

'By Education and Conduct': Educating Trans-Imperial Indigenous Fur-Trade Children in the  
Hudson's Bay Company Territories and the British Empire, 1820s to 1870s

By

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## **ABSTRACT**

Mid-nineteenth-century Indigenous fur-trade students were part of a larger group of mixed-descent children in the British Empire who were the product of intimate relations between British men and local women in the colonies. These imperial children were the source of a great deal of anxiety for their parents, British administrators, missionaries, and entrepreneurs. In the mid-nineteenth-century Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) territories, the parents of elite Indigenous fur-trade children sought a British-style education for their children in order to equip them thrive in the HBC territories and the larger British Empire. These children were sent to schools in the HBC territories, the Canadian colonies, and Britain in order to learn how to perform gendered British middle-class identities. In the HBC territories, however, missionaries who were attuned to the project of civilizing and Christianizing Indigenous peoples leveraged this curriculum in different ways than their counterparts in metropolitan spaces.

Elite Indigenous fur-trade students were highly mobile, as schooling often required children to live at boarding schools far from their homes at fur trade posts. An extensive network of British and Indigenous kin that spanned the HBC territories, the Canadian colonies, and Britain supported fur-trade students who were at school. For these trans-imperial children and their families, the HBC territories were not an isolated outpost of the British Empire but were only one site in an imperial circuit of familial mobility. The children's educational mobility provides a window into the reciprocal movement of people, ideas, and culture between the HBC territories, Britain, and other parts of the Empire that formed the 'mutually constitutive' Empire.

The elite Indigenous fur-trade children in this study were able to draw on both their Indigenous heritage and the privilege afforded to them by their elite status in their attempts to negotiate the shifting racial and social boundaries in the HBC territories and the larger British Empire. Indigenous skills, language, material culture, and kin ties existed and operated alongside the British cultural practices and values that served as signifiers of their elite social status. These students performed versions of British middle-class 'respectability' that were both ubiquitous to the British Empire and tailored to the local conditions of the HBC territories.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I begin by acknowledging that I have researched and written this dissertation while living on Treaty 1 lands, which include the traditional territories of the Anishinabek, Assiniboine, Cree, Dakota, Métis, and Oji-Cree, and Métis Nations. My work has explored the sometimes intimate and tragic lives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous fur trade men, women, and children. I have done my best to honour and respect the families, both past and present, who have shared their stories with me.

This dissertation is a project that has spanned more than a decade and included two universities, three dissertation advisors, two cities, and two babies. I have completed this project only with the assistance and support of many, many people.

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An historian’s work is nothing without sources to draw on, and this thesis has benefitted from the assistance of numerous archivists and curators. Chris Kotecki and Rachel Mills at the Archives of Manitoba and the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives have kindly helped me with many research and archival questions over the years. Amelia Fay and Maureen Matthews at the Manitoba Museum have allowed me to access the collections at the museum that relate to my

research, and provided the photos of Manitoba Museum holdings that are included in this study. Sherry George, the curator at Fort Frances Museum & Cultural Centre, delved into her archive to find an obscure primary source for me, and Val McKinley, the Curator at the University of Winnipeg Anthropology Museum was both inspiring and encouraging at a time when I needed a bit of both. Gloria Romaniuk at the Rupert's Land Diocese Archives, Josephine Sallis at the South Peace Archives, and Brian Hardcastle at Forest School in London have all contribute their expertise as well. I must also thank the many descendants of the fur trade families in this study who have shared their own genealogical research with me and, in particular, to Judy Kessler for sharing her family's private collection of Davis family letters.

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## INTRODUCTION

### I. INTRODUCTION

In 1868, twelve-year-old Johnnie Davis wrote from The Nest Academy in Jedburgh, Scotland to his Aunt Matilda in Red River. He noted that the masters at the school were kind to him, that he was healthy, and that he was going to London during his summer holidays to visit his cousins. He closed the letter by commenting that he enjoyed receiving photographs of Red River, and asked his mother write to him.<sup>1</sup> Johnnie's letters home from Scotland focus primarily on his family, his day-to-day activities at school, and the parcels and mementos he received from home. In these ways, his letters reflect the interests and experiences of many boys who attended mid-nineteenth-century British boarding schools.

Johnnie, however, was not a typical British boy in a Scottish school. He was an Indigenous child of Cree, English, and Orcadian ancestries who was born in Rupert's Land to two Indigenous parents. Johnnie was just one of a large body of children of mixed indigenous and British ancestry in the mid-nineteenth-century British Empire.<sup>2</sup> Many of these children were sent to school in colonial locations and in Britain in the hopes that education would help

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<sup>1</sup> Johnnie Davis to Matilda Davis, 4 July 1868, P2342 fo. 11, Matilda Davis Family Papers, Archives of Manitoba (AM).

<sup>2</sup> The term 'indigenous' as it is used here is in line with the United Nations' use of the term to denote, in part, peoples who demonstrate "historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies; Strong links to territories and surrounding natural resources; Distinct social, economic or political systems; Distinct language, culture and beliefs; and form non-dominant groups of society." The term when used with a lower-case 'i' is a general term used by scholars to denote local peoples who are/were native to a specific region. In other areas of this study, the term Indigenous is used with a capital 'I.' This term is more specific to the Canadian (and sometimes North American) context, and is a "collective term encompassing all the original peoples of the land in Canada." Indigenous peoples include First Nations, Metis, Inuit, and other non-status peoples. United Nations, Division for Social Policy and Development Indigenous peoples, "Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Voices," accessed 27 August 2017, [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session\\_factsheet1.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf); Celeste McKay, "Briefing Note on Terminology," University of Manitoba (April 2015), <http://umanitoba.ca/student/indigenous/terminology.html>.

mitigate the children's indigenous ancestries by turning them into respectable British ladies and gentlemen, and thereby affording them the best opportunities to succeed in a colonial society.

The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) territories, where Johnnie was born, have often been depicted as a great wilderness that was isolated from the larger British Empire, both at the time of the fur trade and in later years by historians. The movements associated with Indigenous fur-trade children's education, however, including the movement of their physical bodies, their thoughts and feelings via correspondence, and material culture connected Indigenous students and their families to an extensive trans-imperial network of kin, friends, and HBC employees. Moreover, the children's lived experiences as imperial students in the HBC territories, the Canadian colonies, and Britain were a means by which British imperial ideas of race, gender, family, and class were translated and transformed. This study will explore the educational experiences of elite Indigenous fur-trade children, and how these students' travels and education engaged and contested British imperial ideals of the place and roles of indigenous children in the British Empire.

The regions that became territories of Hudson's Bay Company, occupying most of what is now northern Ontario, western Canada and Oregon, was and is home to many First Nations groups.<sup>3</sup> These First Nations peoples variously hunted, traded, farmed, went to war, and intermarried long before the arrival of the Europeans. In the 1660s, Prince Rupert of England and French explorers and fur traders Médard Chouart des Groseilliers and Pierre-Esprit Radisson convinced King Charles II and other noblemen and merchants to finance a jointly-

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<sup>3</sup> This study uses the term 'HBC territories' to denote the regions west of the Great Lakes that were under the control of the Hudson's Bay Company after the 1821 merger of the HBC and the North West Company. This includes modern-day north-western Ontario, the prairie provinces, most of British Columbia and the northern regions of Canada, and parts of Oregon.



funded enterprise. The purpose of this company was to access fur resources in the interior of north-west North America. The first two HBC ships departed for Hudson Bay in 1668, and a royal charter granting the company exclusive trading rights in the region was proclaimed in 1670.<sup>4</sup> When the first fur traders arrived on the shores of the Bay, they were primarily curiosities to the local First Nations peoples and the white men's presence was marginal to First Nations' cultures and lifestyles. The European men who arrived in the Northwest, however, were dependent on First Nations peoples to help them survive in the harsh climate and supply them with furs to ship back to London and Montreal. Indigenous women established intimate relationships with the white men based on personal and community motivations, which facilitated the traders' relationships with the women's Indigenous kin. These Indigenous wives also provided the traders with the skills, knowledge, labour, and material goods that the men needed in order to survive.

In the 1700s, the HBC struggled for control of the region with Montreal-based outfits the North-West Company (NWC) and the XY Company.<sup>5</sup> An intense period of rivalry followed. What were often violent conflicts between the NWC and the HBC ended when the two companies merged under the umbrella of the HBC in 1821, leaving the new company with a monopoly over the HBC territories.

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<sup>4</sup> For overviews of the history of the Hudson's Bay Company and the fur trade see, see E.E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, vol. I & II (London : Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1958-1959); Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the fur trade: their role as trappers, hunters, and middlemen in the lands southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); A.S. Silver, *A history of the Canadian West to 1870-71: being a history of Rupert's Land (the Hudson's Bay Company's territory) and of the North-West territory (including the Pacific slope)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973).

<sup>5</sup> The NWC and the XY Company amalgamated in 1804 under the NWC name.

After 1821, the HBC attempted to keep control of its monopoly by challenging the activities of independent traders who undercut their profits. In 1849, a jury of Red River men refused to persecute Metis trader Guillaume Sayer for his independent trading activities, thereby effectively ending the HBC's monopoly on the fur trade. In 1869, the HBC sold its territories to the Government of Canada without consulting either the white or the Indigenous inhabitants of the region. The result was the Red River Resistance of 1869-70. Led by Louis Riel, the Metis asserted their rights to the land as Indigenous peoples and forced Ottawa to accede to their demands for recognition and guarantees for their language, religion, and way of life. This victory proved to be short-lived, however. In the immediate aftermath of the *Manitoba Act* (1870), which established the small province of Manitoba, Canadian government troops terrorized Indigenous peoples at Red River. The lands that the Metis were promised never fully materialized and, as a result, many Metis people around Red River moved out of the area to the United States and the Northwest Territories.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the fur-trade period, the descendants of First Nations women and white fur-trade men lived a variety of different lifestyles and identities across the HBC territories. These children have been identified at the time and in the historical literature variously as Métis, *bois brulées*, natives of the country, country born, Rupertslanders, half-breeds and

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<sup>6</sup> See for example, Gerhard J. Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Metis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University Press, 1996); P.R. Mailhot and D.N. Sprague, "Persistent Settlers: The Dispersal and Resettlement of the Red River Métis, 1870-85," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 17, no.2 (1985): 1-30; Brad Milne, "The Historiography of Métis Land Dispersal, 1870-1890," *Manitoba History* 30 (Fall 1995): 30-41; Diane Payment, "Batoche After 1885, A Society in Transition," in *1885 and After: Native Society in Transition*, ed. Laurie Barron and James B. Waldram ( Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1986), 173-187; D.N. Sprague, *Canada and the Metis, 1869-1885* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988).

mixed-bloods.<sup>7</sup> This study focuses on one group of these Indigenous children – the middle-class and elite children of HBC fur-trade families. The children who I refer to in this study as elite or middle-class Indigenous fur-trade children share three common histories and identities that bound them together as a social group. Firstly, their family ancestries included various formulations of primarily English, Scottish, Orcadian, Cree, Anishnaabek, Okanagan, and Chinook heritages. Secondly, these families shared elite social status within the fur-trade. The children’s white fathers or grandfathers were almost exclusively English, Scottish, or Orcadian officers in the HBC or NWC. These men’s social and financial privilege, along with the kin ties they made to Indigenous families through their marriages to Indigenous women, provided their children and grandchildren the basis on which to claim status as ladies and gentlemen in HBC territories. Thirdly, these families were connected by their social class, religion, ties to the HBC and, more importantly, the intertwined and extensive kin networks that underwrote the fur trade. Through these connections, they formed a tightly woven group of families that stretched from the North American west coast to Britain.

There is no clear and appropriate term with which to label these elite Indigenous fur-trade children. The families most often referred to themselves as ‘natives of the country’ or

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<sup>7</sup> For discussions of the ‘English Metis’ identity and terminology see, Jennifer Brown and Theresa Schenck, “Métis, Mestizo and Mixed-Blood,” in *A Companion to American Indian History*, ed. Philip Deloria and Neil Salisbury (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 321-338; John E. Foster, “The Country-Born in the Red River Settlement, 1818-1870 (PhD diss., Queen’s University, 1974); John E. Foster, “The Origins of the Mixed-Bloods in the Canadian North West,” in *Essays on Western History: In Honour of Lewis Gwynne Thomas*, ed. L.H. Thomas (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1976), 69-80; Frits Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Riel Resistance 1869-70* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1991); Sylvia Van Kirk, “‘What if Mama is an Indian’: The Cultural Ambivalence of the Alexander Ross family,” in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis*, ed. Jennifer Brown and Jacqueline Peterson (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 205-217; Sylvia Van Kirk, “Colonized Lives: The Native Wives and Daughters of Five Founding Families of Victoria,” in *In the Days of Our Grandmothers: A Reader in Aboriginal Women’s History in Canada*, ed. Mary-Ellen Kelm and Lorna Townsend (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 170-199.

sometimes ‘HBC people,’ when they referred to their identities at all. They could fit under the category of Metis as outlined by Brenda Macdougall, Carolyn Podruchny, and Nicole St. Onge. These historians argue that ‘Metis’ with a capital ‘M’ and no ‘é’ acknowledges the “patrilineal diversity of heritages” among Metis people and the “existence of a group identification,” and thereby can be generally applied to North American peoples of mixed Aboriginal and European ancestry.<sup>8</sup> I agree with their assessment, but the term Metis was not claimed by these families, even in the later period under study when the term was in more common usage. Although the lives of British-descended Protestant and French-descended Roman Catholic Indigenous fur-trade families were intertwined in many ways, including through marriage and kin ties, the families in this study drew very clear lines between themselves and the francophone Roman Catholic families ‘on the other side of the river’ at Red River or ‘in the valley’ in the Columbia District. Given that these fur-trade families distinctly delineated themselves from the Cree-Ojibwa (and at least nominally) francophone families most closely associated with the term Metis, I am reluctant to label these elite Indigenous fur-trade families as ‘Metis.’

My categorization of these Indigenous families as a distinct group is informed by Chris Anderson’s critique of the use of ‘mixedness’ to determine Metis identities. In part, mixedness was central to how these children were defined within the British Empire. They were part of a larger body of children in the British Empire whose imperial identities were in part defined by their dual British and indigenous heritages. In the HBC territories, however, mixedness was not the feature that united these fur-trade families as a social cohort, as there were several

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<sup>8</sup> Nicole St. Onge, Carolyn Podruchny and Brenda Macdougall, “Introduction: Cultural Mobility and the Contours of Difference,” in *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility and History*, ed. Nicole St. Onge, Carolyn Podruchny and Brenda Macdougall (Norman, OK: Oklahoma University Press, 2012), 6.

different (but intertwined) groups of mixed-descent peoples in the nineteenth-century HBC territories. Anderson warns that defining Metis people by their ‘mixedness’ recreates the unequal power relations of the colonial nation-state and leads to definitions of Metisness rooted in biology instead of in “historical, peoplehood-based relationships.”<sup>9</sup> The relationship between the identities of these elite fur-trade families and modern constructions of Metis identities today is unclear. They were, however, a specific group of Indigenous families whose lives and experiences were bound by kin ties, common languages, religion, and identities as ‘natives of the country’ and ‘HBC people.’

The children of these elite Indigenous fur-trade families and their schooling are at the heart of this study. Indigenous fur-trade children’s educational experiences were diverse. Some were educated in their homes or nominally at local parish schools, while others received a primarily Indigenous education that centred on traditional knowledge, cultures, languages, and skills. Many children, however, were ‘placed,’ or sent away from their parents and put into the care of family, friends, or school administrators in order to attend school. These children’s education and life stories were shaped by a convergence of local situations in the HBC territories, by British imperial perspectives on interracial intimate relations in colonial contexts, and by imperial ambiguities about the role of mixed-descent children in the British Empire.

Elite fur-trade parents engaged British-style schooling as a means to teach Indigenous fur-trade children the British middle-class norms of ‘respectability’ that were required to claim identities as ladies and gentlemen. This, in turn, would potentially mitigate discrimination associated with the children’s Indigenous heritage and allow them to secure good employment

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<sup>9</sup> Chris Anderson, *Metis: Race, Recognition and Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 10-11.

for boys, and good marriages for girls. In these efforts, there were points of both tension and collusion between Indigenous and white parents and educators.

Examining fur-trade students' education offers a lens into Indigenous families, their affective relationships, and social networks. Extensive family and fur-trade social networks were enacted to manage Indigenous children's education, health, and well-being when they were away at school. The letters and other documents produced by parents and children provide insight into parental anxiety, Indigenous children's lives and experiences, and the challenges and successes of maintaining genuine affective family ties during long separations over often vast distances while children were away at school.

My research reconsiders Indigenous fur-trade children's education from three perspectives. Firstly, I draw on studies of interracial intimate relations and families in the British Empire to understand how concepts of the family, class, masculinity, and femininity were reproduced and reified in the HBC territories. In part, this body of work builds on studies of domesticity in nineteenth-century Britain which identify and articulate the constructions of masculinity, femininity, and domesticity that were exported to the colonies.<sup>10</sup> Scholars in the past two decades have applied these gendered and racial analyses to the colonies and in doing so have explored intimacy as a key site of the re-workings of British cultural norms. They found that imperial and colonial constructions of race, gender, class, and sexuality were "defined,

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<sup>10</sup> Lenore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (London: Routledge, 2002); Catherine Hall, ed., *White, Male and Middle-Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Ellen Ross, *Love & Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

reproduced and rendered powerful,” and have demonstrated the importance of intimate relations and the family to the British imperial project.<sup>11</sup>

Secondly, I draw on histories of childhood and education in Canada and the British Empire to assess Indigenous fur-trade students as imperial children. Fur-trade students’ schooling is a means by which to explore the lived experiences of one group of Indigenous children and youth. Although children have been included in previous fur-trade histories, these studies have primarily considered fur-trade children as the offspring of the intimate relationships between fur traders and Indigenous women. The scholarly focus has not often been on the children themselves.<sup>12</sup> A body of letters written by Indigenous fur-trade children and youth provides unique insight into how Indigenous students experienced their education and their place in a colonial society and the larger British Empire. These letters and other documents produced by children allow me to explore the children’s lives from their own perspectives instead of having to rely solely on records produced by adults about the children.

Thirdly, I employ theories of the ‘mutually constitutive’ Empire, transnationalism, and migration to explore the educational experience of fur-trade children as part of the exchange of

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<sup>11</sup> Laura Ishiguro, *Nothing to Write Home About: British Imperial Family Correspondence and the Everyday Foundations of Settler Colonialism in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, forthcoming) 8. For a discussion about the British empire and families, see Esmé Cleall, Laura Ishiguro, and Emily Manktelow, “Imperial Relations: Histories of Family in the British Empire,” *Journal of Colonialism and Commonwealth History* 14, no.1 (Spring 2013), doi:10.1353/cch.2013.0006. See also Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Sarah Carter, *The Importance of being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation-Building in Western Canada* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008); Cecilia Morgan, “Creating Interracial Intimacies: British North America, Canada, and the Transatlantic World, 1830-1914,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 192, (2008): 76-105; Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Angela Wanhalla, *Matters of the Heart: A History of Interracial Marriage in New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> For studies that examine fur trade children in more detail, see Denise Fuchs, “Native Sons of Rupert’s Land 1760 to the 1860s” (Ph.D. diss, University of Manitoba and University of Winnipeg, 2000); Juliet Pollard, “The Making of the Metis in the Pacific Northwest, Fur Trade Children: Race, Class and Gender,” (Ph.D. diss, University of British Columbia, 1990).

ideas, personnel, and material culture between the British metropole and its colonies.

Indigenous fur-trade children were part of a larger body of mixed-descent imperial children, and the rhetoric that informed the perspectives of parents, educators, and HBC administrators were rooted in British imperial perspectives on race, class, gender, and colonialism. Fur-trade students, however, were also active participants in the exchange of people, ideas, and culture between the HBC territories, the Canadian colonies, and Britain. These exchanges between the HBC territories and the larger British Empire were part of Indigenous fur-trade students' educational experiences and they enmeshed Indigenous students in the larger flow of people and ideas in the British Empire. In their own ways, fur-trade children made their mark on the metropolis by bringing their bodies, their Indigenous heritage, and colonial roots to England, Scotland, and the Orkneys.

## II. SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

The archival sources that form the foundation of this study were produced within the contexts of British imperialism and colonialism, and are located primarily in Canadian archives. Historians in the past twenty years have devoted a significant amount of thought and writing to the colonial archives, how power and privilege shape whose records end up in the archives, and in what forms.<sup>13</sup> The interests and activities of the people who held power are pre-dominantly reflected in the archival record. Those who possessed less power in society, including racialized persons, working-class people, women, and children are less often represented in the archive.

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<sup>13</sup> Antoinette Burton, ed., *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009).



When they do appear in the archival record, it is often in records produced by the dominant society. As Durba Ghosh has argued for the Indian colonial archive, this leads to the purposeful erasures and forgetting of names.<sup>14</sup> In the context of the archival records used in this study, Indigenous fur-trade mothers and children are often absent from the Canadian colonial and British imperial archive.<sup>15</sup> Early historians of Indigenous women, however, have demonstrated how the colonial record could be read ‘against the grain’ to locate the stories of fur-trade women and children.<sup>16</sup>

One of the ways that I work to counteract this imperial and colonial erasing of Indigenous women and children is to use both women’s maiden and married last names to identify them. Some nineteenth-century women used this naming practice themselves, but for the most part this naming practice has been adopted by historians of trans-imperial families to counteract the patriarchal naming practices that erased women from the archival record.<sup>17</sup> The erasure of Indigenous women’s names in the colonial record also hides women’s kin ties. In the

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<sup>14</sup> Durba Ghosh, “Decoding the nameless: Gender, subjectivity, and historical methodologies in reading the archives of colonial India,” in *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840*, ed. Kathleen Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 297. On tracing one Indigenous woman in the Canadian historical archive, see Donna G. Sutherland, “The Kokum Puzzle: Finding and Fitting the Pieces,” in *The Long Journey of a Forgotten People*, ed. Ute Lischke and David T. McNab (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2007), 305-328.

<sup>15</sup> Jeannette Allis Bastien, “Reading Colonial Records Through an Archival Lens: The Provenance of Place, Space and Creation,” *Archival Science* 6, (2006): 268. See also Kristine Alexander, “Can the Girl Guide Speak? The Perils and Pleasures of Looking for Children’s Voices in Archival Research,” *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures* 4, no.1 (2012): 132-145; Jean M. O’Brien, “Historical Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies: Touching on the past, looking to the future,” in *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies*, ed. Chris Anderson and Jean M. O’Brien (New York: Routledge, 2016), 15-22; Crystal Fraser and Zoe Todd, “Decolonial Sensibilities: Indigenous Research and Engaging with Archives in Contemporary Colonial Canada,” *L’Internationale*, 15 February 2016, <http://www.internationaleonline.org/>.

<sup>16</sup> Jennifer Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1980); Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing Ltd., 1980).

<sup>17</sup> Ishiguro, *Nothing to Write Home About*, 9; Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 7.

case of the fur-trade archival record, these deletions obscure the extensive maternal Indigenous kin networks that underwrote and were essential to the fur trade. Using the double naming method (or, in case of multiple marriages, more than double) illuminates the kin networks that were essential to caring for and supporting Indigenous students when they were at school.

To find archival records from the mid-nineteenth-century *about* these Indigenous children themselves is a challenge. Their place in the colonial archive is disadvantaged by their Indigenous heritage and their age. To find records produced *by* Indigenous children that offer insight into their lived experiences from their own perspectives is even more challenging. Indigenous fur-trade children's education, however, generated records both about the children, and by the children. Children wrote letters from school, for example, *because* they were sent away from their homes for their education. Several of these letters were archived as part of the business and family archive of the Oakfield Establishment for Young Ladies, a boarding school run by Indigenous trans-imperial student and headmistress, Matilda Davis, in the Red River settlement. In addition to the students' letters, students also wrote or altered textual documents associated with their education including exercise books, school projects, and textbooks. School administrators created administrative records and accounts like report cards, statements of account, and reports on the children's behaviour. Parents wrote letters to schoolmasters, extended family members, and friends who helped managed the children's transportation and lives away from home, and to their sons and daughters at school.

These two groups of records – those produced by adults about fur-trade children's education, and those produced by the children themselves - reflect very different interests.

Parents, educators, and guardians were more focused on finances, logistics, and children's behaviour. The children, however, were more interested in maintaining ties with their families, the care packages sent from home, and their daily lived experiences. These differences in focus highlight the importance of putting the child at the centre of research about Indigenous children's education. As with reading against the grain for any subaltern group in the archive, it is a reminder that records produced *about* Indigenous children do not necessarily reflect the experiences *of* Indigenous children.

My goal in this study is to trace the education of two generations of Indigenous fur-trade students. The first generation of children attended school around 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s. Their children, the second generation, were students in the 1850s through the early 1870s. In order to focus my research, I have identified a core group of fur-trade families – the Sinclair, Bird, McKenzie, Anderson, Christie, McDermot, Kennedy/Isbister, and Davis/Hodgson families. These families were descended variously from English, Scottish and Orcadian men and Cree, Anishnaabeg, Okanagan and Chinook women.

The educational experiences within these families were diverse, and were influenced by location, finances, the ages of the children, and the career paths of their fathers. Some of the Indigenous fur-trade children of these families were educated in their homes, some attended schools in the HBC territories, some were sent abroad to middle-class boarding schools in the Canadian colonies and Britain, and some never learned to read or write. Most learned Indigenous languages and knowledge traditions from their Indigenous grandmothers and mothers.

Family and personal correspondence related to Indigenous fur-trade children, their education, and their families form the core of the study. This correspondence provides insight into why children were sent to school, the logistics of managing their education, the lived experiences of the students themselves, and the affective relationships between students and their families. Most of these records are held at the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, the Archives of Manitoba, the BC Archives, and Library and Archives Canada. Due to the mobility of fur-trade families and the complexities of the archive, some of these records are also held elsewhere in North America including California, Oregon, Ontario, and other regional archives across the country.

Official HBC correspondence related to the business of the Company, including that of Governor George Simpson, and the letters and reports written by the missionaries sent to Rupert's Land by the London-based Church Missionary Society (CMS) form a second group of records. These 'official' records offer a window into how British imperial ideas of class, race, gender, and sexuality were imported to and interpreted in the HBC territories. These imperial ideas informed the reasoning behind establishing schools in fur-trade country and HBC support of such endeavours. Various other fur-trade records including ships' logs, fur-trade wills and the records associated with their estates, and post records offer details on the configurations of fur-trade families, their travels, and their kin and social networks.

The third group of records that have proven essential to this study are British and Canadian census data, which are now available in large part online. Tracing fur-trade families can be a complex and challenging task. Metis and fur-trade genealogists have spent decades painstakingly mining an archival record that often obscures the names and identities of

Indigenous men, women, and children in an effort to piece together family trees. Fur-trade families were also highly mobile, moving from post to post and often back and forth between the HBC territories, the Canadian colonies, Britain, and sometimes further afield. Online, searchable census data has been invaluable for tracing Indigenous fur-trade students' and trans-imperial fur-trade families' lives, travels, marriages, and deaths. In these ways, the English and Scottish census records in particular illustrate how fur-trade children's mobility challenged nineteenth-century imperial notions and subsequent historical approaches to the literal place of Indigenous women and children in the British Empire.

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The family in the British Empire was a site of intersection for British and colonial ideals about gender, race, and sexuality. As Angela Wanhalla argues of interracial intermarriage in New Zealand, the ordering and re-ordering of colonial familial relationships, and in particular those related to mixed-descent children, "disrupted colonial categories of race, in the same way that interracial relationships undermined racial theories and hierarchies throughout the nineteenth-century colonial world."<sup>18</sup> The efforts on the part of colonial administrators and missionaries to manipulate gender roles, perceptions of race, and intimacy within these families was a reflection of British attempts to control and organize colonial peoples. In this way, the personal and the imperial intersected at family hearths in Britain and the colonies.<sup>19</sup> Both white

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<sup>18</sup> Angela Wanhalla, *In/Visible Sight: The Mixed-Descent Families of Southern New Zealand* (Athabasca: Athabasca University Press, 2010), 130.

<sup>19</sup> Daniel Livesay provides a review of literature on interracial intimate relations in North America and the Caribbean in "Emerging from the Shadows: New Developments in the History of Interracial Sex and Intermarriage in Colonial North America and the Caribbean," *History Compass* 13, no.3 (March 2015): 122-133. See also Durba

and interracial family politics were essential to how British imperialism functioned and was resisted.

In the HBC territories, intimate relations between European men and First Nations women were one of the first sites of meaningful contact between Britons and First Nations peoples. Jennifer Brown, Sylvia Van Kirk, and Jacqueline Peterson all made intimate relationships and families a focus of their studies of the fur trade in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>20</sup> First Nations women formed alliances with White men to forge trade alliances, gain access to material goods, and more personal and inimitable reasons. These marriages *en façon du pays* were “an Indigenous marriage rite that evolved to meet the needs of fur-trade society.” As per Indigenous traditions, according to historian Sylvia Van Kirk, these relationships between white men and Indigenous women created distinct family units and “a reciprocal social bond” that consolidated economic relationships between the fur trader husband and the wife’s Indigenous family.<sup>21</sup> These unions, which were most often marriages according to Indigenous rite, formed the basis of interracial and mixed-descent fur-trade families and demonstrated that interracial intimate relationships were “fundamental to the growth of fur trade society.”<sup>22</sup> Moreover, these early studies pointed to how the “reification of racial and gender hierarchies” was used to

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Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, Special Issue: “Imperial Relations: Histories of Family in the British Empire,” 14, no.1 (Spring 2003); Daniel Livesay, “Family Matters on a Jamaican Plantation,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 72, no.4 (2015): 671-675; Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Damon Ieremia Salesa, *Racial Crossings: Race, Intermarriage, and the Victorian British Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>20</sup> Brown, *Strangers in Blood*; Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*; Jacqueline Peterson, “Prelude to Red River: A Social Portrait of the Great Lakes Métis,” *Ethnohistory* 25, no.1 (Winter, 1978): 41-67.

<sup>21</sup> Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 28-29.

<sup>22</sup> Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 4.

re-order fur-trade society to reflect the norms of settler society.<sup>23</sup> More recent works have continued this exploration of fur-trade families. Some have explored the intersections of intimacy, family, imperialism, and colonialism in Canadian and North American borderlands history.<sup>24</sup> Others have focused more specifically on Metis families, and examined how family was central to the construction of Metis identities up to the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup> These studies of imperial and Metis families provide a foundation for my own study of nineteenth-century Indigenous fur-trade families and children.

Children in the British Empire often became the focus of British and colonial anxieties and hopes. Mixed-descent children in particular were the embodiment of the “dual interests” of colonial and imperial race politics as they aligned in “governing native races and improving the white race.” The perception in both the colonies and the metropole was that the best way to achieve these goals was to focus reform efforts on children.<sup>26</sup> Parents, administrators, educators, missionaries, and entrepreneurs all had their own visions for the roles that children were to occupy in the Empire; their bodies and minds were sites on which to exercise imperial

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<sup>23</sup> Sylvia Van Kirk, “From Marrying-In to Marrying-Out: Changing Patterns of Aboriginal/Non-Aboriginal Marriage in Colonial Canada,” *Frontiers* 23, no.3 (2002): 7.

<sup>24</sup> On the intersections of family, intimacy and the fur trade in Canada and the Canadian-United States borderlands, see Krista Barclay, “From Rupert’s Land to Canada West: Hudson’s Bay Company Families and Representations of Indigeneity in Small-Town Ontario,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 26, 1 (2015): 67-97; Jean Barman, *French Canadians, Furs and Indigenous Women* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014); Anne F. Hyde, *Empires, Nations and Families: A History of the North American West, 1800-1860* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011); Melinda Marie Jetté, *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races: A French-Indian Community in Nineteenth-Century Oregon, 1812-1859* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2015); Lucy Eldersveld Murphy, *Great Lakes Creoles: A French-Indian Community on the Northern Borderlands, Prairie du Chien, 1750–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Perry, *Colonial Relations*; Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001).

<sup>25</sup> Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004); Brenda Macdougall, *One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010).

<sup>26</sup> Fiona Paisley, “Childhood and Race: Growing Up in the Empire,” in *Gender and Empire: The Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series*, ed. Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004 ) 23.

anxieties about gender, race, class, and sexuality.<sup>27</sup> As Simon Sleight and Shirleene Robinson argue in their recent collection on children in the British world, “children and young people, both British and Indigenous, both locally born and migrant, were central to the imperial project, burdened with its hopes and anxieties. Their experiences and how they were represented exemplify the processes through which ‘Britishness’ was expressed and contested across the globe.”<sup>28</sup>

Imperial children, however, were also individuals with their own thoughts, feelings, and choices. In many ways, their autonomy and individuality were circumscribed by the expanding, but still limited, definitions of what constituted a child and childhood in the nineteenth century.<sup>29</sup> Understanding children’s experiences of childhood, colonialism, and imperialism in the British Empire is as important as acknowledging those of women, the working classes, and other racialized and marginalized groups. In part, exploring children’s experiences provides insight into larger concerns and patterns in relation to contested sites of power in both the colonies and the metropolises. Searching out children’s own voices and perspectives on their lives as nineteenth-century imperial children, however, introduces another dimension to the history of the ‘mutually constituted’ Empire. In particular, accessing children’s voices offers insight into how lessons about often competing local and imperial constructions of race, gender, class, and sexuality were received and translated by children themselves.

