En attendant le céleste héritage:

Frameworks and methodologies for the archival preservation of Franco-Manitoban folklore

by

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Abstract

Folklore occupies an interesting space within archives. It can be difficult to capture, and yet it is so culturally important that not doing so seems like an oversight. Archivists have explored in detail the concepts of collective memory and archives as places of memory, yet folklore remains an underexamined topic. This thesis seeks to address some of these gaps where they relate specifically to the Franco-Manitoban community. Using existing scholarship surrounding community archives and collective memory, it delves into the ways in which Franco-Manitoban folklore is currently represented within local archives and the challenges these archives face in making this folklore accessible. It argues that while the challenges may be significant, there is equally significant value in overcoming these challenges. To do this, I use the holdings at the Centre du patrimoine as a case study in the presence of folklore, folk culture and oral history in heritage institutions as it stands today. Throughout this exploration, I apply archival theory in order to examine how community archives can overcome some of the most pressing issues they are facing in regard to folklore-related records and highlight the efforts already being made towards this end. This thesis also attempts identify Franco-Manitoban representation within the larger sphere of online folklore. I discuss the difficulties of defining archives within the vast realm of cyberspace, as well as the advent of Internet-born folklore. Reflecting on the limitations of search engines and online archives, I examine the scattered and sparse nature of Franco-Manitoban folklore on the Internet, observing that there is still much work to be done in this respect.

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First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Greg Bak, whose endless patience and steadfast guidance helped me complete this thesis. In a time that presented unprecedented challenges, his knowledge, encouragement, and passion for archival studies saw me through. When my own confidence in myself failed, his did not, and I will always be grateful for that. The Archival Studies M.A. program has been one of the most difficult yet rewarding experiences of my life. It is an immense privilege, to be able to work in a field that one loves, and that love was cultivated by the many people who make the program possible. The trajectory of my life and career have been forever altered by this process, and I could not be more thankful.

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Dedicated to the Franco-Manitoban Community.

Introduction

In his book *The Quest of the Folk,* Ian McKay writes: "The Folk were those who kept the lore of the Folk."[1] What precedes and follows this statement is a critique of the ways in which Nova Scotia's tourism industry manipulated the world's perception of Nova Scotians as a simple, idyllic people, taking advantage of the public's preconceived notions of who the "folk" are to further their own agenda. McKay's work highlights the difficulty of defining folklore, in both general and academic contexts. "The Folk were those who kept the lore of the Folk" may seem reductionist, but it opens the door to a debate that has been ongoing for decades: who are the folk? What constitutes their lore? The answers to these questions still vary among academics today. Even folklorists struggle with them. The American Folklore Society defines folklore as: "one of the many ways we communicate who we are. Often—but certainly not always—rooted in the past, folklore is one of the ways we share with each other the things we see as vital and important. […] Folklore is a fundamental part of what it means to be human."[2] Martha C. Sims offers another definition: "Folklore is informally learned, unofficial knowledge about the world, ourselves, our communities, our beliefs, our cultures and our traditions, that is expressed creatively through words, music, customs, actions, behaviors and materials."[3] Within Canada, opinions on what constitutes folklore varies between institutions and, more specific to this thesis, between language groups. While interest in Canadian folklore has been on the rise since the nineteenth century, it was not until the mid-twentieth century that it garnered significant attention in academic spheres.[4] Since then, both English-speaking and French-speaking scholars have had to contend with oftentimes pejorative connotations of the term in the eyes of the public. From an English-speaking perspective, scholars concluded that it "carried a connotation of untruth or marginality,"[5] and therefore attempted to label their research as "folk studies," "folklife" and "folklore studies". Francophone researchers likewise felt that the existing vocabulary delegitimized their work, and so they adopted new terms such as "arts et traditions populaires" and "ethnologie". Use of the word folklore persisted within the academic study of traditional culture in French-Canada, however its definition was somewhat narrowed to only refer to "performance materials": song, dance, music, and oral storytelling.[6]

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[1] Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 26.
[2] "What is Folklore?" The American Folklore Society, last accessed September 15th, 2024, https://whatisfolklore.org/.
[3] Martha C. Sims and Martine Stephens, *Living Folklore: Introduction to the Study of People and their Traditions* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2005), 8.

In 1997, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in collaboration with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) hosted a summit in Phuket, Thailand on the protection of folklore. The goal of the summit was to examine and ultimately solidify the legal protection of Aboriginal culture in Australia. UNESCO defines folklore as follows:

> Folklore is a means by which culture is expressed. Many see folklore as, in effect, archaeology of the mind. Folklore is a powerful means of bringing people together and of asserting their cultural identity. In enables the present generation to appreciate the highly creative genius of past generations and acts as a mirror that reflects their psychic make-up and explains the primeval civilization of a race. […] For indigenous peoples, folklore has its source in the life of their people and, like life, it evolves continuously. […] Folklore is a testimony of the past without which the present would have no future.[7]

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[4] Gerald L. Pocius, "Academic Folklore Research in Canada: Trends and Prospects pt. 1," *Ethnologies* 22, no. 2 (2000): 257.

[5] Pocius, "Academic Folklore Research in Canada: Trends and Prospects pt. 1," 257.

[6] Pocius, "Academic Folklore Research in Canada: Trends and Prospects pt. 1," 258.

[7] Kamal Puri, "Preservation and Conservation of Expressions of Folklore: The Experience of the Pacific Region" (Dissertation on behalf of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, University of Queensland, 1997), 4-5.

As opposed to the comparatively simplified definition of folklore in a North American settler context, it is clear that for the Indigenous peoples of both Australia and the Americas, folklore represents more than just "performance materials". It is the preservation of their laws, their culture, and their past. For this reason alone, I believe that the vocabulary surrounding the study of folklore should be carefully considered and changed depending on the context, whether one is discussing European folklore/folk studies or Indigenous cultural and oral tradition. This separation can be difficult to make, particularly in the milieu of French-Manitoba. Indigenous peoples and culture are present and intertwined in Franco-Manitoban communities. The Red River Métis represent a significant part of the demographic, acknowledging the nuance and differing personal feelings of belonging and/or identification involved in such a statement. Still, despite the difficulty, it must be done, as the distinction is incredibly important.

A brief review of the ways in which various archival institutions label their folklore collections reveals an interesting trend in vocabulary as well. While "folklore" is frequently used in reference to settler and European archives (Scandinavian, Slavic and Settler-American), the term is often substituted for "oral tradition", "oral histories" and/or "storytelling tradition" when discussing Indigenous-focused collections. Laval has "Les archives de folkore de d'ethnologie."[8] Large American universities such as UC Berkeley[9] and Harvard[10] either have dedicated "Folklore Archives" or at least significant "Folklore Collections," while the latter also has a separate "Indigenous Knowledge" collection which leads to my next point. In the case of

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[8] "Archives de folklore et d'ethnologie," Division de la gestion des documents administratifs et des archives, Université Laval, last updated January 2024, https://www.archives.ulaval.ca/les-collections-historiques-de-lulaval/archives-de-folklore-et-dethnologie/

[9] "Berkeley Folklore Archives," Berkeley Folklore, UC Berkeley, last accessed December 10th, 2023, https://folklore.berkeley.edu/folklore-archives-0.

[10] "Harvard Folklore Collections," Harvard Folklore, Harvard University, last modified March 20th, 2024,https://guides.library.harvard.edu/gened1097/Harvard.

Indigenous-focused archives, there is a distinct shift in language. The University of Saskatchewan, for example, labels their collection as "Traditional Stories"[11]. The University of British Columbia does not separate oral stories from the bulk of their Indigenous Histories Archive: they simply *are* part of history[12]. This is in line with the effort made in recent years to legitimize oral history within academia. Julie Cruikshank discusses contemporary approaches to oral history in her article "Oral history and oral tradition—Reviewing some issues" in which she explains: "To take oral history accounts seriously is not to suggest that they speak for themselves in any simple way or that their meanings are self-evident. One of the more incisive observations of contemporary anthropology is that meaning is not fixed – that it must be studied in practice."[13] Pamela Sing, writing on her work involving the translation of oral Michif to standard English, asserts that the stories of the Métis peoples represent an objective reality, one that can be misrepresented and undermined by Western academic literary theories.[14] What becomes clear is that oral history is viewed differently depending on whether one is treating Indigenous or non-Indigenous records, based on the changes in vocabulary and the varied approaches based on subject matter. Indigenous peoples exist in a living culture of storytelling and oral tradition, wherein these forms of communication play active roles in developing trust, sharing information, strategies, advice, contacts and ideas.[15]

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[11] "Traditional Stories," Literature & Stories, Indigenous Studies Portal, University of Saskatchewan, last accessed December 4th, 2023, https://iportal.usask.ca/subject/21911.

[12] "Indigenous Peoples History and Archives," Library, University of British Columbia, last modified June 3rd, 2024, https://guides.library.ubc.ca/spcoll/indigenous_archives.

[13] Julie Cruikshank, "Oral tradition and oral history: Reviewing some issues," *The Canadian Historical Review* 75, no. 3 (1994): 415.

[14] Pamela V. Sing, "J'vous djis enne cho', lâ: Translating Oral Mitchif French into Written English," *Québec Studies* 50, no.1 (September 2010): 64.

[15] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 2021), 15.

In this respect, it would be unfair and irresponsible to refer to Indigenous oral tradition using the same terminology that is used for European/Settler folklore. While part of my goal in choosing this topic was to contribute in some small way to the efforts that modern academics and folklorists are making to have folklore and folk studies viewed as a serious and valuable area of study, I cannot ignore the way that this language has been used to disregard the historical, social and cultural significance of oral histories and storytelling traditions amongst the Indigenous peoples of Manitoba (and the Red River Métis peoples in particular). To strike a balance between both points, I will continue to use the term 'folklore' in reference to Settler francophone storytelling traditions, while terms such as 'oral history' or 'oral tradition' will be used when the subject matter in question relates to Indigenous peoples. My hope is that by using this varied vocabulary I will be able to accomplish my original goal while simultaneously being respectful of the nuanced role that storytelling plays within Indigenous communities.

On the topic of the Métis peoples, it must be stated that Michif is not French, nor is it a dialect of French.[16] It is its own language, and therefore, communities wherein most of the population speaks Michif would not fall within the scope of my research. However, French *is* one of Michif's root languages, therefore I also cannot ignore the cultural influence present within Métis folklore, as well as the presence that Métis peoples and culture have on the Franco-Manitoban community.[17] Sing explains: "[…]les Métis de la Rivière Rouge reconnaissent volontiers leurs ascendances française et amérindienne, mais s'identifient comme un peuple distinct […].”[18] While Métis peoples may acknowledge their French roots as part of how they came to be, they have firmly cemented themselves within the cultural landscape of Manitoba as a unique people in and of themselves, at once separate from and part of the francophone community at large. In fact, we, as Franco-Manitobans, owe a large part of our collective identity to the Métis; removing them from our history simultaneously removes so much context that it virtually renders French Manitoba culturally unidentifiable. As Anne-Sophie Marchand points out in her article “Louis Riel: « lieu de mémoire » et de métissage des identités culturelles franco-manitobaines,” Franco-Manitoban identity is rooted in the land. Without those roots—planted by the voyageurs and their Métis descendants—being “Franco-Manitoban” would be quite a fragmented and oftentimes conflicting cultural identifier.[19] Taking into account all of these points, I believe in good faith that the most academically and culturally responsible route to take is to use the term “folklore” where possible, but *only* where contextually appropriate.

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[16] Michele Filice, "Michif," the Canadian Encyclopedia, last modified February 4th, 2024, https://development.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/michif

[17] Michif spoken by the Red River Métis is distinct from French Michif, which is a dialect of French. The Louis Riel Institute has resources on the maintenance and learning of Michif here: https://www.louisrielinstitute.ca/metis-languages-learning-resources

While addressing use of terminology during my research, I often found myself wishing that there was a standard form of archival description for folklore collections in archives. It seems as though many folklore repositories struggle to operate independently and ultimately have to join with other, larger institutions in order to have the resources necessary to make their records accessible. For example, the Centre d’études Franco-Terreneuviennes at MUNFLA (the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language archive).[20] The CEFT made use of the archival resources at MUNFLA, as they have their own citation guidelines for folklore-related content such as fieldwork sound recordings and video recordings, survey cards, and questionnaires.[21] The Centre Franco-Ontarien de Folklore, which was for a time an independent institution, became part of the University of Sudbury in 2010.[22] It is difficult to say whether a dedicated description standard for folklore records would help smaller heritage organizations, or if they would still require the support of larger institutions, but the absence of such a standard is frustrating nonetheless and I was not the first person to think so. There is, in reality, a surprising amount of crossover between folklorists and archivists. Andy Kolovos, Archivist at the Vermont Folklife Center, states that there is a growing number of folklorists who have also pursued Library Sciences and Archival Studies degrees in addition to their higher degrees in folklore and folklore-related areas.[23] On the joining of these two disciplines, Kolovos observes: “What we have are archives, archives in the same sense that a professional archivist would use the term. Archives structured by contextual relationships, maintained through the application of concepts, such as provenance, and explicated through the use of standard archival descriptive approaches.”[24] Folklore archives share similarities in that they *are* archives, but are also incredibly diverse, which means that terminology usage will also vary greatly. Different folk cultures have different relationships to the culture at large, and the nature of those relationships will affect the context in which “folklore”, as a term, is viewed. As previously mentioned, North American—particularly Canadian—institutions must grapple with the ongoing effects of colonialism within academia, making it a more contentious issue and requiring more careful consideration.

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[18] Pamela V. Sing, “Production littérare franco-métisse: parlers ancestraux et avatars,” *Francophonies d’Amérique* 15, no.1 (Spring 2003): 120.
[19] Anne-Sophie Marchand, “Louis Riel: « lieu de mémoire » et de métissage des identités culturelles franco-manitobaines,” *Cahiers franco-canadiens de l’Ouest* 33, no. 1-2 (2021): 158.
[20] “CEFT Fonds Description,” Select Fonds, Series, and Collection Descriptions, MUNFLA, last updated August 25th, 2022, https://www.mun.ca/munfla/media/production/memorial/academic/faculty-of-humanities-and-social-sciences/munfla/documents/collection/fonds-collections/Centre%20D%C3%A2%C2%80%C2%99%C3%83%C2%89tudes%20Franco-Terreneuviennes%20(CEFT)%20Fonds%20Description%20-%20ENGLISH%20(reformatted,%202022).pdf

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[21] “Bibliographic Citation Guide,” Guidelines, MUNFLA, last updated August 25th, 2022, https://www.mun.ca/munfla/media/production/memorial/academic/faculty-of-humanities-and-social-sciences/munfla/documents/templatesguides/MUNFLA%20Bibliographic%20Citation%20Guidelines.pdf
[22] “Historique,” Centre franco-ontarien de folklore, last accessed September 8th, 2024, https://cfof.on.ca/historique/
[23] Andy Kolovos, “Contextualizing the Archives,” *Folklore Forum* 35, no. 1-2 (2004): 25.
[24] Kolovos, “Contextualizing the Archives,” 25.

In fact, there is a significant amount of conflict within Canadian folklore and folk life studies to contend with that are unique to us. I have discussed the variation in vocabulary within English-speaking Canadian academia and French-speaking Canadian academia, but these differences are not just a matter of opinion. As Douglas Freake and Carole Henderson Carpenter point out in their article "Folklore and literature: Canadian contexts," the socio-political tension between French-Canada and English-Canada has also affected Canada's relation to folk-culture at large. We were never going to be able to directly follow the models that our European counterparts in folklore studies were able to. For example, folk material has served a particularly political purpose in French-Canada (especially Quebec) owing to its ability to help form a cohesive cultural consciousness amongst Francophones, solidifying an "us-versus-them" mentality that is useful to the powers that be in times of conflict.[25] Pocius identifies the same phenomenon. Canadian folklore studies are commonly viewed as being pioneered by Francophone scholars of the Laval tradition such as Marius Barbeau and Luc Lacourcière. The whole of folklore as an academic discipline is sometimes traced back to the founding of the Archives de Folklore at Université Laval in 1944.[26] This is due in part to the fact that a massive amount of French folklore-related scholarship was conducted over the years and that it was considered an important part of Francophone identity: "Folklore was clearly used as a political tool to prove that Francophones were different, but the differences were largely based on the initial assumption that folklore existed primarily among those who spoke French."[27] Regardless of the factors at play, Freake and Carpenter outline three categories in which a majority of frequently-studied Canadian folk culture fall into. They are, as follows, 1) the oral histories and traditional knowledge of Indigenous peoples, 2) the cultural material of European peasant groups who immigrated to Canada throughout its colonial history and 3) the collective memory of "national" groups (oppressed or formerly oppressed peoples, for example the Irish).[28] French-Canadian folklore would fall into the second category, as the French settlers were very much agrarian peasant folk.

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[25] Douglas Freake and Carole Henderson Carpenter, "Folklore and literature: Canadian contexts," *Ethnologies* 21, no.1 (1999): 100.

[26] Pocius, "Academic Folklore Research in Canada: Trends and Prospects pt. 1," 259.

This contribution to Canadian folklore scholarship contains three chapters. The first is a contextual overview of the history of French Manitoba. It explores who we are as folk, delving into such topics as regional dialects and literacy rates and how these factors affect the folklore we produce. In this vein, it uses Indigenous research methodologies to argue for the legitimacy of oral history and examines the ways in which historical events influence folk culture via song, poetry and storytelling. Chapter Two is a theoretical examination and investigation into the presence of folklore in Manitoban archives, focusing primarily on the folklore collections at the Centre du patrimoine. It seeks to identify and address the challenges of cataloguing folklore and making it accessible to the public. I conduct various keyword searches and use the aggregate results in order to ascertain the true breadth of the folklore collections beyond what might have been explicitly identified by the archives. I use the Henri Letourneau fonds as a case study in the difficulties of capturing folklore in an archival setting, particularly oral history recordings. It also features an examination of community and participatory archiving methodologies and how they relate to the Centre, as well as an exploration of community belonging and boundaries. The final chapter begins by broadening the scope to discuss online folklore creation and Internet-born folklore. It traces the genesis of several now-famous folk tales that were created by communities of likeminded individuals on forums and how quickly myth can influence reality, thus making them not-so-fictional after all. I delve into some theoretical discussion on digital archiving and preservation and the role of informal, "rogue" archivists and their methods of virtual recordkeeping. The focus then returns to French-Canadian and Franco-Manitoban folklore and their online presences, and how we can preserve our stories, both old and new, in cyberspace.

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[27] Pocius, "Academic Folklore Research in Canada: Trends and Prospects pt. 1," 260.
[28] Freake and Carpenter, "Folklore and literature: Canadian contexts," 100.

