

Undan Snjóbreiðunni

(What Lies Beneath the Snow)

Revealing the contributions of Icelandic pioneer women to
adult education in Manitoba 1875 – 1914

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
The University of Manitoba
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

Though women have been involved in adult education throughout Canada's history, their contributions have gone unrecorded and lie hidden "beneath the snow". This study used a qualitative historical research design to metaphorically "melt the snow", to reveal both the women and their educational activities in five Icelandic pioneer settlements in Manitoba 1875-1914. Guided by an adaptation of the Kidd (1979) conceptual framework, data from primary and secondary sources was categorized onto a matrix for coding and analysis according to type of learning (formal, nonformal and informal) as well as seven areas of influence (people, events, ideas, outside Canada, communications, geography & climate and immigrant peoples).

This process resulted in findings that foregrounded five Icelandic adult educators and revealed six themes of involvement by Icelandic pioneer women. The findings demonstrate the need to reexamine the adult education definitions and frameworks so that the contributions of women may be documented and valued.

Acknowledgements

I gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the following women:

Dr. Marlene Atleo, advisor, provided expertise, encouragement and sound advice throughout this project. She was the key person to help shape this research from idea to reality. The day she became a part of this project was the turning point of this research.

Drs. Carolyn Crippen and Roberta Woodgate, committee members, provided valuable feedback and a belief in the value of this research.

Sigrid Johnson and Dr. Valdine Clemens, member checks, provided their expertise in Manitoba Icelandic history and editing skills. Their involvement undoubtedly improved the accuracy and quality of the final document.

The final acknowledgement is reserved for Karen. Her support, and belief in me have made this thesis possible. Because of Karen, I have had the treasured luxury of time and freedom to pursue this dream.

Dedication

To the memory of my great grandmother; Margaret Johnson (Margrét Friðbjarnardóttir, 1874-1918) who emigrated from Iceland in 1891 to eventually settle in Glenboro, Manitoba. This thesis is a tribute to her and the Icelandic pioneer women of Manitoba whose history has inspired and sustained me in this project.

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Chapter 1

This introductory chapter provides the foundation to begin an inquiry into the adult education activities of the Icelandic pioneer women in Manitoba during the 1875 – 1914 time period. The chapter begins by outlining the research problem that led to this study. It goes on to describe the background information needed to understand the problem and state the purpose of the study. The conceptual framework which structured and organized this study is described next, followed by the research questions, definitions, delimitations and limitations. The chapter concludes by identifying the researcher's personal interest in conducting this investigation.

Introduction

Women have been involved in adult education activities throughout Canada's history, yet researchers note their absence within the recorded history (Butterwick, 1998, p. 104; Dewar, 1998, p. 360; Selman, Cooke, Selman & Dampier, 1998, p. 3). Dewar (1998) metaphorically characterizes the experiences of women in Canadian adult education history as being "covered by a blanket of snow" (p. 360). The absence of women's stories creates an incomplete history of adult education in Canada. The result is a history that is missing many rich examples of uniquely female adult education responses to building communities early in Canadian history. Further examination of this

history will reveal “there is much under the snow, and it is beginning to melt” (Dewar, 1998, p. 360).

By 1900, an estimated 10,000 Icelandic immigrants (Kristjanson, 1965, p. 300) had settled in the province of Manitoba. It was the largest Icelandic settlement outside of Iceland. The Icelandic pioneer women and their families arrived with very high rates of literacy and strong Icelandic traditions of literary writing and education (Matthiasson, 1983, p. 332-338). The women were accustomed to holding prominent and respected positions in the home as well as in Icelandic society (Johnson, 1994, p.117). The Icelandic settlements in Manitoba eventually thrived despite considerable hardship. The Icelandic pioneers went on to assimilate successfully into their new country as Canadians and yet maintain their identity as Icelanders. These factors and others point to a group of women worthy of a closer look through the lens of adult education.

A qualitative historical research inquiry is used to “melt the snow” and reveal the contributions of the Icelandic pioneer women to adult education in Manitoba. This inquiry reveals how the women responded with adult education approaches to the challenges they faced. Illuminating the activities and the women involved is one part of the story. The other is to examine the findings within the context of the influences of the 1875-1914 time period. This Manitoba inquiry also makes a contribution towards the recording of the history of women in adult education in Canada.

Problem Statement

Canada has a rich history in the field of adult education. The field has been organized over time “as a way of improving the quality of life, promoting citizen participation, social justice and equality” (Selman, 1995, p.16). Canadian programs such as the Antigonish Movement (Kidd, 1950, p.195), National Farm Radio Forum (Kidd, 1950, p.169) and Frontier College (Kidd, 1950, p.151) have been highly regarded projects in the field and emulated elsewhere in the world. Canadians J. Roby Kidd, Moses Coady, and Allen Tough are internationally respected as pioneers in adult education. However, many other achievements in Canadian adult education have gone unrecorded. A comprehensive history of Canadian adult education still does not exist (Selman, 1995, p.29). There are many gaps, most notably with regard to the contribution of women to adult education.

There are many benefits to documenting the contribution of Canadian women to adult education. Most importantly, such documentation will provide a more accurate and inclusionary history. Certainly history is best served by providing the contribution of both men and women. This study will help identify the valuable contributions that women have made to communities in Canada, in this instance the Manitoba Icelandic community. There are, however, other reasons to address this absence in a field that has had equal participation by women (OECD, 2003, p. 41). Such reasons include the contradiction of separateness and connection that women reportedly feel as adult learners and educators (Dewar, 1998, p. 359). As well, the disconnect that is evident between

the marginalization of women's activities in a field that prides itself on its history of social justice (Butterwick, 1998, p. 105). Recording the history of the activities of women in adult education between 1875 and 1914 brings to light the nature of these activities, demonstrating their contributions and considerable benefits.

Background

Before beginning an inquiry into the contributions of Icelandic pioneer women to adult education, some background information is needed. This section provides background information in the four areas of adult education, the emigration from Iceland, the role of women in 1875-1914, and the role of the Lutheran and Unitarian churches and the Social Gospel.

Adult Education

This background information on adult education will describe the three types of adult education activities, discuss the impact of definition on the inclusion of women in the history of adult education, and describe some gender-specific characteristics of women as learners.

Adult education today can be divided into three types of approaches or activities: formal, non-formal and informal learning. All three types of learning have been identified as being equally important and there is often overlap of activities between the three types (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999, p. 26). Formal adult learning typically takes place in traditional educational institutions and usually leads to certification or accreditation (Selman et al, 1998, p. 26). Examples of formal learning are found with programs offered in community colleges, universities or adult education organizations. The definition used in this

research, which can be found later in this chapter, also includes libraries under formal adult learning. Prominent Canadian adult educator J. Roby Kidd refers to libraries as the foundation stone of adult education (1950, p. 88). Non-formal adult learning takes place outside of formal institutional settings. As a result, it is more flexible in its ability to provide for the needs of a specific group (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999, p. 29). Programming tends to be community-based and can be delivered by either paid and/or volunteer staff. Examples of this type of learning are programs focusing on literacy, job skills development, and the addressing of social inequalities. Informal learning is often referred to as self-directed learning and takes place in the learner's environment. As the name suggests, it is directed by the learner(s) themselves (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999, p. 32). This type of learning is generally accepted as the way most adult learning occurs. In Canadian Allen Tough's research (1979) into self-directed learning, he found that adults spent an average of 700 hours a year at learning projects mostly initiated by the learners themselves. Some spent as many as 2000 hours per year on self-directed learning. When Tough's subjects were interviewed many recalled no learning projects, "but as the interview proceeded, they recalled several efforts to learn" (1979, p. 3). The nature of informal learning is that often we do not realize our learning, much less record it as such. However, these learning efforts are "enormously significant for the adult him(her)self, and for the organization, family, and society in which he (she) works and lives" (Tough, 1979, p. 4).

There is disagreement within the field about including all three types of learning activities within the definition of adult learning. In a 2003 study of adult

education practices worldwide, conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the researchers found that “formal learning is always included in the definition but non-formal and (especially) informal learning are less often so” (p. 23). Here in Canada there is no consensus on the definition of adult learning among the provinces and territories, and so there is no agreement on which activities are being discussed when speaking about adult education in Canada.

When studying the history of adult education, as in this research, the definition used has significant implications determining who is included or excluded within the enquiry. When a narrow definition is applied, such as the one used in the 1998 Adult Education and Training Survey (AETS), much of the involvement of women is excluded due to the nonformal and informal nature of their educational activities. The AETS definition states that it “does not include all educational processes but only those that are formal, structured and institutionalized” (Statistics Canada 1998, p. 57). The AETS survey found that just 27.3% of Canadians participated in adult learning using this narrow definition.

However, when a broader definition was applied in a survey completed by New Approach to Lifelong Learning (NALL) the researchers found that the participation in adult learning was much higher. The NALL definition sees adult learning as a collective of formal schooling, further education and informal learning (Livingstone, 1998, ¶ 1). Their findings revealed that 96.7% of Canadians had engaged in informal learning in their everyday lives (OECD,

2003, p. 23). Thus it appears that a broad definition is more inclusive and arguably more accurate in reflecting the full scope of adult education activities. A narrow definition is often applied, however, when there is a need for quantifying participation for statistical and policy purposes. Unfortunately, this approach obscures the full view of participation in adult education.

Even when a broad definition is applied, women can find themselves included invisibly when the gender of learners is not identified. Hayes & Flannery (2000) conducted a recent search of the adult education literature and found that the learning of women is either not addressed or is treated superficially. When examining adult learning, it seems the significance of gender is largely ignored. The limited research that Hayes & Flannery (2000) have uncovered identifies some gender-specific characteristics of women as learners. The authors respectfully preface their discussion of women as learners with a statement about the diversity of the lives of women and thus their characteristics as learners. They suggest that there is no “one size fits all” when examining women as learners, but indicated that some themes emerged from the research.

A predominant theme that emerged is the variety of contexts in which the learning of women takes place. The researchers found the learning of women taking place “in community groups, in the home, in the workplace, in religious associations, in leisure activities, and in more formal educational settings – in literally every context of life” (Hayes & Flannery, 2000, p. 23). Typically, however, research and historical record, has tended to focus on women in more formal academic activities and ignored the voluntary organizations within which so many

women were involved (Butterwick, 1998, p. 110). The result is that a large proportion of the involvement of women in adult education has gone unacknowledged.

A second theme identified by Hayes & Flannery (2000) in the research into characteristics of the learning of women is the concept of connected learning or learning through interactions and relationships with other people (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). In this type of learning, women learn from personal experience and engage in “collaborative explorations of knowledge” (Hayes & Flannery, 2000, p. 128). The researchers also found that in its most powerful form, the connected learning women engage in can also be a catalyst for social and political change.

A third theme in the research is the importance of understanding the social context in which the learning of women takes place (Hayes & Flannery, 2000, p.23). The social influences on a particular group of women at a particular time in history must be taken into consideration when examining their adult learning. This element of external influences shapes the response by women in adult education.

This section has provided a background on the three types of adult education, the importance of the definition of adult education and learning to the inclusion of women in that history, and a discussion of some prominent gender-specific characteristics of women as learners. We now shift to a focus on the background of these Manitoba pioneer women as they emigrated from Iceland.

Emigration from Iceland

This next section provides an overview of the factors that contributed to the large scale emigration from Iceland. It also provides a sense of the culture in Iceland at the time of the departure of the immigrants.

Large scale emigration from Iceland occurred between 1870 and 1914. It was, in fact, the largest exodus in Icelandic history and is referred to by Icelanders as the “emigration period” (Thor, 2002, p. 4). Almost 12,000 Icelanders immigrated to North America from an island with a population of approximately 70,000 people. Most, almost two thirds, of the Icelandic emigrants were children, teens and people under the age of 30 years (Thor, 2002, p.17). The age demographics of this group of emigrants indicate a substantive loss of Iceland’s human resource future.

The following recommended list of goods to pack when leaving Iceland, indicates an emphasis on both the practical and literary needs of the Icelandic emigrants. This list was exhibited in July 1996 at The Icelandic Emigration Center, Hofsós, Iceland and the text was prepared by staff at the Glaumbær Folk Museum, Skagafjörð, Iceland.

Búferlaflutingar – Leaving Home

People were encouraged to take duty-free goods, a change of everyday clothes, bedclothes, boots, shoes, socks and underwear, hats, tin tableware, starched linen, silver and gold ornaments. Craftsmen were urged to take only their lightest tools, but books could be taken in unlimited quantity.

The reasons for leaving Iceland and being attracted to Canada are described by Thor (2002) and Wolf (2001). Economic, climatic and political events contributed to the decision of many Icelanders to leave their homeland. The Icelandic immigration was part of the European emigration movement that was taking place at the time. Not unlike their European neighbors, the Icelanders were facing difficult economic conditions. Poverty was a fact of life for the farmers in the northeastern part of Iceland, following the eruption of the volcano Dyngjufjoll in 1875 and the cold winters of the 1880s. Politically, the Icelanders were under Danish rule since the Union of Kalmar in 1397. Trade monopolies imposed by Denmark in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries caused economic hardship and strong feelings about the need for independence from Denmark. By the 1840s there was optimism for national freedom through the leadership of Jon Sigurdsson and the restoration of Althing, the Icelandic parliament dating back to 930. The campaign for independence and reform moved slowly, and by the 1870s many Icelanders became dissatisfied.

The economic, climatic and political events of the mid 1800s occurred at a time when emigration agents, working on commission, were promoting opportunities for a better future in Canada. Even the poorest of Icelandic families could afford the inexpensive one-way transoceanic tickets available for ships sailing out of Icelandic ports to Quebec City and Halifax. By 1881, the railway had reached westward to Winnipeg and immigration railway travel was being subsidized in Canada (Morton, 1957).

A better future was enhanced by the immigration policies in Canada at the time and by the Dominion Lands Act of 1872. Canada had a free entry period of immigration from the time of Confederation (1867) until 1895. During this time people could immigrate to Canada with few restrictions (Elliot, 1983, p. 291). Immigration was also boosted by the Dominion Lands Act of 1872. This act granted new immigrants the opportunity to own land for a ten dollar fee (Library and Archives Canada [LAC], 2005). The free entry period, combined with the Dominion Lands Act, attracted three main groups of immigrants to Manitoba between 1875 and 1900; the Icelanders and Mennonites (Germans) began settlement in the 1870s and the Ukrainians began settlement in the 1890s (Francis, 1955; Humeniuk, 1976; Kristjanson, 1965).

When the Icelandic immigrants arrived in Manitoba in 1875, the majority traveled directly to a reserve of land they had been granted by the Canadian government. They named their new reserve New Iceland. The granting of reserves was not uncommon, and reserves of land were also granted to Mennonite immigrants (Lindal, 1967). Though they named their reserve New Iceland, it was never the intention of the Icelanders to keep all non-Icelanders off their reserve or to create a colony of Iceland (Lindal, 1967, p. 143). A very strong commitment to assimilate into their new country and society was evident among the Icelandic immigrants. Evidence includes acquiring their Canadian citizenship earlier than most other immigrant groups, serving in the armed forces as early as 1885, and intermarriage with other nationalities (Kristjanson, 1965, p. 517). Balanced against the commitment to assimilate was a strong belief in maintaining their Icelandic language and culture within their community in Manitoba. These

two forces of assimilation and cultural retention have existed almost simultaneously within the Icelandic community (Matthiasson, 1983, p. 340). In 1897 the Order which granted the reserve of land to the Icelanders was rescinded. In 1907, New Iceland became the Municipality of Gimli and the Municipality of Bifrost (Lindal, 1967, p. 168).

It is useful to have some understanding of the culture in Iceland in the late 1880s as it relates to education and women. This background information is necessary in order to appreciate the expectation by the women for social development. Educationally, Kristjanson (1965, p. 10) describes nineteenth - century Iceland as a country where almost every person could read and write. The children's education was delivered in the homes and from the pastor. The learning of all members of the household was enhanced through reading and literary activities that were common evening pastimes, even in the poorest of farming homes. One member would read aloud to the others as they worked knitting, weaving or making repairs (Arngrimsson, 1997, p. 46). The reading included such works as the Icelandic sagas, the Bible, the sermons of Bishop Jon Vidalin and the Passion Psalms of Hallgrimur Petursson (Arngrimsson, 1997, p. 49). Despite being an island people they had a keen interest in world affairs and knowledge of their own history dating back a thousand years (Kristjanson, 1965, p. 12). On a formal education level, three women's colleges were established by the 1890s and women were able to obtain a Bachelor of Arts at the college in Reykjavik (Johnson, 1994, p. 118).

Attitudes towards women in Iceland can be traced to the sagas of the 13th and 14th century, which feature many strong female characters. Women of the sagas such as Audur Ketilsdottir, Hallgerdur Hoskuldsdottir, Bergthora Skarphedinsdottir and Gudrun Osvidfursdottir are described as strong, ambitious, ruthless, loyal and freedom loving (Eylands,1981). These female ancestors have acted as strong role models for Icelandic women over the centuries and contributed towards creating a position of respect and high expectations for women in Icelandic society. This social position made Icelandic women unique in comparison to other ethnic groups in Europe at the time. Anthropologist John Matthiasson states,

My own conclusion, based upon my reading of literature on women in societies around the world, is that while there may never have been true equality for women in Iceland, their social position was much higher than the world average, and certainly more so than that of other European women, whether in ancient times or more recent ones. (Matthiasson quoted in Barker, 2002, p. 38)

For example, Icelandic women were able to own land and could vote and hold office in municipal and congregational elections by the end of the nineteenth century (Johnson, 1994, p. 118).

This part of the background section has described the reasons for the emigration from Iceland and the culture of Iceland as it relates to education and the social status of women. This information should help to explain why, of the

many changes faced by Icelandic immigrants, one of the most fundamental was faced by the Icelandic pioneer women. The role of women in their adopted country was relatively more conservative politically and socially than that to which they were accustomed in Iceland. This next section describes the role of women in Manitoba at the time of the Icelandic immigration.

The Role and Rights of Women in Manitoba (1875 – 1914)

When the Icelanders arrived in Manitoba in the late 1870s, they joined a population of predominantly British origin. Prior to that Manitoba's population was predominantly made up of English- and French-speaking metis (Friesen, 1984). A 1901 census shows the population of Manitoba as 255,211 with 164,239 of those being of British origin and 11,924 of those being of Icelandic origin. "As the first Europeans to arrive, the Scots, Irish, English and Welsh formed the controlling majority in Manitoba" (Arngrimsson, 1997, p. 261). Canadian immigration policy at the turn of the nineteenth century ensured that "the new Manitoba was Protestant, conservative and very British" (Friesen, 1984, p. 204).

The impact of conservative thinking was felt most strongly by the women. "A married woman on the prairies had the responsibilities of an adult partner and the legal status of a child" (Rasmussen, Rasmussen, Savage and Wheeler, 1976, p. 43). The pioneer women of Manitoba at the turn of the nineteenth century could not hold office in municipal and school elections and could not vote in the provincial or federal elections. They did not have legal guardianship of their children and could not own a homestead unless they had sole responsibility

for a family. Despite spending her adult lifetime laboring alongside her husband on their farm, she had no legal claim on the money earned, the mortgage, the proceeds of the sale of the land or the estate (Rasmussen et al., 1976, p. 43). This was a time of limited rights for Manitoba women, and also a time of “growing dissatisfaction with the constraints of their prescribed roles” (Prentice, Bourne, Brandt, Light, Mitchinson and Black, 1996, p.169).

The prescribed roles were largely dictated by the beliefs of the British majority. A formidable British influence on the Manitoba women was the Victorian Period of 1837 – 1910 which clearly and strictly defined the role of women. This role defined the home as the proper place for women. The expectation was that women would find emotional fulfillment through their work in the home and their role as mothers (Abrams, 2001). Deviations from this norm were met with negative reactions and social sanctions as there was a sharp distinction made between the domestic world of women and the public world of men (Prentice et al., 1988, p.144).

Within the narrow confines of the Victorian values was the endorsement of the female role of service. Therefore, as “angels of the household”, as clergy, doctors and others referred to them, women were, never the less, able to become involved in missionary or church work (Prentice et al. 1988, p.151), or create organizations to address education, healthcare, helping the poor or widowed and assisting new immigrants (Barker, 2002, p. 37). In the 1800s, in addition to the expected support of the public roles of their husbands, “dispensing

charity to the poor had long been an acceptable activity for women” (Kinnear, 1998, p. 143).

Recognizing an opportunity to use their skills outside the home while maintaining social acceptance, pioneer women in Manitoba sought opportunities through their church involvement. For pioneer women in the Icelandic communities, role development was achieved through activities associated with the Lutheran and Unitarian churches. The next section provides background on the two churches.

Lutheran and Unitarian Churches and the Social Gospel

In Iceland the Lutheran Church was, and is, the State church and all Icelanders are born into the state Evangelical Lutheran Church. In the nineteenth century, and today, all Icelanders born in Iceland begin their lives as Lutherans. If a person chooses to belong to a different religious faith, he/she must publicly resign from the State church (Gudmundson, 1984, p. 5). The Icelandic immigrants who arrived in Manitoba therefore were predominantly Lutheran in their religious beliefs, though considerably more liberal in their views than other European Lutherans (Kristjanson, 1965, p. 278). “Unlike most immigrant groups, who brought with them very conservative forms of religion, the Icelanders were well-educated people with an independent cast of mind” (Hewett, 1978, p.130). Their faith was an important focus in their lives, as it was for many pioneers (Prentice, et al., 1988, p.151) providing comfort and strength during times of hardship and suffering (Kristjanson, 1965, p. 7). Hardship such as the high rates of infant mortality at the time could be ameliorated through

active community and spiritual support. “The people as a whole were more interested in practical religion than in the technicalities of speculative theology” (Hewitt, 1978, p. 130).