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<sup>27</sup> Laura Ishiguro, “Discourses of Childhood and Settler Futurity in Colonial British Columbia,” *BC Studies* no. 190 (Summer 2016): 15-37; Daniel Livesay, “Extended Families: Mixed-Race Children and Scottish Experience, 1770-1820,” *International Journal of Scottish Literature* 4 (Spring/Summer 2008): 1-17.

<sup>28</sup> Simon Sleight and Shirleene Robinson, “Introduction: The World in Miniature,” in *Children, Childhood and Youth in the British World*, ed. Simon Sleight and Shirleene Robinson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 2.

<sup>29</sup> Paula S. Fass, “Is There a Story in the History of Childhood?,” in *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World*, ed. Paula S. Fass (New York: Routledge, 2012), 9.



Children's education offers a lens through which to explore these intersections of the imperial project, the 'interconnectedness of histories of education,' and the lived experiences of both white and indigenous children in the Empire.<sup>30</sup> The British men and women who went out into the Empire to organize, administer, and profit from the colonies carried with them metropolitan ideals about gender, race, class, and sexuality. In the mid-nineteenth century, Victorian middle-class ideals of domesticity, femininity, and masculinity were the dominant script. These British Victorian middle-class men and women set out to refine and re-order both the working classes at home, and the racialized locals in the colonies. In both cases, the goals were to transform men, women, and children into Christianized and industrious British subjects who conformed to middle-class norms of gender, class, and sexual mores. Colonial administrators, missionaries, entrepreneurs and their families all carried this "powerful, unified culture" with them to the far reaches of the Empire.<sup>31</sup> These ideals of middle-classness, combined with shifting perceptions of race, informed their interactions with Indigenous peoples.

The ideals of British middle-class culture also informed how imperial parents approached educating their mixed-descent children.<sup>32</sup> In this sense, the lived realities of the daily tensions of the separate spheres ideology were less important than the power of the

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<sup>30</sup> Barnita Bagchi, Eckhardt Fuchs, and Kate Rousmaniere, "Introduction: Connecting Histories of Education: Transnational and Cross-Cultural Exchanges in (Post-) Colonial Education," in *Connecting Histories of Education: Transnational and Cross-Cultural Exchanges in (Post-) Colonial Education*, ed. Barnita Bagchi, Eckhardt Fuchs, and Kate Rousmaniere (New York: Berghahn, 2014), 1.

<sup>31</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 23-25.

<sup>32</sup> Suresh Chandra Ghosh, "'English in taste, in opinions, in words and intellect': Indoctrinating the Indian through textbook, curriculum and education," in *The Imperial Curriculum: Racial Images and Education in the British Colonial Experience*, ed. J.A. Mangan (London: Routledge, 1993) 175-241; Satadru Sen, "The Politics of Deracination: Empire, Education and Elite Children in Colonial India," *Studies in History* 19, 1 (2003): 19-39.

ideology itself. For these parents, the education of mixed-descent children was meant to teach them more than to just read and write. Education was also a means by which to transmit British social norms and standards of behaviour to boys and girls. Christianity was prioritized by both parents and teachers, as was learning the English language. In most classrooms, the two aims intermingled, as Bible passages were used as texts for learning reading and writing. For boys, 'manly' codes of behaviour were reinforced, while girls' schooling emphasized domestic skills, deportment, and sexual restraint.

The aims of this education for mixed-descent imperial children were similar across the Empire. In Palestine, missionaries taught Jewish and Muslim girls the tenets of the Christian religion and the foundations of British domesticity.<sup>33</sup> In Australia, 'half-caste girls' were targeted in the belief that education would help cure their 'loose morals' and at the same time prepare them to fill the demand for domestic servants in the colony.<sup>34</sup> In Hong Kong, a "discourse of domestic ideology clothed in religious language" was aimed at training indigenous girls, and particularly middle-class girls, to be "educated mothers and competent governesses."<sup>35</sup> In Jamaica and New Zealand, the sport of cricket was promoted as a way to teach both indigenous and white boys about masculinity and citizenship.<sup>36</sup> Other parents sought a metropolitan British education for their white and mixed-descent children who were born in the colonies. These

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<sup>33</sup> Nancy Stockdale, "Palestinian Girls and British Missionary Enterprise, 1847-1948," in *Girlhood: A Global History*, ed. Jennifer Helgren and Colleen Vasconcellos (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 217-233.

<sup>34</sup> Christine Cheater, "Australia's Assimilation Policies and Aboriginal Girls," in *Girlhood: A Global History*, ed. Jennifer Helgren and Colleen Vasconcellos (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 255-256.

<sup>35</sup> Patricia Pok-kwan Chiu, "'A Position of Usefulness': Gendering the History of Girls' Education in Colonial Hong Kong," in *Girlhood: A Global History*, ed. Jennifer Helgren and Colleen Vasconcellos (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 790-791.

<sup>36</sup> Aviston Downes, "From Boys to Men, Colonial Education, Cricket and Masculinity in the Caribbean, 1870-1920," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 22, no.1 (Jan. 2005): 14-17; Greg Ryan, "Cricket and Moral Curriculum of the New Zealand Elite Secondary Schools c1860-1920," *The Sports Historian* 19, no.2 (1999): 61-62.

children were sent 'home' in order to separate them from the perceived influence of indigenous men and women in the colonies.<sup>37</sup> For mixed-descent children, parents sought to equip their children with the markers of middle-classness in the hopes that this would mediate their indigenous ancestry.<sup>38</sup>

The export of these Victorian imperial ideologies to fur-trade country was part of the dissemination of English constructs of gender, race, and class. What this meant in post-1821 HBC territories, as the London Committee sought to re-organize and modernize the Company in the wake of the merger, was that the social order of the fur trade was in part dictated from the heart of the metropole, and in part re-arranged in fur-trade posts and at family hearths. Sons were expected to perform as 'gentlemen' in order to have the best chance of entering the officer class of the fur trade, and daughters were expected to be 'ladies by conduct' in order to secure good marriages. At the same time, as ideas of childhood and parenting changed in Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, European trader fathers became more invested in their mixed-descent children and more interested in their futures and education. Sons, in particular, were at first the target of most fur-trade fathers' efforts to educate their children. Denise Fuchs argues in her study of 'native sons' that European fur-trade fathers saw education and the achievement of respectability as a "means of overcoming what these fathers perceived as their children's disadvantageous cultural and racial characteristics which threatened to set them apart and lead them to an uncertain future."<sup>39</sup>

Sylvia Van Kirk makes a similar argument about Indigenous fur-trade daughters and education

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<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Briton and Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1.

<sup>38</sup> Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India*, 86.

<sup>39</sup> Denise Fuchs, "Native Sons of Rupert's Land 1760 to 1860s" (PhD diss., University of Manitoba 2000), 94.

in her study of fur-trade women. Education, she contends, contributed to the ‘acculturation’ of Indigenous fur-trade daughters.<sup>40</sup> As in other parts of the British Empire, however, the intersections of race, empire, and class in the HBC territories were forged in response not only to the dictates of English social norms, but also to the lived realities of colonial lives. These ideals of the Victorian middle-class that the London Committee and European men and women tried to impose on the fur-trade were contested and remade by First Nations wives, Indigenous fur-trade partners, mixed-descent sons and daughters, and sometimes by European fur traders themselves.

Theories of transnationalism, migration, and the ‘mutually constitutive’ Empire also inform this study. In the past, scholarship about the British Empire focussed in large part on how the Empire impacted the colonies with a focus on politics, economics, and the military.<sup>41</sup> Rooted in post-colonialism and the rise of social history, the ‘new’ imperial history instead shifts the focus to race, gender, culture, and intimate relations in the Empire. Historians and literary scholars began to search out how the Empire was intertwined with British literature, politics, views on race and gender, and material culture. What they found was that there was a significant exchange of ideas, personnel, and material culture between the British metropole and its colonies.

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<sup>40</sup> Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 145-147.

<sup>41</sup> For example, see P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, “Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas I. The Old Colonial System, 1688-1850,” *The Economic History Review* 39, no. 4 (Nov. 1986): 501-525, doi 10.2307/2596481; P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, “Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas II: New Imperialism, 1850-1945,” *The Economic History Review* 40, no. 1 (Feb. 1987): 1-26, doi: 10.2307/2596293; J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (New York: James Pott & Sons, 1902), [http://files.libertyfund.org/files/127/0052\\_Bk.pdf](http://files.libertyfund.org/files/127/0052_Bk.pdf); Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1961); Robin Winks, ed., *Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume 5: Historiography* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Historian Catherine Hall has argued for the ‘mutually constitutive’ nature of English identity and the British Empire. In particular, she argues that exchanges of ideas, personnel, and material culture between the English metropole and the British colonies shaped the colonies, England, and constructions of Englishness.<sup>42</sup> One aspect of this ‘mutually constitutive Empire’ was the mobility of people between Britain and the colonies, and how these movements and knowledge circuits transcended national boundaries and national histories. These transnational histories challenge the “primacy of the nation” and interweave the histories of various sites of Empire.<sup>43</sup> My assessment of the connections between the HBC territories, the Canadian colonies, and Britain draws on these transnational theories to expand my analysis of the fur trade beyond the boundaries of the Canadian nation state. In doing so, I explore how Indigenous fur-trade children and families were immersed in larger imperial circuits of people, ideas, and goods.

Within the context of these transnational studies, assessments of mobility and migration within the British Empire point to how people, ideas, and material culture circulated and reformed imperial and colonial knowledges. Antoinette Burton and Tony Ballantyne have argued that explorations of the points at which intimacy and mobility intersected have often focused either on the “mobility of ideologies” and glossed over the local, or on “intimate frontiers” that were rooted in the local in ways that connected white men to colonial communities. Consequently, “mobility becomes the property of the colonizers, and stasis is the

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<sup>42</sup> Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002), 8.

<sup>43</sup> Karen Dubinsky, Adele Perry and Henry Yu, “Introduction: Canadian History, Transnational History,” in *Within and Without the Nation: Canadian History as Transnational History*, ed. Karen Dubinsky, Adele Perry and Henry Yu (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 9.

preternatural condition of the indigene. The local, in turn, is rendered as static and comes to represent the immobility of ‘primitive’ cultures and civilization.” These studies reinforce the assumption that “in the context of empire, the local is that which does not move and the native is the stationary object on whom intimacy is bestowed, visited and forced.”<sup>44</sup>

Jane Carey and Jane Lydon take this argument one step further in their collection on Indigenous people and mobility in the British Empire. They assert that centring Indigenous peoples in transnational histories shows that Indigenous people could be “part of, or exploit, transnational or imperial networks, but also that these networks were shaped and even constituted through engagement with Indigenous peoples’ actions, ambitions and orientations.”<sup>45</sup> This study takes to heart these challenges to re-think Indigenous peoples as local and ‘fixed determinedly in place.’ I demonstrate how Indigenous fur-trade children’s mobility within the Empire was both a function of their education and a constitutive aspect of the trans-imperial kin networks that connected families in Britain, the Canadian colonies, and the HBC territories.

In doing so, I draw on and contribute to a growing body of Canadian scholarship that reconsiders the connections between our past, Britain, and the circuits of Empire.<sup>46</sup> Fur-trade studies have long challenged the limitations of written history that conforms to national boundaries by exploring how the fur trade transcended national borders through economic

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<sup>44</sup> Antoinette Burton and Tony Ballantyne, “Introduction: The Politics of Intimacy in an Age of Empire,” in *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 5-6.

<sup>45</sup> Jane Carey and Jane Lydon, “Introduction: Indigenous Networks Historical Trajectories and Contemporary Connections,” in Jane Carey and Jane Lydon, ed., *Indigenous Networks: Mobility, Connections and Exchange* (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2014), 2.

<sup>46</sup> See Lisa Chilton, “Canada and the British Empire, A Review Essay,” *Canadian Historical Review* 89, no.1 (March 2008): 89-95.

activities and fur-trade networks of family and friends. Indeed, two earlier works of the new imperial history explore British Columbia's imperial past and focus on the intersections of British ideas of gender, race, and class with the lived realities of life in the Columbia District. Both Adele Perry and Elizabeth Vibert show the impact of ideas of gender, class, race, and 'civilization' that British men and women brought with them to early British Columbia.<sup>47</sup> More recent studies have expanded these transnational and imperial perspectives to consider everything from Girl Guides to women farmers to Indigenous men's travels to London.<sup>48</sup> My study will be part of this growing body of scholarship that attempts to situate Canadian history within the context of the 'mutually constitutive' Empire, and in particular works to re-connect Canada to its colonial past through explorations of transnationalism, intimacy, and mobility.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Studying Indigenous fur-trade children and their education offers a lens into mid-nineteenth-century Indigenous families, their affective relationships, and their family and social networks. Indigenous fur-trade students' lived experiences of education are at the centre of the study, which utilizes the letters and other documents produced by Indigenous children to offer insights into how the children experienced their education, their daily life, and their often long

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<sup>47</sup> Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race and the Making of B.C.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Elizabeth Vibert, *Traders' Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounters in the Columbia Plateau, 1807-1846* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997).

<sup>48</sup> Sarah Carter, *Imperial Plots: Women, Land and the Spadework of British Colonialism on the Canadian Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2016); Dubinsky, Perry and Yu, *Within and Without the Nation*. In particular, see articles by Elizabeth Elbourne, Angela Wanhalla, Penelope Edmonds, Ryan Eyford, Laura Ishiguro, Kristine Alexander and Karen Flynn; Elizabeth Elbourne, "Family Politics and Anglo-Mohawk Diplomacy: The Brant Family in Imperial Context," *Journal of Colonialism & Colonial History* 6, no. 3 (2005), doi: 10.1353/cch.2006.0004; Jane Errington, *Emigrant Worlds and Transatlantic Communities: Migration to Upper Canada in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007); Coll Thrush, *Indigenous London: Native Travelers at the Heart of Empire* (New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 2016).

separations from home and family. Extensive family and fur-trade social networks that spanned fur-trade country, the Canadian colonies, and Britain were enacted to manage Indigenous children's education, health, and well-being when they were away at school and separated from their parents.



## **CHAPTER 1 – IMPORTING RESPECTABILITY: IMPERIAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF CLASS, RACE, GENDER, AND PARENTING IN THE HUDSON’S BAY COMPANY TERRITORIES**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

As the British Empire expanded in the nineteenth century, British men and women who travelled to the colonies as missionaries, explorers, entrepreneurs, and administrators transported British ideas about race, class, gender, and sexuality. At colonial sites across the Empire, these ideas of Britishness, and particularly middle-class Englishness, challenged and were challenged by Indigenous peoples. In the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) territories, British men and women assessed what they perceived as a far-flung colonial wilderness and its inhabitants based on their own ideas about femininity, masculinity, and ‘respectability.’ These British constructs shaped their interactions with Indigenous peoples on all levels, including intimate relations and family dynamics. The points at which race-based stereotypes intersected with constructs of middle-class masculinity and femininity influenced British-colonial perspectives on parenting and educating Indigenous fur-trade children.

This chapter explores how ideas of motherhood and fatherhood operated in the HBC territories, and in turn how those concepts influenced some fur-trade parents’ perspectives on the education of their Indigenous children. According to Victorian formulations of middle-class fatherhood and motherhood, parents were responsible for equipping their children for success as adults; this meant gainful employment for boys and marriage for girls. Indigenous children needed to perform a British middle-class version of respectability in order to succeed in the fur-trade economy and society. Fur-trade parents negotiated imperial challenges to their Indigenous children’s claims to middle-class status as ladies and gentlemen in part by providing

them with a British-style education that would equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to create and maintain ‘respectability’ in a colonial setting.

## II. EXPORTING RESPECTABILITY: THE BRITISH MIDDLE-CLASS, THE EMPIRE, AND EDUCATION

In 1853, Hudson’s Bay Company Chief Factor James Hargrave wrote about his children’s education to his former fur-trade colleague, Canada West businessman Edward Ermatinger. Hargrave explained that, given that his children were still young and their “number unlimited,” the bulk of his income would, for the time being, be directed towards funding their education. Hargrave and his Scottish wife, Letitia Mactavish Hargrave, planned to educate “the whole in Britain, for a good and moral education is what I consider they have a natural claim to from me.” This would, he continued, “require for some years the lions’ share of my independent income.”<sup>1</sup>

The connection that James Hargrave drew between his responsibilities to his children as a father and their education reflect British middle-class social mores about fatherhood. These versions of middle-class masculinity and femininity engaged class and gender simultaneously to shape different class identities for nineteenth-century middle-class men and women.<sup>2</sup> Historians Lenore Davidoff and Catherine Hall argue that, as this “powerful, unified culture” rose to dominance in the 1830s, the English middle-class took it as their “moral imperative” to re-work

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<sup>1</sup> James Hargrave to Edward Ermatinger, 3 February 1853, MG 19, Series 2 Vol.1, Library and Archives Canada (LAC).

<sup>2</sup> Lenore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (London: Routledge, 2002), 450.

Victorian society in their image, snubbing their noses at the moral failings of the landed gentry and maintaining that they could manage and civilize the working classes.<sup>3</sup>

This “moral imperative” extended beyond Britain itself to the Empire, where middle-class administrators, entrepreneurs, and missionaries sought to re-order the morality and industry of the “Others” of the Empire. Their ideals of class and gender, including that of motherhood and fatherhood, combined with shifting perceptions of race to inform their interactions with colonial peoples. In the HBC territories, these British constructs of race, gender, and parenting influenced how fur-trade fathers assessed their responsibilities to their Indigenous children, how Indigenous women were evaluated as mothers, and the reasons why many elite fur-trade parents prioritized education for their Indigenous children. Indigenous sons needed to be able to perform as ‘gentlemen’ in order to have the best chance of entering the officer class of the fur trade, and Indigenous daughters were expected to be ‘ladies by conduct’ in order to secure good marriages. Education was considered essential to teaching Indigenous fur-trade children this British middle-class version of ‘respectability.’

### **III. FATHERS, MASCULINITIES, AND PARENTING INDIGENOUS FUR-TRADE CHILDREN**

Beginning in the eighteenth century and carrying on into the Victorian period, a shift occurred in English households that placed the needs of children at the heart of home life.<sup>4</sup> This shift towards a ‘child-centred’ household intersected with the rise of gendered English middle-class identities, with the result that motherhood and fatherhood became essential to Victorian

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<sup>3</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 23-25.

<sup>4</sup> Joanne Bailey, “Paternal power: the pleasures and perils of ‘indulgent’ fathering in Britain in the long eighteenth century,” *The History of the Family* 17, no.3 (2012): 329-331.

middle-class ideals of masculinity and femininity. Gender historian John Tosh argues that fatherhood was “fundamental to middle-class masculinity because it contributed so markedly to a man’s immediate social standing. It testified to his virility; it lent greater substance to his role as sustainer and protector of family dependents (assuming economic disaster was kept at bay); and it provided an enlarged and privileged sphere for the exercise of personal authority.”<sup>5</sup>

In these constructions of fatherhood, fathers were driven by a sense of duty to their children, and in particular a sense of responsibility for their offspring’s “moral supervision and training.” While daughters were not ignored, the sons’ behaviour and success were a reflection of the fathers’ social standing and ‘manliness’ in a way that daughters were not. Education, according to Tosh, therefore became central to equipping sons for both employment prospects and “proper manliness of bearing and character.”<sup>6</sup>

In the HBC territories, fatherly duty to Indigenous sons for many fur-trade officers meant that they wanted their sons to attain the status of ‘gentlemen’ and translate that gentlemanly status into elite positions within the fur trade or colonial administration. In achieving their goals for their Indigenous sons, fur-trade fathers had to negotiate imperial race-based barriers to their sons’ successes as gentlemen and as officers.

While historians have addressed changing and contested versions of masculinity in the fur trade, the concept of fatherhood as it pertained to fur-trade families has been understudied.<sup>7</sup> Jennifer Brown argues in her seminal 1980 study, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade*

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<sup>5</sup> John Tosh, “Authority and Nurture in Middle-Class Fatherhood: The Case of Early and Mid-Victorian England,” *Gender and History* 8, no.1 (April 1996): 50.

<sup>6</sup> Tosh, “Authority and Nurture in Middle-Class Fatherhood,” 51-54.

<sup>7</sup> Carolyn Podruchny, “Festivities, Fortitude, and Fraternalism: Fur Trade Masculinity and the Beaver Club, 1785-1827,” in *New Faces of the Fur Trade: Selected Papers of the Seventh North American Fur Trade Conference*,

*Company Families in Indian Country*, that white fur traders' attitudes towards their Indigenous offspring evolved between the late-eighteenth century and the mid-nineteenth century to reflect changing perspectives in Britain on fatherhood and children. Previously, fur-trade fathers had generally been content to leave their offspring to be raised amongst their mothers' First Nations kin. As emotional parenting and child-centredness became increasingly popular in Britain, however, white fur-trade men developed a "marked parental concern for their native offspring" and began to invest more time, money, and emotion in their children's upbringing.<sup>8</sup>

Denise Fuchs does not explore fatherhood as a trans-imperial concept in her study of the 'native sons' of Rupert's Land, but she does address the responsibility that white fur-trade fathers increasingly felt for their Indigenous sons. Fuchs argues that these fathers subscribed to a commonly-held belief amongst the British middle-class that mixed-ancestry children had to be taught "English morals, manners and customs at a young age" in order to "raise their children to become English gentlemen."<sup>9</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century, fur-trade fathers generally felt some level of financial responsibility for and emotional connection to their Indigenous children.

These white men's roles as fathers in the HBC territories were virtually unquestioned and unchallenged. Fatherhood, from the British imperial perspective, was defined primarily by men's ability to provide for their children. HBC Chief Factor John Work acknowledged this responsibility for his Indigenous children's welfare in an 1836 letter, commenting that "I am

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*Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1995*, ed. Jo-Anne Fiske, et al. (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998 ), 31-52; Elizabeth Vibert, "Real men hunt buffalo: race and class in British fur traders' narratives," in *Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Catherine Hall (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 281-297.

<sup>8</sup> Jennifer Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1980), 155.

<sup>9</sup> Fuchs, "Native Sons," 71.

aware that my family, being natives of this country would not be fit for society, but that gives me little concern, they are mine and I am bound to provide for them.”<sup>10</sup> Men were generally censured as fathers only when they withheld financial support from or severely physically abused their children.

Some fur-trade men, however, were more judgemental of their colleagues’ failure to provide emotional support for their children. Chief Factor John Stuart criticized HBC Governor George Simpson’s desertion of his country wife and Stuart’s sister-in-law, Margaret Taylor. Taylor and her two young sons went to live with Stuart and his wife, Mary, at Fort Alexander after Simpson abandoned his Indigenous family for a white wife in 1830.<sup>11</sup> In 1831, Stuart wrote to George Simpson of his son, four-year-old ‘Geordy’ Simpson.<sup>12</sup> Stuart had clearly developed warm feelings for his nephew, and bristled at Simpson’s neglect of the boy:

It would grieve the little fellow to leave me and I assure you it would pain me to part with him and in consequence I hope you will not forgive the error I commit, if it be one, in Keeping him and not attribute it to disobedience, if you desire it, he will be sent along with the Pidgeon, when he returns to Red River, he will have a good size canoe, and the danger will then be less, but if I was allowed to follow the dictates of my own mind, with respect to Geordy instead of sending him to Red River, where among the crows he will be in a manner lost, I would this very summer send him along with a little fellow of my own to England (or Scotland)...He is a fine Child that ought not to be neglected and it is Education that makes the man.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> John Work to Edward Ermatinger, 1 January 1836, in Paul C. Philipps, ed., “Family Letters of Two Oregon Fur Traders, 1828-1856, in *Frontier Omnibus*, ed. John Hakola (Missoula: Montana State University Press, 1962), 33.

<sup>11</sup> George Simpson married his cousin and Englishwoman Frances Geddes Simpson in London in February 1830.

<sup>12</sup> George Stewart Simpson Jr. was born 11 February 1827. He was the son of George Simpson and his country wife, Margaret Taylor. George Simpson’s second son by Margaret Taylor, John McKenzie Simpson, was born in 1829. James Raffan, *Emperor of the North: Sir George Simpson & the remarkable story of the Hudson’s Bay Company* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2007), 264.

<sup>13</sup> John Stuart to George Simpson, 26 May 1831, B.4/b/1 fo. 9, Fort Alexander Correspondence Book, 1825-31, Hudson’s Bay Company Archives (HBCA).

Geordy Simpson was later moved to Dr. John McLoughlin's school at Fort Vancouver, where he attended school alongside another 'neglected' fur-trade son, Lawrence Ermatinger. Lawrence Ermatinger was the son of an Okanagan woman and HBC clerk Francis Ermatinger. Lawrence was removed from his mother's care on Ermatinger's orders when he was only two years old, and placed with Dr. John McLoughlin and his Indigenous wife Mary Wadden McKay McLoughlin at Fort Vancouver.<sup>14</sup> Although Ermatinger acknowledged of his son that, "I must endeavour to take care of the little fellow," he had little contact with his son for the first nine years of his life.<sup>15</sup> Although some fur-trade fathers figured emotional connections as part of fur-trade constructions of fatherhood, other white men, like HBC officers Francis Ermatinger and George Simpson, felt that their fatherly duties to their Indigenous children were fulfilled by financially providing for their care.<sup>16</sup>

#### IV. INDIGENOUS WOMEN, MORALITY, AND MOTHERING

HBC Chief Factor James Hargrave wrote to his Scottish brother-in-law from York Factory in 1842 that his wife, Letitia, was "from her superior education and habits, admirably fitted to rear and superintend the opening mind of infancy" for their son, Joseph.<sup>17</sup> Letitia was very involved with planning her children's education and future, and her husband relied on her to teach their children at home until they reached an age to be sent to Scotland for school. In comparison, in 1845 Francis Ermatinger wrote to his brother, Edward Ermatinger of St. Thomas,

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<sup>14</sup> Lawrence Ermatinger was born 23 July 1828 to an Okanagan woman that Francis Ermatinger called 'Cleo.' The woman also bore Ermatinger an unnamed daughter who died as an infant. Lois Halliday McDonald, *Fur Trade Letters of Francis Ermatinger, 1818-1853* (Glendale, CA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1980), 115.

<sup>15</sup> McDonald, *Francis Ermatinger Letters*, 138.

<sup>16</sup> McDonald, *Francis Ermatinger Letters*, 173.

<sup>17</sup> Margaret Macleod, *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1947), lxvii.

about his concerns for his Indigenous daughter's upbringing in the HBC territories. He explained that he wanted his daughter, Frances, to have a "good moral education," but that "the mothers of this country have not themselves been well enough brought up to attend it. It is true they are much better than they were; still, to my ideas, are awfully deficient."<sup>18</sup> Ermatinger's own wife, Catherine Sinclair Ermatinger, was the Indigenous daughter of a prominent fur-trade family but was, according to her husband, ill-equipped to properly raise their only child.<sup>19</sup>

Letitia Hargrave was a white middle-class woman at a colonial outpost and, as such, her ability to mother her children was unchallenged and even praised. Her race, her own education, her perceived morality, and her ability to impart to her children both academic teachings and the social norms and graces of the British middle-class qualified her as a fit mother according to British standards. White women like Hargrave arrived in fur-trade country primarily as the wives or sisters of HBC officers or other colonial elite, or as governesses or teachers. Consequently, these women tended to be well educated and middle-class; by their race and class, these women's ability to nurture and educate their children was unchallenged.

Indigenous mothers' perceived ability to function as primary caregivers for their children within the constructs of middle-class femininity was more fragile. According to Victorian norms of femininity and motherhood, Indigenous fur-trade mothers were expected to serve as the

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<sup>18</sup> McDonald, *Francis Ermatinger Letters*, 268.

<sup>19</sup> Catherine Sinclair was the daughter of two Indigenous fur trade parents, William Sinclair II and Mary Wadden McKay. Her paternal grandmother, Nahovay Sinclair was a Cree woman; her maternal grandmother Marguerite Waddens McKay McLoughlin was Metis. Marguerite McKay married Dr. John McLoughlin of Fort Vancouver after the death of her first husband, former North-West Company (NWC) trader Alexander McKay in 1820. Francis Ermatinger had hoped to marry Maria Eloisa (Eloise) McLoughlin, the daughter of John McLoughlin and Margeurite Waddens McKay McLoughlin, but was unable to secure the match. McDonald, *Francis Ermatinger Letters*, 172-173.



moral centre of their family.<sup>20</sup> This meant that, according to British standards, these women needed confine sexual relations within marriage, to embrace Christianity, and adopt the behaviour and social norms of a 'lady.' However, fur-trade women contested this construct of ideal wife and mother that was imported by British men and women. Indigenous women's sexuality, their work in the fur trade, their own education, and their proximity to their Indigenous kin all challenged these ideologies of middle-class motherhood. This, in turn, brought into question their ability to mother their children in an appropriate manner, and facilitated the removal of some Indigenous children to distant schools and boarding schools.

Many of the Indigenous mothers in this study did not have what was considered by British standards to be a sufficient British-style education. There was a lack of schools in the HBC territories, and fathers favoured investing in their sons' education over that of their daughters. Moreover, women were banned from travelling to or from Britain on HBC ships. After a failed experiment in the very early years of the HBC to bring British women to shores of the Hudson Bay, the Company prohibited women from boarding ships to Rupert's Land.<sup>21</sup> By the late 1700s, a few exceptions were made for Indigenous daughters who travelled with their fathers from the Bay to London. The London Committee, however, feared that Indigenous girls who went to school in England would be alienated from their former lives and refused to allow any 'Female Children' who attended school in Britain to return to their homes aboard HBC

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<sup>20</sup> For more on Victorian middle-class motherhood, see Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (New York: Routledge, 1982, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2013); Mary Hilton, *Women and the Shaping of the Nation's Young: Education and Public Doctrine in Britain 1750-1850* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Pauline Nestor, "'A conscientious and well-informed Victorian mother': Elizabeth Gaskell's letters to her Daughters," *Women's History Review* 24, no.4 (2015): 591-602; J. Popiel, "Making Mothers: The Advice Genre and the Domestic Ideal, 1760-1830," *Journal of Family History* 29, no. 4 (2004): 339-350.

<sup>21</sup> Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer, 1980) 34.

ships.<sup>22</sup> As a result, Indigenous fur-trade girls had limited access to training in reading, writing, and religion well into the nineteenth century. Some daughters were educated at the small schools at fur-trade posts. Several fur-trade daughters, for example, attended the Moose Factory and Fort Albany post schools. In 1809, Harriet and Elizabeth Vincent, Catherine Hodgson, and Margaret Goodwin were all students at the school at Fort Albany.<sup>23</sup>

Others were educated by their fathers. Chief Trader Archibald MacDonald taught both his Indigenous wife, Jane Klyne, and his children in his home at Fort Langley in the 1830s.<sup>24</sup> Chief Factor John Work similarly taught his children at home. He reported to Edward Ermatinger in 1841 that, of his seven children, the five eldest could “read some Scriptures pretty well and are making some progress in writing and arithmetic.”<sup>25</sup> A spotty and limited education left some Indigenous mothers with literacy challenges. Amelia Connolly Douglas, the Indigenous wife of HBC and colonial Governor James Douglas, and Catherine Birston Davis, the sister-in-law of Indigenous schoolteacher Matilda Davis, were literate but were “reluctant writers.”<sup>26</sup> As more and more missionaries arrived in the HBC territories from the 1830s and 1840s onward, more schools were established and more Indigenous fur-trade sons and daughters had the opportunities to attend local parish schools.

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<sup>22</sup> It is unclear when this ban officially ended, or whether it was ever officially revoked. Governor and Committee official outward correspondence, 1796-1803, A6/16 fos 159d-160. As cited in Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 99.

<sup>23</sup> Albany School List of Students, 1808, Albany File, MSS 336 A.11-28, Box 7, Fo.12, Jennifer Brown Fonds, University of Manitoba Special Collections and Archives (UMASC). Elizabeth and Harriet Vincent were the daughters of HBC Chief Factor Thomas Vincent and his Indigenous wife Jane Renton. Catherine Hodgson was the daughter of HBC officer John Hodgson and an Indigenous woman (possibly Caroline Goodwin). Catherine’s aunt, Margaret Goodwin, was also a student at the school. Caroline and Margaret Goodwin were the daughters of Robert Goodwin and his Cree wife, Mistigoose.

<sup>24</sup> Archibald MacDonald to Edward Ermatinger, 20 February 1833, *Frontier Omnibus*, 32.

<sup>25</sup> John Work to Edward Ermatinger, 6 February 1844, *Frontier Omnibus*, 38.

<sup>26</sup> John Adams, *Old Square-Toes and His Lady: The Life of James and Amelia Douglas* (Victoria: Horsdal & Shubert Publishers, 2001), 58; Johnnie Davis to Matilda Davis, 4 July 1868, Matilda Davis Family Collection, P2342 fo. 11, Archives of Manitoba (AM).