The archival preservation of folklore in French-Canada has always been about acknowledging and amplifying the voices of everyday folks. Aforementioned founding archivist of the Archives de Folklore, Luc Lacourcière, gave a lecture at the Université de Montréal in 1945 during which he chastised historians for "neglecting the investigation of the lives of the common people," and stressed "the prime significance of oral tradition."[29] However, in contrast to Freake and Carpenter's specification that French-Canadian folklore is the cultural material of "peasant" groups, I believe that Lacourcière is not only referring to "common people" in terms of groups who live in secluded, rural locales, but in a broader sense. Pocius once again argues that both academics and the general public often fundamentally misunderstand what constitutes folklore. In line with UNESCO's declaration during the World Forum on the Protection of Folklore, its definition should be applied in as wide a context as possible. He explains: "Academic folklorists around the world agree that folklore is not a product simply of the rural isolated community. This may have been the late nineteenth century romantic nationalistic reasons why the study began, but modern folklorists have long recognized the limitations of this approach. Folklore can exist in all contexts and is a part of all our lives."[30] Pocius goes on to say that an oversimplified definition of folklore leads to it only being associated with, say, a language group (he even uses French as an example), or a region, or an ethnic group. This is opposed to the reality, which is that folklore exists within families, religions, occupations, and many more groups.[31] One of my objectives in examining Franco-Manitoban folklore is to explore the different microcosms in which it can be found. On the surface, it is easy to assume that I have fallen into the trap of defining my topic exactly as Pocius and others say not to: by an (often rural) language group, through the same quaint, rose-coloured glasses of the past that scholars before me did. This, however, would be a basic misunderstanding of Franco-Manitoban culture. Yes, many of our communities are rural, but they have never been isolated. We have always been connected by a sense of shared identity. I believe that Franco-Manitoban folklore is born out of a kaleidoscope of "common people," as Lacourcière called them. I believe that our stories, music and art have come from the long traditions of groups in various occupations, of various ages and genders, from various ethnic backgrounds and in various social strata, and that all of these traditions have come together to create a whole that is truly unique. This is what I seek to highlight and explore through my research: not the folk life of small, insular communities, but of a vibrant and diverse whole.

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[29] Richard M. Saunders, "Les Archives de folklore : Receuil semestriel de traditions Françaises d'Amérique," *The Canadian Historical Review* 28, no. 3 (September 1947): 326.

Throughout this thesis, I will be referring to a "we" when discussing the Franco-Manitoban community, and this is because I consider myself part of it. My father is French-

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[30] Gerald L. Pocius, "Academic folklore research in Canada: Trends and Prospects pt. 2," *Ethnologies* 23 no. 1 (2001): 289.

[31] Pocius, "Academic folklore research in Canada: Trends and Prospects pt. 2," 290.

Canadian, and I grew up speaking both French and English. As a child, I loved everything to do with stories and folklore. I did my schooling in French all the way through to university, where I completed my bachelor's at l'Université de Saint-Boniface. It was during this time that I had the most direct involvement with my community, participating in various school events, both academic and social. Being Franco-Manitoban is an essential part of my identity, just as being a woman and being queer are. When I moved on to graduate school, I missed the sense of belonging I had at Saint-Boniface. This heavily contributed to my choice of topic: I viewed it as a means of maintaining the connection I wanted. Now, I also view it as a way to give back to the community and take part in the preservation and evolution of our cultural heritage.

My title, "*En attendant le céleste héritage*," is the last line of a poem called "Sonnet à l'hiver" by Georges Dugas. Roughly translated, it means "Awaiting the heavenly inheritance." I connected with it in several ways: the poem is about the beauty of winter, a season which is a large part of life in Manitoba and features heavily in much of our folk culture. In the context of the title as a whole and the thesis' subject matter, the "inheritance" can be interpreted as our collective memory, which will be passed down from generation to generation through our art, stories and songs.

Chapter One: Franco-Manitoban Histories and Communities

The interrelationships between francophone communities across Canada are nuanced and complex. In a perfect world, we would all be united by our commonalities: culture, language, history, and so on. The reality is a little grayer. As I will explain in this chapter, French Canada used to be small. Not in physical size, but certainly in population, at least for the first few centuries following colonization before provincial and nationalistic borders were drawn. It was inevitable that over time, various groups of French-Canadians would splinter off, settling in various regions of the country and forming their own cultural identities, and therefore their own brand of folk-culture and oral tradition. Minority French speaking communities faced unique challenges which influenced their way of life profoundly, as was the case in Manitoba. Quebec, with its majority francophone population, has its own historical perspective and place within the socio-cultural landscape of Canada. There is an identifiable point in the history of French Canada where I believe one must begin to distinguish which group of Francophones are being discussed in particular, whether that be the Quebecois, or Franco-Manitobans, or the *Acadiens,* or any number of other populations. That being said, there is a shared history to be explored that must be acknowledged in order to glean the full scope of the cultural influences which form the foundation of most French-Canadian communities regardless of modern separations.

It may seem unnecessary to go all the way back to the founding of New France in order to examine Franco-Manitoban folklore, but cultural roots grow deep. As Archange Godbout states:

> La curiosité humaine a toujours scruté avec intérêt le mystère de ses origines. Pour nous, les Canadiens français, dont le passé se cache derrière les brumes de l'océan, ce nous est

> une double satisfaction de saluer la France comme notre mère patrie et de nous savoir originaire de telle ou telle ancienne province de la France.[32]

Godbout goes on to say that in spite of this patriotism towards our ancestral homeland, it often happens that the mists of distance and time obscure our ties to a particular region in France. Today's French-Canadian is no longer from Normandy or Champagne or Poitou but is part of a unique cultural identity all its own, despite lingering influences from these long-ago ancestors.[33] French-Canada today is made up of people from across *la francophonie globale,* from places such as Vietnam and Senegal and Haiti; yet there was a time in history when French-Canadians were a small group of settlers living within a relatively small area who migrated over time to other regions that we identify today as being francophone, including Manitoba. What is known of the origins of those early settlers duly applies to Franco-Manitobans as much as it does to the Quebecois until a point in time, which will be discussed further on in this chapter.

Linguistically, Canadian French (particularly that spoken by the Quebecois) diverted from continental French during the era of colonization, when the settlers were first isolated from mainland France, and evolved separately from that period onwards. There is no universal consensus on the exact dates of said period, but a study presented at the first *Congrès de la langue française au Canada* in 1912 officially attributes the French-Canadian language as we know it to a group of 4,892 immigrants who arrived between 1608 and 1700.[34] Of those 4,892 settlers, 1,196 of them were from Normandy and Perche, 569 were from Poitou, 524 were from Aunis and 621 were from l'Île-de-France. Smaller percentages came from various provinces such as Saintonge, Angevin, Champagne, Picardy and others.[35] The settlers, however, were not speaking literary French. Being from the countryside, most spoke a patois referred to as either *langue d'oïl* or *langue d'oc,* depending on whether they were from the north of France or the south. Even at a time when standard French was becoming commonplace in cities and larger centres, those thousands of people who emigrated from France's less densely populated regions retained their traditional dialects.[36] Those people brought with them unique cultures and traditions as well as language.

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[32] Archange Godbout, "Nos hérédités provinciales françaises," in *Les Archives de Folkore 1 : Recueil semestriel de traditions françaises d'Amérique,* ed. Luc Lacourcière (Montréal : Publications de l'Université de Laval, 1946), 26.
[33] Godbout, "Nos hérédités provinciales françaises," 26.
[34] Adjutor Rivard, *Études sur les parlers de France au Canada* (Québec : J.P. Garneau, 1914), 9.

Provincial linguistic influence, however, seems to have dissolved over time, leaving Canadian French with its own distinct lexicology and pronunciation. When comparing Canadian French to that spoken in France, the French would refer to Canadians using the epithet *bouches molles*. Literally translating to "soft mouths," it refers to the nasal *an, in, un, u,* and *i* sounds that punctuate words with silent final syllables such as *fine* and *brume*. This accent does not originate from any particular region in France. As one linguist observed, the phenomenon can be viewed one of two ways; either Canadians have no distinct provincial accent, or they have so many different provincial accents that it is impossible to distinguish one from another. Both can be seen as correct.[37] Canadian French also borrowed terms from the languages of the Indigenous peoples they lived and traded with, such as *Anishinaabemowin*. This was done particularly in relation to things and objects that were unique to North America: bullfrogs (*ouaouaron*), cranberries (*atoca*), badgers (*carcajou*) and mosquitos (*maringouin*).[38] The origins of language play an important role in oral tradition, as it is primarily through language that much of French Canada's early folklore was preserved: *contes* (stories or tales, usually told aloud) and *chanson* (song) represent a majority of this folklore. Access to books—or the ability to read them—was limited or non-existent; in a way, this is what helped the stories survive for so long. Godbout aptly states: "l'imprimé, on ne saurait trop le répéter, tue la mémoire."[39]

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[35] Rivard, *Études sur les parlers de France au Canada*, 9-10.
[36] Rivard, *Études sur les parlers de France au Canada,* 13-14.
[37] Godbout, "Nos hérédités provinciales françaises," 38-39.

Dell Hymes, linguist and former president of the American Folklore Society, speaks at length about the links between language and folklore, and explains that while language is "an index to or reflection of culture," this fact should not be taken for granted. He elaborates: "Why do some features of a community's life come to be named—overtly expressible in discourse—while others are not? Why do communities differ in the extent to which language, or a language, serves this function of a 'metalanguage' to the rest?"[40] I believe that the answer lies in the everyday lives of the people who inhabit the community. The vocabulary of a community speaks volumes about the people's cultural history and traditional lifestyle; if there is a specific word for something that does not exist in other regions or dialects, it can indicate that this is something that was used or done often enough that said people created a word for it. Manitoba has plenty of these, so much so that Dr. Liliane Rodriguez, professor of linguistics at the University of Winnipeg, wrote an entire lexicon of *manitobismes.*[41] Terms like *kinikinik* (wild tobacco), *galette* (Bannock), *pêche blanche* (ice fishing) and *violoneux*

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[38] Peter Moogk, *La Nouvelle France* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000), 146.
[39] Godbout, "Nos hérédités provinciales françaises," 39.
[40] Dell Hymes, "The Contribution of Folklore to Sociolinguistic Research," *Toward New Perspectives in Folkore,* ed. Américo Paredes and Richard Bauman (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1972), 44.
[41] Liliane Rodriguez, "Lexique de manitobismes," University of Sherbrooke, last modified February 17th, 2023, https://usito.usherbrooke.ca/articles/th%C3%A9matiques/manitobismes#d154754e342

(fiddler) all offer insight on aspects of daily life for Franco-Manitobans, past or present, highlighting things that are meaningful and culturally important. Many influential archival theorists recognize that modern historical thought speaks to the idea that identity is formed through the shared, collective memory of any given group, but that there is a fluidity to identity that is ever-changing and evolving. Academics have shifted their focus to the process of identity creation versus the material end product (an archival record, for example, or an artefact), and thus archivists have also had to re-evaluate the role of archives in the grand scheme of things.[42] Part of that identity creation process is nothing more or less than living. It is the things that we, as a people, do and interact with day-to-day. Of the many factors that influence identity, language is fundamentally important. It is how we communicate with one another, how we express our thoughts, feelings, and memories. In relation to folklore, language is the means via which we preserve the stories and lessons that make up our cultural identity. Language can take many forms; it can be written, or spoken, or sung, but it is ultimately about connection. And language is how folklore is able to be preserved in archives. Without physical records or recorded oral tradition, folklore would only exist in the minds and hearts of the people to whom it belongs.

The catalyst for the migration of settlers from New France to the west can be attributed first to a mistake. In 1659, two French traders accidentally travelled further west than they had originally intended. They were pleasantly surprised to find the upper Mississippi river to be abundant in beavers; their fur, as most Canadians know, was at the centre of fur trade economy at the time. They dubbed the region “The Western Sea,” but upon their return to New France, the two men were swiftly jailed by the governor for venturing into the area without permission or escort.[43] Not to be discouraged, Radisson and Chouart Des Groseilliers decided to throw their lot in with the English, hoping that their counterparts in New England would be willing to fund another expedition westward. At the time, the colonial powers viewed North America as being largely up for grabs due to the Doctrine of Discovery and the concept of *terra nullius*, or "land belonging to no one." Indigenous peoples' presence on the continent did not void this doctrine in the eyes of the French and British Empires because it was predicated on Western conceptions of land ownership being tied to European-style agriculture.[44] With the British also vying for territory to occupy in what is now Canada, their bid was successful, and Chouart Des Groseilliers and Radisson were sent on a fully funded expedition to the Hudson Bay. Each was given a ship; Radisson sailed unsuccessfully in 1668 aboard the *Eaglet*, dooming it to be forever overshadowed by Des Groseilliers' much more successful voyage on his ship, the *Nonsuch*. Their exploits led to the founding of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1670.[45]

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[42] Terry Cook, “Evidence, memory, identity, and community: four shifting archival paradigms,” *Archival Science* 13, no. 2-3 (2013), 96-97.

Years later, another man named Pierre Gaultier de Varennes et de La Vérendrye set off to into the interior of the Northwest. Born in New France, in what is now Trois-Rivières, Quebec, La Vérendrye was the fourth son in his family. A career soldier, he served in multiple campaigns both in New France and on the continent before settling down with his wife Marie-Anne and assuming control of a trading post outside Trois-Rivières, where they started their family.[46] With a growing family came growing financial needs, which eventually prompted La Vérendrye to seek and receive command of the trading posts along Lake Nipigon. At the time, the lake represented the westernmost known territory of New France; everything beyond its shores was relatively unknown to the settlers, though the knowledge of the existence of the Western Sea reached by Radisson and De Groseilliers persisted.[47] As Lawrence Burpee explains in regard to the search for the Western Sea: “Like a will-o’-the-wisp, the goal receded always a little beyond the reach of those who sought it so eagerly. As the tide of discovery spread ever farther to the westward, theories as to the position of the elusive Sea had to be revised from time to time.”[48] La Vérendrye saw the potential and possibilities going further west presented. On June 8th of 1731, after earning the patronage of several Montreal-based merchants who agreed to provide goods and equipment for the expedition in exchange for shared profits in any trading posts established along the way, La Vérendrye and three of his sons departed in search of the Western Sea.[49] His primary goal was to establish forts and trading posts, providing France with a stronger fur trade foothold in the region. They called the ill-defined area he was venturing into *le Petit Nord*, or the Little North: from north of Lake Superior all the way to just east of *lac Ouinipigon*, Lake Winnipeg.[50] This voyage would ultimately lead the group to the prairies and thus to what would become the province of Manitoba over a hundred years later.

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[43] Jacqueline Blay, *Histoire du Manitoba français Tome 1 : Sous le ciel de la Prairie, des débuts jusqu'à 1870* (Manitoba: Les Éditions du Blé, 2010), 7.

[44] The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1, Origins to 1939* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 17-18.

[45] Blay, *Histoire du Manitoba français Tome 1*, 8.

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[46] Lawrence J. Burpee, *Journals and Letters of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes et de la Vérendrye and His Sons: with Correspondence Between the Governors of Canada and the French Court, Touching the Search for the Western Sea* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1927), 1-2.

[47] Burpee, *Journals and Letters of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes et de la Vérendrye and His Sons*, 4.

[48] Burpee, *Journals and Letters of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes et de la Vérendrye and His Sons*, 4.

[49] Burpee, *Journals and Letters of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes et de la Vérendrye and His Sons*, 8.

[50] Scott Berthelette, “Frères et enfants du même père: The Illusion of Empire West of the Great Lakes, 1731 – 1743,” *Early American Studies* 14, no. 1 (Winter 2016): 181.

La Vérendrye and his companions kept detailed journals and letters of their time in *le Petit Nord*. On their way from Montreal to the prairies, they encountered many Indigenous peoples and recorded certain historical events and stories as they interpreted them. Obviously, due to cultural differences and language barriers, these accounts can differ from the Indigenous oral histories, and even if an effort was made to record the impartial truth, misinterpretation was frequent. At times, the French were not even properly aware of who they were parlaying with, misidentifying the peoples with whom they were forming alliances.[51] On the part of the Indigenous peoples of the region, dealing with the French was seen as preferable to dealing with the English, so the two groups had significant interaction, complex and precarious as it was. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission cites an account from a group of Iroquois traders in 1754 in which they state: "[Looking at French forts] you will see that the land beneath his walls is still hunting ground, having fixed himself in those places we frequent, only to supply our wants; whilst the English, on the contrary, no sooner get possession of a country than the game is forced to leave it […]."[52] The many varied accounts shared between French and Indigenous traders represent one of the ways that folklore and folk tales are born. *Folk* does not imply a lack of truth—it represents a version of it, one version among many others that could all be truth, in some way or another. In her book *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*, Indigenous scholar Margaret Kovach explains: "In Blackfoot the English word 'story' literally translates as involvement in an event. If a Blackfoot asks another Blackfoot to tell a story, he is literally asking the storyteller to tell about his 'involvement' in the event."[53] Westerners oftentimes create a false association between "stories" and "fiction." To them, stories are made-up, or if they are not made-up, they only contain grains of truth and do not represent a whole truth of their own. Adele Perry puts it very succinctly when discussing how early Canadian scholars viewed Indigenous history: "Those who write and preserve their writing in what [Alexander Begg] calls "records" have history and those who do not have only the misty netherworld of myth."[54] This is why it is so essential to incorporate Indigenous methodologies into scholarship, not only in the fields of history and archives but across academia. Vital knowledge is discounted simply because it exists in a format that is viewed as "less legitimate" than written knowledge. Kovach speaks at length about this, drawing on both her own experiences and those of her Indigenous colleagues. Oral traditions have never been seen as lesser than by Indigenous peoples, she says: "The interrelationship between story and knowing cannot be traced back to any specific starting time within tribal societies, for they have been tightly bound since time immemorial as a legitimate form of understanding."[55]

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[51] Berthelette, "Frères et enfants du même père," 175.

[52] The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Canada's Residential Schools,* 13.

[53] Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations and Contexts*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 94.

Storytelling was important for French-Canadians as well. After the French began migrating west, it became more critical than ever for families to maintain kinship ties over long distances. This correspondence oftentimes took place via letters, wherein the writers would tell stories in an attempt to re-establish familiarity and relationships that may have become frayed by distance and time. Sarah Hurlburt, studying the letters sent between members of the Bergevin family, explains:

> Because the letter exists both as a physical object, written by a gendered individual and situated in time and space, and also as a textual object, a form of recorded conversation, it

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[54] Adele Perry, "The Colonial Archive on Trial: Possession, Dispossession, and History in Delgamuukw vs. British Columbia," in *Archival Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 334.

[55] Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies, 95.*

> enables us to examine the generation and reproduction of the family as a social and historical arrangement […]. Correspondence analysis can thus reveal both the mechanisms of kin keeping that allowed an extended family to persist and the construction of a specific familial identity through the storytelling acts of the letters themselves.[56]

In this context, kin keeping refers to any efforts taken in order to keep family members in touch with one another. It exists in many forms; letters, as mentioned above, but also visitation, telephone conversations, and mutual aid. In many families, the primary kin keeper is identified as being the matriarch.[57] Storytelling exists as a facet of kin keeping within these overarching categories, as it can be both written and oral. One can tell a story via letter, or while visiting a loved one, or over the phone. Letter-writing is one of storytelling's more ephemeral formats, and it therefore has its limitations. Firstly, letters can be lost or destroyed. Sarah Hurlburt highlighted this fact as being as significant hurdle in her research, and her experience speaks to the types of records that have been prioritized by memory institutions over time. For example, despite women being the kin keepers of the family, the letters that have survived from earlier periods of French immigration are those of men.[58] She asks: "Does the preponderance of male voices in these archives accurately reflect the proportion of male letter-writers in life? Did preservation practices privilege writings of men?"[59] The answer to this second question appears to be a resounding "yes". Those who study immigrant communities and their communication practices cite women, illiterate folks and children as groups that are often under-represented in writings or are frequently spoken for, rather than having their own voices.[60] Which leads into the next issue presented when using exclusively textual records as the locus for storytelling research; they do not represent the part of the population that was illiterate and therefore could not communicate via letter or write in a journal or participate in any other such means of recordkeeping.