The time period of this research reflects a time of religious division for the Icelanders in Manitoba. In 1877, two Lutheran pastors served the communities in New Iceland; Reverends Jon Bjarnason and Pall Thorlaksson. Though both were Lutheran pastors, they held different theological beliefs. Thorlaksson preached a fundamentalist doctrine based on the Missouri and Norwegian Synods. The dictates of the Norwegian Synod, for example, did not consider women as full members, and therefore women were not given the right to vote in church matters. Pastor Bjarnason preached a more modernistic doctrine which was more in keeping with the beliefs of the Icelandic State Church (Thor, 2002, p. 113). A rift formed between the followers of the two Lutheran pastors, and this religious schism caused many to leave the Manitoba Icelandic community. In 1879, Thorlaksson left for North Dakota with many of his supporters.

Since the state was no longer orchestrating unity, further religious divide occurred in the last decade of the nineteenth century with the spread of Unitarianism among Icelanders in Manitoba (Arngrimsson, 1997, p. 259). This was a far more liberal and free thinking faith as compared to Lutheran beliefs. Unitarian influence from Iceland can be traced to Magnus Eiriksson and Matthias Jochumsson, well known Icelandic liberal religionists and scholars (Gudmundson, 1984, p.6, 11). The early leader of Manitoba Unitarianism was Bjorn Petursson, the founder of the First Icelandic Unitarian Church of Winnipeg.

He preached against the damnation of souls and promoted humanitarian and ethical teachings of Christ. This doctrine and Petursson were popular, and before long Icelandic communities had both Lutheran and Unitarian churches. The census of 1911 showed that most of the Manitoba Unitarians were Icelanders, though not all Icelanders were Unitarians. Many remained as Lutherans (Hewett, 1978, p. 133). Though religious duality existed within the Icelandic communities, the pioneers were able to respectfully co-exist through open and free debate.

Every North American Icelander saw the first light of day in a Unitarian or Lutheran home, and forever remained a member of one or the other. A Unitarian did not marry a Lutheran, for the one was Godless and the other a True Believer. But they were brought together through an ancient Icelandic love of debate. (Matthiasson, 1983, p. 339)

The Icelandic pioneer women were involved in their churches as members of the congregations and through the voluntary work of the churches' Ladies' Aid societies. The Ladies' Aid societies used various fundraising events to raise money to aid the church and community (Arborg Historical Society, 1987, p. 47). All Icelandic Lutheran and Unitarian Churches in Manitoba appear to have had active Ladies' Aid societies in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

A religious movement that affected the Lutheran and Unitarian churches, and in fact all denominations during the time of this research, was the Social Gospel. The rise of socialism brought with it a Christian interpretation which called for churches to play a major role in transforming the social, political and

economic life of communities. The church had long preached against the sins of the individual and was further urged by their communities to address the sins of the economic and social world (Hewett, 1978, p. 326).

The Social Gospel resonated with the women of the Lutheran and Unitarian churches. Women had opportunities to expand their restricted roles through involvement in church activities, and the issues that were important to them such as temperance and suffrage could be addressed through the objectives of the social gospel. The involvement of women in these campaigns was now legitimized through the attachment to the church and the social gospel.

Social Gospel might figure in the rhetoric of many men, but it seems clear that the chief actors were often women. Yet so far as I know, no history, novel, poem or film sufficiently accounts for or celebrates this important fact. (Kidd, 1975, p. 236)

The Social Gospel also resonated with the ideals of adult education in Canada at this time. Canadian adult education has had “a strong tradition of being part of a movement to make Canadian society a more caring, democratic and equitable one” (Selman et al., p. 9). Using adult educational means to achieve the objectives of Social Gospel is a logical fit. The interrelation of the church, the Social Gospel and adult education are illustrated by Catholic priest and adult educator, Moses Mathias Coady (Kidd, 1975, p. 243):

Social reform must come through education. Social progress in a democracy must come through the action of the citizens; it can only come

if there is an improvement in the quality of the people themselves. That improvement in turn, can come only through education.

This discussion of the Lutheran and Unitarian churches and the Social Gospel establishes the important and sometimes divisive role religion played in the lives of Icelandic pioneer women. This section also examines the opportunities the Ladies' Aids provided for the women through the prevailing social gospel movement, and overall, outlines the interrelationships of the church, the social gospel, adult education and the Icelandic pioneer women of Manitoba.

This concludes the background section of chapter 1. The chapter began with an overview of the three types of adult education and a discussion of adult education definition and characteristics of women as learners. It then described the factors that contributed to the large scale emigration from Iceland and the culture in Iceland at the time of emigration. Next, the role and rights of women in Manitoba during 1875 – 1914 were explained. Lastly, the significance of the Lutheran and Unitarian churches and Social Gospel in the adult learning and education activities in the lives of the Icelandic community was described. The next sections will provide the purpose, conceptual framework, research questions, definitions, delimitations and limitations of this research study. The last part of this chapter outlines the researcher's personal interest in this research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to reveal and record the contributions of Icelandic pioneer women to adult education in Manitoba during the 39 year period beginning with their arrival in Manitoba (1875) and ending with the outbreak of World War I (1914). This study is a response to the absence of women in the recorded history of adult education in Canada.

Conceptual Framework

As stated in the introduction, revealing the activities and the women involved is only one part of the story of the Icelandic pioneer women in Manitoba. The other part is to examine the findings within the context of the influences of the 1875 – 1914 time period. J. Roby Kidd (1979) believed that to ignore the context of adult education activities is to arrive at answers that are one-dimensional. Consequently, Kidd designed a three-dimensional conceptual framework in 1979 for examining adult education in Canada, entitled *Factors Affecting and Explaining Adult Education in Canada*. It was the first and only attempt to create a framework for examining adult education in Canada.

Kidd seems to characterize his framework as a starting point, by describing it as “one way of apprehending some truths, establishing some relationships, identifying some factors that are often neglected, and above all are (is) a source of significant questions” (Kidd, 1979, p. 4). This research study into Icelandic pioneer women in Manitoba takes Kidd’s 1979 framework as a starting point and adapts it in order to create a more effective tool for examining the adult

education activities of women in Canada (see figure 1). Much has been learned about adult education since 1979, yet Kidd's framework still provides a good template of categories of inquiry.

Kidd used a cube graphic to illustrate his analytic model for the analysis of adult education in Canada across the three dimensions of (a) time, (b) influences, and (c) activities. The first dimension, time, is divided into three distinct periods. The first period begins in 1867 with the British North American Act and ends in 1913, the beginning of World War I. He identified this period as a time of massive immigration and an opening up of the western provinces. The second period, from 1914 to 1945 spans the time period between the start of WW I and the conclusion of WW II, including the Depression. The third period begins with the reconstruction following World War II in 1946, up until 1970. Kidd uses 1970 as an end point because he sees it as the point at which adult education was established as a significant field of education. The time period for this research on Icelandic pioneer women begins with their arrival in Manitoba in 1875 and ends with the beginning of World War I, which is similar to the first period in J. Roby Kidd's conceptual framework.

The second dimension, influences, is divided into six categories:

1. People - This category refers to the influence of significant people who were leaders in adult education during each time period. This research will identify individual Icelandic women who were influential in the Icelandic communities.
2. Events: Economic, Social, Political, and Cultural - This category groups significant large scale historical events that occurred during the specific time

period. Examples of events used in this research are the establishment of the Normal School and the University of Manitoba.

3. Ideas and Concepts – This category of influence considers ideas and concepts that influence adult learners. Examples from this research are assimilation and the Social Gospel.

4. Outside Canada Influences – This category refers to the influence of other countries outside of Canada. The two countries examined in this research are developments in Britain and Iceland.

5. Communication and Technology - This category considers the influence of communication and new technology on adult learning. Examples examined in this research are the Canadian postal service and the knitting machine.

6. Disciplines Affecting Learning Theory and Practice - Kidd clarifies that this category had minimal influence until the 1960's and 1970's which is well after the period of this research. This category is not used.

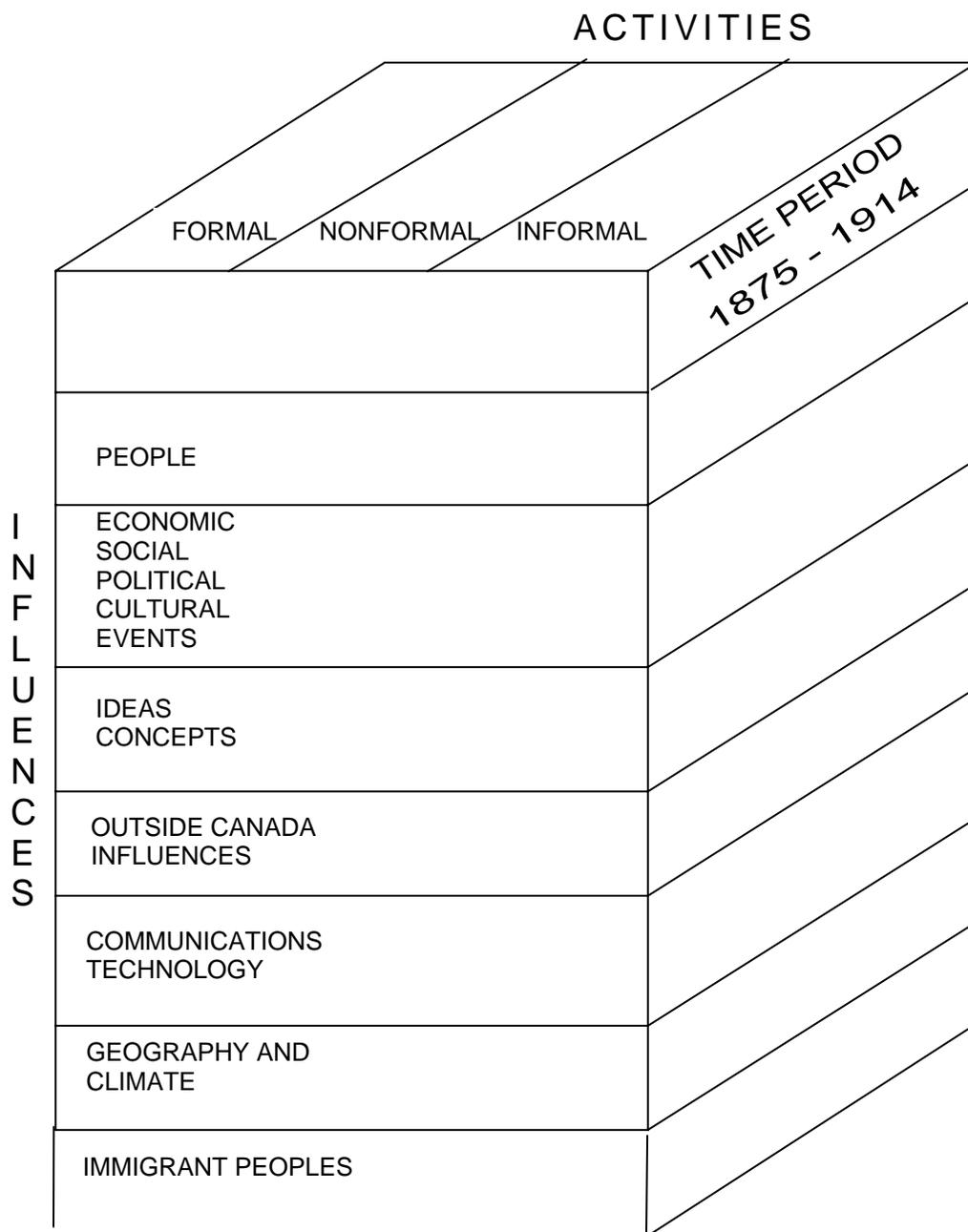
In his discussion of the influences to be considered in his framework, Kidd suggests extending the framework to include the additional categories of “land, climate (the Canadian winter) or the peoples, many of them immigrants” (Kidd, 1979, p. 16). The conceptual framework for this research into Icelandic pioneer women includes the additional categories of geography (land), climate and immigrant people.

The third dimension that Kidd considers in his framework is activities of adult education. He groups the activities under the categories of institutions, programs and methods. This part of the framework is outdated and too limiting

for the purposes of this research. When Kidd created the framework in 1979, adult education was defined as formal and nonformal institutions and programs. The acknowledgement of informal learning as a possible component of adult education came much later. Kidd's inclusion of methods in this dimension only becomes applicable after World War II when "there was considerable research about methods" (Kidd, 1979, p. 22). Because this research concerns the time period before World War I, Kidd's framework was adapted by an expansion of the activities section. Kidd's framework terms of *institutions, programs and methods* (1979) were replaced with *formal, nonformal and informal or self-directed learning* (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 26).

By adapting J. Roby Kidd's 1979 conceptual framework, a more up-to-date and inclusive conceptual framework was created (see figure 1). This revised framework allows for a broader inquiry and captures a greater range of the adult education activities in which Icelandic pioneer women of Manitoba were involved.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for examining the adult educational activities of women in Canada.



Note. From *Some Preliminary Notes Concerning an Enquiry into the Heritage of Canadian Adult Education* (p. 5), by J. Roby Kidd, 1979, University of British Columbia, Vancouver: Centre for Continuing Education. Adapted with permission obtained October 25, 2006 and November 22, 2007 from Roger Boshier, University of British Columbia, Canada.

Research Questions

1. Who were the individual Icelandic women that influenced the adult education activities of the Icelandic pioneer women in Manitoba between 1875 and 1914?
2. What were the adult education activities of Icelandic pioneer women in Manitoba between 1875 and 1914?
 - a) What activities occurred in response to the influences of economic, social, political and cultural events?
 - b) What activities occurred in response to the influences of ideas and concepts?
 - c) What activities occurred in response to the influences from outside of Canada?
 - d) What activities occurred in response to the influences of communications and technology?
 - e) What activities occurred in response to the influences of geography and climate?
 - f) What activities occurred in response to the influences of the immigrant peoples?

Definitions

Adult education activities – Refers to activities conducted in formal institutional settings, nonformal settings and informal or self-directed contexts as defined below by Merriam and Caffarella (1999, p. 26):

Formal Institutional Settings

1. Independent adult education organizations – are organizations whose primary purpose is to provide adult learning opportunities.
2. Educational institutions – are post-secondary institutions such as community colleges, universities, and some public schools serving adults.
3. Quasi-educational organizations – are organizations which consider education as a function of their primary mission. These include libraries, museums, service clubs, religious and civic organizations.
4. Noneducational organizations – are organizations which consider education a means to achieve a different outcome. They provide educational opportunities for an organization's employees rather than the public. Examples are government departments, armed forces and unions.

Nonformal Settings

1. Community-based learning opportunities – are characterized by simple and flexible structures, paid or often volunteer staff, and programming focused on social action or betterment of the community. Examples are church or community groups focusing on literacy, job skills development, housing, and social inequalities.

2. Indigenous learning – is learning related to the learner’s culture. This type of learning makes use of oral traditions, legends, and myths to teach and preserve a culture’s history and traditions.

Informal or Self-Directed Contexts

This type of learning usually occurs in the learners’ natural setting and is initiated and carried out by the learners. It may occur independent of other people or include involvement by friends or mentors. Learning may take place in the home, the workplace, or through recreational pursuits.

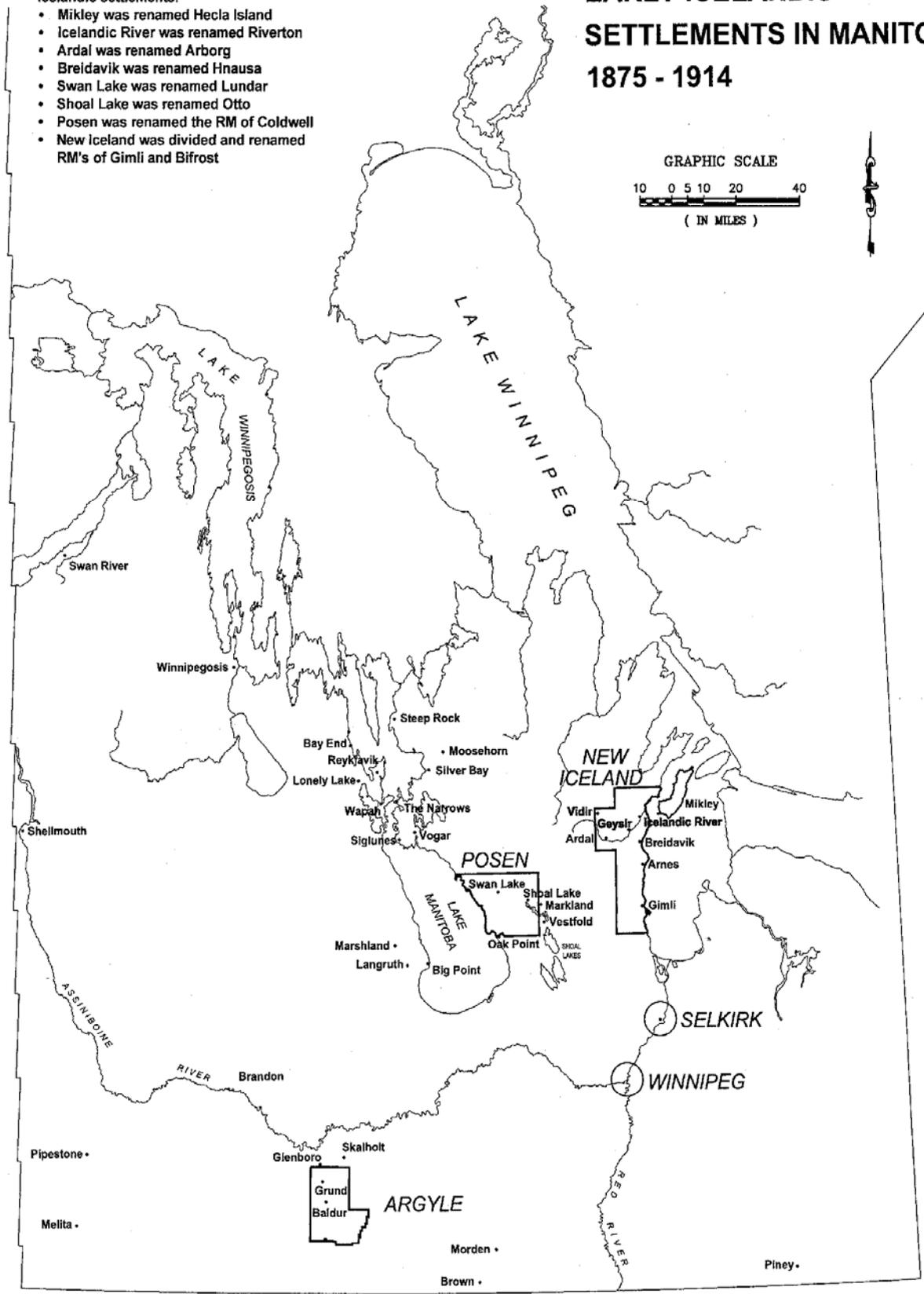
Delimitations

1. The time period for this research begins with 1875, which is the beginning of the Icelandic settlement in Manitoba. The study ends at 1914, the beginning of World War I. This coincides with Kidd’s conceptual framework and Selman (1995) also uses 1914 as a transition year in his discussion of stages of development in Canadian adult education. The focus of the educational activities of women changed dramatically with the outbreak of World War I. During the war, women were volunteering to aid the war effort and working in paid positions that became available as men left for the war (Prentice et al, 1996, p. 204).
2. This study examines the adult education activities of Icelandic pioneer women from five Icelandic settlements or communities in Manitoba. The communities studied were: New Iceland, Posen, Argyle, Selkirk, and Winnipeg (see map in figure 2).

Figure 2: Map of early Icelandic settlements in Manitoba 1875 – 1914

- Present day names of early Icelandic settlements:
- Mikley was renamed Hecla Island
 - Icelandic River was renamed Riverton
 - Ardal was renamed Arborg
 - Breidavik was renamed Hnauasa
 - Swan Lake was renamed Lundar
 - Shoal Lake was renamed Otto
 - Posen was renamed the RM of Coldwell
 - New Iceland was divided and renamed RM's of Gimli and Bifrost

EARLY ICELANDIC SETTLEMENTS IN MANITOBA 1875 - 1914



Map created by Reprormap Ltd. for Jo-Anne Weir in 2007



Limitations

1. Much of the involvement of women in adult education activities during this time period has gone unrecorded. Prentice et al (1996) maintain that “imaginative use of fragmentary sources” (p. 23) is often necessary to begin to construct a picture of the past worlds of women. Consequently, the recording is a construction from historical primary and secondary sources.
2. The researcher in this study cannot read text written in the Icelandic language. Many primary and secondary sources are written in the Icelandic language. Various means resulted in some of these sources being used, but generally they could not be accessed for this research.

Personal Interest

The dedication at the beginning of this thesis is to my great grandmother Margaret Johnson. She was among the Icelandic pioneer women of Manitoba at the turn of the nineteenth century. Sadly, she died in 1918 from complications following her twelfth childbirth at the age of 43. Before beginning this research, I knew very little about her, as there was very little recorded of her life. Her story also lay hidden beneath the snow. Conducting this inquiry into “what lies beneath the snow” has helped me to know something of my great grandmother and her life. It has also shown me how the absence of the history of women results in a loss of heritage to their families, as well as the enterprises, such as adult education, they have been involved in.

This chapter has provided an introduction to the research. Collectively, the sections of this chapter provide the foundation for the inquiry into the adult education activities of Icelandic pioneer women in Manitoba during the 1875 to 1914 time period. The next chapter is a review of the literature related to this research topic.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter reviews the related literature in three areas: the adult education history in Canada, the history of Manitoba 1870 – 1914, and the history of Icelandic immigrants in Manitoba.

