

We Were Outsiders: The Métis and Residential Schools

By

Tricia Elizabeth Logan

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of

Master of Arts

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## Abstract

This study looks at how the Métis were admitted to and discharged from the schools despite government policies limiting their attendance. It also looks at how the Métis were treated at the schools and the impact that the schools have on current generations of Métis people. The study also reflects on the use of traumatic histories, Métis research methods and the state of Residential School history in Canada. The Government of Canada did not encourage Métis attendance and wanted to eliminate any federal responsibility towards supporting the Métis in Canada. Regardless, Métis attended the schools and generations of Métis people continue to be influenced by the intergenerational impacts of these schools today.

The Métis were treated as outsiders in Residential Schools; they were treated differently by both teachers and administrators. The treatment of Métis students often mirrored how they were treated in their communities. Canada's agenda towards Aboriginal people disintegrated the relationship between government and the Métis, and Residential Schools were another way that the Métis were negatively affected by Canada's legacy of mistreating generations of Aboriginal people. It is intended for this study to reflect what Residential Schools meant to Métis lives from a Métis context.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

Residential Schools were one of Canada's primary methods of accelerating a genocidal agenda against Aboriginal people in Canada. Through the co-administration and creation of the Residential School system along with the Protestant and Catholic churches, the government of Canada caused the systemic destruction of generations of Aboriginal children. The Métis were considered outsiders, "Halfbreeds" and the minority of total attendees at Residential Schools and as a result, the legacy of Residential Schools has had a unique impact on the Métis. Residential Schools were not the only segment of Canada's genocidal agenda that the Métis were exposed to, but they did permanently alter their relationship with their own communities, their churches and Canada.

First Nations, Inuit and Métis children were forced to attend these schools and numerous generations of children were taken from their parents. At first, the concept of abolishing their language, all cultural beliefs and connections to their families and communities seemed sufficient to end the cohesion of an entire generation of Aboriginal people. However, at the hands of church officials government orders were often carried out with abusive force that scarred those who lived to leave the schools for life. Many did not live long enough to survive Residential School, though. Criminal negligence and excessive abuse killed thousands of Aboriginal children at Residential Schools, a number that although significant is still unconfirmed.

Métis experiences and relationships with the Residential School are unique and have had lasting impacts on Métis people in Canada. Depending on the location of the

school and various other factors related to religion and community, Métis population at various schools was sometimes fairly high. At other times, in certain parts of the country, Métis attendance was low, but the large ripple-impact from Métis family attendance on Métis communities is undeniable. Métis were forced to attend, and in some cases, especially with those who had a long-standing history with the Catholic Church, Métis people voluntarily requested that their children attend the schools. The Métis were treated as outsiders and their time spent at Residential Schools reflected the same mentality that excluded them from both non-Aboriginal and First Nations communities. Métis experiences were unique from non-Métis students. Even though they were subject to much of the same treatment, the Residential School experience had different meanings for the Métis than they may have for First Nations and Inuit students.

This thesis will examine the two histories involved here and attempt to show how they interact with one another. The histories involved are those of the Métis and of the overall Residential Schools experience which are quite similar in one key way: they are both under-represented and under-researched. The voices of the Métis Residential School survivors have especially often been silent. As survivors, they have been forced to be silent for generations and as a segment of the “other” Aboriginal people they are also ignored by dominant Canada. This thesis will give voice to the Métis experience in the Residential Schools.

The non-Aboriginal voice in Canada once dominated the written accounts of Residential Schools. Records in the form of government reports, church journals and public and church archives comprised a mainly primary-document based history on Residential Schools. Ironically, it also represented the voice of those who are to blame.

The non-Aboriginal voice in Canada dominates all written history in Canada. In those histories, non-Aboriginal Canada is often the victor, the hero, typically white-male, and Canadian life is often revered as something to be envied by other countries. Churches, governments and Canadian bystanders have little to gain today in being the dominant voice of either the Residential School experience or Métis history. Current actions by the Canadian government to pay off Residential School survivors with a one-time payment seem to indicate that they hope to end discussion on Residential School altogether. However, future generations may not see the merit in these actions and Canada has no reason to be proud of its history with Aboriginal peoples. Howard Adams has succinctly described the particular state of Canadian history:

Imperialism is a complex and murderous procedure. After invasion and the holocaust, there are a number of succeeding homicidal actions before the Aboriginal people are exterminated or imprisoned. All Indigenous people of the [European] colonies suffered the same fate: Canada, Australia, or Africa. The Indians and Métis of Canada were no different. Canada probably had better public relations affairs than the other colonies. This is why Canada's history suffers from the greatest distortions and falsehoods of imperial nations. (Adams in Lutz et. al, 2005, 6)

Dominant Canada's histories most often focus on military victories and conquering the frontier. (Granatstein, 1998: 56) There should be little surprise that the history of Residential Schools, a story of a colossal failure for the colonizers, has gone largely unrecorded and has been restricted. (Milloy, 1999, xvii) Some well-known and

respected histories on Residential Schools have been completed by non-Aboriginal writers like John Milloy and Jim Miller. While these histories provide an Aboriginal perspective, they also represent a trend in Aboriginal scholarship. (Milloy xviii) There appears to be a trend in terms of mainstream researchers broadening their research perspectives to include concepts of decolonization, Aboriginal voice and use of oral histories. Miller and Milloy took steps in their data collection and recording to view the primary documents for historical merit while also being mindful of presenting it in a decolonized format with sensitivity to the role that survivors played in the school experience. Decolonized historiographical methods use the volumes of archival records in a way that was rarely done in earlier texts. They were read not for their merit or for their record of government systemic efficiency they were, instead, read for how the system applied to Aboriginal lives. In Residential School histories, like those written by Miller and Milloy, Aboriginal people are the victors. They are the survivors. They maintained continuity in their traditions despite forcible opposition to them and they came together to close schools. They shared resilience after immense trauma and they continue to fight daily to ensure that the legacy of the schools will be remembered.

Even though the Métis represent another “other” (Ashcroft: 1995, 169) in an already under-represented written history, their voice has become more visible over the last decade. Today, we are entering a new era in the Residential School legacy where the survivors’ voices are being welcomed. Survivors feel safer than ever before to come forward with their truths. (Milloy, xviii) The Métis have also been included now and their voice is the primary concern of this thesis.

The dominant Aboriginal narrative in modern Residential School histories is a First Nations narrative. This is a logical outcome because the majority of Residential School attendees were First Nations. However, despite the fact that the number of Métis narratives available is almost non-existent, this is not at all representative of the actual attendance of the Métis at these schools. The Métis were, in some cases, treated quite differently than their First Nations classmates. This thesis will investigate the unique ways that Métis students were admitted, discharged and treated in the Residential schools.

Government policy restricted Métis attendance in the schools but, through Métis requests and manipulation by church and administration officials, many Métis were allowed to attend despite policies that restricted their attendance. Church charity, family finances, religious denomination, physical appearances and location of the school were all factors that affected the likelihood of Métis attendance. This thesis will investigate these factors and describe how they influenced Métis attendance and experiences at Residential Schools. It will also examine how influences external and internal to the Métis, affect Métis roles in the legacy of Residential Schools.

The Métis Residential School legacy includes all historical factors that lead to their attendance, discharge and treatment at the schools as well as the present trend of reconciliation and healing. The state of Métis scholarship and support from Métis organizations has direct impacts in providing support for Métis survivors of Residential School. Since public support for Residential School survivors is currently focussed on legal issues, firm, consistent support for individuals and Aboriginal communities is seriously lacking. Some communities have managed to create supportive, culturally

appropriate environments for all Residential School survivors and some have failed altogether at attempts to create these environments.

### **Métis Identity and Context**

Canada's West is the heartland of one of the most unique ethnic groups in the world, the Métis. These people created a nation and a unique identity from the earliest roots of colonial meetings between Canada's Aboriginal peoples and two distinct fur trade systems. The racist identification of the people as "Mixed-Bloods" or "Half-Breeds" greatly undermines the numerous social, cultural and political influences that created an ethnic identity for the Métis. The ethnogenesis of the Métis in Canada's West is a culmination of various factors which may not have been evident in the history of the emergence of other similar peoples in the world. (Shore, *Métis Legacy* 71) The Métis developed a political integrity separate from both the colonizers and First Nations peoples. They had their own social mores and they built an identity that drew upon First Nations and both Roman Catholic and Protestant beliefs. They also built communities based on their own system of entrepreneurship and dealings with the colonial fur trade systems and the buffalo hunt. (Shore and Barkwell 213)

The creation of a distinct Métis identity did not take place in a vacuum. The Métis steadily faced opposition from missionaries, colonizers, fur trade companies, First Nations, and governments. (Dickason 21) These opposing forces set up barriers that they had to overcome and, in the process, character-building tests of resilience became the hallmark of Métis development. The tests challenged the strength of Métis identity and were also a measure of their resolve. (Sealey and Lussier 145) Métis identity cannot be

reduced to one firm concept; it is more of a fluid process that allowed the Métis to optimize their economic and social potential. (Ens 163) In many cases the Métis would use opposing forces as a resource, taking valuable lessons from the church or fur trade companies while maintaining a distance from them. (Sealey and Lussier 56) Métis identity evolved with each challenge that it faced. The core of the identity never changed, but the perception of that identity progressed to fit the new parameters that the Métis were offered. Their core remained, at all times, distinctly Métis with a culture and language that was always greater than the sum of its original parts, always more than just a 'half' of anything.

The Métis cannot be separated from empire in the Canadian context. (Shore, *Métis Legacy* 74) Some relationships that the Métis had with the colonizers, whether they chose to engage with them or not, comprised Métis concepts of identity. These relationships were usually created for economic reasons but both Métis and colonizers benefited from social and political partnerships with one another. The Métis people are conscious of these relationships with the colonizer and, in turn, they reject it, accept it, or are often confined to it. (Dorion and Prefontaine 26-27) The Métis are first peoples of Canada, recognized as Aboriginal people in the Canadian Constitution and they are a unique Indigenous group. (Constitution Act 1982) The Métis are not eager to be judged in any measure by their connections to First Nations communities or non-Aboriginal communities (Dorion and Prefontaine 36)

There is always a challenge to conduct Métis research in a way that best reflects the needs of Métis communities. Mainstream academic studies focus on Indigenous people in general and only mention the Métis as a footnote or as an aside. (RCAP,

Chapter 10, 389) The Métis are under-represented in the literature and research. Often coupled with the First Nations and Inuit, the Métis often fall victim to forms of academic homogenization. Being labelled under the broad stroke of the term 'Indigenous' may ease a Native Studies student's time, but it glazes over the unique aspects of the Métis and their place in the greater scheme of Indigenous life. Often seen as the 'other' Aboriginal people, the Métis are usually studied using other people's contexts rather than their own. The Métis have long histories always intertwined with colonizers and First Nations but which are also always unique and remarkably rich and detailed.

Contemporary trends within the Métis nation, like access to hunting rights, education funding programs and employment programs run by Métis organizations have forced Métis communities to revisit their terms for Métis identity. In addition, the growing acceptability of the Métis by dominant Canada has increased the pride and desire to identify as Métis. Generations of Métis people who may not have considered it beneficial to identify as Métis or who may not have been formally enumerated as Métis are now coming forward. As the population of the Métis Nation grows, Métis are asked by dominant Canada to provide formal definitions for their identity. Currently, the Métis National Council has adopted the following criteria for Métis identity: " 'Métis Nation' means the Aboriginal people descendant from the Historic Métis Nation which is now comprised of all Métis Nation citizens and is one of the "aboriginal peoples of Canada" within s.35 of the Constitution Act of 1982" (Métis National Council) The term "Métis homeland" is one of the most debated terms, as Métis who live east of Northern Ontario and West of BC's interior are hoping to be included in the definition process.

## **Historical Introduction/Outline**

Residential Schools were a foreign concept when they were first forced upon First Nations in Canada. On the other hand, many Métis communities had a familiarity and knowledge of European-style education. By the start of the Residential School era in the 1870's the Métis had already been dealing with a long standing relationship with the church and government control. In Canada's west the Métis were often connected to the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches and, since the early 1800's, they had often made use of the opportunity to be educated by the trading companies. (Van Kirk 130) The key events in Métis history, such as their dispersal throughout the West, the (alleged) extinguishment of their Aboriginal title through the Scrip program and federal efforts to aid "destitute 'Half-Breed's" (PAM: Volume 6031, File 150-9) contributed to factors that influenced Métis attendance at Residential School. Métis experience had an impact on the Residential Schools and the Residential School legacy continues to impact the Métis today.

### **1700-1770**

Populations of new colonies used Métissage as a commodity and a political tool for their own purposes. It was a relationship that taught them about the "new frontier" and allowed them to extract economic gain from that frontier. (Verges 10) A major result of the capitalist system was political assimilation and some uniquely created ethnic groups would become immersed in the European system as a result. (Neu and Therrien 12) Slavery, capitalism and the various strengths and weakness of the colonizers influenced the cultural, social and political integrity of new peoples. Necessity would

often dictate their compliance with colonization and capitalism and, unlike the Métis; other groups did not capitalize on the same opportunities or economic means to establish their own unique communities. (Verges 11) Métis communities originated from the fur trade depot system where geographical encapsulation would work in their favour and allow them to develop a system between traders and First Nations that would grow to be quite profitable over the 1700's and 1800's.

Over-coming racial barriers and biological categorizing was often the first obstacle that Métissage in Canada had to face. If allowed to develop somewhat free of racial barriers and religious persecution, a new inter-mixed racial group could begin to reformulate their own beliefs and customs relating to inter-marriage. Similar populations in African Nations, Asia, India, Central and South America were often measured by blood quantum and by racial features and characteristics. (Sealey and Lussier 1) It seems that only in Canada was the new Métis population making use of their geographic advantage to create a unique identity. The development of Métis culture and identity was rapid and, at first, primarily restricted to the depot system of the French fur trade. From around 1700 to 1750, the Métis lived under circumstances that were quite original in comparison with similar circumstances in other parts of the world. As noted by Shore:

The process by which the Métis came into existence had to wait until the French-Canadian voyageurs and *coureurs de bois* reached the area of the Great Lakes. Even here, the process was slow and limited to single locations, usually the fur trade depots. It took the greater distances associated with the trade in Rupert's Land, the competition provided by the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), and the existence of the horse and

buffalo in the region to contribute the necessary framework around which the process of Métissage could be developed. (72)

Canada's geography, economy, political structure and societal standards at that time fostered the original development of the Métis way of life.

### **1770-1800**

Some of the first the Métis communities that originated in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century came about from a unique system of Métissage and colonization. Métis children were primarily thought of by the Fur Trade companies as valuable assets for economic growth. (Sealey 13) These children were not only the result of trade company liaisons but they were essentially and unwittingly building Métis communities from what they were learning from the fur trade system. (Shore and Barkwell 3) What the Métis learned from the Church and company-provided education was combined with the knowledge and language they had already acquired from their Aboriginal mothers. Each part was important to the individual and collective development of Métis children and families. (Van Kirk 92)

Exposure to these two systems aided in the eventual development of a Métis-run economic system. (Sealey and Lussier 7) The Métis nation was built on the pemmican trade and their unique ingenuity in supplying pemmican to both companies. This ingenuity came from an economic system drawn from First Nations traditional knowledge of the land and resources and the European trading companies' commercial structures. (Sealey and Lussier 8)

## **1800-1821**

European settlement in Canada's West expanded Métis communities in the early 1800's. Economic and social life for the Métis changed dramatically with the rise of settlement in the West. Churches and company men like Lord Selkirk promoted an agricultural lifestyle for all incoming settlers as well as the Métis who already resided in areas around Red River.(Sealey and Lussier 36)

Relationships between the Métis and the church also started to change at this time. In an effort to force the Métis away from the buffalo hunt and towards agricultural settlement, mission churches opened mission schools. Education that was previously used by the Métis for economic gain in the trading companies was now being used for church and state gain by promoting agrarian lifestyles. (AMNSIS 2) However, the companies and churches at this time were concerned about the Métis, especially surrounding the events of Seven Oaks in 1816 and brewing pemmican trade questions. (Shore, *Métis Legacy* 73) Companies and churches tended to pay less attention to the Métis Nation's growing language, culture and instinctive use of education and more attention to their own interests. Outside parties often perceived that the Métis were only being used by and for the benefit of certain companies and churches but, in turn, the Métis were also benefiting from these developments. (AMNSIS 3) Churches had a great deal of influence on the Métis and their communities and this relationship would grow a web of missionary schools set aside for the Métis throughout the Northwest.

## **1821-1870**

Amalgamation of the Hudson's Bay Company and Northwest Company in 1821 created even more conflict for the Métis around Red River. A wave of settlers moved to

Red River while the Métis also moved there in search of homes because of the closing of depots around the region. Communities like St. Boniface, St. Vital and St. Norbert in Rupert's Land were all Métis locations with increasing Roman Catholic influence and steadily growing parishes. (Sealey 16)

The early Christianization of the Métis started in these large Roman Catholic parishes. The impact of having the Métis involved in the Catholic church and increasing Métis economic development brought even more missionaries west to Red River. (Sealey 16) The church seemed quite concerned with what was perceived as the Métis' semi-nomadic lifestyle as defined by the buffalo hunt. Even though the Métis had developed their own laws for the hunt, business with trading companies, social community standards and use of oral histories, the Church still sought to influence the Métis way of life. Churches that set up schools in Métis communities gave little or no credit for what education the Métis already had and went ahead with their plans for colonization. As Bruce Sealey noted:

With the arrival of the first Grey Nuns in 1844, the Bishop extended the school system. By 1845 there was a boys' elementary and secondary school and a girls' school in St. Boniface, one school at Grantown in addition to a school, of sorts, which accompanied the Métis buffalo hunters on to the plains and attempted to school the children on a 'catch as can' basis. (17)

Scooping up Métis children from their lives on the prairie was already a tactic in use by Catholic and Protestant missionaries at this time. Agriculture and a strictly European style of education was becoming a large part of Métis lives. Early on,

missionaries had limited resources to work with at the time and they did not have as much success influencing First Nations as they did with the Métis. (Sealey 21) This was a trend that would change in the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Church work that was once fairly passive and scattered became more coercive and aggressive in the 1860s and 1870's. Prior to 1860 First Nations and the Métis had a degree of self-determination in their education that rapidly disappeared with the formation of Canada in 1867. (Miller 38)

### **1870-1885**

Prosperous life for the Métis rapidly dissipated after 1869-1870. Large numbers of Métis were forced to move north and west from Red River and those who chose to stay were quickly forced to adapt to the new system. (Shore 76) In 1870, the Métis made agreements with the federal government reflected in part in the Manitoba Act whereby they hoped that their way of life in Red River would be preserved. The agreements embodied in the Manitoba Act and subsequently in the province of Manitoba in 1870 were essential to the maintenance of the Métis Nation after 1870. (Shore 74) The Manitoba Act also had specific provisions included for the education of French-Catholic children who at the time predominately were Métis children.

Criminal-level ignorance of the provisions of the Manitoba Act is well-known in Canadian history. Ignorance of Sections 31 and 32 of the Act that dealt with Scrip for Métis families and children in Manitoba had further impacts on the execution of other sections of the Manitoba Act. Originally intended to provide money or land to Métis, the administration of Scrip from sections 31 and 32 was quite 'unlawful' (Sprague,

“Government Lawlessness” 415) Section 22 of the Manitoba Act stated that denominational schools could be provided for Métis children. (Manitoba Act 1870) Even though some schools were provided, many Métis could not take advantage of such educational opportunities because they were forced out of Red River after the illegal administration of Sections 31 and 32. (Sprague, *Canada and the Métis* 2) The Métis were, in large part, forced from their homes by land surveyors and increasing tensions with Canadian settlers moving into their homeland. (Shore, *Métis Legacy* 77) The Scrip issues arising from sections 31 and 32 of the Manitoba Act also led to the ‘extinguishment of Indian title.’ These actions unjustly removed the federal government from having any responsibility for the Métis. With no ‘Indian title’ the Métis were not recognized as an Aboriginal people with rights to land or access to services. Métis land was illegally stolen from them by unscrupulous spectators with the open collusion of Canadian officials and politicians. (Sprague, “Government Lawlessness” 415) Scrip was offered to the Métis in the form of specific land grants or for a cash value in sections 31 and 32 of the Manitoba Act. A great deal of that land and money was underhandedly taken from the Métis and the Métis were in large part, forced from their homes. Scrip was the only option offered to the Métis despite what was promised constitutionally in the Manitoba Act. The Métis now had huge geographic, social and political barriers keeping them from accessing education. The Métis maintained a strong relationship with the Churches and many missions followed Métis settlements and new schools were opened in Métis communities. In areas like Fort Ellice, Lebret, Camperville and the Turtle Mountains, large numbers of dispersed Métis continued to belong to large Catholic parishes. (Sealey 38) These parishes would have a great deal of influence in the

Residential School system that would start to make its move to the West in the late 1870's.