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[56] Sarah Hurlburt, "Kin Keeping and Family Storytelling in Nineteenth-century French-Canadian Immigrant Letters: The Bergevin Corpus," *Social History* 50, no. 102 (November 2017): 288.

[57] Carolyn J. Rosenthal, "Kinkeeping in the Familial Division of Labour," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 47, no. 4 (November 1985): 965-966.

[58] Hurlburt, "Kin Keeping and Family Storytelling in Nineteenth-century French-Canadian Immigrant Letters," 289.

[59] Hurlburt, "Kin Keeping and Family Storytelling in Nineteenth-century French-Canadian Immigrant Letters," 289.

[60] Bruce S. Elliot, David A. Gerber, and Suzanne M. Sinke, *Letters Across Borders: The Epistolary Practices of International Migrants* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 4.

Literacy heavily affects the documentary heritage of Franco-Manitoban culture, as many voyageurs—and in fact, most of the population of New France—were illiterate. Determining the level of literacy in pre-industrial societies is a difficult task, but it is mostly through archival research and analysis that historians are able to get a rough overall picture of how many people in Canada during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were able to read and write. Best estimates place the total number of schools in Bas-Canada at forty-seven. As an aggregate total, this means that of the 123 parishes and districts in the French colony, less than twenty had *petites écoles* over its entire existence until the English conquest in 1760.[61] In recognition of the reality that the presence or lack thereof of a school or schoolmaster does not necessarily accurately represent the level of education in a region, as family members and community elders could also act as educators, we can also look to census records to fill in the gaps. In particular, marriage records provide a good measure of literacy, as in most cases it is fair to assume that if an individual can sign their own name, they can read and write.[62] Marriage records also have the advantage in this context of being nearly universally representative, as the adult population of New France had a marriage rate of approximately 95%, and a 1678 Ordinance decreed that all marriage certificates had to be signed by both the bride and the groom. Of course, they have the same drawbacks as many historical records of some significant age, chiefly loss and destruction. Nonetheless, Roger Magnuson at McGill

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[61] Roger Magnuson, *Education in New France* (McGill: Queen's University Press, 1992), 86.
[62] Magnuson, *Education in New France*, 88.

University conducted a study of marriage records from two separate periods that represent the early and late years of New France: 1680-1699 and 1750-1765 respectively. The records were from both urban and rural regions in order to cut as wide a swath as possible in terms of population (the three major centres of Montreal, Trois-Rivières and Quebec City being the urban and various rural parishes such as Rivières-des-Prairies and Varennes being the rural).[63] Magnuson concluded that literacy levels were low. Although he warns that the numbers are by no means precise, he found that during the first period (1680-1699), urban literacy rates sat at around 50% while rural appeared to be somewhere in the 29% range. During the second period (1750-1765), they were lower; 41% for the urban population and only 10% for the rural. Taking into consideration that three-quarters of the total populace of New France lived in the countryside, this leaves the overall literacy rate sitting at approximately 25%.[64] We know that migration westward from New France to what is now Manitoba began with La Vérendrye's voyages in the 1730s, so it is fair to assume that these literacy rates can be applied to the early inhabitants of Manitoba as well.[65] This means that until literacy levels began to rise, Franco-Manitoban folklore would have been mostly transmitted orally, through storytelling or music. I will examine this more closely in the next chapter.

La Vérendrye ultimately succeeded in locating a reliable route to the Western Sea and in doing so revitalized the fur trade by bringing migrants west to the Prairies. The consensus amongst Manitoban historians is that La Vérendrye was the first European settler in this part of North America, a legacy which has cemented him in the collective memory of anglophone and francophone people of the Prairies alike.[66] Over the course of the next century and a half, the voyageurs travelling through the *pays d'en haut*, or fur trading country, would become the backbone of the economy. Voyageurs were indentured servants hired by one of the major fur-trade companies to transport goods and furs between Montreal and the furthest boundaries of the known trade routes. There is an important difference here that is often ignored: voyageurs were *engagés*, contracted employees, whereas independent traders were referred to as *coureurs-de-bois*.[67] It may seem like nothing more than semantics, but whether or not a man was an *engagé* determined the work environment they existed in, both socially and culturally. In an occupation where one's work was their life, that is a significant difference. As Anne Lindsay explains, an *engagé* was not free to negotiate on their own behalf. A fur trader could purchase their contract from another, and rather than pay them a wage, they would simply pay the trader from whom they had purchased the voyageur's contract. Lindsay refers to this as "un-freedom," a grey area between slavery and independence.[68] Due to their unique circumstances, voyageurs developed their own culture, distinct from the rest of French Canada. Jacqueline Blay explains:

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[63] Magnuson, *Education in New France*, 89.

[64] Magnuson, *Education in New France*, 90-91.

[65] I will be using the term "Franco-Manitoban" somewhat anachronistically throughout this chapter. While Manitoba did not exist as a province until 1870, it is for the sake of clarity that I use Franco-Manitoban regardless of the period, as I am referring to the same people throughout their evolution. I acknowledge, however, that place names, ethnic compositions of the population and borders change over time.

> Ce voyageur possède sa propre culture francophone, dans laquelle on retrouve ses valeurs et ses croyances catholiques, son adaptation au milieu environnant, et son métier, celui de transporter des marchandises par canot. Ses traditions sont parfois un mélange de religion et de superstitions païennes. Par exemple, lorsqu'il franchit pour la première fois un point de passage stratégique, ses compagnons le baptisent, en se moquant un peu de lui. Cependant, cette cérémonie initiatique a quelques éléments sérieux, puisque ces points stratégiques représentent toujours une entrée dans la confrérie des voyageurs.[69]

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[66] Blay, *Histoire du Manitoba français Tome 1,* 16.
[67] Carolyn Podruchny, "Baptizing Novices: Ritual Moments among French Canadian Voyageurs in the Montreal Fur Trade, 1780-1821," *The Canadian Historical Review* 83, no. 2 (June 2002): 166.
[68] Anne Lindsay, ""especially in this free Country:" Webs of Empire, Slavery, and the Fur Trade" (PhD thesis, University of Manitoba, 2021), 75.
[69] Blay, *Histoire du Manitoba français Tome 1,* 25.

The above testimony, which is an abridged version of an account given by a man named John Macdonell in 1793, hits the major beats of what was called a voyageur *bâtême*, or baptism. The rite consisted of several steps, the first of which was the sprinkling of water in the initiate's face using a small cedar bough, followed by the new voyageur swearing a vow that included such rules as "never kissing another voyageur's wife without her permission." The entire ceremony was concluded with twelve consecutive gunshots and the newly baptized man gifting his comrades a two-gallon keg of liquor for them to share.[70] This mock-baptism was the result of cultural exchange between French-Canadian voyageurs and the Indigenous peoples they relied on for directions, food and supplies on the long journey through fur-trading country.

From a historiographical standpoint, it is around this time that we can begin to separate the history of Franco-Manitobans (or, at the very least, the history of the *francophones de l'Ouest*, or western francophones) from the history of French Canada as a whole. Quebecois history either ignores Métis and western francophone history entirely or attempts to assimilate and simplify it, treating it as little more than an extension of the history of Quebec.[71] This is due to the fact that traditionally, the history of Quebec is non-inclusive of the history of francophone minority communities beyond its borders, despite their common origins. Quebecois historians, particularly those of the early 20th century, did not want to acknowledge the roles that Indigenous peoples played in the history of French Canada, which, for the Métis, meant that their presence was either erased from the history books or they were lumped in with Euro-French Canadians. Lionel Groulx, historian and former professor at Laval University, wrote in a 1950s publication that: "[…] il n'y a pas de Métis au Canada français, ils sont tous devenus des Canadiens."[72] His ethnocentric attitude was echoed by many of his peers shared at the time, and so a separation seems prudent in order to give Indigenous and Métis history the place it deserves. The truth is that the fur trade would not have flourished the way it did were it not for the relationships, political or otherwise, formed between white voyageurs and Indigenous peoples. Marriages "*à la façon du pays*," (roughly meaning "country marriage") were vital in cementing economic and social ties between Euro-Canadian fur traders and Indigenous peoples, who helped French colonists survive the harsh winters and navigate the unforgiving landscapes of *le Petit Nord.*[73] Country marriages were also a means for voyageurs under contract to secure their freedom. The mutual support gained by marrying an Indigenous woman and thereby being brought into her extended family put them in a better position to either desert the company entirely (which was relatively easy to do in the interior) or at the very least negotiate improvements to their working conditions by threatening to desert, bolstered by the comfort and security of their new family.[74] These relationships would endure and evolve in the centuries to come, as the descendants of these unions would eventually form the Métis Nation. By 1820, Métis voyageurs represented a large percentage of the overall workforce.[75] This unique culture, with all its traditions and rituals, is still celebrated today for its influence on modern Franco-Manitoban identity. The *Festival du voyageur* is an annual week-long event which takes place each February in

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[70] Podruchny, "Baptizing Novices: Ritual Moments among French Canadian Voyageurs in the Montreal Fur Trade, 1780-1821," 165.

[71] Diane Payment, "Les héritiers et héritières de Louis Riel : un aperçu des relations entre les métis et les Canadiens français dans l'Ouest canadien," in *Le dialogue avec les cultures minoritaires* ed. Eric Waddell (Québec : Les Presses de l'Université de Laval, 1999), 54.

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[72] Payment, "Les héritiers et héritières de Louis Riel," 55.
[73] Payment, "Les héritiers et héritières de Louis Riel," 57.
[74] Lindsay, ""especially in this free Country,"" 75-76.
[75] Podruchny, "Baptizing Novices: Ritual Moments among French Canadian Voyageurs in the Montreal Fur Trade, 1780-1821," 167.

Winnipeg, where thousands of people gather to celebrate Franco-Manitoban culture and history.

By the late 18th century, there were two dominant fur trade companies trapping and trading within the Red River valley: the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company. Each had their own internal culture that dictated the ways in which they interacted with the land and with local Indigenous peoples. For servants of the HBC at the time, their contracts were typically short, so they did not have any reason to try to put down roots. They were forbidden from marrying or having sexual relationships with Indigenous women, and doing so was punishable by imprisonment or severe fines.[76] These illegal unions still happened, however, and the company often hired independent French and Métis traders to serve as guides for their expeditions. As for the North West Company, they had much closer relations with the Indigenous peoples they encountered. Indigenous trappers were vital in helping them map out the interior of the fur trade country, and *engagés* of the North West Company would often meet with these trappers at the various forts and trading posts to share meals and trade stories. Upon establishing Fort Gibraltar near the Forks, a historic meeting place for Indigenous peoples, they turned Manitoba into a hub for the fur trade in the west.[77] Tensions between the two fur trading companies came to a head in 1816 during the Battle of Seven Oaks, in which servants of both the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company clashed and over twenty men were killed on the side of the latter. By 1821, the two companies would ultimately merge, the NWC being absorbed by the HBC.[78]

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[76] Blay, Blay, *Histoire du Manitoba français Tome 1,* 20-23.
[77] Blay, *Histoire du Manitoba français Tome 1,* 19-20.
[78] Gerhard J. Ens and Joe Sawchuk, *From new people to new nations: aspects of Métis history and identity from the eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 78-80.

Some very important Métis oral history came out of the Battle of Seven Oaks. The *Chanson de la Grenouillère,*[79] so-named due to the location of the battle traditionally being called Frog Plains, commemorated the Métis victory over the HBC settlers and became something of an anthem for the emerging Métis Nation. Composed the night after the battle by Pierre Falcon while the Métis men of the North West Company camped at Frog Plains, it tells a story of bravery and pride at having defended their land from outsiders.[80] The oldest written version of the song appears in the Selkirk Papers, which are currently in the custody of Library and Archives Canada as part of the Selkirk Collection.[81] Since then, *la Chanson de la Grenouillère* has been published and translated dozens of times. It has also been the focal point of much debate among scholars of Franco-Manitoban literature, Indigenous oral tradition, and French-Canadian culture as a whole. In many ways, the dialogue surrounding Falcon's work is a microcosm of the larger issue of Métis tradition and culture often being absorbed into the Franco-Manitoban identity without recognition of its value as part of the history of an Indigenous nation. While nobody can deny the important place Métis peoples hold within the Franco-Manitoban community, the river does not flow both ways. At the end of the day, French-Canadians are settlers, regardless of which part of the country they settled in. It is of vital importance that we as Franco-Manitobans do not co-opt Métis history without acknowledging that the Métis Nation is its own entity, at once part of and separate from us. Monique Giroux examines this phenomenon in detail in her article "Singing for Frog Plain," wherein she critiques the ways in which Falcon's legacy has been appropriated and misinterpreted over time. Speaking to the debate over the authenticity of various transcribed versions of *la Chanson de la Grenouillère*, she explains:

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[79] Also commonly referred to as *La chanson des Bois-Brûlés*

[80] Ens and Sawchuk, *From new people to new nations,* 87.

[81] Papers of Thomas Douglas 5th Earl of Selkirk, 1769-1870, MG 19 E1, Selkirk Collection, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa. http://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.redirect?app=fonandcol&id=114525&lang=eng

> The key issue, then, is not which version is the original, or which is the most authentic; the issue is that representations have erased or otherwise diminished the Metis-ness of Falcon's songs, whether by including them in French Canadian repertoire; tying them to Quebec instead of to a distinct Metis history and culture; using them to tell the story of Franco-Manitobans or to solidify Franco-Manitoban identity; or by dismissing Metis elements as inauthentic. In doing so, representations of Falcon and his songs have erased an important part of Metis culture.[82]

Here, Giroux is not claiming that there is no overlap between Métis and Franco-Manitoban history, or even more broadly French-Canadian history. She emphasizes that the problem herein lies with a general refusal to acknowledge the Métis elements and cultural context of these important works in favour of claiming them as purely Franco-Manitoban. Yes, a shared Métis/Franco-Manitoban culture exists, but painting Métis intellectual property as being uniquely French because of this overlap denies the indigeneity of Métis peoples and thus their rights as part of a separate and distinct Indigenous nation.[83]

The debate surrounding Pierre Falcon and his work further highlights the tension that exists within documentary heritage between textuality and orality. As mentioned above, written versions of the song exist that are old enough in a strictly historical sense to lend them a certain amount of credibility. Traditional methodology suggests that the closer something was recorded in relation to the occurrence of the event in question, the more reliable it is as a source. However, this does not account for the space created between the oral telling of a story and the physical writing of it. In this space, even if it is mere hours after the verbal sharing of the story, there is room for modification and misinterpretation. French-Michif, for example, was an exclusively oral language at the time, and only in recent years have efforts been made to standardize it.[84] This means that at the time Falcon composed *la Chanson de la Grenouillère*, it is possible that the moment it was put to paper some of the original meaning and intent was lost. This would not be a unique case; anthropologists have long sought to translate the oral histories of Indigenous peoples into a more "palatable" format for their Anglo-European peers. In his article "On the Translation of Style in Oral Narrative," Dennis Tedlock uses popular translations of the histories of the Zuñi indigenous peoples of the southwestern United States to illustrate the anthropological propensity towards "simplification" of traditional oral narratives. Some are more egregious than others. Frank Hamilton Cushing, who collected Zuñi oral histories in the 1880s, went so far as to add passages to the Zuñi stories which reflected his own moralistic ideologies.[85] Ruth Benedict, in an attempt to produce a more "truthful" version of the narratives, took a hyper-literal approach that omitted parallelisms, a storytelling device that the Zuñi knowledge keepers used to string together particularly long sentences in order to keep the narrative in motion. The result is a stunted translation which lacks the rhythm and complexity of the original telling because the parallelisms were viewed as "not worth preserving in print."[86]

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[82] Monique Giroux, "Singing for Frog Plain: Representing Canadian/Metis Relations through Falcon's songs," *Ethnologies* 37, no. 1 (2015): 56.
[83] Giroux, "Singing for Frog Plain," 56-57.

It is also not speculative that the same happened with written translations of *la Chanson de la Grenouillère*. One writer, Agnes Laut, published a version of the song which referred to the Métis as "wild, gleeful and bloodthirsty," going so far as to draw comparisons between the Métis North West Company men and "the wild animals feasting on the remains of the dead English soldiers."[87] Laut's translation was published in 1900, less than a century since Falcon originally composed it, and still the lyrics were modified nearly beyond recognition. This is not to say that there is one "right" version of the song today. Folklorist George Herzog states that all we ever have is *a* version of any given folk song, and the closest we can get to *the* version is observing consistencies after collecting many, many versions of it.[88] I do, however, believe that some translations are more honest than others, and that *better* versions exist as Tedlock demonstrated with the Zuñi oral histories. Even Franco-Manitoban settlers, for whom a standardized written French did exist at the time, had very little in the form of written folk culture, and so are susceptible to the same risk of mistranslation and misinterpretation. Carolyn Podruchny elaborates: "French-Canadian voyageurs came from an oral world in which systems of knowledge and meaning were shared through stories and songs. When French peasants crossed the Atlantic to settle in the St. Lawrence valley […] they brought a rich oral tradition."[89] When the voyageurs travelled west to Manitoba, they inevitably maintained their traditional knowledge systems while also incorporating those of the Indigenous peoples they encountered and formed kinship ties with.[90] We will see this reflected in the folklore collections of Franco-Manitoban archives in the next chapter, when I will examine the predominant formats of their records. Also of note is that while there is still room for mistranslation, Franco-Manitoban settlers do not face the same level of language loss as Indigenous peoples, so it is easier to recover the original spirit of a given song or tale.

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[84] Sing, "J'vous djis enne cho', lâ: Translating Oral Michif French into Written English," 60.
[85] Dennis Tedlock, "On the Translation of Style in Oral Narrative," in *Toward New Perspectives in Folklore*, ed. Américo Paredes and Richard Bauman (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1972), 117.
[86] Tedlock, "On the Translation of Style in Oral Narrative," 119.

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[87] Giroux, "Singing for Frog Plain," 50.

[88] George Herzog, "Stability of Form in Traditional and Cultivated Music," in *The Study of Folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 169.

[89] Carolyn Podruchny, "Werewolves and Windigos: Narratives of Cannibal Monsters in French-Canadian Voyageur Tradition," *Ethnohistory* 51, no. 4 (Fall 2004): 678.

[90] Podruchny, "Werewolves and Windigos," 678.

Setting aside the physical state of Franco-Manitoban folklore for the time being, it is imperative to acknowledge the various intellectual categories that folk tales, songs and stories can fall into. These genres offer important insight the socio-cultural landscape of French Manitoba, as they are often indicative of the societal values and cultural makeup of any given demographic. While songs were the preferred medium of knowledge transmission among voyageurs, one genre stands out above the rest: *chansons de geste*, roughly meaning "act-songs" or "songs of action."[91] All one need do is look at the titles of some of the songs and poems featured in J.R. Léveillé's *Anthologie de la Poésie Franco-Manitobain* to find evidence of this: "Le Bal à Fort William (The Ball at Fort William,)" "La Ballade du général Dickson (The Ballad of General Dickson)," and "Rêverie sur la plage du lac Winnipeg (Daydream on the Beach of Lake Winnipeg)."[92] Voyageurs often sang about the things they witnessed, whether that be banal, daily things such as their canoes, or the moments in history they happened to become a part of. For them, sometimes the content of the song was less important than the rhythm of it. So long as it made for a good *chanson à l'aviron* (paddling song), it would have staying power among the voyageurs. Various English traders commented on the tunes, stating: "The light-hearted Canadians under its influence [springtime], again chanted forth their wild and pleasing *chansons à l'aviron*." And: "The poor Voyageurs, who were in a starving condition, kept up *les chansons à l'aviron* until day-break, to divert their hunger."[93] Podruchny comments on the difficulty of locating voyageur voices within documentary heritage, but states that their echoes can be found within their songs, and cites the observations of German explorer Georg Kohl. He writes:

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[91] J.R. Léveillé, *Anthologie de la Poésie Franco-Manitobain* (St. Boniface: Les Éditions du Blé, 1990), 20.
[92] Léveillé, *Anthologie de la Poésie Franco-Manitobain*, 583-584.
[93] Marius Barbeau, "The Ermantinger Collection of Voyageur Songs (ca. 1830)," *The Journal of American Folklore* 67, no. 264 (April-June 1954): 148.