Adult Education History in Canada

Canada has an impressive history in the field of adult education. As a relatively young country with an immigrant society, it has used adult education activities across the country and throughout its time of “nation building” (Selman, 1995, p. 63). Programs such as Frontier College, the Women’s Institutes, the Antigonish Movement, the National Farm Radio Forum, Caisse Populaire, the Banff School of Fine Arts and the National Film Board (NFB) have helped Canadians to learn about, and adapt to, their new country. Many of these programs are highly regarded internationally as innovative approaches to adult education and have been applied elsewhere in the world (Selman et al., 1998, p. 81). Many Canadian adult educators have also been recognized as leaders or pioneers in the field. In addition to the people behind the creation of the programs just mentioned, others also merit mention. J. Roby Kidd, for his work in the international adult education movement, Allen Tough, for his model of self-directed learning, and Gordon Selman, for his work as an adult education

historian have all made their mark internationally in the field. These programs and people indicate a vibrant adult education history in Canada.

This section of the literature review will begin by first looking at the existing summative histories of adult education history in Canada. It will then review some specific histories that contribute to the historical record and relate to the topic of women in adult education.

Three Canadian scholars have made significant contributions to the summative recording of adult education history in Canada: J. Roby Kidd, Gordon Selman and Michael Welton. The first book chronicling the history of adult education in Canada was *Adult Education in Canada* (1950) by J. Roby Kidd. In this book he includes a brief history, describes the activities and programs in each province, and profiles selected programs such as Frontier College, the Banff School of Fine Arts, Camp Laquemac, the National Farm Radio and Citizens Forum, NFB, the Antigonish Movement, and Women's Institutes. Though he does touch on all provinces, the largest sections are devoted to the provinces of Nova Scotia, Quebec and Ontario. The time period Kidd examines begins with the early nineteenth century, but the bulk of his discussion is focused on the post World War I period up to the writing of the book (1950). The programs and activities he includes would fit under the category of formal and nonformal types of learning. Though several women were contributing authors, the only section devoted to women in adult education is a five-page section on the Women's Institute. There is also a brief reference to the YWCA (Young

Women's Christian Association) and YWHA (Young Women's Hebrew Association).

Kidd and Gordon Selman (1978) co-edited *Coming of Age: Canadian Adult Education in the 1960's*. The 1960s are seen by the editors as a time of expansion and significance in activities of adult education in Canada. They compiled 38 articles by numerous authors documenting developments in the field. The types of learning profiled are formal and nonformal. There are several women in the listing of contributing authors. One section under the heading of *The Impact of Some Major Social Developments of the 1960's on Adult Education* is entitled, *Education of Women*. It is authored by Marion Royce, Director of the Women's Bureau, Department of Labour in Ottawa, and describes the learners, trends and programs being accessed by women through her department.

Adult education historian Gordon Selman has made the study of adult education history in Canada his life's work. His experience and research positioned him well to coauthor with Paul Dampier the much needed *Foundations of Adult Education in Canada* (1991). In 1998 Selman and Dampier published a second edition of the text in collaboration with Mark Selman and Michael Cooke. The second edition was published just seven years later due to rapid changes in the field and a determination to address gaps in the first edition. The second edition provides a comprehensive overview of the history and nature of adult education in Canada within the context of political, social and cultural influences. This text stands as an important contribution to the history of adult education in

Canada. The scope of this enquiry is broad, given the confines of a single text. It covers all regions of Canada with adequate emphasis on Manitoba. The time period begins with pre-1867 and leads to the present. Formal and nonformal activities make up the majority of the discussion; however, self-directed learning is included. Most noteworthy in this text is the considerable emphasis placed on women and adult education. One of the gaps identified after the publishing of the first edition was the omission of women and their contribution to adult education. In the second edition the authors have addressed that gap with one chapter entitled *Lest We Forget: Uncovering Women's Leadership in Adult Education*, by Shauna Butterwick, and a second chapter entitled *Women and Adult Education: A Postmodern Perspective*, by Tammy Dewar. These chapters will be reviewed later in this section. Elsewhere in the book, the involvement of women is recorded in a discussion of the Women's Institute and the YWCA.

Selman makes another contribution in 1995 with *Adult Education in Canada: Historical Essays*. This is a collection of his writings from over twenty-five years in the field. His writings are divided into the first three sections on the nature of adult education in Canada, the evolution of the field and a history of the Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE). Sections four, five and six are devoted to a history of adult education in the province of British Columbia. This work comes closer than previous ones to providing a provincial history of adult education. He addresses a time period from pre-1867 to the 1970's and 1980's. There is an emphasis on formal and nonformal activities. Mention is made of the involvement of women through the expected references to the Women's Institute

and the YWCA. Some individual women are identified in the British Columbia sections.

Michael Welton's (1987) *Knowledge for the People: The Struggle for Adult Learning in English-Speaking Canada, 1828 – 1973* is a collection of historical essays by contributing authors. Welton, as editor, created the text to address the two fold issues of "the invisibility of adult educational thought and practice within mainstream Canadian historical writing and the historical amnesia of the Canadian adult education community" (p. 1). The text includes essays related to all regions of Canada, though as the title indicates, it focuses on English-speaking Canada. It covers a 145-year time period, beginning in 1828. The focus is on formal and non-formal types of learning activities. The history of women is included with a chapter on the British Columbia Women's Institutes. Women are also included through references to programs that women accessed. Half the contributing authors in this collection of essays are women. This text is an important contribution by these authors to begin what Welton refers to as a "retrieval of our history" (p. 16).

Kidd's, Selman's and Welton's work comprises the bulk of significant summative studies of adult education in Canada. There are gaps that exist, and researchers have continued to work towards filling them. The rest of this section of the review of literature will highlight some of the specific histories which fill gaps in the history of adult education in Canada.

Harriet Rouillard, editor of *Food for Thought*, the journal of the CAAE, edited *Pioneers in Adult Education in Canada* in 1952. It is a compilation of 16

profiles of significant people in adult education. This book profiles people from across Canada who have been, as the title suggest, pioneers in the Canadian field. It is limited to a specific time frame, however, as all were born between 1854 and 1903. Formal and nonformal activities are highlighted in the profiles. Two of the 16 pioneers are women: Adelaid Hoodless, founder of the Women's Institute, and Helen Gordon Stewart, librarian of British Columbia and Eastern Caribbean.

As mentioned previously, it is important to note the contribution made by Shauna Butterwick and Tammy Dewar in their chapters in Selman's *Foundations of Adult Education 2nd edition* (1998). Butterwick's *Lest We Forget: Uncovering Women's Leadership in Adult Education*, has as its purpose "to draw attention to the contributions of women's organizations and women's leadership to the field of adult education in Canada" (1998, p. 103). Within the limits of a single chapter her inquiry can only be "selective and partial" (p. 104). In several instances, she comments on the absence of women's stories and states the need for more research in this area. In her examination of the contributions of women, she uses the technique of probing into "familiar stories" of adult education, such as the Antigonish Movement, and revealing the women involved. She goes on to highlight the contribution of women's voluntary organizations during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. She points out the historical tendency for these types of activities of women to be ignored. Here she includes the Women's Institute and the YWCA as examples, and lists other less well known examples such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union, The National Council of Women, and the Home and School Association. She specifically points out the

need for more research into women's volunteer organizations during this time period. She references a 1979 Master's thesis by Susan Witter, entitled *An Historical Study of Adult Education in Two Canadian Women's Organizations: the Federated Women's Institute of Canada and the Young Women's Christian Association of Canada 1870-1978*. In her summary she states the need to "rethink or reconceptualize the frameworks" (p. 116) in order to uncover the stories of women in adult education.

Tammy Dewar's chapter in Selman et al's (1998) book is entitled *Women and Adult Education: A Postmodern Perspective*. Her stated goal was to provide a variety of perspectives of women involved in adult education in Canada. She accomplishes this by intermixing her own thoughts with segments of e-mails from colleagues and other writers in the field. She identifies the experiences of women in adult education as being "covered by a blanket of snow" (p. 360). One colleague asks, "Where are the role models?" within the field. Dewar cites adult education historian Jane Hugo's (1990) three reasons for the exclusion of women from adult education history: an early focus on the development of organizations as a means of gaining credibility as a profession, the predominance of men in power, and the difficulty in tracing the activities of women due to the informal roles they have played. Hugo also highlights the need for women in adult education to recover their history.

One recent effort to begin a compilation of adult education history through the use of technology is Don Chapman's on-line *Encyclopedia of Canadian Adult Education*. This open-content project invites contributors to record significant

institutions, people and events in the history of Canadian adult education, providing a forum for people from all walks of life to get adult education stories “on the record”.

There has been limited research written on the history of adult education in Manitoba (Poonwassie and Poonwassie, 1997). The first book to collect and record essays on some of the events is *Adult Education in Manitoba: Historical Aspects* (1997), edited by Deo and Anne Poonwassie. The contributing authors used primary and secondary sources to document thirteen episodes of adult education in Manitoba. The book has been divided into four categories, with the first being a mix of biography, ethnic group and citizenship essays; the second deals with events; the third with institutions; and the fourth with organizations. The text provides a good collection of some of the major adult education stories of Manitoba. It includes stories from across the province though roughly half of them focus on programming that took place in the capital city of Winnipeg. The study covers a time frame beginning as early as 1600 with adult education in Aboriginal culture and leads up to the time of the book’s publishing in 1997. The focus is on formal and nonformal types of activities, but does include a discussion of the informal or self-directed nature of Aboriginal education. The involvement of women is included in many of the stories and specifically in chapters 11 and 12 on the Women’s Institute and the YWCA in Winnipeg.

In the preface, introduction and epilogue of *Adult Education in Manitoba*, Poonwassie and Poonwassie speak of the need for more research into the history of adult education in Manitoba. They point to the “general and largely

episodic” (p. 7) nature of the existing Canadian histories which make few references to activities in Manitoba. Their hope in creating the book is that it may become a “catalyst for others to study and create a knowledge base of adult education in Manitoba” (p. 5). Poonwassie and Poonwassie identify the absence of a “concentration of effort to pursue a research agenda in the history of adult education in this province [Manitoba]” (p. 9). In the epilogue, they refer to lessons learned in the creation of the text. One such lesson is to record historical events within the spheres of context, interpretation and analysis.

There is a specific body of work on women’s history of formal adult education in Manitoba. The focus is on women’s experiences as they took their formal training to become school teachers and their experiences in the profession during the twentieth century. Sybil Shack (1973, 1975) writes of her own experiences as a teacher and leader in the profession during the mid-twentieth century. Her biographical style, which is interspersed with research findings, provides a historical overview of the culture, attitudes, challenges and changes in the profession which female teachers faced. Rosa del Carmen Bruno-Jofre’s research (1991, 1998) focuses on the dimensions of Manitoba history, education and women. Her article *Issues in the History of Education in Manitoba* highlights the educational issues facing women teachers in Manitoba during the twentieth century. Carolyn Crippen and John McCarthy (2003) use a historical accounting of the education of women in Manitoba as an indicator of the presence of Manitoba women in higher education. Collectively, these researchers have captured and recorded a representation of the experiences of Manitoba women in the teaching profession during the twentieth century.

Surprisingly, or not, there exists a history of education of the Icelandic Canadians in Manitoba entitled *Educational Echos* by Roy Ruth (1964). Ruth has compiled various records, including the dates and names of the first schools in the Icelandic settlements, records of the 1913 – 1940 Jon Bjarnason Academy, and a listing of Icelandic students who received university degrees and educational awards. This is a valuable record of one Manitoba ethnic group's educational history, and many Icelandic women are listed and celebrated in this record book.

This review of literature in adult education history in Canada reveals a fragmented history which has focused on certain regions of Canada and certain time periods, and on formal and nonformal learning activities. The history of women is slowly coming into the picture, but often the stories are predictably about the Women's Institutes or the YWCA. The history of women in adult education continues to be hidden. That theme was common among several writers; Butterwick (1998) speaks of "uncovering women's leadership" (p. 103); Dewar (1998) states "there is much under the snow" (p. 360); Hugo (1990) points to "the invisibility of women" (p. 12); and Rasmussen et al. (1976) speak in terms of "jigsaw pieces [that have] been lost or hidden" (p. 8). Continued and increased efforts are needed to uncover women's history. Adult education in Canada has a very large gap in the recording of its history. To be fair, the same could be said for all histories. "Selective and partial vision will doubtless always be part of the historical enterprise, but perhaps by taking thought we can at least reduce its incidence" (Scott, 1984, p. 7). Examining the presence of women in Canadian adult education would be a good first step.

This concludes the review of literature in adult education history in Canada. The next section of this review of literature addresses the history of Manitoba 1870 – 1914.

History of Manitoba (1870 – 1914)

This section provides an overview of the economic, social, political and cultural events in Manitoba beginning in 1870, the year of Manitoba's entry into Confederation, and ending in 1914, the year of the outbreak of World War 1. This period was a time of significant change and growth in the province of Manitoba. One profound change for the province was its geographical size. In 1870 the "postage-stamp province measured approximately 14,000 square miles and through the boundary extensions of 1881 and 1912 it grew to its current boundaries and size of 250,000 square miles" (Kinnear, 1998, p. 11). Another change was in the province's demographics. In 1870, over half of Manitoba's population was Aboriginal or Métis. By 1911, this group formed only two percent of the population, according to the census, and over half of the population of Manitoba was now British (Kinnear, 1998, p. 14). The other half was made up of European immigrants, including German and Russian Mennonites, French Canadians from New England, Icelanders, Germans, Romanians, Finns, Swedes, Jews and Ukrainians (Friesen, 1984, p. 186). Immigrants were able to enter Canada with very few restrictions during the free entry period of immigration from 1867 to 1895 (Elliot, 1983, p.291). That immigration policy, coupled with the Dominion Lands Act of 1872, attracted large numbers of immigrants in what was termed "Manitoba (land) fever" (Thor, 2002, p. 185).

The large influx of immigrants resulted in expanded rural settlement, but similar growth also occurred in the major urban centre of Winnipeg. In 1871 the population of Winnipeg was approximately 1000 people, and grew to more than 27,000 by 1891 (LAC, 2005). This growth brought entrepreneurs to the city who saw its potential as “a new Chicago, a centre for manufacturing, distributing, and financial services as well as for trade in grain and agricultural produce” (Kinnear, 1998, p. 14). Located in the centre of Canada at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, Winnipeg was established as the dominant metropolis of Western Canada (Friesen, 1987, p. 205). Winnipeg's economy during the 1870 to 1914 time period saw a boom up until the end of 1882, a recession in 1882, a rebound in prosperity around 1897, and a second boom between the years of 1900 and 1913 (Friesen, 1987, p. 204-219).

Winnipeg and the rural settlements were characterized by both ethnic and religious diversity. Crippen (2004, p. 29) gives a sense of the variety of Christian denominations of the different ethnic groups in Manitoba at this time: Roman Catholic (French and Irish), Anglican (English), Presbyterian (Scottish), Methodist, Baptist, Congregationalists (English), Unitarian (Icelandic), Lutheran (Icelandic and German), Mennonite (German), Ukrainian Orthodox, and Ukrainian Catholic.

A social class system was already becoming established in Manitoba during this time. In Winnipeg, three areas of residential classes were developing. The south residential area of Winnipeg was for the wealthy and respectable, the north end of the city was for poor Jewish, Icelandic and British immigrants, and

the western part was for the respectable, but not wealthy citizens of Winnipeg (Friesen, 1987, p. 210). The rural farming communities were also divided by class. The upper class was comprised of the wealthy owners of large farms, usually British-Canadian, who employed several male and female laborers and domestic servants. The next level of the hierarchy was made up of respectable families with average-sized farms who might hire seasonal labor. The lowest class included poorer farmers, certain ethnicities, and those who did not own land, such as laborers or domestic servants (Friesen, 1987, p. 316).

A critical factor contributing to the growth of the province and of Canada as a nation at this time was the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway (Friesen, 1987, p. 172). The building of the railway through Winnipeg and later throughout Manitoba created employment, brought increased immigration, improved mail service, and increased economic activity through more efficient movement of goods, particularly grain. It also provided the pioneers with a link to the rest of Canada and reduced feelings of isolation (Arngrimsson, 1997, p. 238). During 1881 and 1882 the transcontinental route of Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) was built east to west across Manitoba. Originally, the transcontinental route was to pass through Selkirk but the federal government decided that Winnipeg was the better choice. For the settlement of New Iceland, directly north of Selkirk, this was disappointing news (Arngrimsson, 1997, p.238). Rail service finally reached the New Iceland settlements in the period between 1906 and 1914.

The CPR provided a transportation link for the pioneers and the main communication link was the Canadian postal service. When Manitoba joined Confederation in 1870, it also became part of the Canadian postal service. Twenty-one post offices were established in the province with weekly or semi-weekly mail service (Peterson, 1990, p.12). The outlying rural areas had post offices established later than the larger centres and their mail service was inconsistent until the railway reached the community. A province wide telephone system was not established until after 1910 (Rural Municipality of Argyle, 1981, p. 35).

Women were active in the suffrage movement in Manitoba during this time period. In 1870, the Federal Elections Act stated that “no woman, idiot, lunatic, or criminal could vote” (Treble, 2000, p. 77). Manitoba women lobbied for suffrage and temperance with an emphasis on protecting the home and family life (Prentice et al., 1998, p. 169-188). The campaign in Manitoba, led by well-known suffragist Nellie McClung, was finally successful in 1916, with Manitoba becoming the first province in Canada to grant women the vote. Icelandic suffrage workers such as Margret Benedictsson played a part in this victory as well (Kristjanson, 1965, p. 372).

The Manitoba public schools were undergoing significant changes during the 1870 - 1916 time period. In 1871 the province passed legislation establishing a system of public education. Between that time and 1916, much national controversy surrounded the issue of language of instruction in Manitoba schools. It became known as the Manitoba Schools Question. In 1890, the Manitoba

government cancelled the use of French language as a language of instruction in the schools. In 1897, it restored the right to French language instruction, and then abolished it again in 1916 (Friesen, 1987, p. 215). The year 1916 was also the point at which the province made school attendance compulsory. This was instituted at a time when all schools were experiencing low attendance rates. One exception was the Icelandic community which had established a school upon its arrival and encouraged both girls and boys to attend regularly (Kinnear, 1998, p. 47). Though the Icelandic pioneers could have chosen Icelandic as their language of instruction through the Laurier-Greenway compromise of 1897, they chose English from the outset (Thor, 2002, p. 209) as part of their efforts to assimilate.

Other historical events related to education in Manitoba during this time included the establishment of Wesley College (later the University of Winnipeg) and the University of Manitoba in 1877, and the opening of the Nursing Program at the Winnipeg General Hospital in 1887. Teacher training at Normal School was instituted by the provincial government in 1882 (Crippen and McCarthy, 2003, p. 257).

Well-documented histories have been written about Manitoba's history as a province: *Manitoba: A History* (Morton, 1967); *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Friesen, 1984); and *River Road: Essays on Manitoba and Prairie History* (Friesen, 1996). Only recently have texts such as Armstrong's *Extraordinary Ordinary Women; Manitoba Women and their Stories* (2002), Kinnear's *A Female Economy; Women's Work in a Prairie Province* (1998), and Prentice et al.'s

Canadian Women; A History (1996) provided histories focusing on the contributions of women. These are important contributions, but there are other stories that also need to be recorded. In 1976, a group of women created a history book of Canadian prairie women entitled *A Harvest Yet to Reap; A History of Prairie Women* (Rasmussen et al.). Their choice of title points to the valuable history that has yet to be revealed. As former Provincial Librarian for Manitoba, William J. Healy stated back in 1923:

The pioneer women of Manitoba hold an important place in Canadian history. No record of our country's past will be of greater interest or more inspiring than the record of their lives, if ever their lives are adequately recorded, as they should be (p. 260).

History of Icelandic Immigrants in Manitoba

This section begins with a brief overview of the migration and settlement of the Icelandic immigrants into the five Manitoba communities studied in this research; New Iceland, Posen, Argyle, Selkirk and Winnipeg. It then moves onto a review of the literature that exists on the Icelandic history of Manitoba specific to the activities of women.

Today, Manitoba is home to a large and active Icelandic community. The Icelandic culture has thrived within the multicultural milieu of Manitoba. Evidence of enduring Icelandic culture in Manitoba can be found through the 116-year history of the Icelandic festival, *Islendingadagurinn*, which began in 1890. It is the second oldest continuous ethnic festival in North America. A central figure of the

festival is the Fjallkona, or the Maid of the Mountain. She is said to represent Iceland and its mountains, geysers, people, language, literature and arts (Lindal, 1967, p. 393). A respected woman from the Icelandic community is chosen each year to be the Fjallkona. This is a further indicator of the social position of women in the Icelandic community.

The community of Gimli, Manitoba, is an Icelandic cultural centre that hosts the festival, as well as other cultural events throughout the year. The New Iceland Heritage Museum, dedicated to preserving and presenting the history of the New Iceland settlement, is also located in Gimli. A cairn honoring the pioneers who first arrived in Manitoba in 1875 stands in the middle of the town. Winnipeg is also an Icelandic cultural centre. In downtown Winnipeg the offices of the Icelandic weekly newspaper, *Logberg-Heimskringla*, can be found. This newspaper is an amalgamation of two pioneer newspapers which were established in 1888 and 1886 respectively.