In a region where schools were scarce, mothers often carried the responsibility of educating children in the home, and particularly in the children's early years. Limits on Indigenous women's education could pose a challenge to their roles as mother-teachers. Caroline Isbister Christie, the wife of Chief Trader Alexander Christie Jr., spent "a part of each day" teaching her son Willie and daughter Emma in their home at Fort Chipewyan.<sup>27</sup> Christie's own schooling, however, limited the extent to which she could educate her children. As a female student at the Red River Academy, she would not have learned the advanced math, Latin, and sciences that her son was expected to study.<sup>28</sup> In an 1868 letter to Indigenous schoolteacher Matilda Davis, Christie lamented the fact that her son, Willie, had been unable to join his brothers at The Nest Academy in Jedburgh, Scotland. She wrote that "he is now quite old enough to go to school [and] I cannot attend him as I should."<sup>29</sup>

Children whose mothers were illiterate were considered at a disadvantage due to their mothers' inability to educate their children in the home. In 1869, Chief Factor William Lucas Hardisty wrote of his children to Matilda Davis. Davis was the England-educated headmistress of the Oakfield Establishment for Young Ladies at St. Andrew's in the Red River settlement and

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<sup>27</sup> Caroline Isbister Christie to Matilda Davis, 30 June 1864, P2343 fo. 16, Matilda Davis Family Collection, AM.

<sup>28</sup> Caroline Isbister Christie was the daughter of Thomas Isbister of the Orkneys and Mary Kennedy. Mary Kennedy was the daughter of Alexander Kennedy and wife Aggathas. Caroline Isbister was the sister of Alexander Kennedy Isbister. Alexander Kennedy paid for Alexander Kennedy Isbister to attend school at St. Margaret's Hope in Stromness. Upon his grandfather's death, Isbister returned to Red River in 1833 and attended the Red River Academy. His brother, James Isbister, attended the University of Aberdeen at some point. There is no information available on Caroline Isbister Christie's education. Thomas Isbister File, Box 5, File 2, MSS 336 A.11-28, Jennifer Brown Fonds, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (UMASC); Sylvia M. Van Kirk, "ISBISTER, ALEXANDER KENNEDY," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, accessed November 23, 2016, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/isbister\\_alexander\\_kennedy\\_11E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/isbister_alexander_kennedy_11E.html).

<sup>29</sup> Caroline Isbister Christie to Matilda Davis, 14 December 1864, P4724 fo. 3, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

Hardisty's son, Richard, was one of her students.<sup>30</sup> In his letter Hardisty explained that:

My children labour under further disadvantage that their mother has no education. I am generally absent from them all summer & at intervals during the winter so that they are to be pitied more than blamed for their mischievous habits. I hope you will excuse them if they are not so good or so well behaved as those who have educated Mothers to instill virtuous habits into them from their infancy & to teach them the rudiments of their education & thus relieve the teachers of the most troublesome part of their duty which is with beginners.<sup>31</sup>

His wife Mary Ann Allen Hardisty's perceived failures in mothering came at a price to her family.

Educated daughters sometimes took on the role as teacher for their younger siblings. In 1851, HBC Chief Factor John Bell wrote to his colleague Donald Ross that his eldest daughter, eighteen-year-old Jane, a former student at the Red River Academy, was instructing her younger sister, Annie, in their home.<sup>32</sup> Angelique McKenzie, the daughter of HBC Chief Trader Samuel McKenzie and his first Indigenous wife, reported to her former teacher in 1863 that her family would be sending her sisters Mary Jane and Maggie to the Davis school the following spring.<sup>33</sup> She noted that, "we are teaching them to read a little before they go that they may

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<sup>30</sup> William Lucas Hardisty was the son of Englishman and HBC officer Richard Hardisty, and Margaret Sutherland, a Scots-Cree fur trade woman. W.L. Hardisty married Mary Ann Allen, the daughter of Englishman Robert Allen and Charlotte Scarborough. Charlotte Scarborough was the daughter of Paly Temalkimi Tchinouk, a Chinook woman who married HBC Captain James Scarborough by Catholic rites. Given the dates of Scarborough's engagement with the HBC in 1828, and the birth of Mary Ann Allen c.1840, Charlotte was most likely Paly Temalkimi Tchinouk's daughter by another father. After the Allen's deaths in the 1840s, Mary Ann Allen went to live with the Scarboroughs. Thank you to Doris MacKinnon for sharing her research on Mary Ann Allen's family tree with me. Email, Doris MacKinnon, 1 August 2017; Nancy Marguerite Anderson, "Captain James Scarborough's Gold," 26 October 2013, <http://nancymargueriteanderson.com/scarboroughs-gold/>.

<sup>31</sup> W.L. Hardisty to Matilda Davis, 20 Nov 1869, P2342 fo.22, Matilda Davis Family Collection, AM.

<sup>32</sup> John Bell to Donald Ross, 18 June 1852, MS0635 Files 10- 11, transcript, Donald Ross Papers, BC Archives.

<sup>33</sup> There is little research on Samuel McKenzie. He was the son of HBC Chief Factor Roderick McKenzie and his Ojibwa wife, Angelique. Samuel was, for unexplained reasons, the only one out of six sons who did not attend school. He learned to read and write in his early twenties. Samuel's first wife seems to have been an Indigenous woman named Sarah, who died in 1860. He then married Ann Spencer at Ile a la Crosse in 1862. The daughters mentioned in this letter were by his first wife. On Samuel's literacy, see Elizabeth Arthur, "Angelique and Her Children," in *Lake Superior to Rainy Lake: Three Centuries of Fur Trade History A Collection of Writings*, ed. Jean Morrison (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 2003), 119-120.

not quite have to begin from the alphabet as we did.”<sup>34</sup> While white women in the HBC territories were considered qualified by their race and gender to guide their children’s education, Indigenous mothers’ own barriers to accessing a British education undermined their roles as early educators in the home and thereby put their ability to effectively parent their children in doubt.

The second challenge that Indigenous women faced to their suitability as mothers was perceptions of their supposed immorality, and thereby their ability to teach their children the social and moral norms of the white middle-class. Scholars have examined how intimate relations between indigenous women and European men in colonial spaces provided discursive and physical sites in which anxieties about ‘the Other’ were negotiated and re-worked.<sup>35</sup> Racial stereotypes of indigenous women that depicted them as sexually promiscuous and thereby immoral took forms that were specific to the local conditions in each colony, but suspicions about indigenous women’s sexuality were generalized across the Empire. Durba Ghosh argues that indigenous women at colonial sites occupied a contradictory place in imperial rhetoric, both as ‘loose’ and oversexualized bodies and as the intimate and domestic partners of British men and mothers of their mixed-descent children. Through interracial relationships between British men and Indian women, “national affiliations and imperial priorities were being actively

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<sup>34</sup> Angelique McKenzie to Matilda Davis, 13 Dec 1863, P4724 fo.3, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>35</sup> Albert Hurtado, *Intimate Frontiers: Sex, Gender, and Culture in Old California* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999); Anne Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families: A New History of the North American West, 1800-1860* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power. Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

worked out from the earliest moments of the Anglo-Indian encounter, particularly on the bodies of native women.”<sup>36</sup>

The intersections between femininity, sexuality, and motherhood in colonial spaces thereby brought racialized women’s abilities to mother their children, and particularly their mixed-ancestry children, into question. Ann Laura Stoler has outlined how, in the Dutch East Indies, reformers voiced concerns that indigenous mothers did not know “what [child] rearing is.”<sup>37</sup> Indigenous fur-trade mothers in the HBC territories were similarly scrutinized. Race-based stereotypes of Indigenous women’s sexuality called their virtue into question, as did some of the lived realities of intimate relations and Indigenous women’s roles in the fur-trade economy.

In part due to the lack of missionaries in the HBC territories, marriage *à la façon du pays* was the most common form of intimate fur-trade unions well into the mid-nineteenth century. It was also one of the reasons that Indigenous women’s virtue was considered suspect. These intimate unions between fur trader men and Indigenous women were generally solemnized by Indigenous rite, or sometimes by fur-trade officers in the absence of clergy.<sup>38</sup> These ‘connexions’ were diverse in form and meaning, and sometimes lacked consensus from the two parties involved as to the nature of their relationship.<sup>39</sup> What were common to all of them were intimate relations between the men and women without the sanction of Euro-Christian marriage rites. These relationships thereby contravened British imperial standards of morality

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<sup>36</sup> Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 10.

<sup>37</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, “Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies,” *Journal of American History* 88, no.3 (December 2001): 852.

<sup>38</sup> Jean Barman, *French Canadians, Furs and Indigenous Women In the Making of the Pacific Northwest* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 116-120.

<sup>39</sup> Jennifer Brown, “Partial Truths: A Closer Look at Fur Trade Marriage,” in *From Rupert’s Land to Canada*, ed. Theodore Binnema *et al.* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001), 61-62.

because, by the dictates of Victorian Christianity and middle-class mores, these marriages were unsanctioned and illicit. As a consequence, the children resulting from these relationships were considered illegitimate by metropolitan norms of domesticity. Beginning in the 1830s, as more missionaries arrived in the region, many couples, and particularly those who settled at the main fur-trade settlements near clergy members, had their long-standing relationships solemnized. Other couples, however, continued in their relationships according to the custom of the country.

The masculinity of white fur-traders does not seem to have come under scrutiny as a result of their intimate relations with Indigenous women. Indigenous women's femininity and morality, however, were interrogated. Stereotypes about Indigenous women's sexuality and the 'unsanctioned' marriages that were the norm in the fur-trade both challenged and undermined Victorian middle-class ideals of femininity. This, in turn, called into question Indigenous women's ability to mother and serve as the moral centres of the household and as good influences on their children according to white standards of parenting.

Indigenous women's economic roles in the fur-trade posed a third challenge to British ideals of middle-class femininity. The traditions of women's personal independence and sexual autonomy that were fundamental to many Indigenous cultures clashed with white expectations of gender roles that were rooted in patriarchy and male authority. Moreover, Indigenous women's contributions to the fur-trade economy conflicted with European beliefs that women's work should take place in the home.

Women's work was essential to the success of the fur trade, and Indigenous women's traditional skills like hunting, trapping, gathering, and sewing made them valuable partners for

white men.<sup>40</sup> First Nations women provided their husbands and fur-trade posts with clothing, food, and methods of transportation. At Île à la Crosse in the early nineteenth century, for example, the wives of both HBC officers and servants provided the post with most of their fish, an essential food source for survival at the northern post.<sup>41</sup>

Fur-trade women and their Indigenous kin passed these productive skills to their children, enabling them to thrive in their home regions and in the fur-trade economy.<sup>42</sup> Mary McKay McKenzie, the Indigenous wife of first NWC and then HBC officer Charles McKenzie, was, according to historian Elizabeth Arthur, “more oriented to her Indian than her European heritage.” She hunted and trapped, and her husband wrote of Mary that, “she is so much her own mistress that she hunts from choice.”<sup>43</sup> The McKenzies’ youngest daughter, Caroline, lived with her parents at Lac Seul until she was eighteen years old. Although McKenzie’s goals for his daughters were that they become ‘good housewives,’ his support of his wife’s hunting and trapping and Mary’s own independent spirit meant that Caroline was undoubtedly instructed in these skills by her mother. When Caroline began to attend the Red River Academy as a

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<sup>40</sup> For more on Indigenous women’s work in the fur trade, see Carol Cooper, “Native Women of the Northern Pacific Coast: An Historical Perspective, 1830-1900,” in *Canadian Women: A Reader*, ed. Wendy Mitchinson, et al. (Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1996), 89-118; Sherry Farrell Racette, “Nimble Fingers and Strong Backs: First Nations and Metis Women in Fur Trade and Rural Economies,” in *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labour to Activism*, ed. Carol Williams (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 148-162; John Lutz, “Gender and Work in Lekwammen Families, 1843-1970,” in *Gendered Pasts: Historical Essays in Femininity and Masculinity in Canada*, ed. Kathryn McPherson, et al. (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1999), 80-105; Sylvia Van Kirk, “The Role of Native Women in the Fur Trade Society of Western Canada, 1670-1830,” in *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women’s History*, 2nd ed., ed. Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997), 70-78; Bruce M. White, “The Woman Who Married a Beaver: Trade Patterns and Gender Roles in the Ojibwa Fur Trade,” *Ethnohistory* 46, no.1 (Winter 1999): 109-47.

<sup>41</sup> Brenda Macdougall, *One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth Century Northwestern Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 48-49.

<sup>42</sup> Fuchs, “Native Sons,” 150.

<sup>43</sup> Elizabeth Arthur, “Charles McKenzie: *l’homme seul*,” *Ontario History* 70, no.1 (March 1978): 54.



teenager in the 1840s, she had difficulty adjusting to the regimented life at the school after years of living with a mother who was 'her own mistress.'<sup>44</sup>

The correspondence of Caroline Isbister Christie and her daughter Mary Christie Macfarlane offer a more detailed perspective on how children learned Indigenous skills in elite fur-trade families. Caroline wrote to Matilda Davis, her daughter Mary's teacher, in December 1864 that she had just sat down to begin her letter when "I was told there was a flock of pheasants close by. Willie & I dressed ourselves to go after them, but we only saw one, & a rabbit both of which I shot. Willie was very glad to carry them home. I am very fond of shooting, and I am generally successful in that line but at present the snow is so deep that I cannot go any distance."<sup>45</sup> Christie, a fur-trade lady by both education and marriage, engaged in Indigenous norms of parenting by teaching her son to hunt through the observation of his mother's skills, and trial and error on his part. In other letters to Matilda Davis, Caroline Christie discussed picking berries, and making maple sugar cakes to send to her daughter and her nieces, Annie and Lydia Christie, at the Miss Davis school.<sup>46</sup> As an adult, Caroline's daughter, Mary Christie Macfarlane, sewed personal items to send to her brother and sister at the Davis school, and sent both moose and deer skins to Matilda Davis's sister Nancy.<sup>47</sup> Indigenous ladies like Caroline and Mary continued to practice traditional Indigenous skills and pursuits that had made the labour of their mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers

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<sup>44</sup> Charles McKenzie to Sir Roderick McKenzie, 20 April 1842, MG19 C1 vol.1, Masson Collection, LAC.

<sup>45</sup> Caroline Isbister Christie to Matilda Davis, 14 December 1864, P4724 fo.3, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM

<sup>46</sup> Caroline Isbister Christie to Matilda Davis, 28 January 1863, P4724, fo.3, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>47</sup> Ann Mary Christie Macfarlane to Emma and Duncan Christie, 22 August 1872, P4724 fo.4 and Ann Mary Christie Macfarlane Macfarlane to Matilda Davis, 22 August 1872, P4724 fo.5, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.



*Figure 1.1 – Matilda Davis, c. 1870, Archives of Manitoba*

essential to the success of the fur trade. This continuity of traditional maternal Indigenous knowledge and skills, and Indigenous women’s roles in the fur trade, contradicted and

contested white constructions of middle-class femininity by which Indigenous women were evaluated in a colonial society.

Some Indigenous women participated in the fur trade in more formal roles. Mary McKenzie was repeatedly left in charge of the Lac Seul post in her husband's absence. While Charles McKenzie was away, she kept the accounts, managed the fur trade, and dealt with an epidemic that swept through the fort.<sup>48</sup> Christina MacDonald McKenzie Williams, the daughter of Fort Colville Chief Factor Angus MacDonald and his Metis wife Catherine Baptiste, followed in the footsteps of her Scottish fur-trade father as a businesswoman. As a youth, she served as an interpreter for her father and traveled with him on business. After her husband's death, Williams took over her husband's fur-trade business and ran the post at Kamloops in direct competition with the HBC. Williams recalled in her memoirs that she "more than held my own with them, for I was raised in the fur trade and had been a companion of my father so long that I knew the business thoroughly."<sup>49</sup> In these ways these Indigenous women who, by their gender were supposed to confine their efforts to their home and family, transgressed British imperial norms of morality and femininity by engaging in the fur trade as autonomous women in the public sphere.

The imperial rhetoric that prescribed the bounds of femininity and motherhood in the HBC territories was not absolute, and was translated in fur-trade families in different ways. Some fur-trade husbands and fathers, like Charles McKenzie, supported their Indigenous' wives activities as independent trappers. Others saw the merit in the values and skills their wives

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<sup>48</sup> Arthur, "Charles McKenzie, 54.

<sup>49</sup> Christina MacDonald McKenzie Williams, "The Daughter of Angus MacDonald," *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 13, no.2 (April 1922): 115.

passed on to their children. HBC Chief Factor Robert Miles pinned his hopes for his children's success in life only in part on their education. In addition, he claimed, the work ethic and traditional skills that their mother, Elizabeth 'Betsey' Sinclair, had taught them would sustain them in times of adversity:

The three youngest of my daughters having only received their tuition from Annie, I cannot do less than endeavour to make them competent to pass through life altho I do not wish to give them too high a taste of refinement and if I did not so should I consider myself blameable & they might consider themselves neglected. Under their mother they have been taught to work tolerably well & should a reverse of fortune happen I hope will not be at loss to provide for themselves.<sup>50</sup>

The value of these Indigenous mothers' teachings and skills, however, was often not enough to fully overcome the race-based suspicions that Indigenous mothers were unfit to serve as appropriate caretakers for their children.

In both Britain and colonial spaces, boarding schools sometimes served as a means to remove children from their mother's sphere of influence. In Britain, sons were sent to boarding schools in order to remove them from what was perceived to be the overly-effeminate influence of their mothers and "[submit] them to a crash-course in manliness."<sup>51</sup> In the HBC territories, a boarding school education also removed children from their mothers' sphere of influence, but for different reasons. The multiplicity of ways in which Indigenous women's lives challenged British constructions of femininity undermined their authority as mothers. For white fathers in particular, boarding schools sometimes functioned as a substitute for what they

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<sup>50</sup> Betsey Sinclair was the daughter of William Sinclair and Nahovay. The "Annie" that Miles refers to is his daughter, Ann Seaborn Miles Hamilton. His three youngest daughters were Mary, Harriette, and Hannah. Robert Miles to Edward Ermatinger, 18 May 1859, transcript, E.94/3 fo.316-319, Edward Ermatinger Papers, HBCA; "Miles, Robert," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. 2006, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/m/miles\\_robert-seaborn.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/m/miles_robert-seaborn.pdf).

<sup>51</sup> Tosh, "Authority and Nurture in Middle-Class Fatherhood," 55.

perceived as mothering deficiencies in their Indigenous wives. Teachers and missionaries were instead put in charge of providing moral guidance to Indigenous fur-trade children in a school setting in lieu of their mothers' care.

In some cases, Indigenous fur-trade children were sent to boarding schools against their mothers' wishes, further undermining Indigenous mothers' authority over their children's upbringing and education. When fur trader Kenneth McKenzie left the employ of the HBC for the American Fur Company, he enrolled his two daughters by his Indigenous wife at Red River Academy. Headmaster John Macallum prohibited Indigenous mothers who were not married by Christian ceremony from having contact with their children who were at the school. In order to see their mother, McKenzie's daughters were forced to sneak out of the school. According to Letitia Hargrave, their mother "sits in some concealment at MacCallums with deers head, or some such Indian delicacy ready cooked for her daughters, & they slip out & see her, & as she is almost naked they steal some of their own clothes & give them to her."<sup>52</sup>

Although Isabella and Margaret McKenzie were barred from seeing their mother, she was at least able to remain near to them. Other women were not so fortunate, and never saw their children again after they were sent away to school. In 1822, HBC Chief Factor John Davis took his two daughters, Elizabeth and Matilda, to England with him on furlough and left them there in the care of his English kin. It is unknown what role their Indigenous mother, Ann Nancy Hodgson Davis, had in this decision, but she did not accompany her husband and children to England. Shortly after John Davis returned from furlough, he died in an accident. The two girls

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<sup>52</sup> Macleod, *Letitia Hargrave Letters*, 178.

stayed in England into adulthood. Ann Nancy did not see either of her daughters again before her death in 1849.<sup>53</sup>

The British men and women who traveled through and lived in the HBC territories evaluated Indigenous' women's education, morality, and work according to the gendered, racial, and social norms of the metropole. Although many British men were bound to their fur-trade wives and children by affective ties, their perspectives on their families were weighed against imperial rhetoric asserting their familial relationships were illicit, their wives' virtue was in doubt, and the moral centre that was assumed to give women authority over the hearth was lacking. This, in turn, brought into question these Indigenous women's ability to mother their children in an appropriate manner, and facilitated the removal of fur-trade children to distant schools and boarding schools.

## **V. INDIGENOUS FUR-TRADE WOMEN AND RESPECTABILITY**

The intersections of race, empire, and class in the HBC territories were forged in response not only to the dictates of British social norms, but also to the lived realities of colonial lives. Social class in the HBC territories aligned with and challenged the middle-class ideals that the British brought with them to HBC territories. In particular, the permeability and changeability of class as it related to intersections of class, gender, and race highlighted the precariousness of class identities for Indigenous sons and daughters.

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<sup>53</sup> "Davis, John," HBCA Biographical Sheets, rev. 1999, [http://www.gov.mb.ca/cgi-bin/print\\_hit\\_bold.pl/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/d/davis\\_john.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/cgi-bin/print_hit_bold.pl/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/d/davis_john.pdf). See Matilda Davis Family Collection, AM, for correspondence that Elizabeth and Matilda wrote to their siblings from England.

Indigenous men and women faced ongoing and shifting challenges to their class- and gender-based claims to 'respectability' in the HBC territories. Employment in the officer ranks of the fur-trade economy for sons and socially appropriate marriages for daughters were in large part dependent on Indigenous fur-trade children's ability to be accepted by the fur-trade elite as ladies and gentlemen. These children's (and later adults') hold on their class-based identities as middle-class ladies and gentlemen were often tenuous. For Indigenous daughters, the changing meanings of class in fur-trade country offered some Indigenous women the opportunity to use respectability as a way to make socially mobile marriages. By the 1850s, however, shifting boundaries around class, race, and gender meant Indigenous women's positions as ladies in the HBC territories were both precarious and potentially advantageous. In the latter case, the flexibility associated with shifts in boundaries afforded them opportunities for social mobility through marriage.

In 1836, Chief Factor John Work explained the changing social composition of the Columbia district to his former colleague, Edward Ermatinger. There were, he wrote, "Lots of fine young accomplished ladies now on the other side and no gallants – Chief Factors [sic] daughters too."<sup>54</sup> In Work's opinion, there were more Indigenous 'ladies' than there were Indigenous gentlemen, or 'gallants.' This meant that Indigenous women who were raised as 'ladies' had the opportunity to marry elite white and Indigenous men, and possibly improve their material and social status.

The case of Mary Sinclair Christie and the Christie family offers one example of the upward social mobility that could be attained by performing middle-class respectability in the

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<sup>54</sup> John Work to Edward Ermatinger, 1 January 1836, *Frontier Omnibus*, 33.

HBC territories. Governor Alexander Christie of Scotland formed a relationship according to the custom of the country around 1815 with Ann Thomas, the daughter of John Thomas and his Cree wife, Margaret.<sup>55</sup> Alexander and Ann had four surviving children - Alexander Jr., William, Margaret, and Mary.<sup>56</sup> All four children were sent to Britain for schooling between the 1820s and 1840s. Margaret Christie married Judge John Black at Red River in 1844, while Mary Christie returned to Edinburgh with her parents upon their retirement in 1848 and married a Scottish cabinetmaker.<sup>57</sup> Alexander Jr. and William both returned to Rupert's Land, engaged with the HBC, and married Indigenous women from prominent fur-trade families.<sup>58</sup> Through their father's social status and their own educations, the Christie children could lay claim to identities as British ladies and gentlemen in both Britain and in the HBC territories.

William Christie met Mary Sinclair, the daughter of William Sinclair II and Mary Wadden McKay at York Factory in 1848. Letitia Hargrave witnessed the couple's whirlwind courtship and was unimpressed with Mary. She deemed Mary's behaviour to be less than lady-like, and was convinced that Governor Christie would be "much vexed" over the marriage and refuse his consent.<sup>59</sup> On that point, she was incorrect, as Mary and William married a year later. Mary Sinclair's background was typical of many of the Indigenous daughters who married fur-trade officers and other colonial administrators. Her grandmother, Nahovay Sinclair, was a member

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<sup>55</sup> Ann and Alexander were married in a Christian ceremony at Red River in 1835, before Christie took up the governorship. Alexander Christie File, MSS 336 A.11-28 Box 2 File 17, Jennifer Brown Fonds, UMASC; Hartwell Bowsfield, "CHRISTIE, ALEXANDER," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 10, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 9, 2016, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/christie\\_alexander\\_10E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/christie_alexander_10E.html)

<sup>56</sup> The Christie's eldest son, Daniel, was born in 1815 and died in 1818. Alexander Christie File, MSS 336 A.11-28 Box 2 File 17, Jennifer Brown Fonds, UMASC.

<sup>57</sup> "1861 Scottish Census," database, *Ancestry.com* (<https://www.ancestry.com/>: accessed 5 November 2014), entry for Mary Patterson, Edinburgh St Cuthberts; ED: 68; Page: 14; Line: 11; Roll: CSSCT1861\_129.

<sup>58</sup> William Christie went on to become an Inspecting Chief Factor and a Treaty Commissioner for treaties four and six.

<sup>59</sup> Macleod, *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 232.



of the Home Guard Cree at Fort Churchill, who raised her children “in accordance with Cree values and practices.”<sup>60</sup> Mary’s father, William II, grew up in northern Cree country at Oxford House after his father was appointed trader there in 1798. Mary’s mother, Mary Wadden McKay, was of Swiss and First Nations descent.<sup>61</sup> Mary Sinclair spent most of her childhood at the Lac La Pluie HBC post amongst her mother’s Anishinaabek relatives. There was a strong maternal tradition of Indigenous skills and practices in the Sinclair family, which may have influenced Hargrave’s critical assessment of Mary Sinclair.

The Sinclair family’s move to Red River in the 1830s and William II’s promotion to Chief Trader in 1844 was sufficient to “secure his daughter’s entree into the upper echelons of Red River society.”<sup>62</sup> Mary likely attended the Red River Academy alongside her sister, Margaret, and her cousin, Harriet Sinclair Cowan.<sup>63</sup> In spite of Hargrave’s assessment of Mary Christie’s behaviour, Christie went on to become the ‘lady’ of Fort Edmonton and was renowned for her hospitality. When the Earl of Southesk visited Fort Edmonton in 1859, he recorded that the Christies had received him with “utmost kindness and hospitality,” and that it was “delightful to

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<sup>60</sup> Susan Berry, “Recovered Identities: Four Metis Artists in Nineteenth-Century Rupert’s Land,” in *Recollection: Lives of Aboriginal Women of the Canadian Northwest and Borderlands*, ed. Sarah Carter and Patricia McCormack (Athabasca: Athabasca University Press, 2011), 48.

<sup>61</sup> Mary Wadden McKay was the daughter of her Metis mother, Marguerite Wadden, and HBC officer Alexander McKay, the son of United Empire Loyalists who settled in Upper Canada. Marguerite Wadden was the daughter of Swiss emigrant Jean Étienne Wadden and an unidentified First Nations woman. Marguerite Wadden McKay later married HBC Factor Dr. John McLoughlin of Fort Vancouver. Susan Berry makes the strongest case about the identity of Marguerite’s mother, arguing that, based on Wadden’s postings and Sinclair family beadwork, Marguerite’s mother was likely of the local Anishinabek peoples around the Lac Pluie and Lake Winnipeg regions. Berry, “Recovered Identities,” 337 nt.97; T.C. Elliot, “Marguerite Wadin McKay McLoughlin,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 36, no.4 (December 1935): 338-347; J. I. Cooper, “WADDENS, JEAN-ÉTIENNE,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed July 31, 2017, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/waddens\\_jean\\_etienne\\_4E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/waddens_jean_etienne_4E.html).

<sup>62</sup> Berry, “Recovered Identities,” 48.

<sup>63</sup> Macleod, *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 218.

again be enjoying the comforts of civilization.”<sup>64</sup> Mary Sinclair Christie’s children all attended elite schools, and went on to become doctors, bankers, HBC , and the wives of HBC officers. Through marriage, education, and ‘respectability,’ Mary’s social status was elevated to that of a fur-trade lady. Her children, moreover, claimed elite colonial identities from the 1860s and onwards.

Historian Angela Wanhalla argues in her study of mixed-descent families in southern New Zealand that “respectability was a fragile and often fleeting asset for some in frontier and colonial societies,” and this was true of the HBC territories as well.<sup>65</sup> The Christies were able to negotiate the complex web of race, class, and gender in fur-trade country to both identify as and be recognized by their social cohort as a respectable, middle-class Indigenous British-colonial family. Events in the HBC territories in the 1850s, however, illustrate how Indigenous women’s social status rested on a precarious balance between the performance of femininity as prescribed by Victorian middle-class ideals, and race-based stereotypes of Indigenous women’s rampant and uncontrollable sexuality. The first case study, the Foss-Pelly affair, demonstrates the imperial race-based challenges to the elite status claimed by some Indigenous fur-trade women.

In 1830, Governor George Simpson shocked fur-trade society by putting aside his Indigenous wife, Margaret Taylor, to marry his young British cousin, Frances. It was Simpson’s intention that he and his wife would form the nucleus of an elite group of men with white wives

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<sup>64</sup> Earl of Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains: a diary and narrative of travel, sport, and adventure during a journey through the Hudson’s Bay Company’s territories in 1859 and 1860* (Toronto: J. Campbell; Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1875), 268.

<sup>65</sup> Angela Wanhalla, *Invisible Sight: The Mixed-Descent Families of Southern New Zealand* (Athabasca: Athabasca University Press, 2010), 55.

at Red River. By the 1840s, it was clear that his plan to usurp the place of Indigenous wives had failed due to his colleagues' resistance to displacing their Indigenous wives and daughters.<sup>66</sup>

Indigenous women's grasp on respectability, however, was by no means secure. In 1850, Letitia Hargrave's astute observation that the reputation of an Indigenous lady "would not bear much trifling with" reflected the changeable nature of class identity for Indigenous women in the HBC territories.<sup>67</sup> In 1848, Ann Clouston Pelly, the wife of HBC clerk A.E. Pelly and daughter of Edward Clouston of Stromness, and Miss Margaret Anderson, the sister of the Bishop of Rupert's Land, David Anderson, circulated a rumour throughout the settlement that ignited a race-based conflict amongst the elite at Red River. Pelly and her supporters, who were primarily the white couples and missionaries at Red River, claimed that Sarah McLeod Ballenden, the Indigenous wife of John Ballenden, the officer in charge of Red River, was conducting an illicit affair with Captain Christopher Foss of the recently arrived Chelsea pensioners.<sup>68</sup>

Rumour and accusations circulated throughout the settlement, inducing Captain Foss to file suit against his accusers and their wives for slander. Mrs. Ballenden, the leading lady of the settlement and the Indigenous daughter of an HBC Chief Factor, was supported by the families of the fur-trade elite whose own wives and children were also Indigenous.<sup>69</sup> After a trial that

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<sup>66</sup> Sylvia Van Kirk, "From Marrying in to Marrying Out: Changing Patterns of Aboriginal/Non-Aboriginal Marriage in Colonial Canada," *Frontiers* 23, no.3 (2002): 1-11.

<sup>67</sup> Macleod, *Letitia Hargrave Letters*, 255.

<sup>68</sup> Ann Pelly to Letitia Hargrave, 1 August 1850, MSS 15 Box 2, File 5, Margaret Arnett Macleod Fonds, UMACS.

<sup>69</sup> Sarah McLeod Ballenden was the daughter of Chief Trader Alexander Roderick McLeod and his Indigenous wife. His wife is unnamed in the archival records, including in his will, where he provided for her but did not name her. Will and estate papers for McLeod, Alexander Roderick, H2-77-2-2, Officers' and Servants' Wills, HBCA.

revealed that most of the evidence was based on speculation and rumor, the Indigenous jurors found in favour of Foss, and settled significant damages on the defendants.<sup>70</sup>

Although Sarah Ballenden was cleared of all charges, even the suspicion of impropriety on her part was sufficient for her status as a 'lady' to be undermined. Her husband was relieved of his position at Upper Fort Garry, and the family was forced to move downstream to Lower Fort Garry. John Ballenden drew George Simpson's censure by refusing to divorce his wife, and as a result was posted to the Columbia district, far away from his wife and younger children at Red River.<sup>71</sup>

Scholars have interpreted the Foss-Pelly affair in a variety of ways, but have primarily focused on what the presence of white women at Red River meant to the changing social structure of the settlement. Historian Sylvia Van Kirk argues that the scandal represents white women's lack of power within the institution of Victorian marriage, and that the white women's "petty and vindictive" actions stemmed from what they perceived to competition with Indigenous ladies for white husbands.<sup>72</sup> Frits Pannekoek contends that the impact of the trial was an "irrevocable splitting of Red River into two and distinct factions" consisting of the 'mixed-blood elite' and the white colonial administrators.<sup>73</sup> Sharron A. Fitzgerald and Alicja Muszynski have more recently considered the Foss-Pelly case in an imperial perspective, and

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<sup>70</sup> *Christopher Vaughn Foss Esquire versus Augustus Edward Pelly Esqr. & his Wife, John Davidson & his Wife* [1850], General Quarterly Court of Assiniboia, transcript, in *Law, life, and government at Red River*, ed. Dale Gibson (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 158.