> The voyageurs accompany and embroider with song nearly everything they do—their fishery, their heavy tugging at the oar, their social meetings at the camp fire; and many a jest, many a comic incident, many a moving strain, which, if regarded closely, will not endure criticism, there serves to dispel ennui. If even at times no more than a 'tra-la-la-la!' it rejoices the human heart that is longing for song and melody.[94]

The *complainte* was another popular genre, which were used to recount the tragedies endured by the voyageurs on their long journeys and to remember those lost. An example is "The Little Rock," which tells the story of Jean Cadieux, a man who sacrificed himself so that his companions could escape from a group of enemy Iroquois. Old French ballads (even predating the establishment of New France) featured heavily as well, indicative of the voyageurs' continued connection to their ancestral roots.[95] These songs were an important part of voyageur life, but they were not the only genre of folklore that the early inhabitants of Manitoba shared amongst themselves.

Another common motif was survival stories and lessons. The *pays d'en haut* was a harsh environment to exist in at times. The wilderness was thick and full of perils that could easily result in injury or death if one was not savvy enough to navigate it. Many of the tales shared between voyageurs (and later those living in the Red River Settlement) were cautionary in nature. When French traders first began venturing West, they primarily interacted with Algonquin Indigenous peoples, therefore much of their oral tradition is borrowed—or at the very least influenced by—those of the various nations they encountered and, in many cases, relied on for survival.[96] Starvation was an acute fear for voyageurs, and this is reflected in the pervasiveness of themes of cannibalism and warnings against isolation in their folk narratives. Algonquin teachings tell of the *windigo*, an evil spirit driven to madness either through possession or starvation, with an insatiable appetite for human flesh. It is described as "an owl-eyed monster with large clawed hands, matted hair, a naked emaciated body, and a heart made of solid ice."[97] The existence of the windigo in Algonquin oral tradition indicates a cultural anxiety surrounding starvation and cannibalism, similar to those ultimately shared by French voyageurs as they travelled through their lands.[98] Carolyn Podruchny theorizes that the voyageurs connected with the tales of the windigo due to a pre-existing familiarity with a similar creature of European folklore: the *loup-garou*, or werewolf.[99] Werewolves, similarly to windigos, were evil spirits which underwent a physical transformation after which they developed a taste for human flesh. However, unlike the windigo, the werewolf did not arise due to fears of food scarcity, but rather fears of being "cursed" or beset upon by evil spirits sent by Satan. Voyageurs in particular believed that being lax in their Catholic faith made one more susceptible to becoming a werewolf.[100] Still, there was enough overlap that the voyageurs immediately took to the beliefs of the Algonquin peoples they communicated with, and the windigo served as a warning of what could happen if they ever found themselves isolated and without enough food to sustain themselves.

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[94] Carolyn Podruchny, *Making the voyageur world: travelers and traders in the North American fur trade* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 86-87.

[95] Podrychny, *Making the voyageur world*, 87.

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[96] Podruchny, "Werewolves and Windigos," 679.

[97] Nathan D. Carlson, "Reviving Witiko (Windigo): An Ethnohistory of 'Cannibal Monsters' in the Athabascsa District of Northern Alberta, 1878-1910," *Ethnohistory* 56, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 359.

[98] Carlson, "Reviving Witiko," 381.

[99] Podruchny, "Werewolves and Windigos," 682.

[100] Podruchny, "Werewolves and Windigos," 682.

The history of French Manitoba after the Battle of Seven Oaks is too extensive for the scope of this thesis. In brief, however, several events led to the formation of the province of Manitoba as we know it today, and it was closely tied with Métis nationhood. Chris Andersen traces the contemporary roots of Métis resistance in the 1800s to 1821, when the HBC (having just absorbed the North West Company in the wake of Seven Oaks) was granted a trade monopoly over Rupert's Land. This also gave them propriety governance powers, and it was made clear that their values were shifting towards a business model less interested in profiting from the fur trade and more interested in the colonization opportunities of the land they now claimed as their territory. Andersen concludes: "The events of 1869-70 took place squarely within this increasingly colonial landscape."[101] In the years directly following Canadian confederation in 1867, the government started pushing immigration westward, inviting Ontarians and Europeans to settle in their "newly purchased" territories. This was done without consultation with the Indigenous peoples of the Red River Settlement, including the Métis. They blocked the land surveyors and set up a Métis-led provisional government, comprised of both francophone and anglophone Métis, who created a list of demands for Prime Minister John A. Macdonald.[102] Despite the presence of anglophones in the provisional government, historians posit that Louis Riel's conceptualization of Métis identity and nationhood would have been "inextricably connected to his sense of belonging to a French-Canadian Nation."[103] They cite the fact that initially, when the Métis responded to Canada's planned annexation of Rupert's Land, they did so from an Indigenous land rights paradigm. Riel opposed this, and instead proposed a defence based on religion and language. In his song *La Métisse*, he writes: "Je suis métisse et je suis orgueilleuse/D’appartenir à cette nation/Je sais que Dieu de sa main généreuse/Fait chaque peuple avec attention/Les Métis sont un petit people encore/Mais vous pouvez voir déjà leurs destins/Être haïs comme ils sont les honore.”[104] Ens and Sawchuk point to these lyrics to support the idea, claiming that Riel relies upon God and religion to legitimize Métis nationalism.[105] Poetry—folk culture—can give us insight into some of the most important historical events in our past. Regardless of his views and motivations, Louis Riel is considered by many to be the founder of Manitoba. The spirit of the Manitoba Act was to protect both Métis land rights and French language rights, neither of which were respected by the Canadian government in the long run. But it speaks to a shared history, at once separate and the same. It is this history which archives have sought to preserve, and which we will explore in more detail in the next chapter.

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[101] Chris Andersen, *"Métis:" Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 113.
[102] Andersen, *"Métis,"* 113-114.
[103] Ens and Sawchuk, *From new people to new nations,* 93.

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[104] Léveillé, *Anthologie de la poésie Franco-Manitobaine*, 167.
[105] Ens and Sawchuk, *From new people to new nations,* 102.

Chapter Two: Folklore in the Franco-Manitoban Community Archives

It is difficult to get a clear picture of how folklore is represented in archives and memory institutions. This is for a variety of reasons but can primarily be attributed to vocabulary. For the purpose of my research, I used a variety of terms and keywords in order to search the collection of the Centre du patrimoine, the largest repository of Franco-Manitoban documentary heritage in the province. However, I could not simply use the word "folklore" and expect to obtain all possible results. Terminology changes over time, and as I have discussed previously, there are many names for what I would consider folklore and folk-adjacent, both academic and colloquial. Therefore, I have created a list of all of the terminology I used in an advanced keyword search in the Centre's online database, and the number of associated results. This is without taking a deeper look at the formats, origins etc. of said results, which I will do later in this chapter. For comparison, I repeated this process with the Archives of Manitoba online database, as I was interested to see what the disparity would be between English folklore collections and French. My preliminary results were as follows:

Table 1: Database results, Centre du patrimoine[106]

Keyword	**# of results**
"Folklore"	215
"Histoire orale"	831

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[106] "Chercher dans nos collections," Recherche, Centre du patrimoine, accessed July 3rd, 2023, https://archivesshsb.mb.ca/

“Contes”	286
“Chansons”	1575
“Récits”	461
“Témoignages”	176
“Légendes”	283
Total:	**3827**

Table 2: Archives of Manitoba[107]

Keyword	**# of results**
“Folklore”	12
“Oral history”	1343
“Tales”	161
“Songs”	175
“Stories”	249
“Testimonies”	65
“Legends”	39
Total:	**2044**

Based on these searches, it would appear that the Centre du patrimoine has a significantly larger folklore collection than the Archives of Manitoba. While the search for “Oral history” yielded more results, every other search yielded significantly fewer. This is not surprising, despite the Archives of Manitoba being a significantly larger institution. Taking into consideration the different mandates of the two archives, the results make sense: we are simply looking at two different types of archives. The Centre du patrimoine is a community archive. It exists not only to serve a geographical region, but a people. It is right there in the name: *patrimoine*, meaning "heritage" or "history". Laura Millar, in defining different varieties of institutions, describes community archives as follows: "The scope and responsibilities of these types of archival institution—often established by or associated with historical societies, special interest groups, associations, municipalities or local government authorities—are almost entirely guided by the cultural, social and political priorities of the jurisdiction they represent."[108] The Centre certainly fits these criteria, having been founded by the Société historique de Saint-Boniface and committing, as per their mandate "[…] à la préservation, à l'étude, à la diffusion et à la mise en valeur de l'histoire francophone et métisse du Manitoba et de l'Ouest canadien."[109] The Archives of Manitoba has a more administrative mandate, which includes the preservation of the records of the provincial government, as well as its agencies, courts, and legislature. They also act a repository for the records of private sector businesses and the Hudson's Bay Company archives.[110] This is more in line with Millar's definition of an institutional archive, which maintains the records of a corporation or government.[111] This is a very utilitarian explanation for the difference in results for my keyword search exercise, and ultimately the question of why the Archives of Manitoba does not contain *more* folklore is extraneous. It is clear from the difference in their mandates that these two institutions are not an apples-to-apples comparison anyways, and this is not a criticism of the Archives of Manitoba; my intention was to simply have a control against which I could compare the Centre's collection. What matters is that there is a significant amount of folk culture-related records in the collection at the Centre du patrimoine, which makes it an indispensable resource to the Franco-Manitoban community at large.

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[107] “Keystone Archives Descriptive Database,” Archives of Manitoba, accessed July 3rd, 2023, http://pam.minisisinc.com/pam/search.htm

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[108] Laura A. Millar, *Archives: principles and practices* (London: Facet Publishing, 2017), 84.
[109] "Histoire du Centre," Centre du patrimoine, accessed August 1st, 2023, https://shsb.mb.ca/histoire/
[110] "Our Mandate and Mission," About Us, Archives of Manitoba, accessed August 1st, 2023, https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/about/index.html
[111] Millar, *Archives: principles and practices*, 80.

Upon a more in-depth examination of the folklore records, it became clear that the Centre du patrimoine serves as a repository for a larger Franco-Manitoban heritage network. There are several large oral history projects conducted by community heritage centres that were donated to the Centre and made available to the public. The Musée Saint-Joseph, in the small francophone town of Saint-Joseph, Manitoba, conducted an oral history project in 2003 in which they interviewed former students and staff of the historic Union Point school. In 2004, the recordings were given to the Société historique de Saint-Boniface, who in turn placed them in the archives.[112] The community of Saint-Joseph has a population of under 2000 people, a number that has been declining since the 1960s.[113] Another project, titled "Nos Racines agricoles racontées (Our Agricultural Roots Told)", consists of a series of interviews conducted with members of various Franco-Manitoban farming communities beginning in 2007 and ending in 2012.[114] Communities documented include Sainte-Agathe, Saint-Pierre-Jolys, Saint-Jean-Baptiste and others. The Centre du patrimoine has the resources to act as a hub for francophone heritage institutions all across Manitoba. While it may not be particularly well-defined, it is clear that a Franco-Manitoban heritage network does exist and is working to preserve the history of our communities, ensuring that their stories are not lost even in the face of population decline. Small-town museums often do not have the facilities or funding to preserve large numbers of their own records, having to focus their efforts on the upkeep of the museum or historical site itself, so it is not surprising that they choose instead to send their records to a larger, dedicated archive. In fact, this concept is ingrained in the Centre's acquisition policy, which states: "[Le SASHSB] fait la promotion du Centre du patrimoine comme centre de dépôt des archives du Manitoba français menacées de destruction ou de détérioration en favorisant la préservation des archives dans le milieu d'origine (principe de territoralité)."[115] This is one of the primary functions of a community archive and exemplifies why they are such culturally important spaces. I am confident that in choosing to examine the folklore collection at the Centre du patrimoine, I am getting a good representation of the larger Franco-Manitoban community as well.

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[112] Projet d'histoire orale, 2003-2004, C505, Collection Musée Saint-Joseph, Centre du patrimoine, Winnipeg, Manitoba. https://archivesshsb.mb.ca/link/archives104172

[113] "Manitoba Communities: Montcalm (Rural Municipality)," Manitoba Historical Society, accessed September 1st, 2023, https://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/municipalities/montcalm.shtml

[114] Histoire orale de l'expérience agricole, 2007-2012, W0003, Collection générale de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface, Centre du patrimoine, Winnipeg, Manitoba. https://archivesshsb.mb.ca/link/archives240300

There are, however, inherent issues involved when attempting to capture folklore in an institutional setting no matter how much funding or staff is available. I will be using the Henri Letourneau oral history fonds at the Centre du patrimoine as a case study in both the challenges and triumphs of not only capturing folklore but making it accessible to the public. According to correspondence with the Centre, the Letourneau fonds was selected as a flagship project in improving the database searchability and online accessibility of audiovisual material. They utilised the Oral History Metadata Synchroniser (OHMS), an open-source web application designed to aid heritage institutions in navigating the unique challenges presented when trying to capture oral history interviews in databases and finding aids.[116] Henri Letourneau was a chronicler, folklorist and curator who had an interest in Métis and western French-Canadian folklore. He undertook several large oral history projects for both the Société historique de Saint-Boniface and the Canadian Museum of History, and it is this collection which was eventually transferred to the Centre.[117] Doug Boyd, the developer of OHMS, describes the issues he sought to address in an article he wrote for *The Oral History Review.* Two major factors were taken into consideration when conceptualizing the application: accessibility and cost. Boyd identified a common shortcoming in existing digital archival platforms, that being the tendency to treat the different elements of an oral history interview—audio, video, transcript, index and metadata—as separate entities rather than as a package, and OHMS aimed to integrate these components in order to improve finding aid searchability and enhance user experience. The resulting application ties all of these parts together, providing a timecode marker in the transcript that corresponds to the correct moment in the audio recording.[118] But while transcripts are a hallmark of oral history cataloguing, they also present a significant financial hurdle, especially for smaller institutions. Boyd estimated the cost of creating a finalized transcript at around $200 per hour of interview in 2013, even when using students or volunteers as transcribers.[119] Given how many oral history interviews an archive might have (especially those like the Centre du patrimoine which focus on community heritage), that is prohibitively expensive and would require significant funding in order to transcribe a single collection. His solution, then, was to implement an indexing system into subsequent versions of OHMS, so that a complete transcript was not necessary. Partial transcripts, keywords and/or narrative descriptions would be enough to both find an audio recording and locate the relevant timecodes.[120] Boyd's process is an interesting microcosm of the challenges faced when archiving folklore, but particularly within a community archive such as the Centre that would face barriers such as cost, time, and/or limited staff and volunteers.

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[115] "Politique d'acquisition," Documents constitutifs, politiques et rapports annuels, Centre du patrimoine, adopted April 19th, 2018, https://shsb.mb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/politique-acquisition-19avril2018_web.pdf

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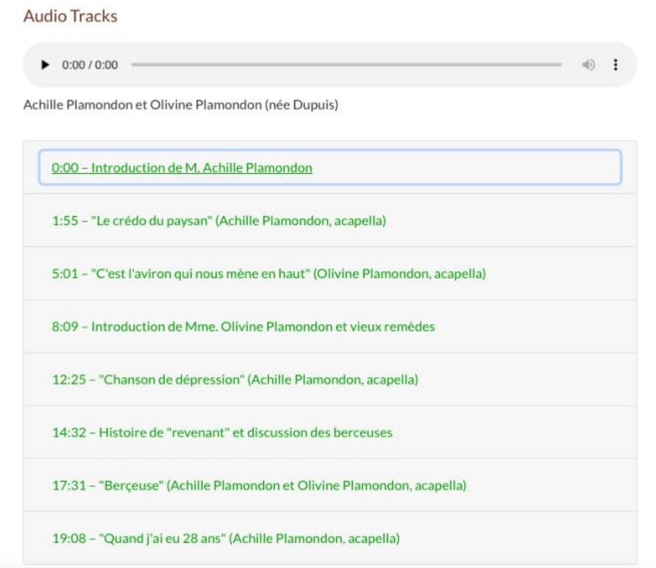
[116] Centre du patrimoine, email communication with author, June 19th, 2024.
[117] Gilles Lesage and Diane Boyd, "Henri Letourneau," *Revue d'ethnologie de l'Amérique française* 4, no. 1 (2006): 75-76.
[118] Doug Boyd, "OHMS: Enhancing Access to Oral History for Free," *The Oral History Review* 40, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2013): 96-97.
[119] Boyd, "OHMS: Enhancing Access to Oral History for Free," 99.

We can see OHMS in action by looking at the first database entry that comes up in the Letourneau fonds. It is an interview with a couple named Achille and Olivine Plamondon of Saint Jean-Baptiste, Manitoba.[121] The finding aid contains the usual information—scope, custodial history, document type, etc.—but features an integrated, playable audio track with accompanying index. As Boyd predicted, an institution the size of the Centre du patrimoine was not able to dedicate the time to creating a full transcript of the interview but was able to make use of the indexing feature to provide timecodes and descriptions for each section of the interview, including relevant keywords for each sub-section in order to improve searchability.



Achille Plamondon et Olivine Plamondon (née Dupuis)

0:00 – Introduction de M. Achille Plamondon

1:55 – "Le crédo du paysan" (Achille Plamondon, acapella)

5:01 – "C'est l'aviron qui nous mène en haut" (Olivine Plamondon, acapella)

8:09 – Introduction de Mme. Olivine Plamondon et vieux remèdes

12:25 – "Chanson de dépression" (Achille Plamondon, acapella)

14:32 – Histoire de "revenant" et discussion des berceuses

17:31 – "Berçeuse" (Achille Plamondon et Olivine Plamondon, acapella)

19:08 – "Quand j'ai eu 28 ans" (Achille Plamondon, acapella)

Figure I: The OHMS indexing system, integrated into the Centre du patrimoine's online database.

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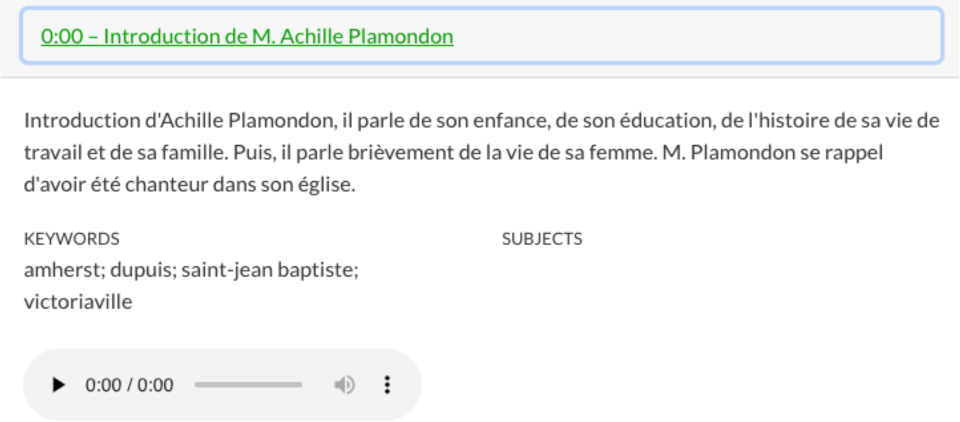
[120] Boyd, "OHMS: Enhancing Access to Oral History for Free," 101.

