoba: Its Bearings upon Settlement and Agriculture,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 7, 1880, page 1.

⁶⁷ “The Climate of Manitoba: Its Bearings upon Settlement and Agriculture,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 7, 1880, page 1.

June and July caused the “stem, already furnished with a very vigorous root, to grow with astonishing rapidity.”⁶⁸ The harvests were almost always dry, which was also an asset. All of these factors together would lead to Manitoba being “pre-eminently the wheat growing portion of the North American continent.”⁶⁹ This optimism challenged the prevailing idea of the prairie as generally unsuited for agriculture, as had been stated in the Hind and Palliser reports in the 1850s.⁷⁰ Gradually, perceptions began to change, but Doug Owram explains that “The basic geographical configuration of the West set out by Palliser and Hind had been modified in some of its details, but as of 1879, its general applicability to the region had not been challenged.”⁷¹ John Macoun’s report would eventually provide an optimistic outlook for prairie agriculture, but his travels did not take place until 1879 and the 1880s.⁷²

These environmental observations were sometimes accompanied by reports of injury or death that occurred. In 1872, the *Manitoban* reported that “A Canadian emigrant named Findlay Booth” was attacked by his cow and “rendered incapable of moving.” Due to it being winter, while laying on the ground, “both his hands and feet were so severely frozen that amputation was considered inevitable.”⁷³ Several weeks after these injuries, Dr. Turver visited and initially amputated both hands and one foot, but “on the following day amputated the remaining foot.”⁷⁴ Despite all of this, Booth was “said to be doing well.”⁷⁵

⁶⁸ “The Climate of Manitoba: Its Bearings upon Settlement and Agriculture,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 7, 1880, page 1.

⁶⁹ “The Climate of Manitoba: Its Bearings upon Settlement and Agriculture,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 7, 1880, page 1.

⁷⁰ Doug Owram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, reprinted 1992), 68.

⁷¹ Owram, *Promise of Eden*, 152.

⁷² Owram, *Promise of Eden*, 152.

⁷³ “Important Operation,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 22, 1872, page 3.

⁷⁴ “Important Operation,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 22, 1872, page 3.

⁷⁵ “Important Operation,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 22, 1872, page 3.

In 1873, the *Free Press* issued a correction for newspapers in the eastern provinces, who were “giving Manitoba credit for the intense suffering and numerous cases of freezing to death, resulting from the severe cold in Minnesota this winter.”⁷⁶ They said there was only one case of death by freezing in Manitoba, and it was “An old man, very feeble, but poorly protected [who] ventured some miles across the open prairie, with a yoke of oxen, to some hay stacks, in one of the heaviest storms of the winter. He lost his way and perished.”⁷⁷ The *Free Press* said that Minnesota had faced much colder temperatures and more severe storms, but was “hundreds of miles to the south.” The additional three deaths reported as being from Manitoba, were actually from Buffalo Coolie, Goose River, in Dakota, and Glyndon, Minnesota.⁷⁸ The article concluded with a request to be more careful, as “Our climate will bear a thorough investigation, but it most respectfully declines being held responsible for that of Minnesota and Dakota.”⁷⁹

A serious blizzard hit Winnipeg in 1876, and according to the *Free Press*, it blew in so quickly that “The fine snow was blinding, so much so that even in places near the business centre of the city, citizens lost their way and were only enabled to find their homes after considerable plodding.” The city had been in fear for a number of hours during and after the storm, with many people reported missing, “many of whom were children.” The police had been “on the alert nearly all the night and succeeded in tracing the lost ones, who in most cases were safely ensconced in the houses of friends, and restored them to their homes.”⁸⁰ Some people had been in danger of death, as “a young daughter of Mr. Hargreaves, deputy postmaster, who became

⁷⁶ “Our Climate,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 1, 1873, page 4.

⁷⁷ “Our Climate,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 1, 1873, page 4.

⁷⁸ “Our Climate,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 1, 1873, page 4.

⁷⁹ “Our Climate,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 1, 1873, page 4.

⁸⁰ “Blizzardy Blizzardness: Old Boreas Let Loose! A Terrible Storm! Lost—And Found Again! Apprehensions for Those on the Plains! Previous Storms in Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 16, 1876, page 5.

bewildered, and got into a lot of bushes on her way home.”⁸¹ She had waited for some time, and two passing men “fortunately heard her cries, and rescued her from her perilous position.” Based on her condition upon arriving home, she would “most assuredly have perished had not assistance been at hand.”⁸² The article contained at least a dozen similar stories of children, people running errands, and “several wayfarers” who found themselves relying on the hospitality of strangers to take them out of the street for the duration of the storm. Even people close to their homes struggled, as “One well-known citizen roamed around within fifty yards of residence, for nearly two hours, and was unable during that time to discover his exact whereabouts, further than that he was out in the storm; and another citizen was five hours in endeavoring to find a house within a block of his own residence.”⁸³

These winter disasters were covered with interest, but in 1873, a *Manitoba Free Press* article claimed that “The probabilities of the recurrence of the various convulsions of nature are being reduced to a science—certainly, though slowly.”⁸⁴ Scientists were collecting data about volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and storms. They said “All nature is found to be the servant of Law, and the student finds herein a clue to the ultimate mastery of all the furies.”⁸⁵ Because of this rule,

It is not too much to suppose that with the rapidly increasing means of observation, and the deep interests taken by governments and scientists every-where in the laws of climate, we may yet learn to calculate with certainty and for years in advance, what years will be dry or wet; *when* we may expect years of storm or cold.⁸⁶

⁸¹ “Blizzardy Blizzardness: Old Boreas Let Loose! A Terrible Storm! Lost—And Found Again! Apprehensions for Those on the Plains! Previous Storms in Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 16, 1876, page 5.

⁸² “Blizzardy Blizzardness: Old Boreas Let Loose! A Terrible Storm! Lost—And Found Again! Apprehensions for Those on the Plains! Previous Storms in Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 16, 1876, page 5.

⁸³ “Blizzardy Blizzardness: Old Boreas Let Loose! A Terrible Storm! Lost—And Found Again! Apprehensions for Those on the Plains! Previous Storms in Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 16, 1876, page 5.

⁸⁴ “Probabilities,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 15, 1873, page 3.

⁸⁵ “Probabilities,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 15, 1873, page 3.

⁸⁶ “Probabilities,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 15, 1873, page 3.

During the 1870s, newspapermen assumed that their readers knew very little about Manitoba's land and weather, and so there was extensive coverage in the newspapers to explain in detail the climate, seasons, and natural features of the environment. This advice and information was intended for readers outside of Manitoba to prepare them, but was also useful for residents of Manitoba who were new immigrants to the region.

Settler Colonial Agriculture

Along with answering questions, prairie settlers also simultaneously worked through their fears and perceptions about their climate and environment and attempted to frame their environment as a promised land. The prairie was often described as an "Edenic paradise," but in the 1870s this had not yet been proven, as settler forms of agriculture were still developing.⁸⁷ Immigration was an important aspect of creating a promised land, specifically the right kind of immigration. Settling the west was "regarded as an essential check upon American expansionist impulses," and a way to increase Canada's role in the British empire, if they could become an "international leader in grain production."⁸⁸ Grain production was important for the nation, but in terms of establishing sovereignty over the region, agriculture was a way of physically asserting dominance and ownership over the land.

Agricultural coverage was a large part of newspapers in the 1870s, but sometimes news about agriculture was directly connected to the discourse about immigration. In 1871, the *Manitoban and Northwest Herald* announced that they would be setting aside space for "agricultural matters." They would "collate matter from the most reliable sources, and we shall

⁸⁷ R. Douglas Francis and Chris Kitzan, "Introduction," in *The Prairie West as Promised Land*, R. Douglas Francis and Chris Kitzan, eds. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007), x-xi.

⁸⁸ Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy, 1540-1997* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 63.

feel obliged of those farmers in the Province, whose experiments are worth recording, will furnish us with them.”⁸⁹ They clarified that they did not want just any writing from farmers, but specifically “results and facts not theories and fine writing. Information fitted to enlighten farmers here and give useful information to intending emigrants is the desideratum.”⁹⁰

While agriculture was not new to Manitoba, the settler colonial model of export-oriented agriculture was of new importance in the region, and newspapermen, reformers, and immigration boosters, (whose identities often overlapped) were invested in proving that this type of agriculture could be successful. This “advice” in newspaper articles and immigration pamphlets was often overly optimistic, and was contradicted by “reputable scientists” who were not employed by the Department of Agriculture or immigration agencies.⁹¹ An American geologist who testified before Congress in 1877 asserted that claims that the proposed agricultural models were not true, and that “agriculture unaided by irrigation would be impossible beyond the hundredth meridian.”⁹² Instead he proposed a model of huge pastures and small (80 acres) irrigated riverside homesteads “as the ideal setup for development of arid lands.”⁹³ This was not received well, as it defied the liberal homestead grid model that was the basis for the expanding settler colonial nations on both sides of the border. This agricultural science was still developing and eventually technology would assist in overcoming these challenges, but during the 1870s, much of the agricultural advice was guesswork or based on “experts” who were not respected scientists.

When reporting on the seeding of 1872, the *Manitoba Liberal* reported that “Farmers are devoting a large area for crops this season in view of the prospective demand next fall owing to

⁸⁹ “The Farm,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, September 23, 1871, page 2.

⁹⁰ “The Farm,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, September 23, 1871, page 2.

⁹¹ Rozum, *Grasslands Grown*, 27.

⁹² Rozum, 28.

⁹³ Rozum, 28.

large immigration.”⁹⁴ One of the main reasons for covering the agricultural yields was also to assess whether or not the Red River region could support immigrants over the winter who would need food. This continued throughout the early part of the 1870s, while settler colonial agriculture was still developing. When reporting on the harvest in 1874, the *Nor’Wester* reported that the grasshoppers had not been as severe as previously feared, which was good news, and they were “likely to have all the grain we require during the coming winter and next spring, and there is nothing we see to prevent a large emigration next summer.”⁹⁵

When reporting on the crop of 1876, the *Free Press* said that yields were looking worse than in some years, and so it was unlikely that Manitoba would have much grain to export. The article connected this to immigration, saying that this problem would likely continue, as “Immigration being bound to keep pace with our increasing grain growing, it may be reasonably deduced that long before we have a surplus for exportation eastward we shall be in possession of competing routes of transportation in the Canadian Pacific Railway to Thunder Bay, and the American railway system.”⁹⁶ By 1877, there was a surplus of grain, as the *Free Press* reported that their calculations suggested that “this will give a surplus, over the requirements of Manitoba and the interior, of at least 400,000 bushels.”⁹⁷ As more grain was produced in the province, the next concerns were how to export it, which required more railways. Gradually, the agricultural prospects of Red River developed, from early concerns that they were not self-sufficient, to being a grain-exporting community, an essential part of the staples-based economy.

By 1879, Manitoba’s potential as a wheat-producing region was making news. The *London Advertiser* reported that “Manitoba is pre-eminently agricultural, and in the near future

⁹⁴ “Seeding,” *Manitoba Liberal*, May 18, 1872, page 2.

⁹⁵ “No Starvation,” *Nor’Wester*, August 24, 1874, page 2.

⁹⁶ “The Crop of 1876,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 16, 1876, page 4.

⁹⁷ “Harvest Home,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 29, 1877, page 4.

will contribute largely to the European market. The most pressing requirements of the country are roads and a proper drainage system.”⁹⁸ Drainage had initially been ignored, but recent years had showed the necessity of some sort of system. The harvest of 1879 would be an average crop and “Notwithstanding the unprecedented wet summer the area under crop this season was fully one-third more than any former year, and will be increased by about one-half next season, owing to the large influx settlers this summer.”⁹⁹ Technology was improving and the “self-binding reaper” was allowing for greater productivity, and there were “a large number of self-binders in this Province, and the demand is still increasing.”¹⁰⁰

Drainage continued to be discussed frequently in the 1879 harvest coverage, with the *Free Press* saying that “a general system of drainage would be conducive and even necessary to the Province’s commercial welfare.”¹⁰¹ They did not think the government had the “means to perform this work, nor if they had would it, perhaps, be desirable if they should undertake it, directly.”¹⁰² They were concerned that if the government made it their project “All sorts of unnecessary drainage would be asked for, and political support would be made the reward of acquiescence.”¹⁰³ If it could not be managed by individuals, or municipalities then perhaps the province was the best option, having a “greater regard to the configuration of the country.”¹⁰⁴ Ultimately they concluded that more study was needed, as most individuals did not have the proper understanding, and “It may prove that in localities, the residents of which are confident drainage is easy, such a result can only be obtained by making the water run up hill.”¹⁰⁵ Further coverage of the harvest and drainage said that in the western part of the province, streams had

⁹⁸ “Manitoba Notes,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 27, 1879, page 1.

⁹⁹ “Manitoba Notes,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 27, 1879, page 1.

¹⁰⁰ “Manitoba Notes,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 27, 1879, page 1.

¹⁰¹ “Drainage,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 5, 1879, page 2.

¹⁰² “Drainage,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 5, 1879, page 2.

¹⁰³ “Drainage,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 5, 1879, page 2.

¹⁰⁴ “Drainage,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 5, 1879, page 2.

¹⁰⁵ “Drainage,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 5, 1879, page 2.

overflowed early in the summer, and “Perhaps a third of the whole was lost this way.”¹⁰⁶ The crops had generally been good, and “nought but good drainage was lacking to have made it much better.”¹⁰⁷ Stunden Bower describes early efforts at Manitoban agriculture and how often it was thwarted by flooding, saying for many settlers, flooding came with fear, as “starvations seemed to be a real risk for many.”¹⁰⁸ Persistent flooding was often one of the first situations that municipalities would attempt to address.¹⁰⁹

Despite the challenges with drainage, the decade ended with hope towards a prosperous future in Manitoba. In 1880, the *Free Press* published an article from the *Philadelphia Press*, which said that “The greatest wheat-growing region in the world is now being opened to settlement. The largest and most productive portion lies within the British Province of Manitoba in North America.”¹¹⁰ The region had recently been made accessible to immigrants, with the resumed construction of the Northern Pacific Railway. When describing the residents of Manitoba, the *Press* said they were “well to-do farmers from the older States, from Iowa, Wisconsin, from Canada, and especially from the best parts of Ontario.”¹¹¹ The article concluded that “The influences of the opening up of this new district cannot but have a most important effect on the supply of the English market. ‘It will likely make the mother country entirely independent of foreign supply.’ It is evident that our superiority as a grain-growing country is likely to be seriously threatened by the rich prairie wheat lands in North-western British

¹⁰⁶ “The Harvest,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 21, 1879, page 3.

¹⁰⁷ “The Harvest,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 21, 1879, page 3.

¹⁰⁸ Stunden Bower, *Wet Prairie*, 26.

¹⁰⁹ Stunden Bower, *Wet Prairie*, 38.

¹¹⁰ “The Manitoba Wheat Fields: The Grain-Producing Prairies of the British North-West,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 4, 1879, page 1.

¹¹¹ “The Manitoba Wheat Fields: The Grain-Producing Prairies of the British North-West,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 4, 1879, page 1.

America.”¹¹² Manitoba’s agricultural success was praised, but also began to spark worries that the North American market would have to adjust, as the American grain would have competition in the “English market.”

When promoting Manitoba’s agricultural success as part of the Manitoba Exhibit of 1879, which showed a sampling of Manitoba goods in Ottawa, London, Hamilton, and Toronto, Alexander Begg explained to impressed onlookers that “the samples were not fair specimens of Manitoba products, as in most cases, they were gathered at least three weeks before maturity in order to reach Ottawa in time for the exhibition.”¹¹³ The list of products displayed included produce, locally milled flour, furs, bricks, clay, pottery, 16 soil samples, and “a large number of fancy articles too numerous to mention” as many ladies “contributed some fancy work which were very much admired.”¹¹⁴ Manitoba was selling itself abroad as a producer of agricultural goods, as well as a place that already had several markers of “civilized settlement,” like mills and women with enough leisure time to produce “fancy work.”

Grasshoppers and other “Disasters”

As agricultural methods shifted from the earlier Red River agriculture practiced by the Métis and others to the new settler colonial system, settlers justified removing Indigenous peoples from land and dividing it up for settler use. These justifications were based in myths about “Indians’ apparent ignorance of man’s obligation to subdue the earth. The Indians displayed no visible evidence of any degree of mastery over the environment; they appeared to

¹¹² “The Manitoba Wheat Fields: The Grain-Producing Prairies of the British North-West,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 4, 1879, page 1.

¹¹³ *The Manitoba Exhibit of 1879* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Free Press Steam Printer, 1880), <http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/888.html>, 9.

¹¹⁴ *The Manitoba Exhibit of 1879* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Free Press Steam Printer, 1880), <http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/888.html>, 7-8.

be, not in control of, but at the mercy of natural forces.”¹¹⁵ Despite this, settlers found themselves at the mercy of natural disasters and phenomena.

Settler identity was mythologized as one of “suppressing fire,” and, as Julie Courtwright wrote, “By controlling fires, both actual and symbolic, Euro-American settlers fused images of this environmental force with their image of themselves and their rightful possession of the land.”¹¹⁶ These ideas were largely rooted in a fundamental misunderstanding of Indigenous practices of burning. William Cronon explains the ecological impacts of regular burning as important part of forest maintenance, as it increased the return of nutrients to the soil, and “allowed more light to reach the forest floor” which increased the growth of gatherable foods.¹¹⁷ Burning also destroyed plant diseases and pests, as well as fleas. The burning also influenced game to live in certain areas, for the “fresh and sweet pasture” that sprang up after the burn, raising the “the total herbivorous food supply,” as well as creating larger populations of game. He argues that by this process of burning, Indigenous peoples were not just hunting the surplus, but were “harvesting a foodstuff which they had consciously been instrumental in creating.”¹¹⁸ This form of animal husbandry and forest maintenance was not recognized by settlers, and burning was seen as a sign of “idleness” and simply trying to clear brush from paths. The arrival of settlers and domesticated animals and barns and fences led to a distrust of fires, as they were seen as “uncontrolled,” and a risk to property damage. Settler societies did engage in burning, such as in New England, when they could sell potash and charcoal for a profit while clearing

¹¹⁵ Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), 16.

¹¹⁶ Julie Courtwright, “‘When We First Come Here It All Looked like Prairie Land Almost’: Prairie Fire and Plains Settlement,” *Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Summer, 2007): 179.

¹¹⁷ William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983 and 2003), 50.

¹¹⁸ Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 50-51.

fields for planting.¹¹⁹ Around the Great Lakes, fires also became more common as lumber companies engaged in commercial clearcutting. With no tall parent trees to release seeds into the sunny, fresh soil after a burn, forests did not come back.¹²⁰ Settler presence decreased Indigenous burning practices, but increased other forms of fire, not to mention fires caused by carelessness.

In Manitoba water was a more common concern than fire in most years, but fire was still an ever-present risk, both in town and on the open prairie. Winnipeg residents were cautioned to get some sort of fire protection, as wooden houses built close together posed a fire risk.¹²¹ At some points of the year, fire was a real threat to Winnipeg, with one newspaper reporting that “the continued dry weather seems to induce prairie fires, and a large one is raging, apparently a few miles to the west of the city, to-day.”¹²² This article does not mention if any of these fires were the intentional fires occasionally lit on the prairie that had become out of control because of the dry weather, or if they were started accidentally.

The *Select Standing Committee on Immigration and Colonization* report discussed prairie fires and the impact of fires on the availability of wood for settlers. After telling a story about two ministers who had set the prairie on fire while cooking their breakfast, the witness said that “It is principally white people who do this, stopping on the prairies to cook their meals. I do not think the Indians set fire to the prairies as much as has been represented. I think this is done by reckless travellers.”¹²³ Another witness said that his “observation has been that Indians are very

¹¹⁹ Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 118.

¹²⁰ William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), 202.

¹²¹ “Fire Protection,” *Nor'Wester*, August 31, 1874, page 2.

¹²² “Local and Provincial,” *Manitoba Free Press*, October 10, 1874, page 5.

¹²³ James Trow, *Select Standing Committee on Immigration and Colonization* (Ottawa: MacLean, Roger & Co, 1877), <http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/799.html>, 184.

careful in this respect,” while the Métis “who travel in trains, and the white men, are very reckless.”¹²⁴

That same committee addressed the concerns around standing water, saying that while the country was “low and swampy,” the land was “easily drained by running a plough across the fields” and that the water was carried away. This prompted the observation that it was good that the water was carried to brooks and creeks, as “If it was just carried to swamps, that would just make the country more unhealthy than if it was carried to brooks.”¹²⁵ Standing water was a concern because of the prevalence of flooding on the wet prairie, not just for health, but also for property.

Floods were typically a seasonal occurrence, and each spring brought new speculation about how bad the flood would be this year. Not only was the flooding a risk for property and roads, but also for bridges, which were a relatively new investment in the 1870s. Bridges allowed easy transportation from one settlement or fort to another, and without them, trade slowed down because of the need for ferries, or it was rerouted to alternate bridges. Newspapers urged the authorities and local people to be vigilant and to act to avoid the destruction of bridges.¹²⁶ Each year brought new speculation about the flood, usually simply through asking people who had been living in the area for a while, although some felt that “the wise old parties” made the same predictions every year.¹²⁷ The complications of flooding were often less about land and property than concern about the mail delivery and trade. In 1873, it was reported as being stopped for several weeks, because of a few small creeks that had blocked a road.¹²⁸ In 1874, a brief note in

¹²⁴ James Trow, *Select Standing Committee on Immigration and Colonization* (Ottawa: MacLean, Roger & Co, 1877), <http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/799.html>, 184.

¹²⁵ James Trow, *Select Standing Committee on Immigration and Colonization* (Ottawa: MacLean, Roger & Co, 1877), <http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/799.html>, 153.

¹²⁶ “Indications of a Spring Freshet,” *New Nation*, March 4, 1870, page 2.

¹²⁷ “The Spring Flood: To Be or Not to Be?” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 22, 1873, page 5.

¹²⁸ “Mail Stoppage,” *Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, May 3, 1873, page 2.

the *Manitoba Free Press* announced that the river was open to navigate and that the water was “remarkably low this spring.”¹²⁹ One update, after lamenting the state of the roads and the “baptism” the grasshoppers were receiving from the rain, was worded “Rain! Rain! Rain! Mud! Mud! Mud! And corresponding depression of spirits and abatement in business is what’s the matter these days.”¹³⁰

As the years passed, perspectives on flooding and access water began to shape and influence decisions about land. In 1876, a letter to the editor entitled “Opening of Rivers,” a “well-informed correspondent” wrote about how ice jams formed and what caused the worst types of flooding.¹³¹ Later in that same year, the heavy rains caused more flooding and correspondence from the Palestine region included updates than many settlers were looking for new locations for their land, as so much of it was under water.¹³² They were also attempting to build bridges to try and increase the navigability of some areas. The following year brought the flood to Winnipeg, with the newspaper reporting that many houses were surrounded by water, and that on Notre Dame street there was so much water that people were amusing themselves by “rafting on sections of floating sidewalk.”¹³³ The school was also closed down because “Portage avenue resembled two canals.”¹³⁴ These events were not uncommon, and in 1884 it was reported that there were proposals to “cut a ditch around the city” because it cost the city “thousands of dollars annually for damages and labor arising from this surplus water.”¹³⁵

Grasshoppers were the threat to settlers and agricultural success that received the most newspaper coverage during the 1870s, although for the first few years they were not seen as a

¹²⁹ “Local and Provincial,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 2, 1874, page 5.

¹³⁰ “Local and Provincial,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 5, 1875, page 5.

¹³¹ “Opening of Rivers,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 1, 1876, page 5.

¹³² “Palestine,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 24, 1876, page 8.

¹³³ “Another Freshet,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 30, 1877, page 2.

¹³⁴ “Another Freshet,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 30, 1877, page 2.

¹³⁵ “Untitled,” *Portage la Prairie Weekly Tribune*, May 2, 1884, page 1.

large problem. An interview with a early Canadian settler, Kenneth McKenzie, published in 1874 asked about the problem with grasshoppers and he said that there had not been any issues in the four years he lived in Manitoba.¹³⁶ He said that “In 1868 they destroyed all from Portage at that time to Fort Garry, and all settled. This year they destroyed all down on Red River or around Fort Garry, and partially up the Assiniboine River, up to Poplar Point, but no farther.”¹³⁷ He clarified that “their ravages are partial. Some may suffer, while others escape. They have only made three clear sweeps, I am told, since 1812.”¹³⁸ Most settlers had arrived to Manitoba after the 1868 grasshoppers, and so the plagues of the mid-1870s were new to the majority of the white homesteaders.

While grasshoppers were briefly mentioned early in the decade, in 1874 and 1875, newspapers were filled with articles addressing grasshoppers. By later in the 1870s, grasshoppers did not appear to make a major impact in the newspapers, certainly not compared to the 1874-75 years. In 1872, the presence of grasshoppers was noted, and “In many quarters, the farmers have slashed down their crops green in order to ensure at least food for their cattle, and the loss thus entailed must be enormous.”¹³⁹ They wrote that “Hundreds of millions can be seen at a single glance and when it is taken into account that three of them can do a moderately sized cabbage leaf in a night, some idea may be formed of the destruction they are capable of doing.”¹⁴⁰

In 1873 the *Manitoban* addressed the farmers, saying that “We trust that the experience of the past summer will show our farmers the folly of neglecting to put in crops on account of

¹³⁶ *Province of Manitoba: Information for Intending Emigrants* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1874), <http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/690.html>, 10.

¹³⁷ *Province of Manitoba: Information for Intending Emigrants* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1874), <http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/690.html>, 10.

¹³⁸ *Province of Manitoba: Information for Intending Emigrants* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1874), <http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/690.html>, 10.

¹³⁹ “The Grasshoppers,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, August 17, 1872, page 2.

¹⁴⁰ “The Grasshoppers,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, August 17, 1872, page 2.

grasshoppers.”¹⁴¹ Based on the previous summer, the “loss from the ravages of the destroying insect has been less to individual farmers” than to those who neglected to plant. The logic was that “In cases where fields have been sown close to each other the grasshoppers have had greater scope to spread themselves, and the loss to any one particular spot has been less than where a field of grain stood alone by itself. In the latter case the total destruction of the crop has been the rule, whereas in the former only a partial loss has been sustained.”¹⁴² The article concluded that “We hope they never will come again, but if they do, don’t let them frighten our farmers so completely as to prevent their sowing.”¹⁴³ Advice for how to fight the grasshopper suggested that the soil should be turned over as soon as the grasshoppers laid their eggs. A deep layer of soil “will crush the eggs, and thus destroy the spring crop of grasshoppers.”¹⁴⁴

In 1874, the *Free Press* stated that “Total destruction of the growing crops, in this Province, by the grasshoppers now seems imminent. It is but little more than a week since the pests came within the boundaries of Manitoba but already they have destroyed by far the greater portion of the growing crops; and still the work goes on.”¹⁴⁵ They said “Rarely does such a severe calamity fall so suddenly upon a community, as we have been met with by these grasshopper visitations. A few days ago, and every foot of cultivated land in the Province was covered with a luxuriant growth; the crops never in the history of the country, were more promising; and never was there so large an area under crop.”¹⁴⁶ The grasshoppers apparently came from two sides, from the west and the south, which made them worse than in previous years.

¹⁴¹ “To Our Farmers,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 18, 1873, page 2.

¹⁴² “To Our Farmers,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 18, 1873, page 2.

¹⁴³ “To Our Farmers,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 18, 1873, page 2.

¹⁴⁴ “Shall We Starve? Grasshoppers, Crops, and Flatboats,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 19, 1873, page 5.

¹⁴⁵ “The Grasshoppers!” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 25, 1874, page 4.

¹⁴⁶ “The Grasshoppers!” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 25, 1874, page 4.

Within two days, the outcome no longer seemed so dire, with the *Nor'Wester* reporting that after they had looked through all the regional reports, “we are pleased to find that we can hold a more cheerful opinion of the prospect than seems to now be generally entertained.”¹⁴⁷ The grasshoppers were predicted to be moving quickly, based on reports from other regions, so the damage was expected to be manageable. Looking for the silver lining, they said that “Had the Dominion Government fulfilled their [immigration] pledges to this province, more grain would have been required, but their treachery and the grasshoppers combined, have about equalized matters [...] so that our population is not sufficiently increased to cause us to apprehend a demand that a half-crop will not supply.”¹⁴⁸ The *Free Press* confirmed that the damage was not too severe, but that there were some settlements “nearly cleaned out, and these are, in the main, the most ill prepared to stand it, being the newest in the country.”¹⁴⁹

A few days later, the *Nor'Wester* reported that “A special service of humiliation and prayer on account of the grasshoppers will be held in St. John’s Cathedral this evening at 7:30 p.m. His Lordship the Bishop of Ruperts Land will deliver a sermon on the occasion.”¹⁵⁰ Apart from the special service, they also said that in many regions the grasshoppers had moved on. They said that “First rumors proclaimed all the crops entirely ruined, but careful inquiries show that the damage is not half so bad as was anticipated so that [...] our settlers have been far more frightened than hurt.”¹⁵¹

As August ended, the *Nor'Wester* connected the grasshopper damage to the larger immigration situation, writing that “Notwithstanding the ravages of the grasshoppers our Province will show a good crop and our farmers will not be losers” and that “This year has

¹⁴⁷ “The Grasshopper ‘Scare’,” *Nor'Wester*, July 27, 1874, page 2.

¹⁴⁸ “The Grasshopper ‘Scare’,” *Nor'Wester*, July 27, 1874, page 2.

¹⁴⁹ “The Grasshopper Visitation,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 1, 1874, page 4.

¹⁵⁰ “Local News,” *Nor'Wester*, August 3, 1874, page 3.

¹⁵¹ “The Grasshoppers,” *Nor'Wester*, August 3, 1874, page 3.

proved that in a very short time we will be obliged to export grain, and this fact will prove to the government the necessity for giving us an outlet for the purpose.”¹⁵² There was still no railway, so there was no way to ship surplus grain which would inevitably be produced in a better year. They concluded that “The grasshopper visitation will prove to the world our vast fertile resources [...] In a few words, out of even good often comes,” as the governments would surely be incentivized to build the railway now.¹⁵³ As so frequently happened in Manitoban newspapers, current events were connected to larger concerns about immigration and Manitoba’s prospects as a future where it was connected to the larger settler colonial world.

In 1875 the grasshoppers were back. In May, as the grasshoppers began swarming, the *Free Press* reported that the grasshoppers may be worse this year than previously, and that this was primarily a concern for new immigrants, who would not have friends to rely on them, as they were still recovering from the previous year’s grasshoppers.¹⁵⁴ In June, as the grasshoppers arrived and hatched in large numbers, the *Free Press* reported that in many regions planting had been well underway. In the Scratching River region more grain had been sown than in previous years. They wrote that “The Mennonites in this neighbourhood do not fear the hoppers; and have sown large crops of wheat, oats, barley, peas, and potatoes.”¹⁵⁵ There was not quite the panic of the previous year, but the *Standard* still concluded that “we cannot help believing that when the winter approaches it will find at least some of the settlers in a destitute condition.”¹⁵⁶

Connecting the grasshoppers to immigration, the *Free Press* wrote that “Ordinarily, we should hope to see every season bring a large immigration to this Province. But the prospects are such, that for this year, in candour, we must say we believe the interests of the country will be

¹⁵² “Have the Grasshoppers Injured Our Prospects,” *Nor’Wester*, August 31, 1874, page 2.

¹⁵³ “Have the Grasshoppers Injured Our Prospects,” *Nor’Wester*, August 31, 1874, page 2.

¹⁵⁴ “The Grasshoppers,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 29, 1875, page 3.

¹⁵⁵ “Grasshopper Intelligence,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 5, 1875, page 5.

¹⁵⁶ “The Grasshopper Devastation,” *The Standard*, July 10, 1875, page 2.

much served by a very slight, or no, increase to our present population.”¹⁵⁷ They clarified that “this argument will not apply against the immigration of people who have sufficient means to carry them over for a year or a year and a half without depending at all upon on hiring their labor,” but these were relatively few of the immigrant class coming to Manitoba.¹⁵⁸

Assessing the situation in July, the *Manitoban* said that in some regions, the crops had failed in two or even three successive years, and “during that time our settlers have, for the most part, expended all the means they had in hand, without replenishment.”¹⁵⁹ They suggested that “the Dominion Government might make a direct loan, at interest, to the needy settlers upon the security of their lands” especially if there was not going to be a lot of public works investments and no opportunities for jobs in construction or on railways for the season.¹⁶⁰

In August the *Free Press* reported that the Minister of Immigration was coming to Manitoba to “for the purpose of ascertaining the necessities of the settlers, with the view of furnishing Government aid.”¹⁶¹ The *Nor’Wester* was upset that the province was in need of aid, saying that “Had the Ottawa ministry adopted a fair and liberal policy, with respect to Manitoba, we should not have been in need of any assistance at all, in spite of grasshoppers or other drawbacks to which our people may have been exposed during the last few years.”¹⁶² They encouraged people to find a different solution than accepting government aid and looking needy to outsiders, writing:

It would be far more prudent for us to subscribe amongst ourselves to assist those men, chiefly poor settlers who have been brought in by injudicious immigrant agents, and who have started farming without being possessed of the requisite means to do so properly,

¹⁵⁷ “Immigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 26, 1875, page 4.

¹⁵⁸ “Immigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 26, 1875, page 4.

¹⁵⁹ “The Situation,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, July 10, 1875, page 4.

¹⁶⁰ “The Situation,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, July 10, 1875, page 4.

¹⁶¹ “Aid to the Grasshopper Sufferers,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 7, 1875, page 4.

¹⁶² “How to Help Us,” *Nor’Wester*, August 16, 1875, page 2.

than to go in, *forma pauperis* to the outside world, begging it to come to our aid as though we were a race of mendicants, and paupers just come, out of a parish union.¹⁶³

The aid was debated and discussed over the next months, with little communication from the federal government.

The stories of individual farmers and their successes were an important part of newspaper coverage, and in some ways, just as reliable as the false “science” promoted by the immigration pamphlets. One example of a local farmer was Mr. Nimmons, who farmed at Little Stony Mountain. He arrived in Manitoba from England in 1869 and came back with his family in the spring of 1870, “when the Riel rebellion was at its height.”¹⁶⁴ He farmed within six miles of Winnipeg, and his land “furnishes no wood fit for fuel.”¹⁶⁵ Initially, incoming Ontarians “laughed at his attempting to farm where there was no prospect of getting wood near, and they themselves went miles west or south, near wooded sections.”¹⁶⁶ He now had a 20 acre wood lot in Rockwood, and was quite successful. He gave tips for fighting grasshoppers, saying that they “may be met and conquered by hard work and common-sense means,” like ploughing their eggs underground and burning.¹⁶⁷ Manitoba was hardly the only place periodically plagued by grasshoppers on the prairies, but as most of the residents were not locals, for many of them this seemed like an insurmountable hurdle on land that was already a challenging environment.

The ability of immigrants to Manitoba to achieve agricultural success and master the challenging climate and environment was directly connected to assumptions about racial superiority. It was also a necessary requirement for establishing settler colonial authority over the land and geography in Manitoba. Immigrants and settlers needed to show that their system of

¹⁶³ “Grasshoppers and Dominion Government Aid,” *Nor’Wester*, August 16, 1875, page 2.

¹⁶⁴ “A Successful Pioneer,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 11, 1875, page 2.

¹⁶⁵ “A Successful Pioneer,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 11, 1875, page 2.

¹⁶⁶ “A Successful Pioneer,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 11, 1875, page 2.

¹⁶⁷ “A Successful Pioneer,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 11, 1875, page 2.

occupying and using land was successful. Absent from most of the news coverage and promotional materials was the perspective and knowledge of Indigenous peoples who had navigated the environment for much longer. During the 1870s the agricultural potential of the Canadian prairie was unproven, and so much of the advice was based in unscientific optimism to try and promote immigration to the new extension of the Canadian nation and British empire.

Chapter 5

Métis Identity and French Immigration

The process of establishing Manitoba as a settler colonial province that fit into the larger British-Canadian empire was challenged by the linguistic, cultural, and racial diversity of the existing population. The French Métis were seen as a direct opposition to the settler colonial project because of their association with Louis Riel, and for being too French, too Catholic, and too Indigenous to neatly assimilate into British-Canadian structures. In addition to the cultural and linguistic tensions, the promises for land and the early political representation set out in the Manitoba Act meant that the Métis were a direct opposition to non-Indigenous settlers and the nation-building goals of the new immigrants and settlers. While the non-Indigenous settlers worked to remove the French Métis from land and power, local leaders like Joseph Royal, politician and editor of *Le Métis*, looked to other French-speaking populations with the hope that encouraging their immigration to Manitoba would maintain some level of political balance. Immigration was both a force working against the Métis nation and their ability to maintain their homeland, and, if French immigration plans could be successful, a bolstering force to slow down the demographic shift.