### **1885-1900**

Between 1880 and 1885, aggressive Residential School schemes started to flood both eastern and western Canada. Federal Indian policies took form during these years and the concept of Residential schools, as outlined in the Davin Report in 1879, took shape. In these years, what was known as the “formal” Residential School legacy (Chansonneuve A19) and Métis history came together. The familiarity that the Métis had with the Protestant and Catholic churches would be tested. Métis education prior to 1880 was either provided to them in the form of Indigenous ways of knowing, taught by their families and communities, or by small mission schools in the west. What they would be exposed to in Residential Schools after 1880 was totally unexpected and foreign to them.

### **Limitations and Controversies of the Study**

The Métis are aware of their ‘place’ in the larger scheme of things in the modern sense but negotiating an understanding of this place in dominant history is a frustrating undertaking. The Métis are trying to meet the new era of expanding Aboriginal rights and responsibilities by working to continually and often forcibly define themselves. At times, it seems as if there are a thousand different definitions for Métis identity and for ways of thinking about who the Métis are. In an effort to simplify things, it is useful to reflect on what the Métis are not. The Métis are not Non-status “Indians” nor are they defined by biology or blood quantum. Defining the Métis by their relations to First Nations communities fragments Métis identity and contributes to lateral violence which

is also known as internalized oppression, and in-fighting. (Battiste and Henderson 37)

Using blood quantum or ties to one specific cultural trait in measuring Métis-ness hurts the Métis. This thesis will contribute to the discussion not by adding another definition but by giving them a voice and a place in an important aspect of overall Aboriginal history. The Métis should be allowed to define themselves without judgement or by the influence of academic terms.

Nevertheless, government actions have placed limits on Métis identity. The Métis are forced to fight to define themselves and to have this definition accepted by all and sundry. In doing so, the Métis do not always fight the source of the problem but each other. The Reserve system in Canada, illegal administration of Scrip in the late 1800's, Bill C-31, education systems and other various government initiated policies have turned the Métis against one another. Jealousy, blaming, in-fighting, malicious gossip and petty arguments or what could be termed altogether as lateral violence has engulfed entire Métis communities. Using blood quantum or ties to one specific cultural trait in measuring Métis-ness further works to fragment Métis communities.

### **Life on the Periphery**

The Métis have spent most of their historical lives on the periphery. They are often relegated to the position of the other 'other' Aboriginal people. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 169) In mainstream educational systems there is often a place for a generalized notion of Aboriginal people but far less often a place for the Métis, specifically. They are too frequently forgotten about, under-researched and they are often under-represented.

In a new era when public understanding about Aboriginal issues is at an all-time high, the Métis occupy an interesting position. In the era when efforts to de-colonize and eliminate stereotypes dominate research involving Indigenous populations, the Métis are increasingly seen as different from all other Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Care and caution are being exercised at every level of Indigenous research and research methods and protocols in mainstream institutions are being created to serve Indigenous interests in increasing capacities. The Métis now have a place in this scenario, although this is a recent development.

Research processes are delicate and political, especially when one is placing Indigenous knowledge into a mainstream framework. Terms, referencing styles and writing methods must be chosen carefully. The improper use of terms has the potential to offend and will detract credibility away from the researcher. Actions speak louder than words.

Métis-specific information and academic study about the Métis is in high demand despite the fact that such information and methodology is rare and hard to find. Métis organizations fight for it and hoard it. If knowledge is power, the Métis are in a position to be grateful for what they can get their hands on. For many reasons, either from forced colonization, lateral violence or in-fighting, the Métis recognize the value of Métis research and end up fighting for it. I have been part of a system in Métis organizations where I have been given specific instructions not to share information. In turn, information was withheld from me for the very same reasons. What was being withheld was not political or confidential information but public record and historical material

valuable to all Métis. Knowledge is power and internalized oppression becomes quite evident as Métis groups fight for this power.

The colonizers distinguished themselves from Indigenous people. By using pre-conceived concepts of primitivism, the colonizer worked under a binary and a hierarchical system. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 169) Each works to define their counter-part. Through this lens, Indigenous people may have started to 'other' themselves. There is an undeniable relationship between the self and the other. The colonizer 'others' the colonized by excluding, marginalizing and steadily comparing themselves to the 'other,' in this case the colonized. (ibid)

As the 'other' Aboriginal people, the Métis have been excluded by both the colonizers and by the Aboriginal majority, the First Nations. The Métis take pride in having a language, culture and customs separate from First Nations. That pride is born, in part, due to a historic perseverance through long-term exclusion, marginalization and comparison. Left to live on road allowances, in makeshift shantytowns, the Métis were also swindled out of their land. (Shore, *Métis Legacy* 75) Presently, it is still a common Métis trait to be resilient, innovative and entrepreneurial.

In the twenty-first century the Métis have taken a huge step forward by fighting legally for their position as the 'other' Aboriginal People. For a century, dominant Canada made efforts to extract the Métis from Federal and Provincial responsibility. In some respects, exclusion, and marginalization of the Métis in Canada was quite severe. Some of the exclusion was even as severe as forcible removal as in the case of Ste. Madeleine, Manitoba. (Zelig 4) Métis homes were burned and an entire town was destroyed in order to force them from their town and to make room for Euro-Canadian

settlers. Through systemic malicious ignorance, the Métis were forcibly cast aside by dominant Canada and by movements that favoured European settlement in Canada's west. (Shore, *Métis Legacy* 77)

Major attempts by the Canadian Federal Government to provide for First Nations were carried out in a manner that government thought was adequate and fair. Attempting or appearing to adhere to treaties was Canada's way of acknowledging that the land they now reside upon was once First Nations land. They were responsible for First Nations and their attempts to address this responsibility were carried out with some level of determination. (Friesen and Friesen 26)

In contrast, even into 2006, the Federal Government is still unwilling to acknowledge that Métis land was unlawfully taken from them. The Métis were forced off their land by dominant Euro-Canadians and they were excluded from the safety of their home land. The Métis did not feel safe in the homes they had made in the Northwest. As settlers moved west, the Métis were forced to move farther West and North. (Sprague and Frye 27)

It could be argued that the Métis should consider themselves fortunate to have been excluded from the oppressive legacies set aside for the First Nations by the Dominion of Canada. The Reserve system, Treaties and mandatory attendance at Residential Schools were all used to address Canada's 'Indian Problem'. (Milloy 7) In order to see this clearly, one must visualize the deplorable conditions of First Nations reserves, conditions that continue even into 2006. First Nations were forcibly confined to the Reserves on a pass system, forced to live in 4<sup>th</sup> World conditions and were inundated with systemic social distress. Simultaneously, the Métis were living on the side of the

road outside those communities in tents and make-shift lean-tos. Métis communities lined the roads leading up to and bordering these reserves. Their road allowance communities were literally situated on the periphery. (Shore, *Métis Legacy* 77) In addition, these towns bordered on non-Aboriginal communities where settlers lived, occupying land that was once populated by the Métis.

Being and becoming Métis on the margins embraces a paradox of being and becoming the 'other', which is the perceived goal and the endless struggle to obtain the "centre". As Ashcroft has noted: "Marginal groups do not necessarily endorse the notion of a fixed centre...The marginal therefore indicates a positionality that is best defined in terms of limitations of a subject's access to power." (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 135) The Métis are proud of their marginal status. Métis life flourished and their resilience on the margins created pride in their nation. Achieving the centre was never a primary objective for the Métis. The dominant Canadian centre was whiter, usually richer, male dominated and English-speaking. Métis did not always equate life in that centre as an improvement to their own life conditions. If identifying with the First Nations was beneficial to them, they did so with pride. Other Métis were living their lives as a lie, denying identities, language and people in order to identify in some cases as French, Ukrainian, Russian or British so in order to provide a better life for their families. Adopting the characteristics of the centre was a conscious and intentional move to advance Métis interests. Canada created an atmosphere that caused some Métis to suffer for their identity. Courage was a key in opposing that atmosphere and embracing life on the margins. Even though circumstances are changing in Canada, the Métis still adopt these tactics in their relations to the centre.

Consideration for a research subject's gender, culture, religion, mental capacity and social structure is paramount in 21<sup>st</sup> century research. How the research will impact a human must be considered. (Smith 25) Métis researchers often do not have the luxury of entering research with pre-determined protocols that their other Indigenous counter-parts do. Borrowing from others often replaces the creation of their own. The Métis accept their position on academic margins and adopt methods of both centres, these being mainstream-dominant and First Nations. The benefits in doing so may favour the researcher and not the subject. The voice of the Métis is like no other. It is a voice that encompasses the margins and a life created to work on the margins. A margin is not a barrier for the Métis; it is their way of being. A margin is a starting point for academic questioning and it has great significance for Métis researchers. Accepting, rejecting or allowing themselves to be confined to the margins are choices Métis could make.

### **Positionality**

Finding a personal location in both the Métis and Residential School histories has been an evolutionary process. Métis and Residential Schools histories are often contested, controversial and, for this reason, they are often unpopular. Constant opposition to these emerging histories has created the evolution of Métis concepts and methodologies included in this thesis. The ebb and flow of subjectivity throughout this thesis followed the reactions that I received from family, survivors, teachers and community members. How I thought about the topic was greatly influenced by what these people in my life told me about it. These following words are not innocuous historical narratives. They are narratives of trauma, cultural identity and a unique history.

Learning about Residential Schools opens your mind to truths you may not have considered or wanted to consider before. My grandmother attended a Residential School and my understanding of her life and relationships have changed over the course of this study. My family was always on my mind when I thought about Residential Schools and now Residential Schools are even more present than I ever anticipated when thinking of my family. I often feel fortunate to have been given this opportunity to hear the stories I have heard. Very few people have the chance to engage with their families and communities in such a meaningful way. Residential School stories are so personal they transcend the findings of this thesis and serve to provide context for understanding the larger study of what it means to be a modern Métis woman.

Several factors that have influenced the context of my thesis have been beyond my control. One factor is genetics which can produce phenotypic attributes of human beings. Modern Canada still bases judgements on these phenotypic attributes. One parent with black hair and brown skin and one parent with fair hair and fair skin can produce two different children. One child can have dark phenotypic attributes and one child can have fair attributes. Physical attributes cannot change each child's connection to their parents and ancestors. Physical attributes cannot change the children's understanding or knowledge of their ancestors. I have been involved with the Department of Native Studies at the University of Manitoba since 1996. I worked at the Manitoba Métis Federation for three years and the Métis Centre at the National Aboriginal Health Organization for over two years. I have presented at international, national, provincial and regional levels on topics relating to Residential School and Métis histories. I have been taught to pass on my family's genealogy and I am one member of

my family that all other cousins come to for family histories. I have worked with Métis Elders across Canada. I have fair skin and fair hair. My brother has a Bachelor of Science degree with a psychology major. He is a corrections officer and he is an excellent athlete. He has black hair and brown skin. I have often considered that some of my material and papers that I have presented in the past would have been better received if I had given the same items to my brother to read for me. I do not think it is his expertise in Métis or Native Studies that would make the audience more responsive to the work. I have no right to describe these experiences as a complaint though. My brother has faced his own racially-based judgements in his life, based on his genetic phenotypic attributes. These circumstances do not make one of my parent's children more Métis than the other. Being Métis without having to publicly declare or 'display' it may just be one of the clearest assertions of identity there is.

I have not lost anything from my genetic make up. I have gained understanding. My world view is different; my thoughts on skin colour and heritage are forever changed because of my Métis-ness. My grandmother is still perplexed as to why everything she learned in Residential School and in her community that taught her to hide her Métis-ness has now changed and now her grandchildren want to be proud of what she formerly hid. Genetics and denial have not changed my understanding of Métis identity or the Métis and Residential Schools. Unfortunately, genetics have impacted some readers' understandings of my work. However, misconceptions about the Métis and common fallacies about Aboriginal people in general challenged me to expand my thoughts on being a Métis scholar in both mainstream and Native Studies.

## **Conclusion**

Once an historical account of the 1990-2000's era of Residential School history is written, decolonizing historians may record how Canada tried to efface its role and responsibility for the Residential Schools. It is interesting to consider a bystander, non-Aboriginal Canadian's reactions to Residential Schools and the Métis. The government is willing to create the impression that with quick, one-time payments the Residential School issue will go away. What the government and bystander Canadians are unwilling or unable to see are the long term effects of the school experience that were and are a part of Aboriginal communities. Absence of the Métis in Residential School histories is just one example of how the Residential School legacy is still relevant and important to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadian histories. All survivors need to be given opportunities to tell their stories in safe, welcoming, supportive venues if they desire to tell their stories. Memories of Canada's treatment of Métis and Residential School survivors should not die with the survivors. They live again with their descendants and serve to reconcile and repair relationships with non-Aboriginal Canada.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

The Residential School System has had a major impact on both Canadian and Aboriginal history. Recently, those who question the attendance of Métis people at these schools have been drawn into the debate, especially in a handful of unpublished reports. Some historians go as far as to make statements declaring that the Métis did not attend the schools (Deiter 1999) while some contend that their role was so insignificant that their mention within the historical context of Residential Schools is completely avoidable. (Chartrand 5) Recently, a few histories specifically addressing the Métis role at Residential Schools have surfaced from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation to shed light on the misconceptions and misinterpretations that exist on the Residential School system and the Métis role in them.

Métis experiences at Residential schools are historically documented in a select few unpublished documents. There are selections from a general survey of Residential School histories which outline government policies and conditions at the schools that some Métis students attended. Some of these resources make little mention of the Métis experience as unique or recognize that Métis attended the schools in the numbers that they did. A general survey of Métis history and Native Studies literature sheds light on how the Métis were educated and, in general, the topic of Residential Schools arises in several instances. Ties between the Métis and the Churches also bring to light many Residential School issues and there are several mentions of the various Church roles in Métis histories.

Since the mid-1970s Aboriginal people have been at the point where they are prepared to come forward with their experiences at these schools. A great number of the schools were closed in the late 1960's and early 1970's and, at that time, many Aboriginal people were threatened by clergy with religious persecution in the event that they came forward with their stories of abuse. (Knockwood 9-10) Many Aboriginal people were ashamed, frightened and discredited while, at the same time, facing discrimination from Canadian society, they were unable to share their tragic stories. Conversely, there is a considerable number of Aboriginal people that did not have bad experiences at Residential School and they believe that the experience benefited them and that their stories also need to be told. For these reasons, the history of the Residential School system has been left untold in its entirety until recently.

### **Residential Schools**

A search for the most comprehensive history of Residential Schools starts with J.R. Miller's *Shingwauk's Vision* and J.S. Milloy's *A National Crime*. As two of the only purely historical texts on the subject, they are in a class of their own when compared with other Residential School histories. Both Miller and Milloy look at the schools' administration history and both authors give a broad range of evidence that supports their claims that these schools were government efforts to adhere to treaty provisions while also having the somewhat hidden agenda to forcibly assimilate generations of Aboriginal children. Several other histories tend to focus solely on an individual school or an individual group of people rather than the history of the entire system. Some of the most compelling Residential School memoirs like Basil Johnston's *Indian School Days* and

Isabelle Knockwood's *Out of the Depths* focus on personal experiences at Residential Schools, but their stories undoubtedly reflect on the entire system. Chrisjohn, Young and Marion's *The Circle Game* is more of a socio-psychological profile of all of the effects that these schools had on Aboriginal people but it still has much historical merit due to the extensive research done on the schools in general. Accounts of the Residential School system as an instrument of genocide in Canada are central to Chrisjohn's argument.

Miller's *Shingwauk's Vision* is a very thorough history of the Residential Schools presented in three parts. The three components Miller uses consist of the history of Government involvement, church involvement and the Aboriginal experience of the entire system. The three major factors are broken up into their component parts in order to get an accurate sense of the motivating factors that led the government to choose to assimilate the Aboriginal people as they did, the churches to choose to turn a blind eye to generations of abuse and the Aboriginal people to resist this system and its mandatory attendance policies. The key fact in Miller's work is that the government was the primary instrument that manipulated both the churches and the Department of Indian Affairs to solve the 'Indian Problem'. Miller is able to draw facts to prove this with a great degree of accuracy from his research into the collection of personal accounts and archival materials dealing with the topic. Miller was fortunate to have written his text at a time (the early 1990's) before the wave of lawsuits hit the Churches across Canada. Miller was able to access many of these repositories before the widely accepted church policy of sealing records commenced. These records were key to Miller's depiction of the day-to-day life of the schools. There is an abundance of evidence that indicates that he was careful in his selection of primary sources, oral histories, archival records and various

literatures as each of them lends itself to a sort of historical process on its own. The letters from Department of Indian Affairs officials, clergy in charge of the schools and Aboriginal oral histories in written and verbal form are all measured, compared and contrasted with one another to help validate the author's point of view. At no point does Miller critically assess of each of his primary sources but he does acknowledge that the key to understanding the impact of Residential Schools is the support that oral histories lend to the archival search. He interprets all sources with an equal weight in order to best defend his position on government manipulation in these schools. By extending his reach to oral and non-government sources he is best able to open his narrative with material that is not found in a shallow search of government only records.

In Larry Chartrand's February 2002 "Métis Residential School Participation-A Literature Review" he mentions that in interviews with J.R. Miller, he found that "his book was on Indian participation and that therefore he generally ignored any material on Métis experiences." (5) However, Miller's evidence of Métis attendance is not completely ignored in his text. Métis attendance may not be highlighted to any great significance but mention has been made of the subject by the inclusion of the Davin Report, an 1879 exploratory search into the "Industrial Schools for Indians and 'Half-Breeds'". (Miller 101) Author Chartrand proves that while the Métis were considered as students from the start of these schools' by its administration, it was the government's primary policy to focus on the extinguishment of Aboriginal title and to severely reduce the amount of funding that would be allotted to maintain treaty agreements. These policies made every effort to exclude the Métis from any federal benefits, including education and left assimilation of the Métis to mainstream Canadian education systems.

The examination of church and Métis opposition to their exclusion from federally run-Residential schools is not included in Miller's history, but he does mention the existence of Métis demands and a few Church requests to include the Métis students in the classes. Miller's admittance of his intentional omissions of Métis information lends hope to the historian looking for the Métis experience because one can follow Miller's leads to primary and literary sources which touch upon the Métis voice on this issue. Miller's text is quite lengthy and one can quickly appreciate the volume of information that he may have been forced to omit.

J.S. Milloy's *A National Crime* has an excellent approach to the "hidden secret" of Canadian government policy and the resultant traumatic events of the Residential School legacy. Requested by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1993), Milloy created a historical account of the Residential Schools and the only mention of the Métis surfaces in his use of terms to describe the potential students of this system as Indian, Inuit, Métis, Non-Status and White. The division of the Residential School era into the logical periods of their existence; their founding from 1879 to 1920, their administration and every-day activities up to 1946, and the period leading to their closure from 1946 to 1986, allows Milloy to produce an accurate historical account of the life of these schools. The Métis' role appears to be under-played in these significant and seemingly thorough texts. Much like Miller, Milloy identifies strong government influence over the church-run administration of the schools and the highly negligent morality with which both bodies administrated the schools. He also interprets a great deal of government and church archives to advance his position that the schools were steadily under-funded and criminally mismanaged. Like Miller, he describes how this

mismanagement and negligence affected generations of Aboriginal people. Both Miller and Milloy's texts are the most comprehensive Residential School histories to date but both, unfortunately, leave out the role played by the Métis.

Métis experiences were often purposely hidden in Department of Indian Affairs primary documents and, in many cases, Métis attendance was strictly denied by Department policies, yet the churches for charitable reasons often ignored this policy. During the early administration of the schools, (1880's to 1930's) the Métis were generally facing a lower quality of life than other Aboriginal people in Canada. Many families had been forcibly dispossessed from their homeland and forced onto the periphery of both First Nations and non-Aboriginal communities. Many lived on the Road Allowances as squatters on the edges of private and public lands. The various churches felt that the Métis were often "worse off than Indians" (Chartrand, Logan and Daniels 71) and would allow their attendance in complete disregard of Department policies that did not allow 'Half-Breed' admittance. Although it is regrettable that extensive and comprehensive histories of Residential Schools like *Shingwauk's Vision* and *A National Crime* do not include the Métis experience, it should not negatively reflect on the historical merits of the text. As references on Residential Schools they are, in some instances, the only reliable sources available to date.

An example of unreliability is the short self-proclaimed history that Constance Deiter's *From Our Mother's Arms* presents. This collection of stories from Residential Schools gives a few examples of the personal strife that Aboriginal people faced at these schools but its weak research shows through in several areas. For example, the author

states that “the Métis did not have restrictions placed on them by the Indian Act and were not affected by the residential school experience” (5).