[121] Achille Plamondon et Olivine Plamondon (née Dupuis), 24 March 1971, BS01140A, Collection Henri Letourneau, Centre du patrimoine, Winnipeg, Manitoba. https://archivesshsb.mb.ca/link/archives48043


0:00 – Introduction de M. Achille Plamondon

Introduction d'Achille Plamondon, il parle de son enfance, de son éducation, de l'histoire de sa vie de travail et de sa famille. Puis, il parle brièvement de la vie de sa femme. M. Plamondon se rappel d'avoir été chanteur dans son église.

KEYWORDS
amherst; dupuis; saint-jean baptiste; victoriaville

SUBJECTS

Figure II: An example of the automatic keyword generation feature.

Not only does OHMS greatly improve accessibility to oral history, but the findability is also much higher than it would be without this tool. Prior to the Centre taking on this project, this interview from 1971 was only available on CD and the original tape recording. Researchers would have had to physically go to the archive and access the recording, and that is providing that there is a legacy media reader available (not as much of a barrier for recordings that were transferred to CD at some point, but certainly for those that are still in tape format). Now, they can access the complete interview online, with keywords and timestamps to help identify sections of interest. They can listen to Achille and Olivine sing their songs and tell their stories without the limitations of time and location, able to access Franco-Manitoban folklore from anywhere in the world. Given the oral nature of Franco-Manitoban folklore and the sheer number of oral history-related holdings, OHMS is an excellent tool for an institution like the Centre du patrimoine. It is a tangible step into the future and keeps with the Centre's mandate of outreach and their role as a community archive.

Community archives are the result of a need to collect and preserve a social group's history, typically where mainstream archival and heritage institutions have failed to do so accurately and honestly.[122] This applies to Franco-Manitobans in a few ways, chiefly as a linguistic minority group that has not always been fairly treated or represented socio-politically in the province. The effects of the 1890 Official Language Act on the Francophone community are numerous, but the ban on French-language schooling would have greatly impacted the accessibility of written materials. For 80 years, French educators were forced to run illegal schools, students having to hide their books and writing whenever the inspectors came around to make sure that lessons were being conducted in English.[123] Logically speaking, even if it were not intentional on the part of the Anglophone majority to underrepresent the French population in its archives, it happened nonetheless due to poor education and the resulting loss of language. Underrepresentation can also be attributed to the simple fact that since 1870, Franco-Manitobans have become more and more a demographical minority. At the time of the signing of the *Manitoba Act*, Francophone and Anglophone populations were about equal, with French-speaking Canadiens and Métis peoples representing a slight majority. A mere twenty years later, as the Anglophone population grew, Francophones represented around 10% of the population, mainly due to immigration from Ontario and other Eastern, English-majority provinces.[124] According to the latest numbers from Statistics Canada, today there are 112,115 Manitobans who can speak French, representing 8.4% of the total population. Only 40,560 people (3%) identify French as one of their first languages.[125] While these numbers are not perfectly representative of the entire Franco-Manitoban community—language is but one aspect of what makes one a community member—they are a good baseline. Using these statistics, we can now examine the necessity for a French language archive with a better understanding of the Franco-Manitoban community's place within the province at large, at least when it comes to linguistic representation. The consequences of not preserving our own history hurts not only us, but future generations as well. Michelle Caswell uses the term "symbolic annihilation" to describe the ways in which gaps in representation silence and erase minority groups within mainstream archives and heritage institutions. On the role of archives in avoiding symbolic annihilation, she states: "If archives are to be true and meaningful reflections of the diversity of society instead of distorted funhouse mirrors that magnify privilege, then they must dispense with antiquated notions of whose history counts and make deliberate efforts to collect voices that have been marginalized by the mainstream."[126] The solution, according to Caswell, is to engage communities in archival collecting in order to fill the gaps in mainstream repositories. This ensures better representation in the future and avoids erasure via symbolic annihilation.[127] The Centre du patrimoine represents the Franco-Manitoban community's efforts towards this end, where bigger institutions such as the Archives of Manitoba fail.

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[122] Andrew Flinn and Mary Stevens, "'It is no mistri, wi mekin histri.' Telling our own story: independent and community archies in the UK, challenging and subverting the mainstream," in *Community Archives: The Shaping of Memory* ed. Jeannette Bastian and Ben Alexander (London: Facet Publishing, 2009), 3-4.

[123] Emmet Collins, "Francophones of Manitoba," The Canadian Encyclopedia, published October 25, 2017 for Historica Canada, last edited November 30, 2020, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/francophones-of-manitoba

[124] Collins, "Francophones of Manitoba."

[125] Nicolas Auclair, Catherine Frigon and Gabriel St-Amant, "Key facts of the French language in Manitoba in 2021," released July 19th, 2023 for Statistics Canada, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-657-x/89-657-x2023011-eng.htm

Archives and museums have an important role to play in the preservation of language. While French as a whole may not be in any danger of disappearing anytime soon, the dialects specific to Manitoba are. In addition, as an Indigenous language, Michif is particularly at risk due to additional factors including, but not limited to, colonization and systematic governmental efforts to assimilate Indigenous peoples.[128] Language is vitally important to culture. Quoting *The Report on the Status of B.C. First Nations Languages*, Krisztina Laszlo writes: "It is through language that a culture is transmitted. Each language holds unique ideas, philosophy, points of view and intricate details of a culture including everything about a way of life […]."[129] Loss of language thus results in massive loss of culture as well. Archives, and particularly community archives, are in a unique position to be able to stem this loss. There are a variety of strategies which they can employ in order to ensure a future in which the community's language and culture can not only survive but thrive without relying on mainstream repositories. This is not to say that said mainstream repositories should not evolve, nor is it to say that this evolution is not already underway; many archives are becoming more inclusive and are taking positive steps towards fair and equal representation within their collections.[130] However, minority communities whose languages and cultural identities are at risk cannot rely on gradual progress, and institutional archives are not as well-placed to effect social change when compared to their community-based counterparts. J. Edward Chamberlin, writing on language preservation, says that the language that survives is often the one with the army.[131] He is, of course, referring to an army in the literal sense, but figuratively we can take it to mean whoever is in the majority or whoever has the power. The battle for language preservation is not being fought on a battlefield, but in government, in schools, in libraries and archives. Archivists are uniquely positioned to aid in this fight, if they are aware of the implications of the power they hold: "Archivists choose which records to preserve and discard, using the power of appraisal to consciously or unconsciously assert chosen narratives as truth while ignoring or reframing others."[132] Fortunately, there are a variety of weapons at our disposal to ensure (as much as possible) that we are on the right side of history.

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[126] Michelle Caswell, "Seeing Yourself in History: Community Archives and the Fight Against Symbolic Annihilation," *The Public Historian* 36, no. 4 (November 2014): 36.
[127] Caswell, "Seeing Yourself in History," 36.

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[128] Krisztina Laszlo, "Language, Identity and Archives," in *Identity Palimpsests: Archiving Ethnicity in the U.S. and Canada,* ed. Dominique Daniel and Amalia Levi (Sacramento: Litwin Books, 2014), 118.

[129] Laszlo, "Language, Identity and Archives," 119.

[130] Michelle Caswell, "Inventing New Archival Imaginaries: Theoretical Foundations for Identity-Based Community Archives," in *Identity Palimpsests: Archiving Ethnicity in the U.S. and Canada,* ed. Dominique Daniel and Amalia Levi (Sacramento: Litwin Books, 2014), 40.

[131] J. Edward Chamberlin, *If This is Your Land, Where Are Your Stories? Finding Common Ground* (Canada: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 16.

As we can see, community archives are inherently political, and are important tools to aid in mobilizing for social causes. The community archives movement was born out of the antiwar, feminist, civil rights and 2SLGBTTQ+ protests of the 1960s, though it did not hit its stride until the mid-1970s.[133] Even community archives which are location-based rather than identity-based can be political, as demonstrated in Chapter 2 of Sarah Ramsden's thesis, "Defining 'Community' in Models of Community Archives: Navigating the Politics of Representation as Archival Professionals", where the author discusses the various politics surrounding the Boissevain Community Archives. In this chapter, Ramsden explores the ways in which politics not only define the functions of a small-town community archive, but the role that politics plays in who gets to claim membership of said community.[134] We must be careful not to create our own archival silences within spaces that are meant to combat this very thing. Excessive gatekeeping of community membership, whatever the motivation behind it may be, risks excluding people who should be able to find a place within the group but are unable to due to factors such as racial bias, political affiliation and so-on. Regrettably, this is the double-edged sword of community; it is defined by both belonging and non-belonging, for better or for worse.

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[132] Kate Shilton and Ramesh Srinivasan, "Participatory Appraisal and Arrangement for Multicultural Archival Collections," *Archivaria* 63 (Spring 2007), 88.

[133] Flinn and Stevens, ""'It is noh mistri, we mekin histri.' Telling our own story," 5.

[134] Sarah Ramsden, "Defining 'Community' in Models of Community Archives: Navigating the Politics of Representation as Archival Professionals" (Master's thesis, University of Manitoba, 2016), 37-62.

Addressing discrimination, intentional or not, within our communities is an uncomfortable topic, and many avoid it due to the backlash they may receive in bringing attention to the problem. In order to interrogate this potential short-coming, I searched the collections at the Centre du patrimoine to see how Black Franco-Manitobans are represented. While not as pervasive as the records relating to white or Métis history, I was able to discover at least one major oral history project conducted by the Société historique de Saint-Boniface which focused on interviewing immigrants to French-Manitoba, many of which were Black. These included the story of Fatouma Touré, a Malian woman who immigrated to Manitoba from France, and Mamadou Ka, a Senegalese man who ultimately became a professor at l'Université de Saint-Boniface. Each interview discusses various aspects of their lives, including their families, traditions, and cultures, and the ways in which these things continue to influence their lives here in Manitoba. [135] Fatouma, for example, describes the challenges of growing up in a polygamist household, reflects on the games she used to play with her siblings as a child, and shares the unique Eid traditions her family partook in, being both Malian and Muslim.[136] Mamadou speaks fondly of his comfortable childhood, his family split culturally and physically between Senegal and the Côte d'Ivoire, and describes what it was like moving to Winnipeg and finding his place in the Franco-Manitoban community.[137] These interviews are not officially included in the larger folklore collection, nor are they labeled as such in the finding aid; but they certainly contribute to the larger preservation of folk culture and oral history, and represent the stories being shared by newer Franco-Manitobans who immigrated more recently. While not necessarily a deafening silence, the presence of Black Franco-Manitoban folklore is certainly more of a whisper when compared to the settler Franco-Manitoban or Métis history. This could simply be due to the fact that immigration from francophone African countries is more recent, and therefore there has been less time to collect documentation from them, but it would be nice to see more projects like this which capture the stories of Black community members and demonstrate the evolution of Franco-Manitoban folk culture.

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[135] Interview avec Fatouma Touré, 30 June 2016, W0700, Collection générale de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface, Centre du patrimoine, Winnipeg, Manitoba. https://archivesshsb.mb.ca/link/archives190647 and Interview avec Mamadou Ka, 9 March 2017, W0709, Collection générale de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface, Centre du patrimoine, Winnipeg, Manitoba, https://archivesshsb.mb.ca/link/archives190575

[136] Interview avec Fatouma Touré, Collection générale de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface.

[137] Interview avec Mamadou Ka, Collection générale de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface.

All communities contend with an amount of gatekeeping, whether implicit or explicit. Identity is a complex subject, and opinions are rarely uniform across an entire community. An interesting example of this is the controversy surrounding a statue of Louis Riel that currently resides on the grounds of l'Université de Saint-Boniface. In 1971, Marcien Lemay and Étienne Gaboury unveiled a statue of Louis Riel on the grounds of the Manitoba Legislative building. The sculpture features two half outer "shells" that depict segments of Riel's writings, with an abstract statue of the man himself inside of them. Reception of the art piece was mixed among both Métis and non-Métis folks from the beginning. In the late 80's, a landscaping project at the Legislative Building saw the statue moved to Saint-Boniface after much protest. Lemay ultimately agreed to the arrangement under the condition that he be allowed to sculpt the replacement monument. This never happened, and a much less ambiguous statue by Winnipeg artist Miguel Joyal was installed in 1996 instead.[138] There are many elements about this story that speak to community identification and belonging. Shannon Bower goes on to explain that while in many ways Louis Riel is a Canadian symbol, he is first and foremost a Métis symbol, and his image will always be a representation of the Métis community. Thus, there is much to be said about the reactions and commentary towards the Riel statue by the broader Winnipeg community. The Métis community by and large preferred Joyal's depiction of Riel, its lack of ambiguity making it less likely to be misinterpreted or act as a negative reflection of Métis peoples. The twisted, nude figure of Riel depicted in Lemay's sculpture can be interpreted and misinterpreted in any number of ways, many of which reinforce colonial preconceptions about the Métis. Angus Spence, then-president of the Manitoba Métis Federation, stated in 1972 that the statue did not do any credit to Riel nor to the Métis people. Yet their concerns about the Lemay statue were often minimized or disregarded entirely, put down to either simple prudishness or a misunderstanding of "art." Publications such as the *Winnipeg Free Press* and the *Winnipeg Sun* sought commentary from Métis people on the statue controversy in which the assertion of their Métis-ness—their belonging to the community—immediately lent credence to their opinions, whether they be pro- or anti-statue.[139] Ultimately, the controversy highlights the power of community representation, for good or for ill. To belong to a community is to be connected to it, and thus to be affected by that which affects the group. While gatekeeping can lead to exclusion, it can also serve as a means of protecting the community from harm. In this case, comments made publicly by only a handful of self-identified Métis people could be used to discredit the concerns of the majority simply because they were amplified by the media where others were not. This is not to say that gatekeeping is a net-positive for communities, but more to say that it is not inherently negative. Perhaps it is just a reality.

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[138] Shannon Bower, "Practical Results: The Riel Statue Controversy at the Manitoba Legislative Building," *Manitoba History* 42 (Autumn/Winter 2001/2002), https://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/42/rielstatue.shtml

My goal in this chapter is not to define what community means; I do, however, believe whichever way one chooses to define it, it is vital that certain elements (such as the political aspect) not be lost or muddled in that definition. It is also important that the onus of this definition remain on internal identification. Scholars in various fields have stated that it can be problematic and reductionist to use an ill-defined and vague term such as "community".[140] I would argue that it is not the place of sociologists and anthropologists to tell communities how they should identify. Flinn and Stevens justify their own use of the term "community archive" thusly: "The emphasis is on the community's or group's own self-definition and self-identification by locality, ethnicity, faith, sexuality, occupation, ideology, shared interest or any combination of the above."[141] Interestingly, this is similar to how folklorist Alan Dundes defines the term "folk":

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[139] Bower, "Practical Results."

> The term 'folk' can refer to any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is—it could be a common occupation, language or religion—but what is important is that a group formed for whatever reason will have some traditions which it calls its own.[142]

The criticism that the term "community" is ill-defined has validity to it. The uniting factors which guide the formation a community can run a wide gamut, but what is important is the community's ability to self-determine the parameters of belonging. Participation is often a key factor in being considered part of a community. A person who does not speak French, for example, but frequently volunteers their time towards community events and actively seeks connection, would belong in spite of not having an otherwise defining characteristic (in this case, language) in common with the majority.

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[140] Flinn and Stevens, "'It is noh mistri, we mekin histri.' Telling our own story," 5.

[141] Flinn and Stevens, "'It is noh mistri, we mekin histri.' Telling our own story," 5.

[142] Alan Dundes, "What is Folklore?," in *The Study of Folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 2.

There is considerable power in community identification. All one needs to do is look to the formation of l'Union nationale métisse to see an example of the work that has been done in order to openly identify with a community that correctly represents oneself without fear or prejudice. In the wake of Louis Riel's execution in 1885 and increasing immigration to the Canadian west, the Métis faced significant marginalization. In order to survive in a social climate that was openly discriminatory towards Indigenous peoples, many Métis saw no other option than to identify only as Franco-Manitoban.[143] Come the early 20th century, l'Union nationale métisse made it their mission to re-instill pride in Métis identity. They began attempting to correct their history, one that was largely misunderstood and misrepresented by many Canadians. They formed a Historical Committee, who sought to change public opinion of the Métis and to inspire the next generation to openly identify with their ancestry without shame. To this end, in 1924 the Historical Committee approached Auguste-Henri de Trémaudan about writing a comprehensive history of the Métis. Trémaudan, who had worked as a journalist and lawyer in Manitoba and who had published several books about Riel and the French in Western Canada, agreed to write the manuscript, which l'Union hoped would "endow the Métis with prestige, common purpose, and group identity."[144]

After much back-and-forth and no small amount of intervention on the part of the Historical Committee, *l'Histoire de la nation métisse dans l'Ouest canadien* was published in 1935, and was an epic account of the trials and tribulations of a resilient, proud Métis Nation. It stands as a milestone in the evolution of modern-day Métis nationhood, representative of a time when Métis identity was inextricably intertwined with both French Language and Catholicism.[145] The efforts of l'Union nationale métisse speak not only to the importance of community identification, but to the ever-changing nature of identity itself and the way that community boundaries are drawn and re-drawn over time. In order to seek their own power, l'Union relied upon identifiers that tied them to other, less-marginalized, more privileged communities.

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[143] Ens and Sawchuk, *From new people to new nations,* 113.
[144] Ens and Sawchuk, *From new people to new nations,* 119.

On community identification, using the criteria provided by Flinn and Stevens, the Centre du Patrimoine exists at an intersection of language, geography and, conditionally, ethnicity. Labelling it as a purely local archive ignores the nuance of what the Franco-Manitoban community is at its foundation. Frameworks that treat ethnic archives apply to certain collections, particularly those related to Métis history. However, those same frameworks do not apply to everything in the archives. On the other hand, distilling the essence of the Centre to language only erases the element of ethnicity that is the reality for a significant part of the community; not only Métis Franco-Manitobans, but Vietnamese, Nigerian, Senegalese, and numerous other Franco-Manitobans for which race and language intersect. Ethno-linguistic could work to acknowledge the various elements and nuances to be taken into consideration with an institution like the Centre du patrimoine, but risks remaining too non-specific. This is not an issue unique to the Franco-Manitoban community. Most communities are not a monolith and represent a diverse group of people who have different experiences based on factors outside of their belonging to the demographic which defines that community. Like many community archives, their *raison d'être* is political empowerment and representation. Their theoretical basis is what Michelle Caswell identifies as "strategic essentialism". She further explains:

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[145] Ens and Sawchuk, *From new people to new nations,* 129.