Discussion of Métis identity, politics, language, and race were all present in immigration discourse in Manitoba throughout the 1870s, which is unsurprising considering that the decade began with English and French Métis as easily eighty percent of the census population.¹ Definitions of “Métis” as a nation are usually political and contested, and this was no less true in the 1870s than today. The ethnogenesis of the Métis nation can be traced through numerous backgrounds of both First Nations and European fur traders, but for the purposes of this examination of Red River in the 1870s, we are referring to the English and French speaking

¹ D. N. Sprague, *Canada and the Métis, 1869-1885* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988), 75.

Métis who resided full time at the agricultural settlements at the Red River, and the “predominantly French, Cree/Ojibwa, and Michif-speaking Plains Métis settlements of buffalo hunters and provisioners who split their residence between the colony and the plains.”² Due to the primary sources used, namely the newspapers produced in Winnipeg and St. Boniface, there is an unavoidable bias given to the Métis voices who lived full time at Red River. It is important to acknowledge that the Métis nation was defined by mobility, geography, and the “Métis conceptualization of family” that allowed for a unique national identity in a range of settings beyond the Red River Settlement.³

Métis Identity and Race

Categories of race, especially those created and regulated within a settler colonial nation which divides peoples up so as to lessen its treaty obligations, will often fail to grasp the complexities of Indigenous identity. Robert Innes explains that First Nations and Métis have interconnected histories and family relationships, and that while often the father’s identity is emphasized (i.e.. English or French Métis), other scholars like Brenda Macdougall have explained the importance of Indigenous women in forming cultural practices.⁴ Innes suggests that focus on the paternal culture is due to scholars’ tendencies to “highlight the cultural differences between First Nations people and Métis people,” which is part of an “implicitly racial view.”⁵ This emphasis on distinction between First Nations and Métis is also tied to the

² Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall, *Contours of a People: Métis Family, Mobility, and History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 24.

³ St-Onge, Podruchny, and Macdougall, 12.

⁴ Robert Alexander Innes, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People: Contemporary Kinship and Cowessess First Nation* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013), 85.

⁵ Innes, 87.

differences in legal status under the *Indian Act* and the *Manitoba Act*, which were imposed by a settler government, not by people themselves.⁶

Chris Andersen argues that a better way to understand Métis nationhood is as connected to a shared Indigenous identity that predates (and contradicts) the settler state's imposed claims. It is a shared political designation with internal, intersocial, and nation-to-nation relationships and practices.⁷ Added to this is the history of Métis origins and “associated historical power,” where Métis characteristics “clashed with European, state-based understandings of nationalism, particularly in relation to kinship.”⁸ Essentially, this identity allows for the consideration of Red River Métis history and the importance of the Red River Resistance and Batoche, without ignoring twentieth century Métis organizing and evolutions.⁹ Important to both this understanding of identity and to the contents of this chapter, the 2013 Supreme Court decision in *Manitoba Métis Federation Inc. v. Canada (Attorney General)*, found that Canada “failed to act in a way that upheld the honour of the Crown.”¹⁰ Jean Teillet described the decision as “a complete vindication” for the Métis arguments that Canada had not honoured their treaty claims.¹¹ Essentially, the negotiations are ongoing between the Métis nation and Canada.

With this understanding that Métis identity is complicated and extends beyond Red River, the focus of this chapter presents a far more limited examination of Métis identity and land claims, since the focus is Manitoba in the 1870s. In particular, this chapter addresses the loss of the Métis homeland and the various efforts to preserve language and religious representation by encouraging French immigration. This is not a thorough examination of the

⁶ Innes, 87.

⁷ Chris Andersen, *“Métis”: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 91-92.

⁸ Andersen, 92.

⁹ Andersen, 116.

¹⁰ Andersen, 117-118.

¹¹ Jean Teillet, *The North-West is Our Mother: The Story of Louis Riel's People* (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers, 2019), 466.

Métis nation during the 1870s, but rather how the push for immigration and settler colonialism impacted the Métis, and how the Métis were understood in the newspapers and promotional materials for immigrants.

Manitoba began the 1870s with an English and French Métis population, living amongst a small English-speaking settler population and many Indigenous nations. By the end of the decade, demographics were shifting, and the influx of English Protestant immigrants had made English-speaking settlers the political (and sometimes the actual) majority. Figure 5.1 depicts the school districts in Manitoba in 1890, which is outside of the decade discussed here. This visual representation of the number of Catholic and Protestant schools in each district provides a helpful visual for not just the religious demographics, but also the linguistic make up of Manitoba. While there certainly were English Protestant Métis communities, as well as English-speaking Catholics, the communities with the highest number of blue rings on this map were the historically French Métis communities, in addition to the communities with French immigration.

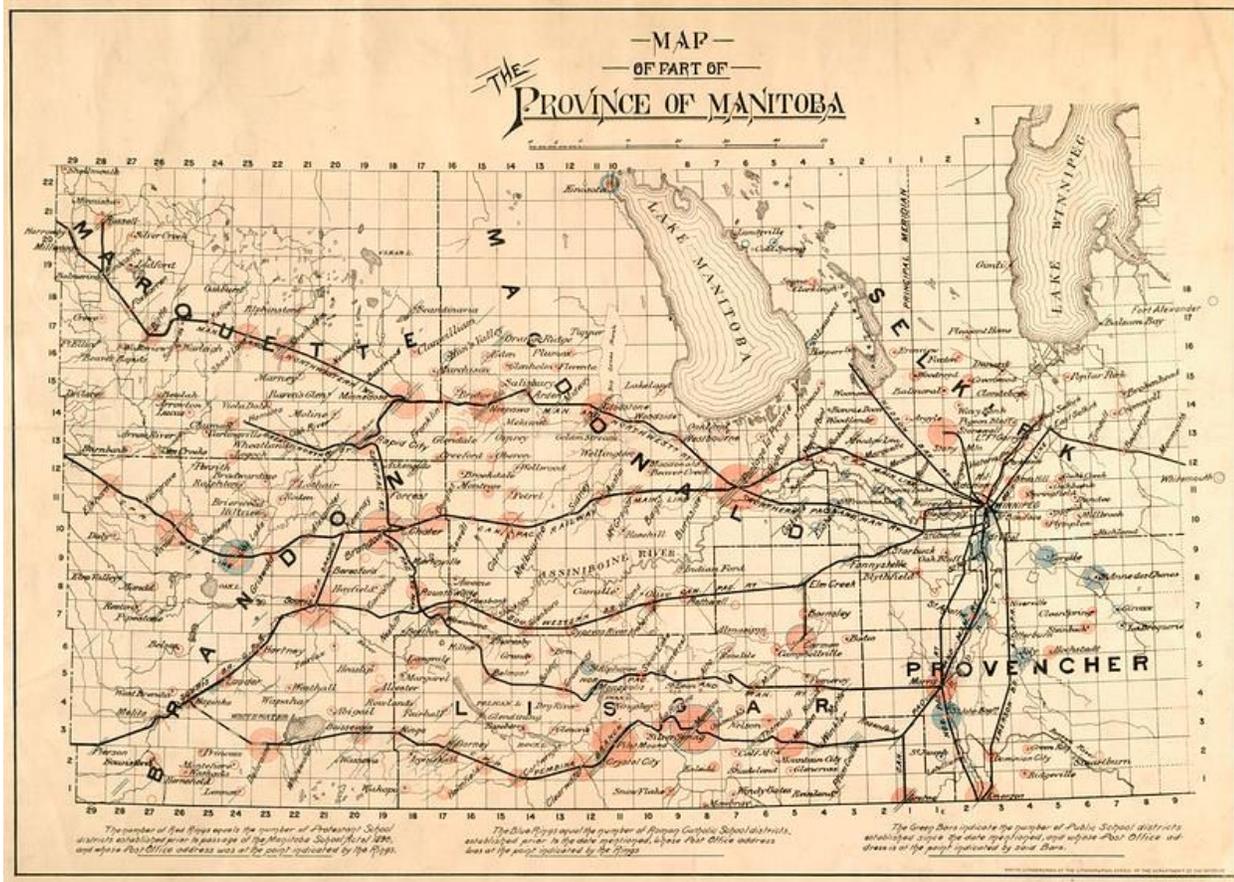


Figure 5.1 - Map of part of the Province of Manitoba [Protestant and Roman Catholic School Districts] [map], Canada: Department of the Interior, 1890. Accessed via <https://www.flickr.com/photos/manitobamaps/2105527867/>.

The French Métis community also faced the most direct and immediate backlash from settlers and the military in the 1870s as a result of their association with Louis Riel. The Reign of Terror, which began in 1870, acted as a sundering event. In an attempt to avoid the occupying army, “Social connections with relatives and friends in other parishes were severed.”¹² The English and Métis were isolated from each other, as the French population was not able to cross

¹² Jean Teillet, *The North-West is Our Mother*, 242.

the river to Fort Garry safely.¹³ The interconnected Métis community of Red River spent years isolated in fear, avoiding retaliatory violence.

When analyzing the concept of “nation” and how Métis understandings of this term may have applied, Jean Teillet says:

Our modern understanding of a nation is likely not what the Métis meant when they proclaimed themselves to be one in 1815-16. They certainly did not mean a nation-state. They did not assert an exclusive prior claim to the territory, since they did not exclude the claims of the Indians. They also did not mean to exclude the fur traders or the *Canadiens*. [...] They had one institution at the time, the family. What these interconnected Métis families had in common was a national goal and they used a combination for force and negotiation to obtain it.¹⁴

Teillet takes the claim further and says that “If we accept the notion that neither the English nor the French [Canadians] were nations in 1867, then it may be accurate to suggest that the Métis Nation was, in fact, the only nation- English, French or Aboriginal- that participated in the negotiated founding of Canada.”¹⁵ The Métis nation was created from a combination of these identities, French, English, and Indigenous, and thus did not neatly fit into the political, religious, and linguistic categories the Canadian (Ontario) settlers tried to apply onto Red River. This tension between Métis as a complex, family-based Indigenous national identity and the settler colonial understandings of belonging forms the basis of much of the English-language newspaper coverage.

Further complicating Métis identity is the work of Timothy Foran, who examines the role of Catholic missionaries in attempting to define “Métis” as a term. He argues that “Catholic missionaries did not simply discover and describe a Métis population, but rather [they] played a

¹³ Teillet, *The North-West is Our Mother*, 243.

¹⁴ Jean Teillet, “The Métis Nation: The Only Nation – English, French or Aboriginal- That Actually Participated in the Founding of Canada,” *Association for Canadian Studies* (2016), 15.

¹⁵ Jean Teillet, “The Métis Nation,” 15.

critical role in its conceptual production and in the delineation of its collective characteristics.”¹⁶ Prior to the 1870s, “Oblates did not begin differentiating between a local *Métis* population and an outlying *sauvage* population” until the community had developed “a degree of proficiency in French.”¹⁷ Before the 1870s, the missionaries used “*Métis*” to refer to “an Indigenous collectivity defined by its common use of French and by its common profession of Catholicism,” but in later decades the term came to apply to “the segment of their flock that was most vulnerable” to the corrupting influence of modern society and settlers, largely due to *Métis* exclusion from the treaty and reserve system, which did in fact leave their land base vulnerable in many instances.¹⁸ The strict definition of “*Métis*” as related to proficiency in French reflects the settler understanding of the limitations of *Métis* nationhood, and can explain some of the language used in the Manitoban newspapers, where “French,” “Catholic,” and “*Métis*” are often used interchangeably for anyone who supported Louis Riel or opposed Canadian colonization. Settlers placed the focus of national identity on spoken language or religious or political affiliation, none of which could effectively convey the complexity of an Indigenous concept of nation based on geography, mobility, and family.

Métis identity was observed in great detail in the immigration pamphlets and promotional materials. While the newspapers for the local audience did not focus on observing the *Métis* as outsiders, immigration pamphlets intended for outsiders made that a priority. Alexander Begg’s novel frames this description through the eyes of the fictional Meredith family, who first notice *Métis* on their journey to Red River, saying that they “observed a number of peculiarly dressed men” and “all of them had sashes around their waists, some of which were of the brightest hues.

¹⁶ Timothy P. Foran, *Defining Métis: Catholic Missionaries and the Idea of Civilization in Northwestern Saskatchewan, 1845-1898* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2017), 4.

¹⁷ Foran, 118.

¹⁸ Foran, 117.

A few sported leggings ornamented with bead work. One or two wore long blue coats, with bright buttons [...] most of them had moccasins on their feet.”¹⁹ Observing their physical appearance, Begg wrote “they shewed great strength and activity of body; their features were chiefly dark, but regular—mild and pleasant in their appearance. As a rule, they were what would be considered handsome, although many of them gave indisputable signs of Indian origin.”²⁰ He then clarified, that this was less true for “those claiming Scottish descent, as in these the Celtic characteristics seem to pre-dominate” and “The French appear to resemble the Indian more than either the English or Scotch settlers” although it was difficult to “distinguish their nationality” until speaking with them and hearing an accent.²¹

When George Wade, the protagonist of Begg’s novel, stayed with the Stone family, he met their daughter, Nina Stone, who was “a half-breed girl” and “a perfect lady in every respect.”²² Begg wrote that “She had never had the opportunity of seeing much of what is called society, still she possessed that innate sense of what is maidenly and proper in one of her sex, that one could not help admiring and even loving her for her gentleness and goodness.”²³ These fictionalized narratives presented the Métis at Red River as “others” who occupied a unique place as not quite Indigenous and not quite settlers.

In a lecture delivered by Captain Nesbitt Willoughby Wallace, who was part of the Red River Expeditionary Force, Louis Riel was described as a “French Canadian adventurer” and there was little attention paid to his Métis identity.²⁴ Justus Alonzo Griffin’s published “diary”

¹⁹ Alexander Begg, *Dot It Down”: A Story of Life in the North-West* (Toronto: Hunter, Rose & Company, 1871), 47-48.

²⁰ Alexander Begg, *Dot It Down*,” 48.

²¹ Alexander Begg, *Dot It Down*,” 48.

²² Alexander Begg, *Dot It Down*,” 333-334.

²³ Alexander Begg, *Dot It Down*,” 333-334.

²⁴ Nesbit Willoughby Wallace, *The Rebellion in the Red River Settlement, 1869-70, Its Causes and Suppression: A Lecture Delivered at Clifton, October 25th, 1871* (Barnstaple, England: Henry T. Cook, 1872), <http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/611.html>, 5

from the Second Expedition observed First Nations and Métis on his journey to Red River, and wrote,

a number of Indians, half-breeds and French Canadian voyageurs came into the shanty, then ensued a babel which both interested and amused me, for while the soldiers were talking English, the French Canadians and half-breeds were conversing with each other and the cook of the shanty in French, and the Indians were using their own language, which I believe was Iroquois.²⁵

In these two accounts from soldiers who encountered Métis at Red River, language became the defining trait for Riel and the Métis, specifically the use of French, although Griffin does hint at the multilingual connections with his observations of voyageurs who employed a combination of English, French, and Indigenous languages.

Liberal Member of Parliament James Trow, in his immigration pamphlet, shared his opinions on the failure of the scrip system, and said that “The French half-breeds are as a rule not successful agriculturalists, being more inclined to trading and hunting. They are very hospitable, social, light-hearted and merry, they prefer a roving life, and are very anxious to sell their eligible locations at reduced prices. The Scotch half-breeds cling with greater tenacity to their homes.”²⁶ This pamphlet was published in 1878, and so any observations about French or English Métis at Red River should be understood within the context of the Reign of Terror and the varying levels of violence facing the English and French Métis communities. As Teillet explains, the French Métis became the main targets of the settler violence and “Though [the English Métis] were held to be inferior because of their Indigenous blood, they were more acceptable because they were Protestant, more invested in agriculture and spoke English. The

²⁵ Justus Alonzo Griffin, *From Toronto to Fort Garry: An Account of the Second Expedition to Red River: Diary of a Private Soldier* (Hamilton, Ont.: Evening Times Office, 1872), 13.

²⁶ James Trow, *Manitoba and the North west Territories* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1878), 17.

French Métis had three strikes against them. They were ‘too Indian, too Catholic and too French.’”²⁷

An 1880 pamphlet by Charles Acton Burrows described society in Canada as “less marked by the distinctions of caste than in the Mother Country; while there is at the same time a careful preservation of those traditions which give the general features to English society which are found the world over.”²⁸ Specifically addressing the North-West and Manitoba, Burrows wrote that the “early settlers [...] were principally French and English half-breeds, and Scotchmen who emigrated.”²⁹ They were joined by many Canadians from older provinces but the “population is a remarkably united one, distinctions of all races being dropped in the general desire to build up a strong, homogenous community.”³⁰ This observation ignores the violence and racism that was certainly part of life at Red River during the Reign of Terror, which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 6, but the idea that “race” or “language” was not a defining characteristic for most Red River residents is in keeping with a Métis fur trade society and the ways that Métis identity was formed.

Language and Politics

Throughout the 1870s, newspapers politicized the interests of the French and Catholic Métis population in the province. The *New Nation* published an article from the *Montreal Gazette*, which was refuting the “false assertions of the *Witness* and kindred papers.” They had insisted that “the Manitoba Act of last session was passed in the interests of the Church of Rome, while, in truth, it is conceived in a large and liberal spirit, which was evidently passed to promote

²⁷ Teillet, *The North-West Is Our Mother*, 167.

²⁸ Charles Acton Burrows, *North Western Canada: Its Climate, Soil, and Productions: With a Sketch of Its Natural Features and Social Condition* (Winnipeg: Charles Acton Burrows, 1880), 34.

²⁹ Burrows, *North Western Canada*, 34.

³⁰ Burrows, 34.

the best interests of the whole Dominion, and its whole people, irrespective of race or creed.”³¹ They said that contrary to being “in the chains of Rome,” the Manitoba Act gave a “free constitution and responsible Government to the people of that Province, present and future; it takes the entire lands of the great North-West *without* the Province, into the hands of the Dominion Government for settlement.” The article insisted that “*the majority of the present population is Protestant*, and that the Scotch and English half-breeds are also a decided majority.”³² The article concludes that “We regret that these sectional and religious issues should be introduced by designing politicians for their own selfish ends.”³³ While newspapers often emphasized the control of the Catholic church as the reason for the Manitoba Act’s push for French rights, that erased the Métis negotiators who viewed these protections as important for the future of their own community.³⁴ These concerns should be understood within the local context, where anti-French supporters of Dr. John Schultz were quoted saying “The pacification we want is extermination. We shall never be satisfied till we have driven the French half-breeds out of the country.”³⁵

The large Métis population continued their political activism that had led to the creation of the province throughout the 1870s. At the same time, newspapers like the *Globe* added to the conflicts between Métis and white settlers in Manitoba, and their coverage of events was often discussed in the *Manitoban*. The *Globe* regularly published articles and letters discussing the French influence over Manitoba, calling Governor Archibald a “Roman” governor, and accusing various members of government of being “tools” for Roman Catholic Archbishop Alexandre-

³¹ “Manitoba and the Manitoba Act,” *The New Nation*, July 16, 1870, page 2.

³² “Manitoba and the Manitoba Act,” *The New Nation*, July 16, 1870, page 2.

³³ “Manitoba and the Manitoba Act,” *The New Nation*, July 16, 1870, page 2.

³⁴ Teillet, *The North-West Is Our Mother*, 224-225.

³⁵ Teillet, *The North-West Is Our Mother*, 242.

Antonin Taché.³⁶ The *Manitoban* quoted the *Globe* saying that “To have the French code of laws with all the usual etceteras introduced into a British colony because of a mere handful of people, would be perfectly absurd [...] the Executive has no business to think of anything but that it is a British colony they are founding” and all the distinctions between French and English would not serve a British colony.³⁷ The *Manitoban* pushed back against this claim by saying that “Up here we cannot discern this terrible French Canadian party. The *people* on both sides of the river seem resolved to live harmoniously together, and but for a few restless spirits, not a jar would have occurred since the arrival of the Governor.”³⁸ This defence of the French Métis community showed a misunderstanding of the severity of the violence facing the Métis in the early 1870s. While both sides of the river may have wanted to live “harmoniously” prior to the 1870s, that was no longer true, at least for the white settlers.

It was not just the English newspapers who brought Ontario and Quebec competition into local Manitoban discussions. *Le Métis* commented on the census in 1871, and noted that Ontario was growing, but Quebec’s population was not growing at the same rate.³⁹ In 1872, *Le Métis* said that if Ontario was organizing to “jeter ici au plus vite une immigration anglo-protestante et orangiste, que faisait la population française de Manitoba?” It was hard to imagine a future where the French Métis population would remain safe if Orangemen and Protestants were allowed to quickly immigrate to Manitoba in large numbers. The writers did not think that anyone was looking out for the concerns of the French population, and that immigration should be encouraged, acknowledging that “la distance, sans, doute, est un obstacle sérieux a

³⁶ “Affairs in Manitoba,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 28, 1871, page 2.

³⁷ “Affairs in Manitoba,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 28, 1871, page 2.

³⁸ “Affairs in Manitoba,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 28, 1871, page 2.

³⁹ “Le Recensement,” *Le Métis*, December 14, 1871, page 2.

l'immigration de la Province de Québec, mais non pas insurmontable.”⁴⁰ *Le Métis* printed a letter from an immigration agent from *La Minerve*, where he promoted French immigration to Canada more broadly. He said that he was working to support the “mouvement d'émigration qui se manifeste en France, en Suisse, et en Italie, et qui m'a permis de diriger vers le Canada cette année sept cents personnes.”⁴¹ This immigration of 700 French-speaking Europeans did not arrive in Manitoba in the 1870s, but this represents Joseph Royal's efforts to encourage a large, united, French-speaking community in Manitoba that was not strictly Métis, a lifelong goal.⁴²

When a party of immigrants from “Lower Canada” arrived in Manitoba, *Le Métis* reported that “La coopération de nos frères et amis de la Province du Québec n'est peut-être pas aujourd'hui aussi directement nécessaire qu'autrefois pour la conversion des sauvages, mais elle l'est pour fortifier l'élément honnête, laborieux et conservateur de notre population: cette mission n'est pas moins belle que l'autre.”⁴³ This connected present-day French immigration with the earlier French Canadian efforts to convert First Nations to Christianity or to their lifestyle, which was less necessary at the moment, but the Quebecois immigrants would still strengthen the larger community.

Distinctions between French and English Métis were sometimes discussed in the newspapers. In the coverage of crown lands, the *Manitoban* reported that “a considerable number of the Half-breeds, principally, we believe, the French, have already made their selections. They are anxious, evidently, to group themselves together” while “the English Half-breeds seem not to have the same desire to keep together. They appear willing to take their chance with the

⁴⁰ “L'émigration Bas-Canadienne Au Manitoba,” *Le Métis*, September 11, 1872, page 2.

⁴¹ “Immigration,” *Le Métis*, December 7, 1872, page 2.

⁴² A. I. Silver, “Royal, Joseph,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/royal_joseph_13E.html.

⁴³ “Colons Du Bas-Canada,” *Le Métis*, September 21, 1871, page 2.

emigrants.”⁴⁴ This also represents the challenge facing the French Métis in terms of maintaining their political representation and linguistic sovereignty. If they were scattered among a larger English immigrant population, their representation and services would be English.

The *Manitoba Free Press* commented in 1873 that “When the Province was erected into electoral divisions in the first instance, the main object sought, apparently, was the giving an equal representation to both the English and French speaking portions of the population— whether such was desirable, even in that case, is at best very questionable.”⁴⁵ This was “unjust,” especially now, as “the party predominant then has, in the meantime, increased by hundreds while the other has done so scarcely by units.”⁴⁶ The article then said that “while religiously, and in a great measure perhaps, socially, we are fated to be somewhat distinct, it is certainly the duty of the state to foster a civil and political unity. We do not wish to see people of Manitoba viewed as French and English; we want this distinction effaced as rapidly as possible.”⁴⁷ Eliminating this “distinction” would have meant erasing the bilingual rights the Métis had fought so hard for in the Manitoba Act, and would have hastened the goal of creating Manitoba in the image of Ontario, and other British settler colonies.

This debate was continued in later months, as the *Free Press* said that since “a portion- now a minority- of our population, at the time of the transfer, spoke French, [and now] the Province must be considered unto all time to be a French one, when almost the entire immigration since the transfer, and that which is likely to come in, has been and will be English.”⁴⁸ They complained about everything needing to be printed in French and English, and that the justice system required “juries must be composed of an equal number of English and

⁴⁴ “Crown Lands,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 17, 1871, page 2.

⁴⁵ “The Electoral Divisions,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 1, 1873, page 4.

⁴⁶ “The Electoral Divisions,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 1, 1873, page 4.

⁴⁷ “The Electoral Divisions,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 1, 1873, page 4.

⁴⁸ “Are We a French Province?” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 5, 1873, page 4.

French speaking people.”⁴⁹ As this related to immigration, they found: “a growing disposition among the *Métis* to resist any immigration which does not speak their language and attend their places of worship. They say in words and in actions that Ontario people, and those from the older countries who speak English, have no business here.”⁵⁰ English newspapers drew comparisons with other groups in Manitoba, saying that some groups may insist that “the Scandinavian language must prevail; or the expected Mennonites insist that the judges’ charges in our courts be delivered in High Dutch.”⁵¹ No one was earnestly campaigning for the inclusion of additional immigrant languages in official courts or services, but the English newspapers showed a fundamental misunderstanding of French as a founding language in both Canada and Manitoba. The article continued, “It may be argued that the French people only ask and require what they receive in Quebec. This is true, but let us not repeat the calamity here. The sooner the idea gets abroad that Manitoba is a British Province the better.”⁵² British Canadian control over the Canadian prairie needed to be repeated frequently enough to eventually make it true and believable.

The proposed reorganization of the electoral districts prompted additional criticisms. The *Free Press* reported that “in this Province there is a steady determination to secure French domination and to submit to French dictation.”⁵³ They asked “Why for instance should the English speaking people submit to an act which renders it compulsory to have the French language thrust upon us when it entails an expense far out of all proportion to our means to bear?”

⁴⁹ “Are We a French Province?” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 5, 1873, page 4.

⁵⁰ “Are We a French Province?” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 5, 1873, page 4.

⁵¹ “Are We a French Province?” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 5, 1873, page 4.

⁵² “Are We a French Province?” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 5, 1873, page 4.

⁵³ “Normanism Again,” and “Is the Cat Out,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 12, 1874, page 4.

No one denies that it is a very nice and pretty language in its way and in its place, but why should it be poked upon us when less than one-sixth of our population only speak it.”⁵⁴

In another article, the *Free Press* wrote that “the present Local Ministry is entirely controlled and influenced by French interests and intrigue, and that the English speaking members of the Ministry who are supposed to represent the anti-Franco element in the Province have lent themselves very willing tools to the men who are their superiors in cunning and in everything except incompetency.”⁵⁵ They said that “There is no limit to the cunning and intrigue of a Frenchman, either in statecraft or the ordinary affairs of the world.”⁵⁶

In 1875, the *Manitoba Free Press* published an article reflecting on what Red River was like in 1860, fifteen years earlier. This article was based on a talk given by U.S. Consul J. W. Taylor, at the Court House. He reflected that “The prevalence of religion and education in the scattered community struck him forcibly, and he detailed his experience in church-going during his visit.”⁵⁷ When he attended one service, the sermon was delivered in English as “the preacher forgot that he was to have preached in Gaelic.”⁵⁸ And then, when seeing the blank faces, had delivered the entire service again in Gaelic. The next Sunday, he visited St. Peter’s, where he “listened to a sermon in that beautiful syllabic, phoenetic language, the Cree.”⁵⁹ This reflection on the multilingual culture of Red River in 1860 was a unique observation in the mid-1870s, where the majority of contemporary news coverage was about the relative decline of French and the political tensions between the French and English communities, often coded to mean violence between Métis and settlers or their conflicts over land or language rights. Red River in

⁵⁴ “Normanism Again,” and “Is the Cat Out,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 12, 1874, page 4.

⁵⁵ “Normanism Again,” and “Is the Cat Out,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 12, 1874, page 4.

⁵⁶ “Normanism Again,” and “Is the Cat Out,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 12, 1874, page 4.

⁵⁷ “Red River Fifteen Years Ago,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 1, 1875, page 4.

⁵⁸ “Red River Fifteen Years Ago,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 1, 1875, page 4.

⁵⁹ “Red River Fifteen Years Ago,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 1, 1875, page 4.

1860 was seen as a multicultural but ultimately Indigenous space, but by 1875, Manitoba was being framed as a settler space, with Indigenous peoples relegated to the historic past of the settlement.

Despite the depiction of Manitoba as a bilingual province with only a small French population remaining, by the mid-1870s, occasional newspaper coverage commented on the remaining linguistic diversity. An article from 1874 reported that “A number of Norwegians and Swedes have arrived but owing to their inability to speak English, United States, French, Cree, or Chippewa, our artist has been unable to discover what part of the Province they have intentions regarding.”⁶⁰ This joke about not being able to speak to new immigrants was humorous in part because of the assumption that in Winnipeg it would be easy to find someone who could translate “French, Cree, or Chippewa.” Manitoba was not yet established as a solely English or British space.

Métis identity was debated in 1875, when the *Nor'Wester* commented on the Métis land grants by asking “Who is a Half-breed or what constitutes as a Half-breed—or what is the difference between a British Half-breed and any other British subject is a matter which is deserving of some consideration.”⁶¹ The article says that everyone in England meets the definition of “mixed descent from two or several races” if one considered “Normans, French, Danes, Jews, Germans, and Celts.”⁶² Yet, to the frustration of the author, “in Manitoba things are considerably different, not because the law and constitution are different, but because the comprehension of our Legislators and Judges appear to have somehow got a warp in a different direction.”⁶³ The article then explains the frustrations around the delays in Métis land and how

⁶⁰ “Immigrants,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 11, 1874, page 5.

⁶¹ “Half-Breed Land Grant,” *Nor'Wester*, April 26, 1875, page 2.

⁶² “Half-Breed Land Grant,” *Nor'Wester*, April 26, 1875, page 2.

⁶³ “Half-Breed Land Grant,” *Nor'Wester*, April 26, 1875, page 2.

there were different sets of laws for different people, before concluding that “the Legislature went so far as to make the law retroactive so as to nullify a number of contracts which had been entered into on good faith” and that the Métis land grant business was “a positive disgrace to the country.”⁶⁴ These statements were in reference not just to disputes over language but also in blaming Mr. Masson of Terrebonne of assisting “in the re-election of an outlaw and a murderer,” and that he was being “ably assisted by the Local Government and its organ.”⁶⁵

Masson appeared in the *Free Press* a month earlier, as he promoted “assisting numbers of French Canadians, now in the United States, and who desire to emigrate in ‘groups’ to this Province, and the North-West.”⁶⁶ He referenced the success of the Mennonites, and asked “if the Government intend to advance sums of money to the repatriation of a people whom he described as a class equally as worthy and valuable as the Mennonites.”⁶⁷ The *Free Press* dismissed this, saying that while any immigrant was welcome to come on their own, the government should not use public funds or lands “towards facilitating an object which must eventually prove embarrassing and unprofitable.”⁶⁸ This was also because immigrants should be made to “feel that they are Canadians, not French or Dutch or Irish, and, moreover if Intermigration is to receive substantial aid from Government at all it should commence with the English-speaking farmers of Ontario, and other Provinces.”⁶⁹ The article concluded that “We would like to see these people helped in the same way as European immigrants are assisted, but the plan of settling them in antagonistic groups is, we are sure, inimical and unwise.”⁷⁰ Some ethnic immigrants were able to

⁶⁴ “Half-Breed Land Grant,” *Nor’Wester*, April 26, 1875, page 2.

⁶⁵ “Is the Cat Out,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 12, 1874, page 4.

⁶⁶ “Intermigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 6, 1875, page 4.

⁶⁷ “Intermigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 6, 1875, page 4.

⁶⁸ “Intermigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 6, 1875, page 4.

⁶⁹ “Intermigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 6, 1875, page 4.

⁷⁰ “Intermigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 6, 1875, page 4.

settle in groups, but of course, these were not the groups seen as “antagonistic,” they way that French-speakers were discussed in Manitoba.

Le Métis explained the situation by making the suggestion to set aside some amount of money for repatriating French Canadians to Manitoba, Masson had “rendu un service réel a ses compatriotes, et si, grâce a son initiative, le gouvernement met une certaine somme à la disposition des Canadiens, qui désireraient aller s’établir dans le Manitoba, nous espérons qu’ils sauront assez bien en profiter pour justifier, l’année prochaine, le vote d’une somme plus considérable.”⁷¹ If the government would choose to fund this settlement plan, perhaps there could be more funding directed to promoting French settlement in Manitoba.

In weighing in on this debate, the *Nor’Wester* quoted from both *Le Métis* and the *Free Press*. They said that as they could understand it, the only offense of *Le Métis* was that it was “guilty of *anxiety to retain* the privileges its people obtained at the organization of the Province of Manitoba. It believes that the continued use of the French language in the Courts and the Legislature is a right it may reasonably insist upon.”⁷² The French population as a percentage of the overall Manitoban population may be shrinking, but it was only natural that they would still want the privileges they had negotiated in the founding document of the province. The *Nor’Wester* article concluded:

If *Le Métis* and the French element for which it speaks have been coarse and violent in their expressions towards the English, cannot the English afford—seeing, as the *Free Press* admits, that the French are ‘a small fraction of the people of this Province’—to retaliate by being courteously indifferent to so small a minority? What good is accomplished by thus prematurely stirring up the worst prejudices of the two nationalities and becoming frantic over a matter which must, in the near future, right itself with the consent of all parties.⁷³

⁷¹ “Untitled,” *Le Métis*, March 20, 1875, page 2.

⁷² “Hasten Slowly” and “Cui Bono,” *Nor’Wester*, September 28, 1874, page 2.

⁷³ “Hasten Slowly” and “Cui Bono,” *Nor’Wester*, September 28, 1874, page 2.

The dispute over language and rights was further dividing the population and the *Nor'Wester* was advocating for a middle ground to decrease the rhetorical attacks between the *Free Press* and *Le Métis*. Their call for peace ultimately came with the explanation that soon, when other linguistic and ethnic groups outnumbered the French, the French themselves would “recognize the absurdity of continuing the French language as part of the constitution of the country.”⁷⁴ The French Métis community, who generally viewed the rights in the Manitoba Act as binding, would not have agreed with this interpretation.

French Immigration

In 1874, the Canadian government’s Department of Agriculture produced a French-language pamphlet dedicated to explaining Canada to potential immigrants from Europe, particularly French-speaking countries. The goal was to challenge misconceptions that existed around what Canada had to offer, as “En France, on se fait généralement une idée aussi fausse que peu avantageuse du Canada.”⁷⁵ Explaining Canada, the pamphlet continued,

Pour beaucoup de personnes, toutes ces richesses naturelles, accumulées de l’autre cote de l’Atlantique, sont encore inconnue. Pour elles, le Canada est un pays perdu, couvert de forets inextricables et de savanes marécageuses aux exhalaisons fétides, le tout enseveli pendant huit mois de l’année sous une épaisse couche de neige, une pays ou l’os gelé en hiver et griller en été; ou le colon doit toujours être sur le qui-vive pour défendre sa vie et sa propriété contre des tribus de sauvages complètement incivilités et a moitié antropophages [sic].⁷⁶

The pamphlet explained the climate of Canada, and some general information, and then dedicated a section to each province, saying that French was an official language in the federal government, but that “Dans toutes les autres provinces, les Provinces de Québec et Manitoba

⁷⁴ “Hasten Slowly” and “Cui Bono,” *Nor'Wester*, September 28, 1874, page 2.

⁷⁵ *Le Canada et L’Emigration Europeenne* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1874), 3.

⁷⁶ *Le Canada et L’Emigration Europeenne* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1874), 3.

exceptées, l'anglais est la langue officielle.”⁷⁷ The majority of this pamphlet was advertising Canada more broadly, with Manitoba mainly mentioned as an additional place where Francophones were entitled to access government resources in French. At this point there was not a specific effort to draw French immigration to Manitoba itself, but rather to Canada as a whole. The European targets for this pamphlet needed to be sold on the idea of Canada, and so Manitoba was not heavily featured in most of Canada's early immigration materials in the 1870s.