<sup>71</sup> John Ballenden to George Simpson, 5 December 1851, D.5/32, fo.2 p. 323, Governor George Simpson loose inward correspondence, HBCA.

<sup>72</sup> Sylvia Van Kirk, "'The Reputation of a Lady': Sarah Ballenden and the Foss-Pelly Scandal," *Manitoba History* 11 (Spring 1986), [http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb\\_history/11/fosspellyscandal.shtml](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/11/fosspellyscandal.shtml).

<sup>73</sup> Frits Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Riel Resistance of 1869-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer, 1991), 127.

agree that the Foss-Pelly affair offered white women at Red River the opportunity to exercise power outside of the constraints of the home and hearth. British women, they contend, “deployed Victorian morality and discourses on sexuality to participate in colonial power relations, constitute respectable femininity, and stabilise and develop their own identity.” In doing so they exercised a form of female agency in regulating and discrediting Indigenous women.<sup>74</sup>

What is left unexamined in these studies is the impact of the scandal on Sarah Ballenden, and what the discourse surrounding the case indicates about the Indigenous women identified as ‘ladies’ in the 1850s. Sarah Ballenden was all that Indigenous ladies were supposed to be. She was the daughter of an HBC officer, she had attended Red River Academy, and she was the wife of the highest-ranking HBC officer in the colony. Contemporaries reported that she performed the duties of middle-class lady and hostess admirably, presiding over the officers’ mess at Upper Fort Garry and hosting dinner parties and balls.<sup>75</sup> She was so admired that, prior to the scandal, James Hargrave was prepared to assure John Ballenden’s Scottish relatives of Mrs. Ballenden’s merits, and “sponge over” any prejudices towards her that he might encounter while on furlough in Scotland.<sup>76</sup>

By all counts, Sarah Ballenden’s reputation as a lady should have been impeccable, but even the hint of impropriety was sufficient to undermine Ballenden’s class privileges and have the leading lady of Red River barred from polite society. Just as men’s decisions to abandon

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<sup>74</sup> Sharron A. FitzGerald & Alicja Muszynski, “Negotiating Female Morality: place, ideology and agency in the Red River Colony,” *Women’s History Review* 16, no.5 (2007): 677.

<sup>75</sup> Letitia Mactavish Hargrave to Flora Mactavish, 1 June 1850, typescript, MSS 15, Box 2, fo.3, Margaret Arnett Macleod Fonds, UMASC.

<sup>76</sup> James Hargrave to John Ballenden, 7 September 1839, E.21/1, James and Joseph James Hargrave Fonds, HBCA.

their Indigenous country wives in the 1830s and 1840s unsettled fur-trade families - George Simpson's example foremost among them - the repercussions of the Foss-Pelly affair must have signalled once again the vulnerability of Indigenous fur-trade women and their status as ladies in the HBC territories.

The parents of elite Indigenous fur-trade daughters and Indigenous ladies themselves were aware of the race-based challenges to their social status that brought into question their morality and respectability. During the Foss-Pelly affair, Margaret Christie Black, the Indigenous daughter of Governor Alexander Christie and his wife Ann Thomas, was one of the primary opponents of Sarah Ballenden.<sup>77</sup> Black's motivations for siding against Ballenden are unclear. John Black was evicted from his temporary post in favour of John Ballenden and held a grudge against the Ballendens, but Margaret Christie Black likely had her own motivations for standing against Mrs. Ballenden.<sup>78</sup> Mrs. Black was the daughter of a former Governor, wife of an HBC officer, and had spent more than a decade in England for schooling. She reportedly thought herself "far above the rest of the native ladies" in the settlement.<sup>79</sup> Whether this was true or not, Christie Black was certainly one of the elite Indigenous ladies at Red River. Sarah Ballenden's alleged impropriety was thought to reflect poorly on all of the Indigenous fur-trade ladies. Van Kirk argues that one of the reasons that Mrs. Ballenden initially garnered so much support from elite HBC families was due to concerns that the attack on Mrs. Ballenden was an

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<sup>77</sup> Margaret Black was the sister-in-law of Mary Sinclair Christie. The Foss-Pelly affair and Sinclair's marriage to William Christie were concurrent.

<sup>78</sup> A letter from one of the accused in the Foss-Pelly affair, Ann Pelly, confirms the animosity between Black and Foss. Ann Pelly to Letitia Hargrave, 1 August 1850, MSS 15 Box 2, File 5, Margaret Arnett Macleod Fonds, UMSCA.

<sup>79</sup> John McBeath to Donald Ross, 6 August 1850, MS-0635.3.96, Donald Ross Papers, BC Archives.

attempt to discredit Indigenous women and threaten their positions as wives in the colony.<sup>80</sup>

Margaret Christie Black may have been incensed by what she believed to be an affair between Ballenden and Foss, but that does not explain why she chose to condemn Mrs. Ballenden publicly when so many other fur-trade men and women came to Ballenden's defense. Black may have perceived Sarah Ballenden's supposedly immoral behaviour as a direct threat to her own position as a 'lady' at Red River, and decided that the best way to protect her own social position was to distance herself from Mrs. Ballenden's scandalous reputation. In this way, at least one Indigenous lady perpetuated and reinforced British imperial connections between Indigenous sexuality, morality, and social status as they defined women's claims to 'respectability' at Red River in 1850.

A few years later, the Indigenous ladies at Fort Resolution took a similar approach to the supposedly 'immoral' behaviour of one of their own. In 1857, Chief Factor James Anderson, then in charge of the Mackenzie District, wrote to George Simpson complaining of the behaviour of one Mrs. Maxwell. Betsy McIntosh Maxwell was the granddaughter of Chief Factor Donald McIntosh and the Indigenous wife of Chief Trader Henry Maxwell.<sup>81</sup> According to Anderson, Mrs. Maxwell was a "bold and clever woman, with an extraordinary tongue" who

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<sup>80</sup> Van Kirk, "The Reputation of a Lady," 5.

<sup>81</sup> Betsy McIntosh Maxwell was likely the daughter of John McIntosh and Charlotte Robertson. Clerk John McIntosh was the son of Chief Trader Donald McIntosh and his wife, who was likely Mohawk or mixed-ancestry. It is unclear who Charlotte Robertson's parent were, but there was an interpreter and postmaster named John Robertson serving in the Lake Superior region at the same time that John McIntosh was posted to the area. Charlotte may be a daughter of this John Robertson. "McIntosh, Donald," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. December 2005, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mcintosh\\_donald.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mcintosh_donald.pdf); "McIntosh, John [Jack]," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. March 2006, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mcintosh\\_john1821-1844.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mcintosh_john1821-1844.pdf); "Maxwell, Henry," HBCA Biographical Sheets, Feb 1987, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/m/maxwell\\_henry.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/m/maxwell_henry.pdf); "Robertson, John A.," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. October 2002, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/r/robertson\\_john-a1795-1841.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/r/robertson_john-a1795-1841.pdf).

had been accused of numerous accounts of inappropriate and promiscuous behaviour with men other than her husband. Anderson explained that:

When Mr. M. and his family arrived here, they were placed in a small house distant from the Men's quarters, but day and night the house was surrounded by all the scamps in the district – French Halfbreeds from Red River – Mrs. Maxwell was seen repeatedly in the woods with at least 3 different individuals (2 of them married who at consequence have been at issue with their wives ever since). She was seen to come out at night, at the signal of a whistle, in short her conduct exceeded in barefacedness that of the worst character I ever knew. She and her husband had a regular fight once...Maxwell himself appears to be blind to all this, and I am afraid to tell him as he is of such an excitable temper that I am sure that he would blow out her brains and his own also.<sup>82</sup>

The Indigenous wives of the fort's officers, who would have included Anderson's own wife, Margaret McKenzie Anderson, were particularly aggravated by Mrs. Maxwell's behaviour. "You have here a set of gentlemanly officers," Anderson wrote, "their wives are ladies by education and conduct, and both men and Indians held them in the highest respect. They have all expressed their indignation, in the bitterest terms, at being contaminated and lowered in the eyes of the men and Indians."<sup>83</sup> The officers' wives were aware of the precariousness of their position as 'ladies', as had been demonstrated at Red River only a few years before. Even the hint of impropriety and unladylike behaviour by one of their own had the potential to undermine their own standing as 'ladies.' At the same time, however, their status as 'ladies by education and conduct' clearly empowered them to voice their concerns to the officers in charge and request that the Maxwells be transferred elsewhere. Indigenous women could sometimes perform respectability in order to gain social status in the colonial society, but their race meant that their hold on their social status and respectability would always be tenuous.

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<sup>82</sup> James Anderson to George Simpson, 15 November 1857, MG19, A 29, vol 1, file 4, James Anderson Fonds, LAC.

<sup>83</sup> James Anderson to George Simpson, 15 November 1857, MG19, A 29, vol 1, file 4, James Anderson Fonds, LAC.



## VI. INDIGENOUS FUR-TRADE SONS AND RESPECTABILITY

Indigenous fur-trade sons also faced challenges to their claims to respectability. Unlike their mothers and sisters, however, their morality as connected to sexuality was not at issue. Instead, Indigenous men's morality and 'respectability' was evaluated according to middle-class norms of men's work ethic, sobriety, and personal conduct. When white fur-trade men judged Indigenous sons for failing to conform to these class-based expectations of performance, the sons' Indigenous heritage was pointed to as the root of their supposedly sub-par intellect and work ethic.

After the merger of the HBC and the NWC in 1821, race-based evaluations of HBC employees became increasingly common and, for Indigenous men, limiting. The restrictions that Governor George Simpson imposed on opportunities for 'native sons' to rise in the fur-trade in the 1830s and 1840s have been well documented.<sup>84</sup> These changes were due in part to the racist and classist attitudes of George Simpson himself, and to the need to reduce staffing costs in the post-merger era. By the 1830s, race had become a primary basis upon which company employees were evaluated by Simpson.<sup>85</sup>

As a result, distinctions between labourers and 'gentlemen' in the HBC became rigidly defined, and were soon matched by racial distinctions that were applied to 'halfbreed' applicants to the Company. The position of assistant postmaster was created specifically for the sons of Indigenous officers as an alternative to the post of assistant clerk, which was the level at which white middle-class men entered the trade. This race-based two-stream system of

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<sup>84</sup> Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 207-211; John Foster, "The Country-born in the Red River Settlement, 1820-1850," (PhD. diss., University of Alberta, 1973), 212-255; Fuchs, "Native Sons," 56-69.

<sup>85</sup> Fuchs, "Native Sons," 62-64.

placement effectively barred Indigenous sons from being promoted to the officer class from the 1830s through the 1850s. Charles McKenzie, whose son Hector had attended the Red River Academy, explained to his kinsman Sir Roderick McKenzie that, “the Honorable Co Are unwilling to take Natives, even as apprentice clerks, and the favoured few they do take can never aspire to a higher status, be their education & capacity what they may....I do not see the use of so much Greek & Latin for these postmasters, since neither artificial nor natural acquirements are of any avail.”<sup>86</sup> Under these restrictions, a father’s high ranking did not always help his Indigenous sons, and the sons of officers regularly achieved lower rankings within the Company as compared to their fathers.

By the late 1850s and 1860s, the racial barriers to advancement within the Company began to ease. In part, this was because of a change in perspective on Simpson’s part. By mid-century, the Metis were the overwhelming majority of the population at Red River, and Indigenous men had made “considerable contributions” to the fur trade and the colony.<sup>87</sup> The political and economic power of Indigenous men was on the rise, and Simpson’s outlook on the prospects of Indigenous sons began to shift. These changing racial attitudes meant that Indigenous sons began to move up the ranks of the Company. In the 1860s, four Indigenous men were promoted to the rank of Chief Factor: William J. Christie (1860), Joseph Gladman (1864), William McMurray (1866), and William Lucas Hardisty (1868).<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Undated letter from Charles McKenzie to Sir Roderick McKenzie, in L.R. Masson, *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest, vol.1* (New York: Antiquarian Press, Ltd., 1960), 318-319; Charles McKenzie to Roderick McKenzie, H2-136-7-3 (E.61/3, fo.7d), William Murray Inward Correspondence, William and Harriet McMurray Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>87</sup> Fuchs, “Native Sons,” 69.

<sup>88</sup> Joseph Gladman attended school in England along with his brother, George Gladman Jr. William McMurray attended the Red River Academy. Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 208-209.

Fathers themselves also articulated race-based assessments of their children. These men were products of a British culture that increasingly defined the 'Others' of the Empire by their perceived racial qualities. Francis Ermatinger, for example, wrote in an 1845 letter to his brother, Edward, about the prospects of his son, Lawrence. Of Lawrence's education and future, Francis advised Edward, who had charge of the boy in Upper Canada, that "to try to make a gentleman of him would be folly indeed for nothing gentlemanly can come of the tribe. But if they can be made useful something will be accomplished."<sup>89</sup> Chief Factor Roderick McKenzie Sr.'s seven sons all engaged with the HBC.<sup>90</sup> However, several of the sons had trouble retaining their positions, and were generally only reinstated at their fathers' request.<sup>91</sup> McKenzie outlined his frustrations with his sons in an 1841 letter to George Simpson, in which he noted that, "none of these unfortunate half-breeds will ever give satisfaction in any country but their own, and even in their own very seldom."<sup>92</sup>

This statement reveals the tensions between family affect and British cultural values in the fur-trade. Roderick McKenzie clearly cared deeply for his family. He worked until age seventy-eight in order to support his large family, long beyond when his colleagues thought he should still be in service.<sup>93</sup> He paid for the education of his children and several of his

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<sup>89</sup> Lois Halliday McDonald, *Fur Trade Letters of Francis Ermatinger, 1818-1853* (Glendale, CA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1980), 267.

<sup>90</sup> Sons Roderick Jr., Benjamin, Patrick, Ferdinand, Alexander, Samuel, James. "MacKenzie, Roderick Sr.," HBCA Biographical Sheets, rev. 2002, [http://www.gov.mb.ca/cgi-bin/print\\_hit\\_bold.pl/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mckenzie\\_roderick-sr1804-1852.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/cgi-bin/print_hit_bold.pl/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mckenzie_roderick-sr1804-1852.pdf)

<sup>91</sup> Fuchs, "Native Sons," 70.

<sup>92</sup> Roderick McKenzie to George Simpson, 30 July 1841, D.5/6/fo.181, Governor George Simpson Loose Inward Correspondence, HBCA.

<sup>93</sup> In 1844, McKenzie, at age 72, broke his leg after falling into "a hatch." Letitia Hargrave commented in a letter that because he was so old "it will not mend again." However, McKenzie continued in active service until age 78 in 1850. Macleod, *Letitia Hargrave Letters*, 181; "McKenzie, Roderick Sr.," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. 2002,

grandchildren. In the mid-1840s McKenzie was paying £280 per year to the Red River Academy for tuition for his children and grandchildren.<sup>94</sup> He and his Ojibwa wife, Angelique, also fostered many of their grandchildren in their home, either because their parents could not care for them or in order for them to attend school in Red River.<sup>95</sup> And yet, those family ties operated simultaneously with McKenzie's belief that none of his children or grandchildren would ever 'give satisfaction.'

The case of Ranald MacDonald also occasioned much commentary from fur-trade fathers. MacDonald, the son of Chief Factor Archibald MacDonald and Koale'zoa, a daughter of the Chinook leader Concomly, was a restless 'native son.'<sup>96</sup> He grew up at various HBC posts in the Columbia District before attending first the Fort Vancouver school and then to the Red River Academy in 1835.<sup>97</sup> After obtaining his education, he was then dispatched in 1838 to retired HBC trader Edward Ermatinger in St. Thomas, Upper Canada to learn Ermatinger's banking business.<sup>98</sup> MacDonald was unsatisfied with this work, however, and in 1841 he left of his own accord to go to sea. He made his way first to Hawaii and then to Japan, where he worked as an English teacher and interpreter until he made his way back to Lower Canada in

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[http://www.gov.mb.ca/cgi-bin/print\\_hit\\_bold.pl/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mckenzie\\_roderick-sr1804-1852.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/cgi-bin/print_hit_bold.pl/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mckenzie_roderick-sr1804-1852.pdf)

<sup>94</sup> Macleod, *Letitia Hargrave Letters*, 168-169.

<sup>95</sup> For example, after the death of their daughter, Nancy McKenzie Dutrembles in 1840, Nancy's youngest daughter went to live with Angelique and Roderick. In 1837, son Benjamin McKenzie died at Honolulu, where he was stationed as an accountant with the HBC. His widow, Catherine Campbell McKenzie, was at Fort Vancouver at the time of his death. She and her three children (Angelique, Colin, Benjamin Jr.) took refuge with her in-laws at Ile la Crosse. Benjamin McKenzie File, MSS336 A.11-28, Box 6, File 24, UMSCA; Arthur, "Angelique and Her Children," 119.

<sup>96</sup> For more information on Ranald McDonald, see Joe Anne Roe, *Ranald MacDonald: Pacific Rim Adventurer* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1997).

<sup>97</sup> Archibald MacDonald to Edward Ermatinger, 1 April 1836, *Frontier Omnibus*, 33.

<sup>98</sup> McDonald, *Francis Ermatinger Letters*, 254.

1853.<sup>99</sup>

Archibald MacDonald was unhappy with his son's lack of direction and appreciation for the opportunities that were provided for him. In 1836, while Ranald was still at school in Red River, Archibald McDonald wrote to Edward Ermatinger that:

Much better to dream of less [for them]...and to endeavour to bring them up on habits of industry, economy and morality than to aspire to all this visionary greatness for them. All the wealth of Rupert's Land will not make a *half-breed* either a good person, a shining lawyer, or an able physician, if left to his own direction while young.<sup>100</sup>

Word of Ranald's defection from Ermatinger's mentorship spread, and in 1843 John Tod wrote to Ermatinger expressing his sympathies over Ermatinger's poor experience with the young MacDonald. He also outlined his concerns about Indigenous sons, which reflected the growing hold of scientific racism in the British Empire:

I am sorry to learn that Mr. McDonalds Son had conducted himself so badly, truly Mrs Ermatinger and yourself have had your hands full with the bois brules...Well you have observed that all attempts to make gentlemen of them, have hitherto proved a failure. The fact is there is something radically wrong about them all as is evidently shown from mental science alone I mean, Phrenology the truths of which I have lately convinced myself from extensive personal observation.<sup>101</sup>

Indigenous sons who did not follow the paths expected by their white fathers were judged as lacking due to their race, rather than as being rebellious or independent.

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<sup>99</sup> David H. Wallace, "MACDONALD, RANALD," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 12, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed December 2, 2016, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/macdonald\\_ranald\\_12E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/macdonald_ranald_12E.html)

<sup>100</sup> Archibald MacDonald to Edward Ermatinger, 1 April 1836, *Frontier Omnibus*, 33-34. Emphasis in original.

<sup>101</sup> John Tod to Edward Ermatinger, 20 March 1843, MG19, A2, Series 2, vol.1, pp.96-102, Edward Ermatinger Papers, LAC.

At the same time that Indigenous sons were judged to be lacking a 'proper' work ethic, the power and 'savagery' of their Indigenous masculinities were a source of anxiety. Racialized men in the colonies were often viewed by British administrators as a threat to any potential British colonial regime. Race-based depictions of Indigenous 'savagery' combined with the small numbers of whites in most colonies, including in the HBC territories, meant that indigenous men were perceived to be a threat to the white administrators' tenuous grasp on control. When occasions of resistance and overt violence aimed at British colonizers erupted in the colonies, such as the Jamaica Slave Rebellion of 1831, the 1857 Indian Mutiny, and the 1869-1870 Red River Resistance, fear and suspicion of racialized men were reinforced and heightened. Colonial authorities implemented a variety of methods to control these indigenous populations and maintain the appearance of authority over their 'underlings.'<sup>102</sup>

It was thereby in the vested interests of Company administrators to limit Indigenous men's access to power and privilege in the HBC territories. Perceived at once as both less-than and as a physical threat to white colonial structures, Indigenous men's economic opportunities within the post-amalgamation fur-trade were restricted. The barriers that were imposed to limit both the perceived economic and physical threats posed by Indigenous men to the colonial enterprise restricted their access to employment opportunities in the fur trade, and

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<sup>102</sup> See, for instance, Timothy Burke, *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption, and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); E.M. Collingham, *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj, c.1800-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Joy Damousi, *Depraved and Disorderly: Female Convicts, Sexuality and Gender in Colonial Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990); Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

thereby limited their social mobility. In the mid-nineteenth-century HBC territories, where white men's masculinity was constructed around their roles as fathers and breadwinners, this also limited Indigenous men's ability to attain these same markers of masculinity and respectability. By gender, Indigenous sons were privileged with opportunities and autonomy that were denied to their sisters. Indigenous men, however, were considered a threat to the colonial order in ways that Indigenous women were not, and were consequently targeted by the British in an effort to ease white anxieties in the face of an overwhelming Indigenous population in the HBC territories. These imperial perspectives on race also served to make fathers keenly aware of the race-based discrimination their Indigenous children faced in a colonial society, and the measures that were needed to ensure their success in the HBC territories.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

The metropolitan worldviews of British men and women who travelled out into the British Empire as administrators, missionaries, entrepreneurs, wives, and daughters shaped their assessments of colonial constructions of masculinity and femininity. Interwoven with these constructs were concepts of metropolitan fatherhood and motherhood that dictated the roles and responsibilities that middle-class mothers and fathers had for raising and educating their children to, in turn, produce another generation of British middle-class men and women. In the mid-nineteenth-century HBC territories, the realities of life in fur-trade country came up against these constructs of race, class, and gender, which were in turn transformed in many ways by Indigenous and British fur-trade men and women.

The contested nature of class and racial identities in the HBC territories intensified the divisions between ladies, gentlemen, and 'others.' For the parents of middle-class and elite Indigenous children, this meant that educating their children to perform British middle-classness offered these children the best opportunity to achieve success in the HBC territories and beyond. For Indigenous women, being a lady allowed them the opportunity for social mobility. The stereotypes of immorality associated with Indigenous women across the Empire, however, made their perch atop the colonial social hierarchy precarious. For Indigenous men, British fears of Indigenous men's supposed savagery and threat to British power led to limits being imposed on their economic and social mobility. In spite of these limits, learning to be gentlemen offered the only pathway to advancement to the officer class of the fur trade and attaining the same class status and financial resources as their fathers. While the class and gendered ideals that the British brought with them were never uncontested, the 'respectability' of middle-class and elite Indigenous men and women in the HBC territories was tenuous and changeable. Consequently, fur-trade parents of Indigenous children looked to British-style education to give their Indigenous children the best chance of success as ladies and gentlemen.



## **CHAPTER 2 – LEARNING RESPECTABILITY: EDUCATING INDIGENOUS LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

British parents across the Empire shared concerns over the education of children born of intimate relations between British men and racialized colonial women. Although local colonial realities influenced the ways that education operated at the local level, the attitudes that British parents, and particularly British fathers, brought to the colonies were metropolitan-based and similar across the Empire. By the late eighteenth and into the nineteenth century, imperial parents who were emotionally invested in the success of their children looked to education as one of the key ways to inculcate in their children the markers of class and social status that would help their children be successful in London, India, Jamaica, New Zealand, or Rupert's Land.

For mid-nineteenth-century fur-trade parents in the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) territories, a British-style education for their children required a significant investment of family resources. Education required the payment of tuition, and attending school removed children and their labour from the household. Moreover, at a time when domesticity and emotional parenting were on the rise, educating fur-trade children often required parents and children to be separated for long periods of time. This chapter considers the reasons why British and Indigenous parents of Indigenous fur-trade children invested financial and emotional resources in a British-style education for their children or, sometimes, why they chose not to do so. Parents financed their children's educations for diverse and often gendered reasons. The education of sons was often prioritized over that of daughters. Education was a key factor in evaluation for upward mobility within the HBC after 1821, and fathers were cognizant of the

need for their sons to have an education in order to move into the officer class of the fur trade. Moreover, parents who were educated themselves looked to continue intellectual traditions of literacy and learning in their own families.

A British-style education, however, taught more than just reading and writing. In a colonial society where the fine divisions of class were shifting and tied to intersections of race and gender, education taught academics alongside the social and behavioural norms that Indigenous children needed to learn to be recognized as ‘ladies’ and ‘gentlemen’ in both the HBC territories and the wider empire. Elite Indigenous parents also viewed education as a means by which to clearly demarcate their children from the ‘wild’ children of buffalo hunters and Indigenous labourers. For both British and Indigenous parents, education was fundamental to their children being recognized as respectable ladies and gentlemen. This, in turn, provided Indigenous fur-trade students with the opportunities to achieve middle-class employment for men and class-appropriate or socially mobile marriages for women.

## **II. EDUCATION AND INDIGENOUS CHILDREN IN THE EMPIRE**

Fur-trade children were part of a diverse group of white and mixed-ancestry imperial children. Some lived their whole lives in one colony, while others moved through the metropole and various sites of empire. What was common to all of these children, however, was an imperial anxiety on the part of the British about these children’s place in the Empire and particularly what their existence represented in terms of race and authority. Although local conditions influenced how intersections of race, gender, class, and sexuality operated at each

colonial site, the anxieties over the challenges that mixed-ancestry children posed to constructions of 'Britishness' and British authority were similar throughout the Empire.

Education was viewed by parents, missionaries, and other concerned parties as a means by which to implement British authority and social norms in colonies where the British hold on authority and control was tenuous and often challenged. The education of mixed-ancestry and white British children in India contributed to delineating who was considered 'British' and who was not, and thereby influenced who had access to power and resources in the colony. Durba Ghosh argues that, in late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth-century India, British fathers' concerns over the education of their mixed-descent children revealed the fathers' own social anxieties about status and respectability in connection with their intimate relations with their children's Indian mothers.<sup>1</sup> In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the education of white British children in India played a large role in determining who was considered 'British' in the colony and who was not. Families who could send their children back to Britain to be educated, and who avoided the appearance of residency by taking long furloughs in Britain, maintained an elite social status. These elite colonial families in India used education and furloughs to separate themselves from the local natives and from non-elite mixed-descent and European families who did not participate in this cycle of migration.<sup>2</sup>

Studies of the education of Indigenous imperial children in other colonial sites such as the Caribbean, Australia, and New Zealand have drawn similar conclusions. The purpose of education, from the British perspective at least, was to teach children more than to just read

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<sup>1</sup> Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 86.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Briton and Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1.

and write. Children in the colonies often studied subjects that mirrored those being taught in British classrooms – history, geography, math, and Latin. However, educators in the colonies in the mid-nineteenth century approached the education of mixed-descent children with the dual aims of both educating and civilizing their charges. Their schooling taught these children religion, British culture, and the class-based social and gender norms they would be expected to perform in British colonial and sometimes metropolitan societies. In Palestine, missionaries taught Jewish and Muslim girls both the tenets of the Christian religion, and the foundations of British domesticity.<sup>3</sup> In Australia, ‘half-caste girls’ were targeted in the belief that education would help cure their ‘loose morals’ and at the same time prepare them to fill the demand for domestic servants in the colony.<sup>4</sup> In Hong Kong, a “discourse of domestic ideology clothed in religious language” was aimed at training indigenous girls, and particularly middle-class girls, to be educated mothers and governesses.<sup>5</sup> In Jamaica and New Zealand, the sport of cricket was promoted as a way to teach both indigenous and white boys about masculinity and citizenship.<sup>6</sup>

The parents of Indigenous fur trade children shared concerns similar to parents in other colonial sites. The specificities of local economies and customs in the HBC territories resulted in these broader imperial anxieties being interpreted and prioritized based on the specific needs and concerns of the Indigenous and white inhabitants of fur trade country.

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<sup>3</sup> Nancy Stockdale, “Palestinian Girls and British Missionary Enterprise, 1847-1948,” in *Girlhood: A Global History*, ed. Jennifer Helgren and Colleen Vasconcellos (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 217-233.

<sup>4</sup> Christine Cheater, “Australia’s Assimilation Policies and Aboriginal Girls,” in *Girlhood: A Global History*, ed. Jennifer Helgren and Colleen Vasconcellos (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 255-256.

<sup>5</sup> Patricia Pok-kwan Chiu, “‘A Position of Usefulness’: Gendering History of Girls’ Education in Colonial Hong Kong,” in *Girlhood: A Global History*, ed. Jennifer Helgren and Colleen Vasconcellos (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 790-791.

<sup>6</sup> Aviston Downes, “From Boys to Men, Colonial Education, Cricket and Masculinity in the Caribbean, 1870-c1920,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 22, no.1 (Jan. 2005): 14-17; Greg Ryan, “Cricket and Moral Curriculum of the New Zealand Elite Secondary Schools c1860-1920,” *The Sports Historian* 19, no.2 (1999): 61-62.

### III. EDUCATION, RACE, AND THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY

Many men who immigrated from Britain and the Canadas to work in the fur trade arrived in the HBC territories with a British-style education. This education gave them access to positions in the officer ranks of the fur trade, and fostered an intellectual culture amongst HBC employees. By the mid-nineteenth century, education was an important element in the performance evaluations of HBC employees, and was therefore necessary for upward mobility and economic success. White and Indigenous fur-trade fathers, many of whom were educated and mindful of the value of education, identified the connection between a good education and access to the officer ranks of the HBC corporate structure for their Indigenous sons.

Most HBC employees who rose to the officer ranks had received some education in England, Scotland, the Orkneys, or the Canadian colonies before travelling to fur-trade country. By the early nineteenth century, the London Committee of the HBC considered a foundational education in reading, writing, and arithmetic to be essential to at least some positions in the Company. Special skills specific to maritime service, including drafting, surveying, and mapping were even more valuable and were considered an asset to advancement. The HBC went so far as to recruit apprentices, some as young as twelve years old, from charity schools in England that offered curriculums suited to the fur trade. Nine students from the Christ's or Blue Coat Hospital in London (1680-1717), and twelve students from the Grey Coat Hospital of the Royal Foundation of Queen Anne in Westminster (1766-1799) were enlisted as HBC apprentices. 'Hospital boys' such as John Hodgson, David Thompson, John Charles and Captain Henry

Hanwell learned mathematics, navigation, surveying, and cartography in addition to the basic English curriculum.<sup>7</sup>

The education of other British men employed by the HBC varied. Richard Hardisty Sr., for example, was the child of a working-class father and grew up in a poor part of London. He acquired some education, however, because he was “competent in Writing & accounts” upon his entry as a clerk in 1817.<sup>8</sup> Many HBC employees also came from the Orkneys and Scotland where, until the 1870s, most children were educated in parish schools. The quality of education and the subjects taught in these schools were highly variable, but children learned the basics of reading, writing, arithmetic, religious knowledge and sometimes more advanced subjects like Latin and Greek.<sup>9</sup> John Tod received only a basic education in a village school before moving on to work in a cotton warehouse. From there he took an apprenticeship with the HBC in 1811.<sup>10</sup> Donald McKenzie of Inverness reputedly received a “good education” from the parish schools in Scotland, where he likely attended school until age seventeen before joining his three older brothers in the fur trade.<sup>11</sup> Brothers Duncan and Nicol Finlayson received some form of basic education that equipped them with the literacy and skills necessary for their later jobs in the fur trade. In the 1820s, Nicol Finlayson was assessed by his superiors as being a good accountant

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<sup>7</sup> Denise Fuchs, “Native Sons of Rupert’s Land 1760 to 1860s” (PhD diss., University of Manitoba, 2000), 98.

<sup>8</sup> Rupert’s River District Report, 1823-1824, B.168/e/6m, Rupert’s River District and Rupert House Reports, Hudson’s Bay Company Archives (HBCA); “Hardsity, Richard,” HBCA Biographical Sheets, rev. 2000, [http://www.gov.mb.ca/cgi-bin/print\\_hit\\_bold.pl/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/h/hardisty\\_richard.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/cgi-bin/print_hit_bold.pl/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/h/hardisty_richard.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> R.D. Anderson, *Making Citizens: Education and the Scottish People, 1750-1918* (Oxford University Press, 1995) 4-5.

<sup>10</sup> Madge Wolfenden, “Tod, John,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 25, 2016, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/tod\\_john\\_11E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/tod_john_11E.html)

<sup>11</sup> Sylvia Van Kirk, “McKENZIE, DONALD,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed August 3, 2017, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mckenzie\\_donald\\_8E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mckenzie_donald_8E.html).

and a “tolerable clerk” with a “good education.”<sup>12</sup>

Other fur-trade employees entered the service with higher levels of education. Wealthier British families who could afford to do so sent their children to private schools for a more rigorous curriculum, which sometimes included Latin, Greek, mathematics, and navigation. Chief Factor Roderick Macfarlane, the husband of Mary Christie Macfarlane, attended parochial school and the Free Church Academy in Stornoway, Orkney. He worked in a law office for three years before engaging with the HBC as a clerk in 1852.<sup>13</sup> Edward and Francis Ermatinger, whose extended family was centred in Montreal, went to school in England where they received “a good education in languages and music.”<sup>14</sup> James Anderson and his brother Alexander Caulfield Anderson received a ‘liberal education’ that included Latin and poetry at the private Rokeby Academy in London until they were forced to abandon their studies in their teenage years due to their father’s financial insolvency.<sup>15</sup> Some officers, including Chief Factors Alexander Christie Sr., Dr. John McLoughlin, Dr. William Cowan, and Chief Trader William Tolmie had university degrees.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Nicol Finlayson Research File, MSS 336 A.11-28, Box 3, File 13, Jennifer Brown Fonds, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (UMASC). Other traders who entered service at the rank of writer or clerk include Thomas McMurray, James Curtis Bird, Richard Hardisty Sr. and Roderick McKenzie

<sup>13</sup> Edward A. Preble, “Roderick Ross Macfarlane, 1833-1920,” *The Auk* 39, no.2 (April 1922): 203.