There are many cooperative cultural events and initiatives between Iceland and Manitoba, most notably Iceland's recent support of the Department of Icelandic Language and Literature Studies, and the University Libraries' Icelandic Collection at the University of Manitoba. The Icelandic Collection, under the direction of librarian Sigrid Johnson, houses over 27,000 volumes. It is the second largest collection of Icelandic materials in North America after the Fiske Icelandic Collection at Cornell University (Brydon, 2006, p. 16). The Icelandic community in Manitoba is committed to preserving its culture and history. It is a

rich history that began with the first group of some 200 Icelandic pioneers arriving in Manitoba in 1875 (Arngrimsson, 1997).

The memorial cairn at Gimli, Manitoba marks the beginning of the Icelandic settlement in Manitoba in 1875. Over the next 25 years, the Icelanders immigrated and migrated to various parts of the province before finally settling into a number of permanent settlements. The movement within the province was because of new immigrants arriving from Iceland each year, new regions of the province being opened up, and the overpopulation of some Icelandic colonies (Thor, 2002, p. 222). The following description of this twenty-five-year period of Icelandic migration and settlement within Manitoba is paraphrased from Brydon (2006).

The original group of approximately 280 Icelandic pioneers arrived in Winnipeg from Kinmount, Ontario in the fall of 1875. Approximately 35 single men and women from the group chose to stay in Winnipeg to find work as laborers and domestic servants. The remainder of the group proceeded north by a flotilla of boats on Lake Winnipeg and landed at Willow Point. They proceeded to establish their first settlement in the reserve of New Iceland, six kilometers north of the landing point. They named it Gimli, which is the name of the home of the Gods in Norse mythology. The approximately 200 Gimli pioneers arrived in late fall and were poorly prepared for their first winter in Manitoba. During the first six months they faced severe hardship, causing many to leave the new settlement. In addition to the extreme cold of that first winter, the Icelanders also faced a lack of food and winter clothing, disease (scurvy), and high rates of infant

mortality which took a terrible toll on the immigrants. It is remarkable to note that in the midst of these considerable hardships, the pioneers were able to begin establishing the institutions of a community. In those first six months, a school for their children was created with English as the language of instruction, a committee was formed to govern the community with its limited resources, and a newspaper was circulated to keep channels of communication between them open.

The following year the “big group of 1876” arrived, bringing 1200 Icelandic immigrants to Gimli. The Gimli settlement was not prepared for such a large influx of people and migration began to spread north further into the New Iceland reserve. Settlements were established at Arnes, Breidavik (later called Hnausa), Icelandic River (later called Riverton) and Mikley (later called Hecla Island). Gimli and these four settlements were collectively referred to as New Iceland.

The second year of settlement brought continued economic hardship and a devastating smallpox epidemic. A third of the Icelanders contracted the disease and over a hundred people died, mostly teens and children. New Iceland was quarantined, cutting off the transport of much needed food and supplies. Once again, when the quarantine was lifted, many discouraged young men and women left the settlement to work in Winnipeg or on farms elsewhere in Manitoba.

The next three-year period of 1877 to 1879 was marked by improved conditions and community development. New Iceland established a regional council to govern its settlements with representation from each. A constitution was created to ensure the fundamental governance needs of the reserve were

met. A printing press was purchased and the newspaper *Framfari* was established. Despite the community progress, this time period was also marked by religious divide. Discord between the two factions of the Lutheran church was causing significant problems within the community (as discussed earlier in chapter 1 of this thesis). There was also the issue of whether or not New Iceland could survive economically or was doomed to failure. Rev. Pall Thorlaksson's followers felt that a closer association with Norwegian settlements in the United States was their best hope for survival. Rev. Jon Bjarnason's followers felt that opening up the reserve to non-Icelanders would ensure its survival and was in keeping with efforts to become a part of their new country. Assimilation was foremost in the minds of most Icelanders, who wanted equality with the British majority and rejected the status of being foreigners in their new home. In 1878, Rev. Thorlaksson and many of his followers left New Iceland for North Dakota. The religious controversy, the difference of opinion on the solution for economic survival, and other hardships, such as the devastating flood of 1880, were taking their toll. Many Icelanders chose to migrate to other parts of the province in the wake of the controversy and hardship. By 1881 only 250 people remained in New Iceland, down significantly from the population of over 1400 just five years earlier.

Between 1880 and 1900 many Icelanders continued to migrate, looking for an ideal permanent home. The urban centers of Winnipeg and Selkirk attracted many, and by the year 1900 many Icelanders lived in those cities. Rural settlement continued to spread during this decade into Argyle and Posen, and the New Iceland settlement was extending westward to include Ardal and the

settlements in that area such as Geysir. Other smaller settlements were also being established in Pipestone, Winnipegosis, Swan River, Piney, Shellmouth, Brown and Morden. Meanwhile, New Iceland was facing a critical time in its survival. The past exodus of people was discouraging, yet it also created a more manageable size of population to support economically. In 1881, a sawmill was built at Icelandic River and two barges were purchased to transport the lumber, thereby providing employment for many in the area. The fishing industry was also expanded, and New Iceland began to experience some much needed economic stability. This resulted in some migration back from Winnipeg as well as continued immigration directly from Iceland. By 1894, New Iceland's population had grown to almost 1600 people. By 1895 a period of prosperity had begun that continued well into the next century. By 1905, New Iceland and most Icelandic settlements were established and the migration decreased (Thor, 2002).

This concludes the overview of migration and settlement of Icelandic immigrants in Manitoba largely paraphrased from Brydon (2006). The next part reviews the literature that exists on women in the Icelandic histories of Manitoba.

The history of the Icelandic immigration and settlement in Manitoba is well documented. Wilhelm Kristjanson's *The Icelandic People in Manitoba: A Manitoba Saga* (1965) is a well researched and sometimes anecdotal historical account of the experiences of Icelanders in Manitoba from 1875 to the mid-twentieth century. Over half of the text focuses on the pre-1900 period. Kristjanson includes accounts of several women and their achievements in this history of Icelanders in Manitoba. In addition to the expected inclusion of Margret

Benedictsson and the suffrage publication *Freyja*, also included are the many voluntary associations that Icelandic women were involved in. Significant women such as physician Dr. Sigga Christianson, soloist Sigridur Hall, and author Laura Goodman Salverson are also highlighted, along with others in teaching, nursing and formal education. In light of the time the book was written (1965) it is exceptional in its inclusion of women, and offers further evidence of the high regard women are afforded within the Icelandic culture. The women and the activities of women that are recorded in Kristjanson's book are, however, far from being given equal exposure to the men and their achievements. There are still significant amounts of women's history to be revealed.

Two other histories of the Icelandic pioneers have been published in recent years: Gudjon Arngrimsson's *Nyja Island; Saga of the Journey to New Iceland* (1997) and Jonas Thor's *Icelanders in North America: The First Settlers* (2002). These provide different perspectives of the emigration and new information and photos not available or included in Kristjanson's book. Arngrimsson makes several references to the contributions of women in his book. Thor makes a relative number of references to Manitoba women, as his book examines settlements all across North America. As was the case in Kristjanson's book, equal representation is not afforded women in these historical texts.

Most of the individual settlements have published local histories which provide a history of their community, as well as histories of the pioneer families. Within these texts is valuable historical information regarding the creation of

schools, libraries, churches, industries, sports and cultural activities. For example, in the community of New Iceland the history of the settlement of Gimli is published in *Gimli Saga* (Gimli Women's Institute, 1975), the history of the settlement of Arnes is published in *The Point and Beyond* (Arnes History Book Committee, 1990), Riverton's history is published in *Icelandic River Saga* (Gerrard, 1985), and Hecla Island's history is published in *Mikley* (McKillop, 1979). These accounts provide information on the activities of the pioneer women, yet the achievements of the women are often overshadowed by those of their husbands or other men in the community. This research study collects the achievements of women from the local histories and other sources and presents them through narratives which foreground the women and their stories.

The written Icelandic histories of Manitoba include the important contribution to the suffrage movement by the pioneer women. Icelandic-Canadian women were pioneers in securing the vote for Manitoba women in 1917 (Barker, 2002, p. 37). The Icelandic effort was led by suffragist and Icelandic pioneer Margret Benedictsson. She and her husband published a monthly woman's suffrage journal, *Freyja*, from 1898 to 1910. Through *Freyja* and other educational activities, Margret Benedictsson made significant contributions to her community and the province of Manitoba. These contributions are documented by Kristjanson (1965), Kinnear (1987), Johnson (1994), Thor (2002), Barker (2002), and Crippen (2004).

Attention to recording the literary achievements of Icelandic women in Manitoba is evident. Kirsten Wolf (1996) describes her book entitled, *Writings by*

Western Icelandic Women as a collection of “socio-historical documents that play against a background of the development of women as legitimate voices in the early history of Western Icelandic settlement” (p. 3). Daisy Neijmann’s 1997 doctoral dissertation examines the literature created by immigrant Icelanders of both genders. One prominent writer profiled by Wolf and Neijmann is Laura Goodman Salverson. Salverson’s autobiographical *Confessions of an Immigrant’s Daughter* and her historical novel *The Viking Heart* provide rare insight into the hardships faced by pioneers at the turn of the twentieth century in both rural and urban Manitoba.

The research found specifically on Icelandic Canadian women here in Manitoba was an article describing C. Matthiasson’s (1977) thesis documenting the history of Icelandic-Canadian women’s involvement with voluntary organizations. Her methodology is not included in the article, but her data appears to come from second and third generation informants. She found that the involvement of pioneer women in volunteer associations was for charitable, political and social purposes. Her results also indicated that the informants felt the pioneer women were “a special group of individuals who were more than ordinarily hard working and capable” (p. 29). A Masters thesis study done by Susan Gudmundson (1991) studied the perceptions of health, health needs, and factors that influence health by middle-aged Icelandic-Canadian women. Also found was a doctoral dissertation by Carolyn Crippen (2004) examining three pioneer women in Manitoba for evidence of servant-leadership. This form of leadership is characterized by service to the community first. It is through that service that a person gains recognition as a leader. One of the women who met

the criteria of servant-leadership was Margret Benedicsson, the Icelandic suffragist leader.

To date the most relevant journal article to be found regarding Icelandic Canadian women in Manitoba was written for *The Icelandic Canadian* by Lark Barker (2002) entitled, *Icelandic Women*. Barker provides a convincing account of the contributions of Icelandic pioneer women to their family's survival, as well as of their contributions to their communities outside their homes. Barker's article is a response to his belief that "Icelandic women were ominously left out of the writing of Icelandic history in Canada" (p. 33). This study will build on Barker's efforts in recording the history of Icelandic pioneer women in Canada.

The literature on the Icelandic history of Manitoba, although it may value the contributions of women more than the histories of other ethnic groups do, certainly does not treat women equally. Several writers and researchers listed in this review have ensured that the history of Icelandic pioneer women in literature, suffrage and voluntary organizations has had more prominence than a line or two in an Icelandic history book. There is still, undoubtedly, much history of Icelandic women in Manitoba that "lies beneath the snow".

This chapter has provided a review of the literature in the areas of the history of adult education in Canada, the history of Manitoba (1870 – 1914) and the history of Icelandic immigrants in Manitoba. This review supports the research and situates it in the current research. The next chapter describes the methodology and method used to examine the adult education activities of Icelandic pioneer women in Manitoba between 1875 and 1914.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology and method used to reveal the adult education activities of Icelandic pioneer women in Manitoba. It begins by giving a rationale for using qualitative research as the methodological approach in this study. Next, the method of historical research is described and how the criteria of this method have been met. The processes of data collection, sampling strategies and data analysis are explained, as well as how the issue of trustworthiness was addressed.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative research approach. Examining the activities of Icelandic pioneer women is a study of human phenomena which cannot be measured quantitatively, which is one of the reasons why qualitative research approaches have been accepted as a another way to discover knowledge (Speziale and Carpenter, 2003, p. 1). Also, the definition of adult education applied in this research includes informal learning activities for which quantitative approaches would be difficult to quantify since they are not categorically defined. Finally, historical studies do not allow for events to be observed directly and therefore measured in quantitative ways. Qualitative methodology, on the other hand, is used when what can be observed is not the only reality (Speziale and Carpenter, 2003). For these reasons, a qualitative research approach was the most appropriate approach for this research.

Method

Historical research method was the logical method of choice for this research, given the historical nature of the topic. “Historical research opens windows into the past, creating new ideas and reshaping human thinking and understanding” (Speziale and Carpenter, 2003, p. 208). By revealing the past contributions of Icelandic women, new ideas about the part played by women in adult education history in Canada can emerge. This study may also reshape the definitions and frameworks that continue to exclude women from the recorded histories.

Choosing an historical research method requires meeting four criteria: an understanding of the history; knowledge of the factors affecting events, ideas and people; an interest in the topic; and creativity in approach (Christy, 1978). In this study an understanding of the history is demonstrated through the background section provided in Chapter 1 and through the histories provided in the review of literature. Knowledge of the factors, or in this research, the influences affecting events, ideas and people, is an integral part of this study’s conceptual framework. Demonstrated knowledge and consideration of the influences is shown throughout the findings and discussion chapters. An interest in the topic is shown through a strong personal interest as a descendent of an Icelandic pioneer woman. Creativity in approach is demonstrated in the same way that so much of the history of women is revealed; through “imaginative use of fragmentary sources” (Prentice et al., 1996, p. 23).

In order to conduct historical research, a framework is used to guide and organize the research. There is, however, no set theoretical framework for historical research, and therefore, historians use frameworks from other disciplines (Tholfsen, 1977, p. 249). This research used an adult education framework which was adapted from J. Roby Kidd's (1979) conceptual framework (see figure 1). Once the research framework was determined, data collection began.

Data Collection

The data for this historical research was collected only from primary and secondary sources. Interviews were not used in this research. The Icelandic community in Manitoba has long been committed to preserving its primary and secondary source documents and supporting the creation of on-going secondary sources detailing their pioneer history in Manitoba. The body of work available for this study was considerable, and exceptional among pioneer immigrant groups across Canada. Many of the sources were also easily accessible at the University of Manitoba Libraries' Icelandic Collection.

Though many primary and secondary sources were examined, not all were used or will show up referenced in the findings section. Many were read to simply get a sense of the Icelandic community in Manitoba during this time period. This proved to be a valuable perspective to have when evaluating and analyzing data.

All primary and secondary sources reviewed for this research were essentially run through three filters. The first filter examined the sources for the

presence of Icelandic women and their stories. When these stories were found they were then assessed through the second filter of time. This ensured that the stories or activities occurred during the 1875-1914 time period of this research. The last step in the filtering process was to examine the stories or activities in light of Merriam and Caffarella's (1999, p. 26) definitions of formal, nonformal and informal adult education activities. If the activity fit within those definitions, then the activity was collected as data.

The primary sources used for this research that were accessed at the Provincial Archives of Manitoba were the two 1910 suffrage petitions by Manitoba Icelandic women, transcripts of oral history interviews of Winnipeg Icelanders, and well over 100 original settlement photos. Many of these photos were taken by Icelandic pioneer woman, Kristin Johnson. Accessed at the Manitoba Legislative library were copies of the *Manitoba/Winnipeg Free Press*. Copies in volume form of the suffrage magazine *Freyja* were accessed at the Gimli library. Copies of many Manitoba Icelandic pioneer newspapers such as *Logberg* and *Heimskringla* were accessed on-line at www.timarit.is. Like *Freyja*, these were printed in Icelandic and could only be partially accessed through vigorous use of an Icelandic-English dictionary. Also accessed on-line were cemetery records and Canadian census records from the 1911 data base available through the Library and Archives Canada website.

The secondary sources used for this research began with the Icelandic histories by Arngrimsson (1997); Kristjanson (1965); Lindal (1967); and Thor (2002). All issues of the *Icelandic Canadian* magazine from 1942, its first issue,

to 1992 were reviewed, as well as some issues published after 1992. Local histories of 15 Manitoba communities were reviewed, many of which are quite lengthy. For example, the local history of the districts in Posen is published in a 738 page volume. Church histories were read from the First Lutheran Church in Winnipeg, the Grund Lutheran Church in Argyle, and a history of the Ladies' Aid Society of the First Federated Church of Winnipeg. Other histories read and reviewed were of the Betel Home Foundation and of the Islendingadagurinn Festival. For interest and context, Laura Goodman Salverson's novels *Confessions of an Immigrant's Daughter* and *The Viking Heart* were read. Other on-line resources accessed were the Manitoba Historical Society website and the Library and Archives Canada website. Many members of the Icelandic community generously gave of their time and assistance by suggesting, and in some cases providing, to me these primary and secondary sources.

The data collection from these primary and secondary sources resulted in a large volume of data being generated. Dewar (1998) was correct when she said "there is much under the snow" (p. 360), consequently, a sampling strategy was used to limit the amount of data to a manageable size.

Sampling Strategy

The sampling strategy used in this research was a nonprobability strategy which allows for data to be chosen by non-random methods (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 1998, p. 251). The specific types of nonprobability sampling applied were purposive and quota sampling. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to choose elements based on her knowledge of the population and of the needs of

the study (Norwood, 2000). Quota sampling allows the researcher to again use her knowledge of the population to choose a specific number of elements to build in representation and proportion to the sample (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 1998, p. 254). These sampling strategies permitted effective management of the large amount of data available for consideration.

Purposive sampling in this study allowed for a selection of women and activities that were especially good exemplars of adult education. Rather than collecting all activities, only those that fit clearly under Merriam and Caffarella's (1999, p. 26) definition and were considered good illustrations of formal, nonformal and informal learning were chosen. Purposive sampling also allowed for a deliberate search for evidence of informal learning, which in most cases was implied but rarely recorded. Efforts to unearth informal learning required creative means such as looking for examples of women engaging in activities they did not engage in while living in Iceland. Those examples indicated that learning occurred after their arrival in Manitoba. Such learning was often informal. One example would be women helping their husbands cut cordwood in the New Iceland area. Iceland's geography does not include many trees, so this would be a new activity and thus an example of informal learning for Icelandic pioneer women.

Quota sampling in this research provided representation and proportion to the findings and reduced the volume of data. Representation was achieved through ensuring selection of activities from all five of the Icelandic communities chosen for this research. The communities were chosen because they were the

five largest, in terms of population of Icelandic pioneers. The five communities also provided a good mix of rural (New Iceland, Posen and Argyle), where the Icelanders were in the majority or high in population density, and urban (Selkirk and Winnipeg), where the Icelanders were in the minority. Proportion was achieved through ensuring that more examples were chosen from the two largest communities of New Iceland and Winnipeg and fewer from the smaller communities of Argyle, Posen and Selkirk.

The nonprobability sampling strategy of purposive and quota sampling was an effective means to manage the data for this research. The result was a collection of data that included many rich examples of adult education spread proportionately across all five communities. The next section will outline the process of data analysis.

Data Analysis

The two research questions of this study ask who the influential Icelandic pioneer women were and what adult education activities they engaged in. The data collected, therefore, was both about individual women and their activities. Each of these: women or activities, was coded according to the Matrix for Coding and Analysis (see figure 3).

Figure 3. Matrix for coding and analysis of adult education activities of Icelandic pioneer women in Manitoba 1875-1914

Settlements		A New Iceland	B Posen	C Argyle	D Selkirk	E Winnipeg
Influences	Adult Ed. Activities					
Category 1	Formal					
People	Nonformal					
	Informal					
Category 2	Formal					
Events	Nonformal					
	Informal					
Category 3	Formal					
Ideas	Nonformal					
Concepts	Informal					
Category 4	Formal					
Outside	Nonformal					
Canada	Informal					
Category 5	Formal					
Communication	Nonformal					
Technology	Informal					
Category 6	Formal					
Geography	Nonformal					
Climate	Informal					
Category 7	Formal					
Immigrant	Nonformal					
Peoples	Informal					

The Matrix reflects the dimensions of the conceptual framework (see figure 1) with its inclusion of influences and formal, nonformal and informal educational activities. The five communities are also included. The coding process of each piece of data began with writing a brief description of the woman or activity onto a 3" X 3" lined *Post-It* note. The reference was also written at the bottom of the note so that a full description could be accessed later. It was then coded with a number from 1 – 7 according to which influence it occurred in response to. It was further coded with either an F for formal, an N for nonformal, or an I for informal depending on which type of educational activity it was. It was then coded A – E depending in which community the activities occurred. As an example, if the data was a woman who was a leader in the Ladies' Aid (nonformal) in New Iceland, that *Post-It* note was coded 1NA. The 1 represents the influence of People, the N represents the nonformal adult education activity, and the A represents the settlement of New Iceland. As another example, if Icelandic domestic servants in Winnipeg learned to speak English informally as part of the concept of assimilation, then that data was coded 3IE.

The many coded *Post-It* notes were then placed onto a "big paper" that was an exact representation of the grid shown in figure 3. Crippen (2004, p. 37) used what she referred to as a "big paper process" to cluster and code her data in her doctoral research. A similar approach was used in this research with each *Post-It* note being placed in the box corresponding to the coding. The result was that the many *Post-It* notes covered the big paper matrix, themes began to emerge from the data, and individual women were foregrounded. It was at this

point that it seemed that the activities were finally revealed and the women were given voice.

The next step in historical research is to “weave together historical facts, research findings and interpretations influenced by the conceptual framework into a coherent story” (Speziale and Carpenter, 2003, p. 221). The themes that emerged from the big paper grid were now written up within the context of the influences and developed into historical narratives, which is “the final stage in the historical research process” (Speziale and Carpenter, 2003, p. 220). A series of seven historical narratives make up the findings of this research. The first narrative profiles five influential Icelandic women, and the other six narratives describe six adult education activities that many Icelandic pioneer women engaged in. This collection of historical narratives effectively and qualitatively answers the two research questions of who the influential women were and what the adult education activities were.