Presumably somewhat aware that French-speaking immigrants were being recruited from Europe, *Le Métis* writes that “Nous constatons avec plaisir que nos agents d'émigration en Europe réussissent à nous envoyer des colons. La *Minerve* donne les noms d'un peu plus d'une cinquantaine d'émigrants venus par les deux derniers steamers. Ce sont des français, des alsaciens, des belges, et quelques suisses.”⁷⁸ They hoped that Manitoba would not be forgotten by the immigration agents, concluding that “nous prions donc ceux qui sont chargés de recevoir les immigrants en Canada de ne pas oublier notre petite Province.”⁷⁹ Manitoba was just a “little province,” but the French Métis community, or at least Joseph Royal, was attempting to appeal to the global French community to increase the French presence in Manitoba.

In 1873, *Le Métis* commented on Québécois immigration trends and noted that “La plupart se dirigent vers l'état de New York, le Massachusetts, et autres parties de la Nouvelle Angleterre.” After exploring this phenomenon, the article insisted that there were opportunities for immigrants in Manitoba and repeated several times throughout, “Venez à Manitoba.”⁸⁰ The *Free Press* also encouraged the immigration of Quebecois to Manitoba, printing an article from the *Globe* that said that a society to encourage this immigration has been formed and has issued a

⁷⁷ *Le Canada et L'Emigration Europeenne* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1874), 8.

⁷⁸ “Emigrants d'Europe,” *Le Métis*, August 7, 1872, page 2.

⁷⁹ “Emigrants d'Europe,” *Le Métis*, August 7, 1872, page 2.

⁸⁰ “L'immigration,” *Le Métis*, May 10, 1873, page 2.

“lengthened prospectus” which encouraged people to move to Manitoba, explaining the immigration and homesteading process, and describing the climate as “very like that of Quebec, and one of the most salubrious in the world.”⁸¹

Manitoba was competing for French Canadian immigrants with a growing labour market in New England, as examined by Bruno Ramirez. He explains that while the New England economy was at times precarious for male breadwinners, particularly if they were “unskilled” labourers, yet despite this “rural Quebecers in the post-Civil War era headed in increasing numbers toward the industrial centres of New England.”⁸² Life in New England had its challenges, as several studies showed that “it was not rare [...] to find French-Canadian unemployed fathers in Lowell and Lawrence attending to the housework while wives and children worked in the mills.”⁸³ The income of these wives and children were incredibly important for their families and French-Canadian families tended to be large, and therefore had a lot of potential wage earners.⁸⁴ When considering the New England French-Canadian immigration was shaped by “an adequate presence of working children within each migrating family,” this was certainly a period shaped by children’s history, and this economic reality should be considered when discussing why relatively few French Canadian families chose to immigrate to the Canadian prairies. Children were certainly considered essential to successful settlers as farm labour, but they were not wage earners to the extent that they were in cities.

Economic historians theorize that one of the barriers to French Canadian immigration to the prairies was the cost of financing a move west, as this was a greater burden for francophone families as compared to others. This was particularly true for farmers in Quebec, where young

⁸¹ “Manitoba Immigration, *Manitoba Free Press*, May 31, 1873, page 4.

⁸² Bruno Ramirez, *On the Move: French-Canadian and Italian Migrants in the North Atlantic Economy, 1860-1914* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1991), 119.

⁸³ Ramirez, 119.

⁸⁴ Ramirez, 120, 125.

men had more dependents, and “Francophones in eastern Canada had lower employment earnings than anglophones, and Quebec farms were less productive than Ontario farms.”⁸⁵ They point out that based on earning potential, “working in the United States was a good option for francophones with weak English and literacy skills” while “knowing how to speak English was a key determinant of earnings for men working in the Canadian west.”⁸⁶ That did not stop the Manitoban newspapers from attempting to advertise the opportunities for French speakers in Manitoba.

The *Nouveau Monde* published an article in 1874, describing the fertile soil, as well as that Manitoba “est dole d’institutions semblables à celles du Bas-Canada. L’organisation parochiale est la même: les lois d’écoles sont les mêmes, le français y est la langue officielle comme l’anglais [...] L’émigrant y retrouvera en arrivant les descendants et les parents de ses voisins de ses amis. Il ne verra aucun changement, pour ainsi dire.”⁸⁷ These articles emphasized that French Canadian immigrants would find familiar laws, schools, and would feel at home surrounded with people descended from similar backgrounds. The efforts clearly had some impact, as in April 1875 the *Free Press* reported that several townships “adjoining the Emerson settlement, and on the frontier” would be withdrawn from general settlement.⁸⁸ The new reservation was for the Manitoba Colonization Society, which was based in St. Boniface, and primarily comprised of French Canadians.⁸⁹ The goal of the Society was “to induce French Canadians to immigrate to and settle in this country. The objective is laudable [...] but we think it is quite unnecessary that there should be set apart special reserves for settlement by people

⁸⁵ Alan Green, Mary MacKinnon, and Chris Minns, “Conspicuous by their Absence: French Canadians and the Settlement of the Canadian West,” *The Journal of Economic History* 65, no. 3 (September 2005), 846.

⁸⁶ Green, MacKinnon, Minns, “Conspicuous by their Absence,” 844.

⁸⁷ “Emigration a Manitoba,” *Le Méris*, March 28, 1874, page 1.

⁸⁸ “Another Reservation,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 3, 1875, page 4.

⁸⁹ “Another Reservation,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 3, 1875, page 4.

from any of the older Provinces of the Dominion.”⁹⁰ They hoped that the order would be reversed, as “It is desirable that people settling in this country should mix up as much as possible, to the end that we may rapidly become homogenous.”⁹¹ As was discussed in chapter 3, the land reserves were controversial during the 1870s, and for English writers, more reserved land was just another impediment to settlement of the ideal British-Canadian homesteaders.

Le Métis published an article from the *Protecteur Canadien* in Fall River, Massachusetts, which described Manitoba to the local French Canadians:

Manitoba est une terre française que l’on nous enlevé petit a petit, jour par jour, par cette implantation d’étrangers que l’on fait venir, à grands frais, du fond de la Russie. Avant longtemps pour peu que l’immigration menonite continue nos compatriotes seront noyées par le flot toujours grossissant des étrangers; il faut arrêter ce mouvement, retarder le moment ou cette immigration progressive aura enseveli pour toujours l’influence française sous les débris de sa grandeur impuissante.⁹²

The French Canadians were informed that the French community was gradually losing control over their land in Manitoba, as the continuing “flood” of immigrants like the Mennonites would soon overpower the French influence. More French immigration was needed to try and slow this loss of land and influence.

When representatives from Connecticut visited Manitoba to look at future locations for French Canadian communities, *Le Métis* reported that “ils sont émerveillés de la beauté du sol et croient à l’avenir du pays. En cinq ans, disent-ils, plus de dix mille familles canadiennes des États-Unis émigrèrent à Manitoba, si les premiers essais de colonisation réussissent.”⁹³ A month later, the *Free Press* published an article from the *American Canadian* from Boston, which said that “quite a number of French Canadians have left, or are about to leave this State, to settle in Manitoba.” This article concluded that “It is useless to delude ourselves any longer, good times

⁹⁰ “Another Reservation,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 3, 1875, page 4.

⁹¹ “Another Reservation,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 3, 1875, page 4.

⁹² “Emigration a Manitoba,” *Le Métis*, June 1, 1876, page 2.

⁹³ “Une Deputation Canadienne Des Etats-Unis,” *Le Métis*, August 19, 1875, page 2.

are ended in the United States, and it is high time that Canadians were looking to the future [sic] themselves and their families. It costs but little more to go to Manitoba than it does to go to Montreal.”⁹⁴

In building the system of French immigration, *Le Métis* introduced Mr. Jean E. Têtu, the new federal immigration agent for Manitoba, described by historian Kenneth Sylvester as “well-connected,” with the local community, and responsible for annual reports to the Department of Agriculture on the community’s progress.⁹⁵ He would stay in Dufferin, and watch out for French immigrants and help them access any services and supports they would need when they arrive.⁹⁶ As this system was established, settlers began to arrive in 1876 and *Le Métis* wrote extensively about the arrival of the new immigrants from the United States, and also published articles from the New England region that shed light on the information French Canadians were reading. The *Travailleur*, based out of Worcester, wrote that “Manitoba profitera considérablement de l’immigration de nos compatriotes des États de l’Est. La plupart [sic] sont d’anciens cultivateurs qui, ici, se sont faits artisans. Ils sont par conséquent très aptes à l’agriculture et à l’industrie.”⁹⁷

In the meeting of the Société de Colonisation, a number of important issues were raised, among them the importance of a common religion. The article in *Le Métis* which reported on the meeting stated:

La conservation de ces groupes catholiques, leur autonomie qui se forme et s’affirme au milieu des révolutions politiques de toute espèce, leur existence comme nationalité distincte se sont pas des choses naturelles ni ordinaires dans les circonstances où ce grand

⁹⁴ “French Immigration from the United States,” *Manitoba Free Press*, October 9, 1875, page 2.

⁹⁵ Kenneth Michael Sylvester, *The Limits of Rural Capitalism: Family, Culture, and Markets in Montcalm, Manitoba, 1870-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 112, 24.

⁹⁶ “Agent d’Immigration,” *Le Métis*, April 20, 1876, page 1.

⁹⁷ “Emigration à Manitoba,” *Le Métis*, March 2, 1876, page 2.

fait ethnographique s'est réalisé. Il y a des peuples qui ont une mission à remplir tout comme les individus.⁹⁸

The article concluded that “Vouloir retracer les effets généraux de la colonisation de Manitoba par les canadiens, c'est répéter l'histoire du Bas-Canada dans ses souffrances, dans ses succès, dans ses persécutions et dans ses triomphes.”⁹⁹ The struggles for French language rights and a Catholic community that had defined the history of Quebec were now being repeated in Manitoba, at least according to the promoters of French Canadian immigration to Manitoba.

The *Nouveau Monde* reported that so far around fifty families were moving from the United States to Manitoba, and more should join them. They wrote that “Le Canada n'a rien à envier aux des États-Unis sous le rapport de la liberté et de la bienfaisance des institutions politiques et sociales; il peut même soutenir le parallèle avec avantage.”¹⁰⁰ Potential French Canadian immigrants were reassured that Canada had all of the benefits of America, but with the advantage of Manitoba having a strong French Catholic population. In May of 1876 as immigration was well-underway, *Le Métis* published a selection of articles from around Quebec and New England, all excitedly reporting about the party of around 100 French Canadians who had left the United States and were on their way to Canada.¹⁰¹

On June 1, *Le Métis* reported that there was a celebration planned for the arrivals, and that several had already arrived.¹⁰² The new arrivals were staying in Dufferin for the time being, and there was a celebration planned once more had arrived. The recent arrivals were listed

⁹⁸ “Séance de la Societe de Colonisation,” *Le Métis*, March 16, 1876, page 1.

⁹⁹ “Séance de la Societe de Colonisation,” *Le Métis*, March 16, 1876, page 1.

¹⁰⁰ “Go West,” *Le Métis*, April 20, 1876, page 1.

¹⁰¹ “Emigration a Manitoba,” *Le Métis*, May 24, 1876, page 1.

¹⁰² “Arivee de Nos Compatriotes,” *Le Métis*, June 1, 1876, page 1.

according to where they had come from, with the largest groups from Fall River, Massachusetts, Woonsocket, and Manchester.¹⁰³

At the Societe de Colonisation meeting in August there were “les paroles si patriotique et si varies” as the French Canadian settlers were adjusting well to their new homes. They continued the call for more French Canadians to immigrate, saying that “Nous n’avons cessé de dire à tous les canadiens des Etats-Unis et de Québec qui ont quelques moyens et veulent faire un bel et bon établissement pour eux et leurs enfants : Venez à Manitoba; la terre produit 20 pour 1; par un arbre à abattre pour semer; des prairies naturelles sans limites; tous les avantages possibles pour élever.”¹⁰⁴ As immigration promoters, they were working hard to sell Manitoba as an enticing option for the French Canadians.

A letter from the *Travailleur* published a letter from the French Canadians in Manitoba, and *Le Métis* commented and then published the letter. The immigrants wrote that “La récolte en général est des plus belles, cela fait envie a tous ceux qui aiment l’agriculture, et toute personne possédant le bou sens le plus commun ne peut que louer le gouvernement sue les avantages offerts aux émigrants; et je ne comprends pas pourquoi tant de nos pauvres canadiens, esclaves dans les manufactures américaines, ne s’empresent pas de profiter de cette belle fortune tandis qu’il en est encore temps.”¹⁰⁵

Le Métis published an article from *Le National* about the importance of settlement in Manitoba, which said that “Nous avons plusieurs fois encourage nos compatriotes, qui désirent émigrer, à aller exploiter les ressources des vastes prairies de l’Ouest.”¹⁰⁶ The article continued

¹⁰³ “Arivée de Nos Compatriotes,” *Le Métis*, June 1, 1876, page 1.

¹⁰⁴ “A Nos Compatriotes de Quebec et Des E.-Unis,” *Le Métis*, August 10, 1876, page 2.

¹⁰⁵ “La Colonie de Dufferin: Une Interessante Lettre,” *Le Métis*, September 14, 1876, page 2.

¹⁰⁶ “Allez A Manitoba,” *Le Métis*, November 2, 1876, page 2.

to explain that with more immigration, French Canadians could have quite a strong influence, “proportionnée à leur nombre.”¹⁰⁷

The English newspapers also wrote about the immigration, as shortly after the first group of immigrants arrived in June of 1876, the *Free Press* published an article from the *Montreal Witness* which introduced the Colonisation Society, and said that “this is a work eminently religious and patriotic, and in laboring to colonize Manitoba, they are preserving for the French race the heritage bequeathed them by their fathers, and preparing for the future the alliance and assistance of a population kindred in blood, friendship, and gratitude.”¹⁰⁸ The article continued that “The extraordinary fecundity of the French race in Canada would rapidly fill up the gaps made by emigration.”¹⁰⁹

After the French Canadians had been in Manitoba for a few months, the *Globe* wrote that the immigrants had “found their most sanguine expectations more than realized.”¹¹⁰ Perhaps as a result of this, the *Globe* reported that “Some of the employers of labor in New England are also beginning to write depreciatory letters about this Great North-West, so as, if possible, to nip the present movement in the bud, and prevent the French Canadians already settled in the States from removing.”¹¹¹ In addition to this, “Manitoba is more and more advertised, and the likelihoods of an ever increasing immigration into it made always greater.”¹¹² The *Globe* said this was only a good thing, as “there is no reason at all why the Canadian North-West should be exclusively peopled by English or Scotch or Irish. There is plenty of room for all who are both

¹⁰⁷ “Allez A Manitoba,” *Le Métis*, November 2, 1876, page 2.

¹⁰⁸ “Manitoba Colonization,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 10, 1876, page 6.

¹⁰⁹ “Manitoba Colonization,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 10, 1876, page 6.

¹¹⁰ “The French in Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, October 28, 1876, page 1.

¹¹¹ “The French in Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, October 28, 1876, page 1.

¹¹² “The French in Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, October 28, 1876, page 1.

able and willing to work, and the mingling of various nationalities may eventually make only a stronger and a more progressive community.”¹¹³

Not all were happy with increasing French Catholic immigration. A letter to the editor of the *Free Press* expressed concern with the reserve for French Canadians, saying that “we feel aggrieved to know that for years at least we must be surrounded by a people who refuse to affiliate with us in school, church, municipal, or other institutions.” They clarified that they did not object to immigration generally, just that if they “wish exclusiveness they should find some region where others have not settled and, and not intrude themselves on a section already occupied by true Canadians.”¹¹⁴ Another letter came in that summer, saying that “several Protestant families have settled in this and the adjoining township” and they were concerned about their children potentially attending separate schools created by the French reserve they found themselves on. They clarified “No Protestant objects to Roman Catholics teaching their creeds, but they do object to having those dogmas forced upon them by an act of the Government, by so hemming in a few Protestants as to prevent their children learning science free from Roman tenets.”¹¹⁵ The writer expressed frustration with the reserve system, saying “What a strange absurdity that in nearly a whole Province in Canada a British subject has no right to live!”¹¹⁶

The *Free Press* reported that the immigration promoted by the Colonization Society would receive “an extra stimulus from the present conditions of affairs in the manufacturing towns whence such immigrants come. The rose-colored accounts of thriving centres of industry which attract many dissatisfied Canadians are not found to be verified in the large majority of

¹¹³ “The French in Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, October 28, 1876, page 1.

¹¹⁴ “Land Reserves,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 29, 1876, page 3.

¹¹⁵ “Land Reserves,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 19, 1876, page 5.

¹¹⁶ “Land Reserves,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 19, 1876, page 5.

cases.”¹¹⁷ Referring to an article from the *Protecteur Canadien* from Fall River, Massachusetts, factory work was described as “very hard, especially for women and children; [and] that in these manufactories anything but good is learned; that wages are diminishing daily, and that many families in the factories here live poorly and in misery.”¹¹⁸ They also referred to religious challenges, saying that because parents are “keeping their children at the factory six months in the year, the parents are, in many places, obliged to send them during the other six months, not to Catholic schools, which are nullities before the law, but to the public schools, which are hotbeds of Protestantism.”¹¹⁹ Life in manufacturing centres was so difficult that immigration promoters thought it would be easy to promote homesteading on the prairies as a more ideal option, despite all the challenges with land and climate in Manitoba.

In 1878, the *Free Press* reported on the French-Canadian immigration, saying that “over four hundred French Canadians were brought into Manitoba on the last down trip of the International.”¹²⁰ Describing the immigrants, they said “These people constitute a thrifty, well-to-do class. They were formerly farmers in Quebec, but left Canada some years ago for the New England States, where they went into the mills and factories of that country.”¹²¹ The article concluded that “they have not forgotten how to till the soil, and as all of them bring some money they will, with their little means and well-known industry, prove valuable additions to the population of Manitoba.”¹²²

When the French paper reported on the increasing numbers of French Canadians in 1878, there were direct connections made to the Métis presence in the province. After describing the

¹¹⁷ “Factory Life in the United States,” *Manitoba Free Press*, October 13, 1877, page 2.

¹¹⁸ “Factory Life in the United States,” *Manitoba Free Press*, October 13, 1877, page 2.

¹¹⁹ “Factory Life in the United States,” *Manitoba Free Press*, October 13, 1877, page 2.

¹²⁰ “The French Canadians,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 27, 1878, page 8.

¹²¹ “The French Canadians,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 27, 1878, page 8.

¹²² “The French Canadians,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 27, 1878, page 8.

French Canadian lands and hoping they all feel welcome, *Le Métis* wrote that “On se retrouve chez soi. Que nos colons voient de suite qu’ils ne sont plus sur une terre étrangère. La population métisse a bravement fait son devoir en accueillant comme des frères les premiers canadiens venus dans le pays pour leur aider et grossir leur rangs : que cet noble exemple ne soit jamais perdu.”¹²³ The Métis were praised for welcoming the French Canadians who had come to increase their numbers.

In 1879, *Le Métis* challenged an article in the *Journal de Quebec* which said that immigrants should consider moving back to Lower Canada, and that “N’avons-nous pas le Saguenay? Les terres du Saint Maurice, et celles qu’offre le nord de Montréal? Nous sommes sur qu’on y trouverait tout aussi bien ce qu’on va chercher a Manitoba.”¹²⁴ In challenging that “idee fausse” *Le Métis* noted that Manitoba had much more available land and opportunity than Quebec, and that moving to Manitoba was also patriotic and helping to support a French Canadian community.¹²⁵

An immigration pamphlet dedicated to reaching French-speakers was published in 1880 and the second edition in 1882. This pamphlet, by Élie Tassé, provided information on everything from climate to soil to homestead laws, and several pages of quotes from newspapers and experts attesting to the importance of Manitoba and the opportunities waiting for immigrants.¹²⁶ One of the important factors for French immigrants was the importance of French in Manitoba politics, as well as Saint-Boniface, which was “destiné à devenir une grande ville.”¹²⁷ There was also a French-language newspaper, *Le Manitoba*, along with many churches

¹²³ “L’Immigration,” *Le Métis*, April 18, 1878, page 2.

¹²⁴ “Une Idee Fausse,” *Le Métis*, May 8, 1879, page 2.

¹²⁵ “Une Idee Fausse,” *Le Métis*, May 8, 1879, page 2.

¹²⁶ Elie Tasse, *Le Nord-Ouest: La Province de Manitoba et Les Territoires Du Nord-Ouest* (Ottawa: Imprimerie du Canada, 1880), 9.

¹²⁷ Tasse, *Le Nord-Ouest*, 9.

and French schools from Catholic schools in various parishes, to the university in Saint-Boniface, and so immigrants would not face many linguistic barriers.¹²⁸ Tasse wrote that “Au point de vue de l’éducation, nos compatriotes de Manitoba sont donc plus favorisés que ceux des États-Unis, ou l’État ne reconnaît et ne subventionne que les écoles communes.”¹²⁹

French Settlements

Newspapers also commented on the French immigrants after they had arrived, and observed their settlements. When the Minister of Agriculture and Immigration gave his 1876 report, he discussed the Mennonites and Icelanders and their reserves and agricultural and economic progress. The French Canadians were then discussed under the heading “Repatriated Canadians,” with a brief note that there were 322 French Canadians “from the New England States.” According to the Dufferin immigration agent, “they have, in general, done well” and there would be more arriving in future years.¹³⁰ This was far less detail than paid to the Mennonites or Icelanders.

The next notes on the French settlements were reported during the Vice Regal visit, when the Governor General visited the French Métis community of Pointe de Chêne. The article first appeared in *Le Métis* on August 30, but then was translated and re-printed in the *Free Press* on September 1. The Métis population were greeted warmly, and then the Governor General said :

Quoique l’ancienne colonie de la Rivière Rouge soit maintenant habitée par plusieurs nationalités différentes, nous aimons à dire que nous en sommes les pionniers. Implanter la civilisation dans ce pays n’était chose ne facile, ni sans dangers il y a plus d’un demi-siècle; nos pères l’out fait; nous avons tâche de marcher sur leurs traces. Et aujourd’hui que la colonisation du pays n’a que des attraites et des avantages a offrir, nous voyons

¹²⁸ Tasse, 10.

¹²⁹ Tasse, 10.

¹³⁰ “Report of the Minister of Agriculture and Immigration for 1876,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 10, 1877, page 7.

arriver avec plaisir l'immigrant qui vient apporter ici son expérience, son industrie et ses capitaux.¹³¹

This statement that Red River was now inhabited by people from many different nationalities was perhaps not what the Métis community wanted to hear, especially as their “loyalty” was then praised. He then said, “L'impression que vous remporterez de la soumission du peuple aux lois, de sa loyauté inaltérable, de son contentement, de la fertilité du sol, et des espérances légitimes de progrès qui animent toutes les classes, sera, nous osons l'espérer, un bienfait public que nous savons apprécier d'avance et dans toute son étendue.”¹³² In addition to these sentiments, the *Free Press* noted that the English-speaking settlers sent a representative to address the Governor General on their behalf.¹³³

As 1877 came to a close, *Le Métis* reported that there was a new settlement at St. Pierre de la Riviere-aux-Rats where around sixty families were going to lose their claims to land, since they had not cultivated the required five acres. The article explained that many of the settlers were waiting for their families to join them, and were just getting started, but they had purchased their homesteads in good faith.¹³⁴ The newspaper article expressed concern that many settlers struggled to get their homesteads started, and especially those who arrived during the grasshopper infestation of recent years. The article concluded with a plea for to the Minister of the Interior to not displace fifty families who had only just acquired the rights to their land, after all “Il y a la une question de bonne et saine politique, une question de bons sens, une question de sage administration de la chose publique, et surtout une question d'humanité.”¹³⁵

¹³¹ “Visite Du Gouverneur-General,” *Le Métis*, August 30, 1877, page 2.

¹³² “Visite Du Gouverneur-General,” *Le Métis*, August 30, 1877, page 2.

¹³³ “The ViceRegal Visit: At Pointe de Chene,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 1, 1877, page 1.

¹³⁴ “L'Etablissement de La Riviere-Aux-Rats,” *Le Métis*, December 27, 1877, page 2.

¹³⁵ “L'Etablissement de La Riviere-Aux-Rats,” *Le Métis*, December 27, 1877, page 2.

In 1878 the township of Taché received considerable coverage. A letter to the editor of the *Free Press* from “A French Canadian” explained the situation by saying that there was a “great injustice perpetrated on the French Canadians emigrating from the States, and wishing to settle on the township Taché, reserved for them by the Government.”¹³⁶ The writer referenced the earlier “wrong done to the Menonites [sic] by some emigrants from Ontario desirous of homesteading on their reserve” and that this was now happening to the French Canadians.¹³⁷ Letellier and Taché were set aside for the French Canadians, and now Letellier was “nearly all taken up” and “the other township was taken in the same way this last spring when some people, having no right to settle there, came, and without any title whatever, took sections for themselves, ploughed, put up fences, etc.”¹³⁸ When they were told that they had no right to that land and would lose their improvements, “they held on and would listen to no advice but replied by violent expressions and threats.”¹³⁹ When the French Canadians had attempted to take the land this year, they were prevented from defending themselves by the immigration agent. The letter writer said that the case had been dismissed by the Winnipeg courts, so now they were appealing “to public sentiment and honesty in the consideration of one of two things: either the French Canadians have the right and just title to the reserve or they do not.”¹⁴⁰ He concluded by asking why the French Canadians were “not protected by the law in their just claims when the land officers decline to do anything in order to settle the question”?¹⁴¹ As examined in chapter 3, this unequal treatment by the land officers was hardly a new development for the French Métis.

¹³⁶ “French Canadian Reserves,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 3, 1878, page 1.

¹³⁷ “French Canadian Reserves,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 3, 1878, page 1.

¹³⁸ “French Canadian Reserves,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 3, 1878, page 1.

¹³⁹ “French Canadian Reserves,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 3, 1878, page 1.

¹⁴⁰ “French Canadian Reserves,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 3, 1878, page 1.

¹⁴¹ “French Canadian Reserves,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 3, 1878, page 1.

This same incident was discussed in *Le Métis* in the following months, as settlers continued to ask if French Catholics could rely on government representation and protection of their lands.¹⁴² One of these articles opened with the hypothetical of what if this had happened to settlers from Ontario:

Supposez que nos amis d'Ontario aient formé une Société de Colonisation à Manitoba, et qu'ils aient obtenu deux townships pour y placer leurs colons. Ces townships sont une réserve exclusive; nul individu ne peut s'y établir sans avoir d'abord obtenu un permis de la Société qu'il doit présenter à l'Agent des Terres avant de pouvoir inscrire son entrée et acquérir son droit de *homestead*.¹⁴³

This angry article expressed the frustration with this ongoing situation and pointed out that settlers from Ontario would never have been treated so badly by the agents at the Land Office.

The article continued,

Aujourd'hui, l'inquiète est consommée, on veut arrêter notre immigration, tuer la Société de Colonisation, et rendre inutiles nos efforts patriotiques, donc le temps est arrivé de parler, et parler de façon à être entendu. On nous dit que des amis travaillent en ce moment à nous faire rendre justice : c'est bien! Mais qu'on sache que rien ne nous contentera si ce n'est une restitution prompte, pure et simple des terres qui ont été volées à nos colons.¹⁴⁴

The writer was frustrated that it seemed like there were efforts to make their immigration useless and to impede the goals of the Société de Colonisation. Nothing would improve the situation except for the returning of the land stolen from the settlers. While this land theft was not the same as what the Métis nation experienced during the 1870s, the treatment that all Francophones experienced in Manitoba was drawing attention.

There were clearly ongoing tensions between the French and English communities, as *Le Métis* published an article entitled "La Persécution de Notre Race à Manitoba," which began with the statement, "Une majorité anglaise fanatique et intolérable vient de former à Manitoba in

¹⁴² "Le Township Tache," *Le Métis*, September 5, 1878, page 2.

¹⁴³ "Le Township Tache," *Le Métis*, August 15, 1878, page 2.

¹⁴⁴ "Le Township Tache," *Le Métis*, August 15, 1878, page 2.

ministre exclusivement compose d'Anglais au mépris des droits de la minorité canadienne française."¹⁴⁵ When the new cabinet was announced, there was not French representation (Mr. Taylor, identified as "Métis anglais" was put in charge of agriculture), which prompted Mr. Royal to "démontra cette politique comme une violation des principes qui [sic] présidé à la formation de la province."¹⁴⁶ They then presented a selection of articles from other French newspapers across Canada expressing outrage about Manitoba abandoning French rights.¹⁴⁷ It seemed that all the fears from previous years about the English population looking to remove the French influence from the province were happening.

When W. Fraser Rae observed St. Boniface in 1882, he noted that while it was always strange to cross from an English to French space, giving the examples of Ottawa and Hull as well as the Straits of Dover, "none of these cases is so curious as that of St. Boniface."¹⁴⁸ He clarified that "It is not so much the fact that French is spoken, as that everything looks so French which renders this suburb of the city of Winnipeg unlike any other which I have seen in any city on the continent of North America or Europe."¹⁴⁹ He did mention the long history of the French Métis in the region, and the importance of Archbishop Taché to their community. He noted the importance of the weekly *Le Métis*, which was "the only French journal published in the Canadian North-West and taking cognizance of the wishes and wants of the large class there which preserves the use of the French language."¹⁵⁰

The 1870s was a decade of change, loss, and violence for the French Métis community as not only was their land base being taken away, as was discussed in previous chapters, but their

¹⁴⁵ "La Persecution de Notre Race a Manitoba," *Le Métis*, June 19, 1879, page 3.

¹⁴⁶ "La Persecution de Notre Race a Manitoba," *Le Métis*, June 19, 1879, page 3.

¹⁴⁷ "La Persecution de Notre Race a Manitoba," *Le Métis*, June 19, 1879, page 3.

¹⁴⁸ W. Fraser Rae, *Facts About Manitoba*, (London: Chapman & Hall, 1882), 36.

¹⁴⁹ W. Fraser Rae, *Facts About Manitoba*, (London: Chapman & Hall, 1882), 36.

¹⁵⁰ W. Fraser Rae, *Facts About Manitoba*, (London: Chapman & Hall, 1882), 42.

language and religion were also under attack. Increasing the numbers of French speakers by recruiting French Canadians from the United States or Quebec, and later Europe, could help retain the French and Catholic presence in Manitoba, but French Métis identity was not strictly about speaking French or being Catholic. For Joseph Royal, the editor of *Le Métis*, maintaining a French presence was a sufficient goal, but for the Métis, the goal of preserving an identity and homeland was threatened during this decade.

Chapter 6:

Policing Society: Military, Gender, Family, and Indigenous Peoples

Re-creating and enforcing Manitoba's identity was part of the "national project," particularly in Winnipeg. It required promoting the behaviour of "good citizens" and investing in preventative measures to control the unwanted people and behaviours that did not support the larger imperial project of settler colonialism.¹ Central to this story of transforming Manitoba is the myth of peaceful settlement, as claiming the land for Canada meant removing Indigenous peoples, or at least portraying them as people who would "not interfere with the agrarian settler lifestyle."² There were a number of facets to this portrayal of Manitoba as a "civilized" society. One was to focus on gender and family roles in order to emphasize the safety and respectability of Winnipeg. As the urban centre of Manitoba, the policing of behaviour, especially Indigenous peoples, was far more prevalent in Winnipeg. Rural Manitoba, and the larger Northwest, remained Indigenous spaces without much direct contact with colonial violence and policing until the creation of the North West Mounted Police. Newspapers contained discussions about rural Manitoba, but much of the direct colonial violence took place in the city of Winnipeg. Interactions with Indigenous peoples and the violence present in Manitoba needed to be portrayed in specific ways to encourage immigration and downplay the full extent of the violence that the establishment of settler colonialism required.

¹ Kurt Korneski, "Reform and Empire: The Case of Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1870s-1910s," *Urban History Review* 37, no. 1 (Fall 2008), 49.

² Gina Starblanket and Dallas Hunt, *Storying Violence: Unravelling Colonial Narratives in the Stanley Trial* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2020), 40.

Gender and Race

Race and gender were intersecting themes that were directly connected to immigration and the future of Manitoba as a “successful” part of the British empire. Much has been written about the history of gender and race in colonial spaces,³ but the subject of this chapter is the ways that gender and race were used within Manitoban newspapers to promote immigration and the policing of life at Red River. Newspapers such as the *Manitoba Liberal* published stories that emphasized these ideas, with one such story beginning with “A lady, white, residing a short distance from Winnipeg, was made the victim of an atrocious crime last week, at the hands of an Indian.”⁴ The writer said that her husband was haying away from the house and she went through the woods to bring him his dinner, where “she was met by an Indian, who assaulted her and, notwithstanding her struggles and cries for help, consummated his devilish purpose.”⁵ The perpetrator in question was not recognized and had not been found, but the *Liberal* concluded that “It is high time that these vagrants were compelled to take advantage of their reserves,” clearly implying that all Indigenous people had no right to freedom of movement.⁶ Sarah Carter explains that in the late nineteenth-century the presence and contributions of Indigenous women in the prairies were erased (or seen as a menace) while the “first white women” were celebrated,

³ For more about the history of gender, family, and empire, see Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth Century Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).; Lisa Chilton, *Agents of Empire: British Female Migration to Canada and Australia, 1860s to 1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).; For the ways that whiteness and paternalism/maternalism shaped settler colonial empire and gender, see Cathleen D. Cahill, *Federal Fathers & Mothers: A Social History of the United States Indian Service, 1869-1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).; Margaret Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).; and the collection edited by Ann Laura Stoler, *Haunted By Empire: Geographies in North American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

⁴ “Rape,” *Manitoba Liberal*, August 9, 1871, page 2.

⁵ “Rape,” *Manitoba Liberal*, August 9, 1871, page 2.

⁶ “Rape,” *Manitoba Liberal*, August 9, 1871, page 2.

as those who would “bring ‘civilization’ to an untamed wilderness.”⁷ Fears about white women and children being captured by Indigenous peoples were propagated by popular culture, who published what were usually false stories, but “the hoaxes kept alive the image of predatory Aboriginal males who were a threat to the sanctity and purity of white women,” and “reinforced the need for a racially stratified and divided society.”⁸ The threats white women faced on the frontier were largely part of settler lies that allowed them to absolve themselves of the violence enacted against Indigenous peoples (particularly men) in the so-called defence of white women.

Mennonite women later became part of this process, as in 1880, a “brute in man’s form” passed through a Mennonite village, and “beat the owners of the house at which he had been most hospitably treated, not only the male portion, but ill-used the women also.”⁹ The story concluded with a call that “such lawlessness was put a stop to” and for law to be enforced more harshly, particularly at the border.¹⁰ The story acknowledges that the assailant was welcomed into the home and hospitably treated, so it is unclear what the goal of more law enforcement would have achieved, apart from tracking him down after the attack was committed, but the violence against pacifists, and white women in particular, was used as justification for increasing law enforcement.

White women were explicitly connected to the success of immigrant men, as an article originally published in the *Globe* told immigrants that “Far from going alone, let each man take along with him a wife or a sister, or both, and he will be much more likely to succeed in making

⁷ Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada’s Prairie West* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), 5.

⁸ Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women*, 136.

⁹ “West Lynne,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 17, 1880, page 3.

¹⁰ “West Lynne,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 17, 1880, page 3.

for himself a home in the North-west, than if he went forth in advertisement phrase, 'without encumbrance.'"¹¹ The article continued:

The 'pilgrim' mothers and wives have always borne their part quite as nobly as the 'pilgrim fathers' and it would be a poor compliment to the girls of the present day to say that they are so delicate and so cowardly that they could not be induced to face the difficulties of travel and the privations and toils incident to the upbuilding of a new home. They are no such thing. The young women of Ontario can 'rough it' as well as the young men, and therefore let every bachelor who proposes to move to the North-west in the spring give some one an opportunity of showing what she can do and endure as the wife of a pioneer.¹²

In newspaper accounts like these, the success of settler men was linked directly to the presence of white women, reflecting practical observations about labour and agriculture, but also trying to represent the west as a suitable place for white women and families.

White women were still rare in Manitoba in 1874, as the *Manitoban* noted in one advice article. They wrote that immigrants should not "leave behind them their sisters or any female relatives they can persuade to go with them. They need not fear that these will be dependent upon them for a single day. [...] Women are scarce in Manitoba, and will always be welcomed with an unfeigned cordiality."¹³

In 1876, white women were still scarce, as an article from the *Globe* published sections from a French Canadian settler in Letellier, Manitoba, and one part noted that "We must say that many of us are vexed to see their companions enjoying all the comforts of a family. We are like castaways, and the misfortune is that marriages are impossible, for there are no girls. O ye, our young fellow countrywomen who have no like for a state of single blessedness, come to our help. Start for Manitoba. You will find here not only plenty of husbands, but those of the very best description. Without knowing you we already love you in advance. Come, for if you don't, we

¹¹ "Emigration to Manitoba," *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, March 18, 1872, page 4.