<sup>14</sup> L. G. Thomas, “ERMATINGER, EDWARD,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 10, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed December 2, 2016, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ermatinger\\_edward\\_10E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ermatinger_edward_10E.html)

<sup>15</sup> Nancy Marguerite Anderson, *The Pathfinder: A.C. Anderson’s Journeys in the West* (Victoria: Heritage House Publishing, 2011), 16.

<sup>16</sup> Alexander Christie Jr. graduated from Marischal College, University of Aberdeen in 1812, Alexander Christie Jr. in 1834, and William Joseph Christie in 1838. All three took a degree in Arts. Peter John Anderson, ed., *Fasti Academiae Mariscallanae Aberdonensis: selections from the records of the Marischal College and University*, vol.2 (Aberdeen: Printed for the New Spalding Club, 1889-1898), 415, 192, 506, <https://archive.org/details/fastiacademiaema02univuoft>; For info on Dr. William Cowan, see Allen Ronaghan, “COWAN, WILLIAM,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 13, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 25, 2016, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cowan\\_william\\_13E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cowan_william_13E.html).

In addition to this tradition of education in the fur trade, there was also what German naturalist Karl Andreas Geyer described as an “intellectual life” in the HBC territories. Theodore Binnema recounts in his book on the scientific exploits of the HBC and its employees that Geyer was surprised to find an active intellectual society during his visit to the Columbia District in the 1840s. He recounted that HBC men busied themselves with “literary pursuits” including writing manuscripts and exchanging books. This intellectual life was facilitated in part by a library housed at Fort Vancouver. The HBC traders were, Geyer commented, “a group of rather substantial, educated men.”<sup>17</sup>

These intellectual and literary pursuits were common throughout HBC territory. Libraries, both those that were privately held and those that were financed by the HBC, were common at fur-trade posts and settlements. John Tod was delighted with the small library that he encountered upon his posting to Fort McLeod in 1823.<sup>18</sup> By 1836, a lending library that stocked newspapers, periodicals, and books operated out of Fort Vancouver.<sup>19</sup> At Red River, Donald Gunn’s house at Little Britain served as his family’s home as well as a library and school.<sup>20</sup> Bernard Ross left his own personal collection of five hundred books behind in the Mackenzie District to serve as a circulating library when he left the region. At Red River, Bishop

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<sup>17</sup> Theodore Binnema, *Enlightened Zeal: The Hudson's Bay Company and Scientific Networks, 1670-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 23-24.

<sup>18</sup> Madge Wolfenden, “TOD, JOHN,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed December 2, 2016, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/tod\\_john\\_11E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/tod_john_11E.html).

<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Vibert, *Traders' Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounters in the Columbia Plateau, 1807-1846* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 45.

<sup>20</sup> Janet Gunn Muckle describes the community library held at the home of her father, Donald Gunn, in the Little Britain settlement at Red River when she was growing up. W.J Healy, *Women of Red River: Being a book written from the recollections of women surviving from the Red River era* (Winnipeg: Canadian Women's Club, 1923; republished Peguis Publishers Ltd., 1987), 158.



David Anderson and his sister, Margaret, formed a literary club that met regularly in the 1850s to discuss 'leading magazines.'<sup>21</sup>

For some, at least, the prospect of being sent to a quiet posting with a good library was an attractive offer. In 1851, Chief Factor George Barnston at Norway House wrote to his predecessor Donald Ross. Barnston informed Ross that John Sinclair, the clerk and schoolmaster at the nearby Methodist Rossville mission, had vacated his position upon marrying a cook employed by one of the missionaries' wives.<sup>22</sup> Barnston recounts that he was forced to lend the mission one of his employees from Norway House until Sinclair's replacement could arrive. He hoped, however, that the replacement would "liberate my man ere long. He is very comfortable, and I daresay likes the place, as he has plenty of books, the evenings to himself, and a love for reading."<sup>23</sup>

Several HBC men contributed their own writings and research to literature and science. Explorer and Chief Trader Alexander Caulfield Anderson, was a "would be literary gentleman," according to Letitia Hargrave, "[who] writes letters to the Times, & bothers the Honorable Company a good deal by their contents."<sup>24</sup> Charles McKenzie had "considerable literary tastes"

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<sup>21</sup> Marion Bryce, "Early Red River Culture," *Manitoba Historical Society Transactions* 1, no. 57 (February 1902), <http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/transactions/1/redriverculture.shtml>.

<sup>22</sup> The cook, Mary, was employed by Sophia Thomas Mason, the wife of Reverend William Mason, who was the missionary in charge at the Rossville mission. George Barnston to Donald Ross, 17 December 1851, MS0635 File 8, Donald Ross Papers, BC Archives. Sophia Thomas was the daughter of Governor Thomas Thomas and his Cree wife Sarah, and was sister to Ann Thomas Christie, the wife of Governor Thomas Christie. Anne Lindsay and Jennifer Brown, "Memorable Manitobans: Sarah Thomas Mason," *Manitoba Historical Society*, rev. 2009, [http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/mason\\_st.shtml](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/mason_st.shtml).

<sup>23</sup> George Barnston to Donald Ross, 17 December 1851, MG1 D20 fo.8, Donald Ross Papers, Archives of Manitoba (AM).

<sup>24</sup> Margaret Macleod, *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1947), 132.

and devoted much of his leisure time to studying the history of his native Scottish Highlands.<sup>25</sup>

Other HBC men were active contributors to scientific research.<sup>26</sup>

Part of this fur-trade literary culture was offering educational opportunities to men who were less educated or illiterate. At York Factory, Methodist missionary Reverend James Evans ran an evening school for post employees. Through this school, postmaster William Anderson taught evening classes for five years, without remuneration, for men who wished to learn to read and write. In 1842, Evans boasted that every apprentice at York Factory could read and write.<sup>27</sup>

To these imperial fur-trade men, education mattered. It mattered in the context of British society in the metropole, but, in particular, it mattered in the context of the business and society of the fur trade. Education was an integral aspect of employee evaluations within the HBC, and particularly for clerks and those of the officer class (or those trying to enter the officer class). From the 1820s to the 1840s, when divisions between labourers and officers hardened in the HBC hierarchy, education was perceived as essential to entering the company in the officer stream. Entering the company below the clerk level generally limited upward mobility within the company. This led James Hargrave to advise an acquaintance in London that her son should wait for a position as a clerk rather than engaging as a labourer. As a labourer, Hargrave noted, the son would be “descending to the same rank as the most uneducated of our

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<sup>25</sup> L.R. Masson, *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest, vol.1* (New York: Antiquarian Press, Ltd., 1960), 320.

<sup>26</sup> Binnema. *Enlightened Zeal*, 24.

<sup>27</sup> William Anderson later became a Chief Trader and was in charge of York Factory in the 1860s. Macleod, *Letitia Hargrave Letters*, lxxi; “Anderson, William ‘A’,” HBCA Biographical Sheets, rev. 2000, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/a/anderson\\_william-a.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/a/anderson_william-a.pdf). For information on Reverend James Evans, see Gerald M. Hutchinson, “EVANS, JAMES,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed December 14, 2016, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/evans\\_james\\_7E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/evans_james_7E.html).

people...in short lose caste and descend from the respectable rank in which he has been brought up to a level with the lowest of the peasantry.”<sup>28</sup>

Recommendations for potential employees often commented on the extent and quality of their education. James Hargrave recommended the fourteen-year-old son of a long-time friend to Governor George Simpson, commenting on the boy’s “good conduct and carefully superintended education.”<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Lady Frances Simpson, the Governor’s wife, wrote a recommendation for R.M. Ballantyne in 1841, noting that he was her cousin and a “very clever boy...straight from Stockbridge Academy.”<sup>30</sup> Poor education or lack of literary skills was also noted by employees’ superiors. James Anderson wrote of his subordinate, Henry Maxwell, that “his education is very defective, though I dare say he would do well enough in some stations.”<sup>31</sup> Similarly, John Vincent, the son of Chief Trader Thomas Vincent, was described in 1827 as “not sufficiently educated for a Clerk” but had been “retained for the present out of feeling and respect to his father.” Once Thomas Vincent retired with the rest of his family to England, John Vincent was demoted to the rank of postmaster.<sup>32</sup>

The importance of education to advancement within the company led many fathers to prioritize education for their sons. This was true for both the fur-trade fathers of white children and the fathers of Indigenous children. The dictates of British middle-class fatherhood were transformed in the HBC territories to reflect the realities of colonial family structures, meaning

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<sup>28</sup> James Hargrave to Mrs. Lane, 22 May 1840, MG 19 A 21 Series 2, Hargrave Family Papers, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), accessed via Heritage Canadiana, [http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac\\_reel\\_c81](http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c81).

<sup>29</sup> James Hargrave to George Simpson, 1 March 1838, MG 19 A 21 Series 2, Hargrave Family Papers, LAC, accessed via Heritage Canadiana, [http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac\\_reel\\_c80](http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c80).

<sup>30</sup> Macleod, *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 99.

<sup>31</sup> James Anderson to George Simpson, 15 November 1857, MG19, A 29, vol 1, file 4, James Anderson Fonds, LAC.

<sup>32</sup> John Vincent, A.34/1, fo. 76d, p131, Servants’ Character and Staff Records 1822-1830, HBCA.

that fur trade fathers were deemed responsible for the well-being of their children regardless of the children's ancestry. Elite fur-trade fathers in general thereby acknowledged the claims that both white children and Indigenous children had to financial support for their education. In 1847, James Hargrave wrote to Simpson that he would be taking his son Joseph James home to Scotland on his next furlough, as it was his "warmest wish to give him a good Scottish Education."<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Governor Alexander Christie felt a duty to educate his four children by his Indigenous wife Ann Thomas Christie. Christie sent both of his two sons, William and Alexander Jr., and his two daughters, Margaret and Mary, to Britain to be educated. In 1844 he wrote to Donald Ross that, "it was ever my intention to give the whole of them a good education, and then let them push their way through life."<sup>34</sup>

In addition to funding their children's education, some fathers tried to relocate in order to be closer to better educational opportunities for their children. Several HBC men requested to be moved to a different post for this reason. In 1858, Chief Trader Donald Manson left the HBC to take up farming in the Willamette Valley in Oregon Territory. In part this was due to his frustration over not being promoted to the rank of Chief Factor, but in his April 1858 letter he informed George Simpson of his resignation and his wish to "settle down in the Willamette, where I can secure a tolerable education for my children."<sup>35</sup> Similarly, James Bissett wrote to his friend Joseph Hardisty in 1859 that he wished to relocate to the Montreal District from

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<sup>33</sup> Macleod, *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, xci.

<sup>34</sup> Alexander Christie to Donald Ross, 3 January 1844, MG1 D20 fo.22, Donald Ross Papers, AM.

<sup>35</sup> E.E. Rich, ed. *A journal of a voyage from Rocky Mountain Portage in Peace River to the sources of Finlays Branch and north west ward in summer 1824*, no.18 (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1955), 240.

Honolulu “on account of the education of my children.”<sup>36</sup> Fathers who were aware of the challenges that their Indigenous children faced in colonial and metropolitan societies perceived the value of a British-style education for their Indigenous children, and were willing to make personal and family sacrifices to invest in education for the reasons outlined in Chapter 1.

#### IV. A NEW ERA OF EDUCATION IN THE HBC TERRITORIES

Before the 1830s, there were few opportunities for a British-style education in the HBC territories. Educational opportunities consisted primarily of small post schools, sometimes financed by the HBC and sometimes run by missionaries. Fathers who sought a ‘quality’ education for their children had to send them abroad.<sup>37</sup> For younger children both before and after the 1830s, early education was often offered in the home. In the pre-1821 era, when Indigenous wives were generally illiterate, mothers were less likely to participate in teaching children reading and writing in the home. Indigenous mothers instead provided their children with an Indigenous-based education and taught them Indigenous languages, cultural knowledge, and traditional practices like hunting, tracking, sewing, and gathering.<sup>38</sup>

Many aspects of education in the home before the 1850s were left primarily to fathers. Fathers were encouraged by the HBC to take a direct role in their Indigenous children’s education. In 1823, the London Committee issued instructions that urged fathers to read to their children, instruct them in religion, and teach them French or English in place of Indigenous

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<sup>36</sup> James Bisset to Joseph Hardisty, 1859, H2-136-7-3 (E.69/2 fo.19), William McMurray inward correspondence, 1852-1853, William and Harriet McMurray Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>37</sup> Fuchs, “Native Sons,” 97. For a discussion of post schools in the pre-1830s era, see Fuchs, Chapter 3.

<sup>38</sup> See Fuchs’ discussion of Indigenous educations, 149-60, and Regina Flannery, *Ellen Smallboy: Glimpses of a Cree Woman’s Life* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995).

languages.<sup>39</sup> James Bird, Donald Gunn, and many other white fathers taught their children at home. Even in the later years, when Indigenous mothers and older sisters were literate and took on some of the teaching, fathers continued to have a hand their children's education. In 1844, John Work reported to his friend Edward Ermatinger that he was teaching his children their lessons at home.<sup>40</sup>

In the absence of schools, visiting missionaries or missionaries' wives were sometimes recruited to take over the role of teacher. Narcissa Whitman, the wife of missionary Dr. Marcus Whitman, wintered at Fort Vancouver in 1836-1837 while her husband built a mission at Walla Walla in the Oregon Territory. John McLoughlin asked her to take his daughter in her care and "hear her recitations" during Whitman's time at the fort.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Ann Cockran, the wife of CMS missionary William Cockran, "[had] some girls under her care" at Red River in the late 1820s.<sup>42</sup>

Indigenous and England-educated HBC officer George Gladman Jr. observed in 1842 that, "schools are rising up rapidly in the Columbia settlement and as Gentlemen are beginning to take a more lively interest than formerly in the education of their Children it is probably that

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<sup>39</sup> R. Harvey Fleming and E.E. Rich, ed., *Minutes of the Council Northern Department of Rupert Land, 1821-1831* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1974), 60.

<sup>40</sup> Paul C. Phillips, "Family Letters of Two Oregon Fur Traders," in *Frontier Omnibus*, ed. John Hakola and Paul C. Phillips (Missoula and Helena: Montana State University Press, 1962), 38.

<sup>41</sup> "Diaries and Journals of Narcissa Whitman, 1836," [www.isu.edu/~trinmich/00.ar.whitman1.html](http://www.isu.edu/~trinmich/00.ar.whitman1.html). For more information on Narcissa Whitman at Fort Vancouver, see Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 42-45.

<sup>42</sup> In 1829, Chief Factor Alexander Kennedy wrote from Moose Factory to his wife Mary or Aggathas before leaving for England on furlough with his son, Alexander Jr. In the letter, he instructed her to place their daughter Isabella with Mrs. Cockran at Red River, and to also find a school for their son Phillip. Nicol Finlayson Research File, MSS 336, A.11-28, Box 3 File 13, Jennifer Brown Fonds, UMASC; "Kennedy, Alexander," HBCA Biographical Sheet, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/k/kennedy\\_alexander.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/k/kennedy_alexander.pdf)

teachers of a higher grader will very soon be in requisition.”<sup>43</sup> Gladman was correct in his assessment. Between the 1830s and the 1860s, the educational facilities in the HBC territories expanded and more diverse educational opportunities became available for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children. The growing number of local parish schools, smaller private schools, and more academically rigorous boarding schools provided fur-trade parents with the first opportunities for their children to access a British-style education at ‘home’ in fur-trade country. These schools included the Red River Academy (1832), a post school at Fort Vancouver (1832), the Grey Nuns’ convent school at St. Boniface (1844), and a boarding school at Fort Victoria (1849). Although missionaries were already running some parish and post schools, the founding of these schools marked a new era in education in the HBC territories. Fur-trade parents of the colonial and fur-trade middling and elite classes had the option to keep their children at ‘home’ to receive an adequate education instead of sending their children abroad.

Many parents, however, continued to send their Indigenous fur-trade children abroad for at least part of their education. Both European and Indigenous parents valued a metropolitan education, and sent their children to school in the Canadian colonies, England, Scotland, or the United States. In part, at least, this was driven by a prejudice within the fur trade against the quality of ‘local’ education. From the 1830s to the 1860s, fur-trade fathers complained about Company discrimination against children who were educated in fur-trade country. Charles McKenzie, a clerk at Lac Seul post, wrote bitterly in the 1840s about the Company’s treatment of his son, Hector Aneas McKenzie, and other students of the Red River

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<sup>43</sup> George Gladman to Edward Ermatinger, 5 August 1842, transcript, E.94/3 pp.279-280, Edward Ermatinger Collection, HBCA.

Academy. He commented that, “it appears the present Concern has stamped the *Cain mark* upon all born in this country, neither education nor abilities serve them...The Honorable Company are unwilling to take Natives, even as apprentice clerks, and the favored few they do take can never aspire to a higher status, be their education and capacity what they may.”<sup>44</sup>

Chief Trader James Anderson also complained repeatedly about the bias against a Red River education. In the early 1850s, Anderson wrote to Eden Colvile, the HBC Governor of Rupert’s Land, to protest the lack of advancement for “young Gentlemen natives of this country” who had “the misfortune to be educated on the Banks of the Red River instead of the Thames.” In particular, he objected to the administration ignoring the recommendations that he had made for promotion for some of his Indigenous subordinates.<sup>45</sup> Anderson wrote to Colvile again three years later, arguing that Indigenous apprentice postmasters “do precisely the same duties as app. Clerks, are fully as talented, as zealous and well educated as the generality of app. Clerks from Europe and tho the sons of the oldest and most faithful officers of the Company, are put in this inferior station. This is not only unjust but, like all unjust things, impolitic for unless human nature [changes], this degrading treatment must rankle in their minds.”<sup>46</sup>

When his entreaties to his superiors were ignored, Anderson tried a different approach. In 1856 he encouraged David Anderson, the Bishop of Rupert’s Land and principal of St. John’s Collegiate School, to speak to the Governor and Committee against the “mistreatment” of “young gentlemen educated at the R.R. School.” James Anderson noted in his letter to the

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<sup>44</sup> Masson, *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie*, vol.I, 318-19.

<sup>45</sup> James Anderson to Eden Colvile, 29 November 1852, MG19, A29 vol. 1, file 2, pp.51-52, James Anderson Fonds, LAC.

<sup>46</sup> James Anderson to Eden Colvile, 29 November 1855, MG19 A29 vol.3 p.116, James Anderson Fonds, LAC.



Bishop that his own protestations had been ignored, but that he hoped that the Bishop's "representation" on the topic would find more success with the Company administration.<sup>47</sup>

In the 1850s, Anderson's older children attended schools at Red River. Two of his sons were at the St. John's Collegiate School under the supervision of Bishop David Anderson and schoolmaster Thomas Cochrane. His daughter, Eliza, attended the St. Cross school under Ann Benton Mills, which was adjacent to the St. John's School, and then Matilda Davis's Oakfield Establishment for Young Ladies at St. Andrew's.<sup>48</sup> In 1857, Anderson requested passage for himself and four of his sons in Company canoes, noting that he no longer found the school at Red River satisfactory and he wished to remove his sons to school in Canada West.<sup>49</sup> In 1858, the entire family moved to Anderson's parents' farm near Sutton, Canada West during Anderson's year-long furlough.<sup>50</sup> The four Anderson sons were placed at a boarding school at Barrie, nearby Anderson's own estate on the western shore of Lake Simcoe, while Eliza pursued further education in Toronto.<sup>51</sup> Clearly, Anderson felt that the prospects of his sons in particular were limited by the continuing biases in the HBC against locally educated fur-trade children.

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<sup>47</sup> James Anderson to Bishop of Rupert's Land, 3 July 1856, MG19 A29 vol. 1, file 4, pp.69-71, James Anderson Fonds, LAC.

<sup>48</sup> James Anderson to Bishop of Rupert's Land, 3 July 1856, MG19 A29 vol. 1, file 4, pp. 69-71, James Anderson Fonds, LAC; Unnamed author (Eliza Anderson) to Matilda Davis, 7 April 1859, P2343 fo.6, Matilda Davis Family Collection, AM.

<sup>49</sup> James Anderson to George Simpson, 15 November 1857, MG19 A29, vol. 1, file 4, pp. 148-169, James Anderson Fonds, LAC.

<sup>50</sup> The Andersons spent their furlough with James Anderson's parents, who lived on an estate called Gowan Brae near Sutton, Canada West. In anticipation of retirement, Anderson purchased an adjacent estate, Ainslie Hill, in 1861. Anderson and Margaret retired there in 1864, and Anderson died there in 1867. Indenture of Mortgage for Ainslie Hill, Slides 34-37, Georgina Pioneer Village and Archives, Online Exhibit, "Exploring James Anderson: A Journey through the Adventurous Life of a Company Man," <http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/>, accessed 26 August 2017.

<sup>51</sup> James Anderson to Roderick Macfarlane, 1 Nov 1865, MG20 A11 vol 1 p102-105, Roderick Macfarlane Papers, LAC; For Allan, Alexander and James Anderson Jr. at school in Canada West, see "1861 Census of Canada," database, *Ancestry.ca* (<https://www.ancestry.com/>: accessed 4 July 2017), entry for Barrie Grammar School, Roll: C-1072, p44.

Many of the fathers of the children in this study either entered the fur trade early enough to witness the changing importance of education to advancement in the fur trade, or had themselves secured their officer-track appointments in part as a result of their own levels of education. Although race and education were contested issues in the middle part of the century, fur-trade fathers recognized that their sons needed to be equipped with a solid education in order for them to be competitive for coveted HBC appointments. Daughters were sent to school to learn the lady-like graces that would help them function as middle-class women in both fur-trade and metropolitan societies. Although education opportunities expanded in the HBC territories, HBC administrators and some fur-trade parents continued to value the education offered in Britain and the Canadas over that offered at Red River and Fort Victoria. These considerations were important factors in parents' decisions as to how, why, and where to educate their Indigenous children.

## **V. LEARNING RESPECTABILITY: EDUCATION AND MIDDLE-CLASS FUR-TRADE FAMILIES**

The goal of middle-class fur-trade parents was to teach their Indigenous fur-trade sons and daughters British norms of respectability and middle-class social mores. The form that this education took, however, was gendered and was shaped by conditions specific to the HBC territories. Although Indigenous fur-trade sons were more likely to be sent abroad for their education than their sisters, they seem to have most often returned to fur-trade country to either take employment with the HBC or otherwise find a suitable occupation in fur-trade country. Indigenous women, however, were more likely to 'marry out' and leave Rupert's Land to live permanently in the Canadas, Britain or the United States, sometimes as daughters but

more often as wives. Sons, therefore, needed to be educated to function as gentlemen within the expectations of the fur trade and colonial society, but Indigenous daughters needed to be able to perform respectability both as fur-trade wives and as middle-class 'ladies' outside of fur-trade country. Teaching British middle-classness to both Indigenous sons and daughters was important, although for different and gendered reasons.

Although the trappings of middle-classness and behaviour were important to class status, there were differing opinions in fur-trade country on what education could accomplish for Indigenous fur-trade children. In 1820s Red River, Church Missionary Society missionary and schoolmaster William Cockran considered parents' desire to have their daughters "educated in refined skills" to be "pretentious." Red River society, he concluded, "not being so highly polished as to meet their approbation, they wish to make the offspring of the Indian Wives accomplished Ladies all at once."<sup>52</sup> Fur-trade parents were more optimistic about their daughters' prospects than Cockran. In 1841, John Work, who had been educating his children in his home, wrote of his five daughters that, "had I them a little brushed up with education, and a little knowledge of the world, they would scarcely be known to be Indians."<sup>53</sup> Former HBC factor and colonial governor James Douglas had high hopes for his youngest daughter's education in England. Although Douglas's older children were educated on Vancouver Island and in Oregon, due to an increase in family fortunes later in life he sent his two youngest children, James William and Martha, to school in Britain. In 1871 he wrote to his daughter,

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<sup>52</sup> Reverend William Cockran to the Secretaries, 20 July 1831, *Mission Book, North-West Canada, 1822-1834*, Church Missionary Society Archives, Empire Online, [http://www.empire.amdigital.co.uk.uml.idm.oclc.org/Documents/Details/MissionBook North-WestCanada18221834](http://www.empire.amdigital.co.uk.uml.idm.oclc.org/Documents/Details/MissionBook%20North-WestCanada18221834), accessed 3 August 2017.

<sup>53</sup> Phillips, *Frontier Omnibus*, 32-33.

Martha, to “remember that you are to be my learned daughter, the veritable Blue-stocking of the family & at the same time endowed with a meek & gentle spirit.”<sup>54</sup> Douglas had higher aspirations for Martha than just ‘brushing her up’ a little. Parents, educators, and other colonial and imperial stakeholders held a variety of views and opinions on what Indigenous fur-trade children could accomplish through education.

If education was important for teaching Indigenous children the behaviours and values of ‘ladies’ and ‘gentlemen,’ then parents’ choice of schools was in large part tied to these constructions of class. Jonathan Anuik has argued that at Red River in the 1830s and 1840s, Anglican missionaries and fur-trade parents used education to attempt to create and reinforce social status in Red River by funneling different ‘classes’ of children into different schools. Parents who could not afford tuition for education had access to missionary-run schools at Upper Church, Middlechurch, Frog Plain, and Grand Rapids. This resulted in the separation of the poorer Metis children, and particularly the ‘agricultural’ Anglophones, in these parish schools from the middle-class children of retired HBC officers who attended the more elite boarding schools.<sup>55</sup> The teachers at the parish schools were generally less-educated than those engaged to teach at schools like Red River Academy, thereby creating disparities in the education offered to the two different groups at their separate schools.

The commentary of missionaries who taught at parish day schools seems to reinforce this perspective. By 1833, Cockran had approximately sixty students at his school at St.

Andrews, about half of whom were girls. These students were comprised primarily of the sons

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<sup>54</sup> James Douglas to Martha Douglas, 12 February 1872, B/40/4/A, Letters to Martha Douglas, Sir James Douglas Fonds, BC Archives.

<sup>55</sup> Jonathan Anuik, “Forming Civilization at Red River: 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Missionary Education of Metis and First Nations Children,” *Prairie Forum* 31, no.1 (Spring 2006): 7.

and daughters of Indigenous farmers. These families were not wealthy enough to be able to dispense with their children's labour, as the school was virtually deserted during harvest.<sup>56</sup> Cockran decided that a traditional British public school education would be of little use to these children, and instead argued that the parish children should be taught 'practical' skills like carpentry, animal husbandry, farming, spinning, weaving, and knitting.<sup>57</sup> Cockran's plan for an industrial-based education was seemingly not put into action, and education at his school instead centred on learning Christianity, reading, and writing.<sup>58</sup> The class differences between the different groups of Indigenous students are underscored, however, when Cockran's perspectives on education in rural parishes is compared to the classical English education being taught at the nearby Red River Academy, where students learned math, Latin, and other advanced subjects.<sup>59</sup>

Other evidence, however, seems to undermine Anuik's thesis about segregated schools. Archivist W.J. Healy interviewed several Red River women in the early 1920s, and their accounts of their childhood and education indicate fluidity between parish schools and the more elite boarding schools. Harriet Sinclair, whose Indigenous fur-trade father had been educated in Edinburgh, first attended a small school run by Mrs. Ingham (later Mrs. Robert Logan) and then the Red River Academy.<sup>60</sup> James Sinclair later took Harriet and her sister Maria

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<sup>56</sup> Robert Coutts, *The Road to the Rapids: Nineteenth-Century Church and Society at St. Andrew's Parish, Red River* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2000), 45.

<sup>57</sup> David Jones and William Cockran, "Report on the state of religion, morality and education at the Red River Settlement and Grand Rapids, 5 June 1835," Incoming Correspondence, Volume 2, 1834-1837, pp.62-71, Mission Books C.1/M2 Reel 3, Church Missionary Society Archives, via St. John's College Library, University of Manitoba.

<sup>58</sup> Anuik, "Forming Civilization at Red River," 8.

<sup>59</sup> Denise (Fuchs) Hahn, "A 'Philanthropist's Bosom Conflicted': The Reverend John Macallum of the Red River Academy," *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 35, no.1 (2015): 123.

<sup>60</sup> James Sinclair was the son of William Sinclair and Nahovay. Harriet's mother was Elizabeth Bird, the daughter of Chief Factor James Bird and his second wife, Elizabeth Montour. Norma Hall, "William Sinclair II," *Doing Canadian*

to Knox College at Glaesboro, IL.<sup>61</sup> Several children who attended the St. John's parish school moved on to either St. John's Boys' School or the ladies' schools run by Ann Benton Mills and Matilda Davis.<sup>62</sup> Davis also guided the education of several young boys, including Duncan Christie, Richard Hardisty, and William Kennedy Jr. until they reached the age which they required "more than a lady's management" and moved on to St. John's School or abroad.<sup>63</sup>

There was also intermixing of the children of HBC labourers and officers in the post school at Fort Vancouver in the 1830s. In the fall of 1832, Chief Factor John McLoughlin established the school "for the good of the Native children in this Quarter."<sup>64</sup> The student population in 1832 consisted of about twelve Indigenous boys. Among the pupils were David McLaughlin, the son of John McLaughlin; the sons of other officers and kin including Ranald Macdonald, Andrew Pambrun, and William Cameron McKay; Louis Labonte, whose father was employed as a trapper and carpenter; and Benjamin Harrison, a Chinook orphan who had been adopted by McLaughlin.<sup>65</sup> The sons and grandsons of HBC officers, then, attended the school alongside those of labourers. Some of the elite Indigenous sons, however, including Ranald Macdonald, Andrew Pambrun, and William Cameron McKay went on to further their education

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*History n.0*, accessed 26 August 2017, <https://hallnjean.wordpress.com/seafarers/lecture-transcript-an-introduction-to-the-history-of-aboriginal-sailors-of-hudson-bay/captain-colin-robertson-sinclair/family-network-of-captain-colin-robertson-sinclair/william-sinclair-ii/>.

<sup>61</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 27.

<sup>62</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 86-89, 142.

<sup>63</sup> Eliza Kennedy to Matilda Davis, 12 January 1871, P2342 fo. 27, and W.L. Hardisty to Matilda Davis, 10 July 1870, P2342 fo.22, Matilda Davis Family Fonds, AM.

<sup>64</sup> John McLoughlin to Edward Ermatinger, 1 February 1836, MG19, A2, Series 2, Vol 1, pp.175-178, Edward Ermatinger Fonds, LAC.

<sup>65</sup> John McLoughlin's second wife, Margaret Wadden McKay, was William McKay's grandmother by her son Thomas. William Cameron McKay was the step-grandson of John McLoughlin. See Stephen Woolworth, "The School is Under my Direction: The Politics of Education at Fort Vancouver, 1836-1838," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 104, no.2 (Summer 2003): 243; Lawrence Barkwell, "Thomas McKay," The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture, <http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/13792.Thomas%20McKay%20b.%201796.pdf>

at the Red River Academy.<sup>66</sup> This class fluidity in the post and parish schools, however, seems to have been primarily unidirectional, in that elite schools were inaccessible to the Indigenous children of non-elite fur-trade parents due to the costs of a boarding school education. It is unlikely, for example, that the sons of the company labourers who attended the Fort Vancouver school went on to higher education.<sup>67</sup>

The intersections of class, gender, and education could also be variable within fur-trade families due to the composition of what were often large, blended families. In 1867, Alexander Christie Jr., who was living at St. Andrews while on furlough, wrote to Matilda Davis.<sup>68</sup> Christie's children, Mary, Duncan, and Emma, all took part of their education at the Davis school. The same education, however, was not offered to his adopted daughter, Sophia.<sup>69</sup> Following his

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<sup>66</sup> Woolworth, "The School is Under my Direction," 243.