> First introduced in detail by postcolonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, strategic essentialism is the deployment of essentialist identity categories by marginalized groups in order to organize for political empowerment. Strategic essentialism also simultaneously acknowledges the social construction of identity categories and builds solidarity among individuals who identify with such categories.[146]

Strategic essentialism is necessary in order for identity-based archives to exist in a society (in this case, white Anglophone society) which has ignored and silenced them for so long. While, yes, categorizing and labeling identity can emphasize differences between people, it is also required; otherwise, those things which bind a community together and make up its foundation risk being erased in favour of a misguided attempt at eliminating boundaries. It serves nobody to pretend that everybody is treated equally. Many communities still suffer under various forms of systemic oppression, or have in the past, which has an effect on how they interact with the world. Anglophones never had their language rights stripped in Manitoba. Francophones did, and this is reflected in the attitudes of many Franco-Manitobans today. Métis peoples had to contend not only with suppressed language rights, but with racism and colonialism as well, which unfortunately endures to this day. Black Franco-Manitobans also contend with racism, from both within and without the community.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the fact that the records of the Société historique de Saint-Boniface were not always inclusive of Black, Asian, or even Métis Franco-Manitoban history. Their original 1903 mandate was as follows: “Se livrer à l’étude de l’histoire du Canada et en particulier ce qui concerne Manitoba et les Territoires du Nord-Ouest et de poursuivre des recherches sur les anciens lieux historiques qui se rapportent aux premiers voyages d'exploration des découvreurs du pays."[147] In addition to the romanticized language surrounding "exploration" and "discovery," the Société was founded based on a search for the ruins of Fort Saint-Charles, where La Vérendrye buried the remains of his son Jean-Baptiste, Jesuit priest Father Jean-Pierre Aulneau, and 19 of their companions who were "massacred" by Dakota warriors. It would not be acknowledged until later that Jean-Baptiste was not mindlessly slaughtered but was killed in retaliation for La Vérendrye's role in the trafficking of Indigenous slaves and for selling weapons to Dakota's enemies.[148] The Dakota also suffered casualties in the fight, making the event less a "massacre" as the French-Canadians had originally recorded and more a battle (the Battle of Seven Oaks, for example, suffered similar misnaming for decades). While an argument could be made that the language used in the Société's constitution back in 1903 was simply a product of the time, it is important to acknowledge the colonial biases that make up the foundation of our heritage organizations, as they will often be reflected in their collections. This issue is not unique to the Centre du patrimoine, and their mandate has clearly evolved over the years to be more inclusive, but it must be said that the Franco-Manitoban community is not exempt from the problems inherent in any settler-colonial space.

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[146] Michelle Caswell, “Inventing New Archival Imaginaries: Theoretical Foundations for Identity-Based Community Archives,” in *Identity Palimpsests: Archiving Ethnicity in the U.S. and Canada* ed. Dominique Daniel and Amalia Levi (Sacramento, California: Litwin Books, 2014): 40.

To share a personal anecdote, when I was an undergraduate student at the Université de Saint-Boniface, I once attended a sketch comedy performance at the CCFM. There were both white and Black students in attendance, eager to participate in what we thought was a lighthearted community event. The performance, however, proceeded to showcase several insensitive (and frankly, racist) anti-Black jokes, which made the Black students either visibly uncomfortable or prompted them to leave altogether. I cannot imagine how alienated they felt, not even able to attend a comedy show without facing racial aggression. Oppression does not always come from outside a community. Therefore, essentialist categories help to organize change and cement community ties, for example, by integrating Black oral history into our memory institutions. Equally important as racialized folks being able to see themselves being represented in this way is non-racialized folks seeing them represented as well. Ultimately, perhaps it would be most apt to use language and location as the main qualifiers defining the community (Franco-Manitoban is the identifier, after all), while also acknowledging and applying ethnic archiving methodologies where required. We can identify nuance while also employing strategic essentialism in order to reach common goals and organize for the empowerment of those within our community who still have to contend with various forms of oppression, and to also fight the oppression that exists within the community as well. In the end, identity categories are not real. They are fictions conceived based on history, economics, politics and culture.[149] Caswell elaborates: "Through strategic essentialism, we can acknowledge both that identity categories are often socially constructed by the powerful in order to marginalize those who are perceived to fit within these categories and, at the same time, leverage those constructed categories to organize for common goals."[150] Sharing in certain identity categories—in this case, language and region—brings us together while also forcing us to confront that which makes us different. It is the responsibility of those with privilege to use it for the benefit of those who do not share in it.

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[147] "Chronologie de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface," Votre histoire, Centre du patrimoine, last accessed September 15th, 2024, https://shsb.mb.ca/societe-historique-de-saint-boniface-chronologie/.

[148] La foundation de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface," Votre histoire, Centre du patrimoine, last accessed September 15th, 2024, https://shsb.mb.ca/fondation-de-la-shsb/.

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[149] Caswell, "Inventing New Archival Imaginaries," 40.
[150] Caswell, "Inventing New Archival Imaginaries," 41.

Terry Cook writes on a concept called identity provenance; the idea that the records in a community archive are not simply records and resources, but that they are integrated into the identity of that community.[151] The Society of American Archivists defines traditional provenance as: "[A] fundamental principle of archives, referring to the individual, family, or organization that created or received the items in a collection."[152] In order to incorporate identity into our conceptualization of provenance, we must broaden our preconceived notions of who and what can create records. Organizations and family units are not the only groups of people who can create records. Although, as we have seen, the boundaries of a community are not as well-defined as those of a family or an organization, they still create and receive records which will find their way into archives.[153] Using community—particularly a community defined by potentially marginalized identities, such as race or sexuality—as provenance is not without its risks, however. If archivists fail to understand the nuances as well as the social, historical and cultural context of such a community, they risk their treatment of the records being based on "distorted, if not damaging, preconceptions of ethnic identities and community experiences."[154] In other words, if an archivist presented with the records of an ethnic community and their knowledge of that community is heavily based on stereotypes and misconceptions, the way that the records are processed is not going to accurately represent the community the way they wish to be represented in the archive. Participatory archiving is a promising solution to this.

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[151] Cook, "Evidence, memory, identity and community," 114.

[152] "Provenance," Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology, Society of American Archivists, accessed November 12, 2023, https://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/p/provenance.

[153] Joel Wurl, "Ethnicity as Provenance: In Search of Values and Principles for Documenting the Immigrant Experience," *Archival Issues* 29, no. 1 (2005): 67.

[154] Wurl, "Ethnicity as Provenance," 69.

Involving the community members themselves in the archival process ensures that they will have a say in the way their records are treated and avoid negative or stereotypical representation. This is an initiative which aims to get non-archivists involved in the archival process, whether by contributing to the archiving itself or having input on the archives' practices.[155] Community archives use some degree of participatory archiving by nature, given that they are founded and run by community members. The Centre du patrimoine, for example, is overseen by the Société historique de Saint-Boniface, a committee run by and for Franco-Manitobans. The community is invited to volunteer at the archives as well as make donations of their own to the collections. In employing participatory archival practices, we are opening the door to community archives and the people they represent. Archivists are not gatekeepers; we should not be standing in the way, but instead sharing space, allowing communities to be the keepers of their own collective memory and to shape their own history. While it requires archivists to relinquish no small amount of control over the collections, in doing so we are putting power back into the hands of people who have, in some cases, had it taken from them. Eveleigh cites Indigenous social justice as an example of this.[156]

This leads us to another key component in community archiving, that of collective memory. Jeannette Bastian writes: "The core archival mission of documenting society implies both a commitment and an obligation towards the inclusion of all modes and manners of recording within the archives because society documents itself in so many diverse ways."[157] For a long time, folklore was not considered a valid form of documentary heritage, so this is doubly important when examining folk culture within archives. Conceptualized in the early twentieth century by sociologist Maurice Halbwach, collective memory refers to the idea that an identity group, viewed as a whole by society at large, is perceived differently by each individual in that group based on their own unique backgrounds and experiences. Bastian elaborates that while a community "may always be more than the sum of its parts," it is every members' memory of the community itself which transcends the collective.[158]

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[155] Alexandra Eveleigh, "Participatory Archives," in *Currents of Archival Thinking*, ed. Heather MacNeil and Terry Eastwood (Santa Barbara: Libraries Unlimited, 2017), 299.

[156] Eveleigh, "Participatory Archives," 300.

[157] Jeannette Bastian, "Documenting Communities Through the Lens of Collective Memory," in *Identity Palimpsests: Archiving Ethnicity in the U.S. and Canada* ed. Dominique Daniel and Amalia Levi (Sacramento, California: Litwin Books, 2014): 16.

I mentioned how participatory archiving practices allow communities to shape their own history, and also discussed archives as a site of memory. However, history and memory are not mutually exclusive; an archive can both preserve history and keep memory. There is an important distinction between the two. On the conceptual difference between history and memory, Wurl explains: "In a "memory" construct of archives, the past is never really separate from what is active and immediate, and documentation, no matter its physical age, is always inextricably tethered to an ongoing process of collective remembering."[159] In other words, for many communities, the events of their past cannot be excised from their present experiences, because their present experiences are directly informed and affected by that past. History implies that it is something which happened and is now over. Memory is something which endures and does not have an "end" to it. If we were discussing the French language instead, history would be *passé composée*; the verb tense which denotes that something has begun and finished in a specific time before the moment you are speaking. Memory would be *imparfait*; the verb tense which denotes that something has begun in the past but has not yet ended. Imparfait is also used when discussing a habit, or something which transpires recurrently. This, too, is like the memory construct of archives, as we are viewing the records as representative of something which continues to impact the community in the present day.

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[158] Bastian, "Documenting Communities Through the Lens of Collective Memory," 16.
[159] Wurl, "Ethnicity as Provenance," 70.

Current archival memory frameworks are not necessarily well-suited to the preservation of folklore. Brien Brothman points out some inherent flaws in the traditional life cycle model of recordkeeping in his article "The Past that Archives Keep: Memory, History, and the Preservation of Archival Records." To briefly summarize, the life cycle model places records into three phases of "life": active, semi-active, and finally, inactive (archival).[160] Brothman points out that this has lent to an interesting interpretation of the term "cycle" within the archival profession, in that it is not truly a cycle at all. Traditionally, there is no point at which a record goes from the archival stage back to the active stage, as would be expected if the model was truly cyclical. Brothman observes:

> How can inactive—useless or dead—records continue to possess value? Why not call archival records dormant, like perennial flora that return to life periodically? And what about "permanent value?" Like the increasing inadequacy of Ptolemy's model of an earth-centered universe in the face of new observational data, the linear life cycle metaphor lacks the robustness necessary to accommodate postmodern, or postculturalist probing of the grounding notions of document, memory, history, and time.[161]

Applying this to the topic at hand, the life cycle model forces folklore records into a state of permanent dormancy, *passé composée*, where they allegedly continue to be of enduring value but are not actively serving a purpose. Folklore continues to be part of our cultural growth and evolution, so referring to folklore records as "inactive" does not accurately describe their enduring function, their *imparfait* nature. The Australian concept of a records continuum, wherein records are seen as serving multiple purposes at the same time, throughout time, gets closer, but again adheres to certain traditional notions that sometimes miss the mark. It still subscribes to the philosophy of linear time, ordering records based on past, present, and future.[162]

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[160] Brien Brothman, "The Past that Archives Keep: Memory, History, and the Preservation of Archival Records," *Archivaria* 51 (Spring 2001): 53.
[161] Brothman, "The Past that Archives Keep," 55.

As a solution, Brothman proposes a "helical" model, taking inspiration from certain medieval conceptions of birth, life and death. At its core, a helical recordkeeping model would embody the idea that a collection, fonds, or even a single record can represent multiple temporal states.[163] Via considerable philosophical analysis, Brothman points to (albeit Western/European) medieval belief in resurrection, or the continuing influence of the dead on the living, as the basis for his helix model. The intention is to prompt archivists to break out of the linear thinking which the life cycle model promotes and to challenge the ways in which we view history as being unidirectional, confined within the neat borders of beginning-middle-end. He explains: "The helix and the concept of record formation seek to loosen this grip, and to place before record-keepers other perspectives on these complexes of archival thought and practice."[164] It is certainly a more effective way of treating collective memory from a theoretical standpoint and helps to broaden our thinking when dealing with non-traditional resources.

To view the past as something which is continually influencing us, rather than something which begins and ends, is necessary when dealing with records of folklore and folk culture. The archival state of these records does not represent a "death," but a continuation, an afterlife. As useful as the helix model is as an intellectual exercise and critique of the limitations of existing frameworks, however, archives must still work within these bounds out of necessity. The Centre du patrimoine stated that their description standard was “RAD-ish.” Utilizing the power of discretion offered to archivists as per the Standard, they have done their best to fit their—largely cultural—collection into a framework that does not necessarily work for a large portion of it, but which allows the Centre to participate in initiatives such as MAIN which require (at least vague) adherence to RAD.

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[162] Brothman, "The Past that Archives Keep," 56.
[163] Brien Brothman, "Archives, Life Cycles, and Death Wishes: A Helical Model of Record Formation," *Archivaria* 61(Spring 2006): 242.
[164] Brothman, "Archives, Life Cycles, and Death Wishes," 259.

The study of collective memory hit its stride during the memory boom of the 1970s, becoming increasingly popular and well-respected in the field of social sciences.[165] Scholars from various disciplines within the humanities shifted their focus away from the macro narratives of the histories of nations and towards the micro narratives of underrepresented, marginalized, everyday people (history from below). This was done by reimagining what was considered academically empirical in terms of research. Evidence no longer needed to be written in text in order to be considered anything more than anecdotal. Oral testimony, artifacts, memorials, performances and celebrations—identified as tools of memory—helped to broaden academia’s perspective on the experiences of the communities they were studying.[166] Archives began to collect more non-traditional forms of memory retention, including ephemera and other non-documentary resources. To use an example of a francophone archive outside of Manitoba, the *Centre d’études acadiennes* in Moncton, New Brunswick, while trying to document the

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[165] Bastian, “Documenting Communities Through the Lens of Collective Memory,” 15-16.
[166] Bastian, “Documenting Communities Through the Lens of Collective Memory,” 18.

Acadian experience, collected books, journals newspapers, genealogical records, oral folklore, maps, paintings, portraits and photographs.[167]

Institutional archives were not exempt from the tidal wave of the memory boom either. Cook comments on this change in the overall collecting strategies of archives during the memory paradigm, stating: "Holdings of both state and private archives also broadened noticeable at this time from primarily written to text to include photographs, sound recordings, maps, architectural records, and moving images (film, television, animation), further emphasizing the cultural heritage and memory dimension of archives as institutions […]."[168] This then carried through to our current era of the community paradigm, changing not only archival collecting strategies but setting in motion an evolution in archival function as a whole. Shilton and Srinivasan expand on this idea in their article "Participatory Appraisal and Arrangement for Multicultural Archival Collections":

> Archival theory has a long history of understanding and achieving the preservation of the contextual value of records. The foundations of anglophone archival theory articulated by Jenkinson and Schellenberg stress the evidential value of records, and the importance of techniques to preserve context and therefore evidentiary value. Archivists continue to strive to preserve contextual and evidential value as they conceptualize and plan for retention of digital records in the changing archival environment of the 21st century. And, importantly, some archivists are beginning to reconceptualize the field's understanding of appraisal and tools of arrangement such as provenance and original order.[169]

Today, we can re-evaluate all of our traditional archival principles and place them within a community framework, employing participatory archival practices at all levels of the process in order to amplify the voices which need to be heard the most. These are our weapons against loss of language, culture, and identity.

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[167] Jacques Grimard, "FOCUS: French-Canadian Archives Outside Quebec—Moncton, Sudbury and Ottawa," *Archivaria* 0, no. 1 (1977), 198.
[168] Cook, "Evidence, memory, identity and community," 109.
[169] Shilton and Srinivasan, "Participatory Appraisal and Arrangement for Multicultural Archival Collections," 90.

Turning our attention back to the Centre du patrimoine's collection, we can see many of the concepts discussed in this chapter at play. To reiterate, I estimate that the folklore collection consists of approximately 3827 records, having used a number of related keyword searches to cast as wide a net as possible. Using the online database, I then sampled 700 records, 100 for each keyword, sorted by relevance so that I was using the records that were the most exemplary of that category. The idea is to provide an overview of what record types are most represented in the folklore collections, so the following numbers are an amalgamated total for all keywords.

Table 3: Media type sample, Centre du patrimoine

Record type	**Total**
Textual records	155
Audio records	137
Books/textbooks/manuals	237
Photographs	103
Illustrations/drawings/cartographic materials	28
Brochures	10
Film	2
Sheet music	14
Articles	4
Multimedia*	10

*Records that had more than one media type listed in the finding aid.

As we can see, while textual records and books still represent a majority of the collection, the number of audio recordings is not insignificant. It is also important to note that many of the textual records are transcriptions of interviews and stories provided by community elders, so they also fall into the category of oral history. For example, a book titled "Au temps de la prairie – L'histoire des Métis de l'Ouest canadien rancontée par Auguste Vermette, neveu de Louis Riel," which is a collection of stories told by Louis Riel's nephew and transcribed by the author, Marcien Ferland.[170] Or "Légendes du Nord-Ouest," a collection of folk legends compiled by a Catholic missionary which were also originally oral.[171]

What interested me in particular was the amount of sheet music included in the collections, even outside of the search category for songs. There were four records listed as sheet music within the first hundred finding aid results using the "folklore" keyword, for example. In Chapter 1, I discussed the significance of music and poetry in Franco-Manitoban folk culture and oral tradition, and the Centre du patrimoine's holdings reflect this. There was a significant number of audio recordings that were music related as well. Returning to our early example of Pierre Falcon's *Chanson de la Grenouillère,* the Centre has nine versions of the song in its collection, in both audio and textual formats.

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[170] Au temps de la prairie—l'histoire des Métis de l'Ouest canadie racontée par Auguste Vermette, neveu de Louis Riel, 2000, 1206, Collection générale de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface, Centre du patrimoine, Winnipeg, Manitoba. https://archivesshsb.mb.ca/link/catalogue1206

[171] Légendes du Nord-Ouest, 1925, 06969, Collection générale de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface, Centre du patrimoine, Winnipeg, Manitoba. https://archivesshsb.mb.ca/link/catalogue3067

This examination of the Centre du patrimoine's folklore collection strengthens the idea that Franco-Manitoban folklore leans towards being more oral in nature, however, it represents what Patricia Galloway refers to as "mixed-media textuality" and therefore presents unique challenges. Many archives struggle to capture oral history sources but have no problem preserving written materials. She elaborates: "The emergence of indigenous protocols for archives and libraries around the world suggests that archival participation in the preservation of orally transmitted materials will be complicated unless such archival participation, if judged to be warranted, is undertaken by insider archival institutions."[172] Thankfully, the Centre du patrimoine is in a good position to undertake such oral history preservation, being an insider archival institution to the community, and Galloway has several recommendations on how they could proceed with building their oral history collections. For example, the freeze-dried tradition, wherein the archives conduct their own oral history project, or a postcustodial approach, wherein the archivists act as advisors to the record creators in carrying out their own records preservation initiatives.[173]

The Centre is consistently making efforts towards improving their oral history preservation. The Letourneau fonds is once again an excellent example. Not only was it a huge undertaking to implement OHMS (going so far as to have Doug Boyd run an in-person workshop with staff and volunteers), but they also had to modify the user interface of their finding aid in order to directly integrate the audio recordings. Their digital preservation program is relatively new, and they have specific digital preservation and digitization policies in the final stages of development. Perhaps most importantly, they are working on providing bilingual descriptions for records and content about Indigenous peoples, and as part of this initiative have launched a community tagging project in order to accurately tag Indigenous-related database entries. The bilingual tags will also improve accessibility for Franco-Manitoban families who no longer speak French but would still like to use the archives to connect to their roots.[174] There are many directions they could go in regard to their folklore collection in the future, but it heartens me to know that they are being mindful, responsible stewards of my community's heritage and folk culture. I have no doubt that the Franco-Manitoban community will enjoy increased accessibility and participation in the archival process in the years to come.