¹² "Emigration to Manitoba," *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, March 18, 1872, page 4.

¹³ "Settlement in Manitoba," *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, April 4, 1874, page 3.

shall have to go to the homes of the Cree, the Saulteaux, and the Blackfeet, and repeat the rape of the Sabines. But no! you beautiful and kindly *Canadiennes*, you will not allow us to commit such a crime.”¹⁴ The writer of the article responded to the letter, saying that they had given the plea in English, “so as to afford Upper Canadian girls a chance, as perhaps those most impressionable Frenchmen, in the event of their failing to secure French Canadian ladies for their better halves, might give a buxom Irish lass or an Ontario girl an offer of heart and hand before proceeding to the threatened extremities with the reigning beauties of the Crees and the Blackfeet.”¹⁵ This casualness of the threat of sexual violence against Indigenous women if white women were not available cannot be taken lightly so soon in the aftermath of the Reign of Terror, where Métis women faced sexual violence from settlers and soldiers.¹⁶ Sarah Carter explains that in the Canadian prairies white women were held up as a “civilizing force” and stories of the “first white woman” invite observers to reflect upon all the hardships they faced in their struggle through “rugged conditions in order to bring ‘civilization’ to an untamed wilderness.”¹⁷ In contrast to this, Indigenous women were portrayed as immoral and “in their own society were accustomed to being treated with contempt and to being bought and sold as commodities,” which justified their mistreatment by white society.¹⁸ This assumption about the value and roles of Indigenous women within their own societies proved false by the lived experiences of generations of frontiersmen and fur traders who depended on Indigenous women and their knowledge and kinship networks for survival.¹⁹

¹⁴ “The French in Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 30, 1876, page 3.

¹⁵ “The French in Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 30, 1876, page 3.

¹⁶ Jean Teillet, *The North-West is Our Mother: The Story of Louis Riel’s People* (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers, 2019), 250-51.

¹⁷ Carter, *Capturing Women*, 5.

¹⁸ Carter, *Capturing Women*, 183.

¹⁹ Carter, *Capturing Women*, 186.

Even newspapers that did not cater as directly to the settler colonial goals of local reformers participated in perpetuating harmful ideas about race and gender. The *Manitoban* wrote in 1872 that “In short, the Indian is not only regarded as a nuisance, but really is a nuisance. He won’t work, but he is not ashamed to beg and will steal to any extent,” before making a “joke” about Indigenous men relieving themselves indoors.²⁰ The article continued, “Now, speaking seriously, we must have a little less of the Indian about Winnipeg” and suggested that the Indian Commissioner take a more active role in ensuring Indigenous men would not be stealing and drinking within the city.²¹ The writer said that “With a police force as extensive as ours, surely there might be no difficulty in tracing to the proper source this supply of liquor to those savages, but somehow we can’t.”²² The presence of Indigenous men was making the city unsafe, as the writer noted, “The knife too is beginning to be brought into operation, and the probability is, we’ll have a murder or two one of these days.”²³ After lamenting about Indigenous men, the article said that “Another phase of this Indian nuisance is its female aspect. The demoralization amongst these women is something frightful; the disgracefully open manner in which they ply their avocations, is unparalleled, and a stain on our Christianity, and the fearful havoc they are making amongst our young men, has brought matters to such a pass that silence any longer would be almost criminal.”²⁴ The article ended with a plea to authorities to take action, saying that it was “a question of safety to ourselves, our boys and girls,” before asking if the “Government and Police [would] do something to clean the community of this moral pestilence.”²⁵ The article concluded with a call to “drive them out either by starvation or

²⁰ “Our Indians,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 22, 1872, page 2.

²¹ “Our Indians,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 22, 1872, page 2.

²² “Our Indians,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 22, 1872, page 2.

²³ “Our Indians,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 22, 1872, page 2.

²⁴ “Our Indians,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 22, 1872, page 2.

²⁵ “Our Indians,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 22, 1872, page 2.

horsewhips.”²⁶ These observations of Indigenous men and women as dangerous and violent were directly connected with the safety of the “boys and girls” of Winnipeg, and also made explicit calls for violence against Indigenous peoples, at a time when were directly connected to threats of violence and dehumanizing language against Indigenous peoples, at a time when settler violence against Indigenous peoples was already making life in Winnipeg unlivable for Métis and First Nations families.²⁷

Indigenous women and men navigated complicated colonial worlds in Winnipeg, as at times they were seen as threats, but at other times, their presence was used to promote the unique culture and social life at Red River. When describing the social life of Winnipeg in 1873, the *Manitoba Free Press* said that “Winter is here the gay and festive season” and that there were many dances throughout the season.²⁸ They described the Red River Jig in great detail, explaining that “so many friends as can be comfortably crammed into his mansion” and then there was “such a jingling of sleigh bells, such a rushing of carioles, such an inpouring of stalwart swains, capoted and sashed, and of charming brunettes, their raven tresses snugly ensconced in the national black shawl, such hearty greetings, laughter, and universally good humored exhibition of ivory, are rarely to be met with outside of the Red River Valley.”²⁹

The press at Red River was building up a large readership of women, regardless of race, and by the middle of the decade, and certainly in later years, newspapers dedicated sections to “feminine miscellany” and other advice or “women’s interest” pieces. In one issue, the *Nor’Wester* linked together several stories about women, including one story about a Michigan woman who worked as a “grave-stone cutter” after her husband died and she could not afford a

²⁶ “Our Indians,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 22, 1872, page 2.

²⁷ Teillet, *The North-West Is Our Mother*, 243.

²⁸ “Life in the Prairie Province: Effort I,” *Manitoba Free Press*, January 11, 1873, page 5.

²⁹ “Life in the Prairie Province: Effort I,” *Manitoba Free Press*, January 11, 1873, page 5.

headstone and so made her own.³⁰ She now had regular work doing this, having showed a natural talent. The story directly following this was called “Vulgarity” and gave advice to women about how to dress. The story began, “A woman who wears as much jewellery as an Indian squaw does of brass and tinsel ornaments has vulgar taste. It is vulgar to dress in very gay colors on the street.”³¹ There was a whole list of things that made one “vulgar,” from staring at strangers, to serving too much for tea, to receive expensive gifts from gentlemen, to “speak in a loud tone of voice in common conversation” and a variety of others.³² This emphasis on manners and “civilized” behaviour as establishing respectability, or a proximity to whiteness, was not new, as previously discussed in the elite schools that had existed for decades at Red River to teach the “country born” children, but these ideas about race, gender, and respectability were now given dedicated space in the columns of newspapers.

By 1879, these sorts of stories were commonplace, and the weekly editions of the *Free Press* which were typically 8 pages usually dedicated page 2 to “women’s topics,” ranging from poetry, to fiction, to advice about gender roles, marriage, or gardening.³³ At times these topics or advice were framed with humour, as in the case of a re-print of an article from *Harper’s Magazine*, where a joke went around based on something said by the “bright and sensible Governor-General, Lord Dufferin.”³⁴ He was quoted as alluding to a popular phrase while addressing emigrants on his trip to the west, saying “He had the misfortune to have too many children.”³⁵ The article quoted him as saying “I remarked that perhaps no better idea could be given of the differences between the old country and their new home than by the fact that

³⁰ “Feminine Miscellany,” *Nor’Wester*, December 14, 1874, page 4.

³¹ “Feminine Miscellany,” *Nor’Wester*, December 14, 1874, page 4.

³² “Feminine Miscellany,” *Nor’Wester*, December 14, 1874, page 4.

³³ “The Wife’s Dream,” “Who Should Not Be a Wife,” and other miscellaneous articles, *Manitoba Free Press*, July 19, 1879, page 2.

³⁴ “A Canadian Phrase,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 19, 1874, page 6.

³⁵ “A Canadian Phrase,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 19, 1874, page 6.

whereas in England a struggling man might be overweighted in the battle of life by a numerous family, in the land to which they were going a man could scarcely have too many children.” To this, the crowd laughed and cheered and he was “greeted by an approving thump on the back by a stalwart young emigrant, who cried out, ‘Right you are Sir; that’s what I’ve been telling Emily.’”³⁶ The article claimed that this had become a slang phrase in Canada, as newspapers had reported the exchange. They said, “one hears everywhere, ‘That’s what I’ve been telling Emily.’”³⁷

The *Canadian Gazette* published a selection of questions and answers from a number of white women settlers in the North-West in 1886, most of whom had been in the region for a number of years, some as much as a decade. The pamphlet was introduced with the idea that “With the mother, wife, or sister, or family, very often rests in a large degree the answer to the first question: ‘Shall we emigrate?’ and also to the second questions, ‘Where shall we make our new home?’”³⁸ These women generally reported that they were happy in their new homes, with the exception of Clementina Livingstone who offered the phrase “don’t” as a response to a question about advice for intending immigrants.³⁹ She also complained that the cows and chickens were not as profitable as the “old country” and when asked about difficulties and if the present circumstances made up for the earlier difficulties, responded that “1. I did, many, and my present position does not make up or compensate for them. 2. I do not like Canadian home life.”⁴⁰ Apart from her comments, the general tone of the pamphlet was that there may be

³⁶ “A Canadian Phrase,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 19, 1874, page 6.

³⁷ “A Canadian Phrase,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 19, 1874, page 6.

³⁸ “What Women Say of the Canadian North-West: A Simple Statement of the Experiences of Women Settled in All Parts of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories” in the *Canadian Gazette* (London: M. Blacklock, 1886), 3.

³⁹ “What Women Say of the Canadian North-West,” 12.

⁴⁰ “What Women Say of the Canadian North-West,” 8.

hardships, but also it was worth it, and there were many opportunities for women, both as wives on farms and for single women looking for work, or to marry.

When these women were asked about the presence of Indigenous people, there were a variety of responses. Notably, when the question “Do you experience any dread of the Indians?” was asked, 81 women said “No” or “None” while 107 women responded with some variation of “No, never did,” “not a bit,” “not in the least, and “none whatsoever.”⁴¹ Around 125 other women responded with more specific comments, although none described “dread.” These responses ranged from many women who claimed they had never seen any Indigenous people, to others who said that they employed them, or that they were peaceful neighbours.⁴²

When discussing immigration to Canada, white women featured prominently in the newspapers and pamphlets, often praised as the ones who would “bring civilization” to the West. As has been discussed, this erased the long presence of Indigenous women at Red River, and who remained important within Red River society as it became Winnipeg, even as violence and threats of violence became more prevalent with the arrival of settlers.

Family, Education, and Religion

Manitoba had a long history with Christian missionaries before it joined Confederation, but the politics of religion faced shifted when combined with nationalism and concerns over the future of immigration to the new province. In his examination of Indigenous missionaries in the British empire more broadly, Tolly Bradford explains that the rise in evangelical Christianity and modernity changed the way that Indigenous missionaries fit into the world. It placed them “into a space between the indigenous and non-indigenous realms and local and global networks. It

⁴¹ “What Women Say of the Canadian North-West,” 41.

⁴² “What Women Say of the Canadian North-West,” 41-43.

forced them to construct a new identity suitable to this liminal position.”⁴³ Scholarship on Christianity and colonialism has often lacked the nuance that Indigenous missionaries reveal in their own writings, often valuing land, language, and Indigenous worldviews while supporting the work of Christian missionaries. Bradford writes, “for nineteenth-century indigenous missionaries, indigeneity meant land, language, and a global collective, but was not necessarily anti-modern or even anti-colonial.”⁴⁴ This means that as we study how colonialism and religion as a colonial tool oppressed Indigenous communities and peoples, it is also important to look at how Christianity “forced them to use the tools, categories, and identities at hand to create new ways to define themselves and their communities.”⁴⁵ This section of this chapter examines how life in Manitoba in the 1870s was shaped by the intersecting ideas of religion, family, and gender.

Norma Jean Hall explains that Red River developed as a series of parishes, but that these parishes were not as religiously distinct or separate as may be first assumed. She writes that “parishes were not populated exclusively by congregants of the predominant religious sect. St. Andrew’s had a mix of Anglican and Presbyterian religionists. In addition to Anglicans and Methodists, St. James was also home to adherents of the Roman Catholic faith. ‘Anglican’ St. Peter had Roman Catholic parishioners, as did St. John and St. Paul. In addition to Roman Catholic, St. Boniface was a centre for Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian congregations.”⁴⁶ She also explains that parish churches were a central meeting place, and a way to organize neighbourhoods, and while “a high proportion of settlers apparently attended church on a regular

⁴³ Tolly Bradford, *Prophetic Identities: Indigenous Missionaries on British Colonial Frontiers, 1850-75* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012), 156.

⁴⁴ Bradford, 158.

⁴⁵ Bradford, 159.

⁴⁶ Norma Jean Hall, “A ‘Perfect Freedom’: Red River as a Settler Society, 1810-1870” M.A. Thesis., University of Manitoba, 2003), 76-77.

basis, an equally large proportion did not.”⁴⁷ While religion was certainly one of the ways communities and families organized themselves at Red River, Hall notes that “parishes did not operate as sealed social units which maintained religious, linguistic, or ‘racial’ identities that super-ceded current or potential kinship.”⁴⁸ Christianity was a significant presence at Red River, but Métis kinship networks demonstrate that neither language nor religion were a limiting factor when it came to building communities and family relationships, prior to Confederation.⁴⁹

As Canada’s attention turned towards Red River, locals found themselves the subjects of colonial missionary writings, suddenly othered from a faith community many had embraced generations earlier. In 1872, a Métis man identifying himself only as “G.” wrote to the editors of the *Manitoban* to express concerns with how the missionaries had portrayed Red River in their reports. He wrote that he was “a Red River man” and did not “know very much about the ways of the world, never having been out of the Red River Settlement,” and yet he had frequently read accounts of Red River that “place us Red River people altogether in a false light in the eyes of the people of Canada and England.”⁵⁰ He specifically called out missions and missionaries, saying that they viewed them as peasants unable to support their own churches. He said, “People outside, from what I gather, seem to regard us as a semi-barbarous semi-civilized race, for whom their pity and their pittances ought to go forth.”⁵¹ He protested this, saying that “The people of Red River today are as well able to support their churches as the people of any other Province in Canada” and concluded that “we have had Confederation, we ought also to have with it self respect.”⁵² In G.’s request for respect, he was calling attention to the tendency of Christian

⁴⁷ Hall, 77.

⁴⁸ Hall, 77.

⁴⁹ Hall, 75-76.

⁵⁰ “Eleemosynary,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, March 11, 1872, page 2.

⁵¹ “Eleemosynary,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, March 11, 1872, page 2.

⁵² “Eleemosynary,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, March 11, 1872, page 2.

missionaries to connect ideas of race or modernity with religion, and specifically the need for “pity” or “charity.”

Bradford notes that in the 1860s the Anglican Church Missionary Society was struggling to create a “fully independent Native church in British North-West America” but were challenged by the local geography and economy of Indigenous peoples.⁵³ They turned to Sakachuwescum, baptised Henry Budd, an Indigenous missionary whose mother (Wash-e-sooE’Squew, the daughter of a Cree woman and Matthew Cocking, chief Hudson’s Bay Company [HBC] factor at York Factory) had introduced him to mission work and had sent him to a CMS residential school at Red River.⁵⁴ He married a Métis woman, Elizabeth Work, and spent his life working for the CMS with the goal of bringing Christianity (and settled agriculture) to the British American North-West.⁵⁵ The CMS Red River committee “believed in the success of a Native ministry, but it doubted that Aboriginal Christians had the economic means to support an independent Native church. Appointing Budd as pastor at The Pas was one way of attempting to achieve this.”⁵⁶ This concern over whether or not an Indigenous church could sustain itself in the British American North-West may have occupied CMS officials and missionaries, but the letter from “G.” reveals another voice in this discussion- the long-standing community of Indigenous Christians at Red River who did not appreciate the colonial, dehumanizing, pitying gaze of the empire.

Continuing the theme of connecting Christianity to the British empire, April 15th was declared a “Day of Thanksgiving” in 1872, where people gave thanks “for the recovery of the

⁵³ Bradford, 117.

⁵⁴ Bradford, 9, 17.

⁵⁵ Bradford, 26.

⁵⁶ Bradford, 117.

Prince of Wales from his recent severe illness.”⁵⁷ Winnipeg businesses were closed, there were flags in the street and it was observed as a holiday, complete with church services that were well attended, as the *Manitoban* reported that “The attendance of worshippers as a rule was large, and, in some instances, even more than could be conveniently accommodated.”⁵⁸ These services praised the British empire, and used patriotic and imperial language. Archdeacon McLean said in his address that “He hoped for an immense immigration to the North-west, and that immigration would be mainly composed of men who were thoroughly loyal—men who would make this great North-west one of the brightest jewels in the British Crown.”⁵⁹ Religion and empire were not separate goals for the settler clergy of Red River. Church services were opportunities to praise the royal family and call for “immense immigration” of the right sort of men who would transform Manitoba into a “jewel” for the empire.

Despite the long history of Christianity at Red River, potential settlers often worried about the presence of religion, and in the language used for their questions, it is clear that the actual question is often about “race” or “civilization” rather than just the presence of churches. In 1873, the *Manitoban* published a series of questions from potential immigrants, with answers provided by Mr. W. Frank Lynn, who claimed to be an immigration agent in Manitoba. Lynn had been an immigration agent with the Canadian Land and Emigration Company of London in the 1860s, but after traveling to the Canadian and American wests in the 1870s, seemed to employ writing newspaper correspondence to the *Globe* and in a variety of local Winnipeg newspapers.⁶⁰ He developed an interest in the Canadian northwest as one of the founding members of the

⁵⁷ “Thanksgiving Day: A General Holiday—Services in all the Churches,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, April 20, 1872, page 2.

⁵⁸ “Thanksgiving Day: A General Holiday—Services in all the Churches,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, April 20, 1872, page 2.

⁵⁹ “Thanksgiving Day: A General Holiday—Services in all the Churches,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, April 20, 1872, page 2.

⁶⁰ Virginia G. Berry, “Lynn, Washington Frank,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/lynn_washington_frank_13E.html.

Royal Colonial Institute, which included Alexander Kennedy Isbister and F. W. Chesson, mentioned in earlier chapters.⁶¹ He may have briefly been an immigration agent in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1878-79, as well as in London, England from 1881 to 1885, but this did not seem to be a permanent career for him after the 1860s. Nevertheless, he used that title in his correspondence in Red River.

One question to the *Manitoban* asked if Manitoba had “churches, Christians, and the usual accompaniments of civilized life.”⁶² Lynn responded that “Most decidedly, we have churches and Christians, clergymen and even bishops and an Archbishop, and although one cannot expect the refinement of Belgrave Square on the North-western plains, yet there is the ordinary mixture of classes usually to be expected in a border town or in a newly settled province, with even some of the polish of a European Capital.”⁶³ Lynn’s answer addressed the concerns about churches, but also pointed out the presence of the formal religious hierarchy, and explains that Red River had similarities to a “border town” but also was a long-settled place. Christianity was hardly new to Manitoba in the 1870s.

Churches and religious institutions oversaw most of the education at Red River, and were thus an important part of life for young people at Red River. Each season, the prizes given to the boys at St. John’s Collegiate School would be published in the newspapers. In 1873, the *Free Press* reported the names of the winners, and the names Budd, Inkster, Flett, and Bird appeared the most frequently, with these four families winning most of the awards over various grade levels and subjects.⁶⁴ James Flett was “admitted as Maccallum scholar” and John Hector Inkster

⁶¹ Berry, “Lynn, Washington Frank.”

⁶² “Mr. Lynn’s Answer to Immigrant Correspondence,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, April 11, 1873, page 2.

⁶³ “Mr. Lynn’s Answer to Immigrant Correspondence,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, April 11, 1873, page 2.

⁶⁴ “St. John’s College,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 21, 1873, page 5.

“was admitted as Prince of Wales scholar.”⁶⁵ The education of girls was also important, as in 1875, advertisements appeared in the *Free Press* for the “Prospect House” in Mapleton, Manitoba and run by Mrs. McKenzie, and Miss Moore.⁶⁶ They were assisted by Reverend W. H. Moore “for instruction in English, French, Drawing, Painting, Music, Singing, Ornamental Leather Work, and the art of Modelling Wax Flowers.”⁶⁷

These educational institutions were not new to Red River, and existed long before Canadian settlers arrived in large numbers. Norma Jean Hall describes the Academy that instructed Red River children from at least the 1820s, saying that for wealthy fur traders “their concern was that their ‘country born’ sons and daughters be equipped to meet the possibility of leading lives in a fully Europeanized context.”⁶⁸ Not everyone valued this “European” education, and “Whatever benefit the education was to confer was moderated by the perception of various parties from equally varied perspectives that the whole was an exercise in pretentiousness.”⁶⁹ The Academy closed in 1859, but mission schools remained, and missionaries like Henry Budd “attempted to have all his children educated at elite mission schools in Red River, usually sending them to the colony for years at a time.”⁷⁰ Historian Erin Millions has written about British-Métis children and their mobility throughout the British empire. Some children were educated in their homes or in parish schools, while others were sent across the ocean to Britain or to far away Canadian colonies, often based on social class and the kinship networks they lived within.⁷¹ This framing places fur trade Métis families within a transnational narrative, evident in

⁶⁵ “St. John’s College,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 21, 1873, page 5.

⁶⁶ “Education: Prospect House, Mapleton, Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 7, 1875, page 3.

⁶⁷ “Education: Prospect House, Mapleton, Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 7, 1875, page 3.

⁶⁸ Hall, 119.

⁶⁹ Hall, 120.

⁷⁰ Bradford, 86.

⁷¹ Erin Millions, “Portraits and Gravestones: Documenting the Transnational Lives of Nineteenth-Century British-Métis Students,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 29, no. 1 (2018), 2-3.

photographs, burial sites, and gravestones.⁷² Education at Red River was only one branch of education available for Métis children and families, but remained important, as a place children may return to after completing their education, or a place their siblings remained while they were educated away from Red River.⁷³

Viewing Red River as a place filled with youths and children, some in the care and companies of their families, and others on their own or in educational institutions for large periods of time helps to shape our perspective of Red River. Hall points out that in many Métis families “Children appear to have been accepted as full participants in society” and that “Inclusion in all social, economic, and ritual activities would have ensured that, as in First Nations societies, Métis children learned primarily through observation.”⁷⁴ In other families, colonial influences would have shaped family life. Adele Perry explains that “colonial intimacies” and empire changed in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and that “The relationships, households, and families formed by newcomer men and Indigenous women that worried and sustained the fur trade in the middle decades of the nineteenth century came to vex and confound the settler colonial and national projects that were created in what had been fur-trade and Indigenous space.”⁷⁵ This worry and “vexing” about fur trade families and the Britishness of spaces like Red River can be seen newspapers, and the role of young people and respectability were often commented upon, as seen in a series of articles from 1874, beginning with an apology to “two highly respectable and innocent young ladies” regarding a recent article that had accused them of “immodesty, in the matter of driving through town while a gentleman

⁷² Millions, 3.

⁷³ Millions, 26-27.

⁷⁴ Hall, 78.

⁷⁵ Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 142.

companion played a lively air on the bag-pipes.”⁷⁶ They acknowledged that “the item referred to was published unthinkingly,” as there was a difference between this story and others they had commented on previously, as “one was in the daytime while the latter were at night.”⁷⁷

The following story was also concerning modesty and respectability, as the *Nor'Wester* said:

Youths of Winnipeg, hark! Whenever you go into the Red River to bathe, show a little sense of decency, and endeavor to seek out a somewhat secluded spot in which to operate. Don't conclude that it is all right to simply go across the river, because some of our citizens live close to the bank, and our stream is only about a hundred yards wide, whereas the human vision has been known to extend as far as a hundred and twenty-five yards. If the evil is not remedied, we trust our police officers will see to the matter.⁷⁸

The behaviour of youths became a problem as the population of Red River grew, and newspaper accounts reveal the reliance on institutions like the police force to create Winnipeg into a civilized place, presumably where youths did not bathe within the eyesight of the homeowners along the river.

Health and Illness

Like many nineteenth-century cities, Winnipeg was plagued by disease. Epidemic disease became a topic of discussion in the local newspapers, both for the current residents of Winnipeg, and for potential immigrants deciding where to raise their families. Managing health and disease in colonial spaces should be understood as part of the colonial process, and linked to the desire for more immigration. Regulating bodies and disease was part of proving that Manitoba could be a desirable location for immigrants.

⁷⁶ “Local News,” *Nor'Wester*, June 29, 1874, page 3.

⁷⁷ “Local News,” *Nor'Wester*, June 29, 1874, page 3.

⁷⁸ “Youths of Winnipeg,” *Nor'Wester*, June 29, 1874, page 3.

In 1871, the *Manitoban* said that “Winnipeg is in a most filthy state. We are inviting disease, and something must be promptly done to mitigate the ravages of typhoid fever among us.”⁷⁹ A few months later, the *Manitoban* expressed concern that “we are threatened with an epidemic in the form of a typhoid or typhus fever. Already in Winnipeg it has made considerable progress, and the question is how best to stay the plague.”⁸⁰ They said that these illnesses “indicates something wrong in the ventilation, cleanliness, drainage, water, or habits of living.”⁸¹ The writer suggested that there was an immense amount of manure along the river, so that could be a potential problem, and one that could be solved by requiring manure piles moved away from the river. The article continued, saying that “In Winnipeg, and in a great measure all over, the water supply is defective in the extreme, and what is of it, is better fitted to destroy rather than to sustain and invigorate life.”⁸² Most water was taken from the river, and “At best, it is a very distinct compound of sand and water—the sand being present to a fearful extent, as may be seen by allowing a glass full of it to stand for a few hours.”⁸³ If the wind blew at all, the water turned into a “think, repulsive, vegetable decoction. Besides, large quantities of noxious matter are thrown into it.”⁸⁴ This was a concern for the future of Winnipeg as an immigration hub, as “its continued use by a rapidly increasing and promiscuous population [is] sure, in the end, to produce disease and death.”⁸⁵ The only solution, according to the writers, was for the city to build wells. They also suggested that the “large numbers of Indians about” should be cut off “from any contact with fever cases. Should typhus, or any similar epidemic get a footing

⁷⁹ “Sanitary Arrangements,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, April 5, 1871, page 2.

⁸⁰ “Sanitary,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, September 9, 1871, page 2.

⁸¹ “Sanitary,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, September 9, 1871, page 2.

⁸² “Sanitary,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, September 9, 1871, page 2.

⁸³ “Sanitary,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, September 9, 1871, page 2.

⁸⁴ “Sanitary,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, September 9, 1871, page 2.

⁸⁵ “Sanitary,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, September 9, 1871, page 2.

amongst them, it will not only decimate them, but it will largely increase the chances of infection among us.”⁸⁶

Water was a major concern in early Winnipeg, with people collecting rainwater in barrels and reservoirs, or using private wells. Watermen transported water on sleighs or trucks depending on the season, and others drew water directly from the rivers.⁸⁷ Typhoid associated with drinking “unprocessed river water and was colloquially called Red River fever.”⁸⁸ There were ways around this, and older residents of Red River carried boiled water in “pannikins” for drinking, but “this Indigenous knowledge did not transfer consistently to the newcomers” and large-scale migration meant that new solutions were needed.⁸⁹ The city of Winnipeg was concerned with how to support large-scale immigration with a safe supply of drinking water.

In 1874, the *Nor’Wester* published a number of suggestions for how to try and clean up the water in the city, concluding that “As our population increases unless we take prompt measures in looking after the sanitary state of the city, Winnipeg will be one of the most unhealthy cities of the Dominion.”⁹⁰ The following year, the *Free Press* wrote that the epidemics of typhoid fever were a “semi-annual visitation” and that to hope that it would not be a problem when factoring in the state of the river and city, which were filled with “a long winter’s accumulation of household filth, rubbish, and excreta.”⁹¹ By 1880, the city had found a private solution, by giving a twenty-year contract to Winnipeg Water Works to filter water from the Assiniboine River.

⁸⁶ “Sanitary,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, September 9, 1871, page 2.

⁸⁷ Adele Perry, *Aqueduct: Colonialism, Resources, and the Histories We Remember* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2016), 36.

⁸⁸ Perry, *Aqueduct*, 36.

⁸⁹ Perry, *Aqueduct*, 36.

⁹⁰ “The Health of the City,” *Nor’Wester*, August 24, 1874, page 2.

⁹¹ “Health,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 6, 1875, page 4.

Those concerns over dirty water and the cyclical bouts of typhoid were not discussed when newspapers were advertising Manitoba to immigrants. Manitoba was generally seen as far healthier than other places, as in the same correspondence answered by Mr. Frank Lynn about religion, he was asked about the health of the climate and the general population, and he asserted that Manitoba had none of the fevers or agues that were present in places like Kansas.⁹² Yet, in a report on the death rates of 1872, the increased deaths were “evidence of the ravages of the typhoid fever and whooping cough which were so prevalent recently.”⁹³ There were also high rates of infant and childhood mortality, as “the mortality among children, principally infants, is nearly three times as great as the total number of deaths from five years and upwards.”⁹⁴

Immigration pamphlets tried to reassure potential settlers that Manitoba would be a healthy place to live. This was shown in the testimony of the Select Standing Committee on Immigration and Colonization, where it was asked if “children grow up healthily?” To which the witnesses responded that there was “no such thing” as ague in Manitoba, and that children “are very healthy. There is always something or other affecting children, but we have no epidemic of any kind.”⁹⁵ When asked about fevers, the witnesses said that “diseases may become more prevalent as the country is settled up” and that “there have been cases of [typhoid], where houses have been overcrowded, and where a number of people have slept together, and houses are badly ventilated.”⁹⁶ These observations the presence of illness contradicted claims about the health of life in Manitoba, but illness was largely blamed on overcrowding or ventilation rather than anything endemic to life in Manitoba.

⁹² “Mr. Lynn’s Answer to Immigrant Correspondence,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, April 11, 1873, page 2.

⁹³ “Mortality,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 7, 1873, page 2.

⁹⁴ “Mortality,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 7, 1873, page 2.

⁹⁵ James Trow, *Select Standing Committee on Immigration and Colonization* (Ottawa: MacLean, Roger & Co, 1877), 152.

⁹⁶ Trow, *Select Standing Committee*, 152.

Indigenous Interactions

Red River and Winnipeg were predominantly Indigenous spaces in the early 1870s, and yet interactions with First Nations people and groups still made the settler newspapers. At times these news stories reflected an appreciation for Indigenous knowledge or wisdom when giving advice to settlers and newcomers, but at other times the newspaper coverage perpetuated the same sort of racist tropes as was commonplace in important Ontario newspapers like the *Globe*, as has been studied by Mark Cronlund Anderson and Carmen L. Robertson. Cronlund and Robertson explain that national newspapers were involved in creating colonial narratives and “the press served as a primary teacher about important public issues such as the construction of race and identity.”⁹⁷ In places like Red River many people would not have learned about Indigenous peoples through the newspapers, but rather would have formed opinions through their day-to-day interactions, but the press, through its framing of issues, also primes readers, “providing them with ready-made consumable opinions.”⁹⁸ As the white population of Red River grew in numbers, the settler readership of the newspapers also grew, and the ways Indigenous peoples were covered in the local media reflects this changing demographic and power dynamic.

Perhaps nothing made the intended settler readership of the newspapers more clear than nonsense articles like “Noremac’s Nonsense” from 1873, where the writer made joke after joke about Indigenous people, based on a fictionalized encounter with “an aboriginal individual accompanied by his wife and a squad of little Loes, whom he was putting through squaw’d drill.”⁹⁹ The jokes were largely racist and offensive, like “On the heads of Lo and Mrs. Lo were

⁹⁷ Mark Cronlund Anderson and Carmen L. Robertson, *Seeing Red: A History of Natives in Canadian Newspapers* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2011), 39.

⁹⁸ Anderson and Robertson, 38.

⁹⁹ “Noremac’s Nonsense,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 19, 1873, page 5.

so many parasites that they were quite a pair o' sights themselves."¹⁰⁰ This type of racist commentary continued for an entire column, and reflects who the editors viewed as their primary readers, dedicating a large amount of space to this racist commentary.

In earlier years, newspapers observed the presence of Indigenous peoples in and around Red River, at times through simple observations, and at other times reflecting fear and racism. The *Manitoban* observed in 1871 that "The Indians are gathering about the town in considerable numbers, and seem to enjoy the extreme heat and the fresh air wonderfully. In the Portage district we learn the Sioux are going about in bands of some two or three hundred, great in paint and the war-dance. Black is the favorite colour this season."¹⁰¹ A letter to the editor of the *Manitoba Liberal* identifying himself as "One of the Sufferers," complained that there were "demons in human shape who prowl about the streets nightly making the air resound with noises that are truly appalling, causing us poor nervous beings to tremble in our beds, and shudder at the idea that the Indian treaty has broken up in the scalping of the Commissioner and in a declaration of war by the noble red man."¹⁰² The letter complained that the police would "appear at the scene" but would not "put a stop to it."¹⁰³ The editor responded that "some of our young bloods are much given to what they term 'whooping it up' nights" and that "respectable people don't appreciate it."¹⁰⁴ The treaty negotiations brought many First Nations to the Red River area, and the *Manitoba Liberal* offered their thoughts on the social gatherings, as well as formal negotiations. The negotiations were reported as generally going well, but the *Liberal* noted:

They were told that on Monday [the Commissioner] must have their final answer, as he would then close the negotiations. Monday forenoon was spent in useless speechmaking, in which 'Yellow Quill,' the Portage chief, seemed to get farther and farther from the

¹⁰⁰ "Noremac's Nonsense," *Manitoba Free Press*, April 19, 1873, page 5.

¹⁰¹ "The Indians," *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 24, 1871, page 2.

¹⁰² "Whooping It Up," *Manitoba Liberal*, August 9, 1871, page 2.

¹⁰³ "Whooping It Up," *Manitoba Liberal*, August 9, 1871, page 2.

¹⁰⁴ "Whooping It Up," *Manitoba Liberal*, August 9, 1871, page 2.

matter at hand, and threatened to go home without treating for his portion of land at all. However, his influence was brought to bear on the wayward faction, and they finally agreed to accept the terms if these were really the best which the Commissioner had authority to offer.¹⁰⁵

Whether or not Indigenous nations were signing and agreeing to treaties was an important topic for newspapers and their readers, both locally and for national or international readers, as any potential immigration and settlement depended on treaties and land. As Howard Adams explains, “To complete the expansion plan, Ottawa needed the vast lands, not only for the C.P.R. but also as an agricultural area for immigrants.”¹⁰⁶ This expansion created tensions between the settler and Indigenous residents of Red River, and the local press was aware of these tensions.

By 1872, tensions persisted, and in a long article explaining the dynamic at Red River and in the North-West more generally, the *Manitoban* pointed out that the Canadian military and treaty negotiators needed to exercise more caution going forward. The *Manitoban* said that “Since the inception of Canadian connexion with Rupert’s Land, difficulties have been generated with a constancy almost too great for endurance [...] Fortunately we have got over the most of our difficulties, and things were settling down into something like their normal condition, when all at once, we have a new development in the form of an Indian Difficulty.”¹⁰⁷ They clarified that “we are no alarmists,” but “unless the utmost caution is taken and the utmost skill of manipulation is exercised, any day may find us plunged into the midst of an Indian war.”¹⁰⁸ The writer explained that some would dismiss this, saying that they viewed First Nations as “the effeminate race” and that “the writer, with his own eyes, has seen a chief and his old mother grossly insulted—insulted in the Indian sense—by Colonel Wolseley himself in the presence of

¹⁰⁵ “The Indian Treaty,” *Manitoba Liberal*, August 2, 1871, page 2.

¹⁰⁶ Howard Adams, *Prison of Grass: Canada from a Native Point of View*, 2nd ed. (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1989), 61.

¹⁰⁷ “The Indians,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, July 27, 1872, page 2.