<sup>67</sup> Louis Labonte Sr. moved his family to settle in the Willamette Valley, Oregon in the mid-1830s. Louis Labonte Jr.'s recollections do not mention living at or attending school at Fort Vancouver, or any schooling at all. H.S. Lyman, "The Reminiscences of Louis Labonte," *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 1, no. 2 (June 1900): 169-188; "Labonte, Louis," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. 2001, [http://www.gov.mb.ca/cgi-bin/print\\_hit\\_bold.pl/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/l/labonte\\_louis.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/cgi-bin/print_hit_bold.pl/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/l/labonte_louis.pdf)

<sup>68</sup> "Christie, Alexander Jr.," HBCA biographical sheet, rev. 2002, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/christie\\_alexander\\_jr1834-1873.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/christie_alexander_jr1834-1873.pdf)

<sup>69</sup> It is unclear who Sophia is and why she is referred to as adopted. She may have been an orphan or family member that the Christies took in. However, fur trade fathers in earlier periods often referred to their illegitimate fur trade children as their 'adopted' children. In 1840, Catherine Sinclair Ermatinger and her daughter, Frances, wintered at Fort Edmonton with her sister, Mary Sinclair Christie, while on their way to meet Francis Ermatinger on his return from furlough. When Catherine arrived at Norway House to await her husband's arrival, she soon after gave birth to a daughter who was not by her husband. This caused a rupture in their marriage. Letitia Hargrave, who was at York Factory and whose husband was a friend of Francis Ermatinger, wrote in a letter home to Scotland that the child was that of Alexander Christie Jr., who had also wintered at Fort Edmonton and 'led her astray.' Christie had accompanied Catherine and her daughter to Norway House, where he married Caroline Isbister. There is no record of what happened to the child after its birth, other than, according to Letitia Hargrave, it was "the moment after its birth sent out of the house & given to an Indian woman to nurse." Catherine and Francis Ermatinger eventually reconciled and settled in Ontario, but there is no mention of the child in the Ermatinger correspondence. Catherine went to live with her parents, William Sinclair II and Mary McKay Sinclair, at Lac Pluie during her estrangement from Ermatinger. It is possible that she took her youngest daughter with her, and then left the child with her parents when she reunited with Ermatinger. Or, given that Hargrave suggests the daughter's father would be returning to retrieve her from her wet nurse, perhaps the Sophia in question is Alexander Christie Jr.'s daughter by Catherine Sinclair Ermatinger. Letitia Mactavish Hargrave to Flora Mactavish, 1 June 1850, MSS 15 Box 2 fo.3, Margaret Arnett Macleod Fonds, UMASC.

wife Caroline Isbister Christie's death in 1867, Christie was left with his eldest daughter Mary and his adopted daughter Sophia in his household while his other children attended school in Scotland and Red River.<sup>70</sup> Christie's letter alludes to tension between Mary and Sophia, and he asks to send Sophia to Miss Davis. Instead of being at the school as a pupil, however, Sophia's role at the school was to be that of a servant and assistant to Nancy Davis, Matilda's sister and the housekeeper at the school. Christie states that after "what transpired here last winter" and because "I cannot bear dissension in the household," Sophia could no longer remain with him. He continues:

You need not pay her anything for her work, this has been settled by me already with herself. She receives from me 15p month, which I think ought to keep her in clothing. I wish however, that she should wash weekly for us only. She might come for our things every Thursday. I am sorry to trouble you but I feel I have no other alternative. The poor girl is much attached to my children, & feels the separation, but using her own words, she says she cannot live here after what transpired last winter and that the last wish of my [wife] was that she should remain with you.

He concludes the letter by noting that if alternate lodging can be arranged for Mary, Sophia would be able to return to his household.<sup>71</sup>

The Bird family provides another example of how gender, class, and education operated in different ways within one family, and the impacts that could have on the lives, class, and cultural identities of siblings and half-siblings in Indigenous fur-trade families. HBC Chief Factor James Bird's first confirmed wife was Oo-menahomisk or Mary. She bore him four children, including his eldest sons James "Jemmy Jock" Bird, Jr. (1798) and George (c.1789-1800). Bird

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<sup>70</sup> Caroline Isbister Christie's date of death is listed as 22 June 1867 on her headstone at St. Andrew's Anglican Church cemetery near Winnipeg.

<sup>71</sup> Alexander Christie Jr. to Matilda Davis, 28 July 1867, P4274 fo.4, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.



then formed a relationship with Metis woman Elizabeth Montour, by whom he had twelve children. After Elizabeth's death in 1835, he quickly married English schoolmistress Mary Lowman in 1835, with whom he had a son and two daughters. The youngest daughter, Harriet, was born in 1842.<sup>72</sup> Bird's children, then were born over a span of almost fifty years by mothers of First Nations, Métis, and English maternal ancestries. Their births encompassed changes in the educational opportunities for Indigenous children in the HBC territories, as well as improvements in Bird's own material circumstances. When his eldest children were born, he was a low-ranking writer and trader, just beginning to work his way up the officer ranks of the Company. By the time he married Mary Lowman, however, he was a well-off retired Chief Factor with a sizeable estate at Red River.<sup>73</sup>

The differing life circumstances of the Bird family are reflected in the sons' lifestyles and education. Bird's older sons were raised at fur-trade posts before the establishment of schools in fur-trade country. James Bird Sr. had a reasonable collection of books that he ordered for both himself and his children, and he likely taught his older children in his home.<sup>74</sup> His younger children by his second wife, Elizabeth, probably attended school in Red River after his retirement to the settlement in 1824. His youngest children, by his third wife, were born in the Red River settlement and attended school there. Of the differences in status and education within families like the Bird family, Letitia Hargrave wrote:

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<sup>72</sup> Norma Jean Hall, "Hon. Dr. Curtis James Bird, St. Paul's (Middlechurch)," *Doing Canadian History n.0*, accessed 27 August 2017, <https://hallnjean.wordpress.com/sailors-worlds/the-red-river-resistance-and-the-creation-of-manitoba/legislative-assembly-of-assiniboia/hon-dr-curtis-james-bird-st-pauls-middlechurch/>

<sup>73</sup> "Bird, James Sr.," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. 1999, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/b/bird\\_james\\_sr.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/b/bird_james_sr.pdf).

<sup>74</sup> Fuchs, "Native Sons," 126.

Some people educate & make gentlemen of part of their family & leave the other savages. I had heard of Mr. Bird at Red River & his dandified sons. One day while the boats were here a common half breed came in to get orders for provisions for his boatmen. Mr H called him Mr Bird to my amazement. This was one who had not been educated & while his father & brothers are nobility at the Colony, he is a voyageur & sat at the table with the house servants here.<sup>75</sup>

Bird's eldest son, Jemmy Jock Bird, adopted a more Indigenous lifestyle and worked as a labourer. His youngest son, Dr. Curtis James Bird, was educated at St. John's College, attended medical training at Guy's Hospital, London, and became a doctor, a politician, and one of the founding members of the Winnipeg Board of Trade.<sup>76</sup>

The marriages the Bird children made were similarly diverse. Jemmy Jock's wives were First Nations, while his younger brothers George, Levi, and Joseph all married the mixed-ancestry daughters (Ann, Jane, and Elisabeth, respectively) of HBC surgeon and Governor of the Northern Department Thomas Thomas and his Cree wife Sarah.<sup>77</sup> Bird's white son, Dr. Curtis Bird, married first Frances Ross and then Annabelle Ross McDermot, both the white daughters of HBC Chief Factor Donald Ross. Bird's youngest surviving daughter, Elizabeth, married HBC Chief Trader Charles Griffin of Montreal.<sup>78</sup>

While the Bird children intermarried extensively with other fur-trade families (Sinclairs, Lanes, McDermots, Fidlers, McKenzies, Fletts), the differences in education and occupation

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<sup>75</sup> Macleod, *Letitia Hargrave Letters*, 84.

<sup>76</sup> Gordon Goldsborough, "Memorable Manitobans: Curtis James Bird," *Manitoba Historical Society*, accessed 09 November 2016, [http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/bird\\_cj.shtm](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/bird_cj.shtm).

<sup>77</sup> Joseph Bird, son of James Bird's by his second wife Elizabeth Montour, married Elisabeth Thomas, who was also a daughter of Thomas Thomas. Bruce Peel, "THOMAS, THOMAS," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 9, 2016, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/thomas\\_thomas\\_6E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/thomas_thomas_6E.html); Hall, "Hon. Dr. Curtis James Bird."

<sup>78</sup> "Griffin, Charles John," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. 2006,

[https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/g/griffin\\_charles.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/g/griffin_charles.pdf)

between the siblings are evident, and particularly the class divisions by gender. None of Bird's Indigenous sons rose to officer status within the Company. Jemmy Jock worked as a sometimes interpreter and clerk. He eventually retired to first the Piegan Reserve in Alberta and then the Medicine Lodge Blackfoot Agency in Montana, where he "lived not only amongst the Indians but became as one of them."<sup>79</sup> George Bird worked as George Simpson's body servant before retiring to farm in St. Paul's Parish at Red River. The other Indigenous Bird sons seem to have been employed in the middling ranks of the Company as interpreters, clerks, and tradesmen, becoming neither labourers nor officers.

The Indigenous Bird sisters, on the other hand, married well. Mary Bird had a child with Hector McKenzie in 1842, who was later a Chief Trader at Fort William.<sup>80</sup> Elizabeth Bird married James Sinclair, a sometime HBC employee and free trader who, along with Alexander Kennedy Isbister, travelled to England to challenge the HBC monopoly on trade in the 1840s. Sinclair later led a group of twenty-three mixed-descent families to settle in the HBC territories in Oregon. Letitia Bird married Charles McKay, who became a well-to-do entrepreneur after their move to Oregon with the Sinclair party.<sup>81</sup> Chloe Bird married James Flett, the Indigenous son of

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<sup>79</sup> *Edmonton Bulletin*, 16 May 1892. As cited in John C. Jackson, *Jemmy Jock Bird: Marginal Man on the Blackfoot Frontier* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2003), 161; David Smyth, "BIRD, JAMES (d. 1892)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 12, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 9, 2016, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/bird\\_james\\_1892\\_12E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/bird_james_1892_12E.html); Lawrence Barkwell, "James 'Jemmy Jock' Bird," Virtual Museum of Métis Heritage and Culture, accessed 12 September 2016, <http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/db/10933>.

<sup>80</sup> Hector and Mary did not marry, and Hector subsequently married Annie Ballantyne, the white sister of R.M. Ballantyne. "Hector McKenzie," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. 1999, [http://www.gov.mb.ca/cgi-bin/print\\_hit\\_bold.pl/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mckenzie\\_hector.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/cgi-bin/print_hit_bold.pl/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mckenzie_hector.pdf).

<sup>81</sup> Lawrence Barkwell, "The Red River Metis Settle in the Oregon Territory: Charles Richard McKay," Virtual Museum of Métis Heritage and Culture, accessed 07 May 2017, <http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/db/07427>.

Presbyterian missionary George Flett Jr. and Mary Ross.<sup>82</sup>

The complexities of race, class, and gender in the Bird family illustrate that the connections between class, education, gender, and ‘respectability’ could vary greatly even within fur-trade families. In particular, social mobility and respectability were much more difficult for Indigenous men to attain in the HBC territories. The barriers to promotion within the HBC limited the economic success and social status they could attain. When being evaluated against a model of British masculinity that privileged work ethic and the breadwinner role, these restrictions on success also limited the ‘manliness’ that Indigenous sons could attain in a British-dominated social order. This led some men, like Alexander Kennedy Isbister, Ranald McDonald, and the Bird sons-in-law, to seek their fortunes elsewhere. Others, however, like the Indigenous men who would finally attain officer rank in the 1860s, continued to perform respectability in the hopes that their accomplishments would eventually outweigh their race in the HBC corporate structure.

## **VI. ‘WILDNESS,’ INDIGENEITY, AND RESPECTABILITY**

Most of the historical studies of Indigenous fur-trade children have focused on the children of white fathers and Indigenous mothers. Indeed, in the first generation under study here, the children of white men who were fur-trade officers dominate the archival records about fur-trade children. However, the second generation of Indigenous fur-trade children in this study, who attended school from the 1850s through the 1870s, had a greater proportion of

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<sup>82</sup> Mary Ross was the daughter of Scotsman Alexander Ross and his Okanagan wife, Sally. Alvina Bock, “George Flett, Native Presbyterian Missionary: ‘Old Philosopher/Rev’d Gentleman,’” (MA Thesis, University of Manitoba/University of Winnipeg, 1997), 29.

parents who were both Indigenous. Their middle-class fur-trade parents, who were generally the children or grandchildren of fur-trade officers, had concerns about their children and their education that were specific to their position in the colonial society as Indigenous ladies and gentlemen.

For these Indigenous parents of Indigenous children, the issues of education, class, and race intersected with their anxiety over ‘wildness.’ The term ‘wild’ appears repeatedly in letters written by Indigenous parents. In their letters, education is touted as an antidote to the ‘wild’ behaviours their children learned from their First Nations peers at remote fur-trade post locations. In particular, and in the context of the fine class and racial divisions in fur-trade country, education was a means by which to distinguish elite Indigenous fur trade children from the ‘wild’ Indians, the francophone buffalo-hunting Metis, and less-well-off Indigenous farming families.

Former NWC employee, colonial official, and Scotsman Alexander Ross addresses these fine class and social divisions in his 1856 history of Red River. Ross and his wife Sally, the daughter of an Okanagan chief, settled at Red River in 1823 after Ross became a casualty of the cuts following the 1821 merger of the HBC and the NWC. The couple had twelve children. In his book, Ross, in spite of having fathered twelve Indigenous fur-trade children, wrote disparagingly about the ‘halfbreeds’ and Indigenous families of retired HBC traders at Red River.<sup>83</sup> In spite of his assessment, Sylvia Van Kirk argues in a study of the Alexander Ross family that his children “[appear] to have been one of the most successfully enculturated British-

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<sup>83</sup> Frits Pannekoek, “ROSS, ALEXANDER,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed December 20, 2016, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ross\\_alexander\\_8E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ross_alexander_8E.html).

Indian families in Rupert's Land."<sup>84</sup> The Ross children were Protestant, the boys were educated and followed in their father's footsteps to serve in public office, and the girls secured marriages to primarily elite white men. Although Van Kirk sees this as evidence that Ross pushed his children to assimilate into British middle-class society and reject their Indigenous heritage, this seems unlikely in the context of Red River society.<sup>85</sup>

It is clear from Ross's writings that he puts his own children, who were educated, Protestant, and raised according to middle-class British norms in a class separate from the children of Orkney labourers and Metis buffalo hunters. The "indolent, thoughtless and improvident" 'brules' that Ross describes in his writing were certainly not, to him, in the same social class as his own educated, elite Indigenous children.<sup>86</sup> It is reasonable to assume that Ross, as someone who worked in the fur trade and lived among Indigenous people, was sensitive to differentiations in class, occupation, lifestyle, and religion that historians have often "[glossed] over." Metis scholar Brenda Macdougall argues that, far from forcing his children to reject their dual cultural heritage, both Alexander and Sally Ross strove to provide their children with the opportunities and benefits suitable to the parents' own social status as a colonial elite and the daughter of a chief.<sup>87</sup> It is clear that there were recognized social divisions in the mid-

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<sup>84</sup> Sylvia Van Kirk, "'What if Mama is an Indian': The Cultural Ambivalence of the Alexander Ross family," in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis*, ed. Jennifer Brown and Jacqueline Peterson (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 208.

<sup>85</sup> Van Kirk, "What if Mama is an Indian," 208-209.

<sup>86</sup> Alexander Ross, *Fur Hunters of the Far West: a narrative of adventures in the Oregon and Rocky Mountains* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1855), 196, <http://eco.canadiana.ca.uml.idm.oclc.org/view/oocihm.40229>.

<sup>87</sup> Brenda Macdougall, "The Myth of Metis Cultural Ambivalence," in *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility and History*, ed. Nicole St. Onge, Caroline Podruchny, Brenda Macdougall (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 426-28.

nineteenth-century HBC territories between elite Indigenous children, and their less-well-off, less-educated, and more transient Metis cousins.

Letters written by Indigenous parents show that they were particularly sensitive to these gradations of race and class in the HBC territories. As evidenced by the Foss-Pelly affair and the scandalous Mrs. Maxwell discussed in Chapter 1, the balance between class and race in fur-trade country was complex and shifting. Indigenous parents were therefore anxious to inculcate in their children the markers of class and respectability that would distinguish their children from those of labourers and buffalo hunters, but also specifically to mark them as different and separate from ‘Indian’ children. Many mixed-descent children of fur-trade officers spent part or all of their childhood at isolated fur-trade posts. Often, the presence of other playmates of similar social class or background was limited, and children at the fort seem to have mixed freely whether they were white or Indigenous, the children of officers or of servants.

The children of Scottish fur trade wife Letitia Hargrave had many Indigenous playmates and nurses at York Factory. In 1843, the Hargraves hired a “little Indian girl” from Oxford House to act as a nurse and playmate for their eldest child, Joseph James. The girl, whom they “promptly named Nancy,” was “installed in the nursery with young Joseph James, who having examined her all round at length scrambled up to her shoulders and they are already as intimate as two young puppies.”<sup>88</sup> Similarly, another young Indigenous girl was secured as a companion for the Hargrave’s daughter, Letitia “Tash” in 1848. Letitia Hargrave wrote that Tash “has now another Indian girl to attend her, but she can speak no English and Tash can speak no

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<sup>88</sup> Macleod, *Letitia Hargrave Letters*, lxxviii.

Indian, so they are very quiet when they play together making houses and gardens.”<sup>89</sup> This language barrier was apparently overcome quickly, as later that year Hargrave wrote in a letter to her mother that, “Tash bids me tell you that she can speak Indian.”<sup>90</sup>

Although the Hargraves engaged Indigenous companions for their children, Letitia was ambivalent about these arrangements. She wrote to her mother in 1843 that “the children brought up here are so simple & ignorant that they are apt to get into ways that those at home escape, & require constant watching.”<sup>91</sup> While other non-Indigenous parents likely shared Hargrave’s mixed feelings about her children’s interactions with Indigenous children, there is no evidence that white parents felt any anxiety that their non-Indigenous children would be confused for ‘Indians’ or that their Indigenous playmates would taint their future prospects. Similarly, white fathers of Indigenous children do not express anxiety about ‘wildness’ in their offspring. Although these men may have attributed some of their children’s perceived failings to their Indigenous ancestry, they do not seem to have shared the same concerns as Indigenous parents about their children being ‘contaminated’ by interactions with the children of Indigenous servants.

Indigenous parents, however, outlined clear anxieties in their letters over the fact that their children were growing up ‘wild’ in the company of First Nations children at remote fur-trade posts. The antidote to this behaviour is similar in the letters of several parents; the first is to remove the children to ‘civilization,’ and the second is an education that will teach them religion, manners, and academic skills. In 1865, Indigenous clergyman Henry Budd, then

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<sup>89</sup> Macleod, *Letitia Hargrave Letters*, cxvii-cxix.

<sup>90</sup> Macleod, *Letitia Hargrave Letters*, 240.

<sup>91</sup> Macleod, *Letitia Hargrave Letters*, 144.



stationed as a Church Missionary Society cleric at the Nepowewin mission along the Saskatchewan River, sent his son James to school in Red River and his daughter Eliza to Matilda Davis's school. Budd wrote to Davis of Eliza that, "I fear you will find her a wild little girl; but when kept under proper restraint and away from home, I trust, she will soon lose the habit of running about which she acquired from the Indian children here; and when she is thoroughly initiated into the school regulations, I think you will find her pretty quick of apprehension, she is rather a sharp little thing."<sup>92</sup>

Other parents had similar concerns. In 1869, W.L Hardisty sent his young son, Richard, to the Davis School.<sup>93</sup> He wrote to Davis, noting that she must have had "trouble" with Richard, and blaming his poor behaviour on the influence of the "Indians who are always about the house."<sup>94</sup> Hardisty also requested that he be allowed to send another son, Frank, to the Davis School in a couple of years, asking if she would be "willing to undertake the trouble of teaching him or rather breaking him for a couple of years, but I must warn you he is a much wilder boy than Richard."<sup>95</sup> Similarly, Hector Finlayson wrote to his cousin George Davis that, "I would like to go to Red River, for my boys are growing up as wild as deer, and perfect Indians. Lord knows we are Ingines enough. They are giving me a good deal of anxiety. If I were at Red River I could keep them at school every day."<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Henry Budd to Matilda Davis, 3 July 1865, P2342 fo. 15, Matilda Davis Family Collection, AM.

<sup>93</sup> William L. Hardisty was the son of HBC Chief Factor Richard Hardisty and his Indigenous wife Margaret Sutherland. William Hardisty was married to Mary Ann Allen, the Indigenous daughter of HBC Captain James Scarborough.

<sup>94</sup> W.L. Hardisty to Matilda Davis, 20 November 1869, P2342 fo.22, Matilda Davis Family Collection, AM.

<sup>95</sup> W.L. Hardisty to Matilda Davis, 20 November 1869, P2342 fo.22, Matilda Davis Family Collection, AM.

<sup>96</sup> Hector Finlayson to George Davis, 4 December 1878, P2342 fo.11. Emphasis in original. Hector Finlayson was the brother of Joseph Finlayson. Joseph Finlayson was a half-brother to George Davis, by way of his mother, Nancy Davis and Nicol Finlayson. Nancy and Nicol formed a relationship after the death of John Davis in 1822, and may

The extent to which Indigenous fur-trade families and individuals had connections to their Indigenous kin and cultures varied. By the end of the period under examination, the wives of fur traders were more likely to be Indigenous women who were one or more generations removed from their First Nations grandmothers. This may have meant they did not live near their kin who practiced traditional Indigenous lifestyles, and had fewer close ties to family members who could pass along Indigenous skills and cultural knowledge. For children who spent long periods of time away from home for school, moreover, their connections to their Indigenous heritage may have been tenuous. Alexander Christie Jr. and Matilda Davis, for example, were both sent to Britain at very young ages and remained there for decades. It is unlikely that either of them retained their mother's Indigenous languages, stories, or cultural practices.<sup>97</sup>

In other families, however, Indigenous identities and heritage persisted, and mixed-descent sons and daughters were often not far removed from their First Nations heritage. Some fur-trade men continued to marry First Nations wives. Geographically, some children lived at fur-trade posts in the lands of their First Nations kin and maintained ties to their First Nations families. Physically, mixed-ancestry children often looked similar to their First Nations relatives, with darker skin, dark hair, and dark eyes. Children spoke Indigenous languages, learned to hunt and trap, to process hides and furs, to gather foods, and to sew. They undoubtedly learned Indigenous cultural and religious practices as well from their kin, their nannies and house staff, and their playmates.

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have had up to three children together. Joseph is acknowledged as 'brother' and a member of the family in the family correspondence.

<sup>97</sup> Christie sent his son, Alexander Jr., to school in Scotland at age 4. Alexander Christie to Donald Ross 3 Jan 1844, MS0635 File 22, Donald Ross Fonds, BC Archives.

The term 'wild' implies something innate, savage, and animal-like and was a label that middle-class fur-trade parents did not want associated with their elite Indigenous children. That is not, however, meant to imply that Indigenous fur-trade families of primarily British and various First Nations ancestries dispensed with their Indigenous heritage in this period. Strong legacies of indigeneity existed alongside British middle-class social and cultural norms. Indigenous parents who were sensitive to the intersections of race, class, and respectability in the HBC territories must have perceived the possibility that their children could embrace their Indigenous heritage and integrate into First Nations groups, as many children of mixed-ancestry had done before them. Growing up with other Indigenous children at remote fur-trade posts, with no educational facilities to correct this supposed 'wildness' was a threat to the middle-class aspirations of the Indigenous elite in the HBC territories.

Although Indigenous and non-Indigenous parents shared similar concerns about class, respectability, and opportunities for their children, anxiety about demarcating Indigenous children from the 'wild' Indians and Indigenous labourers was limited to the middle-class and elite Indigenous parents. White parents of white children were not threatened by the associations made between race and savagery. Unlike in India, where white imperial parents were concerned that theirs and their children's racial and social status would be tainted by contact with Indigenous children, the parents of white fur-trade children expressed no concerns that their children's 'whiteness' would be undermined by contact with their First Nations and Metis playmates.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Buettner, *Empire Families*, 74.

White fathers expressed many race-based concerns about their children, and particularly in relation to their sons – about their work ethic, about their intellect, about their employment prospects. They expressed fewer concerns about their daughters. Perhaps these fathers were, as a group, less sensitive to the class and race-based social nuances in the HBC territories. Perhaps they felt that their power and authority as white men in a colonial setting would be able to positively influence their sons’ employment prospects and their daughters’ marriages. Perhaps, as products of the metropole, their priorities for their children were different from those of Indigenous parents of Indigenous fur-trade children. Whatever the case, the elite Indigenous parents of Indigenous fur-trade children were alone in expressing anxiety over ‘wildness’ in their children. They advocated education as a specific antidote to this behaviour.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

Parents sought education for their Indigenous children to provide them with access to the best opportunities available in a colonial setting that, by the 1850s, was beginning the transformation into a settler-colonial society. Education gave sons the best access to upwardly mobile employment prospects within the HBC, and equipped daughters with the attributes expected of Victorian middle-class wives and mothers. Education also taught both sons and daughters how to perform as middle-class ladies and gentlemen in an imperial context. The lived realities of life in fur-trade country challenged how Indigenous children could achieve these objectives, and racial stereotypes were in constant tension with the achievements accessed through education. This did not mean that Indigenous children dispensed with their Indigenous heritage. As I will discuss in later chapters, they continued to practice indigeneity

through strong kinship networks, language, and traditional skills. For parents of Indigenous children, however, education remained the best means by which to ensure their children's success in Red River, Oregon, and the territories in between.

**CHAPTER 3 - INDIGENOUS FUR-TRADE STUDENTS AT SCHOOL,**  
**PART I: PROVIDING A HOME AWAY FROM HOME**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

In 1831, three Indigenous fur-trade children sailed aboard the ship *Prince of Wales* from Moose Factory to London. William J. Christie (age seven), Donald Mactavish (age twelve) and David Vincent Stewart (age eight) were all Indigenous sons of HBC officers. The three boys travelled without any family members to escort them on their voyage.<sup>1</sup> Upon arriving in London, the boys travelled to different schools throughout Britain, and their lives thereafter took different paths. William J. Christie returned to North America, and eventually became a high-ranking HBC officer and Treaty Commissioner in western Canada. After attending his Indigenous uncle's school in northeast London, David Vincent Stewart went on to become a schoolmaster and industrialist and lived the rest of his adult life in England. Donald Mactavish followed his brother, Duncan, from Inverness to Australia where he worked as a civil servant.

The following two chapters examine the lived educational experiences of elite Indigenous fur-trade students. This chapter considers which schools children went to, how they got there, where they lived, and who looked after them while they were at school. For the most part, children had little control over these aspects of their schooling. Adults made decisions about where they went to school and how they got there. Children were often unaware of the adult-to-adult conversations and decisions that were happening on their behalf. Therefore, much of what can be deciphered about these aspects of their educational experiences are gleaned from adults' correspondence, bills, ships' logs, and other records that allow me to re-

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<sup>1</sup> 1831, Ships' Logs, *Prince of Wales*, C.1/1824 fo. 2-2d, Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA).

construct those aspects of children's experience they did not address in their letters, or, given the limited perspectives of children and youth, were not aware of in the first place. The second chapter will explore what children learned at school.

In considering children's experiences of education, I work to prioritize the voices and perspectives of the fur-trade students themselves. To do this, I draw in part on letters written by the students themselves to explore how Indigenous fur-trade children experienced going to school, and how their educational experiences both challenged and aligned with their status as racialized colonial ladies and gentlemen. There are challenges to using these sources to explore children's lived experiences and prioritizing their perspectives on their day-to-day lives. Firstly, as outlined in Chapter 6, children's letters were shaped by nineteenth-century conventions of letter writing, their understandings of what their parents wanted to know about, and the limits of their own emotional and intellectual development. Their thoughts and emotions as recorded in correspondence were therefore already filtered for a specific reading audience. Consequently, in approaching these letters as historical sources I read for both what children wrote home about and for what they did not.

The second challenge to writing about children's lives at school is trying to trace the children's educational paths within the context of the limited imperial archive. The dearth of records about children in general, and about Indigenous fur-trade children in particular makes it difficult to identify complete educational or life paths. For most of the Indigenous fur-trade students in this study, I have partial records about some of their education. Only rarely have I been able to trace an educational path from learning at home or at a young age, to a specific school or schools, and then on to the workforce or marriage.

In some cases, I am able to make historical conjectures about when and where the children went to school. For example, when Alexander Christie Sr. was appointed the Chief Factor of Upper Fort Garry and Governor of Assiniboia in 1833, his family relocated from York Factory to Upper Fort Garry.<sup>2</sup> At the time, his sons Alexander Jr. and William were already at school in Scotland, but his younger daughters Margaret and Mary lived with their parents. In 1832, Christie committed his support to Reverend David Jones' new boarding school for boys and girls at Red River, and promised to send his two daughters.<sup>3</sup> By 1841, Margaret was at school in England, and Mary was sent to join her.<sup>4</sup> Given the family's commitment to education, their close proximity to Jones's school, and Christie's prior commitment to send his daughters to the new school at Red River it is reasonable to assume the girls attended the Red River Academy in advance of being sent to school in England. There is no clear and specific evidence, however, that the Christie girls were students at the Red River Academy nor is there information available on what schools they attended in Britain.

Fourthly, there are challenges posed by the gendered nature of the colonial archive. Antoinette Burton and Durba Ghosh have assessed how women, and racialized women in particular, are silenced and erased in the colonial archive.<sup>5</sup> This is also true of children. The

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<sup>2</sup> "Christie, Alexander," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev.2002,

[https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/christie\\_alexander1809-1853.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/christie_alexander1809-1853.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> George Simpson to Reverend David Jones, 14 July 1832, transcript, P7540 fo.20, Transcript of correspondence between Reverend David Jones and George Simpson, Archives of Manitoba (AM).

<sup>4</sup> G.P de T. Glazebrook, ed., *The Hargrave Correspondence, 1821-1843* (New York: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1968), 365.

<sup>5</sup> For more on the intersections of gender and race in the colonial archive, see Antoinette Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home and History in Late Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Antoinette Burton, "Archive Stories: Gender in the Making of Imperial and Colonial Histories," in *Gender and Empire*, ed. Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 281-292; Durba Ghosh, "Decoding the Nameless: Gender, subjectivity, and historical methodologies in reading the archives of colonial India," in *A New*



records and perspectives of children were marginalized in the colonial and imperial archives. The records of the school run by Indigenous fur-trade daughter and schoolteacher Matilda Davis at St. Andrew's are an anomaly in the historical record. They are a set of records about a girls' private school, its Indigenous mistress, and her primarily Indigenous students. For the most part, there is only scant evidence available about the other girls' schools at Red River.<sup>6</sup> Some information is available on Catholic schools run by nuns at St. Boniface, Victoria, and Willamette thanks to the institutional archives of the dioceses and nuns' orders. Although I have several letters written by Indigenous sons at school in Britain, I was unable to locate a similar volume of letters written by Indigenous daughters who went to school in England and Scotland.<sup>7</sup> There is a gender imbalance, then, in the records that have been left behind by fur-trade children and consequently I know less about Indigenous fur-trade daughters' experiences in British boarding schools than I do about that of fur trade sons.

Even working within the parameters of these limits on accessing children's voices, examining children's lived educational experiences offers insight into how their lives and education were shaped by British imperial norms of race, class, and gender. It also highlights how the presence of Indigenous fur-trade children at school, and particularly in schools outside of the HBC territories, challenged the ideas about place and race in the British Empire.

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*Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660–1840*, ed. Kathleen Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 297-316.

<sup>6</sup> These schools include the St. Cross School run by Ann Benton Mills in the 1850s, a boarding school run by widow Mary Ingham, and a school founded by francophone Metis sisters Angelique and Marguerite Nolin at St. Francois-Xavier in the 1830s.

<sup>7</sup> Mary Finlayson attended school in Aberdeen in 1852. According to Letitia Hargrave in 1848, Mary and her two brothers were put in the care of an aunt. Letitia Mactavish Hargrave to James Hargrave, 18 March 1852 and Letitia Mactavish Hargrave to Letitia Mactavish, 1 April 1848, transcript, MSS 15 Box 2 Fo.4, Margaret Arnett McLeod Papers, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (UMASC).

Furthermore, how Indigenous children's education was managed and supported by family and other adults continues to demonstrate how trans-imperial Indigenous fur-trade family and kin networks connected the HBC territories with the Canadian colonies and Britain.

## II. CHOOSING SCHOOLS

The first step in getting children to school was to choose where they would go to school. A number of factors played into which schools middling and elite fur-trade parents selected for their children. As outlined in Chapter 2, gender and finances were relevant, as were the parents' own educational histories. The distance of schools to extended kin networks and the type of education offered were also all relevant factors. All other things being equal, however, fur-trade parents relied on schools' reputations and the advice of friends, family, and colleagues in choosing schools for their children.

The reputations of schools were a frequent topic of discussion amongst fur-trade families. Particularly in the HBC territories, where news circulated relatively quickly via correspondence and the HBC canoe brigades, schools acquired reputations that influenced parents' assessments of whether or not a particular school was suitable. In the 1840s, the Red River Academy had difficulty attracting pupils. This was due in large part to the harsh discipline at the school under headmaster John Macallum, and his successor Thomas Cockran's reputed drinking problem.<sup>8</sup> The Presbyterian Pritchard School at Kildonan, which was established by

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<sup>8</sup> In 1849, on the same day that John Macallum died, Bishop David Anderson arrived in Rupert's Land. Anderson bought the Red River Academy and re-established it as the St. John's Boys' Collegiate. He put the school under the direction of Mr. Pridham and Thomas Cockran. Marion Bryce, "Early Red River Culture," *Transactions of the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba* 1, no.57 (February 1901): 12, <http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/transactions/1/redriverculture.shtml>.