Trustworthiness

Ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research requires four aspects: (1) multiple methods of data collection, (2) building an audit trail, (3) working with a research team, and (4) member checks (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p.145). This research included these four aspects in the following ways. Multiple types of primary and secondary data were used from a variety of sources. An audit trail was created through the “big paper process” and a journal that was kept by the researcher throughout the data collection phase of this research. A research team was formed by the thesis committee which was made up of women with

expertise in adult education (Dr. Marlene Atleo), qualitative research (Dr. Roberta Woodgate), and the history of Icelandic pioneer leader, Margret Benedictsson (Dr. Carolyn Crippen). The research team was further extended through collaboration with several members of the Manitoba Icelandic community as well as some very helpful librarians at the University of Manitoba, the Victoria Hospital and in Gimli, Manitoba. Member checks were used in this research. Sigrid Johnson, Head, University of Manitoba Libraries' Icelandic Collection, and Dr. Valdine Clemens reviewed this thesis and acted as member checks. All four aspects described have built trustworthiness into this qualitative research.

This chapter has provided the methodology and method for this research. The processes of data collection, sampling and analysis have been described. Also, the elements built into the research that ensured trustworthiness are explained. The next chapter will provide the findings of this research.

Chapter 4

Findings

This chapter begins with a brief description of the five Icelandic communities that were studied for this research. These descriptions provide a context for the findings that follow. For ease of comparison and to summarize the five communities, a table (see table 1) of the key points is also provided.

The formal findings of this research are presented next in the form of seven historical narratives. Each narrative is a description of an educational response to each of the seven influences from the conceptual framework. The list below provides the seven influences and the titles of the seven narratives:

People – Melting the snow: Five Icelandic adult educators revealed

Events – Teachers training: extending the Icelandic value of education

Concepts – Learning the English language: Integrating learning with work

Outside Canada – Women’s suffrage: Continuing the pursuit of equality in a new land

Communications – Canada’s postal service: A link to the outside world

Geography and Climate – Manitoba’s geography and climate: Harsh teachers

Immigrant Peoples – The Icelandic Women’s Society and the Ladies’ Aid societies: A social welfare network

The Five Icelandic Communities

New Iceland

This community was made up of several rural settlements located along the western shore of Lake Winnipeg, the Icelandic River, and on Mikley, which was later renamed, Hecla Island. It was the first area of settlement for many Icelanders upon arrival from Iceland before they migrated to other communities in Manitoba. The pioneer families of New Iceland faced the hardships of disease, flooding, extreme temperatures, and religious divide. With an estimated population of 2500 Icelanders in 1901, this was a predominantly Icelandic community and the second largest in Manitoba. The pioneers were commercial fishermen and farmers and also cut and sold cordwood to supplement their incomes. Though the settlement of New Iceland began in 1875, its economy was hindered by the slow arrival of the railway. After some 30 years, the railway finally reached the settlements along the Lake Winnipeg shore. In terms of religious faith, the many settlements located within New Iceland had churches of both Lutheran and Unitarian faiths.

Posen

Posen was made up of a small number of rural settlements located along the eastern shore of Lake Manitoba and inland. It was a small secondary community for many Icelanders who had settled earlier in New Iceland or Winnipeg. Despite their small population they were the ethnic majority of the district. The land was better suited to livestock than crops, so the pioneers had few crops, raised livestock, fished commercially on Lake Manitoba and expanded

into dairy production for added income. The settlement began in 1887 but the railway was delayed and arrived 17 years later. Both Lutheran and Unitarian churches existed in the community.

Argyle

The district of Argyle includes several rural Icelandic settlements located on the grasslands of south western Manitoba. This community was situated away from the two largest lakes in Manitoba, which was a considerable change for a group of immigrants who were accustomed to living close to the water. In 1901, it was estimated to be the third largest Icelandic settlement in Manitoba, with a population of over 1000 Icelanders. This was generally a secondary settlement, though many also settled in Argyle directly from Iceland. They joined what was already an Ontario British farming community and benefited from the expertise and goodwill of their British neighbors. They benefited most, however, from the almost immediate arrival of the railway, which came in 1886, the same year the Icelanders began to arrive in Argyle. The Icelandic pioneers soon prospered through grain farming and raising livestock which they were able to ship to market via the railway. Surprisingly, only the Lutheran Church was established in Argyle, with no mention of a Unitarian congregation in the area.

Selkirk

The city of Selkirk is located on the Red River between Winnipeg on the south and Lake Winnipeg to the north. It is also located on the well traveled road between New Iceland and Winnipeg. As a result of its geographic location, many Icelanders used Selkirk as a stopping off place while traveling to and from

Winnipeg by road or river. Over time an Icelandic community began to form in Selkirk as people found work there, and by 1901 approximately 700 Icelanders lived in the urban community. They were one of the minority groups within Selkirk, which had an influential British majority and culture. Historical accounts of the Icelandic pioneers in Selkirk are limited, but it seems many of the men worked as part of the fishing industry, or labored at the sawmill, while some raised dairy cattle. The Icelandic community or settlement within Selkirk is said to have been well established by 1888. The railway between Selkirk and Winnipeg had been in operation since 1883. An Icelandic Lutheran church and congregation existed in Selkirk, while Unitarians living in Selkirk would have had to travel to Winnipeg to attend church.

Winnipeg

The largest Icelandic community in Manitoba, settled in the city of Winnipeg and numbered approximately 4000 by 1901. The Icelanders were one of several ethnic minorities in Winnipeg among a large British majority. Like many other ethnic minorities in Winnipeg, they eventually settled in one section of the city and were able to establish a community within a large urban centre. The community was located in the west end of the city along Sargent Avenue which some referred to as the "Icelandic Main Street". The Winnipeg community began in 1875 and was established through the first large influx of Icelandic immigrants in 1876. Continued immigration and migration within Manitoba brought more and more Icelanders moving into and out of Winnipeg. As Winnipeg grew as a city, new and varied opportunities for employment arose for

the Icelandic immigrants. This urban experience was new, as most Icelanders had emigrated from rural Iceland as farmers and fisherman. The railway arrived in Winnipeg in 1881 and the Winnipeg boom soon followed. Winnipeg was home to an active religious community for both Lutheran and Unitarian members.

Table 1: Comparison of the Five Icelandic Communities in Manitoba 1875-1914

	New Iceland	Winnipeg	Argyle	Posen	Selkirk
Year of Icelandic settlement	1875	1875	1886	1887	1888
Estimated Icelandic population in 1901	2500	4000	1000+	500	700
Type of community	Rural	Urban	Rural	Rural	Urban
Ethnic majority of community	Icelandic	Icelandic	British/ Icelandic	British	British
Main industry of community	grain farming, fishing, cordwood	occupational diversity	grain farming, raising livestock and poultry	raising livestock, grain farming, fishing, dairy production	fishing, fish processing labor at sawmill, dairy production
Year of railway arrival	1906 - 1914	1881	1886	1904	1888
Religion of Icelandic community	Lutheran Unitarian	Lutheran Unitarian	Lutheran	Lutheran Unitarian	Lutheran

(Descriptions and information in table paraphrased from Kristjanson, 1965, Potyondi, 1981, K. Howard [personal communication, October 8, 2007])

The five communities posed different challenges for the pioneer women who lived in them. Who these women were and how they responded to the challenges they faced through educational activities make up the findings of this research. These findings are presented in the following seven historical narratives.

The first narrative provides a very human introduction to the findings by profiling five Icelandic pioneer women. These five women were chosen because they were influential and present a variety of educational approaches across all five of the communities studied in this research. These are their stories.

Melting the Snow: Five Icelandic adult educators revealed

The five women chosen to be profiled here can be characterized as adult educators for the many ways they facilitated formal, nonformal and informal learning opportunities for their fellow Icelandic pioneer women. This historical narrative describes how each of the women helped organize educational activities through her leadership and service to the Icelandic communities. As is the case with effective educators, they also acted as role models as they lived their lives driven by their passions for social justice, music, poetry, literature, language and health care. As you will read, each of these five women brought their own unique way of acting as educators within their communities.

Margret (Jonsdottir) Benedictsson

No history of Icelandic pioneer women in Manitoba is complete without highlighting the influence of Margret Benedictsson. Her role in the woman's suffrage movement in Manitoba is well documented in several articles and texts

[Armstrong (2002); Crippen (2004); Johnson (1994); Kinnear (1987); Kristjanson (1965)]. Her contribution towards securing the vote for women in Manitoba makes her influence widespread beyond just the Icelandic community.

Her life as Margrjet Jonsdottir began in Iceland, where she was born in 1866. Strong feelings of independence were a necessity, as she was on her own at age thirteen years, but they were also fueled by her reading of Iceland's patriot Jon Sigurdsson and women's rights activists Lucy Stone and Elizabeth Cody Stanton. She left Iceland at the age of twenty-one and settled in North Dakota where she worked to put herself through grade school and later spent two years studying at Bathgate College. She continued her education after moving to Winnipeg, where she attended night school and took a clerical course.

Margret soon met Sigfus Benedictsson and they were married in 1892. Margret was twenty-six years old. They went on to have two children, and Margret was devoted to her role as wife and mother. The Benedictssons lived most of the time in Winnipeg with a short stay on Mikley in New Iceland and a few years in Selkirk. She and Sigfus shared a love of writing and a strong and outspoken belief in women's suffrage. Together they set up a printing press in Selkirk and began publishing *Freyja*, the Icelandic word for woman and the goddess of love and beauty from old Norse mythology. It was a monthly women's suffrage paper, the first of its kind in Canada. Most articles were written by the Benedictssons, though much material was from other sources and translated into Icelandic for publication in *Freyja*. All issues of *Freyja* were published in the Icelandic language. The paper became hugely successful and by the second

year there were over 500 subscribers, both men and women from across Canada and the United States. Most saw Margret as the editor of *Freyja*, and because of her other role of wife and mother, she did most of her editorial work and writing in the evenings.

In addition to suffrage and temperance, the paper tackled radical topics such as divorce and labour rights for working women. *Freyja* also brought to light the plight of women living in poverty and married women's lack of choice in bearing children. Disagreement and strain began to show in the Benedictsson marriage and in the editorials of *Freyja* towards the end of the twelve years of publication. In 1910 Sigfus blocked Margret's access to the printing press, which he owned, and *Freyja* ceased to exist. Margret left Winnipeg in 1913 to go and live with her daughter who was married and living in Washington State. Her son stayed behind with his father in Winnipeg. There is no record of Margret Benedictsson ever returning to Winnipeg. She passed away in 1956 at the age of 90.

During the heady years of *Freyja*, Margret had other suffrage initiatives in which she was actively involved. She was a confident and persuasive public speaker, and she traveled throughout the Icelandic communities of Manitoba to generate support for woman's suffrage. As president of the Ladies' Aid society of the Icelandic Unitarian Church of Winnipeg, she helped create a standing committee on suffrage. She was successful in getting many other Ladies' Aids to also adopt woman suffrage as part of their mandate. Margret extended the profile of the Icelandic suffrage workers by forming the First Icelandic Suffrage

Association in America, which was soon invited to join the Canada Suffrage Association and made member of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance as well. Women in Manitoba were granted the vote in 1916, three years after Margret Benedictsson left the province. [Johnson (1994); S. Johnson, (personal communication, September 25, 2007; Kristjanson (1965, p. 371); Petursson (1954)]

The life of Margret (Jonsdottir) Benedictsson shows a strong personal faith in the value of education. She participated in formal education in North Dakota through grade school and Bathgate College and in Winnipeg at night school and the clerical course. Evidence of her on-going nonformal learning and informal learning is seen through her involvement in various organizations and her reading, which kept her informed of suffrage developments worldwide.

Her life also shows a considerable and important influence on the nonformal and informal learning of Icelandic pioneer women throughout all five communities studied in this research. Her speeches to suffrage societies and Ladies' Aids groups provided nonformal learning opportunities for her peers. The reading of *Freyja* provided informal learning opportunities for Icelandic pioneer women about not only suffrage, but many other important issues facing women at the time. Margret Benedictsson's influence resulted in the Icelandic pioneer women in Manitoba being a uniquely informed group of immigrant women during this time period; a tremendous achievement, though not without personal consequence for Margret Benedictsson.

Lara (Gudjohnsen) Bjarnason

Lara Gudjohnsen was raised in Iceland in a home surrounded by music. Her father, Prof. P. Gudjohnsen, was known as the “Father of Modern Icelandic music”. Lara received her formal training in music in Iceland and used this gift throughout her life. In 1870, while still living in Iceland, she married Jon Bjarnason who was a Lutheran pastor. The couple left Iceland in 1873, and after a few years in the United States they came to New Iceland. They arrived in 1877, after which a religious debate and divide occurred in New Iceland, with Rev. Bjarnason in the midst of it. This was eventually resolved and Rev. Bjarnason became a very influential and much loved spiritual leader in the Icelandic settlements. Together Lara and Rev. Bjarnason traveled throughout New Iceland, often on foot, providing for the spiritual and other needs of the Icelandic pioneers.

As wife of the pastor, Lara had an opportunity to become an influential force in the pioneer communities, and she embraced the role. She taught school in Gimli in 1878 and 1879 shortly after the new settlement began. Later in 1879, Rev. Bjarnason became the pastor of the First Lutheran Church in Winnipeg. There Lara became the music leader in the church, leading choirs and other musical activities. Their home became a place where people came to play, learn and enjoy music. The Bjarnasons had no children of their own, but adopted three children. Rev. Bjarnason struggled with health issues off and on during his 30 years as pastor of the First Lutheran Church. In addition to caring for their children, Lara also cared for her husband through his bouts of illness.

Lara Bjarnason was also very involved in social issues. In 1881 she was active in the Icelandic Women's Society, which was an organization that provided for the many needs of the Icelandic immigrants arriving in Winnipeg. She opened her home to many Icelandic immigrants and taught them how to adapt to their new country. In 1884, she was on the executive of the Temperance Society in Winnipeg. In 1886, she provided strong leadership in the newly formed Ladies' Aid of the First Lutheran Church in Winnipeg. She led several fundraising efforts to raise money for the church and community. She is best remembered for being the first to voice the need for a home for aged and or homeless Icelanders. Her suggestion was the impetus for the fundraising efforts of the Ladies' Aid towards the creation of Betel Homes, which continues to exist today. The Rev. Bjarnason died from his illness in 1914. Lara Bjarnason passed away in 1921. (Kristjanson (1965) p. 63, 121-122, 197; Thomas (1947); Thorvaldson (1995))

Lara Bjarnason received her formal education in Iceland as a musician, and learned informally to teach school in New Iceland's education system. She must have also learned to speak English before coming to New Iceland because the Icelandic pioneers had insisted on English as the language of instruction in their schools from the outset. Informally, she probably expanded her musical abilities through the musical influence of her father.

As wife of a pastor, she was able to influence the nonformal and informal learning of Icelandic pioneer women primarily in Winnipeg, but also in New Iceland and Argyle. Nonformally, she provided choir and musical instruction in

the First Lutheran Church in Winnipeg, and informally, she provided musical opportunities in her home. Her leadership in organizations such as the Ladies' Aid, Icelandic Women's Society and Temperance Society contributed to the nonformal learning of their members. The instruction she provided to new immigrants in her home provided informal lessons of assimilation. Lara Bjarnason took full advantage of her privileged position as the pastor's wife to influence the learning of the Icelandic pioneers.

Kristrun (Petursdottir) Fridfinnson

Kristrun Fridfinnson is described as a small woman with dark hair and striking blue eyes. She was born in Iceland in 1850 and came to Manitoba with her husband Sigurdur and two sons. They had faced many hardships while in Iceland, including the emotional hardship of losing two young daughters in one week. During her lifetime, Kristrun gave birth twelve times, with only five sons surviving to maturity. When she and Sigurdur arrived in the Geysir district of New Iceland, they were assisted by other families who opened their homes to them until they were able to get settled on their own homestead. Kristrun, Sigurdur and their sons farmed, yet income from outside the home was still needed for the family to survive. It was easier in Manitoba at that time for women to find work and Kristrun, like other women in the community knew of work available in Winnipeg. On more than one occasion, Kristrun and some other women would walk to the city, a distance of approximately 160 kilometers, to find work scrubbing floors and washing clothes. This work provided much-needed

cash to purchase the family's necessities, which were then transported back by the women on foot.

Kristrun worked hard and endured hardship and loss, yet maintained her love of poetry, which she composed and recited throughout her life. She and Sigurdur provided a home for their sons rich in literature, poetry and religious teachings. Kristrun was also devoted to the literary needs of her community. For a couple of years the community of Geysir discussed the need for an Icelandic library without result. Taking a much-needed direct approach, Kristrun took it upon herself to travel on foot, home to home, to generate support and action. Kristrun's efforts led to the March 10, 1911 meeting where the plan for the library was approved. In honor of her role in the creation of the library, Kristrun was asked to name the library. She humbly declined the honor, but submitted a verse she had written which contained several possible library names. The name chosen from her verse was Visir, meaning beginning, growth or sprout. The library went on to serve the community for fifty years and earned Kristrun Fridfinnson the title of "Mother of the Visir library". Kristrun passed away in 1923 at the age of 74 years. (Geysir Historical Society, 1983, p.176)

The story of Kristrun Fridfinnson's life shows her to be an active informal learner who influenced the informal and formal learning of her community in New Iceland. Upon arrival in Canada, she and her family had to learn informally to farm in a new country with a different geography and climate. Her informal learning extended to the city, where she learned the skills needed to work as a domestic servant in the homes of British families. She may have also learned

some English language skills while working for these English speaking employers. In the private sphere of her home she continued to learn informally and contribute to the informal learning of her family. Her sons Johannes and Fridrik shared her poetic ability. Her ability to recite poetry was a result of the informal readings of poetry in her home in Iceland and in New Iceland. These poetry readings throughout her life no doubt nurtured her own interest and aptitude in composing poetry.

In the public sphere of her community, Krístrun Fríðfinnson's reputation as a poet gave her influence in the cultural affairs of Geysir. Using that influence, combined with her determined personality, she was able to contribute to the formal learning of the community of Geysir. The definition used in this research includes libraries as a means of formal learning (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Krístrun's influence on formal learning in this New Iceland community continued for the fifty year life of the Visir library. Krístrun's story is an example of the important role that poetry and literature played in the lives of the Icelandic pioneers by educating and sustaining them during times of hardship.

Sigurveig (Olafsdóttir) Christopherson

Sigurveig Olafsdóttir was born in Iceland in 1853. She received training as a midwife while living in Iceland. She and her husband Peter and their two daughters Rosa and Helga immigrated to the Argyle district in 1893. They purchased a homestead there and began farming. After just a few years in Argyle, their youngest daughter Helga died at the age of eleven, and that same year their son Helgi was born. A few years later, their daughter Allabjörg was

born and contracted polio. She was confined to a wheelchair and died at the age of twelve.

Despite Sigurveig's own personal losses and a farm to help manage, she continued to meet the high demand for her skills as a midwife. At a time when medical help was unavailable in the outlying rural areas, she was often called upon to assist women in giving birth. She was well known for always carrying her leather case with medicines and instruments for birthing.

Sigurveig was also involved in her community through her membership in Von (Hope), the suffrage society of Argyle. She and her daughter Rosa were among those who traveled throughout Argyle collecting signatures on the women's suffrage petition that was presented at the Manitoba Legislature in 1910. Sigurveig Christopherson gave unselfishly to the communities in Argyle through her roles as midwife and suffrage worker. She passed away in 1931 at the age of 77 years (Rural Municipality of Argyle, 1981, p.118, 341).

Sigurveig Christopherson participated in formal learning in Iceland through her midwife training. Upon arrival in Argyle she continued to learn nonformally through her involvement in organizations such as the suffrage society Kvitabundi. She was probably a subscriber to the suffrage paper *Freyja*, which gave her informal opportunities to learn about the issues affecting women.

Her influence on the learning of Icelandic pioneer women in the community of Argyle begins with her midwifery. Each time a trained midwife such as Sigurveig helped deliver a child, those around her learned informally through observation. Women knew that whenever a friend or neighbor needed

help in birthing that if a trained midwife could not get there in time, they would want to help the best they could. Many pioneer women were self-taught midwives and no doubt learned through observation of trained midwives.

As a woman with formal training and a highly valued position in the community as a midwife, it is probable that Sigurveig was influential within the suffrage society. Her position of influence afforded her the opportunity to influence the nonformal learning of her community. Her involvement in the petition that played a part in granting Manitoba women the vote demonstrates a wider influence on the lives of pioneer women. Her commitment to women's suffrage in the midst of her responsibilities as a mother, farmer's wife and midwife is admirable. To take on this campaign during a time of physical and emotional hardship as a pioneer woman who had lost two daughters, is remarkable.

Sigurveig Christopherson's life as a pioneer woman shows an influence on the informal and nonformal learning of her peers in Argyle. She arrived in Argyle with skills as a midwife that she learned through formal learning in Iceland. Sigurveig and her fellow suffragettes learned nonformally through their membership in the suffrage society in Argyle.

Margret (Danielsdottir) Kristjanson

Margret Danielsdottir arrived in Winnipeg in 1892 from Iceland as a fifteen year old girl. Shortly after arriving, she found work with an English speaking family and used this experience to learn to speak, read and write using the English language. In 1895 she married Magnus Kristjanson, and they settled on

a homestead in Shoal Lake in the Posen district. Together they farmed and raised their four children. Their son, Wilhelm, went on to become a scholar and writer and is referenced throughout this thesis.

Margret's husband Magnus held the title of Postmaster of Shoal Lake (later called Otto) for thirty years, though Margret was the one known to be fully in charge of the post office. The post office in Shoal Lake, like most others, was a lively community centre on days the mail was delivered. In addition to sorting and distributing the much anticipated letters, newspapers, periodicals and books, the postmaster, or in this case postmistress, also provided conversation and hospitality. Due to Margret's English language abilities, she was also often called upon by the community members to assist them in writing letters in English. In her role as the unofficial postmistress of Shoal Lake, she provided for many of the needs of her community. Margret lived a long life, passing away in 1968 at the age of 91 years (Lundar and District Historical Society, 1980, p. 526).