¹⁰⁸ “The Indians,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, July 27, 1872, page 2.

fifty of his people—so lightly did the gallant Colonel regard such canaille.”¹⁰⁹ Others “look upon the modern Indian as much a *child* of the forest and the prairie now, as he was in the days of William Penn, and treat him accordingly, and try to frighten him into subserviency by the sight of a cocked hat and an old uniform.”¹¹⁰ Government officials from Ottawa “seem to have overlooked the Indian altogether in their calculations.”¹¹¹ As a result of all of this, the Fort Francis treaty negotiations had ended, as “Mr. Commissioner Simpson has been obliged to depart from Fort Francis without effecting a treaty, leaving the Indians in an attitude approximating to something very like hostility.”¹¹² This was described as “a mere commencement” to the ongoing “difficulties,” as “west to the Rocky Mountains are thousands if not tens of thousands of Indians of the most warlike caste, who have to be dealt with.”¹¹³ Continuing their observations, the *Manitoban* reminded their readers that “these men are no children. They are sharp, shrewd, business men, and can sell a skin with any man; and what is worse and most to be deplored, is that amongst these heathen tribes, are mingled many free traders—most of whom are Americans and some of these outlaws—whose influence over the native is in many districts paramount, and whose interests will instigate them to use every effort to prevent treaties and keep out immigration.”¹¹⁴

After this plea for caution in maintaining peace with First Nations, the *Manitoban* offered a solution to these difficulties: to treat them as equals and “without any flummery” but unfortunately for many people, there were only two options, “treating the Indians as children or treating them as outlaws—food or the musket.”¹¹⁵ They connected these ideas to the safety of

¹⁰⁹ “The Indians,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, July 27, 1872, page 2.

¹¹⁰ “The Indians,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, July 27, 1872, page 2.

¹¹¹ “The Indians,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, July 27, 1872, page 2.

¹¹² “The Indians,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, July 27, 1872, page 2.

¹¹³ “The Indians,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, July 27, 1872, page 2.

¹¹⁴ “The Indians,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, July 27, 1872, page 2.

¹¹⁵ “The Indians,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, July 27, 1872, page 2.

white families by saying that “when people jump from the idea of toying with the Indian to the idea of exterminating him, the matter assumes a much more serious aspect, and our own lives and safety, and the lives and safety of our wives and families must be taken into calculation.”¹¹⁶ In other words, people should not just assume they could send in soldiers and “shoot down every man of them” because “between Fort Garry on the east and the Rocky Mountains on the west there were at least *fifteen thousand fighting men*.”¹¹⁷

By 1873, tensions were high, as to both the east and west of Winnipeg, Indigenous people were “dissatisfied.” Reports from the Lake of Woods region said that “The Indians are reported to be in a miserable, starving condition, owing to the failure of the fish and rabbit supplies in that section.”¹¹⁸ The high amounts of rain had raised lake levels and the usual fishing places had been disturbed. When Hon. James McKay arrived, he wanted to “alleviate their distress as much as possible: and so “set the Indians to work cutting wood for the steamers” in exchange for store credit for provisions.¹¹⁹ When the treaty was eventually negotiated in the Lake of the Woods region, “An Indian gentleman, stamping on the ground as he spoke, asked whether we heard the gold and silver rattling under his feet? No one had heard the metallic sound, so the Indian proceeded to give us a most gratifying account of what we should find as soon as we had made this treaty. With the views held by him there can be no doubt that he would make a most valuable immigration agent, as the dissemination of his knowledge amongst the miners of the Western States would bring a large increase of immigration to the province.”¹²⁰

The Dakota were also still upset about the failed treaty negotiations, and a new Commissioner, Paschal Breland was sent west to meet with them. The *Manitoban* reported that

¹¹⁶ “The Indians,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, July 27, 1872, page 2.

¹¹⁷ “The Indians,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, July 27, 1872, page 2.

¹¹⁸ “From Lake of the Woods: Indians Starving,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, March 29, 1873, page 2.

¹¹⁹ “From Lake of the Woods: Indians Starving,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, March 29, 1873, page 2.

¹²⁰ “The Indian Treaty: Full Text of the Treaty,” *Manitoba Free Press*, October 18, 1873, page 7.

“He is thoroughly acquainted with Indian character and will not be at all likely either to deceive or slight them.”¹²¹ This was important, as “The Sioux complain of the treatment some of their band received at the hands of the ex-Indian Commissioner Simpson, last Fall. They claim that he did not keep his promise, but treated them with marked contempt, and any one acquainted with Indians known that they are not to be dealt with thus, with impunity.”¹²² Treaty negotiations were a major cause for concern in the early 1870s, as many First Nations expressed concern that their needs and demands were not being taken seriously by the Canadian government. Adams described the treaties as serving “the purposes of colonization more efficiently than other forms of imperial conquest” and as legitimizing “the imprisonment of status Indians under white agents backed by police and soldiers,” so it is not surprising that the negotiations of these treaties produced tensions noted in the newspapers.¹²³

A couple of weeks later, a rumour went around Winnipeg, saying that “the Sioux had commenced a bloody massacre in the White Mud region. First three men had been killed; then a family of eight had been butchered, and their dwelling burnt; next the number of slain had reached fifteen, then thirty, and then it began to look very much as if the whole population of the Province were to be jerked baldheaded by the bloodthirsty braves.”¹²⁴ This was investigated, and “It is more than probable that the rumor originated in an item which appeared in the *Free Press* of that date, which stated that Mr. Marlatt, of the Portage, had fired on some burglarious Sioux, and which, in passing from mouth to mouth, got mutilated and twisted, added to, subtracted from, and multiplied into the formidable rumor which caused Winnipeg to quake and strong men

¹²¹ “The Sioux: A Commissioner Sent to Deal With Them, Why They are Dissatisfied, What They Have Threatened,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, March 29, 1873, page 2.

¹²² “The Sioux: A Commissioner Sent to Deal With Them, Why They are Dissatisfied, What They Have Threatened,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, March 29, 1873, page 2.

¹²³ Adams, 63.

¹²⁴ “The Indian Scare: Rumor,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 19, 1873, page 5.

to grow pale and look at their firearms.”¹²⁵ This exaggeration of rumours to strike fear into readers was common for newspapers, and “American reporters frequently exaggerated or simply fabricated news about Aboriginals in the late nineteenth century” in order to fill column space, and as newspapers competed for readers and deadlines, led to “sloppier attention to detail and accuracy.”¹²⁶

Violence between Indigenous peoples was regularly covered in the newspapers, with brief reports making statements like “There was a stabbing affray across the river last Thursday, among some half-breeds, but not of a serious nature—a penknife in the arm. No arrests.”¹²⁷ Alcohol was often identified as the cause of these incidents, and it also featured in newspaper stories, as when a number of “Indians from St. Peters” were in town and “Many of them were drunk.”¹²⁸ This coverage all played into stereotypes of archetypes that were commonplace in newspaper coverage in Canada, as Anderson and Robertson list, “the moribund Native, the savage, the Indian princess, the stoic or noble Native, the childish Native, the intemperate Native (a.k.a. the drunkard) and so on.”¹²⁹ Considering that for many readers outside of Manitoba in the 1870s, the newspaper coverage may have been their main exposure to Indigenous peoples, the portrayals during this time were creating stereotypes, not just enforcing them.

In a series of short pieces of news from Lake Winnipeg, the presence of Indigenous peoples was noted for a number of reasons, generally in depersonalized stories that portrayed Indigenous peoples as outside of mainstream society. First, they were described as “suffering” from illness, a long winter, and “much misery from want of food.”¹³⁰ Unnamed Indigenous

¹²⁵ “The Indian Scare: Rumor,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 19, 1873, page 5.

¹²⁶ Anderson and Robertson, 39.

¹²⁷ “Local News,” *Nor’Wester*, June 29, page 3.

¹²⁸ “Drunken Indians,” *The Standard*, November 28, 1874, page 2,

¹²⁹ Anderson and Robertson, 7.

¹³⁰ “News From Lake Winnipeg,” *Nor’Wester*, March 15, 1875, page 3.

people were also quoted as experts on the climate, as “The Indians say that an early spring may be expected, the pelts of the fur-bearing animals showing earlier signs of change than usual.” They were also presented as childlike, in a story when a “large, comet-shaped luminous body was observed.” The sight of this comet apparently “created the greatest consternation among the Indians, who believed the world was in danger of catching fire from the collision.”¹³¹

Conflicts arose in the North-West when a geologist attempted to take a diamond drill into the region, where they “were there met by a party of Crees, who refused to let them go further.” The reason for this refusal was that “treaty had not yet been made with them” and therefore no drilling could be done.¹³² Treaties continued to be an important topic of discussion, as they were negotiated in the North-West. The *Free Press* reported that it could hardly be overestimated how important the treaties were for “paving the way for civilization and commerce.”¹³³ The writer continued, “Our Indians have always been proverbial for their friendly disposition towards the whites, but it must be remembered that up to this time they have had little cause of complaint.”¹³⁴ The fur trade and the important role of Indigenous peoples had meant that the HBC had aimed to “conciliate and even assist the Indians, because on them the very life of the fur trade depended.”¹³⁵ While treaty negotiations had been fraught in the United States, the *Free Press* insisted that Canada “has reason to feel gratified with the satisfactory manner in which the treaties already made have been conducted. Lieut.-Governor Morris has shown himself perfectly capable of dealing with the Indians, and by his firmness, kindness, and love of fair play, he has already won the confidence of the red men.” He was not the only one praised, as James McKay

¹³¹ “News From Lake Winnipeg,” *Nor'Wester*, March 15, 1875, page 3.

¹³² “The North-West Trouble: Latest From the ‘Seat of War’,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 7, 1875, page 3.

¹³³ “The Indian Treaties,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 8, 1878, page 4.

¹³⁴ “The Indian Treaties,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 8, 1878, page 4.

¹³⁵ “The Indian Treaties,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 8, 1878, page 4.

brought “knowledge of the Indian character” and that had “assisted greatly in accomplishing the good that has already been done.”¹³⁶

Canada and the United States had different approaches to Indigenous peoples, at least that was how the Manitoba newspapers explained it. In 1874, the *Nor'Wester* published an article from the *New York World*, which explained the difference between the Canadian and American policies, specifically how Lord Dufferin had given a speech that demonstrated “the open secret of Canada’s success in treating her Indians, and conveying an intimation of her future progressive policy.”¹³⁷ In the speech, he said that “the nomadic habit was not to be shaken off in one or two generations” but that “in the coming generation they would be expected more equally to compete with their white fellow-subjects in agriculture and industry.”¹³⁸ This speech also emphasised that the Dominion and mother country had “the policy of common sense and good faith,” and that Britain never broke its word once it was given.¹³⁹ The contrast was made to the various examples of American policies, where treaties were made and then the regions were still “invaded,” as while the “ink is hardly dry on the Laramie treaty,” with the promise “that the Black Hills should not be invaded!”¹⁴⁰

The *New York Times* also discussed this topic, as a Bishop Whipple from Minnesota wrote in to defend the Sioux against the remarks of a local politician. He described how people kept making treaties only to see their reservation lands invaded. One example given was the invasion of the Black Hills, as the treaty was violated as soon as gold was discovered. As Whipple wrote,

¹³⁶ “The Indian Treaties,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 8, 1878, page 4.

¹³⁷ “The Contrast,” *Nor'Wester*, September 21, 1874, page 2.

¹³⁸ “The Contrast,” *Nor'Wester*, September 21, 1874, page 2.

¹³⁹ “The Contrast,” *Nor'Wester*, September 21, 1874, page 2.

¹⁴⁰ “The Contrast,” *Nor'Wester*, September 21, 1874, page 2.

The treaty failed. The evil has been done. The Black Hills swarm with miners. We shall have another Indian war and spend some millions of dollars to swell the hundreds of millions already spent in Indian wars. Many of our brave officers and soldiers will lose their lives in a way which brings them no glory: many a home will be destroyed and innocent people murdered by massacre.¹⁴¹

He made a plea to the faith of the readers, saying that “Perhaps, before the year closes, it may dawn upon the minds of the American people that God is not blind, and that people who sow robbery and violence will reap robbery and murder.”¹⁴² Writing plainly, he said that “Our Indian system is a web of blunders and crimes,” before making disparaging remarks about the “helplessness” of Indigenous peoples. This was followed by a comparison to Canada, saying, “North of us there is another nation of our own race. Since the American revolution they have expended no money in Indian wars. They have lost no lives by Indian massacre.”¹⁴³ He said this was not because the land was not desired or any other reason, but that “In Canada they are the wards of a Christian nation. They select good men as agents,” along with making sure that crimes against them were punished, so they were “amenable to the law.”¹⁴⁴

The *Ottawa Free Press* published an article discussing immigration in the North-West, and said that “to the intelligent immigrant, Canadian institutions are much more preferable to those of our cousins across the border, and they have further the advantage of being at peace with the aborigines of the land; there being no Sitting Bull to disturb their slumbers or drive off their herds.”¹⁴⁵ They credited the Canadian government, saying that “this happy issue of the dealings

¹⁴¹ “Red and White Men: Interesting Letter from the Bishop of Minnesota,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 8, 1876, page 6.

¹⁴² “Red and White Men: Interesting Letter from the Bishop of Minnesota,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 8, 1876, page 6.

¹⁴³ “Red and White Men: Interesting Letter from the Bishop of Minnesota,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 8, 1876, page 6.

¹⁴⁴ “Red and White Men: Interesting Letter from the Bishop of Minnesota,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 8, 1876, page 6.

¹⁴⁵ “Notes on the North-West,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 4, 1876, page 3.

with the aborigines is due principally to the wise and enlightened policy advocated by the Department of the Interior.”¹⁴⁶

The *Monetary Times* also discussed these differences, connecting it to immigration policy and the success each country was having in drawing immigrants. One factor potential immigrants should consider, was that “there is no reason to apprehend on Canadian territory any outbreak of hostilities with the Indians, who, being protected by our laws, are not liable to be forced into rebellion against the authorities.”¹⁴⁷ In 1877, in a response to questions about immigration, the *Free Press* said that “There are a good many Indians, but they are not troublesome.”¹⁴⁸

Despite the claims that things were peaceful in Canada, by the end of the 1870s, that was not necessarily remaining true. In 1878, the *Free Press* said that “Remembering all the boasting in which Canadians have been wont to indulge as to the superiority of their system of managing Indians over that pursued by their neighbors in the United States, it will be somewhat humiliating if the national pride, after soaring like the rocket, should be doomed to come down like the stick.”¹⁴⁹ Sitting Bull had become a refugee in Canada, and there were concerns that he would entice the Blackfeet to rebellion. They wrote that the government should “take some steps for the protection of the settlements in the far west, as well as to afford support to the Mounted Police stationed from 1000 to 1200 miles from here.”¹⁵⁰ The next article explained that the nations in Canada “have always been on good terms with the whites” but that “Sitting Bull has seized the occasion of the first sign of discontent among the tribes to instil into their minds grave doubts as to whether they are not being deceived by the Canadian Government.”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ “Notes on the North-West,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 4, 1876, page 3.

¹⁴⁷ “The Future of the North-West,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 3, 1877, page 4.

¹⁴⁸ “Answers to Questions About Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 3, 1877, page 2.

¹⁴⁹ “Indian Difficulties in the North-West,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 30, 1878, page 4.

¹⁵⁰ “Indian Difficulties in the North-West,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 30, 1878, page 4.

¹⁵¹ “Misunderstandings in the Far West,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 30, 1878, page 4.

Sitting Bull clearly could not be blamed for all of the “difficulties” in the North-West, as starvation and desperation were setting in by the end of the 1870s. In 1879, the *Free Press* reported on a case of cannibalism, saying that there had been rumours regarding the “cannibalistic practices of an Indian” and recently there had been an example. A man was in jail for “eating his wife and four children, who died of starvation—at least he said they did; but it is suspected that the redskin murdered some of them himself.”¹⁵² James Daschuk has explained that cannibalism was not unheard of during times of extreme famine, and was documented among both settler and Indigenous communities during particularly harsh winters and during the fur trade wars.¹⁵³ The collapse of the bison hunt towards the end of the 1870s created those same conditions, and while many died of starvation or the diseases made worse by famine, others were driven to desperate measures.¹⁵⁴

In a significant shift from earlier observations of the prevalence of Indigenous peoples in Manitoba, by 1880, Indigenous people were portrayed as something of a novelty in the immigration literature. When Manitoba sent a sample of its agricultural products as part of the Manitoba Exhibit of 1879, they also set up a “genuine Indian wigwam” complete with furs and a fire pit.¹⁵⁵ Displayed in front of the dwelling was a “richly beaded hunting shirt and feathered head dress of a chief of the [Blackfoot], while on the right hand of the entrance stands a Blackfoot chief, clad in all his glory of war paint and savage finery.”¹⁵⁶ There was also a Red River camp, with “a genuine Red River cart.”¹⁵⁷ Promotional materials about Manitoba by 1880 were relegating Indigenous peoples to part of a historic past for viewers to observe. Gina

¹⁵² “A Horrible Tale! Murder and Cannibalism in the Far West,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 4, 1879, page 4.

¹⁵³ James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013), 56.

¹⁵⁴ Daschuk, 100-101.

¹⁵⁵ *The Manitoba Exhibit of 1879* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Free Press Steam Printer, 1880), 11.

¹⁵⁶ *The Manitoba Exhibit of 1879* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Free Press Steam Printer, 1880), 11.

¹⁵⁷ *The Manitoba Exhibit of 1879* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Free Press Steam Printer, 1880), 12.

Starblanket and Dallas Hunt describe these narratives as they operated together. There was the myth of the “vanishing Indian,” the “murderable Indian” whose presence justified violence “in the name of progress and prosperity,” and the “irrelevant/incidental Indian,” which was connected to the myth of elimination, where some Indigenous people would remain “but settlers need not worry about them or their counter-claims.”¹⁵⁸

Military and Violence

The fact that Manitoba spent its first few years under military occupation is important both to its general history as a province, but also to the impact that environment had on the immigration narratives in the 1870s. Initially, the presence of the Canadian military in Manitoba was debated by Riel’s government in 1870, before they had arrived.¹⁵⁹ One of the debated motions was that “the military force required in this country be composed of natives of the country during four years.”¹⁶⁰ The term “natives of the country” was debated further, to decide if it included “all born in the country—Indians half-breeds and everyone else.”¹⁶¹ Riel responded that “I am a native of the country; and I would say that it means the people now in the country without any distinction.”¹⁶² John (William) Fraser did not agree with this idea, as he said “I claim to be a native of the country, but I have no desire to be a soldier” and he worried that limiting who could be soldiers would mean that many who did not want to join may feel compelled.¹⁶³ Reverend George Flett, speaking French, added that he did not think that “foreign troops, if they

¹⁵⁸ Gina Starblanket and Dallas Hunt, *Storying Violence: Unravelling Colonial Narratives in the Stanley Trial* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2020), 31.

¹⁵⁹ For a list of Manitoba’s government representatives in 1870, see Lawrence J. Barkwell, “Manitoba’s Provisional Government of 1870: The Convention of Forty,” *Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research*, <https://www.Métismuseum.ca/resource.php/12539>.

¹⁶⁰ “Seventh Day: Council Chamber,” *The New Nation*, February 4, 1870, page 2.

¹⁶¹ “Seventh Day: Council Chamber,” *The New Nation*, February 4, 1870, page 2.

¹⁶² “Seventh Day: Council Chamber,” *The New Nation*, February 4, 1870, page 2.

¹⁶³ “Seventh Day: Council Chamber,” *The New Nation*, February 4, 1870, page 2.

came here, would do us any injury or be actuated by any motives of revenge.” He asserted that he did not foresee violence as part of Red River’s future, saying “It is just possible that emigrants might be actuated by such motives; but for ourselves we have lived together for fifty years as brothers and would not like to raise our hands against each other.”¹⁶⁴ Fraser said that he did not “anticipate trouble from natives; but foreigners and ill designing persons may come in, seeking to have influence over certain sections of our people; they may form large parties, and do us considerable mischief.”¹⁶⁵ Riel opponent Alfred Boyd saw an outside military as a positive for Red River, saying that “if troops are sent in here, they are a positive advantage, if in no other way, that they add a large body of consumers to the community. The impetus they will give to industry of every kind will be considerable.”¹⁶⁶

By May of 1870, the *New Nation* was hopeful that Manitoba would not require a military, saying that “we are at peace amongst ourselves, and hard feelings are giving place to better counsels of our hearts.” By May, the Manitoba Act had been negotiated, and so the uncertainty was over, Manitoba would join Canada. This was a new phase and, “Where only a few weeks ago, guns, pistols, and such like murderous weapons were to be seen, now we observe the ploughshares and harrow at work. Let us continue in this blessed state of peace amongst ourselves, and remember the oft-repeated motto that ‘union is strength.’”¹⁶⁷ This hope for a nonviolent transition was not held by Canada or the incoming Red River Expeditionary Force (RREF).

The presence of military both contributed to the violence and was used as proof that the region was safe for settlers and immigrants. As the RREF was on their way to Manitoba, the *New*

¹⁶⁴ “Seventh Day: Council Chamber,” *The New Nation*, February 4, 1870, page 2.

¹⁶⁵ “Seventh Day: Council Chamber,” *The New Nation*, February 4, 1870, page 2.

¹⁶⁶ “Seventh Day: Council Chamber,” *The New Nation*, February 4, 1870, page 2.

¹⁶⁷ “At Home and Abroad,” *The New Nation*, May 6, 1870, page 2.

Nation reported that the *Hamilton Times* said they were proud of “the brave boys who left this city in defence of our rights.”¹⁶⁸ The *New Nation*’s response was that “we most decidedly object to his cool impudence in saying that they go in defence of *our rights*. The tables are somewhat reversed; the fact being that they, as well as *all* those under Colonel Wolseley’s command, come here in defence of OUR RIGHTS.”¹⁶⁹ With the arrival of the RREF, perhaps no one was proven more wrong than Flett, who did not think that the peace of Red River would be impacted by revenge. Jean Teillet explains that many of the RREF were from Orange Lodges in Ontario, and “freely admitted that the desire to avenge the death of Scott was one of their inducements to enlist,” with others vowing to “shoot any Frenchman that was in any way connected with that event.”¹⁷⁰

The presence of the military was immediately political, as in January of 1871, some of the military’s biggest supporters were stirring up anti-military sentiment due to how they chose to defend their actions. The *Manitoban* was speaking out against the *News-Letter*, which quoted unnamed Frenchmen saying that they wanted to remove the military, and that the military was “unruly and lawless.”¹⁷¹ The *Manitoban* defended the “Ontario Battalion,” saying that they knew them for “an absence of crime, for general good behaviour, and for discipline.”¹⁷² They did acknowledge that “there may be a few foolish men amongst them” but that generally “the Battalion as it is and as it has been is an honor to Ontario.”¹⁷³ Men like Schultz added to this conflict, reportedly making statements supporting a monument to “a martyr like Scott” and that “the armed men who were sent here to avenge his murder” were not being thought of, since they

¹⁶⁸ “Cool Impudence,” *The New Nation*, July 16, 1870, page 2.

¹⁶⁹ “Cool Impudence,” *The New Nation*, July 16, 1870, page 2.

¹⁷⁰ Teillet, *The North-West Is Our Mother*, 238.

¹⁷¹ “Save Me From My Friends,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 14, 1871, page 2.

¹⁷² “Save Me From My Friends,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 14, 1871, page 2.

¹⁷³ “Save Me From My Friends,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 14, 1871, page 2.

were made to “tread over the spot where the dread tragedy was enacted.”¹⁷⁴ The *Manitoban* said that Schultz’s attempt to “champion” the Ontario Battalion actually “abuses them” as it raised the anti-military sentiment in the city.¹⁷⁵

The *Manitoban*’s description of the violence and concerns at Red River was clearly downplaying the Métis concerns and the Reign of Terror that was allowed to continue without punishment. Teillet describes the climate in Red River as one where “Soldier vigilante squads roamed throughout the settlement” and where “no one was punished for any of the violence.”¹⁷⁶ In spring the violence increased, as “many of the volunteers were now free of the constraints of military life. They had signed up for two-year contracts in the spring of 1869 and were now free to continue their rampage unrestrained by officers.”¹⁷⁷ Officers rarely restrained the violence, as when a soldier raped Marie La Riviere, “his punishment consisted only of being confined to barracks” and soldiers who raped other Métis women were not punished, as Samuel Peters Jarvis, the commander of the Ontario force and future inspector of the NWMP, explained that “rape by his soldiers was none of his business” and no one was charged.¹⁷⁸

The same month that the *Manitoban* cautioned the pro-military factions to not stir up more tensions, the *Manitoban* discussed the military volunteers as potential settlers. Upon hearing that some men had applied to be released from military service, they said that “We do not know what the majority of those who will thus be disbanded intend doing, but we speak the opinion of the inhabitants of Winnipeg and the Province at large, when we express the hope that they will settle down in our midst, and become as good citizens as they have been settlers.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ “Again,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 28, 1871, page 2.

¹⁷⁵ “Again,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 28, 1871, page 2.

¹⁷⁶ Teillet, *The North-West Is Our Mother*, 248.

¹⁷⁷ Teillet. *The North-West Is Our Mother*, 250.

¹⁷⁸ Teillet, *The North-West Is Our Mother*, 250-251.

¹⁷⁹ “The Volunteers,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 21, 1871, page 2.

That may have been the *Manitoban*'s perspective on the RREF soldiers becoming settlers, but the claim that they represented all the "inhabitants of Winnipeg and the Province at large" reveals who they perceived to be the legitimate inhabitants.

A few weeks later, the *Manitoban* again addressed the presence of the military, writing that "The idea has been promulgated, and fostered with a pertinacity that has had its effect, that the French Half-breeds looked with distaste and distrust on the troops stationed here, and regarded them rather as their foes than their friends."¹⁸⁰ Despite the efforts of Schultz and others, at a recent meeting at St. Boniface, the "French people to a man, homologated the resolutions passed at other meetings, relative to petitioning Government to allow the troops to remain."¹⁸¹ The article concluded, "English Half-breeds, Englishmen, Scotchmen, and Canadians—after this will you allow unprincipled schemers longer to throw dust in your eyes, and endeavor to create dissensions between you and your French brethren?"¹⁸²

By later that year, the government had proposed that "every member of the Ontario and Quebec battalions, settling in Manitoba, may obtain 160 acres by pre-emption," another 160 acres by continued residence, and "a third tract of 160 acres as a bounty or gift in consideration of his military service, without actual residence thereon."¹⁸³ Now, there were concerns that this would aggravate Indigenous nations, as "the expansion of settlements over their hunting grounds" would require a "liberal manner" of compensation.¹⁸⁴ Once the surveys had been completed and First Nations were compensated, the *Manitoban* was confident that there would not be any problems, concluding that "Hitherto we have preserved the confidence of the savage races. ---It is our interest to retain it, and a great deal of mischief might be done by any harshness

¹⁸⁰ "The Troops and the People," *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, March 4, 1871, page 2.

¹⁸¹ "The Troops and the People," *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, March 4, 1871, page 2.

¹⁸² "The Troops and the People," *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, March 4, 1871, page 2.

¹⁸³ "Land for the Volunteers: A Liberal People," *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, April 29, 1871, page 2.

¹⁸⁴ "Land for the Volunteers: A Liberal People," *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, April 29, 1871, page 2.

or hard treatment towards these people. But we are quite sure that our volunteers need no caution from us on this point and will act generously and kindly towards the natives.”¹⁸⁵

That confidence was misplaced, as by June, the *Manitoban* reported on an “Affray in Winnipeg,” which they insisted the police take “stringent measures” to “prevent its recurrence.”¹⁸⁶ On May 30th, “some 50 or 60 French Half-breeds and soldiers engaged in a fight in which fists, clubs, chairs, mud, and pieces of plank were freely used.”¹⁸⁷ It had gotten quite violent, and “had it not been that several of them were so drunk that they could hardly stand, a formidable riot might have occurred.”¹⁸⁸ The police arrested “a French Halfbreed and a Volunteer” and the reason for the incident was that “There is much ill feeling between some of the French Halfbreeds and the Volunteers. This shows itself when either or both are drinking. It has shown itself in several fights already, and in conduct which is very disgraceful.”¹⁸⁹

Tensions between the military and the Métis flared again in August, in a series of incidents. First, two soldiers reported that they were trying to locate their land claims “up the Eastern bank of the Red River” and were “met by a party of French Half-breeds who requested them to return to the Fort forthwith.”¹⁹⁰ The men had explained they were not there to interfere, on a personal errand, to which “the Métis insisted on their return, remarking that they did not like the men’s uniform, and did not want any Canadian to come into their country on any pretense whatever. The Métis then organized a guard of six men, armed with Spencer carbines and other weapons, which escorted the soldiers to within a few miles of the Fort.”¹⁹¹ The *Liberal* demanded the attention of authorities, as “These people must be taught that their ‘rights,’ even if

¹⁸⁵ “Land for the Volunteers: A Liberal People,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, April 29, 1871, page 2.

¹⁸⁶ “Affray in Winnipeg,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 3, 1871, page 2.

¹⁸⁷ “Affray in Winnipeg,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 3, 1871, page 2.

¹⁸⁸ “Affray in Winnipeg,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 3, 1871, page 2.

¹⁸⁹ “Affray in Winnipeg,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 3, 1871, page 2.

¹⁹⁰ “The Rights of the Métis,” *Manitoba Liberal*, August 9, 1871, page 2.

¹⁹¹ “The Rights of the Métis,” *Manitoba Liberal*, August 9, 1871, page 2.

they are guaranteed by Governor Archibald, hardly warrant such outrageously high-handed proceedings.”¹⁹² The next week, the *Liberal* reported that a “most dastardly assault was committed by a French Half-breed named Pierre Lavallee, on John J. Setter, J. P., an old and respected settler from Portage la Prairie.”¹⁹³ They said that Setter was “one of the loyal English natives who opposed Riel and his crew, during their Reign of Terror in this province” and had often been threatened by Lavallee.¹⁹⁴ Authorities should not let this go, as the previous week’s incident had received no attention from the authorities, and “if such things are allowed to pass with impunity [then] the peace of the country stands in jeopardy.”¹⁹⁵

1871 ended in similar conflict, as on December 21st, a group of six or seven young men “visited the haunts of Riel with hostile intentions.”¹⁹⁶ They assumed that because it was a Roman Catholic holiday he would be at St. Boniface. He was not there, but they visited a number of places “within a radius of ten or twelve miles of Winnipeg” but they could not succeed in the “capture of the ex-President.”¹⁹⁷ The *Manitoban* reported that “They knew too that only the mother and sisters of Riel were at home, and like heroes—save the mark—rushed into the house and performed prodigies of valour by pointing loaded revolvers at the heads of his mother and sister, and threatening all manner of things against poor defenceless women.”¹⁹⁸ Riel’s rumoured presence was enough to cause havoc in Winnipeg, as when a Métis delegation went to the land office it was suspected that Riel was with them, and crowd formed outside the office, wanting him, nearly causing a fight. He was not there, and nothing happened, but the threat remained.¹⁹⁹

This scene was repeated during the 1873 election, when a “upwards of sixty special constables”

¹⁹² “The Rights of the Métis,” *Manitoba Liberal*, August 9, 1871, page 2.

¹⁹³ “An Assault,” *Manitoba Liberal*, August 23, 1871, page 2.

¹⁹⁴ “An Assault,” *Manitoba Liberal*, August 23, 1871, page 2.

¹⁹⁵ “An Assault,” *Manitoba Liberal*, August 23, 1871, page 2.

¹⁹⁶ “Globe Gallantry,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 15, 1872, page 1.

¹⁹⁷ “Globe Gallantry,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 15, 1872, page 1.

¹⁹⁸ “Globe Gallantry,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 15, 1872, page 1.

¹⁹⁹ “Une Fausse Alarme,” *Le Métis*, April 5, 1873, page 2.

were sent to the “nomination meeting for the purposes of arresting Louis Riel.”²⁰⁰ The scene remained calm, and the *Manitoban* said that it “does honor to the electors of Provencher that they remained quiet and orderly in the face of a body of armed men advancing upon them for what purpose they could have no idea for supposing.”²⁰¹ These men then left and “proceeded to search in every direction and into every conceivable place for Louis Riel. They were not successful in finding him and soon afterwards the meeting broke up in good order, the constables going their way and the people of Provencher separating to their homes.”²⁰²

The violence of the Reign of Terror is well-documented within Métis scholarship, even if settler newspapers neglected to cover many of the stories of violence. Within the first six weeks of the arrival of the RREF, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* had named the phenomenon. As Teillet explains, “This was the North-West and it was no stranger to violence. For the St. Paul paper to name it a “Reign of Terror” so quickly gives an indication of the level of violence in Red River.”²⁰³ In contrast to this, a speech given at the Royal Colonial Institute in Britain described the military occupation as the “bloodless suppression of the insurrection.” Mr. F. W. Chesson, member of the Aborigines’ Protection Society, and the speaker, said that “No sooner did Sir Garnet Wolseley and his gallant red-coats make their appearance, than, as if by an enchanter’s wand, the whole fabric of organized anarchy dissolved.”²⁰⁴

The anonymously written pamphlet from 1872 called *Ontario and Manitoba* explained the violence at Red River, saying that “Serious disturbances have arisen in Red River; but

²⁰⁰ “Who Is to Blame?” and “Provencher Election: Riel Elected By Acclamation,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 18, 1873, page 2.

²⁰¹ “Who Is to Blame?” and “Provencher Election: Riel Elected By Acclamation,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 18, 1873, page 2.

²⁰² “Who Is to Blame?” and “Provencher Election: Riel Elected By Acclamation,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 18, 1873, page 2.

²⁰³ Teillet, *The North-West Is Our Mother*, 248.

²⁰⁴ F. W. Chesson, *Mr. Chesson on Manitoba* (London: European Mail, 1872), 8.

everyone is well aware that the troubles took their origin from Ontario people.”²⁰⁵ The actions of Louis Riel were explained by saying that he would not have thought of violence and “would have failed in the effort, had not the population been unfavorably predisposed by the vile and shameful proceedings of certain Canadians.”²⁰⁶ After explaining the actions that led to the death of Thomas Scott, the author says “If Ontario has a right to interfere in revenging Scott, she has the same obligation to interfere and punish the perpetrators of the death of Goulet. In the one instance it is the victim, in the other it is the murderers, that are of Ontario. The protracted silence kept relative to Goulet’s death, and the noise made about Scott’s grave, are clear proofs that justice is not the main object in view with those who dwell so eagerly on this irritating question.”²⁰⁷

In an 1873 critique of Robert Cunningham, the M. P. for Marquette (and editor of *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*) who generally defended the actions of the Riel government and advocated for Métis rights, the *Free Press* said that “he is the tool of rebels and murderers, and therefore it is that he has ever attempted to extenuate and condone treason and murder, while he makes ever so much ado about a drunken row, attended with no serious consequences, in which the hated Ontario volunteers happen to be implicated.”²⁰⁸ A week after this, Cunningham moved in the House of Commons that he would like to see all copies of

all correspondence which may have passed between the Dominion Government and the Government of Manitoba, touching the military riots of 1870, and the riotous and incendiary proceedings at the late elections, together with the murderous assault committed on Mr. Dubuc, barrister, for acting as prosecuting counsel against some of those charged with taking part in these riots: also copies of any communications which

²⁰⁵ Anonymous, *Ontario and Manitoba*, (Toronto, 1872), 2.

²⁰⁶ Anonymous, *Ontario and Manitoba*, (Toronto, 1872), 2.

²⁰⁷ Anonymous, *Ontario and Manitoba*, (Toronto, 1872), 4.

²⁰⁸ “A Tool and an Obstructionist,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 29, 1873, page 4.

may have been received, referring to the late outrages perpetrated on the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba and the Speaker thereof.²⁰⁹

Cunningham hoped that “when the papers were brought down, steps would be taken to do away with the Reign of Terror under which the people of Manitoba had been placed during the last few years.”²¹⁰

In October of 1873, the *Manitoban* wrote that one hundred men in the Mounted Police Force were on their way to Fort Garry, and speculated about what this could mean for life in Manitoba.²¹¹ They noted:

In our own little Province we have had various experiences with respect to our police. We have seen the whole police force when it was at its largest, not only threatened, but chased like prairie chickens by a crowd of Wolseley’s heroes, and their gaol broken open and their prisoners taken out without having the courage even to lodge a complaint. We have seen the town of Winnipeg in the hands of a riotous mob, and we have seen our police force when informed that in the lands of that mob, property was being destroyed and lives endangered, hidden away in their little office, quivering and quaking and refusing to do their duty.²¹²

The article concluded that “What the exact duties of a mounted police force are anticipated to be, we are not aware. But we trust that the men of the force who are on their way will be found to be reliable men and not composed of material which ought to be forming part of the penitentiary. It is a bad thing for any country when the conservers of the peace are felons.”²¹³

In May of 1875, newspapers examined the transfer of the North-West Mounted Police from the Department of Justice to the Secretary of State, “suggests a reference to an experiment which has been recently tried on a small scale by our American cousins to govern Indians with Indian policemen.”²¹⁴ This appeared to refer to something different than the NWMP, as

²⁰⁹ “Manitoba Riot,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 5, 1873, page 2.