John Pritchard and later continued by his son, Samuel Pritchard, also had an uneven reputation in the fur-trade community. Caroline Isbister Christie reported to Matilda Davis in 1864 that she had not heard “favourable accounts” of the school, then re-opened under the direction of Samuel Pritchard in 1862. The school’s reputation may have contributed to its short life in its second incarnation as it merged with the St. John’s Boys’ School in 1866.<sup>9</sup>

In the Columbia District, disputes between Reverend Herbert Beaver, the HBC chaplain at Fort Vancouver, and Dr. John McLoughlin, the Chief Factor, undermined the reputation of the post school. McLoughlin established the school in 1832 to accommodate the growing number of Indigenous children at Fort Vancouver.<sup>10</sup> In 1835, newly appointed HBC chaplain Beaver arrived at Fort Vancouver, and McLoughlin and Beaver spent the next three years clashing over the school before Beaver was dismissed in 1838. Although the impact of these disputes on the students was negligible, parents were frustrated by the tensions between Beaver and McLoughlin as both fought for control of the school. John Work, whose two daughters were students at the school, wrote to Edward Ermatinger that, “there are ample means of getting my girls educated pretty well here were it not for the damned bickering.”<sup>11</sup> Work, like several other fur-trade parents in the Columbia district, opted to place his daughters at a Methodist school in the Willamette Valley in order to avoid becoming embroiled in the

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<sup>9</sup> Bryce, “Early Red River Culture,” 12.

<sup>10</sup> Archibald MacDonald also established a school at Fort Colville around the same time. The purpose of the school was to educate his own children, but other children at the fort attended the school as well. Jean Barman and Bruce Watson, “Fort Colville’s Fur Trade Families and the Dynamics of Race in the Pacific Northwest,” *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 90, no.3 (Summer 1999): 142.

<sup>11</sup> Juliet Pollard, “The Making of the Metis in the Pacific Northwest: Fur Trade Children Race, Class and Gender,” (PhD. diss, University of British Columbia, 1990), 300.

dispute.<sup>12</sup>

After Beaver's 1838 departure the school fell under the jurisdiction of Chief Trader James Douglas, who was put in charge of Fort Vancouver during McLoughlin's furlough.<sup>13</sup> By the following year, the school was reported to be in a "general state of disorganization from neglect."<sup>14</sup> Any hope that the school's reputation would be rehabilitated under Douglas's direction were dashed when schoolmaster John Fisher Robinson was accused of sexually molesting female students at the school. Francis Ermatinger reported to his brother Edward Ermatinger in Upper Canada that:

From discoveries that were made by Mr. Douglas, [the schoolmaster] was this year flogged in the most public manner twice, yet not half severe enough for the villain. He ought to have been shot....The schoolmaster, it would appear, has been in the habit of taking advantage of the female part of his pupils.<sup>15</sup>

Mixed education in the Fort Vancouver school classroom thereafter came to an end. A gender-segregated system like that already in place at the Red River Academy was put into effect, and the female pupils were afterwards taught separately by schoolmistresses.<sup>16</sup>

In part it was such scandals and gossip, combined with perceived superiority of metropolitan education, that led some fur-trade parents to look abroad to educate their children. When local schools were deemed insufficient, parents often sought advice from

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<sup>12</sup> Lois Halliday McDonald, *Fur Trade Letters of Francis Ermatinger* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1980), 203; Pollard, "Metis in the Pacific Northwest," 299.

<sup>13</sup> John McLoughlin was on furlough in 1838-1839, having been called to London by the Committee to give an account of the affairs of the region. James Douglas was promoted from Chief Trader to Chief Factor in his absence. W. Kaye Lamb, "McLOUGHLIN, JOHN," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed July 13, 2017, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcloughlin\\_john\\_8E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcloughlin_john_8E.html).

<sup>14</sup> Stephen Woolworth, "'The School is Under My Direction': The Politics of Education at Fort Vancouver, 1836-1838," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 104 no.2 (Summer 2003): 246.

<sup>15</sup> McDonald, *Francis Ermatinger*, 215-216.

<sup>16</sup> Pollard, "Metis in the Pacific Northwest," 300.

friends or family as to where their fur-trade children should go to school. Alexander Kennedy Isbister, who was brother-in-law to Alexander Christie Jr. by Isbister's sister, Caroline Isbister Christie, was likely consulted by the extended Christie family as to which Scottish school they should send the Christie grandsons. Isbister also served as an advisor for his Christie nephews once they moved on from The Nest Academy in Jedburgh, Scotland around 1870. He helped James Christie pursue a medical degree, and both James and William Christie lived at his home in London for a period after they left The Nest.<sup>17</sup>

The Davis family also relied on Isbister to advise them as to where to send Matilda Davis's nephew, Albert Hodgson, to school in England.<sup>18</sup> Albert Hodgson originally arrived in England in 1860, where he attended an unnamed school while boarding with Miss Janet Braby.<sup>19</sup> When concerns arose about the harsh discipline at the school, Miss Braby and Matilda Davis consulted with Isbister. On the advice of Isbister, who knew Forest School headmaster Frederick Guy, Albert was moved to Forest School in Walthamstow in 1863.<sup>20</sup> Forest School was also recommended by retired Rupert's Land missionary Reverend William Mason, who was then living in London with his Indigenous wife Sophia Thomas Mason and their children. Mason advised Braby that he planned to send his own son to Forest School the next year.<sup>21</sup> Although

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<sup>17</sup> Alexander Christie Jr. to Roderick Macfarlane, 7 March 1870, MG 29 A-11, vol.1 file 2, Roderick Macfarlane Fonds, Library and Archives Canada (LAC).

<sup>18</sup> There do not seem to be any kin relationships that unite the Isbisters and the Chrisites. Matilda Davis was, however, in contact with Mary Kennedy Isbister when they both lived in London. Matilda's brother, George was also seemingly engaged to Alexander and Caroline Isbister's sister Eliza prior to his 1855 marriage to Catherine Birston. Eliza lived in London with her mother and brother, Alexander. Mrs. Isbister offered to pay for George's passage to London if he still considered himself to be engaged to her daughter. Unnamed author [Matilda Davis] to unnamed recipient [George Davis], n.d. [prior to 1854], P2343 fo.6, Matilda Davis Family Collection, AM.

<sup>19</sup> Davis paid Braby 6.0.0 in Jan 1859, paid for her washing April 1859, paid her for bonnets & ribbon in April 1859. "Jan 1857-1859," Notebook 5, P4715 fo.1, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>20</sup> Frederick Guy to Matilda Davis, 6 April 1863, P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>21</sup> Janet Braby to Matilda Davis, 16 May 1862, P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

there is no record of such an exchange, Davis probably also sought counsel from her cousin, Henry Rosser, who managed her affairs in London. Rosser lived near Forest School and was named as Albert's guardian in school documents.<sup>22</sup>

Francis Ermatinger consulted extensively with his brother, Edward, as to what to do with his first-born son, Lawrence.<sup>23</sup> Ermatinger had initially placed his son in the care of Dr. John McLoughlin at Fort Vancouver, where Lawrence attended McLoughlin's school. When Lawrence failed to progress under McLoughlin's care, however, Ermatinger blamed the quality of the school and withdrew Lawrence without notice in 1836. After spending a few months with his son, perhaps for the first time since the child was born, Ermatinger wrote to his brother that:<sup>24</sup>

[Lawrence] is vicious and requires a curb. At Vancouver he remained too long; not that I have to complain of the kindness of Mr. McLoughlin's family, as far as giving him plenty to eat and, I believe, good will, but they have so many about them, of all tribes, that they cannot pay the attention to them that children require. The consequences are that their morals are not too good, nor their habits of cleanliness charming. Lawrence has imbibed the vile practice of piddling his bed and he must absolutely be broke of it before you can recommend him to a decent one.<sup>25</sup>

Francis arranged for his son to travel to St. Thomas, where he was put in the care of his Uncle Edward. In a letter carried by Lawrence, Francis wrote to Edward that his goal in sending Lawrence eastward was to "give the little fellow every chance in my power to improve himself in the common branches of education and ultimately to gain a livelihood in some honest line of

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<sup>22</sup> Email to author, Brian Hardcastle, Forest School, 27 August 2014.

<sup>23</sup> Lawrence Ermatinger (b. c.1827) was the son of Francis Ermatinger and an Okanagan woman known as 'Cleo.' The McLoughlins had cared for Lawrence since he was a small child. McDonald, *Francis Ermatinger*, 173.

<sup>24</sup> Lawrence was removed from his mother's care at a young age and sent to live with the McLoughlins. It would appear that, apart from visits to Fort Vancouver, Ermatinger had little to do with his son's upbringing until he removed him from the school. Lawrence then spent a few months travelling with his father before Francis arranged for the boy to be sent to his brother in St. Thomas.

<sup>25</sup> McDonald, *Francis Ermatinger*, 198.

business.” Given that Lawrence would be arriving in St. Thomas with no warning or further discussion with his brother, Francis left the details of Lawrence’s education to Edward’s discretion. He wrote to his brother Edward that, “I leave it to you to place him as you think best. You know my means, and the object is to obtain the most good for him at the least possible expense, bearing in mind, however that I do not wish him to be neglected to save expense.”<sup>26</sup> In the absence of parental guidance, Francis relied on his brother to make decisions about Lawrence’s education.

Ermatinger married Catherine Sinclair in 1842, and soon after their only child, Frances ‘Fanny’ Maria was born.<sup>27</sup> When it came time to plan for Fanny’s education, Francis again considered sending his child out of the HBC territories for an education. He wrote to his brother in 1845 that:

Our little daughter is growing a lively child...the education of the child costs me much serious thought. The schools got up here are such a mixt nature, and the mere teaching a child to read and write I look upon as nothing. I want a good moral education, and the mothers of this country have not themselves been well enough brought up to attend it. It is true they are much better than they were; still, to my ideas, are awfully deficient.<sup>28</sup>

It is unclear where Fanny went to school.<sup>29</sup> In 1853, Edward wrote to Francis at Fort William that Fanny was ill. This suggests that, as with Lawrence, Francis had put his daughter in the care of his brother in order for her to attend school at or near St. Thomas.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> McDonald, *Francis Ermatinger*, 198.

<sup>27</sup> Catherine Sinclair was the daughter of William Sinclair II and Mary McKay. Frances Maria was born 1843. “Ermatinger, Francis,” HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev.1999, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/e/ermatinger\\_francis.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/e/ermatinger_francis.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> McDonald, *Francis Ermatinger*, 268.

<sup>29</sup> It is unclear where Frances was educated. Ermatinger was away on furlough in England and Canada in 1846-1847, and was posted to Fort Chipewyan in charge of the Athabasca District upon his return. While Francis was away, Catherine and Frances stayed first at Willamette and then Fort Colville, near Catherine’s grandmother (Margeurite Waddens McKay McLoughlin, mother of Mary Wadden McKay Sinclair) at Fort Vancouver. In 1849,

Nicol Finlayson similarly served as an advisor to his Indigenous family in the HBC territories. Finlayson retired to Scotland in 1854 where his youngest daughter, Mary, by his third wife Betsey Sinclair, was already at school in Aberdeen.<sup>31</sup> John Finlayson, the son of Nicol and his first wife, a Cree woman named Nancy Ka-na Ka-she-waite-was, wrote to his father in Nairn to ask for his father's advice on whether or not he should send his own son to school in Scotland.<sup>32</sup> Nicol demurred, advising John to keep his son in Rupert's Land. "I would not advise you to send your boy to this country to school," Finlayson counselled his son, "as few Natives, educated in this country can turn out well...If there be missionaries (Wesleyan) at the Pic you could not send home the boy to a better school where he would be taught useful information."<sup>33</sup> Nicol Finlayson's daughter, Mary, and sons Roderick and Kenneth had all attended school in Scotland. Nicol's perspective on education for his Indigenous grandson, however, was perhaps qualified by John's wife's First Nations' heritage, by John Finlayson's own financial resources, or by Nicol's own disappointment in his educated sons' prospects in North

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Catherine and Frances joined Francis at Norway House. In 1850, after Catherine gave birth to a child that was not by her husband, Francis and Fanny went by canoe brigade to Montreal and St. Thomas for a two-year leave of absence. During this leave of absence, Catherine resided with her parents at Lac La Pluie. In 1852, Catherine and Francis reunited at Fort William, and the next year the couple retired to St. Thomas. McDonald, *Francis Ermatinger*, 286-290; "Ermatinger, Francis," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev.1999, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/e/ermatinger\\_francis.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/e/ermatinger_francis.pdf). For more on Marguerite Waddens McKay McLoughlin, see John A. Hussey, "The Women of Fort Vancouver," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 92, no.3 (Fall 1991): 265-308.

<sup>30</sup> McDonald, *Francis Ermatinger*, 291.

<sup>31</sup> Mary Finlayson was the daughter of Nicol's third wife, Elizabeth Kennedy Finlayson (c.1810-1842). Elizabeth Kennedy was the aunt of Alexander Kennedy Isbister. She had three children with Nicol Finlayson – Roderick (c.1830) and Kenneth (c.1833), and Mary (b. c.1839). Mary was attending school in Aberdeen in 1851. "1851 Scotland Census," database, *Ancestry.com* (<https://www.ancestry.com>, accessed 29 June 2017), entry for Mary Finlayson, Parish: Old Machar; ED: 21; Page: 20; Line: 14; Roll: CSSCT1851\_40; "Finlayson, Nicol," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev.1999, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/f/finlayson\\_nicol.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/f/finlayson_nicol.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> For an account of John Finlayson, his wife Angeliqwe Geshagesic Shebagijig Finlayson, and family see James Fortier, "Ojibway Family History: Finlaysons of Long Lake and Pic River bands of Ojibway," accessed 11 June 2017, [http://www.turtle-island.com/native/family-roots.html#New\\_Finlayson](http://www.turtle-island.com/native/family-roots.html#New_Finlayson).

<sup>33</sup> Nicole Finlayson to John Finlayson, 6 April 1866, E.137/1, John Finlayson Fonds, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, (HBCA).



America and Scotland.<sup>34</sup> John Finlayson, however, like many other fur-trade parents, relied on his father's advice as to where to send his child to school.

#### IV. GETTING TO SCHOOL

Getting to school was one of the first challenges (or adventures) for fur-trade students. As with choosing where they would go to school, children had little say in how they got to school. Sometimes they were accompanied on their voyage by parents or other relatives. Others were put in the care of friends, or were escorted by a paid companion. Fur-trade students' voyages to and from school were almost always facilitated in some part by their kin and social networks.

Parents who lived in the HBC territories could sometimes make short trips to Red River, Victoria, or Fort Vancouver to escort their children to or from school. Mary Isbister travelled from Norway House to Red River in 1836 in order to bring her children home from school at Red River.<sup>35</sup> William J. Hardisty escorted daughter Isabella to Red River, where she stayed with her grandmother, Margaret Sutherland Hardisty, until she went to the Miss Davis School.<sup>36</sup> Samuel McKenzie accompanied four of his daughters from Île à la Crosse to Matilda Davis's

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<sup>34</sup> Mary Finlayson married banker and lawyer James Dunbar Lamb in Nairn c. 1858. Nicol Finlayson to John Finlayson, May 1859, E.137/2 p1-2, John Finlayson Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>35</sup> Alexander Kennedy Isbister returned to Rupert's Land in the spring of 1834 at age twelve. For the next four years, he attended the Red River Academy. It is likely that his siblings Caroline (b.1825), Eliza (b.1829) and James (birthdate unknown) also attended the Red River Academy). For the account of Thomas Isbister's death and Mary Isbister's travels see W.J. Healy, *Women of Red River: Being A Book Written From The Recollections Of Women Surviving From The Red River Era* (Winnipeg: The Women's Canadian Club, 1923, reprint Peguis Publishers 1987), 177. For information on Alexander Kennedy Isbister's return to Red River, see William Smith to Elizabeth Ballenden, 28 April 1834, H2-77-2-1 (A.36/8 fo.145), Will and Legal Papers for Kennedy, Alexander, Officers' and Servants' Wills, HBCA. For list of Isbister children, see "Isbister, Thomas," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. 1987, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/i/isbister\\_thomas.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/i/isbister_thomas.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> William Hardisty to Isabella Hardisty, 12 November 1865, P4724 fo.3, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

school in 1868. James and Eliza Anderson, the children of Chief Factor A.C. Anderson and his Indigenous wife Elizabeth Birnie, travelled as far as Fort Langley with their father. From there they proceeded on to Fort Victoria under the supervision of James Douglas.<sup>37</sup>

When children were sent further afield for their education their fathers often made use of their furlough, or leaves of absence from the HBC, to escort their children at school.

Alexander Christie Sr. went on furlough to England in 1823. Given that he sent his son, Alexander Jr., who was born in 1818, to Scotland for school at age four, Alexander Jr. likely accompanied his father to Britain in 1823.<sup>38</sup> In 1822, Chief Factor John Davis boarded the ship the *Eddystone* at York Factory, en route to England. With him were his two daughters, Matilda and Elizabeth, who were around three and five years old.<sup>39</sup> Alexander Kennedy escorted all of his sons and one of his grandsons to school in St. Margaret's Hope in the Orkneys over the course of three separate trips to Britain.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, in 1839 Chief Trader Donald Manson of Fort McLoughlin used his year of furlough to escort his son, William, to school in England, and in the

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<sup>37</sup> James R. Anderson, "Notes and Comments on Early Days and Events in British Columbia, Washington and Oregon (c.1914-1925), MS 1912 p140, BC Archives. Hereafter James Anderson Manuscript. James R. Anderson was the son of A.C. Anderson of India and England and his wife Eliza Birnie, the daughter of HBC clerk James Birnie and Charlot Beaulieu. A.C. Anderson was the brother of HBC Chief Factor James Anderson. James R. Anderson and his sister, Eliza, were thereby cousins of Alexander, James and Eliza Anderson who attended school at Red River.

<sup>38</sup> Alexander Christie Sr. to Donald Ross, 3 January 1844, MS0635 File 22, Donald Ross Papers, BC Archives; "Christie, Alexander," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. 2002, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/christie\\_alexander1809-1853.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/christie_alexander1809-1853.pdf).

<sup>39</sup> 1822, Ship's Log, *Eddystone*, C.1/317 fo.4, HBCA.

<sup>40</sup> Kennedy escorted two of his sons, likely John and Alexander Jr., to Scotland in 1819 aboard the *Prince of Wales*. In 1829, he took Roderick and grandson Alexander Kennedy Isbister to Scotland, again aboard the *Prince of Wales*. George and William Kennedy also attended the St. Margaret's Hope School, although they are not listed in any of the ships' logs for their father's trips to Britain. They likely travelled with Kennedy on his 1825 voyage, but there is no list in the ship log for women and children travelling aboard for that trip. 1819, Ship's Log, *Prince of Wales*, C.1/788, fos. 2-2d; 1825, Ship's Log, *Prince of Wales*, C.1/806, fos. 1d-3. 1829, Ship's Log, *Prince of Wales*, C.1/818, fos. 2-3, HBCA. See also correspondence with brother-in-law James Allan of St. Margaret's Hope, Will and Legal Papers for Kennedy, Alexander, H2-77-2-1, HBCA.

1840s Mary Barnston travelled with her father George to Scotland.<sup>41</sup>

Other families made the trip together to place children at school, and used the opportunity to re-connect with family members who lived outside of the HBC territories. After being dismissed from his position following the 1821 merger of the North-West Company (NWC) and the HBC, former Nor-Wester Charles McKenzie and his wife Mary McKay McKenzie took their two daughters with them to Montreal in 1823. Charles and Mary married at St. Gabriel's Presbyterian Church, and baptized their children.<sup>42</sup> On their departure, they left their daughters Julia and Margaret in the care of Mary's sister and brother-in-law in order for the girls to attend school.<sup>43</sup> William Joseph Christie and Mary Sinclair Christie made taking their sons to school at The Nest Academy in Jedburgh, Scotland a family event. In 1861, they accompanied their sons William and John George to Scotland, where the family visited William Joseph's father, Alexander Christie Sr., in Edinburgh.<sup>44</sup>

Other children were put in the care of family or trusted friends to get them to school. John Davis accompanied Joseph Corrigan, the son of his colleague Jacob Corrigan, when he took

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<sup>41</sup> Mary Barnston was the daughter of George Barnston and Ellen Matthews, who was the daughter of a Clatop woman named Kilkokotah and an American Fur Trade Company employee. George Barnston to James Hargrave, 1 April 1844, Box 2 Fo.5 MSS15, Margaret Arnett Macleod Papers, UMASC; E.E. Rich, ed., *Black's Rocky Mountain Journal, 1824* (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1955), 231. Manson married Félicité Lucier, the daughter of Étienne Lucier and Josette/Josephte Nouette (or Noutie), in 1828. Lucier was from Lower Canada, and Josette is described in various sources as "Kwakiutl." "Lucier, Etienne," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. 2001, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/l/lucier\\_etienne.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/l/lucier_etienne.pdf); Melinda Marie Jetté, "We have almost every religion but our own': French-Indian Community Relations and Social Relations in French Prairie, Oregon, 1834-1837," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 8 no.2 (Summer 2007): 230.

<sup>42</sup> Elizabeth Arthur, "Charles McKenzie: l'homme seul," *Ontario History* 70 no.1 (March 1978): 42.

<sup>43</sup> Phillip Byrne to Charles McKenzie, 12 April 1828, MG19 A44, vol.1, Charles and Hector Aneas McKenzie Fonds, LAC.

<sup>44</sup> Mary Sinclair Christie to Matilda Davis, 16 October 1861, P4724 fo.3, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

his own two daughters to England in 1822.<sup>45</sup> Francis Ermatinger entrusted his son, Lawrence, to a missionary, W.H. Gray, who was travelling from the Columbia District to the Canadian colonies.<sup>46</sup> When Alexander Christie Jr. was unable to get furlough to take his son Willie to Scotland in the 1860s, Caroline Isbister Christie wrote to her mother, Mary Kennedy Isbister. Mrs. Isbister was living in England with her son, Alexander Kennedy Isbister, and unmarried daughter Eliza. Caroline asked that her mother come to Rupert's Land and escort Willie to Scotland.<sup>47</sup>

Children were also often accompanied by family members and friends for shorter trips within the HBC territories. Christina Bell Peers McKenzie sent her eldest son, Augustus Peers, to retrieve his younger half-sister, Jane McKenzie, from the Miss Davis school.<sup>48</sup> Samuel McKenzie, who had previously escorted his four daughters to Red River, later sent his son William to Red River via the boat brigade and in the care of Mrs. Charles Thomas.<sup>49</sup> Duncan Christie was accompanied by his eldest sister, Mary, from Portage La Loche to Red River via Samuel McKenzie's boats where he thereafter attended the Davis school before transferring to St. John's College.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> "Passengers from Moose Factory 1822," 1822, Ship' Logs, *Eddystone*, C.1/317 fo.4, HBCA; "Corrigal, Jacob," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. 1999, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/corrigal\\_jacob1790-1844.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/corrigal_jacob1790-1844.pdf).

<sup>46</sup> McDonald, *Francis Ermatinger*, 191.

<sup>47</sup> Mary Isbister was living in London with her son and Caroline's brother, Alexander Kennedy Isbister, and her daughter, Eliza Isbister. Caroline Isbister Christie to Matilda Davis, 14 December 1865, P4724 fo.2, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>48</sup> Christine Bell Peers McKenzie to Matilda Davis, nd., P4724 fo.1, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>49</sup> Samuel McKenzie to Matilda Davis, 25 July 1870, P4274 fo.4, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>50</sup> Duncan Christie left for The Nest Academy in 1867, but returned to Rupert's Land for unknown reasons sometime before July 1869. He returned to the Davis school and then went on to St. John's Boys' School. Alexander Christie Jr. to Matilda Davis, 11 July 1869, P4724 fo.4, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

Other children travelled with the regular HBC brigades. When Benjamin McKenzie Jr. left Île à la Crosse in 1845 to go to school at the Red River Academy, he sailed via York boat to Red River along with his aunt, Jane McKenzie McKenzie.<sup>51</sup> Johnnie Davis journeyed to York Factory to leave for Scotland in the company of a John Brown who was most likely hired to escort him there.<sup>52</sup> Johnnie wrote to his father from Norway House in August 1866 that, “we were seventeen days in the Lake but every day we had headwind.”<sup>53</sup> Ten days later, he again wrote to his father to let him know that they had arrived at York Factory:

We have all arrived here safely...We were twenty six days coming altogether. The Ship came...Sunday before last. I and Brown are going to see it today. I sleep in the mens [sic] house but eat in the Govern [house]. I am very happy here. I am quite well and I hope all are the same.<sup>54</sup>

On Johnnie’s return trip home from The Nest Academy, he was once again put in the care of a paid escort. This time a tutor accompanied him from Jedburgh to London, where he travelled by ship to York Factory.<sup>55</sup>

Other students left no personal accounts of their travels to school, but adult correspondence provides some details about their journey. Eliza and James Budd travelled from the Nepowewin post on the Saskatchewan River, where their father Henry Budd served as a

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<sup>51</sup> Aunt Jane is Jane McKenzie McKenzie, a former student at the Red River Academy who returned to serve as the girls’ instructor at the school. Sophia Thomas, another former Red River Academy student, had been offered the position first, but turned it down in order to marry Reverend William Mason. Benjamin McKenzie Jr., “Reminiscences of the Reverend Benjamin McKenzie,” PRL-84-59 7593, Ecclesiastical Province of Rupert’s Land Archives, AM. Hereafter Reminiscences of Benjamin McKenzie.

<sup>52</sup> John Brown to George Davis, 29 August 1866, P2342 fo.9, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>53</sup> Johnnie Davis to George Davis, 29 August 1866, P2342 fo.9, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>54</sup> Johnnie Davis to George Davis, 10 September 1866, P4724 fo.4, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>55</sup> Marion Millar to Matilda Davis, 5 April [1870], P4274 fo.1, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

missionary, all the way to Red River via Red River cart.<sup>56</sup> William Murray paid someone to escort his son to Red River, where the boy was put into the care of Matilda Davis's brother, George, en route to Samuel Pritchard's school at Kildonan.<sup>57</sup> The Lane children made a more dramatic trip from the Columbia district to Red River. After his wife Marie McDermot Lane died in 1851, HBC clerk Richard Lane sent his son and daughter to Red River to live with their grandparents, Andrew McDermot and Sarah McNab McDermot. Lane remained at his home in Oregon City, and sent the children "in baskets on the backs of mules through the Rockies and across the Plains" to Red River.<sup>58</sup>

Students were sometimes met at the end of their travels by friends or family members who could welcome them and facilitate the next leg of their journey or their placement at school. When James and Eliza Budd arrived at Red River from Nepowewin, their sister Elizabeth Budd Cochrane was there to greet them and help prepare them for school.<sup>59</sup> When Johnnie Davis arrived in England, he was met by his London cousins. He visited with them in the city

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<sup>56</sup> Henry Budd to Matilda Davis, 3 July 1856, P2342 fo.15, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM. Eliza Budd went to the Miss Davis school. James was also going to school at Red River, but it is not clear which school he attended.

<sup>57</sup> William Murray to George Davis, 26 October 1863, P4724 fo.3, Matilda Davis School Collection. At least one of Murray's daughters attended the Davis school.

<sup>58</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 32. The children were John Lane (b.1848) and Maria Lane (b.1850). The Lane children were seemingly raised by their grandparents. Lane remarried in Oregon in 1858, but apparently suffered from mental illness. In 1873, he was committed against his will to an insane asylum. By 1875 his second marriage had dissolved, and in 1877 he died by suicide. William R. Sampson, "LANE, RICHARD," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 10, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 12, 2017, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/lane\\_richard\\_10E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/lane_richard_10E.html); "Lane, Richard," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. 1988, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/l/lane\\_richard.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/l/lane_richard.pdf); "Lane, John," R190-43-X-E, Metis and Original White Settlers Affidavits, Dominion Lands Branch, Department of the Interior Fonds, LAC, accessed 26 August 2017, [http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/our/res.php?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&url\\_tim=2017-08-26T23%3A11%3A47Z&url\\_ctx\\_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft\\_dat=1501911&rft\\_id=info%3Aasi%2Fcollectionscanada.gc.ca%3Apam&lang=eng](http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/our/res.php?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&url_tim=2017-08-26T23%3A11%3A47Z&url_ctx_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft_dat=1501911&rft_id=info%3Aasi%2Fcollectionscanada.gc.ca%3Apam&lang=eng); "Logan, Maria," R190-43-X-E, Metis and Original White Settlers Affidavits, Dominion Lands Branch, Department of the Interior Fonds, LAC, accessed 26 August 2017, [http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam\\_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec\\_nbr=1502256](http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=1502256).

<sup>59</sup> Elizabeth Budd Cochrane was the second wife of Indigenous catechist, schoolmaster, and missionary, Henry Cochrane. Henry Budd to Matilda Davis, 3 July 1865, P2342 fo.15, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

before they arranged an escort to take him to The Nest Academy in Scotland.<sup>60</sup> On his return to Rupert's Land three years later, family friend Alexander 'Sandy' Christie III, a former student at The Nest and then an HBC employee at the fort, met his boat when it docked at York Factory.<sup>61</sup>

These trips most likely brought a mixture of emotions for children who were travelling to school, including excitement about new adventures and sadness at leaving behind their parents and siblings. In part, the trips to and from school gave children the opportunity to explore the world beyond their homes. Their youth provided perspectives on their travels that were different from that of the adults who accompanied them. At York Factory, Johnnie Davis was excited to explore the ship that he was going to sail in, and the experiences that he found noteworthy were characterized by the curiosity of the young. Johnnie wrote to his father about York Factory that "there are no caps here but plenty of hats."<sup>62</sup> When William J. Christie and Mary Sinclair Christie travelled to Scotland with some of their children in 1861, the Christie's children were "delighted" by the sights of London. They also rode on a train for the first time en route from London to their grandfather Alexander Christie Sr.'s home in Edinburgh.<sup>63</sup>

The journey to school could also be exhausting and harrowing. Johnnie Davis's journey to York Factory by boat took over three weeks.<sup>64</sup> Ann Mary Christie Macfarlane made a similar journey after completing her studies at the Davis school. In 1868, after the death of her mother the previous year, Mary made the trip north by boat brigade with her father because he was

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<sup>60</sup> Matilda Poole to Matilda Davis, 13 February 1867, P4724 fo.4, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>61</sup> Marion Millar to Matilda Davis, 5 April [1870], P4274 fo.1, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>62</sup> Johnnie Davis to George Davis, 10 September 1866, P4724 fo.4, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>63</sup> Mary Sinclair Christie to Matilda Davis, 16 October 1861, P4724 fo.3, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>64</sup> Johnnie Davis to George Davis, 10 September 1866, P4724 fo.4, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

attending the annual Council meeting at Norway House.<sup>65</sup> On arriving at Norway House, she wrote to Matilda Davis about their trip:

We arrived at Norway House on Wednesday about nine o'clock in the midst of a thunderstorm. Wednesday was our seventh day from Red River. We were not wind bound at all on our way, the heat, during all the time on the Lake, was almost unbearable, the mosquitoes also were very numerous, if it were not for the heat I think we would have enjoyed the trip very much. The Governor and Uncle William caught us up in the Lake on Monday, so we were together for the rest of the way.<sup>66</sup>

James R. Anderson recorded his recollections of his journey by canoe from Fort Langley to Fort Victoria in his memoirs. His account captures the fear and confusion of being separated from his father and having to adjust to new terrain and experiences:

But, oh, the misery I endured; what with my recent parting, the terror of the rough sea, the savage crew and their terrifying canoe songs, I never expected to see land again. A bed was made for me in the centre of the canoe, when after hours of torture, in my futile attempts to balance the rocking of the canoe, exhausted nature at length came to my relief and I fell asleep. A phenomenon which perplexed my young mind, I was only nine years old, was the phosphorescent glow at each stroke of the paddle. I looked in vain, even for a lighted pipe, but could discover nothing to account for the curious occurrence.<sup>67</sup>

Anderson's account was written as an adult and likely dramatized for effect. The fear and dislocation of at the root of the memory, however, would have been quite trying and even traumatic for a young boy.

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<sup>65</sup> Alexander Christie Jr. was on furlough in 1866-1868 and, along with his wife Caroline and youngest children Emma and Duncan, was living at St. Andrew's. Caroline Isbister Christie died in fall 1867. Mary and Duncan returned to Portage La Loche with their father, while Emma remained at the Davis School. Duncan Christie left from York Factory to The Nest Academy in 1867 or 1868. By the fall of 1869, however, he had returned to Red River and was a student at the Davis school. He later moved to St. John's College.

<sup>66</sup> Mary Christie Macfarlane to Matilda Davis, 22 June 1868, P4724 fo.4, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>67</sup> James R. Anderson Manuscript, 140-141, BC Archives.



For children who travelled further afield, the journey could be even more arduous.