Margret Kristjanson was an active informal learner. In order to survive when she arrived in Winnipeg as a fifteen-year-old girl, she had to quickly and informally learn the domestic skills needed to work in a British-Canadian home. She also learned informally to gain English literacy skills. This informal learning of the language hastened the assimilation into Canadian society of both herself and her children. Her informal learning continued in her unofficial role of postmistress. It is probable that her husband received training from the Canadian postal service and then showed her informally the skills needed for the job.

Margret contributed to the informal learning of her community in Posen through her role as postmistress. Facilitating the distribution of correspondence and reading materials played a part in helping others to learn informally. The social environment of the post office created an informal learning centre for the Icelandic pioneers that operated regularly each time the mail was delivered. Her literacy skills, which she used to help others to write letters, also provided a type of informal learning opportunity for those learning English. Margret Kristjanson's story demonstrates several ways that Icelandic pioneer women used informal means to obtain job skills and literacy skills, which they in turn used to influence the learning of others in their community.

This concludes the first historical narrative, which has profiled five Icelandic adult educators: suffragist, Margret Benedictsson, church leader Lara Bjarnason, Mother of the Visir library Kristrun Fridfinnson, midwife Sigurveig Christopherson, and postmistress Margret Kristjanson. They are an impressive representation of the Icelandic pioneer women of Manitoba. Many other remarkable women were revealed in this research, and it was difficult to choose just five. The individual Icelandic pioneer women of Manitoba continue to be a fertile ground for further research.

The next historical narrative will describe a prominent theme that emerged from the research: Icelandic pioneer women entering the profession of teaching.

Teachers' training: Extending the Icelandic value of education

This historical narrative is a description of a theme that emerged from the second area of influence shown on the conceptual framework: *Events*. The term, *events*, in this framework refers to economic, social, political and cultural events of the 1875 – 1914 time period. The Icelandic pioneer women were exposed to a number of events during this time period because it was a time of dramatic growth and change in the history of the province. The event that caused the largest adult education response by the women was the establishment of formal post-secondary educational institutions. Wesley College and the colleges of the University of Manitoba were established in 1877, and the formalized teacher training through The Normal School was established in 1882 (Crippen & McCarthy, 2003, p. 257).

For pioneer women in Manitoba during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, it was a fact of life that women had three career choices: teaching, nursing or stenography (Shack, 1973). Nursing training was still being developed at this time in the province, and so both nursing and stenography programs were seen as vocational training (Kinneer, 1998, p. 52). Most women chose teaching as a pursuit because it offered the only way to achieve some independence (Shack, 1973). Pioneer women who wanted that independence and had ambitions of pursuing post-secondary education could consider Wesley College or the colleges of University of Manitoba as of 1877, or The Normal School as of 1882.

There were some limitations for women at the colleges of University of Manitoba (U of M). Some U of M colleges would not admit women until 1886 and 1890 (Kinnear, 1998, p. 55). Fortunately, Wesley College admitted women and men equally when it opened its doors in 1877. Another limitation was financial cost. Most women, particularly those from immigrant minority groups, could not afford to go to college, and so most female students at this time were from wealthy families. By 1894 there were only 13 female grads from U of M (Kinnear, 1998, p. 56). Given the high cost, it is surprising to note that in 1909-1902 Wesley College had six Icelandic women enrolled, out of a total of twenty-six Icelandic students (Kristjanson, 1965, p. 403). One way the women financed their way through college is illustrated in the case of Salome Halldorson from Posen, who taught school, possibly on Permit, in order to afford to take courses at Wesley College and later at University of Manitoba (Lundar and District Historical Society, 1980, p. 418).

Faced with the high cost of college and university courses, most Icelandic women who wanted a career chose teaching rather than nursing or stenography. Several factors contributed to the fact that more Icelandic women became teachers at this time than did other minority groups of women in Manitoba. Paramount was the high value that the Icelandic pioneers placed on education. This was shown by their immediate establishment of schools upon arrival in New Iceland in 1875, well before school attendance became compulsory in the province in 1916 (Kinnear, 1998, p.47). The Icelandic value of education was also commented on by Lord Dufferin when he visited the settlement of Gimli shortly after their arrival:

In fact I have not entered a single hut or cottage in the settlement which did not contain, no matter how bare its wall, or scanty its furniture, a library of twenty or thirty volumes; and I am informed that there is scarcely a child amongst you who cannot read or write".(Leggo, quoted in Ruth, 1964, p. 20)

For Icelandic women to enter the field of teaching would be a logical extension of the Icelandic value of education.

Another reason that Icelandic women pursued teaching was the fact that their parents encouraged their daughters and sons equally in their education (Kinnear, 1998, p. 48). The pioneer years in Manitoba were a time of poor school attendance, yet the Icelandic community was "one exception to this general picture of poor schooling among immigrant groups" (Kinnear, 1998, p. 47). The parents not only encouraged, but insisted that their daughters and sons obtained an education.

Another exception that applied to the Icelanders was the length of time many Icelandic students stayed in school. In Manitoba at this time "only a minority of students stayed at school until the age of 16 or more" (Kinnear, 1998, p. 51). In Gimli, around 1900, the school there "was always able to qualify for high school grants" (Gimli Women's Institute, 1973, p. 171) meaning that they consistently had a sufficient number of students who intended to graduate from high school, usually at the age of sixteen years.

The fact that the Icelandic pioneers insisted on English as the language of instruction in their schools meant that young Icelandic women who graduated from high school were fluent in English. This allowed them to compete with the English-speaking majority for teaching positions throughout the province, and not just in their own ethnic communities. By 1916, it was mandatory that English was used as the language of instruction, but well before then most Icelandic women could read, write, speak and ultimately teach in English. As more and more Icelandic women became teachers, they served as role models for their female students, and this further perpetuated the movement of Icelandic women into teaching.

The Manitoba system of teacher accreditation during the 1875 – 1914 time period had different levels. It was a system that provided for the high demand in a rapidly growing province, but also resulted in many teachers being young, inexperienced, and minimally trained. The Manitoba system allowed students who stayed in school until age 16 to write an exam to receive a 3rd class teaching certificate. This certificate entitled them to teach in Manitoba schools. This was referred to as “teaching on permit”. If students enrolled at The Normal School to take teacher training, they were granted a 2nd class teaching certificate (Kinnear, 1998, p. 51). Due to the high demand, the province had many teachers “on permit” with 3rd class certificates at this time, though it was not uncommon for these teachers to continue on to The Normal School for the increased training and higher pay that a 2nd class certificate brought.

The first Icelandic pioneer woman to teach in Manitoba was Lara Bjarnason, who is profiled in the previous historical narrative. She taught in the Gimli settlement of New Iceland in 1877 and 1878, before the 1882 provincial accreditation system was in place. Shortly after the system was in place, Icelandic women began to pursue their teaching careers. In 1888, three Icelanders received their 3rd class certificates, and two of the three were women. In 1889, one of these women, Salina Peturson, completed her training at The Normal School and received her 2nd class certificate. One year later, the other woman, Bjorg Jonsdottir Thorkelson, did the same, just seven years after emigrating from Iceland (Lundar and District Historical Society, 1980, p.731). By 1892 there were fourteen Icelandic teachers in Manitoba, seven with 3rd class certificates and seven with 2nd class certificates.

At first, all teachers of Icelandic descent taught in the rural areas of Manitoba. It was not until 1904 that any Icelanders received teaching positions in the urban centre of Winnipeg. In 1904, Miss Kristin Herman began teaching at Pinkham School and Miss Ingiridur Johnson began teaching at Aberdeen School (Ruth, 1964, p. 54). For the teachers in the rural school districts, it meant teaching in a multigrade one-room school house. These school houses were located throughout the Icelandic communities, and the names of the teachers in the histories are predominantly Icelandic. These were some of the Icelandic women who taught at Baldur School in Breidavik (New Iceland):

1895: Solveig Svendsdottir

1896: Gudrun Johannson

1898: Mrs. Nordal

1899: Jona Vopni

1903: Solveig Swinford

1906: Christiana Sveinsson (Hnaua History Book Committee,
2004, p.26)

It seemed from the research that the Icelandic women moved around to various schools in the same district. Rosa Christopherson for example moved around Argyle teaching at Mimir, Hola and Thor School before moving to Saskatchewan to teach (Rural Municipality of Argyle, 1981, p.222, 236, 255). Jona Vopni taught at various New Iceland schools and served as the secretary-treasurer of the governing Education Association of Lake Winnipeg in 1902 (Gimli Women's Institute, 1973, p.171).

There was one obstacle for all Manitoba women pursuing a long career in teaching at this time: marriage. This was a time when "no (school) board would employ a married woman...unless her husband was incapacitated" (Shack, 1973, p. 54). If the woman was pregnant or had a family, it was completely out of the question. Pioneer society could not imagine, much less accommodate motherhood and full-time paid work (Kinnear, 1998, p. 61).

Women such as Bjorg Jonsdottir Thorkelson, who was a much loved and highly respected teacher, went on to have a 30-year teaching career that was available to her only because she was single. It is disheartening to imagine how many other talented Icelandic women could have realized the same had they been born later in Manitoba's history. It is probable, however, that these former

teachers found other ways to use their many educational and leadership skills within their families and their communities. For the Icelandic women with formal teachers training and experience there would have been many opportunities for them to use their skills. The historical narratives that follow describe a variety of these opportunities.

This section has referred to the value which the Icelandic people placed on education. One example that illustrates that value is Lord Dufferin's observation of small libraries in the home of the Icelandic pioneers. Another indicator of the Icelandic belief in the value of education is evident through the community libraries the Icelanders established in almost every settlement soon after they arrived. Icelanders, like adult educator J. Roby Kidd, believed libraries to be a "foundation stone" of learning (1950, p. 88). The best way to illustrate this unique feature of Icelandic settlements is to list the communities and the names that were chosen for the libraries. The names are listed with their English translations because it is interesting how the names chosen reveal the attitude of the pioneers. Ardal's choice of *Incentive to Learning* as a name reveals their faith in education. Arnes' choice of *Forward* implies optimism for the future. These community libraries provided one more way for Icelandic pioneers and their families to engage in learning, whether they were reading to themselves or reading aloud to others. Here are the Icelandic community libraries that were revealed from the many sources in this research, and (when available), the year they were established:

New Iceland:

Gimli – Arora (Dawn) 1887, Lestrarfjelagid Gimli (Gimli Icelandic Library)

1911

Arnes – Framm (Forward)

Nes – Fjolan (Violet)

Breidavik – Nordurljos (Northern Lights) 1887

Mikley – Morgunstjarnan (Morning Star) 1896

Geysir – Visir (Beginning, growth, sprout) 1911

Ardal – Frothleikshvot (Incentive to Learning) 1908

Framnes – Mimir (name of wise giant in Norse mythology) 1905

Posen:

Swan Lake – Dagsbrun (Daybreak) 1904

Suffren (commonly referred to as Siberia) – Mentahvot (Incentive to Culture) 1887

Shoal Lake – Mentahvot (Incentive to Culture) moved from Suffren in 1896

Argyle:

Baldur – Islendinga I Argyle (Icelandic library at Argyle) 1893

Bru – Bru Literary Society

Glenboro – Islendinga Lestrarfélagid í Cypress-sveit (The Icelandic Reading Society in the municipality of Cypress)

Skalholt – Icelandic Library Club

Selkirk:

City of Selkirk – Stjarnan (Star)

Winnipeg:

Progressive Society Library

That concludes the historical narrative entitled, *Teachers' training; Extending the Icelandic value of education*. The next narrative will describe how Icelandic pioneer women used formal, nonformal and informal educational activities to learn the English language as part of their efforts to assimilate into Canadian society.

Learning the English language: Integrating learning with work

This historical narrative is a description of a theme that emerged from the third area of influence shown on the conceptual framework: *Concepts / Ideas*.

This refers to concepts or ideas that were prevalent in Manitoba during 1875 – 1914 and influenced the educational activities of Icelandic pioneer women. A concept that was revealed consistently in this research into Icelandic history was assimilation. A critical component in assimilating into a new country is to learn the language, without which an immigrant cannot fully participate in the new society. The Icelandic pioneer women, like most other Icelandic pioneers,

recognized this and participated in formal and nonformal ways to learn the language along with the Icelandic men. There were also informal means of learning the language that were unique to the women. In these cases, out of necessity, the Icelandic pioneer women integrated their learning with their daily work. This historical narrative describes the formal, nonformal and informal ways the women in this study learned the English language in their determination to assimilate into Canadian society.

The formal learning of English by Icelandic pioneer women may have begun as early as 1875, with the establishment of a school for their children in the settlement of Gimli in New Iceland. The school was established with English as the language of instruction, which was delivered by Caroline Taylor, an English-speaking Icelandic woman who was part of the original group of settlers. It is reported that adults as well as children enrolled (Kristjanson, 1965).

In Winnipeg, where the demand for English literacy was greater than in the rural farming and fishing settlements, one group of Winnipeg Icelanders formed an afternoon literacy class. They hired Icelandic teachers who were fluent in English to teach them after they had finished working in the morning (Kristjanson, 1965, p. 155). There is no specific mention of women participating, but during the time period identified, 1876-1877 there were many single Icelandic women working as domestic servants in Winnipeg who were very motivated to learn English. If a domestic servant could understand and speak English, her wages went up from four to six dollars per month to eight dollars per month

(Kristjanson, 1965, p. 150). With this kind of incentive, women may have sought out this nonformal learning opportunity for themselves.

Another nonformal means for Winnipeg Icelanders to learn English was through the two Icelandic societies that were established in Winnipeg; Framfarafelagid (Advancement Society) and Islendingafelagid (Icelanders' Society). Both societies were established in 1877, shortly after the Icelandic immigrants arrived in order to support educational activities as well as other cultural initiatives. At the time, some private individuals from the Icelandic community were operating a night school for English language instruction, and the two societies supported these night schools in various ways. In 1881, Framfarafelagid took over the Islendingafelagid night school and changed it to a full-time day school. Both men and women attended the language classes for \$2.00 per month. By 1883, the school was disbanded, as most Icelanders no longer required English instruction (Ruth, 1964, p. 36).

The nonformal literacy opportunities of the afternoon classes, the night classes and the Framfarafelagid full-time day school provided women with the English language training, in the cases where they had the time and money to devote to the classes. The reality for many Icelandic pioneer women was that they needed to combine their English language training with their daily work in various informal ways. This led the women to find creative and informal ways to obtain the learning they needed. One way was to find employment as domestic servants in English-speaking homes (Bildfell, 1947, p. 5). In this way they could learn simply by being immersed in the English culture, or through direct

instruction by the mistress or co-workers. Rosa Davidsdottir Nordal worked in Winnipeg and found lodging with an Irish family. There she found someone willing to tutor her in English in the evening (Gimli Women's Institute, 1975, p. 668). Opportunities to work as domestic servants in English-speaking homes were mainly to be found in Winnipeg, Argyle and Selkirk. As Icelandic families moved into the middle class, there was a need for domestic servants within Icelandic homes. This was often due to help being needed with large families, or due to the death of a man's wife. In Icelandic homes, domestic servants often had access to excellent libraries of both Icelandic and English books, which they used to teach themselves during their spare time (Geysir Historical Society, 1983, p. 171).

For women who were not working outside their home or living in urban areas there were other informal ways for them to learn English. Icelandic homes have a long tradition in the winter months of everyone in the household gathering together in the evening for shared reading. At this time someone would read aloud while others were carding, spinning or knitting wool. Families read from their own libraries or from books they had borrowed from the community library. Books in the homes of Manitoba Icelanders were often in both languages. In 1890, a journalist for the *Toronto Globe* found a surprising collection of books in the home of an Icelandic farmer in Manitoba. She reported that she found "a copy of Byron, Whittier, Scott's *Rob Roy*, Huxley's *Physiology*, Dr. Cope's *Natural History* and a *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*" (Kinneer, 1998, p. 48). The reading aloud of English texts provided an informal means of learning English for the women while they continued working at their knitting or other

work. The knitting was not only for family use, but also a means of generating extra income for the family (Barker, 2002, p. 35).

In some cases, women simply seized whatever free moments they could spare from their work and taught themselves. Thora Jonsson of Gimli, for example, was very determined to learn English and read the dictionary as a means of teaching herself the language (Gimli Women's Institute, 1975, p. 597).

Once the women acquired English skills, they in turn used their skills to assist others who were still learning. Mrs. J. Julius used her advanced skills in English to act as an interpreter for Icelanders obtaining medical aid (Stephenson, 1947, p.11). As profiled in the first narrative, Margret Kristjanson wrote letters for Icelanders who required letters written in English for either business or private correspondence (Lundar and District Historical Society, 1980, p. 526).

In these formal, nonformal and informal ways, Icelandic pioneer women were able to learn the literacy skills needed to truly become Canadian citizens. Whether they were domestic servants working long hours or fishermen's wives with farms and families to manage, the only solution for many women was to combine their learning with their work. The women were successful in using this approach, as evidenced by the high rates of English literacy among the Icelandic women. Learning the language was a critical component the women needed in order to fully participate in Canadian society. The other critical component they needed was the right to vote. The next historical narrative will describe the educational activities Icelandic women were involved in that eventually led to Manitoba women being granted the vote in 1916.

Women's suffrage: Continuing the pursuit of equality in a new land

This historical narrative is a description of a theme that emerged from the fourth area of influence shown on the conceptual framework: *Outside Canada*.

This applies to the influence of countries outside of Canada on the educational activities of Icelandic pioneer women in Manitoba. Iceland continued to have considerable influence on the immigrants during this time period. Manitoba Icelanders continued to be connected to Iceland through their newspapers; *Logberg* and *Heimskringla*, which both published weekly articles on events in Iceland, through the conversations and associations with new immigrants, through visitors from Iceland, through letters from Iceland, and through the exchange of newspapers and periodicals from Iceland. One of the themes of this influence on the Icelandic pioneer women was the theme of women's suffrage. Icelandic pioneer women were very involved in suffrage activities in Manitoba from 1875 to 1916. It is important to note that this was not a campaign that they were introduced to after arriving in Manitoba. They were influenced by the woman's rights movement that was active in Iceland before they left, and this study examines how they continued to be influenced by the events of that movement after they arrived in Manitoba. The story of the Icelandic woman's suffrage movement in Manitoba therefore is a story of continuing the pursuit of equality in a new land. That pursuit involved various nonformal and informal educational activities that eventually led to Manitoba women being granted the vote in 1916.

At first glance, historians might find it an anomaly that a group of Icelandic pioneer women who were dispersed across a prairie wilderness could launch an organized and well-informed campaign for woman's suffrage at a time when no woman in Canada had the right to vote. A closer look reveals several factors which contributed to the passion that drove the Icelandic suffrage workers. First, they were accustomed to greater equality while living in Iceland, where they could own land and vote in municipal and congregational elections (Wolf, 1996, p. 9). Secondly, their lives in Manitoba were "fraught with a sense of isolation and hopelessness grown out of sickness, death and poverty in primitive conditions that they were powerless to control" (Johnson, 1994, p. 120) and so suffrage offered the power to better their lives. Thirdly, there was a concurrent woman's suffrage movement going on in Iceland led by Briet Bjarnhedinsdottir, which included the formation of the Icelandic Women's Association, suffrage petitions being forwarded to parliament, and the publishing of *Kvennabladid*, the Woman's Paper (Kinnear, 1987, p. 25). Fourthly, Manitoba Icelandic pioneer women were kept up to date on these and other worldwide suffrage developments through their own suffrage paper, *Freyja*, as well as through letters back and forth to Iceland (Kristjanson, 1965). Lastly, the Icelandic women had strong leadership through Margret Benedictsson. The collective influence of these factors created an environment that made woman's suffrage activities a natural outcome for the Icelandic pioneer women. Given the demands and the hardship these women were facing in their daily lives, it is truly remarkable that "they found the energy and possessed the stamina to take on yet another struggle" (Johnson, 1994, p. 120).

The Icelandic suffrage campaign created nonformal and informal learning opportunities for the pioneer women. Nonformal learning opportunities were created through the formation of several Icelandic suffrage societies throughout Manitoba. In Winnipeg, the First Icelandic Suffrage Association in America was established in 1908 with Margaret Benedictsson as president. The next year, a suffrage society was formed in the Argyle community, called Von (Hope). In 1910 a suffrage society was formed in Gimli called Sigurvon (Hope of Victory) which served the New Iceland area. Suffrage societies are said to have followed in other Icelandic communities (Johnson, 1994, p.124), with particularly strong suffrage advocates reported in Shoal Lake in the Posen district (Kristjanson, 1965, p. 373). The Argyle and Gimli suffrage societies organized petitions that were formally presented to the Manitoba legislature in 1910. The Gimli Suffrage Association, Sigurvon, also circulated a petition in 1915 in a rare joint effort with the English speaking suffragists (Johnson, 1994, p.124). The societies hosted guest speakers such as Margret Benedictsson and Olafia Johannsdottir, President of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in Iceland, who spent three months traveling throughout the province conducting presentations on temperance and woman's rights (Johnson. 1994, p.122). The suffrage societies also sent delegates to make presentations to the Premier of Manitoba. In 1914, and again in 1915, the First Icelandic Suffrage Association of America joined the Manitoba Political Equity League in a presentation to Premier Roblin. The many activities of the suffrage societies, such as, the petitions, public lectures and presentations to government, provided nonformal learning opportunities for the members.