²¹⁰ “Manitoba Riot,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 5, 1873, page 2.

²¹¹ “The Mounted Police Force,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 4, 1873, page 2.

²¹² “The Mounted Police Force,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 4, 1873, page 2.

²¹³ “The Mounted Police Force,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 4, 1873, page 2.

²¹⁴ “Indian Police,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 20, 1876, page 7.

according to the Montreal *Herald* article in the *Free Press*, “the Indian agent at Fort Peck Agency, Montana, having upwards of six thousand wild Sioux under his charge, last June organized an Indian Police of about ninety men, picking out from among the tribes and bands, those he thought to be the best men.”²¹⁵ These men were tasked “to prevent the fitting out of raiding and stealing parties, and to bring to the agent any Indian interfering with the property of white men” as well as stop liquor trafficking.²¹⁶ This system was reportedly working well, and this police force “will obviate any necessity for military interference,” as “all savage tribes, such as the red men are, submit with better grace to authority—apparently emanating from themselves—than they do outside interference.”²¹⁷ The article suggested that the experiment should be tried in Canada, since there were also Sioux in Manitoba, and they were “the bravest and the best, in many ways, of our Indians,” so “we would have a body of Indian Police, equal to all the requirements of the country, at a cost far less than that of our Mounted Police.”²¹⁸

This effort to police race and property in Manitoba (and across the Northwest Territories) led to the need to police the Canada-United States border. As has been explained already, the border was a site of Indigenous agency, specifically for the Métis hunting bands, who for decades had operated along both sides of the border. Benjamin Hoy argues that “violence served as both a motivation and a tool for federal control” over the prairie border.²¹⁹ During the 1860s and 1870s the border was “an ongoing series of humiliating reminders to the limited control both countries maintained along their shared border.”²²⁰ Specifically, neither nation could “prevent the Dakota or the Métis from crossing the border to avoid military engagements or oppressive

²¹⁵ “Indian Police,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 20, 1876, page 7.

²¹⁶ “Indian Police,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 20, 1876, page 7.

²¹⁷ “Indian Police,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 20, 1876, page 7.

²¹⁸ “Indian Police,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 20, 1876, page 7.

²¹⁹ Benjamin Hoy, *A Line of Blood and Dirt: Creating the Canada-United States Border across Indigenous Lands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 74.

²²⁰ Hoy, 74.

Indian policies.”²²¹ While the border was used strategically, and violence was present in the “gaps in federal power,” some of the violence was directly caused by Canada and the United States trying to enforce their authority in new (Indigenous) regions.²²²

As the NWMP were trying to map the border with the Boundary Commission in 1874, Métis and other Indigenous peoples provided essential provisions and acted as guides, often intentionally delaying and frustrating the NWMP efforts, but they had no other better options.²²³ The NWMP and their move west have been mythologized in Canadian history, and remain significant in the minds of many Canadians, but “the vanguard of Canadian power on the Plains could not have existed without Indigenous, Métis, and American support.”²²⁴

When studying the role of the NWMP in Canada it is important to understand the level of authority they were able to employ across the Canadian North-West. The NWMP had magisterial powers, unlike similar “mounted” or “frontier” police in places like Australia.²²⁵ As Amanda Nettelbeck and Russell Smandych explain, because the NWMP served as magistrates and “ex officio justices of the peace, they could function, even in the absence of regular courts, as a self-contained instrument of colonial law, able not only to apprehend but also to try and sentence offenders.”²²⁶ The NWMP have often been mythologized and praised within Canadian history, which is further complicated by their own records, which “seem to reveal little in the way of use of deadly force,” as the “discretionary powers invested in the NWMP gave them the capacity to carry out government Indian policy with an aura of ‘benevolent despotism.’”²²⁷ NWMP powers

²²¹ Hoy, 74.

²²² Hoy, 77.

²²³ Hoy, 94.

²²⁴ Hoy, 94.

²²⁵ Amanda Nettelbeck and Russell Smandych, “Policing Indigenous Peoples on Two Colonial Frontiers: Australia’s Mounted Police and Canada’s North-West Mounted Police,” *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 43, no. 2 (2010), 360.

²²⁶ Nettelbeck and Smandych, 360.

²²⁷ Nettelbeck and Smandych, 361.

were vast, and as explained by Andrew Graybill, were designed based on the goals of Ottawa's National Policy, and the fear that "the august goals of the new National Policy- especially the construction of a transcontinental railroad and the promotion of Euro-Canadian migration- would languish if confronted by systematic Indian resistance."²²⁸ The NWMP presence helped reassure white migrants that they "would suffer no harm at the hands of potentially defensive Natives."²²⁹

Despite the NWMP presence, and the Canadian military presence at Red River in the years prior, settlers still discussed the need for their own defence, a sentiment explored through the present-day example of the murder of Colten Boushie by Gerald Stanley, in what Neil Nunn describes as "toxic geographies."²³⁰ In this framework, "property has been central to the settler colonial project and works together with processes of elimination,"²³¹ which is why it is unsurprising when in 1876, the settlers at Pembina Mountain reported that they were organizing a rifle company to be a "Home Guard" with men from each part of the settlement.²³² They explained that "we are a frontier settlement, more or less subject to loss of property at the hands of red and white Indians."²³³ The concern was also that the border would attract a certain level of violence, and it sometimes did, as in the case of the "famous gang of sixteen" who, after a chase and standoff with a U.S. marshal, had fled, some of them being killed. A report from Pembina said that "The only two remaining of the famous gang of sixteen are supposed to be wither here or in Manitoba. The balance of the gang have either been killed or are in custody."²³⁴ While these men may have not caused chaos in Manitoba, concerns remained high. The *Free Press*

²²⁸ Andrew R. Graybill, "Rangers, Mounties, and the Subjugation of Indigenous Peoples, 1870-1885," *Great Plains Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (Spring 2004), 90.

²²⁹ Graybill, 90.

²³⁰ Neil Nunn, "Toxic Encounters, Settler Logics of Elimination, and the Future of a Continent," *Antipode* 50, no. 5 (2018), 1332.

²³¹ Nunn, 1341.

²³² "Pembina Mountain," *Manitoba Free Press*, March 25, 1876, page 6.

²³³ "Pembina Mountain," *Manitoba Free Press*, March 25, 1876, page 6.

²³⁴ "Pistols at Pembina," *Manitoba Free Press*, November 9, 1878, page 4.

reported that “the inrush of immigrants and number of railroad men and others who are continually arriving at St. Boniface, has induced a good many characters to resort there in the hope of fleecing unsuspecting travellers. Some of the scamps are known to the police.”²³⁵ The group of “land pirates” in question were “five or six as hard pills as can be found anywhere, two of them were formerly Cornish miners, and one, named Daniels, a deserter from the 7th U. S. Cavalry at Standing Rock. These worthies have evidently an organized system for the purpose of robbing and have doubtless been guilty of many crimes that have never reached the public ear.”²³⁶ These men would apparently “feign drunkenness and mingle with travelers at the hotel, watching their chance to pounce on the valuables.”²³⁷ The article concluded that “In view of the number of scaly characters lying around loose over the river, it would be a wise step on the part of the provincial authorities to put a good sharp man over there to watch them.”²³⁸

The newspaper coverage of violence at Winnipeg and Red River often focused on fights between drunken Indigenous peoples, or on the occasional act of violence against a white settler. Left out of these narratives was the systemic violence against the Métis and First Nations populations in Manitoba. As compiled by Lawrence Barkwell, then coordinator of Métis Heritage and History Research at the Louis Riel Institute, many of these accounts only appeared in *Le Métis*, or in the English-language papers in St. Paul, namely the *Daily Pioneer*.²³⁹ As Fred Shore explains, “Violence against the Métis was soon the order of the day, despite the fact that the RREF was supposed to represent the forces of Canadian law and order.”²⁴⁰ This focus on violence perpetrated by Indigenous peoples (while largely ignoring settler violence) was not

²³⁵ “Land Pirates: A Bad Crowd at St. Boniface,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 3, 1879, page 1.

²³⁶ “Land Pirates: A Bad Crowd at St. Boniface,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 3, 1879, page 1.

²³⁷ “Land Pirates: A Bad Crowd at St. Boniface,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 3, 1879, page 1.

²³⁸ “Land Pirates: A Bad Crowd at St. Boniface,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 3, 1879, page 1.

²³⁹ Lawrence J. Barkwell, “The Reign of Terror Against the Métis of Red River,” *Gabriel Dumont Institute*, <https://www.Métismuseum.ca/resource.php/149078>.

²⁴⁰ Fred J. Shore, *Threads in the Sash: The Story of the Métis People* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications Inc., 2017), 76.

unique to the Canadian prairie, as rumours and stories about “vengeance” were part of American settler narratives. As Gregory Evans Dowd explains:

Rumors that blamed vengeful Indians, phony ‘half-breeds,’ and unredeemed ‘white Indians’ for murders that remained frightening and unsolved in an era of Indian dispossession did more than denigrate Indian or ‘mixed blood’ character; they raised even on an essentially peaceful borderland the concern among U.S. citizens that American misdeeds called for satisfaction.²⁴¹

Frontier settler spaces relied upon reports of violence to excuse and justify their own presence and behaviour, and local newspapers shaped their coverage to appeal to the white settlers and immigrants (and potential immigrants) who feared Indigenous violence and wanted a military and police presence.

While the violence enacted against the Métis went largely unreported, at least in Canadian newspapers, violence against settlers was reported, often with calls to increase violence or surveillance of Indigenous communities. One example of this is found in a story from June of 1875. The *Standard* reported on the murder of a man named Cornell, “who had taken up a claim at Rat Creek” and was found dead in his well. Dr. Bird had found that “the deceased had been shot through the back while in a stooping position” and thrown into the well.²⁴² The house and stables had been burned, and it seemed to be part of the disputes over land, as the land was “withheld from settlement for half-breed reserves. He, however, retained possession of the land, and continued to make improvements thereon, much to the dissatisfaction of some of the French half-breeds living in that neighborhood, who frequently tried to drive him from his home, and upon one occasion last winter bound his hands and feet and carried him to the bank of the Red River and told him to leave the settlement and not come back.”²⁴³ The article concluded by

²⁴¹ Gregory Evans Dowd, *Groundless: Rumors, Legends, and Hoaxes on the Early American Frontier* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015), 274.

²⁴² “Brutal Murder at Rat Creek,” *The Standard*, June 5, 1875, page 3.

²⁴³ “Brutal Murder at Rat Creek,” *The Standard*, June 5, 1875, page 3.

saying that the “police will make every effort to arrest the guilty ones, and bring them to justice.”²⁴⁴ A few months later, the *Standard* reported that “it is now some two months since the body of one Cornell was found in a well at Red River” and when these facts were brought to the government, no one took any action.²⁴⁵ They asked, “Is it because Cornell was a ‘newcomer’ from Ontario, that he may be murdered in our midst and no action by the authorities taken to bring his murderers to justice?”²⁴⁶

Establishing Manitoba as a settler space required the removal and policing of populations that were seen as a barrier to Manitoba’s assimilation into the British empire. Indigenous women and white women had their identities discussed in specific ways to stir up fear or excuse and justify violence, while the existence of large numbers of Indigenous peoples in and around Winnipeg led to fears that assimilation was happening slowly. The arrival of the military to Manitoba brought new levels of violence directed against the Indigenous peoples, particularly the French Métis population, but military presence and later the border policing, was praised by the newspapermen. The ultimate goal of the violence and policing was to make space for the influx of new settlers that the newspapermen and immigration promoters were confident would arrive any day. This context of the violent suppression of any barrier to immigration prepared the province for the immigration narratives that were created during the 1870s.

²⁴⁴ “Brutal Murder at Rat Creek,” *The Standard*, June 5, 1875, page 3.

²⁴⁵ “Is There No Remedy?” *The Standard*, July 10, 1875, page 2.

²⁴⁶ “Is There No Remedy?” *The Standard*, July 10, 1875, page 2.

Chapter 7:

Immigration Narratives

Immigration to Manitoba in the 1870s has been discussed throughout the previous six chapters, but now the focus shifts to the specific narratives and tropes that defined immigration in the newspapers and the promotional materials. Newspapermen were concerned about what people outside of Manitoba thought about their immigration prospects, how Canada related to the United States in terms of promoting immigration, and that immigrants were getting the right sort of information and advice, even if it was not based in facts. Manitoba's ability to attract immigrants in the 1870s was seen as a direct reflection on the province's potential as part of the British empire, and ethnic immigration was at times a tool for nation building but came with new anxieties that only ethnic immigrants seemed interested in moving to Manitoba. Immigration was the means by which settler sovereignty would be established over the new province, and so discussions around the successes and failures of the immigration systems in the 1870s were also discussions about the success or failure of settler colonialism and Canadian expansion.

Outside Opinions on Immigration and Local Concerns

The editors of Manitoban newspapers were mindful about how the rest of Canada (and the world) perceived Manitoba as an immigration destination. In early newspapers, this concern was about Manitoba not being seen as a safe or welcoming place for new immigrants from Canada and Britain. In Manitoba's early days as a province, the *New Nation* reprinted an article from the *Ottawa Times* which expressed concern about the "sectarian or sectional feelings" and that those feelings should be discouraged by the new government so "as to render it a desirable

home for the enterprising and industrious immigrants of Canada and the Mother Country.”¹

These concerns were still present a year later, according to the *Manitoban*'s coverage of the *Globe*, which warned that people should not immigrate to Manitoba because “the province is in an unsettled state, [and] that no Englishman can expect to have justice done him there.”² Ontario newspapers regularly commented on Manitoba's first government, concerned that lieutenant-governor Adams George Archibald, or anyone else in government, would be too French, or at least, French-aligned, which would discourage immigration. This was frustrating to the *Manitoban*, who responded, “we would therefore ask the *Globe* to leave us alone; we are getting on first-rate.”³

These early observations about the tensions in Manitoba reveal that the first years of provincehood were marred by violence and racism. This racism and violence has been discussed in several previous chapters, as immigration required land, which required violent dispossession and suppression of Indigenous rights. Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock explain that since the 1850s there had been plans to “settle” the West, and this meant that “the land had to be free of any encumbrances on immigrant occupancy, and that inevitably brought the government into conflict with the First Nations and Métis inhabitants.”⁴

Following the Red River Resistance and the North West Resistance, the government reports indicated that “the Métis rebellion had a negative impact upon immigration to the West.”⁵ In order to facilitate immigration, the government quickly worked to impose authority in an effort to restore confidence, in addition to “other reforms and financial inducements offered to

¹ “Province of Manitoba,” *The New Nation*, August 13, 1870, page 2.

² “Rhapsody,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 7, 1871, page 2.

³ “Affairs in Manitoba,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 28, 1871, page 2.

⁴ Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy, 1540-1997* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 66.

⁵ Kelley and Trebilcock, 68.

immigrants.”⁶ The assumption was that “peace would be followed by more rapid settlement.”⁷ While these concerns were discussed at the federal level throughout the 1870s and 1880s, this chapter examines how these anxieties and concerns about immigration were discussed within the province of Manitoba, through the newspaper coverage and early immigration pamphlets.

Transporting settlers to Manitoba had always been a concern. The distance from the rest of Canada was one factor, but so was the lack of an easily accessible route and the perceptions of Manitoba as a hostile or inhospitable place for agriculture and settler life. It was clear that immigration to Manitoba would require promotional efforts to have a chance at success. Doug Owram describes this as the problem of converting “the visions of earlier years into concrete and detailed policies and to make the region a centre of growth and population.”⁸ Expansionists and reformers had linked Canada’s “future as a nation” to the development of Manitoba and the North-West.⁹ These same expansionists confidently predicted that a combination of manifest destiny, natural providence, and their own optimism and hopes would result in a rapid settlement.¹⁰ The reality of settling Manitoba was much slower.

By 1871, newspapers were writing about the need to encourage immigration from the “old country.” This included calls to history, saying that “from the day the *Mayflower* landed at Plymouth in New England [...] [for] a British colony to be prosperous [it] must be colonized by Britons.”¹¹ While hoping to encourage immigration, the *Herald* also warned that new immigrants

⁶ Kelley and Trebilcock, 68.

⁷ Kelley and Trebilcock, 68.

⁸ Doug Owram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, reprinted 1992), 101.

⁹ Owram, *Promise of Eden*, 101.

¹⁰ Owram, *Promise of Eden*, 102.

¹¹ “Immigration,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, September 2, 1871, page 2.

seemed misled by the superlatives used to praise Manitoba, and that they were not sufficiently warned, and much was “kept back from them,” leading to being disappointed.¹²

When immigrants did adjust well, that too became the topic of newspaper stories. In January of 1871, the *Manitoban* reported that the people of Manitoba were not “moping, and fretting, and feeling awfully sore over the troubles of last winter” but that “a more jovial people do not exist anywhere, than the people on both sides of the Red River.”¹³ The article goes on to describe long dances, with wives, children, and young people, and many fiddlers. In another article on the same page, dog trains are explained as “the most fashionable travelling conveyances in Winnipeg and vicinity at present” and they were covered in ribbons and bells.¹⁴ Stories like these were attempts to show readers outside of Winnipeg that there were holiday festivities and joy to be found in Manitoba, even in the long winters. This theme was continued in 1873, as “Winter here is the gay and festive season in which fun, enjoyment, revelry or folly” came upon the community, and there were dances and dinners that provided excellent entertainment.¹⁵ These were, of course, observations of winter Métis life at Red River, but also of a unique culture that had developed over centuries of the fur trade. Life at Red River may have not neatly fit into prevailing ideas of Britishness, but as explained by Norma Jean Hall, life at Red River had been and “intercultural exchange” spanning thousands of years, creating a community connected by extended kinship networks and familial bonds.¹⁶ The cultural exchange at Red River had led to a custom of “inter-band and international alliances, diffused ideas and increased potential for successful adaptation to diverse circumstances.”¹⁷ For some settlers,

¹² “Superlatives,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, July 22, 1871, page 1.

¹³ “Merry Making,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 21, 1871, page 2.

¹⁴ “Merry Making,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 21, 1871, page 2.

¹⁵ “Life in the Prairie Province: Effort I,” *Manitoba Free Press*, January 11, 1873, page 5.

¹⁶ Norma Jean Hall, “A Perfect Freedom: Red River as a settler society, 1810-1870,” (M.A. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 2003), 54.

¹⁷ Hall, 54.

hoping to reshape Red River into part of the “British world,” this jovial expression of Métis life may have been a sign of the failure to assimilate, but for these Manitoba newspapers, it was held up as a sign that Red River had a culture of its own to offer settlers, and was not as dour a place as may have been reported.¹⁸

Race at Red River was complicated further by the presence of “old settlers,” who may have been listed as “white” on a census, but were seen as closer to Métis in many ways, especially by new immigrants, due to their kinship with local Métis and First Nations families, something which was common, according to Hall. She explains that “Not only did outside observers have a difficult time when attempting to identify who exactly was First Nations, Métis, or White by physical appearance, the ‘Melange of languages,’ encountered within the settlement, cart brigades, and hunting encampments did not make arriving at distinctions any easier.”¹⁹ After a letter to the editor had made some “uncalled for, and unjust” allusions about “old settlers,” another letter from “An Ontario Man” said that he had visited the house of an “old settler” and would “venture it in comparison with any ‘Canadian’ similar gathering.”²⁰ These nuances in race and identity were challenging for outsiders to understand, which made explaining the local culture to potential immigrants difficult, as life in Manitoba challenged the idea that a place was exclusively “settler” or “Indigenous.”

A few years later, interest in immigration to Manitoba was growing overseas, and the arrival of two young Englishmen prompted some newspaper coverage, as evidence of successful messaging. They were immigrating to join their families, who were already in Manitoba, but the men described being “met with astonishment and ridicule by all other passengers in the vessel as

¹⁸ Anxieties about Manitoba and its “Britishness” or lack thereof have been studied by Kurt Korneski, in articles like “Britishness, Canadianness, Class, and Race: Winnipeg and the British World, 1880s-1910s.” *Journal of Canadian Studies* Vol 41, No 2 (Spring, 2007): 161-184.

¹⁹ Hall, 72.

²⁰ “Old Settlers’ Customs,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 1, 1873, page 5.

soon as their intention of coming to Fort Garry was known.”²¹ They had been told in England that “Manitoba was a kind of polar region, too cold for any but savages to exist in” so had been pleasantly surprised to arrive on a warm day in May.²² While this made for an amusing story, it concerned the writers that such misinformation was apparently spreading and deterring immigration.

Overseas coverage of Manitoba immigration continued to make the local news in the early 1870s, as the London *Times* published a letter from a Winnipeg man, describing the fertility of Manitoba and the North-West Territories, claiming that it was a superior place for immigrants, because there were no issues with malaria and “rejects every pestilence.”²³ The letter states that agricultural labourers and farmers who already have some means (ideally between 100 to 200 pounds or more) were the class of immigrants most in demand. Throughout the 1870s, critics of Canada’s immigration policy argued that the offers of free land grants and passage assistance “did not necessarily attract the most desirable settler.”²⁴

In Canadian papers, like the Toronto *Mail*, immigration to Manitoba and the North-West was directly tied to coverage of high land prices in older provinces, particularly for farmers with many sons, as expanding farms or providing for younger sons to purchase land of their own was becoming more difficult. This suggested, to the *Free Press*, that the west would largely be settled by “native Canadians,” rather than “emigrants from beyond the sea.”²⁵ Manitoba was seen as the solution to Ontario’s land shortage problem, even though with the “diminishing” land, many Ontario farmers’ sons “chose instead to try their fortunes in the United States.”²⁶

²¹ “Manitoba Immigration,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, May 17, 1873, page 2.

²² “Old Settlers’ Customs,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 1, 1873, page 5.

²³ “The New North-West of Canada,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 6, 1873, page 7.

²⁴ Kelley and Trebilcock, 71.

²⁵ “The Future Settlement of the North-West,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 25, 1875, page 4.

²⁶ Kelley and Trebilcock, 105.

When several letters appeared in Ontario papers presenting “many mistakes and contradictions” about Manitoba, a correspondent from St. Thomas speculated that these misleading letters were intentional, as one had been written by an Indian agent, and so “it is his interest to keep settlers out of the territory, and thus prolong his lease of office” and another by a land speculator. He attempted to correct the record and suggested that better maps and pamphlets should be created, to show the “different settlements occupied by Canadians, English, Irish, German, French, half-breeds, and Mennonites” as that could help entice settlement.²⁷ More pamphlets would be created in the late 1870s, including professional pamphlets put out by governments, instead of just “well-meaning” individuals. These pamphlets will be discussed later in this chapter.

Canada vs. United States Immigration

Canadian reformers, politicians, and community leaders consistently compared their nation with that of the United States, and immigration was no different. Manitoba newspapers closely covered the rivalry between Canada and the United States when it came to recruiting immigration. The *Manitoba Liberal* expressed concern about the American government having a much better system of supporting immigrants, and certainly Canada struggled to compete with the reputation and draw of the United States. A. B. Davey, a Canadian immigration agent in Britain reported in 1873 that “America is everything, and appears to be everywhere... The prevailing idea seems to be that the United States is America, and Canada and other parts of America are small and out of the way places, destined soon to be absorbed by the States.”²⁸ Many people were arriving in Manitoba without enough information or resources to be

²⁷ “Manitoba Abroad,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 15, 1876, page 2.

²⁸ Kelley and Trebilcock, 102.

successful, while in “the little village of Benson” which had “not more than half a dozen houses” there was a large building with sleeping apartments, cooking facilities, and immigration pamphlets. In Winnipeg, by contrast, immigrants were left outside and “large buildings are lying idle.”²⁹ This lack of support, combined with lack of information (and some blame for the “red tapeism” of Métis land rights) was preventing Manitoba’s immigrants from being as successful as south of the border.³⁰ What is significant to this discussion is the economic opportunities available in the United States, and the challenge of Canadian immigration officials to competitively attract the “ideal” immigrants.

The *Manitoba Free Press* covered what they saw as another barrier to immigration to Manitoba, which was the “lies” in the American immigration pamphlets. Many Canadians had been persuaded to move to the western states and were now writing letters about the difficulties they had not been warned about. The *Free Press* suggested that these “Canadians who have spent some time in the Western States are just the class of people we need. They are experienced in the ways of the country, and their acquaintance with the prairie is more invaluable.”³¹ In 1877, a re-printed article from the *Guelph Herald* stated that “very many Canadians who years ago went to Iowa, Minnesota, and other Western States, have seen their mistake and are flocking to Manitoba in hundreds.”³² This may have been an exaggeration, but was part of the optimistic promotion of the expansionist Canadian press. This competition has been well-documented by Kelley and Trebilcock, who explain that Canadian immigration agents accused American agents of

²⁹ “Immigration,” *Manitoba Liberal*, July 19, 1871, page 2.

³⁰ “Immigration,” *Manitoba Liberal*, July 19, 1871, page 2.

³¹ “A New Feature in Canadian Immigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 19, 1874, page 4.

³² “Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 16, 1877, page 7.

misrepresenting Canada, as well as providing a “deceptively false picture of their own country.”³³

The Minnesota Legislature was regularly covered by Manitoban newspapers in the first part of the 1870s, as it was their nearest neighbour, and Red River had long connections across the border. Michel Hogue has explored these longstanding relationships in *Métis and the Medicine Line*, arguing that the 49th parallel divided Métis communities, but that cultural and kinship connections persisted, and throughout the 1870s, the border was utilized as a tool and strategy for Métis on each side of the border in their struggle for autonomy and rights.³⁴ This meant that in a primarily Métis space, like Red River in the 1870s, the events in Manitoba and Minnesota were often the subject of each others’ reporting. In 1871, one of the concerns was the effort and funding Minnesota was putting into pamphlets, maps, immigration agents, and immigrant supports.³⁵ In 1873, a report from the State Department described Manitoba, including its population of Métis who were “well advanced toward civilization, under the tutelage of the Red River clergy,” and the Hudson’s Bay Company [HBC] posts and various commercial opportunities and descriptions of the landscapes. The report explained that the land reserved for the Métis “does not exceed that of Massachusetts” but that the Canadian government’s liberal policies were intended to “encourage a large emigration to Manitoba and the more inviting districts [of] Swan River, Cumberland, Saskatchewan, and Athabasca.”³⁶ This was framed as important to the Canadian state as “The Canadian public is much excited by the prospect of a

³³ Kelley and Trebilcock, 102.

³⁴ Michel Hogue, *Métis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2015), 5-7.

³⁵ “Promoting Emigration,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 28, 1871, page 1.

³⁶ “Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 15, 1873, page 1.

West exclusively its own- of an extensive and fertile plain, unburdened by dense forests and destined to speedy settlement and organization as members of the confederation.”³⁷

In 1873, the arrival of a party of 10 immigrant men from the western United States was reported with great interest. One article reported that they were “very probably the pioneers of an emigration which may prove to be very large. There are said to be a couple of hundred thousand Canadians in the Western States.”³⁸ In that same paper, those men were described in greater detail as former Canadians from Huron, Ontario, and “shrewd, sinewy men, quite able to judge for themselves” and would be joined by about 25 families if they were successful. The article reported that they were dissatisfied with Missouri and other western states exacting “enormous taxes” and making it “next to impossible for the farming or working man to get ‘ahead’ to any extent.”³⁹ As mentioned previously, the American West was a draw for many young men from Ontario, who felt that their immigration laws and homestead rights were more competitive than what Canada was offering.⁴⁰

The United States was praised for its immigration policies, as the young Canadian nation had not invested in infrastructure or promoting immigration, and so its numbers could hardly compare to the United States. Towards the end of the decade, Canadian immigration would be promoted with more effort, but Manitoban newspapers were impatient to see the investment made earlier. Despite the minimal resources in early years, the *Manitoban* stated that there were many advantages for immigrants to Canada, as “our institutions have been as free, our area as large, our soil as fertile, our climate as healthy, and our taxation lighter.”⁴¹ A few weeks later, the *Manitoban* provided another comparison that should be promoted: people were starting to think

³⁷ “Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 15, 1873, page 1.

³⁸ “Immigration from the Western States,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 14, 1873, page 2.

³⁹ “A New Immigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 14, 1873, page 3.

⁴⁰ Kelley and Trebilcock, 105.

⁴¹ “Immigration,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, March 29, 1873, page 2.

Manitoba was better than the southern plains “where fever and ague, which we are happily free from, is so rife.”⁴² Canadian immigration efforts struggled to compete with the economy and reputation of the United States, so whenever the Manitoban newspapers heard reports of any positive attributes that might draw people to the province, even if only for the climate, that aspect became emphasized, as seen in chapter 4.

Advice to Immigrants

In the perceived absence of government investment into the promotion of immigration, the local newspapers sought to use their influence and wide readership. From 1874 on, the newspapers regularly dedicated space to answering questions from potential immigrants, as well as giving general advice to dispel misconceptions about the “new frontier.” The *Manitoba Free Press* said that “scarcely a week elapses that we do not receive one or more letters from people in different parts of the world making enquiries about this country.”⁴³ They typically replied by letter, but decided to begin publishing questions they thought would be helpful to others. In this first installment, the letters were from Ontario, New Brunswick, and Bermuda.⁴⁴ The questions were largely about the weather (how did winters compare to Ontario?) and economy, with the economic questions ranging from prices for homesteads and town lots, to the rates of rent and wages for labour. The article also assured readers that because there was a longer history of settlement, there were educational opportunities available in Winnipeg that were hard to find in other communities on the prairies.⁴⁵ In another article, poplar trees were described in detail, and

⁴² “Immigration,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, April 11, 1873, page 2.

⁴³ “About Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 7, 1874, page 5.

⁴⁴ “About Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 7, 1874, page 5.

⁴⁵ “About Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 7, 1874, page 5.

the land was described as “well watered for a prairie country.”⁴⁶ The *Nor’Wester* answered questions from a letter from Illinois that same year, and “the scarcity of timber” was a concern, but not as bad as people may have heard. They also answered question about logistics and which route to take to Manitoba.⁴⁷

Le Métis, the French newspaper, was not as invested in this type of coverage, but did provide some explanation about the severity of winters- noting that Manitoba winters were dry, with bright days and quiet nights, and “lorsque la lune tourne vers la terre son orbe étincelant, le spectacle qu’offre une nuit de Manitoba, est d’une beauté incomparable.”⁴⁸ By promoting the beauty of a cold winter night, the French newspapers were, in a simpler way, advising potential immigrants about the type of cold to be prepared for, and indeed, framing it as a positive aspect of life in Manitoba.

At times, the advice was less about the weather or beauty of the province and more about practical concerns such as in the *Free Press* in 1876, when settlers were advised to buy agricultural implements in Winnipeg. The materials available in Ontario were not preferable as “Canadian waggons are too heavy for this country, and the ploughs are not at all adapted.”⁴⁹ Put another way, “Canadian plows are useless for breaking” and American plows had the best results. As well as the equipment being less effective, travelling with wagons and plows was more expensive, as they would be paying extra. In another article, after advising settlers on the best practices for ploughing and farming, the *Free Press* promoted the “fall exhibition, to be held

⁴⁶ “Something About Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 12, 1875, page 4.

⁴⁷ “Immigration to Manitoba,” *Nor’Wester*, September 14, 1874, page 2.

⁴⁸ “Emigration a Manitoba,” *Le Métis*, July 15, 1875, page 2.

⁴⁹ “Queries Answered,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 30, 1876, page 6.

in this city the 4th and 5th of October” and suggested that “every Ontarian” should visit or send someone from their neighbourhood to see the region for themselves.⁵⁰

In 1877, a brief article explaining homestead laws and average prices for horses and livestock stated that “firearms of all kinds can also be purchased here” with the next sentence saying “There are a good many Indians, but they are not troublesome.”⁵¹ That article concluded with the point: “There is no limitation as to the quantity of half-breed scrip that any person can purchase” whereas the limit on government land was 640 acres.⁵² The direct connection between advice about firearms, the presence of “not troublesome” Indigenous peoples, and the lack of limitation on Métis scrip hints at the underlying tensions that shaped life at Red River. Namely, Indigenous peoples were still a strong presence, but this was rapidly changing. By 1880, the advice given to immigrants had shifted away from basic land concerns and climate and advised travelers to avoid carrying large amounts of cash. They should get a bank draft or bill and exchange that upon arrival, since there were three banks in Winnipeg who could exchange that for cash.⁵³

Advertisements and Promotion

Promoting Manitoba proved to be challenging in the 1870s, as “Canada was still *terra incognita* to the vast majority of Britons. One agent reported in 1872 that fully 90 per cent of the people he met on his circuit had no idea of Canada’s location, let alone its extent, resources, or land policies.”⁵⁴ According to his claim, this lack of knowledge about Canada meant people

⁵⁰ “Information about Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, October 7, 1876, page 6.

⁵¹ “Answers to Questions About Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 2, 1877, page 2.

⁵² “Answers to Questions About Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 2, 1877, page 2.

⁵³ “Advice to Immigrants,” *Manitoba Free Press*, January 17, 1880, page 1.

⁵⁴ Patrick A. Dunae, “Promoting the Dominion: Records and the Canadian Immigration Campaign, 1872-1915,” *Archivaria* 19 (1984) 82-84.

would learn everything they needed to know about Manitoba from these agents and their promotional materials. The promotional materials presented the first information available about Manitoba in many locations.

There was perhaps no more famous or popular promotional pamphlet about Manitoba than John Macoun's 1882 *Manitoba and the Great North-West*, but his work does not feature heavily in this analysis, as it was created after the 1870s, and Macoun was never full-time resident of Manitoba. He was a scientist and did work as a geographer in the North West, particularly in 1879, where he became "something of a celebrity" when passing through Winnipeg after working near the Assiniboine and Qu'appelle rivers.⁵⁵ Macoun was enthusiastic in his work, and after his visits to the North West in 1872 and 1875, he "became an expansionist," viewing it as his life's work to inform the Canadian public about the potential of the region. Doug Owram explains that "The scientist now added a second and possibly conflicting role to his already active life, that of publicist and propagandist."⁵⁶ This connection between scientist and propagandist is present in many of the promotional materials for the Canadian prairie, as optimism for the future of the Canadian nation building project shaped the way that facts were presented.

Throughout the 1870s, immigration pamphlets gained an international audience. Owram explains that the writers promoting the North West garnered a large readership abroad. The Canadian government immigration pamphlet, *Information for Intending Emigrants*, "had more than a million copies in circulation as early as 1873" and "the names of Thomas Spence and Acton Burrows were probably more widely known in Europe" than famous Canadian poets like

⁵⁵ Owram, *Promise of Eden*, 152.

⁵⁶ Owram, *Promise of Eden*, 156.

Charles Mair or Charles G. D. Roberts.⁵⁷ These pamphlets presented an overly optimistic view of Manitoba, and “in the extreme this bordered on outright fraud.”⁵⁸

Most of the literature generated by the Canadian government came from the Department of Agriculture, and was compiled by clerks based on reports from immigration agents across Canada.⁵⁹ Generally the government pamphlets were “decidedly sober in tone,” but writers took some “artistic license in marketing their wares.”⁶⁰ Winters in Manitoba were described as “bracing” and “invigorating” and writers “tended to overestimate the abundance of the soil [and] they placed great emphasis on the availability of ‘free’ homesteads.”⁶¹ The writers did not tell readers about the capital that homestead agriculture required, and “implied that a practical knowledge of agriculture was less important than the possession of grit, pluck, and other Victorian virtues.”⁶²

Immigration was promoted and advertised throughout the 1870s, and Manitoban newspapers were full of opinions about whether or not the various governments were doing enough to advertise immigration. One of the first advertisements for immigration to the prairies was a bilingual newspaper advertisement supposedly signed by the “Chief of the Assiniboine Indians, ‘The Red Stone’ [and] the Chief of the Sioux Tribe.”⁶³ The chiefs were saying that they wanted immigration, had “made peace with the Half-breeds, Chippewas, Crees, and Assiniboines” and had chosen George Racette to oversee the land “west of the Souris River.”⁶⁴ Other early advertisements were from the Department of Public Works in Ottawa and promoted various routes from Ontario to Manitoba, with one ad pricing out the legs of the journey from

⁵⁷ Owram, *Promise of Eden*, 105.

⁵⁸ Owram, *Promise of Eden*, 105.

⁵⁹ Dunae, 79.

⁶⁰ Dunae, 80-81.

⁶¹ Dunae, 80-81.

⁶² Dunae, 80-81.