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[172] Patricia Galloway, "Oral tradition in living cultures: the role of archives in the preservation of memory," in *Community Archives: The Shaping of Memory*, ed. Jeannette Bastian and Ben Alexander (London: Facet Publishing, 2009), 77.
[173] Galloway, "Oral tradition in living cultures," 78.

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[174] Centre du patrimoine, email communication with author, June 19th, 2024.

Chapter Three: Folklore in the Digital Age

As mediums of memory preservation change, as do those of folklore preservation and creation. Traditional means of maintaining and disseminating folklore persist, but recent decades have brought with them a new forum for sharing folk culture: the internet. Any space where people gather and interact can be a hub for cultural evolution, even a digital one. According to a study conducted by Statista, an online platform specializing in data collection and statistics, there are 5.35 billion internet users worldwide as of January 2024. Of those, 5.04 billion use social media.[175] With a global majority of the population congregating in the digital sphere, folklore was bound to make the transition online as well. People bring their stories with them, after all. However, the internet is not only acting as a repository for existing folklore. It is also seeing the creation of its own unique culture and, with it, its own folk culture.

Picture the following scenario: the year is 2004, and you are checking your emails. A friend has forwarded a chain letter to you. It contains the story of a girl named Cassie and her friend who, just like you, received a scary chain letter which they laughed off as fake. That night, a murderer sneaks into the house and kills Cassie's friend. Cassie desperately tries to forward the chain letter in order to save herself, but it is too late. And now that you have read this email, it is too late for you too, unless you forward it to five other people immediately. If you do not, you will meet a similar fate to Cassie and her friend. This is ridiculous, you think. There is just no way that an email could curse you, and the story is so obviously fake. But human beings are superstitious by nature; we have been sharing ghost stories for millennia. What would the harm be in forwarding it on? If nothing else, you and the friend who sent it to you can laugh about it the next time you see them. So, you follow the instructions, and the legend of Cassie lives on. Over time, addendums are added to the letter. Stories of other unfortunate people who did not believe the tale and met grisly fates as a result. The story changes and evolves. You have participated in the perpetuation of born-digital folklore.

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[175] "Digital Population Worldwide," Demographics & Use, Statista, last updated January 31st, 2024, https://www.statista.com/statistics/617136/digital-population-worldwide.

The chain letter described above is real and has been circulating for at least twenty years now. Even if it is not being actively shared anymore, it has been archived in multiple blogs and wikis, solidifying its place in internet folk history.[176] Chain letters are an interesting case study in the way more traditional means of folklore transmission evolve and translate themselves with current times. They have been around in their current iteration since at least the 19th century, but folklorist Daniel W. VanArsdale goes far back enough to draw a link between modern chain letters and apocryphal "letters from heaven" that have been circulating around the Christian world for centuries longer.[177] VanArsdale summarizes their cultural impact thusly:

> By testing hundreds of thousands of variations, chain letters have discovered and exploited our secret fantasies and vulnerabilities. Chain letters have evolved free to make any promise, free to issue any threat, and free from institutional control. […] Hope and fear, truth and error, charity and greed, anything that increases replication becomes part of the tradition.[178]

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[176] "10 Creepy Chain Letters," The Creepy Corner, Wordpress, accessed April 15th, 2024, https://thecreepycornercom.wordpress.com/2019/04/23/10-creepy-chain-letters/ .

[177] Daniel W. VanArsdale, "Chain Letter Evolution," last modified October 1st, 2016, https://carryiton.net/chain-letter/evolution.html#s1-3sources .

[178] VanArsdale, "Chain Letter Evolution."

VanArsdale has curated an impressive online archival database (dubbed “The Paper Chain Letter Archive”) of over 900 physical chain letters spanning several centuries and in multiple languages. Each letter is readable via clickable HTML link, accompanied by a one-line description of the letter. The creator also provides a detailed outline of his file naming system, wherein the letters are identified by category (a = advocacy, c = charity, l = luck, etc.) followed by the language of the letter (d = Dutch, e = English, f = French, etc.), the earliest known date of the letter, a source designator and finally the specification of the dissemination of the letter (s = send, q = copy quota, d = deadline, etc.). It is a somewhat clunky naming system, but for an independently operated online database it is notably well-organized.

By reading through some of the documents in the Paper Chain Letter Archive, it is obvious how this medium of folklore dissemination easily made the jump online. One chain letter, attributed to an anonymous source in Switzerland in 1928 and written originally in French, asks the reader to make nine copies of the letter and send them out within 24 hours of receiving it, lest bad luck (*malheur*) befall them. It cites one Monsieur Privois, who now finds himself in possession of a large fortune which he attributes to his participation in the continuation of the chain. On the other hand, it tells of a Monsieur Monthey, who thought it was a joke and nine days later found his home “ruined”.[179] While not as extreme as the Cassie story, all of the hallmarks of a classic chain letter are present; a quota of people to send the letter to, a time limit, and the promise of either reward or punishment depending on whether or not the recipient follows the instructions. Being in email format simply makes fulfilling the quota much easier, being a matter of a few clicks versus having to make nine physical copies and post them. It is no wonder that the tradition of chain letters thrived early on in the digital age.

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[179] “lf1928a_glf_q9,” The Paper Chain Letter Archive, last accessed April 16th, 2024, https://carryiton.net/chain-letter/archive/french/lf1928a_glf_q9.htm .

All of this is to illustrate that folk culture and practices can not only exist online, but flourish and grow. An urban legend that would have once only reached a few hundred people can now be read by thousands—delivered straight into your inbox. The same could be said for archiving. Once reserved for archives, museums and other brick-and-mortar heritage institutions, anyone can now participate in the act of archiving in some capacity. Archival selection—the process of identifying records or content for preservation—can be easily crowdsourced, inviting anyone who shares in a particular interest to help determine what is of value. Where traditional archives and systems of archival description may fail to accurately capture folklore, the internet provides the flexibility required to do so. Abigail De Kosnik, associate professor of New Media at UC Berkeley, uses the term "rogue archives" to describe these digital sites of memory preservation. She writes: "What I call *rogue archives* are defined by: constant (24/7) access availability; zero barriers to entry for all who can connect to the Internet; content that can be streamed or downloaded in full, with no required payment, and no regard for copyright restrictions […]; and content that has never been, and would likely never be, contained in a traditional memory institution."[180] Now, online folklore repositories do not fit within these parameters exactly. Folklore does exist in traditional memory institutions, however, as we saw in the previous chapter, there are significant challenges to this existence. And not all folklore is made equal; there are modern folk tales that would not exist without the internet and *would* therefore fit within De Kosnik's definition of rogue archives.

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[180] Abigail De Kosnik, *Rogue Archives: Digital Cultural Memory and Media Fandom* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2016), 2.

There is perhaps no better example of intentionally created born-digital folklore than Slender Man. On June 10th, 2009, user Victor Surge (screen name of Eric Knudsen) posted two images on the Something Awful forum in a thread prompting users to create their best creepy, paranormal images. Users took seemingly normal photographs and added their own ghostly elements to them, accompanied by a brief, fabricated witness account of the entity in the photo. Within a matter of days, Slender Man's mythos only solidified, securing his place in internet culture. Participants in the thread immediately latched on to the abnormally tall, faceless being depicted in Knudsen's photos, building upon the vague few lines of text originally included with the pictures by adding their own fictional eyewitness accounts of Slender Man.[181] Forum members expanded on Slender Man's defining features and *modus operandi,* which varies depending on the author and interpretation. Almost all versions of the legend involve the monster targeting children in particular, although adults are not exempt. In some tales, Slender Man impales his victims on trees, in some he removes their organs, and in others he simply whisks them away, never to be seen again.

This process of legend-telling is referred to as "ostension," a term coined by Hungarian folklorists Linda Dègh and Andrew Vázsonyi to describe real-life occurrences of events described in legends[182]. In its simplest form, ostension is when an event, encounter, situation—reality itself—is the message of the tale, without any kind of signification. It speaks to presentation versus representation.[183] Compared to the legend of the *loup-garou* mentioned in Chapter 1, wherein the werewolf represents cultural fears such as starvation, legends evolved via ostension only represent themselves; the act of bearing witness to the legend is all there is. Tolbert elaborates:

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[181] Jeffrey A. Tolbert, "The Sort of Story That Has You Covering Your Mirrors," in *Slender Man is Coming: Creepypasta and Contemporary Legends on the Internet,* ed. Trevor J. Blank and Lynne S. McNeill (Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2018), 30.

[182] Andrew Peck, "The Cowl of Cthulu: Ostentive Practice in the Digital Age," in *Slender Man is Coming: Creepypasta and Contemporary Legends on the Internet,* ed. Trevor J. Blank and Lynne S. McNeill (Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2018), 53-54.

> In turn, the form of ostension most studied by folklorists has been the process of legend tripping, the self-conscious appropriation and enactment of existing legend texts. Legend tripping is well represented in contemporary Internet culture, and the Slender Man Mythos is no exception; however, rather than taking an existing legend and acting it out through legend tripping, the countless individuals who have contributed to the Slender Man Mythos have taken a wide array of disparate raw materials—often created from scratch and usually of a purportedly experiential nature (e.g. stories of encounters with supernatural beings)—and combined them to form a new narrative tradition that resembles the existing, familiar legend genre.[184]

Tolbert goes on to specify that unlike traditional legends wherein it is said that a ghost might haunt a house, and therefore people may have direct experiences with the ghost by visiting the house (the visitation to the house constituting an ostensive action), Slender Man does not physically exist. Users of the Something Awful forums invented experiences to fuel the myth, and everyone was aware that the alleged witness accounts were fiction. In this way, the legend of Slender Man was reverse-engineered, or represents *reverse-ostension*. The legend was created from fictional experiences/interactions with the monster, rather than the legend providing the impetus for the experiences.[185] It is an effort to arrive back at a legend by cobbling together disparate narratives.

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[183] Linda Dègh and Andrew Vázsonyi, "Does the Word "Dog" Bite? Ostensive Action: A Means of Legend-Telling," *Journal of Folklore Research* 20, no. 1 (May 1983), 6.

[184] Tolbert, "The Sort of Story That Has You Covering Your Mirrors," 31.

[185] Tolbert, "The Sort of Story That Has You Covering Your Mirrors," 31.

The internet is the only thing that could have enabled Slender Man to exist the way he does today. The ability to find communities of like-minded people who are all interested and willing to not only add on the to legend, but actively participate in the dissemination of it, was made possible by a perfect storm of circumstances, on a stage that could only exist in cyberspace. While there was a brief point in time where the Slender Man tale was completely self-conscious—as in, everyone aware of it was also aware of its fictionality—it eventually evolved in much the same way that a tradition folktale would. As time went on, and its origins got further buried in the annals of internet history, the canon created by those initial participants in the Something Awful forums attained a level of believability which made it indistinguishable from any other piece of folklore. We only have such a detailed history of this particular tale due to many instances of informal, perhaps even unwitting, internet archiving.

Born-digital folklore is no more or less valid than so-called “traditional” folklore. In fact, it can be argued that there were many stages between traditional and born-digital that can be examined in order to observe how folklore creation changes with the time and the ways in which it interacts with contemporary popular media and means of communication. In my first chapter, I discussed the oral nature of Franco-Manitoban folklore and why so little of it exists in any written form. For the sake of this argument, and acknowledging that it is somewhat of a generalization, I will place oral tradition at the start of this theoretical folkloric timeline as being the oldest and most “organic” form of folklore creation and dissemination. Then there are written stories, which have the ability to evolve much in the same way that the Slender Man mythos did wherein an acknowledged fictional story takes on a life of its own. These legends do not exist, but at a certain point become indistinguishable from those that do.

Dègh and Vázsonyi use Bram Stoker's *Dracula* as an example of this. Perhaps one of the most famous pop-culture monsters of all time, Dracula has no real folklore. That which he does possess is either heavily based on elements of Stoker's novel or represents a tenuous historical link to a Transylvanian count that may or may not have been suspected to be a vampire.[186] Nevertheless, the general public remains convinced of a much deeper Dracula lore than there truly is due to the pervasiveness and believability of the legend. This is known as a *fictitious legend*.[187] Dracula is representative of a time when novels and serials were a popular means of storytelling. Perhaps not quite as globally ubiquitous as the internet, but popular, nonetheless.

The radio era had Orson Welles' *War of the Worlds*, which caused enough panic and uproar when it aired on October 30th, 1938, that Welles had to hold a press conference the following day to reassure listeners that the story was fiction and that he had not meant to purposefully deceive anyone. While many doubted his claims, archival copies of the script drafts and later accounts of those involved with the broadcast prove that they all believed the story "too silly and improbable to be taken seriously,"[188] thus gravely underestimating the power of good storytelling.

Film has many examples of stories that claim to be "based on a true story" but are completely fictional in reality. One of the most infamous is Daniel Myrick and Eduardo

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[186] Dègh and Vázsonyi, "Does the Word "Dog" Bite? Ostensive Action: A Means of Legend-Telling," 25.

[187] Dègh and Vázsonyi, "Does the Word "Dog" Bite? Ostensive Action: A Means of Legend-Telling," 25.

[188] A. Brad Schwartz, "The Infamous 'War of the Worlds' Radio Broadcast Was a Magnificent Fluke," *Smithsonian Magazine*, May 6th, 2015, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/infamous-war-worlds-radio-broadcast-was-magnificent-fluke-180955180/

Sanchez' 1999 found footage horror movie, *The Blair Witch Project*. A staple of the genre, the film claims to be footage shot by three student filmmakers in 1994 investigating a local legend near the town of Burkittsville, Maryland. The students disappear, leaving only their unedited documentary behind, which is later "found" by the directors and released as the very movie the audience is watching. Unlike *War of the Worlds,* Myrick and Sanchez intentionally tried to keep up the guise that *The Blair Witch Project* was real, going so far as to create an accompanying website to the film which doubled down on its authenticity.[189] This blend of traditional media and immersive online marketing was convincing enough that fans of the movie flocked to Burkittsville either in hopes of having an encounter with the Blair Witch herself or to search for the missing students. Ultimately, the town hall's answering machine had to be changed to immediately make callers aware that the Blair Witch was piece of fiction, as the sheriff's office was being inundated with phone calls.[190] Despite this denunciation of the purported legend, belief in the story lingers to this day.

What we are seeing now, with fictitious legends such as Slender Man being created on online forums and social media platforms, are simply the most recent iteration of a long and enduring evolution in folklore creation. In fact, belief in the Slender Man legend has already had real-world consequences, much the same as the previous examples did. In May 2014, two 12-year-old girls lured their classmate into a wooded area in a park in Waukesha, Wisconsin, and proceeded to stab her 19 times. The victim survived, and the girls went on to tell investigators that the attempted murder was in order to please Slender Man, who they believed to be real.[191] With equally real effects on society as other means of legend creation, Internet-born folklore should therefore be treated with the same validity and consideration as any other myth and deserves to be documented and archived as such.

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[189] Jamie Baron, *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History* (London: Routledge, 2013), 48.
[190] Baron, *The Archive Effect*, 48.

Having discussed the ways people collaborate online to create folklore, it is equally important to examine how it is maintained, that is, archived. Digital infrastructures allow for the entire Internet to act as gigantic media database.[192] Innumerable wikis exist online for almost any form of media imaginable, from television shows to movies to, yes, folklore. If you have an interest, no matter how obscure it may be in the real world, there is very likely at least a handful of people online who share that interest and have dedicated hours upon hours to creating and maintaining a wiki page for it. Enthusiasts do not need in-depth knowledge of coding or database creation in order to carve out a spot in cyberspace for their passion, because many of these infrastructures are open-source and free for anyone to use. Fandom.com is a site which allows users to create a wiki for any popular (or unpopular) media they want. Founded in 2004 under the name "Wikicities" by Wikipedia creator Jimmy Wales and British web entrepreneur Angela Beesley Starling, Fandom was intended to fill a gap in existing online reference sources. After recognizing that fans did not have a centralized database to learn about their favourite fictional characters, Wales and Starling built a new website using existing Wikipedia technology that would allow the fans themselves to create the content they wanted to see. Fandom's *About* page states: "If Wikipedia is the "encyclopedia," then Fandom is the rest of the library—a deep repository of information about every fictional universe."[193] Creating a wiki is simple and free to all users.

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[191] Jessica Maddox, "Of Internet born: idolatry, the Slender Man meme, and feminization of digital spaces," *Feminist Media Studies* 18, no. 2 (2018), 235.

[192] De Kosnik, *Rogue Archives,* 2. Of note here is that information's presence in a "database," i.e. the simple fact of being online, does not automatically mean it will be preserved in perpetuity. Preservation is a key archival function.

Allowing users open access to the back end of online database creation while also acting as the host for said database is a unique characteristic of online wiki and blogging platforms. WordPress, a free-to-use blogging site, gives users the ability to create and curate their own blog without the barrier of requiring previous knowledge in web development. Since 2003, founders Mike Little and Matt Mullenweg have made it their mission to democratize publishing by making their open-source web platform accessible to as many people as possible.[194] Users can either utilize the software available on WordPress.org and take it to the web hosting service of their choice, or they can host it directly on WordPress.com. French-Canadian folklore has found a sturdy foothold online using WordPress. Popular blog *Courir le loup-garou* is a platform run by two practitioners of *la sorcellerie traditionelle du Canada français* (French Canadian Traditional Witchcraft) and is dedicated to "rediscovering and reviving French Canadian folklore, traditional beliefs, remedies and superstitions, that is to say all things which fall under the umbrella of French-Canadian Traditional Witchcraft."[195] The blog's content is a mixture of archival sources, media and live testimony. Posts range from straightforward accounts of popular *contes*, such as *La petite Capuche-bleu* and *Les quatre Vents*, to explorations of common motifs in French-Canadian folklore such as *le chien noir* (the black dog) and *le Diable bâtisseur d'église* (the Devil built that church), to tips and tricks relating to folk medicine and remedies.[196] It is a well-organized catalogue of cultural importance, and the bilingual formatting of each post allows for anyone, even those who may be disconnected from their French-Canadian heritage or who are simply interested in the topic, to access this information and connect with the culture. Were it not for pre-existing, accessible digital infrastructure such as WordPress, resources like *Courir le loup garou* may not exist.

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[193] "Fandom's Foundations," About Us, Fandom, last accessed May1st, 2024, https://about.fandom.com/about
[194] "Our Story," About, WordPress, last accessed May 1st, 2024, https://wordpress.org/about/
[195] "À propos," Courir le loup garou, accessed May 2nd, 2024, https://courirleloupgarou.org/a-propos/
[196] "Home," Courir le loup garou, accessed May 2nd, 2024, https://courirleloupgarou.org/

Platforms such as Fandom and WordPress place the ability to determine historical value squarely in the hands of everyday people, as opposed to being limited to a very select number of archives professionals. Online spaces such as this allow anyone to document that which they and their peers deem important, but which may not be accurately captured (or captured at all) in traditional archives. Digital archives upend traditional notions of archives as purely "professional" spaces, where trained archivists carefully organize and preserve documents for posterity.[197] De Kosnik further explains: "Rogue archives reject what Raymond Williams called "the selective tradition" of culture—the custom by which a "minority" of experts chooses, from all cultural documents, the percentage that are put safely into repositories, and the even smaller fraction that comprise the cultural canon […]."[198] As mentioned previously, however, selection is only part of the archival process, and does not necessarily mean that the chosen document(s) will be preserved long-term. Wikis and blogs may be evidence of that which their participants see having documentary value but will not have any sort of permanence unless specific measures are taken to preserve their contents.