Another nonformal learning opportunity related to suffrage was created through the Lutheran and Unitarian Ladies' Aids. Margret Benedictsson was able to extend the suffrage cause further by encouraging the Ladies' Aids to include women's suffrage in their mandate. "By 1906 Icelandic Ladies' Aids throughout the province had written the struggle for woman suffrage into their platforms" (Johnson, 1994, p. 124). Most notably was the Ladies' Aid Society of the Icelandic Unitarian Church of Winnipeg, which had a standing committee designated to providing members with news of suffrage developments throughout the world (Petursson, 1954, p. 2). Margaret Benedictsson was the first president of this Unitarian Ladies' Aid.

Involvement in the voluntary organizations of the Ladies' Aids and suffrage societies provided numerous and various nonformal learning opportunities. The learning is best described by Weiss and Rinear (2002):

The work of these women conducted during the nineteenth century on behalf of the less-fortunate and to cure society's ills resulted in a great deal of change. It also changed the women themselves. As they came together to form societies, build settlement houses, and rally support for various causes, they also developed new organizational skills as well as increased levels of self-esteem, self-worth, and independence. No longer were their identities based solely on their roles as wives and mothers. Their successes showed them that they were capable of doing more and gave them the courage to keep moving forward on the one

issue that had the potential to create change beyond belief, the right to vote. (p. 199)

Icelandic pioneer women also engaged in informal or self-directed learning through the reading of the Manitoba suffrage magazine *Freyja*. The magazine was primarily devoted to the rights of women, though it also supported all efforts to institute prohibition and improve social conditions. It was a monthly magazine that included editorials, poetry, literature, articles by or about American feminists, and a Children's Corner. It tackled issues of state supported social welfare, labor laws for domestic servants, taxation without representation by women and divorce. Also discussed was the economically vulnerable position married women and their children found themselves in, without independent means of support should their circumstances change. This was only made worse by their inability to have a say in the number of children they would bear. This informal means of learning provided Icelandic pioneer women and men with current information, in their own language, on the many issues that faced women. This learning, in turn, created discussion among the women, which is often the precursor to change (Hayes & Flannery, 2000, p.128). Shortly after *Freyja* disbanded in 1910, the Icelandic weekly papers, *Logberg* and *Heimskringla* began carrying articles regarding woman suffrage developments in Manitoba and beyond. In this way women were able to continue their informal learning.

Further evidence of Iceland's influence in Manitoba suffrage activities can be seen when comparing Iceland's woman suffrage campaign with Manitoba's. The Manitoba campaign appears to be an almost mirror image of Iceland's. For

example, Iceland's suffrage leader Briet Bjarnhedinsdottir published a woman's magazine *Kvennabladid* similar to Margret Benedictsson's and her husband's, *Freyja*. Bjarnhedinsdottir created and became president of the Icelandic Women's Rights Association in 1907. Benedictsson created and became president of the Icelandic Suffrage Association of America in 1908. Both these organizations became members of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance. The Icelanders in Iceland presented a petition of signatures to parliament in 1900 (Styrkarsdottir, 2005, p.1); the Manitoba Icelanders did the same in 1910. Women in Iceland won the vote in 1915, Manitoba women in 1916. The similarities in the organizations, the activities and timing cannot be coincidental. The similarities show a close association between Iceland and Manitoba as well as between Bjarnhedinsdottir and Benedictsson in the suffrage activities during this time.

Before closing this historical narrative, it is important to note that the Icelandic suffrage history is rarely more than a couple of sentences added on to the histories of Manitoba women's suffrage. This minor acknowledgement implies a minor campaign, yet this historical narrative reveals a sophisticated campaign that was connected to both the national and international suffrage movements. Manitoba historian Mary Kinnear (1987) examined the impact of the Icelandic campaign on the Manitoba women's suffrage movement and concluded that the effect was minimal. Her overview of the suffrage history in Manitoba at this time depicts an early campaign by the Icelandic suffrage workers followed by a later campaign by the English-speaking suffrage workers that led to the vote being won for the first time in Canada.

The history also shows two camps which rarely cooperated (Johnson, 1994, p. 125) and had many differences. The differences between the two groups are most clearly represented in the differences between their two leaders; Margret Benedictsson and Nellie McClung. A concise description of Johnson's analysis of the two women would be that Benedictsson was an Icelandic Unitarian pacifist, whereas McClung was an Anglo Saxon Protestant patriot. Benedictsson was seen as a radical thinker who based her suffrage argument on women's equality. McClung was conservative in her thinking and based her suffrage argument on woman's moral superiority. These ethnic, religious and ideological differences were significant enough barriers to prevent a united campaign.

Another barrier was the language difference. *Freyja* was published in Icelandic and therefore inaccessible to the mainstream Manitoba suffrage workers. We can only speculate that had *Freyja* been published in English possibly McClung and her followers would have seen that they shared much common ground with the other main suffrage group. This issue of divide in the Manitoba suffrage movement cannot be adequately analyzed here in this historical narrative. This issue is raised only because it is not possible to describe the Icelandic pioneer women's involvement in suffrage without touching on the issue. In terms of this research, the issue is an example of how ideological differences and biases can serve to exclude women from recorded histories.

This concludes the historical narrative on Icelandic pioneer women's involvement in woman's suffrage in Manitoba. The women used nonformal and informal means to educate themselves on the women's issues that faced them in their communities and beyond their Manitoba and Canadian borders. The Icelandic community sought out links to the outside world, and one way they did that was through extensive use of the Canadian postal service. This next historical narrative will examine the use of this service by women as a means of informal learning.

Canada's postal service: A link to the outside world

This historical narrative develops a theme that emerged from the fifth area of influence shown on the conceptual framework: *Communications and Technology*. Certain types of communication or new technology influenced the learning activities of Icelandic pioneer women in Manitoba, especially the Canadian Postal Service. This was a well-used means of informal or self-directed learning in the Icelandic communities, used by women (and men) to access the information they needed.

When Manitoba joined Confederation in 1870, it also became part of the Canadian Postal Service. Post offices were established in the province with weekly or semi-weekly mail service (Peterson, 1990, p. 13). The outlying rural areas had post offices established later than the larger centres, and mail service was inconsistent until the railway reached the community. Figure 4 shows that the Icelandic communities of Argyle, Selkirk and Winnipeg had rail service much earlier than did New Iceland and Posen, in some cases twenty-five years earlier.

One of the effects of that delay was that New Iceland and Posen received less regular and less consistent mail delivery. Normal letter rates in the late 1880s were one or two cents, making this means of communication affordable for most pioneer families (Glenboro & Area Historical Society, 1979, p. 36).

Use of the Canadian Postal Service was a means of informal learning for Icelandic pioneers even before they left Iceland. People living in Iceland often heard of the conditions in Canada for new immigrants via letters from those who had already left (Kristjanson, 1965, p. 15). This would have been seen as a more reliable way to learn about Canada than the statements and promises of immigrant agents. The news related in the letters would have influenced the decision to immigrate.

Once settled in Manitoba, the Icelandic pioneers continued to correspond with family and friends in Iceland and in other Manitoba and North American Icelandic settlements. In fact, Icelandic communities were exceptional in their use of the Canadian Postal Service. In the Argyle community, the Glenboro's postmaster report showed sales of \$1200.00 worth of stamps (Glenboro & Area Historical Society, 1979, p. 36). This was at a time when the letter rate was one or two cents. The Honorable David Mills, Minister of the Interior in 1878, commented that the New Iceland settlement "sent through the mail four or five times as many letters in proportion to their number, as did Manitoba settlers" (Kristjanson, 1965, p. 88).

Letters were not the only source of information received in the mail by the Icelandic pioneers. Wilhelm Kristjanson, son of Posen postmistress Margret Kristjanson, describes the “treasures” of the mail delivery:

The heavy canvas mail bag, with its massive disc padlock, contained real treasures for the intellectually alert and news-hungry settlers; the Winnipeg Icelandic Weeklies, *Heimskringla* (1886) and *Logberg* (1888); the Icelandic Lutheran Synod periodical, *Sameiningin* (1886) and the Liberal and Unitarian periodicals, *Dagsbrun* (1893) and *Heimir*; the *Weekly Free Press*; the *Family Herald and Weekly Star*, old country Icelandic papers such as *Isafold: the Nor' West Farmer and Farmer's Advocate*; letters from the other Icelandic settlements and from Iceland, and, not to be omitted, the bulky, highly informative T. Eaton Company catalogue. There were also books for private libraries and for the community library. On mail days, first one, then two a week, the post office was thronged, a lively community centre. (1980, p.175)

The Icelandic pioneers' hunger for information about the world around them was a fact of life before they came to Manitoba. Their lives in Iceland were characterized by an interest in world affairs beyond the shores of their small island (Kristjanson, 1965, p. 12). They were accustomed to informing themselves despite the geographical isolation of living on an island. Upon

arriving in Manitoba, they continued to seek out ways to become informed despite the geographical isolation of living on the prairies.

Learning was extended beyond the materials received in the mail to the post office itself as a source of learning. The post office became a sort of informal learning centre each week for the Icelandic pioneer women. It was one more context in which they learned. It was here that they learned of the news in their communities and shared whatever news they had. They could use this venue to spread news of Ladies' Aids meetings, fundraising events or of suffrage and temperance presentations being made. Word of mouth was one way to spread the news, but they might also have posted notices of upcoming activities at the post office. Connecting with other women, as they did at the post office, is one of the ways that women used to learn (Belenky et al. 1986).

There were many social benefits from the trips to the post office for the Icelandic pioneer women. Often the post offices were located in the postmaster's home, and his wife would provide coffee and hospitality each week. Some of the wives operated the post office, as did Kristin Christopherson of Argyle and Sella Bodvarson and Margret Kristjanson of New Iceland. The opportunity for women to sit down and have coffee with other women would have been a valued respite. Many would have their young children and babies with them. This would be an opportunity to discuss their children, their health, and other issues related to the day-to-day survival. Pioneer women had difficulties coping with the social isolation of the prairies (Prentice et al., 1988, p. 120), and the Icelandic women were no different. The post office visits offered one way to combat the feelings of

social isolation. This was one of the benefits of adult learning activities for Icelandic pioneer women.

The letters and reading materials received in the mail, as well as the act of going to collect the mail each week, provided many informal learning opportunities for Icelandic pioneer women. Their use of the Canadian Postal Service informed and sustained them during the difficult pioneering years. The harsh geography and climate of Manitoba was a formidable challenge. The next historical narrative will examine how they used informal learning to survive these challenges.

Manitoba's geography and climate: Harsh teachers

This historical narrative develops a theme that emerges from the sixth area of influence shown on the conceptual framework: *Geography and Climate*. This refers to the influences of Manitoba's geography and climate on the educational activities of Icelandic pioneer women. The research revealed that the women responded with nonformal and informal educational activities to the geographical and climatic influences particular to Manitoba.

When the Icelandic immigrants arrived in Manitoba, they faced a very different geography and climate than that of Iceland. The geography of Iceland in the interior is a volcanic mountain plateau, with lava fields and sand. The volcanoes are active, as was evidenced by the eruption of the Dyngjufjoll volcano in 1875, which caused many to leave Iceland and immigrate to Canada. Other parts of Iceland feature lakes, rivers, fjords and inlets (Kristjanson, 1965, p. 1).

The climate is more moderate than Manitoba's climate. Mean temperatures in Reykjavik range from .5°C in January to 10.6°C in July (Brydon, 2006, p. 1). The Manitoba prairies with its greater extremes of temperature presented a formidable challenge and many new things to learn. Understandably, the rural Icelandic farmers and fishermen of New Iceland, Posen, Selkirk and Argyle were more affected by the geography and climate than were the urban Icelanders of Winnipeg. This is not intended to be a complete list of the many lessons learned by the Icelanders as they learned to cope with the geography and climate of Manitoba. The intention here is to highlight some of the interesting or unique educational activities that Icelandic pioneer women engaged in during their settlement in Manitoba.

The trees and bushes presented new learning for the Icelanders. Iceland is not a forested country, so the Icelandic pioneers had little experience in constructing buildings with wood, as their homes in Iceland had been made of turf and stone (Arngrimsson, 1997, p. 46). They also had no experience in clearing their farmland before planting. The whole family, including the women, learned informally to clear land for the crops (Gimli Women's Institute, 1975, p. 606). A source of income in New Iceland was to cut the felled trees into cordwood and transport it to market (Arnes History Book Committee, 1990, p. 48). This family enterprise included the women and presented another informal learning opportunity for them. The clay soils, combined with the flooding of the lakes and rivers of New Iceland and Posen, resulted in a chronic problem with drainage in the two communities. The women worked alongside their husbands,

toiling to direct water away from their farm properties (Lundar and District Historical Society, 1980). Related to poor drainage was the issue of the pest mosquitoes, which was mentioned in several of the local histories as a terrible nuisance and one which they had no experience with in Iceland. They learned to wear netting to avoid bites and use smoke to keep the bugs away from the livestock (Hnausa History Book Committee, 2004).

The wide open geography of Manitoba meant that many early Icelandic immigrants were distanced from medical care. When a woman needed assistance in childbirth, often a trained midwife did not live in the area or could not reach the woman in time. Many Icelandic pioneer women were self-taught midwives who learned informally by observing others. When someone was sick in the home, often a trained doctor was not available, and so many women provided medical care as best they could. They learned informally by observation, reading or simply common sense (Arborg Historical Society, 1987, p. 17; Geysir Historical Society, 1983, p. 123; Glenboro & Area Historical Society, 1979, p. 478). Sigridur Hordal acted as a veterinarian when her husband, who was a trained veterinarian, was unavailable. She would read his journal and follow his example (Lundar and District Historical Society, 1980, p. 458).

In Manitoba, people lived further apart than they were accustomed to in Iceland. The approximate geographic size of Iceland is 40,000 square miles, whereas Manitoba is over six times larger, at 250,000 square miles. As mentioned earlier, the social isolation was difficult for the women and they sought out ways to be connected to other women. They did this using various nonformal

educational activities. A popular response was for the Icelandic pioneer women to become involved in drama productions (Geysir Historical Society, 1983, p. 32; Rural Municipality of Argyle, 1981, p. 150; Arborg Historical Society, 1987, p. 97). Others participated in painting classes (Rural Municipality of Argyle, 1981, p. 455) and handicraft classes. Gudrun Hannesson operated a handicraft school out of her home in Gimli (Gimli Women's Institute, 1975, p. 61).

The climate of Manitoba was especially harsh for the first couple of years of settlement in New Iceland. The extreme cold of the winters and the flood of 1880 led to economic hardship for the Icelandic pioneers. The most tragic event during this early period of settlement was the smallpox epidemic that led to a quarantine of New Iceland. One of the reasons that the disease spread throughout the settlement was because of the overcrowding and poverty that arose from the difficult climate of this time period. Women learned informally, under extremely difficult conditions, to contain the spread of the disease and prevent a future outbreak (Kristjanson, 1965; Hnausa History Book Committee, 2004). The poverty of this time period, which included failed crops, led to the women learning about alternative food sources. They learned informally from Aboriginals to collect berries and grow wild rice (Gimli Women's Institute, 1975, p. 606, 661; Hnausa History Book Committee, 2004, p. 102). As their husbands continued to adapt to the geography and climate and find a means for the families to survive financially, the women looked for ways to bring much needed money into the household or to produce goods that could be traded for necessities. Women learned informally to market their knitted mitts, socks and

other clothing and found markets for their home made butter [Barker, 2002, p. 35; Rural Municipality of Argyle, 1981, p. 589; K. Howard, (personal communication) October 8, 2007].

This historical narrative provides some examples of informal and nonformal educational responses by Icelandic women to the influences of Manitoba's geography and climate. They were harsh teachers indeed. Many of the educational activities of the Icelandic women were critical to their family's survival. Amazingly, in addition to their commitment to their family's welfare, they were committed to the welfare of other Icelandic immigrants who also struggled to survive. The next and final historical narrative will describe the work of the Ladies' Aid societies as they formed a network of support for the Icelandic immigrants in Manitoba.

The last area of influence listed in the conceptual framework is that of *Immigrant Peoples*. The many Icelandic immigrants to arrive in Manitoba during the time period of this research required assistance, which influenced the activities of the Icelandic pioneer women. The women responded through the efforts of the Icelandic Women's Society and the Lutheran and Unitarian Ladies' Aids groups. Active involvement in these groups provided nonformal learning opportunities for the Icelandic pioneer women. The following historical narrative describes the influence of the Icelandic immigrant people on these women's groups.

The Icelandic Women's Society and the Ladies' Aid societies: A social welfare network

This historical narrative develops a theme that emerged from the seventh and final area of influence shown on the conceptual framework: *Immigrant Peoples*. This refers to the influence that new immigrants arriving in Manitoba had on the educational activities of the Icelandic pioneer women. The women responded to this influence with the creation of volunteer community and church groups. These types of groups provide nonformal learning opportunities (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999, p. 28) for the women involved as members. Specifically, the Icelandic pioneer women of Manitoba formed The Icelandic Women's Society in 1881 to receive and assist new immigrants from Iceland when they first arrived in Winnipeg. In addition, they formed Lutheran and Unitarian Ladies' Aid societies in Winnipeg and throughout Manitoba to continue to assist the immigrants in later years. The effect of these efforts by Icelandic women was to provide a social welfare network for the Icelandic immigrants at a time when very few government supports were in place (Glenboro & Area Historical Society, 1979, p. 65). This historical narrative will describe the Icelandic Women's Society and the Ladies' Aid societies whose work benefited the Icelandic immigrants and contributed to the nonformal learning of the women themselves.

Large numbers of Icelandic immigrants arrived in Manitoba during the time period of this research, 1875 - 1914. During this time period Icelandic

immigrants continued to arrive in Manitoba each year, with particularly large numbers in 1876 (approx. 1200), 1883 (approx. 900) and 1886 (approx. 350). By 1900, an estimated 10,000 Icelanders lived in the province (Thor, 2002, p. 219). The Icelandic immigrants who arrived were often without means to support themselves, and most could only speak only Icelandic. They required assistance for basic necessities such as transportation, food, lodging and employment. With few provincial supports in place, immigrants relied on their ethnic communities and families to provide whatever support they could. The Icelandic community provided support to their fellow Icelanders despite also being relative newcomers to the province and only having a few among them who were financially well-established (Kristjanson, 1965, p.165).

The Icelandic community was committed to assisting the Icelandic immigrants just as others from their community had assisted them when they arrived (Gimli Women's Institute, 1975, p. 479). There was a belief in mutual assistance, and often that belief took the form of a group or society that worked collectively to help others in the community. Women had just begun to form women's organizations in Iceland around the time of the emigration period (Matthiasson, 1977, p. 29) and they continued that practice in Manitoba.

The first group organized exclusively by and for women was The Icelandic Women's Society in 1881. This society evolved from a collective concern some women had for the welfare of the newly arrived immigrants and for the vulnerability of others in their community within an urban centre (Kristjanson, 1965, p. 175). One of the founding members, Rebekka Johnson, was chosen to

be president, and the society began meeting on a weekly basis. They raised money through donations and various efforts, including the presentation of a drama and the hosting of a banquet. With funds available, the Women's Society began to assist those in need.

The Women's Society's main focus was to assist newly arrived Icelandic immigrants. The Society assisted them through the arrival process in Winnipeg by acting as English translators. One woman in the Society counseled young Icelandic women as to suitable places of employment. Most members of the Women's Society, and their families, took the immigrants into their homes, providing food, lodging and guidance. At one point there were not enough Icelandic homes available for the immigrants to be billeted, and so for two weeks Women's Society members, Krístrun Sveinungadóttir and Björg Pálsdóttir, provided meals at the Immigration Shed for the Icelandic immigrants (Kristjánson, 1965, p. 180). The Society also worked closely with the Icelandic Progressive Society to arrange transportation for the immigrants to the Icelandic communities of Selkirk and New Iceland (Kristjánson, 1965, p. 180). The Progressive Society was another group of Icelandic men and women who assisted the Icelandic immigrants. The Canadian Immigration Agent in Winnipeg, Captain Grahame, who became a friend of the Icelanders, commented on the pattern of assistance to Icelandic immigrants after observing the work of the Women's Society and the Progressive Society for a couple of years:

As usual, the Icelandic residents of Winnipeg and the surrounding country flocked to meet their friends, each one taking a share of the work, in

cooking and otherwise providing for the comfort of the newcomers, and considering these people were possessed of little or no means, they were satisfactorily disposed of in an incredibly short time. (Grahame, quoted in Kristjanson, 1965, p. 181)

As the first Icelandic women's organization in Manitoba, the members of the Icelandic Women's Society must have learned many new skills through this nonformal means. Many of these women had been part of other organizations prior to 1881, but they were now given opportunities to play a larger role. Their fundraising projects and direct assistance to immigrants indicate potential learning in areas of leadership, organization, budgeting, problem-solving, networking, and counseling, to name a few. In addition to their own nonformal learning, they contributed to the informal learning of the Icelandic immigrants by taking them into their homes and sharing what they had learned about adapting to life in Manitoba.

As the numbers of Icelandic immigrants arriving in Winnipeg began to decrease, the need for the Icelandic Women's Society also decreased. This group of women continued to assist others through a different format called the Women's Society of the First Lutheran Church of Winnipeg (Thorvaldson, 1995, p.IV). Apparently, most members of the original Women's Society were Lutherans, and so this was a logical next step. Their leader was Lara Bjarnason who had also been a member of the Icelandic Women's Society. The group soon referred to themselves as the Ladies' Aid of the First Lutheran Church, as that was the English term.