It does speak, though, for the current state of Residential School history, which is that it is generally a new topic and, in the search for information on these schools, caution should be taken in assessing the sources and historic methodology that is used in the creation of these stories. Deiter’s book only uses a limited number of sources and the author makes several very broad statements based on few sources. The story in *From Our Mother’s Arms* would be better addressed if it had a narrow focus interpreting only selected material rather than broadly addressing Residential Schools in general.

Roland Chrisjohn, Sherri Young and Michael Maraun’s *The Circle Game* is a social/psychological review of the ‘genocidal acts’ of the Canadian government on Aboriginal people. It is a far more dramatic interpretation of the Residential School legacy than Miller and Milloy present as it goes on to describe the government’s actions as not criminal but as a crime against humanity. It draws many connections between the treatment of Aboriginal Canadians with events such as the Holocaust and acts of mass genocide where intentional government policies resulted in the demise of an entire ethnic group. The positions of *The Circle Game* may be disturbing to some, but are necessary historic views of the Residential Schools that must be included in the general survey of Residential School literature.

Chrisjohn’s text reflects on the perspective that many Department of Indian Affairs policies on “ ‘Half-Breed’ attendance at Residential Schools” were serious decisions based on race and how implementation of these policies were wide reaching and extremely harmful to Canadian race relations. Similar to other Residential School texts,

*The Circle Game* makes no specific reference to the Métis but it is a recognized social/psychological overview and must be used as a key tool in adding to the history of the colonization and assimilation of the Métis.

Themes of genocide and Residential Schools are elaborated on by American writer, Ward Churchill. Churchill does not under-emphasize the seriousness of the crimes that both Canada and the United States committed against Aboriginal people through their administration of Residential Schools. In his 2004 book *Kill the Indian, Save the Man*, Churchill explores the genocidal impacts of Residential Schools in both the American and Canadian systems. Similar to research brought forward through Chrisjohn, Young and Mauran's work in *The Circle Game*, Churchill provides a great deal of support for a series of claims that Aboriginal people have against their governing nations in regards to human rights violations that occurred over a century or more. He provides an updated history of the Residential School system by using historical background on Canadian schools from Miller and Milloy with his own views of these schools as tools for genocide through "slow death". (Churchill 44) There are no specific mentions of the Métis but he provides, without question, evidence that Canada and the United States calculated large-scale genocide against Aboriginal people through Residential Schools and their aftermath. It is important to note that Churchill aids Canadian Aboriginal people by emphasizing the international scope and magnitude of the issue of Residential Schools in this country.

Canadian authors Dean Neu and Richard Therrien wrote *Accounting for Genocide* under the premise that a great deal of Canada's accounting procedures provides evidence of systemic genocide against Aboriginal people in Canada. The authors use several

examples of specific legislation that Canada has instituted since confederation as well as long-term policies including those involved in the administration of Residential Schools. There is little mention of specific actions that were taken against the Métis but Neu and Therrien provide a great deal of evidence of long-term bureaucratic manipulations that the Métis have been subjected to for generations. Their argument is clear and the relationship between Canada's bureaucratic manipulations over Aboriginal affairs can be closely tied to a pattern of systemic-sanctioned genocide. Like the Residential School system, many of the actions described by Neu and Therrien remain largely unchecked and overlooked by the Canadian public.

### **Métis History**

The nature of Métis identity, Métis social and political structure and existing history about the Métis lends to varying interpretations of what the 'true' Métis story is. In the investigation of the education of the Métis and the struggle between provincial and federal jurisdiction over the Métis, one is drawn into a history based mainly on oral histories and traditional knowledge because Métis people do not remember things the same way as the written records record events. Many primary sources on the Métis are spread between Church and Missionary records as well as various federal and provincial archival records and the constantly revised history represented in contemporary literature. Two such revisionists, Fred Shore and Lawrence Barkwell, have documented the social condition of the Métis through the collection of oral histories and traditional knowledge in *Past Reflects the Present: The Métis Elders Conference*. The topic of both Residential Schools and the general education of the Métis are raised in several instances. This

collection best emphasizes the point that a history of the Métis experience is best documented from a regional standpoint. It is difficult to generalize the Métis experience into one universal history because Métis communities are dynamic and unique and the conditions in each community often dictate the type of education that was available to them at the time.

Where a Métis community is located and whether or not it is on the periphery of a First Nations or non-Aboriginal community was a major factor in Métis attendance at Residential Schools. Again, lifestyle also played a role; Métis who were considered to be living an ‘Indian Mode’ of life (Logan “Métis Experiences and History and Residential Schools” ) would be considered for admission while those living the ‘country mode’ of life (ibid) were considered already assimilated and they were not allowed admittance to the schools. Shore and Barkwell’s collection of oral histories and their historical interpretations of these oral accounts are an accurate picture of the diverse nature of Métis education and the treatment of the Métis by non-Aboriginal society.

A specific account of Métis access to education comes in D. Bruce Sealey’s “The Education of Native People in Manitoba” in *Monographs in Education*. While dealing only with the history of Manitoban Aboriginal peoples, it probably gives some of the best evidence of all of the options that the Métis had with regards to education. In some cases, they had no choice at all and the only federal government concession made to the Métis was the Scrip process. Otherwise, they were left to slip through the cracks of government policies and, in some cases, were not given the opportunity for formal education at all. Sealey covers the range of both First Nations and Métis experiences in Education, starting with the Aboriginal system of education that existed before

colonization. In this range of educational opportunities, both positive and negative, he mentions the Métis experience at Residential School. In the final analysis, his findings result in one of the first truly inclusive histories of Métis education.

Sealey's history helps to put into perspective the current state of Métis political policies on education. Historical accounts document the inconsistencies in Métis access to education in any school system. The inclusion of the Residential School system is key to his thesis, and although Sealey wrote it in 1980, it is still one of the better contemporary histories on this topic.

Larry Chartrand was commissioned by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (A.H.F.) to review historical literature on the Métis experience for the A.H.F. research department. Chartrand's report makes the suggestion that the literature review is only a start and more research must be done to get a more final and accurate record of Métis experiences. Chartrand exhausted sources from across Canada from archives, published and unpublished literature as well as personal interviews. Chartrand's research reinforces the importance of Métis based research, especially in the area of Residential Schools. As he notes:

Based on research conducted thus far it is possible to make some tentative recommendations for future research. First, there is material on Métis participation in residential schools in Canada. This material is largely in the form of unpublished and inaccessible historical documentation.

Considerable time and resources would have to be set aside to adequately find all materials. It is hard to tell if most have been uncovered by this research effort and that this review only scratched the surface of what

exists. For some, like Professor Miller, it could take up to 15 years to gather necessary documentation. (15)

### **Residential School Literature**

One of the first outlets that survivors found to express their remembered traumas was in stories, poems and other creative writing. Residential School literature often involves remembering, resistance, decolonization and personal healing for the writer. The artistic expression involved in the writings of Residential School histories provides writers and readers with an outlet that is not available anywhere else. It allows the voice of the Residential School Survivor to engage a public audience as their words transform feelings and trauma into something that engages survivors with those willing to learn about their experiences.

Writings by Métis survivors and Métis authors are featured in Linda Jaine's *Residential Schools: The Stolen Years* and Agnes Grant's *Finding My Talk* where First Nations, Métis and Inuit authors contribute to the collections by providing a voice for the survivors. What is revealing about the Métis writers, Maria Campbell, Mabel James, Edith Dalla Costa and Mary Cardinal Collins in particular, are their representation of Residential School memories. Each author reflects on memories of home as well as how the Residential School experience shaped those original memories. Their words lend themselves to the general Métis Residential School survivor experience and they also provide context for how survivors' stories are or should be presented. Presentation of their stories and words is always an act that extends far beyond the writing itself.

Residential School stories, poems and other creative writing are courageous. Authors and editors like Jaine and Grant have given a voice to generations. As Janice Acoose states in Jaine's collection:

As a child, I tried to tell anyone who would listen about those night visits to our dorm, the cruel punishments, and the deadly threats but my voice was silenced by my family's fears, the community's pressure, and the church's power. As a result, I grew up believing that what I felt, heard, and saw was not real! (6)

These stories do something that the histories and primary documents cannot. They not only inform but promote courage and resilience in other survivors. While Métis were being excluded from written history on Residential Schools, they were consistently being included in creative written literature. One of the broader objectives that written literature achieves in terms of resistance, remembering and support for survivors does not decipher between First Nations, Métis or Inuit. While historians and academics were willing to overlook Métis stories because of the barriers and research challenges that they faced, creative writers and editors did not give a second thought to questioning the Métis experience at Residential Schools.

The written literature has a similar impact on oral histories in terms of informing the Métis experience. When Métis, as oral historians, reflect on Residential Schools, the question of Métis attendance is fairly straight forward. Written historians rely on primary, archival documents which are notoriously restricted by legal action and often hide Métis attendance overall. Oral historians, on the other hand, have generations of information from their community. Oral historians and written literary authors draw on

human experience and community memory. They draw from a pool of truth that is readily accessible to them and more reflective of the actual experience of a Residential School Survivor. Research methodology writer, Qwul'sih'yah'maht-Robina Anne Thomas who learned about Residential Schools for the first time in community college, not through books or written articles, spoke with a survivor, Alex Nelson:

Alex's story devastated me. He shared his experiences at St. Michael's Residential School in Alert Bay, B.C. Today, I cannot remember the specific details of his story, but the sense of trauma I experienced remains absolutely clear. As well, the sense of that this experience was not a thing of the past, but continued to play itself out in Alex's everyday life was abundantly clear. (Brown and Strega 238)

Clearly, there are ways that oral histories and written poems, stories and literature can inform and transcend in providing a rare understanding of the Residential School legacy.

The rift that was created between the Métis and the churches is often reflected upon by the Métis and Métis survivors. The Métis were, for a long time, connected to the Roman Catholic church and Métis children were some of the first children to be 'reached' by church missionaries in the west. Through acts of colonization, racism and the administration of Residential Schools and other church-schools, the churches started to lose the Métis' trust. Métis writer, Marilyn Dumont describes this rift in her poem "Still Unsaved Soul":

If I hear one more word  
about your Christian God  
I'm gonna howl

I'm gonna crawl outta my 'heathen'  
skin and trick you  
into believing I am the Virgin  
Mary and take you to bed.  
If I hear one more line  
about your white church  
I'm gonna start singing and dancing  
with all my 'false gods'  
in a giveaway dance and honour  
you with all the 'unclean' sheets from my bed.  
If I hear one more blessed thought  
or witness one more holy act  
I'm gonna throw up  
35 years of communion hosts  
from this *still unsaved soul*.

(Dumont 37)

## Chapter Three

### Methods

This study required sensitivity to several different issues dealing with both the Métis and Residential Schools. Métis history, in its written form is still being revised from the early versions written in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Residential School history is also a relatively new history as it has only been in the last twenty years that many survivors who know the truths about life at Residential Schools have felt the encouragement to come forward with their stories. Métis and Residential school histories are fairly contemporarily written histories often revised and both are associated with traumatic legacies. Personal interviews, review of recorded interviews, archival research, secondary-source research and an intentional mix of Indigenous and historical methods were used in this study.

In order to write the most respectful interpretation of the Métis experience at Residential School, Indigenous methods helped to investigate both Métis and Residential school history. The experience of a Residential School Survivor is an inherently Indigenous experience and the context that these experiences are set in are the largely marginalized lives of the Métis. Traumas, power-relations, historical revisionism, political trends and post-colonialist considerations required transposition of different methods. Archives and written secondary sources provided a great deal of background on how the Métis were allowed into Residential schools but the sources had to be read mindfully with consideration for the colonizer's voice. Oral histories and community histories were invaluable sources for the survivor's experience but several considerations for Indigenous methodologies had to be utilized to respectfully use the knowledge and

stories shared by survivors. Numerous pre-recorded and pre-written interviews were used. As a collective group, Residential School survivors are always, on some level, cognizant of the role they have to uncover the hidden criminal secrets of Canada and the churches while still trying to protect themselves from continued re-traumatization. Asking survivors to share or re-share their story is a considerable favour to ask in the name of research; therefore, where possible, pre-recorded stories were used.

Métis scholars are marginalized by their proximal location to the mainstream and First Nations 'centres' while their scholarship also faces two spheres of power. Modern Métis are not only working constantly to 'define' themselves according to the dominant centre but they are also facing another front since they are forced to compete with other Aboriginal groups for funding and research. Dominant mainstream funders support the popular pan-Aboriginal models and usually leave the three distinct groups to function on their own. (Lamouche 4) First Nations are a dominant voice in Aboriginal research and, therefore, they create an academic criss-crossing of centres. Unlike many First Nations, Métis communities in general have not been "researched to death" like their First Nations counter-parts.

It may be easy to transpose Métis research into one of the popular Indigenous methods in order to suit the needs of the Métis. However, the question lingers as to whether or not their needs will be met in the end. In the same way that Métis communities worked with their marginalization in the past, Métis scholars today have been asked to do the same. Without the necessity of adopting a centre and with the opportunity of finding a 'space in-between' to create their own methods, the Métis are left in a unique situation.

Defining Métis methods, in terms of this study did not simply mean creating a heterogeneous mixture of Indigenous and mainstream methods. It was more of a 'Métis' process than that. It was never a simple merger of two methods, Western European and Aboriginal. It was a choice made dependent upon which method benefited the study at the time. For example, completing a study on factors that affected Métis attendance relied essentially on finding the best way to inform the study. Personal interviews, reflections on family stories and histories and visiting Métis communities revealed most about how infrequent education opportunities were for the Métis. The interviews and 'Indigenous' methods provided valuable insight into the impact of the jurisdictional gap as well as the serious inconsistencies between the church, provinces and federal government. There was information gathered by what most would consider Indigenous methods that could not have been obtained in other ways.

Conversely, information on classification of the Métis, per capita attendance, school location and specific government policies were found in archival documents and books. The Métis knew what happened to them, how they got to Residential Schools and what happened to them there, but what was missing was the information on why some attended and some did not. Information on government policies and the reasoning behind the many inconsistencies and treatment of the Métis were revealed through Western academic research. Using what was best and most beneficial in both methods helped to create the results of this study. Making the best of both is what many consider a truly Métis trait.

In many cases, Métis communities use similar methods to those of First Nations to share and transfer knowledge. In other communities, Métis values often differ from

the range of commonly accepted First Nations values and methods. Identifying if one should or should not expand their methodological thinking in research to encompass Métis-specific values is possibly a method in itself. A researcher entering any Indigenous community comes with their own pre-determined perceptions as well as their own ideas of appropriate and respectful protocols. Unique Métis community histories that date back to the early origins of Roman Catholic and Protestant, French and English influences have impacts on the social standards of Métis communities today. Over hundreds of years some of the oldest Métis communities in Canada have created social values and protocols that are shared among other communities as well as some that are unique to only one community. A researcher's knowledge of a community's history and current social standards are essential to respectful entry into the Métis community. Another essential component is being able to adapt to variations in community assumptions. Métis values have been derived through community development and historical factors. A respectful assumption to make about Métis communities is often to make no assumption at all.

The roots of Métis methods of research begin by acknowledging that one cannot accept pre-conceived notions of accepted Aboriginal or Western methods. Acknowledging that Métis methods are not a perfect fit in Aboriginal studies in general is the first step to finding out where they do fit. In a day's work as a Métis researcher I have personally experienced waking up in the morning to present one Elder with tobacco and ceremonial gifts and ended the day at church with tea and Catholic prayer with another old Métis soul. Preparing oneself to become familiar with the community is essential to the engaging with the Métis Elders and community members. Expectations of laughter, teasing and a casual atmosphere are always found in Métis homes. Entering

a home with a gift of food or tea will be met with a warm bowl of soup or cups of tea and incomparable hospitality. Métis homes are full of family and warmth and the Métis researcher must always be ready to provide information about his or her family tree and just which road or road allowance your family came from. You soon figure out how you are related or how your friends are related and, without knowing it, you have just completed a series of tests unquantifiable by Western methods. If you have been lucky enough to be greeted by the Michif language, you are in for a test and a treat. You will be taught the language without realizing it and go home with more than you expected. Michif is a “laughing language” (Flamand 2005) and where it is spoken, people are always smiling. This is just a sampling of Métis practice that is difficult to deal with in anything other than with a Métis worldview.

It is only after years of trial and error that I put what I learned from the old people to a test - a western style academic test. Stories of Lebret became ‘connections to place’, gifts to the old people became ‘honoraria’, lunch with Métis friends became ‘protocols’ and attending ceremonies and gatherings became ‘studying’ community profiles.

Travelling with my grandmother to her home in Lebret, Saskatchewan is an experience that cannot easily be written or theorized about, but I will try. My Grandmother remembers where the saskatoons are in the valley. She points them out, giving directions only by landmarks and trees, never by road numbers. On legs that have carried her for over 8 decades, she navigates her way through the ‘saskatchabush’ to the ripe Saskatoons. My Grandmother’s arthritic hands pick the berries twice as fast as my young hands do. Her ridicule of my slow methods is what teaches me. With my back to her I try to pick faster. This is when Grandma tells me stories that I have never heard

before - when no one is looking. She remembers her mother, her school days and even the songs the Oblate brothers would chant out on Echo Lake that could be heard throughout the Qu'Appelle Valley, and the sounds she would hear as she slept at the Qu'Appelle School. She tells me about her school girl pranks on the nuns, her dreams, her memories and, in between, she sneaks handfuls of berries.

Grandma will not tell her stories to a tape recorder and she thinks it is ridiculous to take notes and she does not agree with my fascination with the Métis way of life. Everything my Grandmother, Aunt and Uncle Tillie and Joe Blondeau and Aunt Rose Desjarlais have told me about their time at Residential School and in the valley have provided me with more knowledge than this thesis can hold in its pages. My time in Lebret picking Saskatoons, following the wagon trails, climbing the hills with my father, visiting the Métis farms, are my Métis methods. I created a history in my head in an 'imaginary place' and tried to pass it on to others. What I learned there fuelled my searches through books and archival records.

In terms of Aboriginal/Indigenous methods, holistic world views and scholarly constructs, I have personally placed the Métis on the periphery of these methods. For anyone who has tried to liberate the Métis from this position, they have probably found, as I have, that there is no easy answer to the question of what exactly are Métis research methods. Perhaps it is not a position that one needs to be liberated from. I have found a place for myself on this periphery, the margins. By not securing a formal place in or out of the 'circle' a Métis scholar opens themselves up to more possibilities, more answers.

This is not a Métis thesis only. There are several different methodologies to draw from. In facing the usual Aboriginal research methods, several barriers arise. Use of an

Aboriginal language, in this case Michif, is often brought up. There are strong urges from Aboriginal scholars to use Aboriginal languages and histories from Elders using an Aboriginal language. In terms of the Residential Schools experience, I have learned that few survivors of these traumas have retained all or part of their Aboriginal language. Generations forced to speak English or French still had an authentic experience and their separation from language was a major segment of their experience. Use of an Aboriginal language is not a measure of Aboriginality or the perception of the 'authentic voice' from Elders and Survivors when speaking about Residential Schools.

In this thesis, historical timelines of Residential School have been created from a Métis point of view. Histories start at a contact and post-contact period during the fur trade and extend to the present day. Written accounts of oral narratives, photos, archives, interviews, literature, poems and stories have all been explored to create the collected findings of this thesis. Interviews have been conducted with survivors of the Residential School, Elders, Métis community members, academics and archivists. Archival searches have been extended to the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, the National Archives, the Glenbow Archives and the Saskatchewan Archives board.

Writing on Residential School history is an exercise in Aboriginal-Canadian relations and, more importantly, in human relations. The damage that these schools inflicted on Aboriginal Canadians will be visible for generations. Conducting research in Residential School attendance is a responsibility that can take a life of its own and a researcher can anticipate passing through a series of emotions that come from entering such an overwhelming legacy of trauma. (Aboriginal Healing Foundation 71)

The first months and years spent involved with studying Residential Schools were a shock to me. One could not anticipate how stories, photos, records and literature can personally impact a researcher. Feelings soon attached themselves to each piece of the legacy that I started to uncover. I was impacted by the attendance of my grandmother, great-grandmother, aunts and uncles at Residential School. I had to learn that I had to abandon all pre-conceived ideas about the schools and how the schools impacted families. In return, I learned more about my Grandmother and entire family by expanding my understanding of the schools.

I defy anyone to study the legacy of Residential Schools without emotion. When questions of objectivity in research arise, I have one easy answer. There are stories and concepts involved with this legacy that are indivisible from emotion and subjectivity. Social sciences methodology meets Aboriginal research, meets the Métis experience, meets the trauma that the students experienced and the result is a series of concepts that overlap as well as stand alone. In order to find the Métis place in the Residential School legacy and produce an ethical and thoughtful study, I chose to draw from several methods.