⁶³ “Emigration! Fine Lands,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, May 27, 1871, page 3.

⁶⁴ “Emigration! Fine Lands,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, May 27, 1871, page 3.

Toronto to Fort William, and from Fort William to Fort Garry, according to age and amount of baggage.⁶⁵

A large part of the general discourse around promoting immigration were the issues around immigration agents and whether or not they were doing their jobs, if they were even employed. One of the concerns was that of the immigration agents from Canada sent to Europe “not one can be named that has anything more than a theoretical knowledge of Manitoba and the North-West, which are the only lands which belong to the Dominion proper, that are open to settlement.”⁶⁶ There were concerns that Lynn, the chosen agent, would not be a good choice, as he would “repeat his stories that the Half-breeds, the Hudson’s Bay Company, the soldiers, and speculators, hold all the lands in the country.”⁶⁷

Immigration agents were tasked with specific goals, namely, recruiting agriculturalists, farm labourers, and domestic workers, while discouraging the immigration of clerks, merchants, and professionals.⁶⁸ The federal policies shaping immigration and its promotion were not only determined by Canadian laws, but also by the nations where the agents were stationed. In 1874 restructuring meant that the federal minister of Agriculture would promote immigration, and provinces would cease their own efforts to promote immigration abroad. Immigration agents travelled, gave lectures, and wrote letters and reports to local press, as well as to newspapers back in Canada.⁶⁹ These agents were initially stationed in Britain, where connections were established between agents and steamship companies. Trebilcock and Kelley report that of the 1 million immigrants who came to Canada from 1867 to 1890, around 60% arrived from the

⁶⁵ “North West Territories,” *Manitoba Liberal*, January 13, 1872, page 3.

⁶⁶ “Immigration Agent,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 19, 1873, page 4.

⁶⁷ “Immigration Agent,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 19, 1873, page 4.

⁶⁸ Kelley and Trebilcock, 78.

⁶⁹ Kelley and Trebilcock, 79.

British Isles, indicating a successful policy.⁷⁰ Agents in the United States were primarily focused on “repatriating Canadians, particularly French Canadians, who had moved south.”⁷¹ Over time, the Canadian immigration promotional projects would develop into a more well organized bureaucracy, but in the early 1870s, the immigration agents who travelled Europe were “often political appointees” and “not familiar with the areas they travelled in” which led to giving “overly positive” stories of life in Canada.⁷² They were often viewed as people who bragged and wrote a lot in the press, but were rarely successful. An example of this was that when the 1872 Blue Book immigration report was published, the *Manitoban* noticed that “no less than seventeen gentlemen have been travelling in various parts of Europe during 1872, and out of all those we only find ONE who even alludes to Manitoba, and that is a Mr. Hespeler who was here with the Menonites [sic].”⁷³

These concerns about the lack of success from immigration agents were supported by letters from immigrants, such from an Englishman who said that in his observations “the people of Great Britain would rather live under their own flag than any other” and that “people immigrating from Great Britain get very little encouragement at present, and no information that would induce them to come to the Dominion of Canada.”⁷⁴ As a *Free Press* article succinctly said about Manitoba and Great Britain, “Our great want in Manitoba and the North-West is population [...] They want to decrease, and we want to increase.”⁷⁵ For these simple facts, Canada “should appoint spirited and practical men to visit the old countries [and] Manitoba and the North-West should be specifically represented by them.”⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Kelley and Trebilcock, 79.

⁷¹ Kelley and Trebilcock, 79.

⁷² Kelley and Trebilcock, 81.

⁷³ “Dominion Emigration Report for 1872,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, August 16, 1873, page 2.

⁷⁴ “Immigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 7, 1873, page 6.

⁷⁵ “Immigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 17, 1873, page 4.

⁷⁶ “Immigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 17, 1873, page 4.

In 1876, information about Manitoba was still scarce elsewhere, at least according to a letter and reply originally published in the *Farmer's Advocate*. This letter said that there were twenty-one people who would like to move to Manitoba but they were requesting a map or pamphlet. The response was that "We have no map or pamphlet about this fine part of our country. The Government has not furnished us with much information."⁷⁷ The *Free Press* described this as "lamentable" that a widely-read Ontario paper had no information about Manitoba, and mentioned that maps could be found in Toronto and other towns, and advised the correspondents "to procure Mr. Spence's pamphlet, and if they were to be fully posted on current topics here to subscribe for the *Manitoba Free Press*."⁷⁸

This sentiment was carried into 1877, when the *Free Press* editor looked over Canadian papers and found "a solitary item with reference to Manitoba" and said that "the Canadian people and newspapers adopt a more patriotic and national feeling, that shall consider the whole Dominion our country and strive to build up and populate our waste spaces" instead of providing information about other countries.⁷⁹ By 1878, Parliamentary committees in Ottawa reported on the ways immigration was being promoted, and specifically the Department of Immigration and Agriculture which had published several pamphlets during the year. These pamphlets and documents had "reliable information to intending settlers regarding the great resources of Manitoba and the Northwest, and its adaptability for successful settlement."⁸⁰ By 1880, the Department of Agriculture had translated immigration pamphlets into German, but there were concerns that the "North West was being built up at the expense of Old Canada in more ways

⁷⁷ "Information About Manitoba," *Manitoba Free Press*, December 23, 1876, page 4.

⁷⁸ "Information About Manitoba," *Manitoba Free Press*, December 23, 1876, page 4.

⁷⁹ "Our Canada," *Manitoba Free Press*, January 13, 1877, page 4.

⁸⁰ "Practical Matters," *Manitoba Free Press*, May 27, 1878, page 2.

than one.”⁸¹ It would be years before immigration promotional materials drew large numbers of settlers to prairies, and the early land booms of the late 1870s to early 1880s were prompted less by promotional materials than the accessibility of the prairies with the Canadian Pacific Railway.⁸²

Despite newspaper complaints that the government was not investing in promotional materials for the prairies, there were in fact many pamphlets that were created, some with government funding, and others from private businessmen. One of the first promotional materials published about Manitoba was attached to the back of a novel about a group of immigrants to Red River. The book was written by Alexander Begg, and was dedicated to the Bannatynes, who welcomed him after he had arrived as “a perfect stranger.”⁸³ Begg and Andrew Graham Ballenden Bannatyne were business partners in the early 1870s, and Bannatyne, coming from a well-established and elite fur trade Métis family, had introduced Begg into Red River society.⁸⁴ In this dedication, Begg said that “It has caused me much trouble and indignation to see the kind-hearted people of Red River vilified by scribblers in the public press, and if I have done anything towards correcting the unjust impression received abroad concerning the settlers, I will have my reward.”⁸⁵ True to his statement, the novel itself glorifies settlers in the 1860s, following the Meredith family and their friend, George Wade. For the first 370 pages, Begg’s novel takes the reader through the journey to Manitoba, how settlers acquired their land, their observations of their Métis and First Nations neighbours, including patronizing racism, and the ill-fated love story between the charming Meredith daughter, Grace, and George Wade. Grace and George find

⁸¹ “Notes From Ottawa,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 7, 1880, page 1.

⁸² Kelley and Trebilcock, 94.

⁸³ Alexander Begg, “*Dot It Down*”: *A Story of Life in the North-West* (Toronto: Hunter, Rose & Company, 1871), iii.

⁸⁴ D. R. Owrham, “Begg, Alexander,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/begg_alexander_1839_97_12E.html.

⁸⁵ Begg, “*Dot It Down*, iii.

themselves separated after their engagement, and Grace succumbs to illness not long after their arrival in Manitoba. George Wade ends up falling in love with Nina Stone, a Métis woman, who comforts the Merediths in their grief, and essentially serves as a replacement for their dead daughter.⁸⁶ Throughout this novel, themes of whiteness and femininity are woven together with descriptions of local politics, land availability, and general efforts to show the merits of Manitoba. This fictional account of immigration allowed the reader to relate to the experience of the Merediths, a new immigrant family to Red River. For some readers, this would be far more compelling than reading an obvious immigration pamphlet, even though those also contained a fair amount of fiction. The structure of a novel was an immersive way to sell Manitoba to the readers, and then interested readers could find the “factual information” at the end of the book.

The final dozen pages are dedicated to something called the “Emigrant’s Guide to Manitoba,” and explained the fertility of the soil, the climate, how to make the journey, and how to find land.⁸⁷ In this case, the information provided did not differ from what was being published in the Manitoban newspapers, but it was intended for a different audience, who may have had their interest piqued by a novelization of the Manitoban immigrant story, rather than readers of local Manitoban newspapers interested in local politics and people.

Other pamphlets promoted immigration to Manitoba by explaining how one should travel. The *Narrative of J. Y. Shantz* was published in 1873, but was reprinted in sections of a number of pamphlets over the next few years.⁸⁸ D. H. Scott also published his diary from travelling to and around Manitoba as a resource for immigrants. He described the scene of passing into Canada where “Many young Canadians on board who had been keeping quiet all along, now joined in giving three cheers for our Queen and in singing the National Anthem, Rule

⁸⁶ Begg, “*Dot It Down*,” 359.

⁸⁷ Begg, “*Dot It Down*,” 369-381.

⁸⁸ J. Y. Shantz, *Narrative of a Journey to Manitoba* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture; Robertson, Roger, 1873),

Britannia, and other loyal British or Canadian songs.”⁸⁹ He then said that his journey to Manitoba took 22 days, but “10 of these were wasted by delays in making connections. It can easily be made in 10 days with good connections.”⁹⁰

Shantz’s account of his journey to Manitoba was also published in a larger compilation of information from 1874. This large pamphlet included a fold out map of Canada and the northern United States from the Great Lakes into the prairies, with roads and railways marked.⁹¹ The first page of this pamphlet said that “The information in this pamphlet is compiled, in as far as possible, from official sources.”⁹² Along with previously published pamphlets, this one also included interviews with Mr. Kenneth McKenzie, a settler from Ontario who had been in Manitoba for four years, and Mr. Joseph Monkman, a Métis man who farmed at St. Peter’s, and spoke “English, Chippewa, and Cree.”⁹³

James Trow, was a member of the legislative assembly of Ontario representing Perth South from 1867 to 1871, and later traveled to Manitoba. He wrote letters to the editor of the *Stratford Beacon* and they were published as a resource to potential immigrants to Manitoba. After describing his journey and his impression of the Ste. Anne’s Métis community and Red River carts, he arrived in Winnipeg.⁹⁴ As he traveled around the province, he commented on everything from the high rents in Winnipeg to the Mennonite communities, to the improved breeds of crops that grew better in Manitoba.⁹⁵

In the 1877 report on the *Select Standing Committee on Immigration and Colonization*, compiled by James Trow, the Chairman asked about the numbers of immigration pamphlets that

⁸⁹ D. H. Scott, *Guide, Ontario to Manitoba* (Toronto: Troy & Co. Publishers, 1873), 15.

⁹⁰ D. H. Scott, *Guide, Ontario to Manitoba* (Toronto: Troy & Co. Publishers, 1873), 16.

⁹¹ *Province of Manitoba: Information for Intending Emigrants* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1874).

⁹² *Province of Manitoba: Information for Intending Emigrants* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1874).

⁹³ *Province of Manitoba: Information for Intending Emigrants* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1874), 20.

⁹⁴ James Trow, *A Trip to Manitoba*.

⁹⁵ James Trow, *A Trip to Manitoba*.

had been issued, and the recorded numbers are that there were 50,000 of the *Manitoba and North West* pamphlets issued, along with 50,000 of the *Manitoba and North West* pamphlets written or compiled by Spence.⁹⁶ Those were by far the most distributed, as the next most common publication was *Stock Breeding for Tenant Farmers* with 20,000, and 5000 of *Mack's German Pamphlet*. Every other piece of material published under 2000 copies.⁹⁷

When Alexander Begg was promoting his 1877 pamphlet, he said that it was presenting accurate information, as he had “submitted it to a number of merchants and citizens of Manitoba,” as well as to several committees.⁹⁸ The purpose of the pamphlet, which was re-printed in its entirety in 1879, was stated as presenting facts to the public “in as clear and concise a manner as possible, to demonstrate the great advantage possessed by Manitoba and the North-West for intending settlers and capitalists.”⁹⁹

By the late 1880s, immigration pamphlets were promising that “the hardships of pioneering are scarcely felt now in Manitoba. Railways, schools, churches, and thriving towns and villages are now scattered all over the country.”¹⁰⁰ When women were asked about their opinion of Manitoba, they responded similarly, saying that “Difficulties experienced ten years ago, do not exist now, owing to railways, etc. etc.”¹⁰¹ This infrastructure that made life easier for the white settlers came at the cost of Indigenous land and rights. The removal of Indigenous peoples from their lands facilitated the buildings of railroads and the easing of difficulties for settlers.

⁹⁶ James Trow, *Select Standing Committee on Immigration and Colonization* (Ottawa: MacLean, Roger & Co, 1877), 41.

⁹⁷ James Trow, *Select Standing Committee*, 41.

⁹⁸ Alexander Begg, *Practical Handbook and Guide to Manitoba and the North-West* (Toronto: Belford, 1877), 9.

⁹⁹ Begg, *Practical Handbook*, 9.

¹⁰⁰ *Facts About Manitoba* (Winnipeg: Government of Manitoba, 1888).

¹⁰¹ “What Women Say of the Canadian North-West: A Simple Statement of the Experiences of Women Settled in All Parts of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories” in the *Canadian Gazette* (London: M. Blacklock, 1886), 6.

Immigration and Travel

Manitoba was a geographically isolated place in the early 1870s, and only slightly more accessible by the end of the decade. While fur trade routes had connected Red River with the rest of the continent for centuries, as a colony of British North America, there were only three routes, all quite difficult. As Korneski describes, settlers could arrive at Red River “overland via the Lake of the Woods, through the Hudson Bay route through Lake Winnipeg, or travel through the United States as far as St. Paul, and then take an oxcart or flatboat to Winnipeg.”¹⁰² None of these options were particularly pleasant for travellers, although once steamships connected St. Paul and Winnipeg, the route through the United States became favoured. Due to these complicated routes, travel and the logistics of bringing immigrants to Manitoba was important in the newspapers of the 1870s. The Toronto *Telegraph* published that the government had made a plan and would place steamers “upon the lakes, and tug boats, sheds and other buildings will be erected at the portages for use of the immigrants.”¹⁰³ In 1871, the arrivals from April to July were listed with the number who arrived on each date, and the method of their arrival was also indicated. The largest groups typically arrived by steamer, either the *Selkirk* or *International*. But there were two large groups of around seventy people each who arrived by wagon.¹⁰⁴ The *Manitoban* commented on the large numbers of arrivals by steamer, writing:

There is something exceedingly touching, to see on the arrival of every steamer, strangers with their wives and little ones, arriving in this strange land. Some seem buoyant with hope- some seem disappointed at the looks of things- some seem anxious, apparently endeavouring to discover the great prosperity which they have been told attaches to the Province- and some- as is always the case with a company of immigrants anywhere- get homesick and make up their minds ere landing that they will go right back again.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Kurt Korneski, “Reform and Empire: The Case of Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1870s-1910s,” *Urban History Review* 37, no. 1 (Fall 2008), 50.

¹⁰³ “Immigration,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, January 28, 1871, page 2.

¹⁰⁴ “Immigration,” *Manitoba Liberal*, July 26, 1871, page 2.

¹⁰⁵ “Immigrants,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 24, 1871, page 2.

The article then advised immigrants seeking help or advice to speak to Governor Archibald instead of listening to strangers complaining on the street.

When the *Selkirk* arrived on 13 June 1871, the ship was described as “loaded down with freight and emigrants” and with around 100 passengers, “most of whom were from Ontario,” and full of wagons and supplies.¹⁰⁶ Earlier that month, a party of around half a dozen had arrived by wagon, after taking the train to Benson. This party was credited with bringing their own wagons and supplies, as “they will find it of much advantage on their arrival here, as horses and stock in general are in great demand and command high prices.”¹⁰⁷ This went against the advice given in later years, as the local economy developed.

In May of 1872 a number of immigrants, many with large families, arrived with their wagons and livestock, and apart from some challenges with spring roads and crossing rivers, they had no complaints. Their livestock “were a good deal pulled down in flesh for the most part, owing to the long travel and some hardships on the journey,” but the newspaper article was optimistic about their prospects.¹⁰⁸ The arrival of this group sparked some debate about how they were accommodated upon arrival,¹⁰⁹ but the *Manitoban* attempted to calm concerns, saying that being unprepared to accommodate large groups so soon did not mean that the province did not want immigration, saying that “we could never see where the necessity for hurry lay” and that immigration should happen “decently and in good order.”¹¹⁰ That same page also had an article about one of the main complaints of the new arrivals was that they were unable “to get or transmit messages of much length, with promptitude from Canada” as the company with the line

¹⁰⁶ “Arrival of the Selkirk,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 17, 1871, page 2.

¹⁰⁷ “High Prices and Immigration,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 3, 1871, page 2.

¹⁰⁸ “Immigration: Arrivals by the Overland Route,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, May 18, 1872, page 2.

¹⁰⁹ “Immigration,” *Manitoba Liberal*, May 19, 1872, page 2.

¹¹⁰ “Immigrants and the Manitoban,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, May 25, 1872, page 2.

was focused on railway business.¹¹¹ A new telegraphing company might also alleviate stress on new arrivals.

When an immigrant wrote about the difficulties of his journey from Thunder Bay to Red River, the *Manitoban* dismissed his concern by saying that “probably he was a married man and had a ‘babby’ or two along with him, which in some measure would account for a little grumbling” and that other passengers had not complained at all.¹¹² By 1873, every “man, woman, or child [was] loud in their denunciations” of the “amphibious route.”¹¹³ Some of their complaints were about difficult roads or weather, but others were that the many men employed at the portages could not understand English.¹¹⁴ The *Free Press* was concerned that the government in Ottawa was not fulfilling its promises to improve the Dawson Route and that it was becoming clear that the only tolerable route was through the United States.¹¹⁵ Complaints about the Dawson Route continued in future years, as by 1874 the requested improvements had not been made, and in this particular journey, many immigrants had their belongings ruined by rain and the condition of the boats. There was a call for the company operating the Dawson Route, Carpenter and Co., to reimburse immigrants for their losses.¹¹⁶ By 1875 a letter to the editor of the *Free Press* said that the reason there were fewer complaints about the Dawson Route was because most people were not using it, and the government should close the route until the railroad was built, and immigrants should just travel through the United States.¹¹⁷

The French-language *le Métis* explained to its readers that there were many routes to Manitoba as “même que tous les chemins mènent à Rome, on peut arriver à Fort Garry par

¹¹¹ “Telegraphing,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, May 25, 1872, page 2.

¹¹² “Jottings by an Immigrant,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, July 20, 1872, page 2.

¹¹³ “The Dawson Route: Dissatisfaction of Immigrants,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 5, 1873, page 3.

¹¹⁴ “The Dawson Route: Dissatisfaction of Immigrants,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 5, 1873, page 3.

¹¹⁵ “Manitoba Immigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 19, 1873, page 4.

¹¹⁶ “The Dawson Road: Gross Mismanagement! Starvation and Exposure!” and “The Dawson Route,” *Nor’Wester*, July 6, 1874, page 2.

¹¹⁷ “Dawson Road,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 21, 1875, page 3.

différentes voies.”¹¹⁸ The paper explained the many trips, the prices and benefits of the three main routes: the overland Dawson Route, the route through Duluth also called “la route des Lacs” which was “la plus agréable” and had a few different routes around the Great Lakes; and the third route which went through Chicago and St. Paul.¹¹⁹ In 1875, *le Métis* reported that the price for travel from Detroit to Fort Garry was \$17, which was a “réduction considérable” and good news for the incoming French Canadian immigrants.¹²⁰

Both the *Manitoban* and the *Free Press* expressed concern that the government needed to invest more in immigration support. There was the Dominion Lands Office, but “there are many other matters upon which the new-arrival requires information besides *lands* [emphasis original].”¹²¹ This would involve a salary of around \$400, and all the other provinces had “a special office for the purpose near the place of landing by rail or river”¹²² These concerns continued to be a problem in the following years, as by 1877, most immigrants were travelling through the United States, but there was a lack of communication about the prices of the various stages of the trip and many immigrants found themselves paying extra charges. There was a call to “appoint an emigration agent at Duluth to give information to immigrants for this Province and save them from these shameless sharks.”¹²³ This was also a problem because intending immigrants to Manitoba were being approached by American immigration agents who “lied about and vilified Manitoba in the most shameful way, and that by this means several of the Canadians were induced to leave the party and go see Iowa and Missouri, which they represented to be a perfect paradise.”¹²⁴ This prompted the Duluth Dominion Immigration Agent to quickly

¹¹⁸ “Route de Manitoba,” *Le Métis*, May 24, 1873, page 2.

¹¹⁹ “Route de Manitoba,” *Le Métis*, May 24, 1873, page 2.

¹²⁰ “A Coux Qui Emigrant a Manitoba,” *Le Métis*, May 22, 1875, page 2.

¹²¹ “Necessities of the Hour,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 7, 1873, page 4.

¹²² “Reception of Immigrants,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 7, 1873, page 2.

¹²³ “Difficulties of Immigrants,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 3, 1877, page 3.

¹²⁴ “Trying to Fool Immigrants,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 4, 1878, page 8.

spread word warning immigrants about the American agents.¹²⁵ This situation was further complicated by a letter to the editor claiming that perhaps intending immigrants were remaining in the United States to avoid paying their travel debts that would be due upon arrival in Winnipeg.¹²⁶

Policies shaping travel costs and passage fares evolved in the early years of Canadian immigration infrastructure and promotion. Immigrating to Canada from Europe meant a journey across the ocean, and then more travel across the vast continent upon arrival. Prior to Confederation, “passes covering inland travel from embarkation to points of destination were given rather freely by colonial governments,” but this system was often abused by people who would use the funds to move to the United States.¹²⁷ The system was reformed to try and limit the abuse of funds, but this was challenging, and in 1872, the federal government cooperated with Ontario and Quebec where “the provinces assumed two-thirds of the inland transportation costs of immigrations settling within their respective borders,” although within a few years Ontario was only paying inland transportation for female domestics.¹²⁸

British philanthropic organizations paid travel costs, but this was controversial in both Britain and Canada, as they were seen in Britain as a way to “dispose of the poor” and Canadian opponents thought it encouraged the immigration of people who would not be successful agriculturalists.¹²⁹ By 1879 there were restrictions that prohibited “the landing in Canada of indigents and paupers” unless the master of the ship would cover all the costs for their temporary support in Canada.¹³⁰ As much as Canada wanted to competitively attract immigrants, there were

¹²⁵ “Cautioning Immigrants,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 18, 1878, page 3.

¹²⁶ “Manitoba vs. Dakota,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 27, 1878, page 8.

¹²⁷ Kelley and Trebilcock, 88.

¹²⁸ Kelley and Trebilcock, 88.

¹²⁹ Kelley and Trebilcock, 89.

¹³⁰ Kelley and Trebilcock, 90.

specific types of immigrants in mind, and even the British poor were not quite what the officials had in mind as they tried to force Indigenous spaces into a distinct model of Britishness.

Immigration, Race, and Empire

The intersecting ideas of race and the British empire were strong influences upon Manitoban immigration discourse. Many of Winnipeg's early settlers were involved in the colonial project of expanding the British empire into the Canadian prairies, even as they lamented the ways that life in Winnipeg differed from the ideal of Britishness.¹³¹ Chapter 1 has explored how the creation of newspapers was an essential part of recreating the British imperial space, and Manitoba's early newspapermen were part of the reforming class looking to assimilate Red River into Britishness.¹³² These reformers understood settler societies as being made up of British people, and being "a kind of extension of Britain itself."¹³³ This was outside of strict understandings of what it meant to be "British," and more about refining a diverse populace into Britishness. Korneski states:

In Canada, and especially in the West and in Winnipeg, it was obvious, and often deeply unsettling, to many middle-class observers that a large number of settlers were from an array of kingdoms and countries. [...] even though there may have been no obvious core "ethnie," nationalists could maintain that with a measure of diligence on their part, a still-developing, linguistically and ethnically uniform, fixed Canadian type would be British, meaning that it would conform to the politico-ethical principles that were common to the most 'advanced' and globally predominant segments of humanity. They could hold that the diverse collection of men and women within Canada could be "refined" into Britishers, meaning that they could be infused with the qualities necessary to realize the ideally functioning liberal-capitalist society nationalists envisaged.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Korneski, "Reform and Empire," 53.

¹³² Korneski, "Reform and Empire," 50.

¹³³ Korneski, "Reform and Empire," 52.

¹³⁴ Kurt Korneski, *Britishness, Canadianness, Class, and Race: Winnipeg and the British World, 1880s-1910s.* *Journal of Canadian Studies* Vol 41, No 2 (Spring, 2007), 169.

This understanding of Britishness as something that was about performing identity, rather than the nation of origin of immigrants, is essential to understanding how Britishness was established in a decidedly diverse place like Winnipeg. These ideas would develop throughout the late 19th century, but initially the hope was immigration would be directly from Britain.

Perhaps one of the most significant and long-lasting narratives about immigration was about the race of immigrants and the accompanying anxieties about how this would influence Manitoba's position in the Canadian nation and the British empire more broadly. From as early as 1860, immigration was seen as a mark of advancement for Red River, with the *Nor'Wester* saying that "changes are not far distant" and that "The wise and prudent will be prepared to receive and benefit by them; whilst the indolent and the careless, like the native tribes of the country, will fall back before the march of a superior intelligence."¹³⁵

By November 1870, there were reports of a "large number of emigrants, who were proceeding to Fort Garry by way of Pembina," and it was noted that they were from England. The group "had considerable means" and two of them had "machinery to establish a brewery."¹³⁶ British immigration was the ideal goal for establishing Manitoba as a respectable part of the Dominion, so when a large wave of English immigration had not arrived by 1874, apart from some English Canadians, the newspapers began to publish stories looking into why this was. One story, from the *London Times*, had reported that "emigration from England to Canada can be productive of nothing but misery and distress for this who are foolish enough to be persuaded into so ruinous a step."¹³⁷ This was dismissed as the ideas of people far away, and influenced by feedback from a few who had returned after failing, or ideas from landlords and manufacturers to keep the poor from seeking a better life. Immigration agents should instead focus on telling the

¹³⁵ "Retrospect," *Nor'Wester*, January 14, 1860, page 2.

¹³⁶ "Varieties – Local and Foreign," *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, November 26, 1870, page 2.

¹³⁷ "English Emigration," *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, September 19, 1874, page 2.

working classes that “better wages and more extended chances” were available in Canada.¹³⁸ A letter to the editor said that Canada should also encourage “small farmers” to look into Canada, as “where in Britain’s bright galaxy of colonies can they find brighter skies, a climate more adapted to men of Anglo Saxon lineage or more fertile land and easily cultivated soil than here, the mere name of which is at present all but unknown to them.”¹³⁹

The *Free Press* regularly discussed how crowded Britain was becoming, and presented the North-West as a solution to help save the British Empire- to allow the British to both stop overcrowding, and continue to live under British laws. Put clearly, “All who desire to see the future of Great Britain assured, must hope to see the North-West Territories thrown open for settlement as soon as possible, and rendered available to become the home of millions of the British race.¹⁴⁰ One of the proposed methods for this was to encourage blocks of British immigration and to coordinate group immigration efforts, such as through the British Canadian Land Settlement Company of Glasgow, which suspected it, under Colonel Shaw, would bring 100,000 immigrants over the next decade.¹⁴¹ The *Globe* proposed another organization that suggested that it would recruit married couples from England, and build and furnish their dwellings, as well establish “cooperative stores in order to supply them with merchandise at wholesale prices” and would pay each immigrant one hundred pounds sterling each year for their share of the work.¹⁴² This was seen as a method that would encourage success, more than the liberal model of individual homesteads.

The *Free Press* compared immigration to Manitoba and the North-West with immigration around the world, arguing that the Western States “have had their day” and were

¹³⁸ “English Emigration,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, September 19, 1874, page 2.

¹³⁹ “Immigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 7, 1875, page 3.

¹⁴⁰ “The North-West: England’s Interest in its Settlement,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 13, 1874, page 4.

¹⁴¹ “The British Canadian Settlement Company of Glasgow,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 1, 1874, page 4.

¹⁴² “Another Colony,” *The Standard*, November 28, 1874, page 2.

exhausted for immigrants, while Australia and New Zealand were in the hands of speculators and demanded prices most could not afford. South America or “Central or Southern Africa” there were “disadvantages both physical and political which are too formidable to the ordinary immigrant.”¹⁴³ After explaining this, they asserted “The answer is Our Great North-West, which, including British Columbia” was an area of 2.5 million miles.¹⁴⁴

By 1877, it was becoming clear that immigration to Manitoba was primarily from Ontario, and the *Globe* reported that “it is likely that Manitoba will be the favorite place for emigrants during this and many coming seasons” but older provinces should not be discouraged by this. They asserted that “everything promises a large amount of general prosperity during the next decade.”¹⁴⁵ The *Globe* also wrote that young people should seek new opportunities in the west, and reassured Canadians that “they are not lost to Canada when they leave their early homes for the new parts of our country.”¹⁴⁶ This was a more effective strategy than waiting for British immigration, as by 1878 the *Free Press* boasted that Manitoba had received a “Tidal Wave” and “The First Large Batch of Immigrants.”¹⁴⁷ The group of 400 men, women, and children were largely from Ontario, but also from some eastern States, and were certainly not the largest group arriving in Manitoba if one included the Icelanders and Mennonites, but this was still a significantly large group of English-speaking immigrants.¹⁴⁸

The numbers of arrivals from Ontario, and other eastern provinces, continued to increase, which was celebrated but did prompt some “lament” about the “decrease of other provinces of the Dominion.”¹⁴⁹ The positive side of this, was that perhaps a larger population of English-

¹⁴³ “Immigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 12, 1874, page 4-5.

¹⁴⁴ “Immigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 12, 1874, page 4-5.

¹⁴⁵ “New Resources and Fresh Fields,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 19, 1877, page 7.

¹⁴⁶ “Emigration to the North-West,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 31, 1877, page 6.

¹⁴⁷ “The Tidal Wave! The First Large Batch of Immigrants,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 20, 1878, page 1.

¹⁴⁸ “The Tidal Wave! The First Large Batch of Immigrants,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 20, 1878, page 1.

¹⁴⁹ “Our New-Comers,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 29, 1879, page 2.

speakers in the North-West would soon draw more British immigration, which remained the ultimate goal. The *Free Press* speculated about this, saying that the British “influx will be unprecedented” but not everyone would come to the prairies. However, as Ontarians left for Manitoba, that opened up places in Ontario for British immigrants.¹⁵⁰ In the older provinces, where were “hundreds of improved farms” for sale, and those would be better for the British arrivals, as in “the wild and untouched lands of the North-West, Canadian farmers who have served an apprenticeship to that kind of work will have a much better chance of success than Englishmen whose lives hitherto have been passed in the midst of cultivated scenes.”¹⁵¹ These ideas did not spare Ontario immigrants from being observed as outsiders, as when 300 of them arrived in 1880, people crowded the newly arrived party “to gratify the morbid curiosity, which the sight of an Ontario ‘tenderfoot’ always creates in the breast of some of our citizens.”¹⁵²

Manitoba was held up as a “civilized” part of the British empire by visitors, as a correspondent from the St. Paul *Pioneer Press* reported that “the greatest surprise awaiting the visitor is in the character of the citizens” who were from “Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa, and from England itself, and have brought with them civilities and customs of home.”¹⁵³ This was credited with creating a merchant and economic class “unlike the class that we find generally in our newer western towns, and seem more like the product of our older and more cultivated cities of the east.”¹⁵⁴ The correspondent was surprised by the large numbers of Métis around, saying that “they have become as grasshoppers for multitude.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ “Immigration Prospects,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 1, 1879, page 2.

¹⁵¹ “British Emigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 25, 1879, page 2.

¹⁵² “The Immigration Boom: Sunday’s Arrivals,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 22, 1880, page 1.

¹⁵³ “As Viewed by a Visitor,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 27, 1878, page 1.

¹⁵⁴ “As Viewed by a Visitor,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 27, 1878, page 1.

¹⁵⁵ “As Viewed by a Visitor,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 27, 1878, page 1.

Immigration and empire were part of immigration pamphlets, as shown in a speech given by Mr. Frederick William Chesson at the monthly meeting of the Royal Colonial Institute, where he said that Americans had “stolen a march upon us” as all immigration to Manitoba and the west went through the United States.¹⁵⁶ Frederick Chesson and Alexander Isbister were both members of the Aborigines’ Protection Society and their friendship influenced his impressions of Red River and the role of British empire. He continued, “Thanks to the restrictive policy which has so long closed that country against all access from the civilised world except through American territory, or what was far worse, through the distant and perilous waters of Hudson’s Bay and straits [...] there was not until last year any direct or regular means of communication between Canada and the Red River; and if one may judge from the complaints which have since been made, the existing arrangement is far from being a satisfactory one.”¹⁵⁷ Chesson concluded his speech by saying that in Britain, funds were not given for “the transfer of the surplus population of this country to our colonies, and the consequence was that all the people went to the United States, and there we had seen a specimen of how they conducted themselves towards Great Britain.”¹⁵⁸ To avoid this, Britain should induce “a healthy and steady flow of emigration into our various colonies,” as this was “the only way of making them fruitful branches of the grand old British trunk.”¹⁵⁹

Towards the end of the 1870s, immigration pamphlets focused on drawing in British immigrants. An 1879 pamphlet from the Department of Agriculture introduced their purpose as showing the advantages of Manitoba “for the settlement of Immigrants from the United Kingdom, especially the class of Tenant Farmers having sufficient capital to make a start in

¹⁵⁶ F. W. Chesson, *Mr. Chesson on Manitoba* (London: European Mail, 1872), 10.

¹⁵⁷ Chesson, 10.

¹⁵⁸ Chesson, 16.

¹⁵⁹ Chesson, 16-17.

life.”¹⁶⁰ All of the information presented was connected back to the British empire and Europe more broadly, with observations about the climate presented with the caveat that “The climate, in short, is continental and dry, instead of what may be termed coast and humid; and it gives the conditions of what would be termed in Europe, “Italian skies,” with sufficient rains in spring and summer for the purposes of vegetation.”¹⁶¹ A few pages later, under the heading “General Suitability for Emigrants from the United Kingdom,” the pamphlet claimed, “The settler in Manitoba from the United Kingdom will find on the whole a much brighter and drier climate, warmer in summer and colder in winter, than he has left behind. It is, on the whole, more pleasant to live in; and, as has already been stated, is one of the healthiest in the world.”¹⁶² Concluding this section, the call for British immigration was supported with the idea that “The settler from the United Kingdom, in Manitoba, will also find his language, his religion, and means to educate his children from the common school to the college.”¹⁶³

Thomas Spence made even more direct pleas for British immigration, when he compared the Canadian west with the American states, saying that “If we examine the history of European emigration, we shall be struck with the fact, that nearly its entire volume has tended in the direction of the like climates of North America, and that when it has not, its attempts at colonization have been failures.”¹⁶⁴ Several letters compared Canada with the United States, and Spence concludes that soon “the entire expansive movement of population on the American continent will be concentrated in the direction of our vast fertile valleys, and under the wise

¹⁶⁰ *The Province of Manitoba and the North West Territory: Information for Intending Immigrants* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1879), 3.

¹⁶¹ *The Province of Manitoba and the North West Territory: Information for Intending Immigrants* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1879), 6.

¹⁶² *The Province of Manitoba and the North West Territory: Information for Intending Immigrants* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1879), 14.

¹⁶³ *The Province of Manitoba and the North West Territory: Information for Intending Immigrants* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1879), 14.

¹⁶⁴ Thomas Spence, *The Prairie Lands of Canada* (Montreal: Gazette Printing House, 1879), 9.

policy of this great Confederacy of Canada, the future destiny of the North-West will be a great and glorious one.”¹⁶⁵

In Charles Acton Burrow’s pamphlet about the climate and soil of North-western Canada, he began by discussing the expected rush of people who would be leaving the United Kingdom. It was his goal to draw them to Manitoba with “official and authentic sources” what would prove the “great fertility of the region [...] its suitability for settlement, and [the] positive assurance of prosperity which can be given to those who locate within its borders.”¹⁶⁶ When comparing Canada to other potential British colonies for immigration, Burrows writes that “Canada is nearer to England than any other colony” and when factoring the ease of travel across the continent:

The comparatively short distance from Canada to Britain allows wheat, flour, butter, cheese, and even perishable apples to be transported across the Atlantic. Australian meats have to find their way to England in tins, while Canadian live stock is carried over alive. Dead meat can be taken from Canada to England, not only without deterioration, but with actual improvement.¹⁶⁷

The climate was particularly well-suited, as “The vigorous constitutions of Canadians stand in marked contrast to the emaciated and prematurely old appearance of the people of Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana.”¹⁶⁸

George Wyatt’s pamphlet encouraged British immigration by saying that “the farmer who migrates from the British Islands to any part of Canada does not change his flag, nor does he, except to a very slight degree, change his mode of life nor his companionship. He goes among his own people, to conditions of life and society the same as those he leaves behind.”¹⁶⁹

This ideology is very much in line with the ideals of the Winnipeg-based reformers, who sought

¹⁶⁵ Thomas Spence, *The Prairie Lands of Canada* (Montreal: Gazette Printing House, 1879), 20.