Rogue archives reject so much of traditional archiving, in fact, that they blur the very definition of an archive. The whole Internet cannot be an archive, there must be some defining feature. Archives have a definition and a function, and to be considered one, those functions must be represented. This question has been a topic of much debate over the years. De Kosnik, for example, leans into the vast multiplicity of digital archives as the bastions of a “proliferation tradition” (as opposed to the aforementioned selective tradition), drawing a parallel between this and Foucault’s conceptualization of the seventeenth-century mode of archiving wherein museums and libraries were more representative of individual choice.[199] While she admits that online archives do not have the longevity that a traditional archive would, they have given rise to what she identifies as three distinct digital archiving styles: universal digital archives, community digital archives and alternative digital archives.[200]

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[197] Baron, *The Archive Effect*, 139.
[198] De Kosnik, *Rogue Archives*, 73.

Baron, on the other hand, seems to exercise more caution when designating an online repository an archive. He acknowledges that theorists have struggled to identify when a collection of data can be classified as an archive: some do not view “archive” as being synonymous with “database,” while others acknowledge continuity and overlap between the two.[201] The question of original order is also raised, as databases and search engines allow users to choose how the documents are organized—by most recent, most popular, etc.—thus rendering any sort of original context indecipherable.[202] There is also the question of long-term preservation. As one of the main archival functions, archivists are eternally concerned with preserving records for future generations, a task which becomes difficult with Internet-born information.

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[199] De Kosnik, *Rogue Archives*, 76.
[200] De Kosnik, *Rogue Archives*, 77-79.
[201] Baron, *The Archive Effect*, 140.
[202] Baron, *The Archive Effect*, 141.

Considering the Internet's ever-changing nature, it is unlikely that this debate will resolve in the near future. What is clear is that there are plenty of passionate amateur archivists out there dedicating themselves to making their interests and passions accessible so that they may be shared with others, whether they realize they are partaking in archiving or not. It is the natural progression of what Adrian Cunningham calls "the archiving impulse and imperative." He elaborates: "While culture is contestable and ever-evolving, human beings nevertheless crave that their culture and its achievements endure across generations. This cultural persistence is made possible through the preservation of stories, both orally and in writing and through dance, rituals, art, music, and performance."[203] Cunningham goes on to examine how various thinkers and archival theorists have tackled the so-called "digital disruption" and the ways in which it both shakes foundational theories and broadens our horizons. Citing German media theorist Wolfgang Ernst, he describes traditional notions of archives as "an anachronistic and hindering metaphor," and how archives must find a new narrative in the face of our rapidly evolving digital future.[204]

It is this flexibility that makes digital archives uniquely suited to capturing information that is not well-represented in traditional archives for one reason or another, such is the case with folklore. Changes have already been made in recent decades to address the evolving archival landscape. Jane Zhang's study, "Archival Representation in the Digital Age," aggregates some of them as follows:

> Peter Scott abandoned the record group based on a single provenance "as the primary category of classification" and used "the record series as an independent element not bound to the administrative context." Chris Hurley expanded the concept into "parallel

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[203] Adrian Cunningham, "Archives as a Place," in *Currents of Archival Thinking*, ed. Heather MacNeil and Terry Eastwood (Santa Barbara: Libraries Unlimited, 2017), 55-56.

[204] Cunningham, "Archives as a Place," 74.

> provenance." Terry Cook adopted a conceptual approach so that an archival fonds is "not primarily a physical thing anymore" but "a multiple and dynamic series of interconnected relationships between records and their context." Laura Miller argued that record creation activities should not be confined to space and time. Peter Horsman called for a return to the basic meaning of "record group"— "as a custodial construct, nothing less and little more […].""[205]

The complex nature of record creation in the digital age has been on archival theorists' radars for quite some time now. Expanding our existing theoretical borders does not spell the end of the archival profession, but a shift towards community, towards participation, towards democratization. The archivist will always have a place; it is the scenery that will change.

Having explored the presence of folklore online in a more general sense, I would like circle back to Franco-Manitoban folklore specifically and the places where it exists on the Internet outside of traditional archival databases. The modern adage, "If you have a question, someone on Reddit has already asked it," rings true here. Subreddit r/Winnipeg has a revolving door of users periodically posting questions about popular local hauntings, and French communities feature frequently. One of the most common is Notre-Dame des Prairies, a Trappist monastery and provincial park in St. Norbert, Manitoba. Built in 1903-1904 and originally inhabited by monks from Bellefontaine, France, it has since fallen to ruin due to time and a fire in 1983, but locals have a myriad of ghost stories connected to the site.[206] User Some-Injury in a thread posted on March 14th, 2020, recounts: "Very creepy and eerie at nighttime. Pulled up once in the parking lot and saw a silhouette walking around at like 3am so got spooked and drove off."[207] User Candycayne84 shares: "I swear there's a body buried in the brick on the left side towards the end. Feel it out."[208] Youtube channel "Paranormies" chronicles the paranormal investigations of two Winnipeg locals who travel the province in an attempt to document video evidence of Manitoba's most notorious ghosts. Their catalogue includes a video featuring another Franco-Manitoban haunting; the Saint-Boniface Museum, formerly the Grey Nuns Convent.[209] Folklore podcast "The Frightful Howls You May Hear" has featured French-Canadian folklore and *sorcellerie* topics in the past, most recently in an episode co-hosted by Mahigan Saint-Pierre, self-declared practitioner of French-Canadian traditional witchcraft and influencer. In this episode they touch on many myths and legends that are ubiquitous across French-Canada, including the *loup-garou* and the common motif of haunted churches.[210] These are only a few examples to demonstrate the spaces Franco-Manitoban folklore inhabits online, from social media to Youtube to Spotify, and there are certainly others out there in cyberspace.

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[205] Jane Zhang, "Archival Representation in the Digital Age," *Journal of Archival Organization* 10, no.1 (2012), 50

[206] "Historic Sites of Manitoba: Trappist Monastery Ruins and Guesthouse (100 Ruines du Monastere, Winnipeg)," Manitoba Historical Society Archives, accessed May 4th, 2024, https://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/sites/trappistmonastery.shtml

With so much valuable cultural memory stored online, concerns surrounding the permanency of born-digital content are not unfounded. This was briefly touched on earlier in this chapter, but the Internet is not without resources in place to prevent information loss. The Internet Archive is a non-profit organization founded in 1996 after recognizing a need to preserve web content in the same way that other ephemeral forms of media, such as newspapers, were being saved. Over 866 billion web pages covering a span of 28 years are available for viewing via the Wayback Machine, and the Archive-It program engages over 1,200 libraries, universities, and other institutions as partners in order to help identify important web content. Other projects include Open Library, a virtual library where modern books can be borrowed and any book published prior to 1928 can be fully downloaded, and the TV News Archive, a collection of U.S. television broadcasts dating back to 2001.[211]

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[207] u/Some-Injury, "St. Norbert Monastery," *Reddit*, March 14th, 2020, https://www.reddit.com/r/Winnipeg/comments/fi9f11/comment/fkghhn8/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=web3x&utm_name=web3xcss&utm_term=1&utm_content=share_button

[208] u/Canndycayne84, "St. norbert monestary," *Reddit*, February 21st, 2024, https://www.reddit.com/r/Winnipeg/comments/1awxeyg/comment/krpfqpy/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=web3x&utm_name=web3xcss&utm_term=1&utm_content=share_button

[209] Paranormies, "REAL Footage Of A GHOST Named Mama (WARNING SCARY)," uploaded December 10th, 2023, Youtube, https://youtu.be/njkGt-RgA7o?si=7gg-D9g64fBVEfA0

[210] "French-Canadian Folkore with Mahigan Saint-Pierre," The Frightful Howls You May Hear (podcast), December 24th, 2023, https://open.spotify.com/episode/1qKlHtu8d7YKgTi5z889wG?si=owzGHEtzSTyQgaxz1-MnSg

The Internet Archive seems to have dodged many of the major pitfalls of crowdsourced digital archiving projects, which Eveleigh identifies as an issue of sustainability. Other early participatory archival initiatives have already disappeared from the Internet, mainly due to a lack of continued interest. Significant time commitment and high barrier of entry (that is, pre-existing archival knowledge) are major factors that contribute towards volunteer attrition or, as is the case with most Internet users, non-participation. Online communities all vaguely adhere to the 90-9-1 principle, wherein 90% of users are lurkers (observation without interaction), 9% are occasional contributors, and 1% support a majority of site activity.[212] The Internet Archive likely avoids these problems for several reasons. First, based on the statistics of Internet usage previously cited (some 5 billion active users), there is a constant flow of potential volunteers. Second is the universal nature of the Internet Archive's mission, which unites volunteers through the common goal of comprehensiveness.[213] Contributors do not need to share a niche interest like they do with fan wikis; they need only be motivated by the broad, simple goal of preserving *everything* (or, at least, as much as humanly possible). Third, the organization has expanded to the point of resembling a more traditional heritage organization, employing over 90 permanent staff in addition to their volunteer contingent.[214] Add in Archive-It's network of partner institutions, and it is no wonder that the project has seen such success. With the right combination of accessibility and community, the future of digital cultural memory preservation looks bright.

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[211] "About the Internet Archive," About, The Internet Archive, last accessed May 4th, 2024, https://archive.org/about.
[212] Eveleigh, "Participatory Archives," 312.
[213] De Kosnik, *Rogue Archives*, 78.

To avoid being naively optimistic about the state of digital folklore preservation, however, there are still challenges. Researching the online presence of Franco-Manitoban folklore was difficult due to the Anglo-centric nature of search engines and databases, including the Internet Archive. French is not even in the top four most-used languages online. A group of researchers from Old Dominion University conducted a study on the archival rate of four languages (Arabic, English, Danish and Korean) on the Internet. They found that English-language websites were archived at a rate of 72.04%, followed by Arabic at 53.36%, Danish at 35.89% and finally Korean at 32.81%. Denmark has a private web archive which, if made public, would greatly increase this percentage, but as it stands there is a significant need for efforts to be made towards preserving non-English web sources.[215] Another inherent flaw in the searchability of Franco-Manitoban folklore online is that search engines and the Internet Archive can only bring up results from the "surface web." They are not capable of reaching into social media silos—the content of social media sites themselves—in order to produce results from specific posts. Researchers have to do that legwork themselves, and due to the scattered nature of online folklore, this is an extremely time-consuming task. Folklore exists on Youtube, on Spotify, on Reddit, on Wordpress. Each of these sites has to be searched individually for results. Couple that with the strong English bias on search engines and archives, and there is a notable hurdle in regard to accessibility.

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[214] "Jobs," The Internet Archive, last accessed July 2nd, 2024, https://archive.org/about/jobs.php.

[215] Lulwah M. Alkwai, Michael L. Nelson, and Michele C. Weigle, "Comparing the Archival Rate of Arabic, English, Danish, and Korean Language Web Pages," *ACM Transactions on Information Systems* 36, no. 1 (June 2017), 31.

Language is not the only issue with search technology that limits the preservation capacity of organizations like the Internet Archive. Most search engines comprise of three components: a crawler, an index, and searching software. The crawler "harvests" webpages by following hyperlinks and compiling the pages into a list, which it then identifies as indexed or not. This is where the problem lies. Many websites are created and run by people who do not have an in-depth knowledge of internet infrastructure, so the crawler can only harvest very basic details from their metadata. Each search engine has a different means of "ranking" websites to determine what a search produces and in what order the results are presented, but they all lack precision and recall.[216] This is why users are oftentimes presented with search results that do not even contain the keywords of the search. Relevant content may exist, but because it is not indexed and was therefore not able to be harvested, it was not presented. Social media silos also present a challenge here, as any web content that cannot be accessed directly by the crawler (e.g. password protected websites) will not be indexed. Thankfully, there are solutions which, if implemented, may help with searchability. Similarly to descriptive standards in archives, metadata standards can help manage digital resources in order to narrow the gap between indexed and not-indexed web content. In a perfect world, every developer would use the same standard, but this is an unreasonable solution, as different websites have different needs. Deegan and Tanner use language as an analogy: dialectical variation is acceptable, but linguistic deviation is not.[217] There have also been collaborative initiatives wherein partners come together to share metadata and develop tools to aid in resource discovery. Standardization, collaboration, communication and documentation will pave the way towards a more searchable future.[218]

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[216] Marilyn Deegan and Simon Tanner, *Digital Futures: Strategies for the Information Age* (London: Facet Publishing, 2013), 110.

Folklorists are generally split on whether or not the Internet will be a hindrance or a boon to the study long-term. In the same way that radio and telephone changed folklore transmission, the Internet has done this and then some. The definition of what constitutes a folk practice has shifted, leaving scholars wondering whether participation on Youtube, Facebook or Reddit fits that definition. Simon J. Bronner observes: “The basis of the claim for the Internet taking on folkloric qualities is the medium’s interactive, instrumental quality; that differentiates it from television and radio, which divides people between broadcasters and listeners or viewers.”[219] The Internet has created community in a way that no other technology has, and yet, it remains fundamentally flawed. Its longevity is forever in question. Not only in a Y2K, worldwide technological collapse sense. Technology is constantly contending with obsolescence, not to mention the environmental effects that things like large-scale server storage and Artificial Intelligence. Amidst the pessimism, however, folklorist Alan Dundes observed that folklore is alive and well thanks to the Internet, not in spite of it.[220] While challenges abound, tradition will always evolve and persist, and with it, so will folklore.

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[217] Deegan and Tanner, *Digital Futures*, 134.

[218] Deegan and Tanner, *Digital Futures*, 135.

[219] Simon J. Bronner, “Digitizing and Virtualizing Folklore,” in *Folklore and the Internet: Vernacular Expression in a Digital World*, ed. Trevor J. Blank (Denver: University of Colorado Press, 2009), 24-25.

[220] Trevor J. Blank, “Toward a Conceptual Framework for the Study of Folklore and the Internet,” in *Folklore and the Internet: Vernacular Expression in a Digital World*, ed. Trevor J. Blank (Denver: University of Colorado Press, 2009), 2.

Conclusion

When I conceptualized this thesis, I wanted to know the ways in which the stories I grew up with exist within our memory institutions. What it became was an exploration of how folklore connects people through time and space, of what helps to shape community identity and of the structures in place that will preserve these stories for generations to come. My goal, ultimately, was to highlight how Franco-Manitoban folklore exists *in situ* within local archives and relate this to the larger world of folklore creation and preservation. The thesis began by providing historical and cultural context for the Franco-Manitoban community, with particular focus on the folk; those who hold and transmit knowledge, and why and how that knowledge was transmitted. It drew on scholarship related to the links between language, culture and memory, examining how each informs the other. An important point of note was the space that Métis peoples hold within French Manitoba, at once part of the community and a community unto themselves and the necessity of respecting their Indigeneity without being exclusionary. History informs folklore, and in some cases, inspires it, and this chapter featured examples of historical events which gave rise to folk songs and tales which have since become fixtures in Franco-Manitoban folk culture.

Following the historical context, an analysis of the folklore holdings at the Centre du patrimoine resulted in an observed correlation between orality in Franco-Manitoban culture and the types of folklore represented in the collection. Oral history—particularly songs and storytelling—proved to have a significant presence at the Centre, which has taken great strides in improving accessibility to these records using innovative open-source software such as OHMS.

They are also in the process of developing their digital preservation program, which includes a dedicated digital description guide in order to address some of the inconsistencies in the finding aid, which will further improve searchability and accessibility. This was tied in with discussions on theory related to community archives, participatory archival practices and collective memory. The Centre du patrimoine embodies many of the defining characteristics of a community archive. To paraphrase Flinn and Stevens, centres and community archives play a pivotal role in the political struggles and social campaigns of the communities they represent. While they sometimes evolve into historical projects—as the Centre du patrimoine has—the content of the archives is still connected to an agenda towards social change and/or education.[221] While I would not go so far as to say that the Franco-Manitoban community faces outright oppression (at least not by virtue of simply being French Manitoban), it does face certain cultural effects which the efforts taken by the Centre du patrimoine hope to mitigate. Linguistic minority communities in primarily Anglophone provinces contend with the looming threat of extinction over time, and the Franco-Manitoban community is no different. French speakers, who once represented the majority in Manitoba, are now a small percentage, and it is thanks to educational initiatives from both within the community and without that we are able to maintain our language. That being said, thanks to historical policies which banned French language learning, many families lost that tie to the community, and the Centre is also making efforts to update the finding aid with bilingual tags and descriptions where possible so that these families are not excluded from their history either.

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[221] Flinn and Stevens, "'It is noh mistri, we mekin histri.' Telling our own story," 8.

The final chapter is the one which surprised me the most. I had expected (or at least hoped) to find a flourishing online community of Franco-Manitobans sharing their stories. This was not the case; not because they are not out there somewhere in cyberspace, but because there are fundamental flaws in search algorithms which make the searchability of non-English web content a significant challenge. I was forced to rely on my personal knowledge of certain folktales in order to find instances of them being discussed online, and even then, my results were limited. What I did discover, however, was that there are people out there attempting to share French-Canadian folklore online, making use of resources such as WordPress to create blogs and websites dedicated to the topic. Searchability is also hampered by search engines and online archives' confinement to the "surface web" and their inability to access social media silos. There may be a Facebook group out there, for example, dedicated to sharing only Franco-Manitoban folklore, but because I did not use the right keywords on the right website, I was not able to locate it.

On a larger scale, folklore seems to be flourishing on the Internet. Not only is preexisting folklore being shared, but new folklore is being created. Bronner points out that the Internet has an element of visualization which face-to-face communication does not, which creates an inherent level of suspicion in regard to whether or not what one is looking at is real. He elaborates: "Especially when images are broadcast from peer to peer in a play frame, the Internet becomes folklorized through the discourse of belief involved. The perceptions that every picture tells and story and that it attracts unseen viewers only add to the Internet's folkloric dimension."[222] A good example of this is the Slender Man mythos. It began as a simple photo, which then sparked the imaginations of users to such a degree that it took on a life of its own, eventually reaching such levels of believability that it left the Internet and bled into the real world. Widespread use of the Internet has introduced discussions on what constitutes an archive in the realm of cyberspace. Some scholars are more liberal with their definitions, while others preach caution that not every online repository automatically constitutes an archive, as we must still adhere to key archival functions in order for the word to apply. I do not pretend to have the knowledge nor the authority to meaningfully contribute to these discussions, but I do believe that it is important to be looking to the future concerning the things we choose to share and create online. The Internet has a long way to go in terms of accessibility, but it is also an exciting frontier for folklore creation and participatory archiving.

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[222] Bronner, "Digitizing and Visualizing Folklore," 29-30.

In the final leg of the writing process, I returned to some of the articles we read in class during the first year of the Archival Studies program. One of the last paragraphs of Hugh A. Taylor's "The Collective Memory" stood out to me. In it, Taylor discusses how a surviving oral tradition in Canada has helped us avoid the cultural melting pot of our southern neighbours and has instead allowed us to come close to a genuine multicultural society.[223] While this is a complex and oftentimes problematic viewpoint, the spirit of what Taylor is saying holds truth. It is thanks in no small part to the tireless efforts of communities throughout Canada that our cultures and traditions are able to persist. Folklore and folk culture survive because the folk will it to. They create centres and archives. They educate. They preserve the stories and songs and poems that act as a living link to our past. Franco-Manitoban folklore continues to exist thanks to everyone who participates in community efforts to preserve it, in whatever form it may take. I am grateful to be part of that effort.

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[223] Hugh A. Taylor, "The Collective Memory: Archives and Libraries as Heritage," *Archivaria* 15 (Winter 1982-83): 129.

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