Personal interviews and accounts give words to the range of emotions involved in sharing stories of the Schools. Survivors, Elders and teachers shared their words about the trauma they experienced and left me speechless in the process. The treatment of students, their daily life, life-long impacts and the historical content came to life as oral histories. Archival records provided another point of view and contributed information on government and church context to the legacy. Archival records answered questions that neither the interviews nor the literature could. With very few historical predecessors

on this topic, primary source documents were key to the study. However, Indian Affairs and provincial governments often re-categorized Residential School records and that made them hard to find and to cross reference. Popular misconceptions about the nature of innocuous and dusty archives are not borne out by the Residential School records. They are an indispensable source in understanding the problem.

Residential school archives are actively restricted in many cases and are commonly scrutinized by lawyers for the many court cases that are a result of the legacy of the schools. The explosion of personal and class action suits have prompted government and churches to restrict massive volumes of records. Litigious safety has dominated over historical aims. Protection of government and church officials and funds has taken priority over genealogies, histories and the pursuit of truth. A review of Residential School content is less of an exercise in 'filtering' through hundreds of years of documents but more of an extraction of a few unrestricted 'gems'. Reading the archival material also requires care in the interpretation of their content. Files from the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Saskatchewan Archives Board and the National Archives were used for research.

Accessing information specific to Métis experiences at Residential School took careful and creative cross-referencing of all government archives. One file or set of fonds was found named "Halfbreed attendance at Residential School", all other information was found in files under various other headings. Individual school files, Indian Affairs "Black" series from western Indian agents, files on Métis, the Northwest Rebellion, "destitute halfbreeds" and western Canadian small town or community files all provided key information for this study. Correspondence and reports from Indian

Agents had first-hand accounts of Métis-community relations. Many of the archives provided evidence of their policies towards the Métis as well as honest accounts of the colonial mindset that created the policies. Accounts and correspondence from teachers and school officials, listed in general Residential School files also revealed a great deal towards their thoughts of “halfbreeds”, social hierarchy that existed in the schools and the expectations or lack of expectations that they had for students.

Restricted archives and files were a constant barrier to accessing research and the lack of secondary sources on Métis and Residential schools also made the archival searches difficult.

### **Cultural Trauma in Métis Memories of Residential School**

Cultural trauma is a recurring theme in Aboriginal Canadian histories. Hundreds of years of colonization and oppression have left Aboriginal communities socially, economically and politically battered. (Adams 6) Memories and representational accounts of any segment of Aboriginal history are part of the revisional factor in new histories and a direct legacy of traumas experienced. First Nations, Métis and Inuit in Canada have all suffered some level of trauma. The impacts of colonization are so far-reaching that it would be hard to represent any of their collective or individual memories without taking the personal trauma of the participants into account. (Aboriginal Healing Foundation 10) This is not a unique phenomenon in terms of the global experience of colonization and the impact that it had on entire cultures. As Alexander has noted:

Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event which leaves indelible marks upon

their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.( I )

Métis people share a pre-determined set of circumstances with other traumatized collectives and Métis lives are forever connected to their colonizers. Their life experiences cannot be extracted from the empire (Adams 3) and empire is part of Métis language, religion, customs and history. The Métis are a unique group of Aboriginal people in Canada because as much as they have inherent Aboriginal connections they are still attached to the empire and the Europeans who constructed that empire. (Barkwell, Dorion and Prefontaine 1)

Métis memories about Residential Schools in particular come from several sources, and the transmission of these memories is a sacred trust that takes both written and oral records into account. (Barkwell et. al. 3) However, the oral method dominated memory transmissions for most of Métis' history. Since the earliest connections to the fur trade in the late 1700's and early 1800s; written records have been kept as well but usually by non-Métis recorders. The format of both the methods of communication and the histories that are being transmitted take shape in layers. These layers that create a larger history include the experiences themselves, the interpretation of the teller, and the circumstances of the time.

Oral Métis history is not usually accepted as legitimate history by most mainstream researchers. In addition, the use of the Michif language and other Indigenous-style oral histories has been traditionally discriminated against. (Barkwell et al. 14) Despite this, the oral method has remained a major component of Métis societal memories while it has taken hundreds of years for this method to be accepted in the

Canadian mainstream. (Barkwell et al 22) While memories circulate orally through Métis communities keeping alive their own versions of their histories, the same histories have not been circulated in mainstream societal memories. This leaves Métis histories open to misinterpretation. At the same time, written records accompanied Métis oral histories, especially in the early days of the fur trade and Western Canadian expansion when trader, missionary and surveyors reports were in vogue. (Barkwell et al. 26) The usual practice, however, was to accept these misinterpreted and misrepresented records as the only valid source of information on the Métis. Needless to say, this has not proved a good thing for current Métis historians who are trying to put the Métis story to the forefront.

### **Embedded Trauma**

Métis memories transmitted from the margins come in both oral and written forms and they can best account for the embedded and internalized traumas. The Métis have spent lifetimes on the peripheries of mainstream and First Nations communities. Cultural trauma is a part of Métis identity. The memories of this trauma have been forgotten, overlooked, remembered or effaced by the Métis, but they are still part of their societal memory. Transmission of Métis histories is a multi-layered interpretive process. It not only considers the Indigenous methods for ethical study but when any segment of Métis history is represented, no matter how innocuous it may seem, the memories still intersect with traumatic elements of colonization, poverty and racism. Embedded trauma is one of the many layers of representational Métis societal memory. Métis societal memories are usually communicated to mainstream written records which mean that Euro-Canadians

occupy the centre. Two versions of history then exist, one circulating through Métis community memory and one through mainstream western, written documents.

As Aboriginal people in Canada the Métis have memories unique from mainstream Canadians. The landscape of their lives is part of Canada's yet still distinct in many ways. The severe marginalization of the Métis in the early years of the Dominion (1867-1900) not only impacted those who were alive at the time but the generations of Métis that followed. Encouraged to hide their cultural identity, entire generations of Métis felt the hardships of separation from the Canadian experience and a share of the economic benefits of Canadian citizenship. (Adams 38) Danieli noted this in 1998:

Multigenerational transmission of trauma is an integral part of human history. Transmitted in word, writing, body language and even in silence, it is as old as humankind. It has been thought of, alluded to, written about, and examined in both oral and written histories in all societies, cultures and religions. (2)

Cultural trauma is layered across generations of Métis and encompasses generalities like discrimination and racism. Even though the collective Métis community experienced some of the broad traumas associated with colonization and assimilation, some Métis individuals experienced their own traumas that were not necessarily experienced by the collective. Collective or individual traumatic memories are not to be judged by their quality or quantity or in comparison to the general experience. Instead, they should be considered for the role they play in comprising identity, both collective and individual. The Métis usually have a sense of camaraderie when exchanging memories of their

childhood, life on the road allowance, school days and family hardships. Even today Métis people meet and reflect, remember and laugh about trials they went through in their lives. Métis lives are always filled with laughter, and resilience was always a strong by-product of the memories of multigenerational collective trauma. Alexander puts it best when he says that

...experiencing trauma can be understood as a sociological process that defines a painful injury to the collectivity, establishes the victim, attributes responsibility and distributes the ideal and material consequences. Insofar as traumas are so experienced, and thus imagined and represented, the collective identity will become significantly revised. This identity revision means that there will be a searching re-remembering of the collective past, for memory is not only social and fluid but deeply connected to the contemporary sense of the self. Identities are continuously constructed and secured not only by facing the present and future but also by reconstructing the collectivity's earlier life. (22)

Collective trauma is evident in Métis communities and an interesting case for remembering specific traumatic events is the case of Residential Schools. Métis attendance at Residential Schools was quite unique and remembering the experience of the schools has been affected by cultural trauma. The result is that the current state of Métis societal memory is connected to their historical response to the trauma caused by the Residential School experience

Popular Aboriginal societal memories in Canada recall trauma associated most often with reserves, poverty, negative health statistics, negative crime rates, racism and

aggressive assimilation. (Armitage 77) Memories of Residential Schools most recently came forward after the investigations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples and public statements made by First Nations leaders, most notably Phil Fontaine. All of these topics and memories have been recorded in oral and written forms for years and are widely accepted in academia as root causes of Aboriginal Canadians cultural and historical trauma. However, anything that is not written in mainstream societal memories can be lost to western, twenty-first century researchers. Without working to change the minds and records of mainstream and Aboriginal writers, topics like Métis student experiences in a Residential School are continually overlooked by society. In the meantime Métis memories are fading, especially those about Residential Schools. (Aboriginal Healing Foundation 4)

Oral histories collected over the last five to seven years have helped to complement the harder-to-find written, archival records. At first there seemed to be little to no societal memory of Métis attendance at Residential Schools. It was as if they had never attended the Schools. Finding information was difficult considering the lack of available resources on the Métis in addition to statements similar to the one written by Constance Deiter in *From Our Mother's Arms* :

It should be made clear that the effects of the Indian residential school system are found only in the Indian and Inuit communities of Canada.

The Métis did not have restrictions placed on them by the Indian Act and were not affected by the residential school experience. (5)

Memories of the Métis attendance at Residential School have been forgotten and effaced. Poor research and misinforming readers can make a once secure memory seem

inaccurate. Simply put, mainstream mistrust of oral histories and First Nations-focused federal archival records, makes documentation of Métis attendance hard to find but not impossible.

The oral histories of Métis survivors of Residential Schools brought life back to the societal memories of their experiences with the Schools. (Daniels ) Furthermore, their oral histories led to further research into both state and church records about Métis attendance. Files created for both Métis and First Nations can be found in Indian Affairs archival records. Combined, the archival files and the body of oral testimonies re-establish an accurate remembrance of the Métis place in the Schools. Effacing and forgetting the Métis Residential School experience is now left to those who are ignorant of the body of written and oral records. Relying on only one source, especially on the written narratives, contributes to the effacement of Métis memories of Residential School. Those who are unwilling to re-examine or re-interpret state and church archives, journals, and tape recordings of oral histories and, more importantly, listen to Métis survivors are delaying the process of remembering.

If current Aboriginal researchers accept the state of Residential School history as-is, Métis memories will be forgotten despite the fact that Residential Schools memories are such an emotional and scarring segment of societal Métis memory. If care is not taken to respect the memories associated with the schools, an injustice will be done to those who have no voice. Thousands of children died in the schools. Even for decades after the close of the schools, students discharged from the schools lost their lives to abuse and alcohol. The collective and individual traumas from Residential School crushed life chances for Aboriginal people in their homes and communities.

(Chansonneuve 72) Injustices that arose from the Residential Schools transcend the scope of Aboriginal consciousness to human consciousness. The abuse of children, of whatever culture or age, evokes strong emotions and stirs memory. Holocaust writer Avishai Margalit reflects on such emotions and memory when he says:

Memory, then, blends into morality through its internal relation with caring. And caring, and especially the lack of caring, seems to belong quite naturally to morality. Indeed, some will hasten to add that caring should be regarded as the core attitude of morality. (32)

The responsibility to care for Métis memories of Residential school falls on the commentator. Whether the commentator is Métis or not, they have a responsibility to let voices that were silenced be heard. A “conspiracy of silence” (Danieli 4) appears when memories meet trauma. Memories are more likely to be hidden, effaced or forgotten when they represent a traumatic event. Mainstream Canadian society was a bystander to the Residential School experience. Whether they were direct witnesses to the experience or not, there was a general level of public knowledge of these schools that exists in a public memory. As traumas caused by the schools started to be recalled in a public forum in the 1990’s, a conspiracy of silence started to emerge.

Canadian churches felt the first wave of bystander guilt and denial that resulted from the initial Residential School memories becoming public knowledge. It was hard for churches to take the lead in addressing alarming public claims of child abuse at the hands of their own officials. However, responses to the Residential School legacy were forced by the growing wave of legal claims from Residential School survivors. Yael

Danieli describes a similar public denial that is mirrored in public post-Holocaust responses:

The reactions of society at large to survivors have a significant negative effect on their post-traumatic adaptation and their ability to integrate their traumatic experiences. After liberation, as during the war, survivors of the Holocaust encountered a pervasive societal reaction consisting of indifference, avoidance, repression and denial of their Holocaust experiences. Like other victims, survivors' war accounts were too horrifying for most people to listen to or believe. Their stories were therefore easy to ignore or deny. Even people who were consciously and compassionately interested played down their interest, partly rationalizing their avoidance with the belief that their questions would inflict further hurt. Similar to other victims who are blamed for their victimization. (4)

Remembering Residential Schools and their intergenerational legacy is not the sole responsibility of survivors. Mainstream commentators on this history have their own role to play. When Residential school memories are transmitted through literature, film, museums and archives, the non-Aboriginal commentator has an elevated responsibility to be as accurate as possible. As Residential School memories become a part of the public domain, sensitivity to cultural trauma has to be included. As Kavanagh notes:

Understanding something of the personal within the public can be achieved, but it requires very different ways of thinking and feeling. Intellectualizing and problematising, however important, are simply not sufficient in themselves. They need to be accompanied by a kind of

emotional literacy, an ability to work sensitively and astutely with the thoughts and feelings of others. Memory is the pivot of the personal.

(110)

Steps have been taken to preserve a level of this 'emotional literacy' in Residential school memorialization. The fact that attendance of Métis students at the schools was overlooked for so long sends a message to the Métis. It sends them a message that remembrance of their lives is of no consequence to overall Canadian societal memory, when, in fact, remembering Métis experiences at Residential School does have bearing on society's collective conscience. The Métis believe they are not only entitled to equitable rights just like other Aboriginal people but they also feel there is a great deal of injustice to be rectified. Métis involvement in Residential Schools is only one injustice that is deserving of recognition and reparations by church and state. The Métis have a long intergenerational legacy of trauma. What they deserve most is reconciliation, equal treatment and, most importantly, to be remembered.

The Métis have inherited a legacy of trauma, hardships and residual negativity. Generations of Métis deal with barriers commonly associated with being Aboriginal in Canada and, in addition, face barriers that their parents and grandparents passed on to them. In writing a historical record of Métis experiences, the evidence of trauma circulates through the voice of the experienced. There is a need for a mindful exchange of historical evidence between the experienced and the 'commentator' in order to respectfully honour the traumatic events. Even though the range of trauma is broad and the fact that some generations have not been necessarily traumatized at all, the ever present theme of trauma is still undeniable in Métis histories. Dominick LaCapra

describes the decision-making process that must be made between the experienced and the commentator. He uses Derrida's *différance* as a primary example of the resistance against dichotomous binary opposites and he promotes the examination of the space in between, like the space in between the commentator and the experienced. (LaCapra, 20-21) On writing traumatic history, LaCapra states:

I would make a correlation...a correlation that indicates the desirability of relating de-constructive and psychoanalytic concepts. I would argue, or at least suggest, that undecidability and unregulated *différance*, threatening to disarticulate relations, confuse self and other, and collapse all distinctions, including that between present and past, are related to transference and prevail in trauma and in post-traumatic acting out in which one is hunted or possessed by the past and performatively caught up in the compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes – scenes in which the past returns and the future is blocked or fatalistically caught up in a melancholic feedback loop. In acting out, tenses implode, and it is as if one were back there in the past reliving the traumatic scene. (21)

The long-term relationship the Métis have to oppression, internalized oppression and lateral violence is sufficient evidence to prove how a traumatic legacy follows a group of people through history. LaCapra goes on to describe a “fidelity to trauma”:

Those traumatized by extreme events, as well as those empathizing with them, may resist working through (their trauma) because of what might almost be termed a fidelity to trauma, a feeling that one must somehow keep faith with it. Part of this feeling may be the melancholic sentiment

that, in working through the past in a manner that enables survival or a reengagement in life, one is betraying those who were overwhelmed and consumed by that traumatic past. (22)

The feelings of melancholy experienced by Métis when faced with commenting on their history are integrated into the methods of this study. The Métis attachment to trauma and the anger they carry as a result is held on to with such sentimentality that leads one to question if it will ever be resolved.

## Chapter Four

### Results and Findings: Métis Attendance

In spite of claims to the contrary, Métis students did attend Residential Schools, but many factors affected the likelihood that they would or would not attend different schools across the Canadian West. Among these factors were Roman Catholic and Protestant church policies and the policies of provincial and federal governments. Before the Schools existed, the Métis had been actively involved in the education of their children. Work in the fur trade allowed the Métis access to colonial forms of education in the West, Eastern Canada and, in some cases, in Europe. This also provided the Métis with a different context in which to view the Residential Schools. In some Métis communities, such as in remote areas, the Métis were exposed to strictly non-colonial forms of education. (Sealey 6) The Métis have a consistent record of controlling this type of education.

It also needs to be said that Métis-specific research on the Residential School has large gaps and inconsistencies that are related to the colonial record of these schools. Within Métis communities the question of Métis attendance at Residential School is an accepted fact. Oral histories about the schools and their impacts have been circulating throughout the communities for several generations. Outside of Métis communities, the nature of the colonial, federal government records do not allow for a straight-forward interpretation like the oral histories do. The federal government did not encourage attendance of Métis students and churches often manipulated the number of Métis students they had attending their schools to help access more funding. Government records also do not reflect accurate numbers of Métis students who attended the schools.

Indian Agents who created the original records had a very narrow understanding of the conditions in Métis communities. The records clearly reflect colonial and racist stereotypes of the Métis, and all of the records available today must be read with an eye for racist and stereotypical bias about Métis communities. If colonial records are the sole source for historical information, there will be inconsistencies between the content of the records and the oral histories by Métis people. Colonial records give no context to the true economic, social and political situation of the Métis. Most of the records are a second or third-hand account of perceived realities in Métis communities and about Métis education. Contents of the records vary but they have still negatively impacted the perception of Residential School history on the Métis. However, there is still a great deal of historic value in these records when they are read critically, within a post-colonial theoretical context.

Due to the fact that most federal government records are incomplete, inaccurate and often influenced by colonial stereotypes and since many church records are restricted from use for legal reasons, Métis oral histories then should be the starting point in the study of Métis Residential School experiences. Métis attendance and discharge from Residential Schools was not as regulated as that of First Nations students. Mandatory and forcible attendance at Residential School was always a condition for First Nations students but it was not always one for the Métis. (Milloy 46) In fact, Métis parents had a level of self-determination in deciding if they would attend the schools that First Nations did not have. The result was that the Métis fell between the jurisdictional gaps of federal and provincial governments and this created a system of disorganized policies. For the purpose of this thesis, policy changes and factors that influenced the attendance of the

Métis have been structured in a mainstream format, listed in theme groupings. Most of the factors that influenced Métis attendance were external to the Métis, so this chapter has been structured to reflect that influence.

## **The Residential School Mandate: Christianize! Civilize! Assimilate!**

### **The 'Indian Problem'**

Non-Aboriginal Canada has a perception of First Nations people that does not foster understanding between their several communities. Non-Aboriginal perception of Aboriginal people relies on European standards of class systems and racial bias that has created a culture of oppression (Dyck 1) After Confederation, Canada started to expand its empire. In order to curtail American interests in the West, it built a railway to the Pacific and created a homeland for increasing numbers of European settlers; Canada also seriously reconsidered their "Indian problem".

Economic reliance on relations with First Nations in Canada then expanded through the fur trade. Military and political action in Upper and Lower Canada also relied on amicable relations with First Nations. Relationships continued to expand over the years in Eastern Canada. However, the situation in the West would pose more of a 'problem' for Canada. In order for Canada to pursue its own interests it would have to ignore centuries of Aboriginal sovereignty. In doing so, Canadian policies created a level of colonial domination that is sometimes seen by Aboriginal people as nothing short of genocide. (Neu and Therrien 15)

The introduction of deadly infectious diseases, the outlawing of ceremonies, and the dislocation of communities, illegal poaching of the buffalo and aggressive

missionaries, contributed to a wide range of factors that could be expressed as a form of genocide against the Aboriginal people. One of the most visible policies for aggressive assimilation, “civilization” and Christianization was the Residential School system. Non-Aboriginal Canada wanted to turn all of the Indian children into ‘Canadian’ children. In doing so, they hoped they could eliminate the Indian and therefore, eliminate their Indian problem. Residential Schools, assimilation and enfranchisement were all clear government policies that were intended to severely reduce the financial ‘burden’ that First Nations posed to Canada. They would try to alleviate this burden by eliminating First Nations people altogether and the major tool used to reduce this cost were the Residential Schools. (Neu and Therrien 103)

### **The Métis ‘Problem’**

The Métis in the Northwest Territories prior to 1867 had great economic and social success with the fur and pemmican trades. They had established a life for themselves in the West that was considered by the colonizers as a threat to colonial expansion. In 1870, a Métis Provisional Government succeeded in asserting Métis rights to their own land and way of life. By creating the province of Manitoba, the Métis proved to Canada that they had an Aboriginal right to their land. Events that followed the creation of the province of Manitoba in 1870 would create a ‘problem’ for Canada. To colonizers, Métis protection of their land and rights was seen as ‘treason’ and the predominance of French Catholic beliefs in the Métis ways of living was a threat. Protestant, English Ontarians were looking to expand west and their interests became aggressive and soon provoked uprisings by the Métis. Resistance to Canada’s ignorance

and the subsequent uprisings in 1869, 1870 and 1885 greatly altered the government's perception of the Métis. The Métis were now perceived as treasonous rebels and 'enemies' of Canada. Canada proceeded with severe economic and political marginalization of the Métis and this also created a problem for Canada.