Ladies' Aid societies of both the Lutheran and Unitarian churches were established throughout the province. They functioned to provide assistance to their church and community. Their community assistance provided a second level of support to Icelandic immigrants in addition to the initial support received through the Icelandic Women's Society in Winnipeg. The Ladies' Aid societies were the most widespread volunteer organizations that the Icelandic pioneer women were involved in during this time period of 1875 – 1914. The research revealed very high numbers of women involved in the Ladies' Aid of their churches. The list below provides the Icelandic names given to the societies and the years they were established. The years indicate that the churches and their Ladies' Aid societies were formed shortly after the settlement was formed. This list is incomplete list because in some cases, the records referred to a Ladies' Aid group but did not give the name of the group or the year in which it was formed. Also, sometimes a Unitarian congregation was recorded with no record of the Ladies' Aid society. It is probable that one existed, but not recorded. These are indicated with an asterisk (*).

Table 2

Icelandic Ladies' Aid societies in Manitoba 1885 – 1914

Communitiies	Affiliation	Name	Founded in
New Iceland:			
Gimli	Lutheran	Framsokn	1898
Arnes	Lutheran		
Breidavik	Lutheran	Liljan	1887
Mikley	Lutheran	Undina	1886
Icelandic River	Lutheran	Djorfung	1901
Vidir	Lutheran		
Geysir	Lutheran	Freyja	
Framnes	Lutheran	Tilraun	1914
Ardal	Lutheran	Eining	1904
Gimli	Unitarian	Tilraun	1898
Mikley	Unitarian		
*Arnes	Unitarian		
*Breidavik	Unitarian		
Posen:			
Swan Lake	Lutheran	Bjork	1910
Markland	Lutheran	Hlin	1908
Shoal Lake	Lutheran	Fraekorn	1908
*Shoal Lake	Unitarian		
Argyle:			
Bru	Lutheran		1895
Glenboro	Lutheran		1914
Baldur	Lutheran	Baldursbra	1906
Grund	Lutheran		1885
Selkirk:			
Selkirk	Lutheran		1889
Winnipeg:			
First Lutheran	Lutheran		1886
First Icelandic	Unitarian		1904

(This list is a compilation of fragmented references from the various local histories and church histories listed in the reference section.)

The Ladies' Aid societies focused a lot of their energies on fundraising. It was clear to these groups that in order to provide assistance to the church and for those in need, they needed to raise funds. Their fundraising events included

staging dramas (Arborg Historical Society, 1987, p. 97) and organizing concerts which featured entertainment, speeches and debates (Arborg Historical Society, 1987, p. 47). They also raised money through box socials and tombolas, which were draws where numbered tickets were sold and later drawn for prizes (Gerrard, 1985). In Winnipeg, The First Lutheran Ladies' Aid and the Ladies' Aid of the Icelandic Unitarian Church raised funds annually by selling refreshments at the Winnipeg Industrial Exhibition (Stephenson, 1953, p. 27; Petursson, 1954, p. 2). These are examples of the various ways that the Lutheran and Unitarian Ladies' Aid societies raised considerable funds and were able to assist their church and community.

The Ladies' Aid society meetings were where the ideas for the various endeavors were born. Women often had to walk three to four miles to meetings, with their babies in their arms and young children along as well (Rural Municipality of Argyle, 1981). Here women could find fellowship, hear news from Iceland, share their news of people in need, and propose ideas for fundraising and the dispersement of those funds. Meetings also devoted time to lectures, readings or entertainment (Petursson, 1954, p. 3). Through these meetings and activities, women learned by nonformal means. Many of the skills they learned were the same ones listed earlier in this historical narrative as skills learned by the Icelandic Women's Society: leadership, organization, budgeting, etc. Again, similar to the Women's Society, the Ladies' Aid societies contributed to the informal learning of the Icelandic immigrants they assisted. The Ladies' Aid

societies in the Icelandic settlements and the immigrants they assisted formed a mutually beneficial learning community.

The two-fold mandate of the Ladies' Aid societies began with service to the church (Rural Municipality of Argyle, 1981, p. 145). The women's efforts resulted in much needed donations towards major projects such as the purchase of land, pianos, organs and pews. Through their budgets they also purchased such items as equipment and communion ware (Petursson, 1954, p. 2; Rural Municipality of Argyle, 1981, p. 184). In this way, the Ladies' Aid societies were valued and respected contributors to the spiritual life of their communities.

A second and equally valued contribution was the community assistance outside of the church that the Ladies' Aid societies provided. The advent of the Social Gospel provided a window of opportunity for women, one outside the private world of their homes. Under the Social Gospel, women could become involved with public activities, helping others while still maintaining their social acceptance within their communities. Pursuing these activities under the auspices of the church's Ladies' Aid Society gave the involvement even further acceptance. This activity provided women with many opportunities to use and develop their skills in the public sphere, and many embraced the idea given that they were used to it in Iceland. The Social Gospel came at a time when Icelandic pioneer women felt confined by the prevailing Victorian belief that determined women's place was in the home. It also came at a time when many Icelandic immigrants in Manitoba were in need of assistance. The synergy of these factors

led to an active involvement in Ladies' Aid societies by Icelandic pioneer women in Manitoba, with the new Icelandic immigrants as beneficiaries.

The ways the Ladies' Aid societies helped others was varied. In some cases it was as direct and simple as buying a cow for a widow (Rural Municipality of Argyle, 1981). In another case, it was through the support of a system such as Mikley's *Help in Emergency* organization. As the name indicates, the women saw their role as helping anyone in their community in an emergency (McKillop, 1979, p. 131). In Swan Lake, as in many other communities, the Ladies' Aid functioned similarly to the Icelandic Women's Society in Winnipeg. They opened their homes to the new immigrants, assisted them in finding housing and employment, and taught them what they themselves had learned about surviving on the Manitoba prairies (Lundar and District Historical Society, 1980, p. 372).

The Ladies' Aid Society of the First Lutheran Church in Winnipeg saw a need for elderly Icelandic immigrants who were in some cases homeless and without the ability to speak English. It seemed unfair for these people to spend their final years in a care home surrounded by people who couldn't understand them, in terms of language or culture. The president of the Ladies' Aid, Lara Bjarnason, first voiced the need for an Icelandic "home for the elderly", which set off a series of events resulting in the creation of Betel Home in Gimli (Thorvaldson, 1995, p. 11). This home continues to operate today and is one of three homes administered by the non-profit Betel Home Foundation. Whether providing for others in small ways, or in major projects such as Betel Home, the Ladies' Aid societies played an important role in their communities. Many such

acts of compassion and generosity by the members of the Ladies' Aid societies were revealed in this research. Once again, it is remarkable how these women found the time or energy to take on these projects in the face of their own day to day hardships.

Before closing, it is important to note how the Icelandic pioneer women worked within their Ladies' Aid societies without need of personal recognition. They did not seek to have their names attached to their achievements. This is best demonstrated by the humble symbol of the Ladies' Aid of the 1st Lutheran Church of Winnipeg's important role in the creation of the Betel Home in Gimli. The symbol is a flagon, or vessel, which was a gift presented by the Ladies' Aid to the Church in 1890 (Thorvaldson, 1995, p. 100). This beautiful silver-plated flagon continues to be used each Sunday as part of the service of holy communion and bears the inscription "fra nokkrum konum" (from a few women). This beautiful act of humility by the Ladies' Aid Society gives us some understanding of why the history of women goes unrecorded.

This historical narrative has described the work of the Icelandic Women's Society and the Ladies' Aid societies that resulted in a social welfare network for the new Icelandic immigrants arriving in Manitoba. It is the last in a series of seven historical narratives which have made up the findings of this research. The next chapter discusses these findings and provides implications and recommendations from this research.

Chapter 5

Discussion of the Findings

This chapter begins with a brief overview of this study of the adult education activities of Icelandic pioneer women in Manitoba and then provides a summary of the findings. The summary includes a discussion of how the seven historical narratives provide some explanations as to why and how so much of the history of women in adult education has been lost. The next section of this chapter highlights the implications this research may have for today's practice. Recommendations for future research and initiatives complete this discussion. This chapter illustrates the many lessons learned through uncovering the lives of these remarkable Icelandic pioneer women.

Overview of the Study

This study used a qualitative historical research design to metaphorically “melt the snow”, to reveal both the women and their educational activities in five Icelandic pioneer settlements in Manitoba 1875-1914. Guided by the adapted conceptual framework of J. Roby Kidd (1979) (see figure 1), data from primary and secondary sources was categorized onto a matrix for coding and analysis according to type of learning (formal, nonformal and informal) as well as seven areas of influence (people, events, ideas, outside Canada, communications, geography & climate and immigrant peoples). This process resulted in findings that foregrounded five Icelandic adult educators and revealed six themes of adult education involvement by Icelandic pioneer women:

Teachers' training: Extending the Icelandic value of education

Learning the English language: Integrating learning with work

Women's suffrage: Continuing the pursuit of equality in a new land

Canada's postal service: A link to the outside world

Manitoba's geography and climate: Harsh teachers

The Icelandic Women's Society and Ladies' Aid societies: A social welfare network

Summary of Findings

The findings of this research, represented by the seven historical narratives, answered the two research questions. The first question asks:

Who were the individual Icelandic women that influenced the adult education activities of the Icelandic pioneer women in Manitoba between 1875 and 1914?

In answer to this question, five women who were influential in a wide variety of educational activities, were profiled in the first historical narrative. Throughout the other narratives, many additional women are also identified for the roles they played in educational activities. Of the five that were profiled in the first narrative, the activities of suffragist Margret Benedictsson and church leader Lara Bjarnason were relatively easy to research. It required a deeper inquiry to reveal Kristrun Fridfinnson, the Mother of the Visir library; Sigurveig Christopherson, the midwife; and Margret Kristjanson, the postmistress. At first glance, they appear

to be ordinary pioneer women, but when they are examined through the lens of adult education, we see the importance of their contribution to their communities. It seems that often the extraordinary lives of women lie hidden beneath what appear to be ordinary lives.

The second research question asks:

What were the adult education activities of Icelandic pioneer women in Manitoba between 1875 and 1914?

This question has six sub-questions which ask what specific activities occurred in response to the influences of events, ideas/concepts, countries outside Canada, communications/technology, geography/climate, and immigrant peoples. In answer to these questions, the last six historical narratives address a theme of activities in each of the six areas of influence. What is interesting in terms of adult education is that there was only one formal educational activity, teacher training, which was frequently identified in the research. There were many more nonformal activities identified, such as the suffrage societies, the Icelandic Women's Society, and the Ladies' Aid societies. The greatest number of activities identified was in the informal activity category. These activities included their use of libraries, reading aloud in the home, learning the English language through domestic service, learning through use of the postal service, and learning how to survive in the harsh geography and climate. These findings show us that much of the learning by women at this time fell into the nonformal and informal categories of learning. The findings also show that there was an abundance of adult education activities taking place among women in Canadian

communities. It is clear that the Canadian adult education histories that have characterized the involvement of women as being limited to the Women's Institute and the YWCA have overlooked a wealth of history.

Having answered the two research questions, the interest shifts to what these findings can tell us about why so much of the history of women in adult education is absent. One reason that was revealed during the research phase of this thesis was the fragmented nature of the existing history of women. What is recorded is spread across several sources, as the long reference list of this thesis demonstrates. The historian must collect small pieces from a variety of sources and creatively put together a picture which one hopes is a reasonable account of the history. Because the complete and accurate records of women's lives that quantitative historical inquiries prefer simply do not exist, the contributions by women will continue to be overlooked until the qualitative approaches used to hypothesize about the lives of women are more widely accepted as historical accounts.

The narratives show us that the involvement of women in adult education is different from the involvement of men. The activities are different, the approaches are different, and the needs, such as connecting with other women, are different from men's learning needs. Gender is a factor that must be identified when discussing adult education participation. An example from the research is the co-ed Progressive Society discussed in the last narrative. It is probable that the involvement of women in the society was different than the

men's, yet the group's activities are recorded in the history generically. The effect is that the involvement of women is almost invisible.

The life of Margret Benedictsson provides one scenario of why there is an absence of female role models within the history of adult education in Canada. Her work as a suffragist, writer and publisher positioned her to become a prominent leader in Manitoba and beyond. All of that changed when her marriage began to deteriorate and she was blocked by her husband from publishing. A woman who was once powerful was now powerless. Once Margaret moved to Washington State, her influence in the Manitoba suffrage movement ended, and she never received the recognition she deserved. This scenario is not an uncommon one and offers one explanation of how the circumstances of a woman's life can render a legitimate adult education role model invisible.

The Icelandic pioneer women who took teachers' training also provide an explanation for the absence of women in the history. Teacher Rosa Christopherson moved around to various schools before eventually moving to Saskatchewan to teach. Tracking this pioneer woman in terms of her formal training was difficult due to her frequent school changes. Moreover, once she moved out of Manitoba it is as though she moved out of the country, because public school education is governed provincially. Teachers at this time were also expected to resign from their positions once they became married. At that point, their careers and their history ended as pioneer women with formal education.

The historical narrative entitled *Learning the English language: Integrating learning with work*, provides another explanation for the absence of women's history in adult education in Canada. One reason is that Icelandic pioneer women learned English in informal ways, in a manner which for many years was not included in the standard definition of adult education. The other reason is the fact that this activity was integrated into work obscures the fact that learning was occurring. Literacy training through traditional literacy programs is more visible and thus more readily acknowledged and recorded. Once embedded into the workplace, literacy activities become less visible. The pioneer women found a creative means of learning, and one borne out of necessity, yet it is not surprising that it would not be acknowledged as a form of adult education.

The division between the Icelandic suffrage workers and the English-speaking suffrage workers illustrates another way in which the history of women can be excluded. In this case, the Icelanders had a different ethnicity, language and ideology from the Anglo majority and that prevented an association with the mainstream suffrage movement. In historical accounts of Canada's first group of women to successfully petition for the vote, the Icelandic minority is often not mentioned.

A final lesson that the Icelandic pioneer women can teach us about the absence of women in history is shown through the flagon mentioned in the last narrative. The engraved inscription, *fra nokkrum konum*, from a few women, reveals the discomfort women feel in receiving individual recognition within group

efforts. The Ladies' Aid society of the First Lutheran Church of Winnipeg seem content with having been a part of the wonderful achievement of the Gimli Betel Home and humbled by the place of honor the flagon is given in their church. One contrasting example that comes to mind is the National Hockey League Stanley Cup, which has engraved on its surface all players and coaches names from each winning team for over 100 years. This too, like the Ladies' Aid society, is a group effort yet recognition is granted for each individual. The flagon symbol is an example of the way women's sense of community spirit and humility can contribute to their absence from recorded history. The challenge is to find ways that women can feel comfortable with their individual contributions being recorded. When women feel uncomfortable with their individual history being recorded, then the responsibility lies with those around them, such as their families, to ensure that their lives are recorded.

This summary of the findings has addressed the two research questions and provided some explanations for why the history of women goes unrecorded. The next section will highlight some implications the research has for current practice.

Implications

Though this research was an inquiry into educational activities that occurred over 100 years ago, there are implications for present day practice. This section offers six implications.

1. The conceptual framework developed in this research can be used for revealing other involvement by women in adult education in Canada. J. Roby

Kidd first created a very effective model in 1979 as a means of “apprehending some truths, establishing some relationships, identifying some factors that are often neglected” (Kidd, 1979, p. 4). Modernizing his model to include nonformal and informal learning (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999), and expanding it to include additional categories of influence, resulted in a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to examining the adult education activities of women. The adaptations to Kidd’s framework resulted in a model far better suited to women and led to a dramatic increase in the visibility of the learning activities of women.

Furthermore, the value of the conceptual framework could be extended beyond the involvement of women in adult education to other activities of women. An example is the involvement of women in physical activity. Physical activity could be categorized as formal, such as university or college sport; nonformal, such as fitness classes offered through community centres; and informal, such as self-directed walking, cycling or swimming. These activities could also be examined in the context of influences such as people, events (economic, social, political, cultural), ideas and concepts, outside Canada influences, communications/ technology, and geography and climate. As used in this research involving women and adult education, the conceptual framework could provide a means of revealing, understanding and recording the involvement of women in other areas of study.

2. The method used in this research was an effective means to reveal the activities of women, particularly given the large amount of data that this enquiry uncovered. Use of a sampling strategy, such as the nonprobability sampling

strategy, used in this research is necessary. This strategy helps to place limitations on the inquiry and reduce the amount of data to a manageable size. A key component to the method is the matrix that was created for this research. This Matrix for Coding and Analysis (see figure 2) allows for the activities of women to be coded according to influences, types and location. Other variables may be used depending on the nature of the inquiry. Once coded, activities can then be charted onto the matrix, and the analysis begins simultaneously. The matrix continues to assist and guide the researcher when a visual picture begins to emerge on the matrix as data is posted on it. Visually, women become foregrounded and themes begin to emerge. These emerging women and themes can then be written into historical narratives which is “the final stage in the historical research process” (Speziale and Carpenter, 2003, p. 220). This method of beginning with a sampling strategy, then using a matrix for coding and analysis, and having as the outcome a historical narrative, was an effective means of revealing the activities of women in this research. This method may have broader application to other types of research.

3. This research acts as a reminder of the social benefits of adult education. In this research, Icelandic pioneer women used adult education responses to promote citizenship, community development and social change. This is the heritage of adult education in Canada and the move to professionalize the field (Selman, 1995, p. 29) has unfortunately moved the field away further from its origins. In the last decade there has been an emphasis in the field on vocational programs and technology (Selman, 1995, p.82) and while those are valuable pursuits, adult education cannot forget its successful history of assisting

disadvantaged Canadians. We continue to be a country with a high number of immigrants arriving each year who have many of the same needs that the original Icelandic immigrants had: employment, literacy, housing and transportation. Adult education has an important role to play in assisting these new Canadians.

4. This research illustrates the role that definition can play in excluding the history of women. These pioneer women were an active community of learners who primarily used nonformal and informal means to learn. Many definitions of adult education being applied world-wide do not include all three types of learning. If the definition used in the Canadian survey AETS (OECD, 2003), which only recognized learning which is “formal, structured and institutionalized” (p. 57) was applied in this research, then the only learning that would merit mention would be the teachers’ training and the small percentage of women who attended college and university.

5. The final historical narrative, entitled *The Icelandic Women’s Society and Ladies’ Aid societies: A social welfare network*, is an account of a successful social welfare system that existed before government programs were in place. These women, within their ethnic community, were able to help new members of their community access housing, employment, literacy, food clothing and other necessities. Their efforts arose from a concern about immigrants from their own ethnic community being vulnerable in a large urban centre. These are needs and concerns that continue to face ethnic communities in Canada, and the Icelandic

example may be a model to consider. As in the Icelandic model, there may be a role for churches to play as they seek ways to be relevant in today's society.

6. Finally, this research has demonstrated the importance of recording the history of women. Women have a particular responsibility to either record our own history or the histories of those women around us. As Heilbrun (1988) points out "women must turn to one another for stories" (p. 44). The history of the Icelandic pioneer women shows us that it is a history which is interesting, informative, empowering, and provides meaning to the generations that follow. Rasmussen et al. sum up the status quo:

Women have seldom felt themselves to be makers of history. For generations they've been stagehands and understudies, doing much of the work while someone up front took all the bows. Few women have thought their lives important or interesting enough to merit documentation, and no one has ever given them much argument on the point. (1976, p. 8)

A change to the status quo begins with the women themselves.

Recommendations

Recommendations for adult education, Manitoba history and Manitoba Icelandic history are listed. These are recommendations for future research and historical initiatives.

Adult Education:

1. Development and implementation of a Canadian definition of adult education which includes recognition of formal, nonformal and informal learning, and acknowledges the distinct nature of gender differences in learning.
2. Encouragement of women to record their histories and the histories of other women through programs such as “Write Your Life Story”, which are in place for older adults. A valuable resource in this endeavor, particularly inspiring for women reaching age 50, is *Writing a Woman’s Life* by Carolyn G. Heilbrun.
3. Research and publish a collection of profiles of female adult education role models who have engaged in formal, nonformal and informal education activities across Canada and from various ethnic communities.

Manitoba History:

1. Research into the adult education histories of other ethnic groups of Manitoba pioneer women such as Ukrainian or Mennonite women.
2. Research into the adult education histories of First Nations and Metis women in Manitoba.

3. Re-examine the history of the Manitoba women's suffrage movement.

Manitoba Icelandic History:

1. Retrieve, reveal and record the life stories of individual Icelandic pioneer women. A suggested format is the "life writing" format recently used in the writing of *Blessed: A Portrait of Asdis Sigrun Anderson* (Anderson, 2005).
2. Translate *Freyja*, the woman suffrage paper, into English so that it may become an accessible archival record of the early Manitoba suffrage movement. (Note that several articles published in *Freyja* began as English articles published elsewhere and were then translated into Icelandic by Margret Benedictsson)
3. In 2010, celebrate the 100-year-anniversary of the 1910 suffrage petitions that Icelandic pioneer women presented to the Manitoba Legislature. This could be celebrated through an exhibit in the Dr. Paul H. T. Thorlakson Gallery, Icelandic Collection, Dafoe Library, University of Manitoba or as part of the traditional program at the 2010 *Islendingadagurinn* (Icelandic Festival) in Gimli, Manitoba.
4. Formally recognize the important role that Margret Benedictsson had in advancing the rights of women in Canada, through the establishment of a national historical monument through the Historical Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.

These final recommendations bring an end to this study of “what lies beneath the snow” or undan snjóbreiðunni. This study has shown there is much under the snow if we can open our eyes to expanded definitions and frameworks of adult education. The story of the Icelandic pioneer women of Manitoba is but one chapter in the history of the contributions of women to adult education in Canada. Hopefully this research has created an interest in revealing the contributions of other groups of women to adult education.

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