¹⁶⁶ Charles Acton Burrows, *North Western Canada: Its Climate, Soil, and Productions: With a Sketch of Its Natural Features and Social Condition* (Winnipeg: Charles Acton Burrows, 1880), 7.

¹⁶⁷ Burrows, 67-69.

¹⁶⁸ Burrows, 68.

¹⁶⁹ George H. Wyatt, *Manitoba, The Canadian North-West, and Ontario* (Toronto: George H. Wyatt, 1880), 6.

to recreate British institutions and society, even if the ethnic make up of the new province did not live up to the ideal white British settler colony.

Ethnic Immigration- Mennonites and Icelanders

In the early years of immigration to the prairies, governments promoted group settlement as a method of recruiting immigrants to sections of land that would be otherwise neglected. The details of the land reserve system were discussed in chapter 3, but this section explores the Mennonites and Icelanders as the main ethnic groups who arrived in the 1870s, and how that related to the larger concerns about immigration to Manitoba. The early blocks of ethnic immigration to Manitoba, specifically the Mennonites and Icelanders, have been the topic of extensive scholarship.¹⁷⁰ Ethno-religious settlement shaped the Canadian prairie, and despite efforts to create the region as an extension of the British-Canadian empire, “by 1901 one-third of the West’s population was foreign born compared to 3 percent in the rest of Canada.”¹⁷¹ Historian Frances Swyripa explains that this was a “sign that the prairies would not replicate the East even though the British and French enjoyed special privileges as European first-comers, dominating the region’s elites and its official narratives.”¹⁷²

The history of ethnic Mennonites in Manitoba has been extensively studied by scholars such as Frank Epp, Lawrence Klippenstein, Marlene Epp, and Royden Loewen, among others. Mennonites were drawn to Manitoba from Russia because in the early 1870s many leaders worried that “emigration might now be the only option to deal with the military conscription

¹⁷⁰ For more about the 1870s Mennonite immigration to Manitoba, see Royden Loewen’s *Hidden Worlds: Revisiting the Mennonite Migrants of the 1870s*, and for more on the Icelandic immigration, see Ryan Eyford’s *White Settler Reserve: New Iceland and the Colonization of the Canadian West*.

¹⁷¹ Frances Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes: Ethno-Religious Identity and the Canadian Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010), 14.

¹⁷² Swyripa, 14.

dilemma.”¹⁷³ After being recruited by immigration agents Jacob Y, Shantz and William Hespeler and establishing committees, Mennonites began to move to Manitoba, with the first arriving in July of 1874.¹⁷⁴ By around 1880 around 7000 Mennonites had arrived in the province.¹⁷⁵

Frank Epp explains that the Mennonites who chose Manitoba in the 1870s were originally from the more conservative settlements in Russia, as compared to the Mennonites who moved to the United States during this immigration wave.¹⁷⁶ While they were more conservative and simpler than their counterparts, the Manitoba Mennonites quickly found economic success, aided by the lack of strict gendered labour, at least for rural Mennonites. Marlene Epp describes that while women were prevented from holding certain positions within the religious and community leadership, when it came to labour they could be found “running the drill press, sharpening scythes [and] putting spokes in buggy wheels.”¹⁷⁷

During the 1870s Mennonites attempted to remain isolated from larger Canadian society, but quickly pursued the best agricultural knowledge and implements, as “by 1883 one out of every ten [Mennonite] households [...] owned a \$700 threshing machine.”¹⁷⁸ The farms quickly grew larger than what the Mennonites alone could maintain, which caused the need for state of the art machinery, and later, hiring Eastern European and Ukrainian labourers who did not have the means (or federal aid) to acquire their own farms.¹⁷⁹ Despite this praise for their agricultural success, Royden Loewen draws from John Warkentin’s observations to explain the challenges Mennonites faced in their new home. They continued plowing in the spring like they had done in

¹⁷³ Lawrence Klippenstein, “Broken Promises or National Progress: Mennonites and the Russian State in the 1870s,” *Journal of Mennonite Studies* Vol. 18 (2000), 99

¹⁷⁴ Klippenstein, 103.

¹⁷⁵ Klippenstein, 106.

¹⁷⁶ Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786-1920: The History of a Separate People* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1974), 155.

¹⁷⁷ Marlene Epp, *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press), 251.

¹⁷⁸ Royden Loewen, *Family Church and Market: A Mennonite Community in the Old and New Worlds, 1850-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 130.

¹⁷⁹ Loewen, *Family Church and Market*, 140.

Russia, which delayed seeding, and so they lost crops to the frost.¹⁸⁰ Loewen said that despite these challenges, “the strength of this communitarian culture was premised on learning the limitations and opportunities of flat, wet, and wintry Manitoba.”¹⁸¹

Mennonites and Icelanders, and later other ethnic block settlements, marked a sharp departure from the ideal homesteading model promoted by Ottawa. However, Ottawa was willing to facilitate block settlement to attract ideal settlers and stimulate immigration, especially in the 1870s and 1880s, “when disappointingly few settlers came on their own.”¹⁸² Block settlements did not last forever, and while pockets of ethnic settlement can still be found in landmarks, cemeteries, and churches across the prairies, by the 1890s many “individualistic Mennonites had moved onto their own farms.”¹⁸³

Ultimately, block settlement was a challenge to nation-building narratives, as settlers in block settlements often prioritized keeping their own traditions, languages, and customs, rather than quickly assimilating into the British empire. Susie Fisher demonstrates the ways that gardens, seeds, and food were part of Mennonite women transplanting their familiar landscapes into their new homes.¹⁸⁴ While on one hand, Mennonite success with establishing beautiful, tidy gardens was praised as demonstrating the fertility of the soil and the “civilization” that families brought to the male-dominated prairie settler society, the gardens were also distinctly nostalgic, and not British.¹⁸⁵ They were a challenge to the homestead model, and the extending of British culture into the west. Groups like the Mennonites and Icelanders received particular types of reserves that would not be extended to groups arriving later, as they were seen as delaying

¹⁸⁰ Royden Loewen, *Mennonite Farmers: A Global History of Place and Sustainability* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2021), 36-37.

¹⁸¹ Loewen, *Mennonite Farmers*, 37.

¹⁸² Swyripa, 15.

¹⁸³ Swyripa, 16.

¹⁸⁴ Susie Fisher, “(Trans)planting Manitoba’s West Reserve: Mennonites, Myth, and Narratives of Place,” *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 35 (2017), 128-129.

¹⁸⁵ Fisher, 131, 133.

assimilation, even though these settlers did assimilate, at least economically. Swyripa explains that by the 1880s, “group settlement shifted from closed colonies, with their negative implications for nation building, to more informal clusterings.”¹⁸⁶ People could still purchase land and live in homesteads near each other, but the immigration reserve was distinct to this early era of recruitment in the 1870s and early 1880s.

Mennonites and Icelanders were so regularly discussed within the 1870s newspapers that it is not possible to discuss everything in this chapter. The focus is an attempt to show that ideas of ethnicity factored into discussions of immigration during the 1870s. The ideal immigrant was white and British, but Mennonites and Icelanders provided another immigration narrative, where Manitoba was a desirable home to groups that were at least close to the ideal settler. The failure of Manitoba to attract large numbers of British or Canadian immigrants could be downplayed with a focus on the large groups of ethnic immigrants moving to the province.

Initially, when a Mennonite delegation showed interest in immigrating to Manitoba, the *Free Press* reported that these were valuable immigrants, as if they could acquire “40,000 of the most industrious and thriving people in the world” more attention and interest would turn towards Manitoba and “the movement will have the effect of bringing here a great share of the steady immigration which for years has been filling up the Western States.”¹⁸⁷ Once the delegation arrived, the news coverage of the Mennonites centred around pre-existing tensions and concerns about the future of the province. When the Métis met the Mennonites on White Horse Plains, the English-language press reported that the Métis were attempting to block all immigration and were stirring up violence and racial tensions.¹⁸⁸ However, even in the *Free*

¹⁸⁶ Swyripa, 16.

¹⁸⁷ “An Immigration Deputation,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 30, 1872, page 4.

¹⁸⁸ “The War of Races Revived: The Mennonites Attacked by Métis, Arrests by Military,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 5, 1873, page 5.

Press coverage of the event, the only violence indicated was when one of the teamsters driving the Mennonites “immediately retaliated, striking the Half-breed and knocking his hat off.”¹⁸⁹ Once they were at the hotel, one of the teamsters “upon being insulted by a Half-breed, treated the latter to a tremendous whipping; and after some further altercation, and dire threats of what they were going to do, the Half-breeds left to get reinforcements.”¹⁹⁰ In this version of events the Métis may have made threats against the Mennonites and their larger party, the only actual recorded violence was directed against the Métis. In later reports, the *Free Press* used this encounter to express concerns that it was “undeniable that gross favoritism has been the lot of this class. The natural consequence is that we find them arrogant and disposed to look upon all others as intruders and interlopers” as they had no consequences under the law.¹⁹¹

The French-language *le Métis* covered the response to this interaction extensively, initially mocking the reaction to the unarmed encounter, and then publishing a letter to the editor calling the uproar in Winnipeg “simplement ridicule.”¹⁹²¹⁹³ When a Mennonite delegation visited Manitoba without consulting the Métis communities, they showed their position on immigration to their province. This account was described as a “war of the races” and that Mennonites were “attacked by the Métis. This event was covered very differently in *Le Métis*. A letter to the editor from “Un Ami” responded to the coverage from English newspapers, specifically the *Gazette*, by saying “ce pitoyable article contient non seulement des erreurs, mais des faussetés telles qu’on s’étonne qu’un homme ait l’audace de les publier.”¹⁹⁴ They said that they were all quite surprised

¹⁸⁹ “The War of Races Revived: The Mennonites Attacked by Métis, Arrests by Military,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 5, 1873, page 5.

¹⁹⁰ “The War of Races Revived: The Mennonites Attacked by Métis, Arrests by Military,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 5, 1873, page 5.

¹⁹¹ “The White Horse Plains Outrage,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 5, 1873, page 4.

¹⁹² “La Panique de la Prairie du Cheval Blanc,” *Le Métis*, July 12, 1873, page 2.

¹⁹³ “Simplement ridicule, si cela ne deviant pas criminal,” *Le Métis*, July 5, 1873, page 3.

¹⁹⁴ “Simplement ridicule, si cela ne deviant pas criminal,” *Le Métis*, July 5, 1873, page 3.

when they heard that this was being discussed as an attack.¹⁹⁵ A later article explained that five men involved in that event had been arrested, but “Nous avons dit dans le temps que ce n’était là qu’une farce ridicule.”¹⁹⁶ The case was settled now, and “Il était bien clair, comme nous le disions alors, que cette affaire dont certains journaux font tant de bruit, n’étaient qu’une querelle d’hommes ivres, dans lesquels les Métis inculpes n’étaient pas mêmes les agresseurs.”¹⁹⁷ From the perspective of *Le Métis*, this had not been an aggressive encounter, and the way the English press was covering this event was exacerbating the tensions between white settlers and the French Métis.

When covering the trial results of the five men who were charged, *Le Métis* reported that the court decided that it was largely made up by journalists, and nothing much had happened after all.¹⁹⁸ The different ways the English and French media covered the “White Horse Plains incident” reveals the various tensions at play between Métis and settler societies, and the role ethnic immigrants played in these larger discussions. Lawrence Klippenstein has written extensively about this early delegation of Mennonites and their reception in Manitoba, concluding:

It was impossible for the Mennonite delegates not to notice the presence of Manitoba natives as they travelled about the countryside inspecting the land. Impressions about them varied, but most of the contacts were pleasant, and those otherwise did not deter four of them, at least, from recommending the move to the province.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ “Simplement ridicule, si cela ne deviant pas criminal,” *Le Métis*, July 5, 1873, page 3.

¹⁹⁶ “La Pretendue Attaque Contre Les Mennonites,” *Le Métis*, September 20, 1873, page 3.

¹⁹⁷ “La Pretendue Attaque Contre Les Mennonites,” *Le Métis*, September 20, 1873, page 3.

¹⁹⁸ “La Pretendue Attaque Contre Les Mennonites,” *Le Métis*, September 20, 1873, page 3.

¹⁹⁹ Lawrence Klippenstein, “Manitoba Métis and Mennonite Immigrants: First Contacts,” *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 48, no. 4 (1974), 488.

Despite these early meetings, Mennonites made little effort to communicate with the Métis or First Nations communities in Manitoba, despite their reserves bordering each other, as has been examined by both Joseph Wiebe and Donovan Giesbrecht.²⁰⁰

Mennonites were reassured that “under the British flag” they would find “perfect security and equal justice” as long as they would be loyal to “British rule and Britain’s Queen.”²⁰¹ In contrast to this, *Le Métis* emphasized that they would be excellent settlers because they did not use violence.²⁰² This idea is of course challenged by the understanding that Mennonites did in fact become invested in the settler colonial order, and so were thus complicit in the violence of settler colonialism, as has been explored by Reina Neufeldt.²⁰³

As the Mennonites arrived, the *Free Press* responded to an idea that “foreign immigration, or in other words an influx of large bodies of people not speaking the English language is not desirable here, but it must be remembered that this Province must of necessity depend on agriculture to a great extent for its prosperity” and so for now, the Mennonites were welcomed.²⁰⁴ Mennonites were, of course, welcomed. And yet, the *Globe*’s coverage was still focused on the idea that Mennonites were only the first stage, and advised “all young Canadians, male and female, to go to Manitoba.”²⁰⁵ The intention was still that British immigration, or at least British-Canadian immigration would be the foundation for Manitoba.

One of the aspects of the Mennonite settlement that received a great deal of attention was in their self-sufficiency. When they wanted a shorter route to Point de Chêne, the nearby town,

²⁰⁰ Donovan Giesbrecht, “Métis, Mennonites, and the ‘Unsettled Prairie,’ 1874-1896,” *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 19 (2001): 103-11. And Joseph R. Wiebe, “One the Mennonite-Métis Borderland: Environment, Colonialism, and Settlement in Manitoba,” *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 35 (2017): 111-126.

²⁰¹ “Menonite [sic] Delegation,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, June 21, 1873, page 2.

²⁰² “Les Mennonites,” *Le Métis*, August 8, 1874, page 2.

²⁰³ Reina C. Neufeldt, “Settler Colonial Conscripts: Mennonite Reserves and the Enfolding of Implicated Subjects,” *Postcolonial Studies* (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2021.1943862>.

²⁰⁴ “The Mennonites: Arrival of the Advance Guard,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 8, 1874, page 3.

²⁰⁵ “From Ottawa: The Globe on Manitoba,” *Manitoba Free Press*, March 21, 1874, page 8.

they “set themselves to work like men and built a bridge over a river” while the older settlers “had been travelling a route some miles longer, and would have done so to this day, unless the Government had come to their rescue.”²⁰⁶ Similarly, the Ontario Mennonites were praised for supporting the Manitoba Mennonites and offering to mortgage their own farms, as “few churches whose members would be willing to incur a similar obligation for their brethren.”²⁰⁷ That same self-sufficiency and ability to survive on the open prairie by relying on each other was not seen as a positive trait when it brought them into conflict with nearby settlers.

Around 1875, the next group of ethnic immigrants arrived, and the Icelanders were added to the news coverage of immigration in Manitoba. There was some slight concern over their homeland, as the assumption was “they have no agriculture, and live mainly upon the products of the fisheries,” but the local market could use more people who could supply the local markets with fish and livestock, so that would still be valuable.²⁰⁸ Perhaps part of their appeal was their appearance as they were “a fair-faced, fair-haired, blue-eyed people, of robust constitution, not afraid to work, and clean in their personal habits.”²⁰⁹ From the first arrivals, there was a large demand for the girls as domestic servants,²¹⁰ and within a few years the young men and women were “unselfishly” employed in nearby communities and using their wages to supply their parents and community with cattle and other goods.²¹¹

The Icelanders experienced greater difficulties than the Mennonites upon arrival, as many arrived just before a severe winter and then faced a smallpox epidemic as a result of their travels.²¹² Laurie Bertram, in her book about the evolving culture of Icelandic immigrants to

²⁰⁶ “The Mennonites,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 10, 1876, page 3.

²⁰⁷ “The Mennonites,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 15, 1876, page 1.

²⁰⁸ “Iceland and the Icelanders,” *The Standard*, July 31, 1875, page 2.

²⁰⁹ “A New Colony,” *Manitoba Free Press*, October 30, 1875, page 7.

²¹⁰ “About the Icelanders,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 12, 1876, page 8.

²¹¹ “The Icelandic Colony,” *Manitoba Free Press*, September 29, 1877, page 2.

²¹² Kelley and Trebilcock, 77-78.

Manitoba, writes that in these early difficult years the “reports of the impressive success of Mennonite farmers south of Winnipeg discouraged them further.”²¹³ The community was facing religious strife in addition to poverty, smallpox, and land that was isolated and required drainage, and many Icelanders moved to Dakota Territory to try again.²¹⁴ Despite this, the *Free Press* correspondent wrote that by 1878 the community was well-established and had a municipal system for building roads where each male inhabitant had to do two days of statutory labour.²¹⁵ The *Manitoba Herald* responded to the early difficulties of the Icelanders by blaming the government, saying that the colonization scheme failed and the government should not have brought people without agricultural knowledge or the financial support to make the first years easier.²¹⁶

There were some concerns about the systems of block ethnic immigration, and in the Manitoba legislature there was a debate about the role of immigration societies. William Luxton, who represented the Rockwood provincial riding and also ran the *Free Press*, was reported to say that he was opposed “settling this country by classes” and that it was fine to facilitate immigration, but he was worried it would lead to “the retention of distinct nationalities to the end of time.”²¹⁷ He also weighed in as a response to letters to the editor. One letter from “A. Spencer Jones” about ways to promote English immigration, received the response that “I shall however reserve my remarks on this subject for a future day, merely observing at present that in my opinion men of all races ought to mingle together so as to in time to form one united people.”²¹⁸

²¹³ L. K. Bertram, *The Viking Immigrants: Icelandic North Americans* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 13.

²¹⁴ Bertram, 13.

²¹⁵ “New Iceland,” *Manitoba Free Press*, April 13, 1878, page 8.

²¹⁶ “Icelandic Emigration,” *The Manitoba Herald*, January 18, 1877, page 2.

²¹⁷ “Manitoba Parliament,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 8, 1875, page 6.

²¹⁸ “Immigration,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 14, 1875, page 2.

The visit of Governor General Lord Dufferin included many speeches that confirmed the importance of Manitoba and the North-West to the British empire, and poetic, racist language about Indigenous peoples and the prosperous future now that Canada was extending beyond “the woods.” One line said that “our Indian friends and neighbours are by no means that only alien communities in Manitoba which demand the solicitude of the Government and excite our sympathies and curiosity. In close proximity to Winnipeg, two other communities, the Mennonites and Icelanders” had made their homes, and he expected them to soon be very prosperous.²¹⁹

The “Menno-Canuck” dispute over timber lands occurred in the winter of 1877-78 around the Pembina Mountain region. The Emerson *Free Press* correspondent referred to it as an “open warfare” and said that there “is no interest in common between the Canadian and Mennonite population.”²²⁰ The dispute was over the wooded area near the township and West Reserve, and the settlers did not believe the Mennonites should access it. This responded a letter to the editor saying that Mennonites had the right to access that land and this had resulted in a “very improper state of things” and that it was “a notorious fact” that Canadian settlers were persistently encouraging people to squat on the Mennonite land, despite warnings from the land office and various governments.²²¹ One of the problems that this incident exposed was that the “chief man, Mr. Isaac Muller” had told the local Justice of the Peace that the Mennonites would not pay fines for accessing wood on land they were allowed access to, and that the J. P. had no jurisdiction so far as the Mennonites were concerned.”²²²

²¹⁹ “The Viceregal Visit,” *Manitoba Free Press*, October 6, 1877, page 6.

²²⁰ “A Menno-Canuck Difficulty,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 8, 1877, page 6.

²²¹ “The Menno-Canuck Difficulty,” *Manitoba Free Press*, December 29, 1877, page 6.

²²² “The Menno-Canuck Difficulty,” *Manitoba Free Press*, January 19, 1878, page 8.

The English settlers of the region who had been in the area prior to the reserve held a meeting in 1878 to express concerns. They were “deprived of the privilege of having schools and churches and of being formed into municipalities, as there is not a sufficient number of settlers to constitute or support the same.”²²³ The settlers were upset that the government should have been aware that “there were several families of English-speaking people living [there] at the time.”²²⁴ By the end of the decade, the Mennonites were becoming a nuisance for settlers looking to establish their own farms, and these large blocks of concentrated ethnic settlement challenged the idea of the “frontier” as being a place for individualism and the liberal order.²²⁵

Immigration pamphlets drew upon the success of the Mennonites, explaining to potential British immigrants that the poorer Mennonites started with meagre resources but that “they are today very prosperous and raise large crops of grain” so “The only question is whether families from the United Kingdom would stint themselves in the same way these thrifty settlers did, and endure what they went through to arrive at their present success.”²²⁶ Their early homes made of earth were used as an example that from “how small a beginning, a settler may successfully start and attain plenty, but that “probably few settlers from the United Kingdom would be willing to do as the Mennonites did.”²²⁷

From this discussion of immigration narratives, a few main themes emerge. In Manitoban newspapers and immigration pamphlets, we see the anxieties about what type of immigrants will settle Manitoba, and whether or not the immigration will contribute to Manitoba’s identity as a British space. The discussion of immigration was exacerbated by a complicated relationship with

²²³ “The Mennonite Reserve,” *Manitoba Free Press*, January 26, 1878, page 3.

²²⁴ “The Mennonite Reserve,” *Manitoba Free Press*, January 26, 1878, page 3.

²²⁵ Swyripa, 3-14

²²⁶ *The Province of Manitoba and the North West Territory: Information for Intending Immigrants* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1879), 16.

²²⁷ *The Province of Manitoba and the North West Territory: Information for Intending Immigrants* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1879), 17.

the rest of Canada, as well as with the United States, as Red River's unique history shaped early perceptions of safety and civilization. Logistically, Manitoba remained a difficult place to visit during the 1870s, and being cut off from the rest of British North America led to unique concerns about immigration, with newspapers dedicating considerable space to explaining travel routes and doing what they could to promote immigration and the assets to be found in Manitoba.

Ultimately, the narratives around immigration in the Manitoban newspapers and promotional materials expressed the anxieties around the lack of immigration during the 1870s, and concerns that the settler colonial claim to sovereignty over the region was not yet established. Increased immigration was the means by which Indigenous claims to land would be dismissed, as the land would then be in the lands of bona fide settlers, loyal to the Canadian nation-building project, and the Indigenous opposition would not be able to overturn Canada's claims to ownership.

Conclusion

As the 1870s came to a close, visitors noted that Winnipeg was “beyond expectation.”¹ They had thought they were arriving at “a dreary wilderness when [they] approached Manitoba, and considered Winnipeg a ‘one-horse town,’ Not so. The backwoods ideas of Manitoba have forsaken us, whilst we are agreeably surprised with the appearance and the reality of Winnipeg.”² They described Winnipeg as a busy centre of trade, writing:

There is such a variety of nationalities and colours represented that you might feel confident that you were in some sea front instead of the centre of the continent. You may see English, Irish, and Scotch fresh from the old sod. English half-breeds, Irish half-breeds and Scotch half-breeds, besides quarter-breeds; and a mixture of I can’t tell you what.³

These visitors from London were particularly interested in Winnipeg as an Indigenous city, noting that “The native population is still represented.”⁴ Winnipeg ended the 1870s as an Indigenous space, much in the way it began the decade, despite the ways that land and power had changed hands and in spite of all the efforts at shifting demographics through immigration.

The newspapers and promotional immigration materials were the tools through which the “pioneer lies”⁵ were spread, as a means of establishing sovereignty and settler colonialism in Manitoba. Repeatedly in the Manitoban newspapers, particularly the English papers, the writers asserted that Manitoba was a British space, that settlers were the “true Canadians,” and that Métis and First Nations concerns over land were a barrier to the inevitable bright future of Manitoba. Despite this, Indigenous people remained in Manitoba, and in settler colonial spaces across Canada, and were at times celebrated as part of what made Canada, especially western

¹ “A Lively Picture of Winnipeg,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 19, 1879, page 1.

² “A Lively Picture of Winnipeg,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 19, 1879, page 1.

³ “A Lively Picture of Winnipeg,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 19, 1879, page 1.

⁴ “A Lively Picture of Winnipeg,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 19, 1879, page 1.

⁵ Travis Wysote and Erin Morton, “‘The depth of the plough’: White Settler Tautologies and Pioneer Lies,” *Settler Colonial Studies*, 9 no. 4 (2019), 480.

Canada unique. Gina Starblanket and Dallas Hunt explain that Indigenous peoples generally exist outside of the myths that shaped the Canadian prairie, “except when we can be invoked in ways that bolster them.”⁶ Images of stoic warriors and chiefs in regalia were used to promote the prairie, and Winnipeg was praised as being a city economically ahead of its time, largely due to its long history as an economic centre prior to the arrival of the settler colonial state. First Nations and Métis presence in Red River, and later Manitoba, was an asset for the labour market. They created local cultures of education and shaped religious institutions, and their actions led to the creation of Manitoba itself as a province with rights, instead of an annexed territory. Yet as soon as it was feasible, those same Indigenous peoples were portrayed as uncooperative and preventing the “ideal” Canadians from immigrating to Manitoba.

Newspapers in Manitoba were part of the imperial press, connecting the new province with the larger settler colonial world. The newspapermen were invested in perpetuating the idea of Manitoba as a successful settler colony, even if the news coverage often reflected their anxieties that Manitoba was far more Indigenous than settler in the 1870s. To achieve this goal of portraying an overly optimistic perspective about the settler colonial project in Manitoba, newspapers focused on immigration, land policies, the environment as suitable for settlers, and advice to immigrants. Interspersed with this coverage were concerns about Métis presence, identity, and French language and land rights, as well as the everyday interactions settlers had with First Nations and Indigenous peoples, as significant participants within Manitoban society.

Newspapers and other promotional materials were essential to the immigration recruitment process in the 1870s, prior to the development of more extensive federal and provincial policies. This importance is reflected in way that the Manitoban newspapers addressed

⁶ Gina Starblanket and Dallas Hunt, *Storying Violence: Unravelling Colonial Narratives in the Stanley Trial* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2020), 22.

their readers as being both local and abroad in Canada or Britain. Direct quotes from the Manitoban newspapers often appeared in immigration pamphlets as evidence or proof to support whatever agenda of which the creators of the pamphlets were trying to persuade the readers. The main newspapermen in Manitoba were often involved in creating the immigration pamphlets and were also involved in federal and provincial politics. With the exception of Robert Cunningham and William Coldwell, most of the newspapermen were new arrivals to Manitoba, and represented the perspective of new settlers. Coldwell and Cunningham's paper, the *Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, reflected the nuance of their own positions as white settlers, but with close relationships with the Métis and other Red River settlers. If the other English papers reflected the white settler concerns that Manitoba was "too Indigenous" and anxieties that they could not recruit the "ideal" settlers, the *Manitoban* news coverage expressed concerns that tensions between the various groups at Red River remained high, as did the likelihood of recurring violence and instability.

This dynamic meant that in discussions about land or immigration, news coverage of politics, government, and the economy remained central. The newspapers cannot be separated from discussions of economic policy and governance because their creators were intertwined in these processes, and this filtered down into the weekly coverage. While Manitoba was a new province, it was created out of a society with a much longer economic history and a complex history of disputes around governance from the Selkirk Settlers to the Hudson Bay Company's Council of Assiniboia. Many of the newspapermen were new arrivals, and so may not have fully understood the roots of these conflicts, but as they reported on the changes brought by this new era of provincehood, they often found themselves frustrated by the reality of life in Manitoba. The white settlers of the 1870s had not arrived in the "blank slate" many of them had

optimistically imagined, and instead found themselves in a largely Indigenous province that was still dealing with the aftermath of their resistance to Canadian expansion.

Central to these early conflicts between the new settlers from Ontario and the United States and the longer residents of Manitoba was the issue of land and how it was used and allocated. Newspapers reported on these conflicts, as well as on the policies developed by federal and provincial governments to try and address land use. Early on, the conflicts over land stemmed from the Métis reserves and the intentional delays that prevented that land from being distributed. The Métis and Red River settlers also clashed with the new white settlers over their differing approaches to agriculture and land use, specifically the practice of river lot agriculture which required systems of common hay and timber lands. This did not fit with the Dominion Lands Act homestead model, which prioritised the liberal, individual model of land use and ownership. By the late 1870s these conflicts over Métis reserve lands and common use lands had developed to include many other types of land reserves, from ethnic immigration reserves to railway reserve lands. Essentially, for the white settlers, all of these policies of reserve lands seemed to be keeping the best lands out of the hands of the “ideal” Anglo-Canadian or American settlers. For the First Nations and Métis communities in Manitoba, their rights to their homelands were equated in the local newspapers as being just one of many groups competing over the limited lands of the small province. The violence and harassment they received while waiting for access to their lands was largely ignored by the newspapers, which focused instead on the bureaucratic inconveniences faced by new settlers.

In conjunction with the news coverage of the disputes over land, newspapers focused on the land and environment as a proving ground for white settlers to demonstrate their strength in a challenging climate. In order to maintain the optimistic tone of newspaper coverage that

attempted to recruit immigrants, newspapers connected the struggles settlers faced to the strength of their character and ingenuity. There were inevitable disasters, from winter storms to floods to swarms of grasshoppers, but at no point did the newspapermen address how the liberal homestead land policies and the white settlers' lack of local knowledge made these natural occurrences more difficult. When these white settlers struggled with their harvests, the newspapers dedicated considerable space to requesting help from the government. While Manitoba was supposed to be a place where strong, hardy men (and families) went to prove themselves, idealizing the model of self-sufficiency ceased when it seemed like white settlers would fall behind, and it was the government's job to make sure the liberal settler colonial model succeeded. Newspapers tried to reassure their readers that life in Manitoba was a balance between attainable agricultural success, but challenging enough to make them prove their strength and superiority.

While Manitoba was portrayed in the newspapers as a place for white settlers to prove themselves, for the French Métis community, the new province was somewhere their presence was seen as suspicious or threatening. As the Métis awaited their land allotments and hoped to continue their agricultural practices and maintain their homelands, the French Métis in particular faced a "Reign of Terror," and waves of violence at the hands of the Canadian military and the white settlers. Their language, religion, and Indigeneity were all threats to the English, Protestant, and white future that Canadian expansionists envisioned for themselves in Manitoba. Joseph Royat at *Le Métis* advocated for the recruitment of French-Canadian immigrants to help ensure a bilingual future for the province in the face of increasing ethnic and English immigration, but this did not help the Métis gain support or recognition for their rights.

In addition to Métis rights not being respected, the violence that they and First Nations people were exposed to was seen as part of the necessary process of bringing immigrants, and therefore civilization, to Manitoba. Interspersed with the other types of news coverage, from land reserves and policy, to weather reports and disputes over the linguistic future of Manitoba were articles that argued that Indigenous peoples were a threat to white settlers. Red River had long been home to Indigenous women and children, and at times their presence was held up to promote the attributes that set Winnipeg apart from many other frontier cities, namely a long history of churches, educational institutions, and social organizations. As more white families moved to Winnipeg, many Métis families faced a loss of social standing and respectability. They were no longer part of the new, modern vision for the future of Winnipeg. White women and children in particular were seen as the markers of civilization, and in need of protection, just as the land was in need of protection, which legitimized the use of violence against Indigenous peoples, as perceived threats against both land and people.⁷ By the end of the 1870s, newspapers generally wrote about Indigenous peoples as being rural, belonging outside of towns and cities, even though in many cases they had been chased out of these spaces by mob violence, and visitors often still noted the significant Indigenous presence in Winnipeg.

All of these themes came together in the narratives about Manitoba that newspapers assembled to try and recruit immigrants to the province. Manitoba's ability to attract immigration was seen as a direct reflection on its potential as an extension of Canada and the British empire. It was concerning then, that immigration numbers remained low during the 1870s, apart from ethnic immigration schemes that brought large groups of Mennonites and Icelanders to the region. New settlers and ethnic immigrants were held up as the people who would bring stability, safety, and industrious development to the prairie. Immigration schemes often blocked off more

⁷ Starblanket and Hunt, 23.

lands for reserves, but this was seen as part of the necessary cost of recruitment and proving Manitoba's future as an agricultural province. Even if the information provided to intending immigrants exaggerated or bent the truth, the goal of growing the empire remained more important than accurate portrayals. Ethnic immigration was acceptable as a starting point, but settler newspaper coverage remained anxious about the types of immigrants who were moving to Manitoba, and what that would mean for Manitoba's future as a British space.

Manitoba, and the prairies more broadly, were portrayed in the newspapers as a land of endless opportunity, where settlers could build lives for themselves uninhibited by the restraints of land shortages and costs and limitations of life in Ontario. Breaking laws, squatting, and threatening (or enacting) violence against Indigenous peoples in order to achieve this life was acceptable, in the pursuit of building the Canadian nation. During the times when the Canadian or Manitoban government attempted to limit this liberal homestead model, as in the case of land reserves for Indigenous peoples or ethnic immigrants, or even large corporations, settlers either ignored the laws or protested that the governments were working against them. Settlers immigrating to Manitoba did so with the goal of extending the Canadian liberal order, which meant that the individual was the most important part of society, and an individual's freedom should not be limited by anything.⁸ This was a contradiction, of course, because in order for white settlers to achieve that liberal order, other people, particularly Indigenous people, needed to have their freedoms limited- or be erased altogether.

This erasure was at times literal, in the case of murder, land theft, and policies of starvation and removal. At other times the Canadian state simply employed a narrative of erasure, repeating the "pioneer lie" that Indigenous peoples were gone and no longer part of

⁸ Ian McKay, "The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History," *The Canadian historical review* 81, no. 4 (2000), 623.

society. The consequences of this erasure of Indigenous peoples have been deadly, not only in the past, but also in the present. The structures and narratives that shaped the Canadian prairie as a settler space open for immigration remain in place today and are used to justify the erasure and murder of Indigenous peoples today. Using the example of the shooting of Colten Boushie by Saskatchewan farmer Gerald Stanley, Starblanket and Hunt explain that settler narratives are not neutral. They were created to solidify claims to land and to establish settler society, and they conclude: “Taken together, the asymmetries of whose narratives ‘count,’ and the narratives about Indigenous people through which these asymmetries are justified, continue to powerfully shape life (and death) in the prairies.”⁹

Immigration narratives in the newspapers and promotional materials emphasised the struggles of the early settlers, as well as an overly optimistic view of the future, where the previous challenges had been overcome. Perhaps far away from Manitoba, the officials creating immigration materials in Ottawa, or writing about the prairies from the office of the *Toronto Globe*, could envision a version of Manitoba that was a settler space without violence or conflicts over land. For the creators of the Manitoba newspapers, and locally-made promotional materials, they were intimately aware of the existence of Indigenous peoples, and of the violence required, particularly in the early 1870s, to facilitate the settler control over land. Interspersed between advice about how to make it through the winter despite grasshoppers and how the local ferry and sawmills were being managed were stories about local mobs hunting down Louis Riel and anyone associated with him.¹⁰ The rest of Canada may have moved on to discussing Manitoba’s potential and its transition into the Canada and the British empire, but in the 1870s Manitoba’s control over land and Indigenous peoples remained complicated and uneven. Immigration and

⁹ Starblanket and Hunt, 120.

¹⁰ “Riel’s Elections,” “Provencher Elections,” “To Our Farmers,” and “The Ferry,” *The Manitoban and Northwest Herald*, October 18, 1873, page 2.

settler colonialism had changed how the land was understood and who claimed ownership of the land, but Manitoba remained an Indigenous space.

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