Fraudulent practices by the federal government, provincial scouts and land speculators obliterated any hope that the Métis would have for preserving their land through Scrip. Forced from their land by these fraudulent practices and violent racism from protestant Ontario Orangemen, the Métis fled North and West from their homes in Red River. Living on road allowances and persecuted for their beliefs, the Métis now posed a problem for provincial, federal and municipal governments. A jurisdictional struggle began, creating a 'The Métis problem' for all three levels of government as Saskatchewan Superintendent of Schools, E.J Brandt stated in 1943:

The condition of these Métis is deplorable. Large families live in one or two rooms. Children have grown up without learning neither to read nor to write; some can not even speak English reasonably well. I feel that only through education can we help these people and at the same time prevent our Métis problem from becoming more serious. Unfortunately, as I said before, I fail to see how adequate schools can be financed unless some Department of either the Dominion or the Provincial Government accepts more responsibility for these people, who seem to be looked down upon by both the white people and the Indians (Saskatchewan Archives Board)

A major part of what was perceived as the 'The Métis problem' revolved around the question of what to do with the Métis in the West. The Métis were not often welcomed into provincial schools. Rural schools, that were closest to the Métis communities started to open in the west between 1890-1940. (Sealey 40) As the number of settlers grew in prairie farm communities, the numbers of schools increased. The Métis who were turned away from federal-run Residential Schools for being 'too white' were often turned away from provincial schools for being 'too Indian'(M. Bourassa) . In 1941, Commissioner G.J. Matte stated:

To begin with I might say that quite a serious Métis problem exists in Saskatchewan in so far as that most of them are now without lands, living the life of squatters along rivers, lakes, etc. both in the north and in the south. With the advent of the combine and other power machinery reducing to almost nil the need for farm labourers in many cases, these people are no longer able to make a livelihood and are dependent to a great extent on relief. (Saskatchewan Archives Board)

In a letter to the deputy Minister of Education for the province of Saskatchewan, E.J. Brandt, Superintendent of Schools, makes this statement about the Métis:

Some parents even threaten to take their children out of school if more of the Métis attend. On the surface this seems to be a very narrow and bigoted attitude but if we examine the matter more closely from the point of view of health and cleanliness, they may be, at least partly justified. (Saskatchewan Archives Board)

Perceptions of Métis health and living conditions would impact whether or not they would be taken into schools. The same perceptions created a conceptual problem for non-Aboriginal Canadians in their thinking about the Métis. A divide, similar to the one created between First Nations and non-Aboriginal Canadians was also created between the Métis and non-Aboriginal Canada. The divide grew with the schools making admittance decisions based on racial perceptions, living conditions, religious choice and a European-style class system.

While some of the Métis families come and go, in most cases the family connection has been in and about Battleford for the past three generations. Apart from the division between Roman Catholic and Protestant in the town, there is among the Catholic element a division between white and the breeds and a further division between the high caste and the low caste breeds. (Regina, Sask, May 2, 1941, Saskatchewan Archives Board)

J.R. Martin, Saskatchewan Superintendent of Schools, writes in 1941:

the (Métis) children were infected with trachoma, itch or scabies, lice and flees (sic.) and that if the Department of Education were to force them to attend any school the other children would walk out and refuse to go to school...Mr. Burke (teacher) stated that the children were not actually excluded from school but in reality the children were excluded. Mr. Burke stated that should a half-breed child attempt to come to his school it would at once be necessary to apply the health laws and regulations and exclude the child from school until a medical certificate was produced and that the parents would not secure such a certificate, and that on account of home

conditions such a certificate would be of little value anyway.

(Saskatchewan Archives Board)

The Métis were perceived as a burden on both federal and provincial education systems. The 'Métis problem' was believed to have impacted not only education but also health and social services. In the same letter as above, in a request made to the St. Vital Roman Catholic Separate School Division, the 'Métis Problem' is discussed again:

One family of seven or eight children was classified as Métis by the school but was found not to belong to this class when their registration of birth were searched in the town hall. Some of the poorer families move seasonally. There are some cases of families of the same name where one is classed as Métis and the other not. (Regina, Sask. May 2, 1941, Saskatchewan Archives Board)

The Métis were viewed as a different class than both First Nations and non-Aboriginal community members. When the governments were posed with the possibility of delivering services to the Métis, they discriminated against them according to the class standards that they created. Euro-Canadian perceptions of class undoubtedly impacted what the Métis could access and when. Euro-Canadians not only controlled Métis access to education, they, in turn, blamed the inadequacy of the services on the Métis themselves.

The answer to the 'the Métis Problem' that the governments were proposing was often focused on agriculture, carpentry and homemaking skills. The Métis were rarely given opportunities to expand their educational and economic interest in Euro-Canada beyond homemaking and general labour. Residential schools were a popular target for

educating the Métis in the way that provincial and federal representatives felt they should be.

In a letter from G. J. Matte, a Commissioner of Education to Ivan Schultz, Minister of Education in Winnipeg, Mr. Matte describes his recommendations for solving the 'The Métis Problem':

In my opinion it is absolutely essential to have the full co-operation of Métis re-establishment schemes...I might say that very few of the women folk among the Métis know how to properly cook meats, vegetables and fruits. The Sisters are not only organizing the girls attending school in such classes of household science, but are going to endeavor to encourage the mothers to take part. They have also started sewing and knitting classes and we have purchased a sewing machine to start with. For the boys attending school one of the Sisters has opened a class in manual training, such as wood work...In my candid opinion our regular public school course of studies is absolutely inadequate for these people, and I am glad to learn that your Department has appointed a special committee to investigate the type of curriculum necessary for the Métis

(Saskatchewan Archives Board)

He goes on to state his vision for the Métis, in his projections of Euro-Canadian society:

I believe it is obvious that what is needed more for these people in the matter of education is moral and manual instructions so that they will not only become self-supporting but that their standard of living will be raised. I do not expect that we will be able to make farmers out of them, but by

growing good gardens and farming on a small scale to supplement their meager trapping and fishing returns the present adult generation will certainly be uplifted. Then with a proper curriculum in the school the coming generations can be molded in such a way, I am sure, that they will be able to go out in the world and make their own living, eventually being absorbed. (Matte, June 19, 1941, Saskatchewan Archives Board)

Similar to the 'Indian Problem' the "Métis Problem" was the government's concern with having to pay for Aboriginal rights and services. Governments were able to see value in resources, land and wildlife that they appropriated from Canada, but they were not willing or able to see value in the people they took it from.

Mr. Pachel (Reeve of Rural Municipality, Crescent Lake, Saskatchewan) objects to paying anything in way of relief or medical care for these Métis, claiming they pay no taxes, are squatters and practically transients as they move about so much. I pointed out if they were residents of the R.M. it should be responsible for relief and medical care. (September 22, 1942, Saskatchewan Archives Board)

Municipal, provincial and federal governments used the 'The Métis Problem' as a prototype experiment to try different methods of assimilation. Creating co-op style farms and widening the jurisdictional gap between governments allowed each government to find a scapegoat in one another when ignoring Métis needs. Education was considered under the same scheme of assimilation and the co-op farming option. "Education of the children of the Métis is one phase of a larger problem – the adjustment to our mode of living." (November 21, 1939, Saskatchewan Archives Board)

This viewpoint adopted by federal and provincial governments would have direct impacts on decades of Métis attendance, discharge and experience at Residential School.

### **Admittance and Discharge of Métis Students to Residential Schools**

The Métis attended Residential Schools, and policies that impacted attendance of the Métis at Residential Schools were based on government needs and objectives. Policies would change from year to year, and the churches' application of these policies to everyday administration of the schools was constantly in flux. (Miller, 122) The Métis had become accustomed to changing their lifestyles and living conditions according to constantly changing government policies, and the adaptation they had to make to the education system would be no different. The Métis attendance at Residential School would depend on a combination of their own self-determination and church and government policy. There are seven different factors that, when present, would increase the likelihood of Métis attendance at Residential School. The factors include, but are not limited to the following:

- Per-capita attendance system
- Social class hierarchy
- Religious denomination of the school
- Location of the school
- Métis family history
- Church influence
- Government influence

At first glance, Métis attendance at Residential School seems unpredictable and unquantifiable. After a review of the above factors, Métis attendance starts to make sense in a mainstream, linear format. The Métis always understood why and how they attended Residential School. The gap that needs to be bridged in this understanding is the one between mainstream non-Métis and the Métis who experienced these schools. The following section will examine each of these factors in detail.

### **Per-Capita Attendance**

Federal funds controlled operations of the Residential Schools which were administered and staffed by Roman Catholic, Anglican, United and Presbyterian Churches across Canada. The Department of Indian Affairs was operating Residential Schools as a means to an end. In an attempt to solve their 'Indian Problem' and to assist provinces with their 'Métis problem', the federal government attempted to find the most cost-effective way to administer their grand scheme of assimilation, Residential Schools. With hopes that they would eliminate Indians and the Métis from the Canadian landscape and therefore eliminate a grand financial burden, the Dominion of Canada thought the Residential Schools would be the best route for this plan. (Chrisjohn, Young and Mauran 70) This is one of the major considerations that the Department of Indian Affairs had in mind when they budgeted for one of the most notoriously under-funded programs in Canadian history. (Milloy 38)

Residential Schools were criminally under-funded throughout the entire history of their operation. Hazardous living conditions at the schools were directly impacted by the negligent amount of funding provided by the Department of Indian Affairs. All of the

schools were cursed with little or no healthy food, cramped living quarters, no medical services or supplies and lack of clothing. In some cases, the lack of funds did not even allow for adequate burial of children who passed away while they were at school.

Physical conditions of the buildings themselves, construction, location and items like furnaces and boiler rooms were in a constant state of disrepair. In an attempt to gain more humane conditions for the schools, churches often requested more funding for their schools. The Department of Indian Affairs regulated the amount of funding to schools, not according to requests, but by a per-capita funding systems. Schools with more children would receive more funding. One of the most effective ways that churches would apply for more funding was by manipulation of their attendance numbers. (Miller 127)

Attendance numbers were easily manipulated by the addition of Métis or 'Half-Breed' students to the school enrollment roster. For example, at the Camperville, Manitoba School, churches were even known to go as far as allowing Métis to attend school, cook, clean and sometimes attend mass, but there was often not enough room to allow them to take part in classes. (Flamand) The Métis children would be fitted with uniforms on the days that Indian Agents came to do 'head' counts for per-capita attendance; they would be counted with the rest of the school population and after the Indian Agent left, they would go back to being cooks or cleaners. (Flamand)

In other schools, the Métis were allowed to attend all of the classes, but if the school became over-populated, they would be the first students that would be forced to leave. Some schools were often faced with the possibility of closure due to low attendance. One school often faced with closure was the Washakada School, in Elkhorn,

Manitoba. To try and keep the school open, church officials would move students from the Qu'Appelle School in Lebret, Saskatchewan to Elkhorn. One Indian Commissioner applied this tactic:

I worked hard and got every child out of the Qu'Appelle school who had no right to be there...if it is decided by the Department that we should admit Half-Breeds living as Indians, off the Reserve and if this is the class of persons you want to admit to our schools, I can fill the Elkhorn school in three weeks.(W. Graham, Indian Commissioner, April 17, 1924, Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

Due to the church manipulation of attendance numbers and the strict administration of per-capita funds, many of the records that still exist on attendance and discharge from schools are unreliable, at best. Records on attendance at Residential School have a number of inaccuracies, in part stemming from the per-capita system of attendance control. In many places in the records, the same name is written more than once, family names are omitted and in the cases where the school officials attempted to write the child's original name, the names are illegible.(RG 10, C 8148, Volume 6039, Provincial Archives of Manitoba) Some Métis marked in these records as 'Half-Breed' have no band number listed in their register.

### **Social-class Hierarchy**

Part of the philosophy behind Residential Schools was the concept of Euro-Canadian domination over Aboriginal people and that all Aboriginal children needed to be assimilated into mainstream, Euro-Canadian society. Canada was primarily concerned

with eliminating their ethical and financial obligation to all Aboriginal people in Canada. They thought they could achieve this by eliminating Aboriginal people altogether through their aggressive plans for Residential Schools, enfranchisement and assimilation. With their efforts to be vigilantly frugal, it was no surprise that they would also be hesitant to pay for attendance of the Métis at Residential Schools.

Requests for Métis attendance from communities and churches started to multiply and the federal government was forced to try and regulate the costs involved with allowing Métis attendance. The Department of Indian Affairs created a social-class hierarchy based on the pre-determined stereotypes about First Nations, the Métis and Inuit in Canada. The class system would identify the 'target' groups that the government would be willing to spend federal funds on. Residential School officials from Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta agreed on the following class-based system.

Halfbreeds may be grouped into three fairly well-defined classes:

1. Those who live, in varying degrees of conditions, the ordinary settled life of the country
2. Those who live, in varying degrees, the Indian mode of life.
3. Those who – and they form the most unfortunate class in the community – are the illegitimate offspring of Indian women, and of whom white men are not the begetters.

Those of the first class make claim upon the Government of the Dominion for the education of their children; nor has any such claim as far as the knowledge of the undersigned goes been made on their behalf. The third class are entitled to participate in the benefits of the Indian schools; and in

so far as the afore quoted...when Indian Treaties are made the illegitimate children of Indian treaty women were excluded and payment of annuity money for them on their behalf was refused. That policy appears to have been adopted to discourage illegitimate breeding. As to the second class of Halfbreed the undersigned at once admit that they present a difficult educational problem. But the very difficulty efforts a strong reason against drawing a hard and fast line such as it is drawn. This second class of Halfbreeds may be divided into three groups:

1. Those who live apart from Indians but follow a somewhat Indian mode of life
2. Those who live in the vicinity of Indian Reserves
3. Those who live on Reserves

...what is so readily and so often charged against people of mixed blood is the result of not blood, but environment... for such schools were established to meet treaty obligations towards Indians, but as a means of preventing, in the public interest, a race of wild men growing up whose hands would be against all men and all men's hands against them. (RG 10, Vol. 6039, File 160-1, Part 1, Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

If the government or churches perceived Métis children as living an "Indian mode" of life, as savages or as un-christianized, they would be more likely to take the children into the Residential Schools. The government was aware that, for the case of the Métis, 'illegitimate breeding' and race was a concern for their enrollment procedures. From their point of view the governments had to deal with the Métis' genetic and racial

connections to 'Indians' as well as their way of life. Both 'blood and environment' were considered in their classification of the Métis and those whose blood "showed" by appearances and environment would be more likely to be taken to Residential School for saving by the Catholic and Protestant churches. At its inception, the Residential School system in Canada did not have a mandate towards Métis attendance but after about ten or fifteen years and several church requests, the government proposed these classifications to allow some Métis into the schools.

Creation of a class system allowed for the perpetuation of Euro-Canadian stereotypes and consistently linked their financial objectives to the racially based characteristics of Aboriginal people. The federal government used this class system to directly control how many Métis they would allow into the schools and therefore influence spending on Métis education. Under the conditions of the social class structure Métis would only be educated if they were perceived as part of a larger plan for assimilation.

### **Religious Denomination of the School**

The Métis in Canada have a long standing relationship with both the Roman Catholic and various protestant churches. From early association with the two fur trade systems, the British, Hudson's Bay Company and French North West Company, missionaries in Canada identified with the growing Métis population in the West. English-speaking Protestant and French-speaking Catholic communities formed in fur trade post and depot locations across Rupert's Land and the Northwest Territories through the nineteenth century. Church was a consistent part of many Métis communities

and some of the first teachers in Canada's west were sent to educate the Métis children of trading company fathers and First Nations mothers.

Due to the nature of the French, North West company style of the depot system, the population of French-Catholic Métis often out-numbered English, Protestant communities. Highly populated Métis communities in the West like Camperville, Manitoba, Turtle Mountains, Red River, Lebret, Saskatchewan, Ile à la Crosse were predominately Roman Catholic. Communities like Kinesota and Bacon Ridge were predominately Protestant.

When the Residential School system was in the early stages of development and expansion, the location of the school was often based on missionary and church history. The location of large, established parishes and churches was taken into consideration when the government decided where to build Schools. Large parishes and missions were often located in close proximity to Métis communities as a result of their history with associations to the fur trade. It made sense to the federal government to agree to church requests and to build Residential Schools in these areas. The fur trade system in the West created a landscape pattern of First Nations communities, settler or trader missionary communities and Métis communities in close proximity to one another. All of these factors created favorable conditions for the erection of Residential Schools.

Some of the largest Residential Schools in Canada were Pine Creek Residential School in Camperville, Manitoba and the Qu'Appelle Residential School in Lebret, Saskatchewan which both bordered on large Métis communities. Métis families and communities often had a long-standing relationship with the Roman Catholic church and they would often request that their children attend the schools. Churches would also

encourage Métis attendance and it was this effort by the Métis families and churches to allow Roman Catholic Métis attendance at Residential School that prompted the federal government to set up regulations and classifications for Métis attendance.

### **School Location**

Trends in Métis attendance at Residential School are viewed from two different perspectives. Department of Indian Affairs and church records indicate changes in Métis attendance based on Euro-Canadian values of race and economics. The Métis accounts of attendance at Residential School are based on more logical social and geographical factors. The dynamic nature of Métis communities with several of them varying from rural to urban, First Nations adjacent or mainstream community adjacent created variances in their access to services as well. These variances were more evident to the Métis, as they were the ones who worked to adapt to conditions they were often forced into by government and churches. When the Department and churches made policies on Métis attendance, they would rarely take into account factors that made sense to the Métis.

Residential Schools were placed in what were considered somewhat strategic locations for the Department of Indian Affairs. In some cases they would locate schools in scenic and remote areas. They chose these locations in hopes that the attractive scenery would remind them of home and the location on the crest of a hill or on the edge of a lake would isolate them at the same time. As it turned out, locations often only made students long for home more and geographic location stood as a small barrier for those students who were determined to escape. Emotional and intellectual coercion had a far

greater impact on keeping students in the schools, and location did not work for student retention as much as they had hoped. (Milloy 140)

Large Roman Catholic parishes often attracted the placement of large Roman Catholic schools. Large Roman Catholic parishes were also often associated with the Métis communities and the Métis congregations. Both of these trends often over-lapped and would directly influence Métis attendance at Residential School. As well, the Métis received little or no funding for attending Residential School so they would often have to take transportation into consideration. Schools would be filled with train-cars full of First Nations students who were thousands of kilometers from their homes, but the Métis were often limited to attending schools that were in close proximity to them.

### **Métis Family History**

Another set of variables that was less visible to mainstream and Department of Indian Affairs authorities were those associated to individual Métis family histories. The Department would allow Métis attendance on a per-request basis. Church officials who ran the schools recognized the jurisdictional gap between the provincial and federal government that the Métis fell into. They would often advocate on behalf of the Métis and would challenge government policies to allow the Métis attendance regardless of mandates and policies. (PAM) The Métis would often request that their children be educated at Residential School, and their close relationship with churches allowed them to create agreements with the federal government that would serve Métis interests. Churches had a far better knowledge of Métis communities than the Department of Indian Affairs did and that allowed for more flexibility in affecting Métis attendance.

Some of the arrangements would, at best, be mutually beneficial to both the school and the Métis:

(the) Department will not object to their attending the schools, provided their parents will, as suggested by the Agent deliver a few loads of wood at the school for the winter. ( RG 10, Vol 6031, File 150-9, Part 1, Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

Residential Schools were notorious for their poor food, heat, clothing and general living conditions. If they could make arrangements with Métis families to help supplement their supplies, the government would seldom oppose.

Evidence of a long-term understanding between churches and the Métis can be seen in the flexibility that was allowed to the Métis in their attendance at Residential School. For instance, First Nations women who lost their status by marrying either a non-Aboriginal man or a Métis man and who likely attended Residential School, often received assistance from the schools. If the churches could draw on treaty money or family allowance cheques, they would accept it as tuition for their children's attendance at the schools.

In the case of the Ahdemar family, all eight children including my grandmother were able to attend the Qu'Appelle school in Lebret when the school received payments from my great grandmother, former Qu'Appelle student, Kate Ahdemar a Santee Sioux and a member of Standing Buffalo Reserve . The day that Katherine Ahdemar passed away, all of her remaining children were asked to leave the school the day she died.

(Tom Logan) So, Sisters Rose and Beatrice Ahdemar, at the ages of five and seven were forced from the school and had to be cared for by family guardians. (Tom Logan) As

easily as the Métis could be taken to Residential Schools, they could also be forced out of them. Inconsistencies in policies between federal, provincial and municipal governments and churches directly impacted the Métis and their family access to education.

Racial and social-class based decisions created some of these inconsistencies. Policies were so easily influenced by arbitrary decisions based on the physical appearance of students including eye or skin colour that it could have meant that a student might or might not have been allowed admittance to the schools. Another aspect of Métis life that was accepted and often unarticulated by the Métis, but troublesome for non-Métis were genetic phenotypic characteristics. Métis families had lived for hundreds of years with the tendencies of one dark-skinned parent and one lighter-skin parent producing numerous children of both light or dark skin. Métis children from the same family who looked different were all raised the same by their families and communities. The only people to treat these children any differently were Euro-Canadians. Perceptions about racial features and characteristics influenced Métis attendance at Residential School. In correspondence from Indian Agents that evaluated students at the schools, racial characteristics were often considered. In a letter from Lytton Industrial School, the subject line read "Re: Admission to Halfbreeds into Industrial Schools" the body of the letter included:

There are difficulties in this matter – I had two boys in school- one grey eyes- hair lighter than Indians in texture and colour – very fair skin – the other Indian in all appearances – both of the same mother – the same father acknowledged with. (February 7, 1911, RG 10, File 150-9, Part 1, Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

Characterizations that were unimportant to the Métis, but common to their family histories were used arbitrarily by government and churches to make decisions on whether or not they would admit certain students. Understandings of the Métis family histories varied, but in several cases, these understandings had impacts on how the Métis would be admitted.

### **Church Influence**

Roman Catholic, Anglican, United, Methodist, Presbyterian and various other churches and missionaries across Canada were the origin of most of the moral and philosophical background of the Residential Schools. The Department of Indian Affairs provided input to the philosophies to the extent that they wanted all children at the Residential Schools to be assimilated but, beyond that, the rest of the moral curriculum was left to the churches. With free reign to apply their moral code where they saw fit, churches used their ideals to influence daily routine at the schools, including attendance and discharge procedures.

Nuns and priests at each school viewed both First Nations and the Métis as the 'tragic savage' and considered their role in the schools as an obligation to 'saving' these 'savages and heathens'. In close contact with the Métis communities, churches were able to record conditions and try to help 'save' the Métis as well as First Nations. As noted in a letter from the Dioceses of Saskatchewan and Calgary, July 21, 1896:

While recognizing with thankfulness the support given by the Indian Department of the Dominion Government to the Boarding School and Industrial Schools, established for education and training of Indian

children hereby (expresses) the deepest concern and regret that there are so many children in different parts of the province whose parents have been allowed to leave treaties and are now in a worse off position as the Indians on Reserves. Their children are growing up in utter ignorance without any opportunities of receiving any education whatsoever. The signed would hereby request the Bishop to communicate with the Department and endeavor to attain their sanction to the education of Métis people to the boarding and Industrial schools on the same or as [Indians] footing as the children of Treaty Indians. (PAM RG 10 File 150-9, Part 1)

In response from the Department of Indian Affairs Response, from Minister of Indian Affairs, Hayter Reed:

The Department has no power, even if it were deemed advisable in the face of the large and always increasing demands on the limited resources available for education of the children of Treaty Indians to divert its funds in the direction indicated, the matters affecting the class referred to are not within its jurisdiction. (Hayter Reed, Indian Affairs, July 30, 1896, Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

The government was only willing to offer Scrip to the Métis. This process was highly mismanaged and through fraudulent practices, the Métis were often left with nothing from the Federal government. Recognizing these gaps, churches attempted to provide education for Métis children to save their souls and 'improve' the quality of life that they were perceived to be leading.

Churches would take on the role of advocates on behalf of the Métis. In some instances, it would benefit the Métis and in others, it would be to their detriment. In another letter from the Bishop of Keewatin:

I want to ask you if, in this northern part of the Northwest where Indians are bound to remain in their reserve and are living side by side with the Halfbreeds in the wilds, the children of those Halfbreeds can be admitted in Indian Boarding Schools. (O. Charlebois, Bishop of Keewatin, The Pas, Manitoba, Feb 19, 1917, Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

Many of the positive accounts that came from the Métis survivors of Residential School related to church charity towards the Métis. Many children of parents who were left dispossessed of their land and of financial and food security found a secure home at Residential Schools. Even though they were separated from their parents some children would still receive fair treatment from nuns at the time. They welcomed the education and regular meals that they were deprived of on road allowances or remote communities. Church influence over attendance at Residential Schools re-emphasizes the incongruities that exist in the Residential School experience. For the Métis children that had positive experiences, there were often just as many or more that had negative ones. At different times and different schools nuns could also be less likely to provide charity and more likely to be the vicious abusers of children. To understand the Residential School Survivor experience, one must always consider the role of the church in the students' perception of their entire experience.

## **Government Influence**

With little or no understanding of the realities of Métis life and Métis communities, government influence was often arbitrary and based on financial decisions. Policies created for Métis attendance were created to achieve government aims and were quite often detrimental to the Métis. The most long-lasting and wide-spread influence was the jurisdictional gap created by all levels of government. With little accurate information on the Métis and with dominant ideas circulating about the Métis as ‘rebels’ and ‘Half-Breed’s’, all levels of government were incapable of forming intelligent or consistent policies. While the government was willing to provide the Métis with a fraudulent system of land and money Scrip, few other services were offered to the Métis. The one consistent feature of government policy was their objective to save money. Government efforts were based on reducing the number of Métis at Residential Schools and regulating the Métis that did attend and, in return, church efforts tried to make logical provisions for the communities that they were hoping to serve.

Teachers, nuns and school administration were often operating within a standard set of guidelines that came from the Department of Indian Affairs. Métis attendance was discouraged through the per-capita system limits and other attempts to cut costs at the Residential Schools. When asked to record student attendance, some of the rules specifically stated that “no names other than those of Indian children are to be included in this return.” (Saskatchewan Archives Board; Education File, Add 2., File 48, Ed. Add 2, 48) The importance of submitting returns to the Department of Indian Affairs was emphasized by another rule set by the Department: “No teacher’s salary will be paid until this return has been received by the Department” (Ibid)

Funding for salaries and for the per-capita attendance system depended on the recording systems and registers involved in the administration process. Church officials would try to circumvent all of these administrative procedures and allow the Métis to attend regardless of government policies. Their requests would often be met with standard Department of Indian Affairs statements on the Métis:

It must be remembered that boarding and industrial schools were not established for the purpose of carrying out the terms of the treaty or complying with any provision of law, but were instituted in the public interest, so that they should not grow up on reserves an uneducated and barbarous class.(Ottawa, October 18, 1899 Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

There is no more unfortunate class in the country... What is to keep them from becoming outcasts and menaces to society if they be not taken to Indian Schools, schools established and maintained, be it remembered, not for the mere purpose of fulfilling the conditions of Indian Treaties but in the interest of the commonwealth. (November 9, 1911, RG 10, File 150-9, Vol. 6031, Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

These statements from 1899 and 1911 were followed by the creation of the classes of 'Half-Breeds' that surfaced in Department policies by 1919 and 1923.

Prior to the development of classes of 'Half-Breeds', the Métis were considered rebels and were not considered legitimate candidates for education. Residential Schools started to open in the period between 1880 and 1890; this was a time notorious for Métis

and government conflict. Events surrounding the Métis resistance in 1870 and 1885 coincided with the opening of several large Residential Schools in Canada. The Department of Indian Affairs was initially targeting only First Nations students and the Métis would be handled quite differently. It should have been no surprise that administration of the schools would overlap with government efforts to intervene in the Métis attempts at creating fair governments in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The Department of Indian Affairs was interested in evaluating the Métis and some First Nations in the West and recorded all the names of those that were identified as disloyal to the Government.

It is the intention of the troops to arrest and punish such runners wherever the same may be found and it will be necessary for them, in order to accomplish this, to arrest all Indians, or any suspicious persons whom they may see in order to ascertain whether or not the runners from Riel. And whereas, it is expedient that all good and loyal Indians should know how to act under the present circumstances so as to secure their own safety and the good will of the Government. (November 9, 1911, RG 10, File 150-9, Vol. 6031, Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

The letter was signed May 6, 1885, three days before the start of the Battle of Batoche. The 'Half-Breed' Commission, which used to systematically identify loyal and disloyal 'Half-Breeds, found cooperation from Residential Schools. In a letter from Father Hugonard of the Qu'Appelle school, he indicates his compliance with the 'Half-Breed' Commission:

Sir, I have the honour to inform you that on the demand of the 'Half-Breed' commission I have considered advisable in order to facilitate matters, to allow them to stay here, as business will detain them. I was unable to get your authorization for this before they came. By helping this commission as much as possible it will tend no doubt to keep the 'Half-Breeds' quiet and thereby the Indians also. (J.Hugonard, Principal, Qu'Appelle Industrial School, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1885, National Archives)

It was desirable at the time to make sure that as many Métis students as possible stayed close to the south of Saskatchewan and did not move north to the areas around Batoche. Residential Schools, then, played a direct role in events around 1885 and the long term effects of the 'Half-Breed' Commission were evident in government influence over Métis attendance up to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century. For their part, Métis would continue to seek fair treatment from the Canadian government right through until the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The Métis, in the eyes of church and state were a "problem" that needed a solution and they were a class of people that they would always consider different and often lower than their own class. Racist perceptions and misconceptions about Métis followed the Métis every time they tried to access the rights and privileges meant for all Canadians. Métis were less often considered equal humans and more often considered sub-human, lower-class "problems". Their rights and concerns were not considered, rather they were "dealt with" and their lives were considered inconsequential to non-Aboriginal Canada.

In the next chapter, it will be seen that the detailed experiences that the Métis had while they were at Residential Schools are often connected, in some measure to the

circumstances that controlled their attendance and discharge from the schools.

Perceptions of class, race and social standards affected attendance as well as how they would be treated while they were in the schools.

## Chapter Five

### Métis Experiences at Residential School

“There was no such thing as warmth. No hugs, no love except what we gave each other.”

Angie Crerar, Métis survivor, *Métis Memories of Residential School*, p. 127

#### “We Were Outsiders”

Residential School experiences were never universal. There is no story of survival at a Residential School that can be codified or structured. Stories like this are inherently traumatic and often only truly understood in Indigenous contexts. How else can one articulate how a way of knowing can be altered so severely from Indigenous to Western ways hitting all the points in between. Those points start by being taken away from your family, being separated from your family for a long period of time, being indoctrinated by Christianity, being belittled for everything you know and believe and exposure to racism that is so severe it takes years, even a lifetime, to comprehend how it impacts you. Survivors still have difficulty coming forward and talking about these impacts after even being out of the schools for several years.

Communicating memories of Residential School pose a challenge. Personal and traumatic experiences are individual to each survivor and there is always an effort to try and represent them respectfully. For purposes of this thesis, the experiences of the Métis survivors will be represented by theme groupings. There are recurring themes in Métis experiences at Residential School that were relatively common to all survivors and that had long-term impacts on Métis lives and communities. It should be of interest to all

Métis and Métis communities that even though there were numerous inconsistencies in policies that would or would not allow Métis attendance, long term impacts from the schools are still evident today. Intergenerational impacts from one Survivor of Residential School are often evident in third and fourth generation family members of Survivors. (Ing) Considering the value of family to Métis communities it is hard to ignore how impacts could circulate through a family and inevitably through a community. The recurring themes from the collective Métis Residential School experience are not presented here to necessarily represent the individual traumas but, instead, to represent the impact that these schools have on generations of family and communities.

## **Recurring Themes**

### **The Métis Experience Entering Residential School**

Experiences that the Métis had when they were first subjected to the Residential School were often related to the factors that influenced their attendance. Location of the school, the Métis family history and the influences of the government and churches added to their perception of the entire experience. There were often correlations between the Métis being allowed in as a result of church requests for charitable relief and the state of poverty that Métis families were in. The impoverished conditions that the Métis were subjected to during the first half of the twentieth century also caused disruptions in Métis family structure.

The influence of government welfare, family services and education gave the Métis little choice on self-determining their own life chances. Learning to adapt to the

inadequacies in policy and support was a key to Métis success in the West. The Métis used what little was available to them on the periphery and road allowances and the Residential School system would sometimes provide them with the assistance they needed. Schools would make arrangements for child welfare and family allowance cheques to be taken from Métis families as a sort of tuition for Métis attendance.

(Daniels 34) As Grant notes,

The residential schools came to be used as repositories for children from inadequate homes, whereas today childcare agencies with professional workers would be involved. These children, already traumatized by events in their lives, had to stay at school all year round, and they were the ones who most often suffered further abuse at the schools. (Grant, *No End of Grief* 169)

Often conditions were so demanding for Métis families that parents often saw little choice but to send their children to Residential School, where clothing and food were provided for them. (Daniels 42) One Métis survivor states:

By the time you were 16 in those days they sort of told you school was over because you were cut off from Family Allowance and the Welfare people (social workers) didn't want to look after you anymore. I didn't get much education because we were automatically kicked out in those days if you weren't accomplishing anything in school, especially if you weren't well liked. (Elmer Cardinal in Daniels 72)

Métis attendance at Residential Schools were an abuse of the child welfare system that lead up to the 'Sixties Scoop' when more aggressive measures were taken to take Métis

children away from their families. Measures were taken by child welfare and social services to not only take their family allowance cheques away for Residential School 'tuition', but the Residential School system from the 1930s to the 1950's was also used to take away children. Métis families were evaluated by the Euro-centric government child welfare system and children were swiftly taken from homes that were considered un-fit by Euro-Canadian standards. Abuse by child welfare workers of the Residential School system started to impact Métis families long before the famous 'Sixties Scoop'. One Métis survivor remembers:

We went to the Residential School, taken by social services, it was in 1952, 'cause my mom passed away in 1951. We got to stay with our dad a year and we were taken to Edmonton... We were brought up a very close family; we were together all the time. I think that was the hardest part- losing our mom when the kids were small... We were always together then being separated, that was the sad part hearing your brothers and sisters crying, that was really hard. (Anonymous in Daniels 104)

Damage inflicted on Métis families during the Residential School period was, sadly, only a preview of what they would be subject to during the child welfare abuses of the Sixties Scoop. Relationships with child welfare systems and child and family services continued to have long-term impacts on Métis families long after Métis Residential School attendance started to decline. The nature of Residential School policies on the Métis allowed this correlation between child welfare and Residential Schools to grow. Métis children dealing with being orphaned, living in impoverished conditions, living in conditions that were adequate but perceived as poverty by outside

agencies and those dealing with family break-ups were often the most likely to be taken from their homes to Residential School. (Martha Mercredi in Daniels 91) Métis children were often moving from an environment of family stress to one with no family but filled with stress that was far more damaging and foreign to them.

Métis children who were not forcibly removed by churches or child welfare were taken to Residential School for other reasons. Regardless of the reason, they were exposed to the damaging and foreign life of Residential Schools with the memory of a happy family home still fresh in their minds.

### **Learning about the Métis from Residential Schools**

Whether Métis children had positive or negative experiences overall, during their time at school all of them were subjected the colonizer's ideals of what Métis, 'Half-Breeds' were. The Métis would often learn for the first time, what Euro-Canadians thought of them. Coming from large Métis families and communities, Métis children had little or no concept of Western classes, definitions of poverty or what racism was. Entering Residential School often meant that they were learning about non-Aboriginal Canada for the first time and, at the same time, they were learning what non-Aboriginal Canada thought about them. The most common statement made by Métis Residential School Survivors is: "We were Outsiders" (T. Blondeau)

Too 'white' to be considered eligible for Aboriginal rights and too 'brown' to be eligible for the rights of full Canadian citizens, the Métis were always slipping through the cracks. Being considered outsiders at Residential school was simply a reflection of how dominant Canada perceived Métis roles in the lives of the 'rest of Canada'. Métis

children were picked out by teachers and ridiculed by First Nations classmates for being 'Half-Breeds'. Entering Residential School meant entering an atmosphere of gender segregation, racial persecution and constant ridicule. One Métis survivor states:

The nuns told us, you know, Indians were bad. Now why would they be telling us Indians were bad? It doesn't matter how tiny bit of Indian or white or whatever; they shouldn't say one nationality is so bad, why? We were little Indian kids, us Métis. They called us half-breeds. I hate that word but who are they to say. I felt bad about that when they called us half-breeds...When you do something wrong they call you nothing but an f'ing half-breed. (Anonymous Daniels 58-59)

A racist agenda was promoted in daily life at Residential School. Since government and church objectives for assimilation were of particular importance to school officials integration of racially and religiously based ideals were made daily.

### **Métis learning about First Nations**

The Métis at Residential School were often placed in the 'Half-Breed' class as soon as they entered the schools. The Métis were told by nuns and priests where their 'position' in society was and, in addition, were told also where their First Nations cousins were socially located. The Métis who may have previously thought of themselves as family to First Nations families, were taught by Residential School that they were 'Half-Breeds' and that in some cases, it either did or did not benefit them to be a 'Half-Breed' rather than an Indian. Most priests and nuns could not intelligently decipher between

First Nations and the Métis children but, for those who did, they let the children know about it. Two Métis survivors remember:

Verbal abuse was very prevalent in the schools. I grew up with the concept of Indians being very bad people. I remember in my earlier years, we were taught that all Indians did was raid farmhouses, kidnap women and burn houses.” (Alphonse Janvier in Daniels: 22)

I didn't think Indians were human anymore because of my experience in a residential school. (Elmer Cardinal in Daniels: 77)

Daily reinforcement of mainstream-driven class structure or placement of Métis in a lower or higher 'class' than First Nations students happened at every Residential School and it was a decision left up to the individual priests and nuns. It would not take much investigation to see how those racial categorizations would be perpetrated in communities once students returned home from school.

### **Physical and Sexual Abuse**

Contemporary Aboriginal contexts view Residential School abuses in a holistic framework. They often see the schools negatively for the damage that they inflicted on the whole person. Impacts on spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical health of all survivors and descendants of survivors created imbalances in people that were, at one time, in constant balance. An interesting paradox is found in the effect of physical and sexual abuse on children at Residential school. Children as young as four years old and as old as sixteen or eighteen years old were subjected to, in some cases, quite severe

physical and sexual abuses at Residential School. These abuses never occurred in isolation. As devastating as the abuses were to the body of a young Aboriginal child, the abuses rarely stood alone. Sexual and physical abuse was often combined or coincided with emotional, intellectual and spiritual abuse. A body bruised, broken and molested often had a heart, mind and soul that was broken as well.

The devastation of physical or sexual abuse was not something that respected class or racial distinctions. Métis and First Nations children were both subjected to these abuses and if emotional or intellectual abuse about their racial classification accompanied it, it only compounded the impact on their self-worth and self-esteem. A Métis survivor recalls:

The type of discipline... what bothered me...I got used to the beatings. Like a dog, I think many of us were treated like dogs. I think if you beat up a dog enough times it will learn to speak as well, and I always felt like I was treated like a dog because of the beatings I endured. (Elmer Cardinal in Daniels 73)

No child at any school should be beaten unconscious, beaten to death, be infected with a sexually transmitted disease after being molested by a member of the clergy, beaten for speaking their own language or be abused just for being born. These were daily realities for over 100 years of the Residential School era for generations of children. Physical and sexual abuse were sometimes daily realities for Métis students and any written descriptions of the extent of these abuses, like the other abuses, will always be under-emphasized in this format. Large cemeteries, holding hundreds of children, exist on the grounds where every Residential School once stood. Thousands of children died

from disease, neglect and abuse and they still lie at Residential school. The memory of those children should speak louder than just survivor testimony alone.

## **Civilization**

Many hands were drawn against the Métis and Aboriginal children in the name of 'civilization'. Mandates to civilize and assimilate '*les sauvages*' were part of the motivation for clergy to abuse students. The Métis were 'Half-Breeds' and, therefore, were thought of as half-civilized and half-assimilated and clergy often felt that half of their job was already done. Assimilation, christianization and civilization were the colonizer's way of justifying every crime they committed in the Residential Schools.

One Métis Survivor describes her thoughts on assimilation:

The school did not allow us to speak our language which I could never understand why – later on in years I understood why they were doing it – they were trying to assimilate us. In terms of culture, I have a lot of resentment towards the church and government, not so much towards the people that were involved in doing it. I was raised very traditionally in the country but a lot of that was taken away. I was told that those ways were dying and those ways were no longer prevalent in our society. At a point in my life I started to believe that it was true and I turned away from my culture, even my own language. There was a stage in my life where I thought I shouldn't be speaking my language and that had a direct impact on my children who lost their language because I chose not to speak

fluently with them all the time, and that makes me sad sometimes.

(Alphonse Janvier in Daniels 23)

The Métis saw opportunities in assimilation that they could use to their advantage. Perhaps if they listened to their teachers, nuns and priests, life outside of school would somehow be easier and feelings of being an outsider could subside. What may not have been known at the time is to what extent the Residential schools were actually microcosms of Euro-Canadian society and how the Métis would not stop encountering assimilation and racism in their communities. The Métis that later identified themselves as French, Ukrainian or British to gain services or escape racial persecution often picked up these tactics as learned behaviours from Residential School.

### **Cultural Annihilation and Forced Forgetting**

The good God he wouldn't have made babies come from mommies and daddies if he didn't want them to stay home and learn their language and know their peoples. (Maria Campbell, *Jacob*, in Jaine, p.21)

Two world views, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, created two processes of assimilation. The effort to induce new languages, new culture and Euro-Canadian world views into young Aboriginal minds worked simultaneously with cultural annihilation. At the same time that First Nations, Métis and Inuit children were forced to learn new ways of knowing, they were also forced to forget and banish all of their old ways. Students were forced into the act of forgetting and, as adults, it is something that they try to reconcile. Reclaiming language, traditions, knowledge, customs, culture and family memories are some of the most universal experiences that all Survivors have. Forced

education was always paired with forced forgetting. Annihilation of memories of their physical, spiritual, emotional and mental 'homeland' was something even the survivors with the most positive memories of Residential School still experienced.

Children worked so hard everyday to try and remember, in the face of forced forgetting. One Métis survivor recalls:

...the girls held secretive puberty rituals when one of them began to menstruate. They did not know how to conduct the rituals, but they knew rituals were required so they made up their own, desperately clinging to familiar ways. They ran in circles because they knew the circle was an integral part of the culture. But often the rituals were hastily abandoned when a supervisor came into view. (Edith Dalla Costa in Grant, *Finding My Talk* 125)

## **Work**

Another common reflection on the Residential School experience that almost all survivors remember is the amount of work that they had to do. Survivors often describe the relationship they had with work and Residential Schools as 'slavery' and 'forced labour'. Since Métis attendance was often based on the amount of funding they could access from other sources, like family or church charity, Métis work in the schools would sometimes be different than work for First Nations children. The Métis would sometimes be assigned more work duties, in order to compensate for tuition deficits. In other cases, there would be little or no room for the Métis students in class rooms, but their numbers were needed in residences for the per-capita attendance system so they would be

delegated to a work detail. Cleaning, sewing, carpentry, farm work, cooking and gardening were common duties for all students, but it would not be unusual for the Métis to be assigned extra chores to earn their tuition. (Flamand)

Work duties were defined by the church and specific roles were always divided by gender and class. Boys were delegated to work in the fields, farms and carpentry shop and girls were cleaning, sewing, cooking and housekeeping in the nuns' and priests' residences. (Daniels 64) "The way they taught us things in those days was that children didn't really need to be well fed you know, just to keep us alive to work." (Theresa Meltenberger in Daniels 28)

## **Food**

The amount of work that students were forced to do in gardens, kitchens and farms while they were in Residential School was never equal to the quality of food they were able to eat. Fresh vegetables, milk, meat and eggs produced on the large farms on Residential School grounds were rarely used to benefit the students. In many cases, food from the gardens and farms at the schools were sold for profit and students were only given small portions or the leftover and spoiled food. In an effort to cut costs, students were only fed the cheapest form of food there was. Food was rarely nutritious and barely palatable to students; some Métis survivors describe their experiences as being less than human. A few Métis survivors remember the food and lack of food at the schools:

The nuns would give us fish and there'd be the scales on it. At least my mom used to clean all the scales, clean fish... That used to remind me of

home- that's how we used to feed Bobbie-my dog." (Colin Courtoreille in Daniels 47)

They give you a lunch, not like today where you have apple, banana or something. Theirs was cabbage, turnip, carrots, that's what we had to eat, we had to take it from the ground because they dumped it there for us, just like feeding cattle. (Anonymous in Daniels 64)

The food in the residential school...I only got one thing I can say about the food in the residential school I went to. It was rotten. It was rotten and we were treated like slaves to feed and cater to the supervisors like the nuns and the priests they ate good. (Elmer Cardinal in Daniels 74)

Food would improve when Indian Agents or church officials would visit and the students would be given 'treats' on special occasions. (Anonymous in Daniels 122) Daily porridge and 'mush' was a common shared memory of survivors. Having doughnuts and cocoa at Christmas and Easter was a fond memory and some survivors still carry on these traditions at Christmas today. (H. Logan, 2005) Priests and nuns always ate better than the children and the level of neglect that was shown towards the children was needless and criminal. Children were fed rotting food, spoiled food and some fell ill simply from eating what they were forced to. One Métis survivor remembers:

Then we'd go downstairs to the second floor and that's where the children would be given porridge with no sugar. Sometimes milk but not too often. Then on Friday if they were good they'd get lard. Straight

beans were mostly the daily diet right through from Monday to Friday...I was in this basement for four and a half years peeling spuds and the children I saw sometimes had no lunch. They were hungry. I used to steal a lot of potatoes, turnips and carrots for them. So I wouldn't get caught I would make sure they would wait for me right out the entrance in the back because I didn't want them to go hungry, but the best I could do was just raw vegetables. (Anonymous in Daniels)

### **Gender/Sexuality**

Boys and girls at Residential School were presented with roles by priests and nuns that many of them were forced to learn for the first time. The daily life and roles that the Métis were exposed to in Residential school were new and challenging to them. They were constantly presented with ideas and gender roles that they were unfamiliar with. Métis homes were clean, housekeeping was done with care in Métis homes, food was always fresh and sharing food in the community was also very common. Métis homes were familiar with humility, privacy and social courtesy and the Residential School norms of shared quarters and the disregard for the delicate bodies of the students was alarming to all students, including the Métis. The story of one Métis survivor reflects this change for the Métis students:

She was very lonely and was petrified of the regimentation. Upon arrival at the school her hair was treated with coal oil though she had no lice. She came from a very clean home and her Métis mother would have been horrified at the very thought of head lice. The matron was overzealous in

her application of the coal oil on one occasion. To this day Edith bears a scar that she has always carefully hidden with her hairdo-even if it meant denying herself the pleasure of the 'hip' hair-dos of the day-in order to keep what she believed was a shameful secret. After the delousing treatment the children were stripped naked and bathed, four to a tub, in total violation of the standards of modesty with which Edith had been raised. (Grant, *Finding My Talk* 130)

Boys and girls were always separated by gender and siblings were not allowed to communicate. Coming from homes that always promoted shared gender roles and a mutually reliant system of social control that had specific rules about gender and sexuality, students were forced into an environment that would forever alter how they thought about the other gender.

School control of gender and sexuality was full of contradictions and irony. Many students had little or no contact with boys or girls of their own age, but almost all students had personally encountered, or knew someone who had encountered sexual experiences with priests or nuns by ages as young as five or six.(George Amato in Daniels 67) Instead of having natural, safe experiences that young girls and boys have, they had scarring, traumatic experiences of sexual abuse. It was not uncommon for young children to be exposed to venereal diseases, unwanted pregnancies, abortion, sexual molestation, arranged marriages, unwanted sterilization and numerous other unspoken violations to a young child's body.

### **Student's descriptions of Residential School and Genocide**

Most genocides in this century have been perpetuated by nation-states upon ethnic minorities living within the state's own borders; most of the victims have been children. The people responsible for mass murder have by and large gotten away with what they have done. Most have succeeded in keeping the wealth that they looted from their victims; most have never faced trial. Genocide is still difficult to eradicate because it is usually tolerated, at least by those who benefit from it. (Christopher Simpson, in Chrisjohn, Young and Mauran 40)

Survivors often have trouble, expressing in words what kind of role Residential Schools played in their lives. Finding words to describe a lifetime of experiences in a way all people can understand is difficult for those who experienced it. Human experiences of trauma and genocide are hard to compare to another similar experience, but there is a solidarity in surviving genocidal experiences that exists between those who share this human experience. Grand schemes of racial persecution often have interesting links, even though the people being persecuted are quite different. The experience of humans being treated as animals or as sub-human, is sadly a universal experience of the racially persecuted. Residential School Survivors often relate their experience to the Holocaust.

Several images of both the Residential School system and the Holocaust overlap. Global trends in genocide, the Residential School system and the Holocaust coincided chronologically. Generations of children who survived this era of genocide in the 1930's and 1940's grew up to have children and subsequent generations who continue to address this experience into the twenty-first century. Beyond coinciding chronologically, these

genocides also shared imagery and experiences like the loading of 'human cargo' on to train-cars, malnourished, emaciated bodies, mass graves, numerical naming systems and forced labour. These are all images of a human experience that transcend time and location. According to one Métis Survivor:

As far as abuse is concerned, to be doing without proper food is physical abuse. You know, not that there wasn't a lot of food there because they had a big farm with cows, and big gardens. We'd pick in the fall, we picked and picked but we seldom saw any of it and we survived. I mean, I looked like something that came out of a concentration camp after the first few months but maybe it was intended to be that way. (Theresa Meltenberger in Daniels 28)

Another Métis Survivor relates the anger and frustration involved in the public disregard of the crimes committed against the survivors of this genocide:

When your own people ridicule you for the abuse that happened to you, I mean who can you turn to? What can you trust? I don't care, let them talk about it. Let people know what really happened in that place. You know there are people that don't believe there was such a thing as the holocaust! How in the hell can you deny six million Jews were slaughtered. What about our people? (George Amato in Daniels 70)

### **Disease, Death**

It is hard to deny claims of genocide at Residential school in the face of the alarming rates of disease, neglect and death that existed at the schools. A common

misconception that non-Aboriginal Canada promotes is that Residential Schools, in some way resembled mainstream boarding schools. The most outstanding difference between Residential Schools and mainstream church boarding schools was the death rate. Entire floors were designated as infirmaries and hospital wards in Residential Schools and children often attended funerals of their young friends and the children who died were often used as examples of punishment for bad behaviour. (Milloy)

Another major irony of the Residential School system is the treatment of students based on racist prejudice. Students contracted diseases like tuberculosis, venereal diseases, scabies, scrofula, lice and trachoma and both medical and school records reflect that the origin of these illnesses were racially influenced. (Saskatchewan Archives Board) Several studies by both doctors and school officials were generated on the health conditions at Residential Schools that contradicted racial theories and actually pointed the finger at the negligent conditions at the schools but those studies had little impact on improving conditions. Disease, neglect, abuse and malnutrition lead to death at all schools and the blame for these deaths always fell unjustly on the students. The Métis students were of particular interest to school administration. As noted in correspondence from school officials:

In nearly all cases the breeds such as above are continually developing Impetigo and the local M.O. of Health has not been very co-operative. This disease, the result of bad food, inbreeding and insufficient changes of clothing, is very infectious and a source of danger to the white students and also teachers. The only way to deal with it effectively and at the same time educate the children would be to put them in boarding

schools- cut out all the frills-and having taught them to read and write and elementary arithmetic, turn out the girls with as much knowledge of sick nursing and hygiene as could be taught in the time and teach boys carpentry. (Saskatchewan Archives Board, May 19, 1943)

The Métis would be encouraged to attend boarding schools in order to address some need to monitor their health and ironically they would be exposed to far greater health risks in Residential School.

### **Discipline**

Daily life at Residential Schools could have had mortal consequences and all students were aware of that. The leverage that priests and nuns held over students was based on their colonial, religious and racial illusion of superiority. Another irony of Residential School was the illusion of superiority that priests and nuns tried to force upon children who could see for themselves the hypocrisy of 'God's servants' acting so maliciously towards them. Memories and scars from straps, 'clappers', corks, clothes pins, belts and fists follow all survivors. Students who were not physically abused were consistently verbally and emotionally abused. Ridicule by name calling either came independent of or in combination with physical abuse. Métis children learned exactly what being a 'Half-Breed' meant in the eyes of God. One Métis survivor remembers:

It was very hard to be there with Sisters always after you, swearing at us, calling me *'sauvage'* which meant "savage" in French or *'le chien'* that meant 'dog'. That's what they used to call us when we didn't listen. I knew what it was because my mom and dad spoke French and the other

kids didn't know what it was; they didn't know the French language.

(Anonymous in Daniels 111)

Métis children learned at a young age just what being a dog, a 'breed', a 'mutt' or a 'Half-Breed' really meant to non-Metis. Spoken to, fed and disciplined as dogs, all students had daily reinforcement of the inhumanity that came with church-led illusions of superiority.

### **Positive Stories**

Another inherent truth about Residential School experiences is the ineffectiveness of generalizing any aspect of the survivor experience. As adults, Survivors are often challenged to summarize their entire school life. Positive stories are sometimes lost in the overwhelming trauma associated with the negative ones. Intergenerational impacts from Residential School can also extend to children and grandchildren of survivors who had mostly positive experiences. One of the most common positive reinforcements from survivors is the support of pre and post-secondary education. In addition, the value of learning how to work with the colonial system and becoming familiar with the 'unwritten' rules of the colonizers became valuable to survivors, as adults.

The Métis who ended up in Residential School as a result of factors such as church charity or government 'classifications' had experienced some levels of financial hardship in the past. Residential School had the potential to offer a source of food, clothing and housing that at a school in good repair was comparable or better than their home of origin. Some priests and nuns were true to their faith and treated children with kindness and compassion. (Martha Mercredi in Daniels 91) The Métis children were

also favoured in some instances, since they had more chances to be exposed to English or French at home and they were sometimes punished less for their use of their own language. (H. Logan, 2000)

### **Conclusion**

There is no “standard account” (Chrisjohn, Young and Mauran 20) for Métis and Residential Schools. There are generations of Aboriginal people in Canada who attended and survived Residential School which had created a large collective of survivors. Within this collective, a series of recurring themes represent shared lives and shared trauma as well as individual ones. What has been presented here has been a small sample of the survivor’s voice.

The Métis were outsiders in Residential Schools. They were counted on a per capita basis and in the eyes of Indian agents they were just another brown face. In the eyes of their fellow students and the staff they were often not just another face, they were a different social class, they came from different communities and they were not always treated the same as the rest of the students. Métis students had little control over how and when they were admitted and discharged from the schools, but they did have their own way of internalizing the experience. Faced with many of the same recurring themes that all other students at the schools did, Métis reacted and remembered the schools in their own way. Just as they were entering the schools with their own unique sets of values, language, customs and culture according to their Métis lives, they left the schools with the same unique sets of interpretations. Métis students would return to communities that had either very high or very low numbers of Residential School graduates. They would also be re-entering communities that were in some cases quite willing or not willing at all

to identify with neighboring non-Aboriginal communities. Residential School legacies did not end when students exited the schools and as each of the recurring themes may have affected them, Métis faced their own set of memories and legacies from their experiences.

Inconsistent government policies, manipulation of records by Indian agents and schools, church support for Métis communities and inconsistent record keeping made Métis attendance easy to overlook. Métis attendance fell silent for several reasons and support for Métis survivors eventually followed this trend. Since government and churches were quick to make Métis attendance seem unnoticed, it was to be easy for government and churches to accept that the Métis Residential School legacy ended once they left the schools. That is never the case with any survivor of Residential School and just because there were few written records of Métis attendance does not mean their legacy is meant to go unnoticed as well.

## Chapter Six

### Current Trends and the Impact of the Métis Residential School Experience

Métis survivors of the Residential School system hold all of the answers. They hold the truths, they hold the histories and they carry the trauma of the Residential School legacy towards and through their families and communities. All of the questions that remain unanswered about the efficacy of government payment schemes, effectiveness of public apologies from the perpetrators, the potential public “truth and reconciliation” style hearings and how Métis communities should proceed to help their own could be best answered by those who were affected most by the legacy. Even though the government of Canada wishes to find a quick end to their role in the legacy, their actions indicate their lack of understanding about the legacy itself. The greatest oversight the government and churches could make would be in believing that the legacy ends with the survivors. In downplaying or disregarding the role of the intergenerational impacts on families and communities and the wide spectrum of impacts including those on culture and language, they not only vacated their responsibility but they perpetuate their own injustices.

In terms of this study, a great deal of the direction and the ‘answers’ came from Métis survivors and their families. How they attended, what their experiences were like and how to investigate respectfully and represent their experiences came from the words of survivors. While the written documents and secondary sources provided facts and background for the study, the words of survivors gave the context and the vision for the study. When listening and reading about Métis experiences, it is clear that the Residential School experience is not exclusive of other actions that the government took

that worked in opposition to Métis lives. Métis often contextualize their experience at school with all other factors like living conditions, family connections and community realities. The Residential School experience for the Métis created rifts between them and their churches as well. Many Métis communities have long standing relationships with Roman Catholic churches and the trust they had in the churches was diminished by the actions of Residential School officials. In turn, many Métis survivors today still turn to the church for support and, even though their trust was lost, their faith was not.

Current trends in the Residential School legacy have included several different responses from government and churches who administered the schools. In response to some of the first public disclosures of Residential School abuse, the federal government issued an apology. Several responses also followed the 1996 release of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Survivors continued telling their own very personal and traumatic stories in large-scale public venues. Long-overdue attention was now being drawn towards the perpetrator churches and governments. Law firms across Canada started responding to requests by clients who were looking to sue either the government or churches. These actions started a lengthy legal process that, in large part, involved elderly survivors who had a small chance of living long enough to ever see their trials. Métis survivors became part of larger class action suits, and it was not until 2005, 2006 that individual Métis claims became public knowledge. The governments did not have a specific fiduciary duty to provide education for the Métis and no clear policy for their attendance or discharge, but the Métis still attended the schools regardless.

Some communities have empowered their Métis survivors by providing funded support to them. The Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) has spent over five years creating

different initiatives and producing the book “Métis Memories of Residential School”. The MNA has consistently lead research in the area of Métis experiences at Residential School and has shown outstanding respect to Métis survivors. Organizations like the Central Urban Métis Federation Inc. (CUMFI), Métis Addictions Council of Saskatchewan Inc. (MACSI), Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement, Brandon Friendship Centre, Winnipeg Region Manitoba Métis Federation, Manitoba Métis Federation Head Office each applied for and succeeded in obtaining funding from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

As an example, the Southwest Region Manitoba Métis Federation, under the leadership of Leah LaPlante in 2000 took one of the most innovative approaches to seeking funding. It was a simple innovation, but the Southwest Region, like some of the other successful projects put the needs of survivors and the Métis first. The Southwest MMF wanted to talk to survivors, gather their histories and create a foundation before making any assumptions about how they wanted to heal. The successes of community-based projects and survivor driven commemoration of the Métis experiences should not be diminished by the lack of national support for survivors. Without the community support and the efforts of individual survivors who have come forward, the entire collective Residential School movement in Canada will falter.

The Métis represent a portion of a larger collective of Residential School survivors. In the wake of one of Canada’s largest man-made disasters, some survivors of Residential Schools have been washed away by a sea of bureaucracy and surrounded by misconceptions and altered perceptions, Survivor’s voices have long been muted by mainstream Canada. As a collective, Residential School Survivors’ often unite with one

another, only to be torn apart by government descriptions, definitions and programs. Survivors have shared a common experience of their time at Residential School, their intergenerational impacts and they now share common experiences of bureaucratic challenges. These challenges include government mandates to address only physical and sexual abuse, overwhelming waits for legal processes, a general lack of understanding on the part of government, churches and lawyers of survivor's actual experiences and the constant struggle to make the offenders (Canada and the churches) provide respectful compensation to those that they committed crimes against. Canada and the churches do not understand the problem of the current trend in the Residential School issue in Canada. The voices of lawyers, bureaucrats and federal representatives still dominate a segment of Canadian history that should be dominated by Aboriginal people and Survivors. There will be no end to the destructive influences of the Residential School legacy until Canada, the churches and lawyers start listening to Aboriginal people.

We have entered a new era in the Residential School legacy. Survivors voices are emerging and now the children of survivors are speaking up. An entirely new generation of Métis is growing up and leading Métis communities with a new knowledge and new outlook on the Residential School legacy. They have had the chance to hear the voices of survivors where previous generations were forced not to speak. They have freedoms and opportunities for self determination that the survivor's generation never had. The rights based agendas and priorities of Métis organizations have provided the Métis with new chances for life that they did not have until now. One of these choices is to learn about Métis Residential School survivors, break silences and support those Survivors in any way possible. As we are often told, this is a time for possibilities for Métis. We are not

clear of colonization nor are we separate from the empire but we have unprecedented levels of public pride and self-identity in Métis nations. It is sincerely hoped that this support will translate into memory and respect for those who attended, survived and for those who died at Residential Schools.

What is remarkable about the results of this study are the impacts that the voices of Métis Survivors have on it. Even though records are hidden and restricted and Métis attendance is surrounded by several “conspiracies of silence”, the history of their attendance still exists. Even though the government of Canada is currently making attempts to end their legacy of responsibility by paying out the remaining Residential School survivors in a fairly quiet manner, survivors are still being heard. There is hope that government commitments toward a truth and reconciliation-style commission will not be broken and survivors will find safe venues for their stories to be told. Repeating truths about their time at school is painful for some survivors but repeating truths is necessary and a form of healing for other survivors. Telling traumatic truths is hurtful for survivors and hearing these truths could potentially be painful for bystander Canadians to hear.

Colonizers rationalized their support for Residential Schools and marginalization of the Métis by promoting misinformation and a general unwillingness to learn about Métis realities. By promoting a swift end to discussion about the Residential School legacy and by claiming that it is currently losing relevancy, colonizers continue to rationalize themselves out of their responsibility for the role they played. The Residential School legacy is about dehumanizing children, dehumanizing Aboriginal parents, the mass death of children and the destruction of generations of fellow human beings. Using

statistics, numbers, dates and unfair rationalizations diminishes the voices of survivors. Government funding agencies are quick to ask how many Métis “actually” attended and provide funding on the basis of numbers and statistics. Rarely has the long-term impact on Métis communities been considered.

Lies allowed generations to believe the Métis were “Halfbreeds”, assimilation was intended to benefit Aboriginal people and the Residential School legacy was scarred only by a “few select individual” priests and nuns, some bad ‘seeds’. Education about Residential Schools and the Métis in Canada should be provided to all school age children. Generations of Canadians cannot grow up in this country without knowledge of what really happened. Providing children with the colonizer’s version of history, filled only with colonizer’s victories and Aboriginal “folklore” promotes the biggest lie of all, that Canada is free of guilt. Whether the lies were merely a source of misinformation or whether they were used to intentionally minimize the role Canada plays in Residential Schools, Canada told lies.

Aspects of the Residential School legacy such as Métis attendance, Inuit Attendance, death and disease at the schools and the role of teachers in working to coerce students to remain silent about their negative experiences are all areas that have been under-researched in the past. Education on education could be one of the most valuable tools that will lend itself to this new era of the Residential School legacy. Promoting education and open intra and inter Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal discussions will help provide a safe, open venue for a new era for Residential School survivors. Métis students attended Residential School, and during their time there they had experiences that were

not necessarily better or worse than those of other students. They did, however have unique experiences that still impact Métis lives today.

The Residential School experience for Métis fit a pattern established by the Canadian government with regards to their plans for civilization, Christianization and assimilation. On a large scale, the Métis were exposed to various government initiated phenomena like the illegal administration of Scrip, forced dispersal of their communities and both physical and systemic marginalization. The essential philosophies that fuelled, for instance, the systemic marginalization of the Métis were the same philosophies that guided the church and government control of Métis attendance at Residential School.

The western European notion that Aboriginal people and in this case the Métis were a lower class and were racially disadvantaged was a factor in determining Métis attendance at Residential School. Métis were classified according to their lifestyles and they were evaluated according to how “Indian” their blood and environment were. The categories of class and factors that affected Métis attendance at Residential School were all based on perceived benefits that the government and churches felt they stood to gain. More Métis students in the Residential Schools meant larger per-capita grants at the schools for the churches. As well, a higher Métis attendance maximized the number of “Halfbreed” and “illegitimate” children that could be changed into more ‘civilized’ Christians and assimilated Canadians through Residential School doctrine.

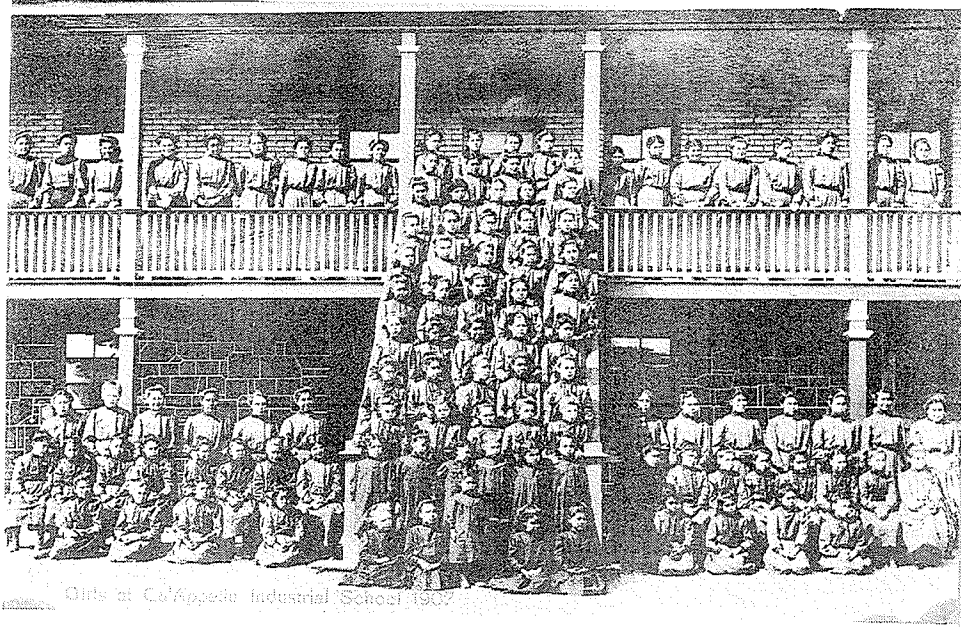
Too many Métis in the schools meant elevated costs for the government so while they implemented a system that controlled Métis attendance based on perceptions of class, family status, religion, location and school population. The Métis had few opportunities for self-determination for their own children’s education throughout the

Residential School era. Those who were not taken or not allowed into the Residential Schools attended either smaller convent schools and after some time attended provincial schools. At the same time, jurisdictional gaps created so many inconsistencies that some Métis did not attend Euro-Canadian schools and, instead, received a community education at home.

Evidence of Métis attendance at Residential School is found in both colonial records and oral histories. Their attendance is undeniable and even though their attendance was often contingent on the presence of one or many specific factors, they still attended. Métis lived disjointed lives, falling between the cracks, being marginalized by either non-Aboriginal or First Nations communities or both, living on road allowances and urban “ghettos”. The way they would access education was therefore disjointed. They attended public schools, Residential Schools or received their education from their families and communities. There was no formula, no formal policy or long-term trend for Métis education during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Access to health care, social support and the constant influence of colonialism were all segments of Métis life, like education that were affected by factors such as location, religious denomination, family history and perceptions of social class. The schools were undoubtedly a microcosm of Canadian society at the time. The admittance, discharge and treatment of the Métis was a mirrored reflection of how they were treated in non-Aboriginal communities. Residential Schools continue to impact a generation of Métis in Canada but the Métis, as always, are still resilient and resistant. With hope, survivors will seek their own healing and path to reconciliation, their children will learn their legacy and those who still lie at the schools will be remembered.

## Appendix A

### Residential School Photos

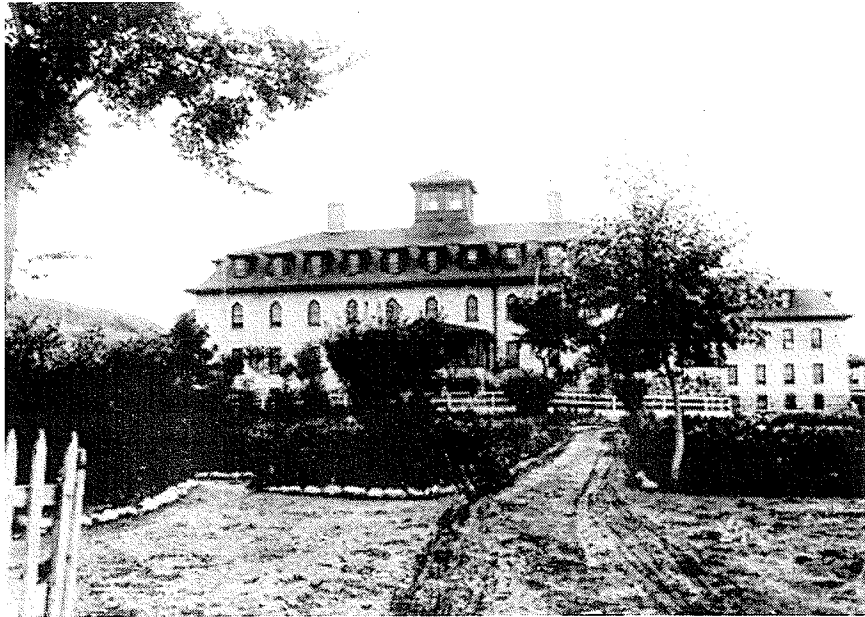


Girls at Qu'Appelle Industrial School, 1907  
Lebret, Saskatchewan  
(Great-Grandmother, Katherine Ahdemar, 11<sup>th</sup> from Right, Top)

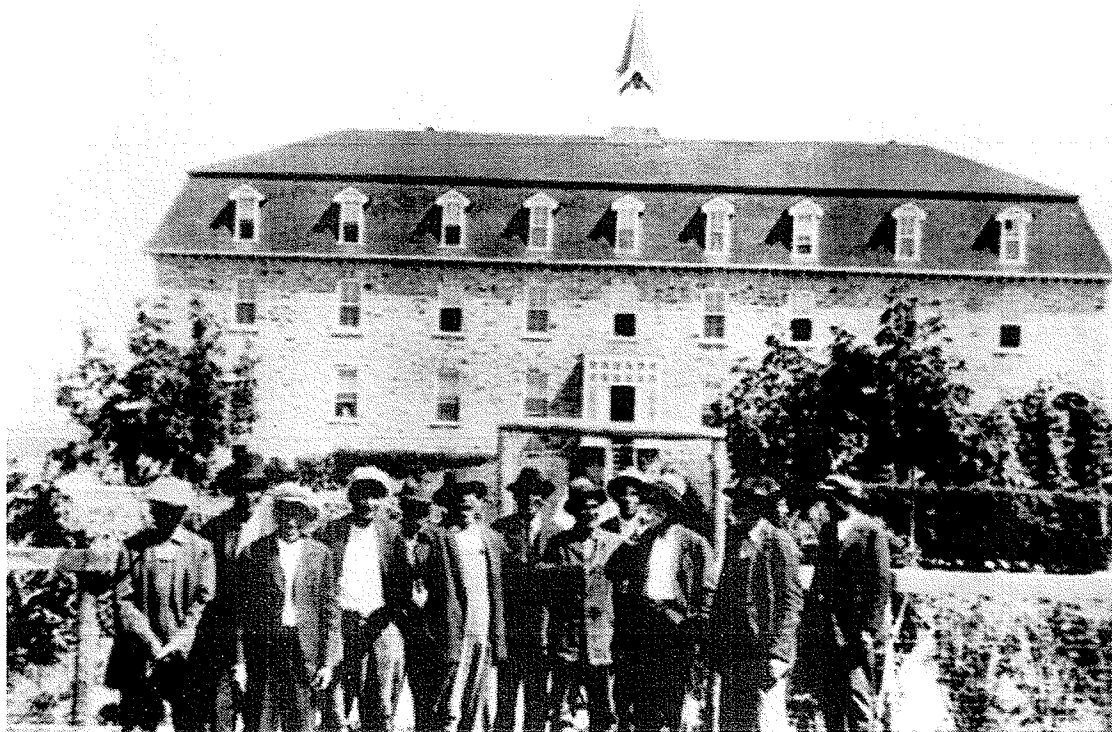
Photo courtesy of Thomas A. Logan



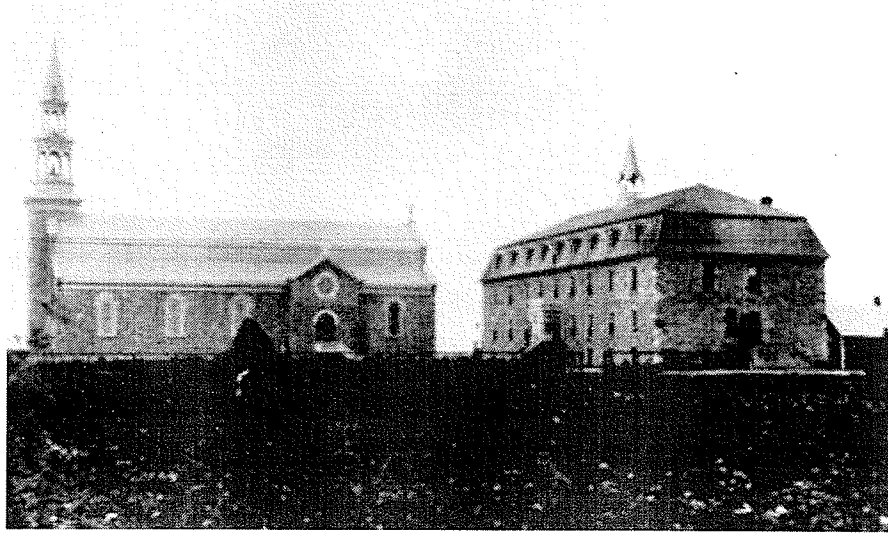
Qu'Appelle Industrial School, 1884-1905  
Lebret, Saskatchewan  
National Archives of Canada



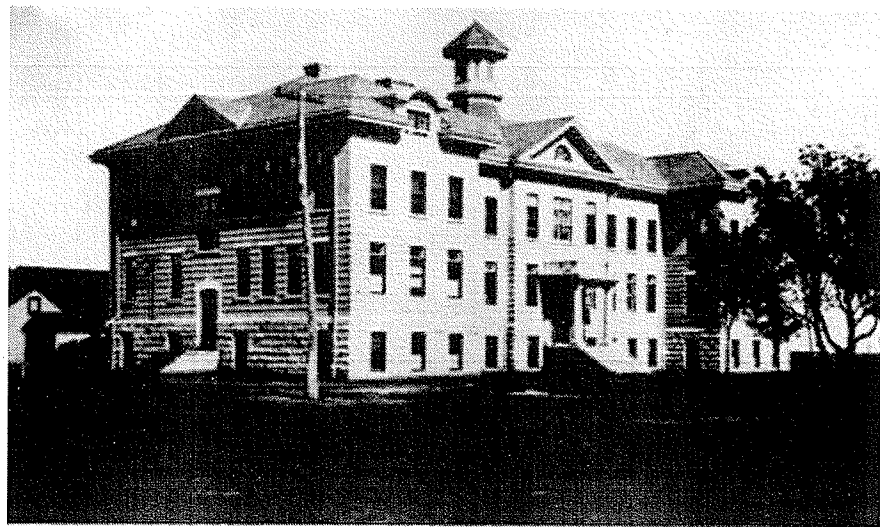
Qu'Appelle Industrial School 1905-1932  
Lebret, Saskatchewan  
National Archives of Canada



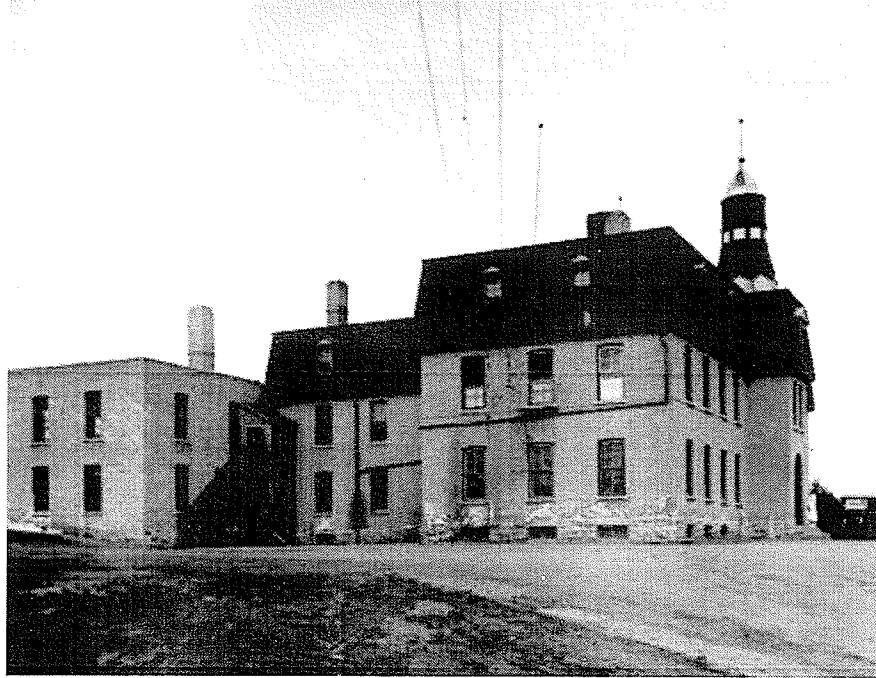
Pine Creek Mission, Lake Winnipegosis  
(Camperville)  
Provincial Archives of Manitoba



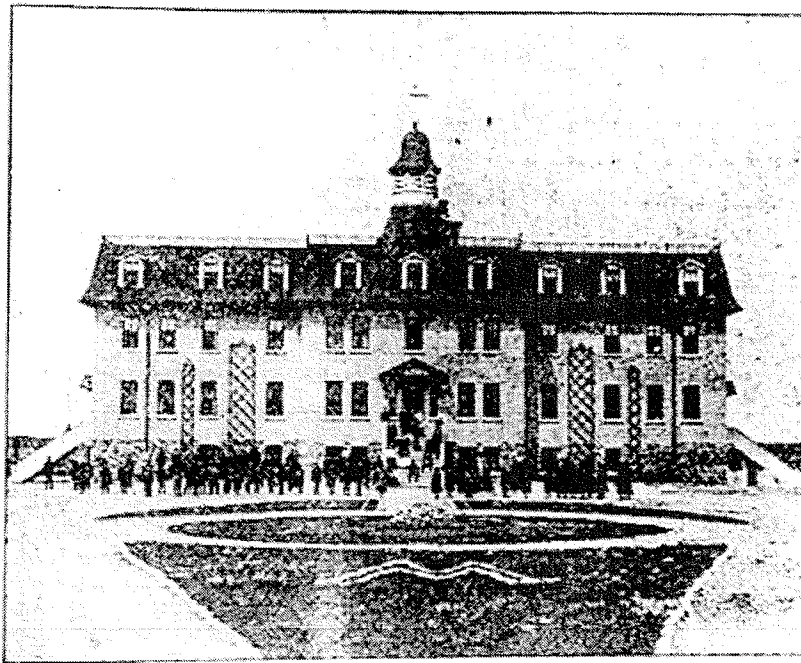
Camperville, Church and Residential School  
Provincial Archives of Manitoba



Indian Boarding School, Portage La Prairie, Manitoba  
1914-1915  
National Archives of Canada



Brandon Industrial School  
Provincial Archives of Manitoba



Washakada Home, Elkhorn Manitoba, 1902  
Provincial Archives of Manitoba



Girls Sewing, Qu'Appelle School  
Lebret, Saskatchewan, year unknown  
National Archives of Canada



Métis Children, being taken to Residential School  
Belcourt, North Dakota, year unknown  
Photo Courtesy of Lawrence Barkwell, Manitoba Métis Federation

## Appendix B

### Statement of Informed Consent

#### Research Project Title The Métis and Residential Schools

Researcher  
Tricia Logan

Sponsor  
University of Manitoba  
University of Manitoba Research Protocol #J2004-158

**This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take time to read carefully and to understand any of the accompanying information.**

The purpose of this research is to explore the unique circumstances that contributed to Métis attendance at Residential Schools. This research will include exploratory archival research and interviews that will give a profile of Métis attendance and their experiences at Residential Schools. Archival research will include collections from the National Archives of Canada and the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Archival research will be ongoing and it should be complete by the end of 2004. Interviews will be conducted with Métis Survivors of Residential School, Métis Elders and academic researchers involved in Métis and/or Residential School history. The interviews will be completed by the end of 2004.

Interviews will be recorded with a tape recorder and will be transcribed by the researcher. A high level of confidentiality will be maintained throughout this study. Any identifying details of the interviews will be used only with the written permission of the interviewee. Materials collected on a participant can be used or destroyed according to the discretion of the participant. If the participant/interviewee wishes that their information be destroyed at the end of the study, the researcher will do so. Records will be stored safely and confidentially by the researcher and information collected will be used strictly for thesis work only. Any personally identifying information collected from the archives will be used in accordance with the rules/regulations of the Archives that hold the records and/or the Privacy Act (R.S. 1985) and Access to Information Act (R.S. 1985).



Researcher: Tricia Logan  
Department of Native Studies  
Faculty of Graduate Studies  
University of Manitoba

Supervisor: Fred Shore  
Department of Native Studies  
Office of University Accessibility  
University of Manitoba

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above named persons of the Human Ethics Secretariat at (204) 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

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Participants Signature

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Date

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Tricia Logan  
Researcher's Signature

---

Date

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