Harriet and Maria Sinclair, the eldest daughters of James Sinclair and Elizabeth Bird Sinclair, first attended Mrs. Ingham's boarding school at Red River, and then the Red River Academy. In 1848, their father, a free trader and partner of Red River Irish merchant Andrew McDermot, travelled with them to Galesboro, Illinois where they attended Knox College for two years. The trip involved a two-month long trip by Red River cart, steamboat, and carriage. Harriet Sinclair Cowan described the journey:

We were three weeks travelling across the plains to St. Paul. We had three Red River carts with horses and a force of six men. The carts were without springs, of course, but with our bedding comfortably arranged in them, they did not jolt us so badly, except where the ground was very rough, and then we could get out and walk...At St. Paul we had to wait three weeks for a boat to take us down the Mississippi to Oquaki, where my father hired a coach with four horses, which took us to Galesboro over roads that were almost impossible in places. But by that time we were used to rough roads and other discomforts of travel. My sister Maria, who was four years younger than I, thought it was all great fun, as I did.<sup>68</sup>

The Sinclair sisters' travels might have been uncomfortable, but Harriet's reminiscences reflect a sense of safety travelling in the company of her father across the plains.

Other fur-trade children were not able to share that same sense of security. In 1837, Francis Ermatinger placed nine-year-old Lawrence under the care of missionary W.H. Gray, who was travelling east to Upper Canada to garner support for his missionary efforts. Gray, Lawrence, and four Salish youth left from Fort Vancouver for Upper Canada, where Lawrence would be delivered to his uncle Edward. En route to St. Louis, the group was taken prisoner by some hostile Sioux. The Sioux killed all four of the Salish youths, but Gray and Ermatinger were

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<sup>68</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 28.

allowed to continue on their way.<sup>69</sup> Lawrence Ermatinger left no writings in the family archive and therefore there is no account from his own perspective about this incident. The death of his travelling companions and fear for his own life, however, was undoubtedly a terrifying experience.

The journeys to and from school could also be marked by illness. Donald Mactavish left no account of his trip to London aboard the *Prince of Wales*, but was quite ill upon arriving in Inverness.<sup>70</sup> In 1839, Alexander Christie Sr. and his daughter Margaret travelled from York Factory to Britain while Christie was on furlough. During the trip, Margaret, who had a history of poor health, became quite ill, leaving her father “painfully anxious” about her well-being.<sup>71</sup> Margaret continued to have health problems after her father’s departure for Rupert’s Land.<sup>72</sup> Twenty-some years later, Margaret’s nephew, four-year-old John George Christie, became very ill with dysentery during his family’s sea voyage to England. His mother, Mary, “quite despaired of his life.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> McDonald, *Francis Ermatinger*, 194.

<sup>70</sup> Donald Mactavish to Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie, 14 May 1848, E.379/1 fo.4-7, Peter and Josette McKenzie Family Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>71</sup> Letitia Hargrave reported to her mother from London in May 1840 that Christie’s “little girl seems very unwell & he is painfully anxious about her. He lost his son here last winter.” It is unclear who this son was. The Christie’s first-born son, Daniel, was born in 1815 and died in 1818 (Eastmain Register of Baptisms and Burials, B.59/z/1 p. 186, HBCA). There are no known records of any other children being born to the Christies besides Alexander Sr., William, Margaret and Mary. However, five births is a relatively low number of children for a fur trade family in this period so it is possible that there are as of yet unrecorded Christie children who did not survive to childhood. Macleod, *Letitia Hargrave Letters*, 40.

<sup>72</sup> G.P. de T. Glazebrook, ed., *The Hargrave Correspondence, 1821-1843* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1938), 409.

<sup>73</sup> Mary Sinclair Christie to Matilda Davis, 16 October 1861, P4724 fo.3, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

## V. ACCOMMODATIONS

Much of the anxiety that fur-trade parents expressed about their children being away at school centred around whether or not their children would be well cared for. When parents were not present on a daily basis to tend to their children, they had to rely on other adults to do so. This included teachers, school administrators, family members, friends, and paid caretakers. Fur-trade children relied on these caretakers to feed, house, clothe, and care for them while they were separated from their families. In many cases, the children's care was facilitated by kin networks.

Children were often put in the care of extended family members while they were away from home for their education. Sometimes this meant living in the home of their extended family while they attended school. Ten-year-old William Manson travelled with his father, Chief Factor Donald Manson, to Britain in 1840. On arriving in Scotland, William and his father visited their Scottish relatives, including William's grandparents, aunts, and uncles.<sup>74</sup> When Donald Manson departed to return to North America, William was left in the care of his paternal aunt, Ann Manson Forsythe, and her husband Robert. By 1841, his aunt was no longer part of the household, and William was therefore left in the care of his uncle Robert.<sup>75</sup> William seemingly lived in his uncle's home while he attended school until 1848, when he returned to North

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<sup>74</sup> Rich, *Black's Rocky Mountain Journal, 1824*, 231.

<sup>75</sup> It is likely that Ann Manson Forsythe had died by 1841, as she is not listed as a member of the Robert Forsythe household in the 1841 Scottish Census, but I am unable to locate a death record for her. William Mason is listed as a member of the Forsythe household in the 1841 census. "1841 English Census," database, *Ancestry.com* (<https://www.ancestry.com>; accessed 27 May 2017), entry for William Mason, Parish: Thurso; ED: 7; Page: 15; Line: 550; Year: 1841.

America to take up a post with the HBC.<sup>76</sup>

More often, family members were put in charge of overseeing the children's education and well-being while the children attended a nearby boarding school. Donald and Duncan Mactavish, the sons of HBC Chief Factor Alexander Mactavish and his Metis wife Josette Monier, were both educated in Inverness, Scotland under the supervision of the boys' Scottish relatives. Alexander Mactavish left instructions shortly before his death that his sons were to be educated in Scotland and "live with their Grandmother till they arrive at an age capable of providing for themselves."<sup>77</sup> The boys seemingly never lived with their grandmother, but were in contact with her. The elder brother Duncan arrived in Scotland first, sometime around 1830.<sup>78</sup> When the conditions at his first boarding situation were found to be lacking, his guardian and cousin, another Duncan Mactavish, took the younger Duncan into his home.<sup>79</sup>

Duncan's younger brother, Donald, sailed aboard the *Prince of Wales* from Moose Factory in 1831 alongside fellow fur-trade students William J. Christie and David Vincent Stewart.<sup>80</sup> In 1832, cousin Duncan Mactavish wrote to Alexander Mactavish about the cost of the boys' education and reported that both boys were ill.<sup>81</sup> In spite of this illness, which Donald noted in his own letters from Inverness, Donald's time at school was seemingly more pleasant

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<sup>76</sup> "Manson, William," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. 1999,

[https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/m/manson\\_william.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/m/manson_william.pdf).

<sup>77</sup> Alexander Mactavish to John George Mactavish, 2 January 1831, H2-77-2-2 (A.36/10 fo.124), Will and Legal Papers for McTavish, Alexander, Officers' and Servants' Wills, HBCA.

<sup>78</sup> Alexander Mactavish was on furlough in Scotland in 1828-1829. It is likely that he took Duncan to Scotland with him at this time. Duncan would have been about 11 years old. "McTavish, Alexander," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. 2003, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mctavish\\_alexander.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mctavish_alexander.pdf).

<sup>79</sup> Duncan Mactavish to Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie, May [1838], E.379/1 fo.8-10, Peter and Josette McKenzie Family Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>80</sup> 1830, Ship's Log, *Prince of Wales*, C.1/824, fos. 2-2d, HBCA.

<sup>81</sup> Alexander Mactavish to William Smith, 12 June 1832, H2-77-2-2 (A.36/10 fo.129), Will and Legal Papers for McTavish, Alexander, Officers' and Servants' Wills, HBCA.

than that of his older brother. When Donald arrived in Scotland, he was placed at the Messers Gair Academy in Inverness alongside his brother and fifteen other students.<sup>82</sup>

Other fur-trade children also lived with their Scottish or English relatives. For some trans-imperial families, hosting Indigenous fur-trade students was both a way of establishing and strengthening kin connections and a source of income. Over the course of a decade, HBC Chief Factor Alexander Kennedy placed at least five of his sons and one of his grandsons at school in St. Margaret's Hope, South Ronaldsay in the Orkneys.<sup>83</sup> The boys were put in the care of Kennedy's sister, Mary, and brother-in-law, James Allan. Mary and James Allan boarded the boys for an annual fee, and according to the bills forwarded to Kennedy's estate after his death, Allan also provisioned the boys with books, clothing, and medical care.<sup>84</sup> In spite of the extra income from boarding the Kennedy boys, James Allan seems to have had financial issues; in 1833 he was insolvent and unable to settle bills on the boys' behalf.<sup>85</sup> The three boys who were

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<sup>82</sup> Alexander Mactavish died in 1832. In his will, dated Duncan Mactavish to William Smith, 10 April 1834, Will and Legal Papers for McTavish, Alexander, H2-77-2-2 (A.36/10 fo.146), HBCA; "McTavish, Alexander," Research file, Jennifer Brown Collection, MSS 336 A.11-18 Box 7, file 7, UMASC; Donald Mactavish to Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie, 14 May 1838, E.379/1 fo.4-7, Peter and Josette McKenzie Family Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>83</sup> I cannot find any evidence that the second-youngest son, Philip Kennedy (born c.1818), attended school at St. Margaret's Hope as well. Philip and Isabella were living with their mother and grandmother at Red River when Kennedy departed for Britain in 1829. On that 1829 trip, Kennedy escorted his youngest son, Roderick, and grandson Alexander Kennedy Isbister to St. Margaret's Hope. In his 1829 letter to his wife, he left instructions for Isabella and Philip to attend school in Red River. There is no mention of Philip in the correspondence between the boys' uncle and boarder, James Allan, and the Kennedy estate that followed Alexander Kennedy's death. It is unclear why Philip Kennedy was not sent to St. Margaret's Hope as well, but it was not unprecedented in fur trade families for children to receive differing levels of education. Alexander Kennedy to Aggathas Kennedy, 14 August 1829, MG1 D1 fo.4, Alexander Kennedy Correspondence, Kennedy Family Fonds, AM; See correspondence between William Smith of Hudson Bay House, London and James Allan of St. Margaret's Hope, H2-77-2-1 (A.36/8 fos. 67-206), Will and Legal Papers for Kennedy, Alexander, Officers' and Servants' Wills, HBCA.

<sup>84</sup> "Debts to Mr. Allan, April 1830-April 1833," H2-77-2-1 (A.36/8 fo.104), Will and Legal Papers for Kennedy, Alexander, Officers' and Servants' Wills, HBCA.

<sup>85</sup> Schoolmaster James Forbes wrote to William Smith in 1833 about Allan's insolvency, and requested that Smith pay Kennedy's outstanding account at the school (fo.123-124). James Forbes to William Smith, 23 February 1833, and William Smith to Elizabeth Ballenden, 28 April 1834, H2-77-2-1 (A.36/8 fos. 67-206), Will and Legal Papers for Kennedy, Alexander, Officers' and Servants' Wills, HBCA.

living in St. Margaret's Hope at the time of Kennedy's death – George and Roderick Kennedy, and Alexander Kennedy Isbister - remained in the Allan household until they returned to Rupert's Land in 1834.<sup>86</sup>

Grandparents also served as an important home base for children who were away at school. Aggathas Kennedy moved to Red River with her youngest children, Philip and Isabella, in 1829 while Alexander Kennedy was on furlough; she remained there after her husband's death in 1832.<sup>87</sup> The Kennedy and Isbister children spent parts of their childhood together. Two of the younger Kennedy children lived with Thomas Isbister and their sister Mary at Cumberland House in 1825 when Alexander Kennedy was on furlough, and Alexander Isbister lived with and attended school with his uncles in St. Margaret's Hope.<sup>88</sup> By the mid-1830s, Aggathas Kennedy's grandchildren by her daughter Mary Kennedy Isbister attended school in Red River, perhaps alongside Aggathas' children Philip and Isabella.<sup>89</sup> Given this intertwining of the childhoods of the Kennedy children and the Isbister grandchildren, 'Swiss Cottage,' the Kennedy home at St. Andrew's, likely offered the Isbister grandchildren a place of comfort and refuge while they were at school. At their grandmother's home, they could spend their time in the company of their aunts, uncles, and other extended family.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> William Smith to Elizabeth Ballenden, 28 April 1834, H2-77-2-1 (A.36/8 fo.145), Will and Legal Papers for Kennedy, Alexander, Officers' and Servants' Wills, HBCA.

<sup>87</sup> Alexander Kennedy to Aggathas Kennedy, 14 August 1829, MG1 D1 fo.4, Alexander Kennedy Correspondence, Kennedy Family Fonds, AM.

<sup>88</sup> Account Book, 1825, B.49/d/17 fo.2, Cumberland House Post Records, HBCA.

<sup>89</sup> In an 1828 letter to Aggathas, Alexander Kennedy instructed his wife to send daughter Isabella to study under Ann Cockran, the wife of missionary William Cockran, and to "be sure to send Philip also to some school." Alexander Kennedy to Aggathas Kennedy, 14 August 1829, MG1/D1 fo.4 pp14-16, Will and Papers of Kennedy, Alexander, AM.

<sup>90</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 177.

Roderick McKenzie Sr. and his Ojibwa wife Angelique similarly provided a home base for the McKenzie grandchildren who attended the various schools at Red River. The McKenzies had spent some twenty years at Île à la Crosse before Roderick McKenzie's retirement. Angelique likely moved from Île à la Crosse to Red River around 1850 with her daughter, Nancy Dutremble, and granddaughter Katherine Dutremble. Roderick spent two years on furlough at Fort Alexander, before joining his wife at Red River. As it had always been, the McKenzie home at Little Britain, called Caberleigh Cottage, was open to their children and grandchildren. The various McKenzie grandchildren who attended the St. John's Collegiate School and the girls' boarding schools at Red River in the 1850s, including James, Alexander, and Eliza Anderson; Benjamin and Colin McKenzie; and the children of Mary McKenzie and Adam McBeath were regular visitors at their grandparents' home. The students would generally have been unable to return to their parents' homes at various fur-trade posts during their school holidays. Instead, they gathered at Caberleigh Cottage for what were remembered as warm family holidays. Benjamin McKenzie reminisced in a letter to his cousin James Anderson Jr. in the 1920s about their days at 'old St. John's.' "Wasn't it immensely good of our old Grandfather," he recalled, "to think of us young noisy mischiefs & do his best to make the holidays as enjoyable as possible. The whole household in fact. Granny & all joined hands to make things in general go off merrily & happily for us."<sup>91</sup> In this way, cousins, grandparents, aunts, and uncles came together in the McKenzie home at Red River.

Family friends were also part of the social network that contributed to the care of fur-

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<sup>91</sup> Benjamin McKenzie to James Anderson Jr., 17 December 1921, E.37/19 fo. 110-111, James Anderson Family Fonds, HBCA.

trade students at school. Following these connections as they related to fur-trade children's education can uncover previously unknown links between the HBC territories and Britain. When Albert Hodgson first went to England in 1860 to attend school, he boarded with Miss Janet Braby while attending an unnamed school.<sup>92</sup> Janet Braby was English, but had connections to Red River. She was most likely the sister-in-law of CMS missionary at Kildonan, Reverend John Chapman.<sup>93</sup> Braby came to Red River at some point, for she notes in a letter to Matilda Davis that she missed seeing Miss Davis, that she wished that she had not left "the settlement" (Red River) and that the children in her care "cannot dress here as in Red River."<sup>94</sup> Braby extended her Red River connections when she returned to England, where her social circle included Alexander Kennedy Isbister, William Mason and Sophia Thomas Mason, and William Christie and Mary Sinclair Christie.<sup>95</sup>

In Red River, Braby may have worked in some capacity for Davis at her school, possibly as a second teacher. Davis opened her school in 1855 or 1856, and did not engage a second teacher from England until 1862.<sup>96</sup> Davis's accounts for the school show that she made payments to Braby in 1859 and also paid for Braby's washing to be done alongside that of the

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<sup>92</sup> The first recorded payment for Albert's schooling in Matilda Davis's accounts was made in August 1860.

"Accounts, Beginning 1859," Notebook 7, P4725 fo.2, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>93</sup> John Chapman had served under Bishop Davis Anderson in England, and Mr. & Mrs. Chapman accompanied Anderson to Red River in 1849. In 1855, son David Macklin Braby Chapman was born to Reverend & Mrs. Chapman at St. Paul's/Middlechurch in the Red River settlement. Given that it was common to give a child his mother's maiden name as a middle name, it is probable that Mrs. Chapman was Miss Braby's sister. Miss Braby did not accompany the Chapmans to Red River, but likely came to stay with them at Red River at some point. M.P. Wilkinson, "The Episcopate of the Right Reverend David Anderson, D.D., First Lord Bishop of Rupert's Land, 1849-1864," (MA thesis, University of Manitoba, 1950), 96.

<sup>94</sup> Janet Braby to Matilda Davis, 16 May 1862, P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>95</sup> On her 1861 trip to England and Scotland, Christie visited with Braby and Isbister before falling ill while in London. Miss Braby nursed her back to health. Mary Sinclair Christie to Matilda Davis, 16 October 1861, P4724 fo.3, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>96</sup> Davis paid for teacher Miss Emma Lane's passage to Red River in 1862. "Miss Lane's Account 1862," Notebook 11, P4725 fo.3, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.



boarding students.<sup>97</sup> This may indicate that Miss Braby lived on-site as did her successor, teacher Emma Lane. By 1860, Davis made payments to England for both Albert's education and to Miss Braby for Albert's lodging.<sup>98</sup>

Children who did not board in someone's home generally lived at their school. In Britain and the Canadian colonies, boarding schools took different forms. Some schools were small, and were run out of the teacher's home. This was particularly common for female teachers and female students. Sarah McLeod Ballenden's younger sisters, for example, lived with their teacher, a Mrs. Kendall, in Quebec. The McLeod sisters seemingly enjoyed their place in the Kendall home and school. After their father Alexander Roderick McLeod's death in 1840, Governor George Simpson pursued removing the three girls to a convent school in Montreal.<sup>99</sup> Sixteen-year-old Eliza McLeod, the eldest of the three sisters, wrote to Simpson herself to request that they be allowed to remain at Mrs. Kendall's school. In her letter, she explained to Simpson that, "I feel much hurt at the thought of a removal as we are very happy here and I cannot bear the thought of a nunnery." The three sisters were allowed to remain with Mrs. Kendall. Eliza, unfortunately, died soon afterward but her two sisters remained with Mrs. Kendall and did not return to the Northwest.<sup>100</sup>

Mary Barnston similarly attended a boarding school for girls near Edinburgh. In 1844, her father wrote of her schooling that:

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<sup>97</sup> "Jan 1857-1859," Notebook 5, and "Accounts, Beginning 1859," Notebook 7, P4725 fo.2, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>98</sup> "Accounts, Beginning 1859," Notebook 7, P4725 fo.2, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>99</sup> The identity of Alexander Roderick McLeod's wife is unknown. She is referenced in the literature variously as 'a native woman' and his 'mixed-blood wife,' and is referenced in his will as his "legitimate wife." His will does not identify his wife by name. Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer, 1980), 117.

<sup>100</sup> Jennifer Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1980), 183-184.

Mary is at school at Musselburgh, 6 miles from Edinburgh with a Miss Sawers, a Boarding School which cannot be to [sic] much recommended, sound instruction, quiet, and regularity are its principal characteristics. Forty to forty-five pounds for girls under 12. 50 to 60 for those above, all expenses, even that of medical advice included.<sup>101</sup>

Although Barnston was more interested in passing along the financial details about the school to his colleague, James Hargrave, his description of the school offers some insight into the setting – rural, quiet, and providing ‘sound instruction.’ The school was also close to Barnston’s hometown of Edinburgh, and presumably to his sister, whom he and Mary visited during their time in Scotland.<sup>102</sup>

Schools in the HBC territories sometimes offered students only rudimentary accommodations. When HBC chaplain Reverend John Staines and his wife Emma arrived at Fort Victoria in 1848, there were no buildings constructed for either a school or their home. Although a school was built in short order, students who boarded at the school lived in the loft above the Bachelor’s quarters for HBC employees. Adequate provisions for the students were in short supply. Emma Staines responded to complaints by Dr. John Helmcken about the students’ pouring water on his bed from above:

‘Thank the Hudson’s Bay Co for it,’ said she, and bringing me a milk pan full of holes from rust or what not, said, ‘These are the only utensils in use by the scholars and no wonder their water may leak through the floor. I have asked Mr. Douglas for the usual toilette services for the children, but can’t get them from him. You had better speak to him about it.’<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> George Barnston to James Hargrave, 1 April 1844, Box 2 Fo.5 MSS15, Margaret Arnett Macleod Papers, UMASC.

<sup>102</sup> Jennifer S. H. Brown and Sylvia M. Van Kirk, “BARNSTON, GEORGE,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed August 7, 2017, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/barnston\\_george\\_11E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/barnston_george_11E.html).

<sup>103</sup> Dorothy Blakey Smith, ed., *The Reminiscences of John Sebastien Helmcken* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1975), 135.

The rats that overran both the school and the dormitory had more of an impact than rusty plates on ten-year-old student James R. Anderson:

The school building like those of the others within the Fort yard was constructed of squared logs not very carefully put together, as previously noted, as regards the exclusion of winter cold and of the rats which overran the school; these disgusting rodents not content with making use of our dormitory as a place of meeting and generally disrupting our rights in the boldest manner; actually attempted to share our meals. One bold marauder got into my bed and was purloining a crust of bread which I had secreted when I discovered and with a quick movement I pinned him to the side of the bed with my blanket. A bounty of a shilling a dozen was offered by Mr. Staines [for the rats].<sup>104</sup>

Students slept on blankets on the floor, on top of floorboards that allowed them to peek through and watch the officers' lavish meals below in the Bachelor's Quarters. Undoubtedly these sleeping arrangements within earshot of the single male employees also provided an education in the less refined aspects of fort life.

Other boarding schools operated out of buildings that were specific to that purpose and had a larger student population. In Inverness, Donald and Duncan Mactavish attended the Messers Gair Academy, a boarding school run by three Gair brothers.<sup>105</sup> The Nest Academy in Jedburgh was located in a stone building adjacent to the ruins of the Jedburgh Abbey. The boys

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<sup>104</sup> James Anderson Manuscript, p166, BC Archives.

<sup>105</sup> John, Walter and Alexander Gair all taught at the school, and both Walter and Alexander trained to become Presbyterian ministers before teaching at the school. The school was located in Inverness proper in 1838 (79 Church Street), but by 1841 the school had relocated to the Gairs' farm at Torbeck. In his 1838 letter, Duncan relates that the brothers were thinking of relocating their school to the brothers' farm "2.5 miles from town." Alexander Gair went on from the school to serve as a Presbyterian minister, and then in 1871 relocated to Portage La Prairie, Manitoba. His son, William and daughter-in-law, Cecilia, joined him from Ontario. Later his son, Murdoch and daughter-in-law Elizabeth also relocated to Portage la Prairie from Ontario, and his daughter, Margaret emigrated from Scotland after the death of her husband. Duncan Mactavish to Josette Monier Mactavish, May [1838], E.379/1 fo.8-10, Peter and Josette Mackenzie Family Fonds, HBCA; Isabel Harriet Anderson, *Inverness Before the Railway* (Inverness: A. & W. Mackenzie, 1885), 56, 64-65; Anne M. Collier, *A History of Portage La Prairie and Surrounding District, 1870-1970* (Altona: Friesen & Sons, 1970), 313; Reverend William Mackelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church* (Edinburgh: Oliphant & Company, and Andrew Elliot, 1873), 676.

at the Nest Academy had little to say in their letters home about their domestic care and arrangements, but it is clear from the letters written by Marion Millar, the woman in charge of all things domestic at The Nest, that Millar had a close hand in the daily lives and well-being of the pupils. When Roderick McKenzie Jr. became ill while attending the school, Millar wrote to Roderick's mother that, "I will say again how deeply we all feel for you & Mr Mackenzie & the great distance your Boy is removed from his home makes all of us take a much deeper interest & is the cause of greater anxiety to us all."<sup>106</sup> Given parents' anxieties over the well-being of their children who were away at school, Millar's attention to the students at The Nest may well have been one of the aspects of the school that attracted such a relatively large group of fur-trade students to the school.<sup>107</sup>

Scholars of English public schools have argued that English girls' schools tended to be small and 'domestic,' with a homey feel.<sup>108</sup> This domestic model, characterized by small classes and personal connections with the teachers, seems to have been the dominant model of upper- and middle-class female education at Red River. The first girls' teachers at Red River, Mrs. Ann Cockran and Mrs. Mary Jones, took female pupils into their homes at St. John's in the 1820s as part of their roles as missionary wives.<sup>109</sup> Across the river in St. Boniface, convent-educated sisters Angelique and Marguerite Nolin operated a school adjacent to the St. Boniface church

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<sup>106</sup> Marion Millar to Jane McKenzie McKenzie, 14 March [1870], H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>107</sup> Between 1861 and 1871, the following Indigenous fur trade students attended The Nest Academy: Christie cousins Alexander III, James Thomas, Robert William, Duncan, William Joseph, John Dugald, James Grant, and Charles Thomas; Albert Hodgson and Johnnie Davis; John Cowan; Harry McAdoo Grahame; Henry and James Stewart; James and Harry Helmcken.

<sup>108</sup> Christina de Ballaigue, "Behind the School Walls: The School Community in French and English Boarding Schools for Girls, 1810-1867," *Paedagogica Historica* 40, no. 1&2 (April 2004): 111.

<sup>109</sup> Amber Bakker, "'Lovely tender exotics': Exploring Victorian Female Agency in the western Canadian Fur trade, 1830-1851," (MA thesis, University of Calgary, 2012), 12.

from 1829 to 1834.<sup>110</sup> The reach of these educational efforts, however, were limited. Cockran and then Jones could only take in a few students due to lack of accommodations in the missionaries' homes. The Nolin sisters' school was primarily a day school, and therefore their student base was mostly local children.

By 1833, David and Mary Jones worked to expand on their educational efforts and opened a private boarding school for boys and girls. The newly built school had separate accommodations available for male and female students. Under John Macallum, who served first as Jones' assistant and then as the headmaster, students were expected to wear European-style clothing and subsist on a diet that prioritized British-style meals over local and Indigenous food sources. Letitia Hargrave was critical of Macallum's approach to schooling his primarily Indigenous students, writing that "children who have had duck geese & venison 3 times a day are supposed to suffer from breakfasts of milk & water with dry bread, severe floggings, confinement after any fault & the total want of the following meal. The boys & girls are constantly fainting but MacCallum wont [sic] change his system."<sup>111</sup> Macallum's failure to adapt his approach to educating Indigenous children to the realities of colonial conditions likely contributed to the decline of the school in the 1840s.

Across the Red River, the Grey Nuns arrived in St. Boniface in 1844 and proceeded to open schools for Indigenous boys and girls. After erecting a new convent building in 1848, the

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<sup>110</sup> The sisters, who were originally from Sault Ste. Marie and had been educated by the Soeurs de la Congrégation de Notre-Dame in Montreal, were recruited by the Catholic bishop, Provencher. Donald Chaput, "The 'Misses Nolin' of Red River," *The Beaver* (Winter 1975): 15.

<sup>111</sup> Macleod, *Letitia Hargrave Letters*, 177.

Sisters took in boarding students along with orphans and the indigent elderly.<sup>112</sup> Fur-trade family names like Connolly, Sinclair, McGillivray, D'Eschambault, Kittson, and Bannatyne are found on the student lists for the Sisters' boarding students from the 1850s.<sup>113</sup> Many of the fur-trade families who attended the Catholic schools were Catholic themselves, but the Sisters also accepted Protestant students.<sup>114</sup> The female students who boarded at the school lived with the nuns in the convent building, where their daily routine reflected the devotional life and schedule of the Sisters. Female boarders were kept isolated from Red River society, had to follow strict dress codes, and their behaviour was closely monitored by the Sisters.<sup>115</sup>

Some Indigenous girls had difficulty adjusting to the lack of freedom at the convent schools. Mary Jane McDougall was daughter of HBC Chief Factor George McDougall and his Salish wife, Jane.<sup>116</sup> Mary Jane was raised at the Lesser Slave Lake HBC post, and was sent to St. Boniface in the wake of her father's death in 1849.<sup>117</sup> The structure and routine of the convent school proved to be a challenge for Mary Jane. Twice she ran away from the convent and

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<sup>112</sup> Rita McGuire, "The Grey Sisters in the Red River Settlement, 1844-1870," *Canadian Catholic Historical Studies*, 53 (1986): 25.

<sup>113</sup> McGuire, "The Grey Sisters," 25.

<sup>114</sup> The sisters expanded their sites of education throughout the Red River settlement in the 1850s and 1860s, culminating in the opening of the Taché Academy in St. Boniface in 1868 and Ecole Saint-Marie (St. Mary's Academy) in 1869. Ecole St. Marie was supported by the patronage of HBC Governor William Mactavish and his wife, Mary 'Sally' McDermot McTavish. Andrew McDermot was Catholic, and some of his daughters may have attended the nuns' school. Christine Butterill, *The Early History of St. Mary's Academy* (Winnipeg: s.n., 1983), 9.

<sup>115</sup> Lesley Erickson, "At the Cultural and Religious Crossroads: Sara Riel and the Grey Nuns in the Canadian Northwest, 1848-1883," (MA thesis, University of Calgary, 1997), 63.

<sup>116</sup> Mary Jane's mother's name is recorded variously in the records as Jane/Genevieve Jasper/ Jaspard/ Gaspard. She was a Têtes Plates Salish whose father was a NWC employee. Nancy Marguerite Anderson, "George McDougall," 1 August 2015, <http://nancymargueriteanderson.com/george-mcdougall/>; Lawrence Barkwell, "Mary Jane McDougall," Gabriel Dumont Institute, 27 March 2017, <http://www.metismuseum.ca/resource.php/149122>.

<sup>117</sup> Anne Lindsay and Jennifer Brown, "Memorable Manitobans: Mary Jane McDougall (1842-1896)," Manitoba Historical Society, 7 September 2009, [http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/mcdougall\\_mj.shtml](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/mcdougall_mj.shtml).

returned home to her mother, and twice she was returned to the school.<sup>118</sup> Mary Jane eventually adjusted to convent life, and joined the Grey Nuns as a novice in 1862.

The girls' schools on the other side of the river in the 1850s and 1860s were run by Mrs. Ingham (later Mrs. Robert Logan), Ann Benton Mills, and Matilda Davis. These were all Protestant boarding schools that catered to the daughters of HBC officers and other colonial elite. Matilda Davis wrote of the students' dorms at her school to the parent of a prospective student that:

In regards to the sleeping department it quite depends on the size of the room as to the number who occupy it. There are four in some. The younger pupils are in one dormitory. I think a small room just now vacant which your daughter could have to herself or one very nice room with two in it. I have just now 30 pupils 25 of whom are boarders.<sup>119</sup>

Davis's records show that she regularly purchased pemmican and other local foodstuffs for the school, and that she operated a farm alongside the school that both supplied the school and supplemented her income.<sup>120</sup>

Former students of the schools had fond memories of their teachers. Harriet Sinclair Cowan developed a particularly friendly relationship with her first teacher, Mrs. Ingham and recalled that, "as the youngest child at the school, Mrs. Ingham used to have me sit by her side in the dining-room, and she used to give me the top of her egg at breakfast as a mark of special favour."<sup>121</sup> The St. Cross school was run by Ann Benton Mills, who was recruited by the

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<sup>118</sup> George McDougall died in 1849 before Mary Jane was sent to school. Christine Butterill reports that McDougall made his promise to send Mary Jane to one of the Catholic mission schools. Jane Gaspard McDougall relocated her family first to Fort Edmonton in 1849, and then to Red River in 1853. Barkwell, "Mary Jane McDougall," <http://www.metismuseum.ca/resource.php/149122>; Butterill, "Early History of St. Mary's Academy," 12.

<sup>119</sup> Matilda Davis to unknown, 2 August 1873, P4724 fo.5, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>120</sup> Bill, Henry Cook to Miss Davis, 14 March 1865, P4724 fo.11, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>121</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 18.

Anglicans at Red River through her connection to Ann Maxwell Colvile, the wife of Eden Colvile, the Governor of Rupert's Land.<sup>122</sup> The school opened in 1851 in a new building built for the purpose at St. John's, and it housed approximately thirty pupils.<sup>123</sup> The students went for regular walks, and Mills' daughters Mary Louisa and Harriet assisted her as a teacher and a companion to the girls. Jane Inkster Tait, a former pupil Mrs. Mills, remembered Mrs. Mills as "very clever & kind, and we were all very fond of her."<sup>124</sup> The teachers at these Red River boarding schools seem to have been quite successful in providing their students with a domestic and 'homey' experience.

## VI. PROVISIONING AND CARE

Once children were settled at school, they required clothing, books, and other sundries and services. Sometimes, parents made arrangements for their children from afar. Mary Sinclair Christie often ordered supplies for her daughters at the Davis school from abroad, and had them shipped directly to Red River. Sometimes she placed these orders via HBC House in London, and other times, she had her sister-in-law, Mary Christie Patterson, send supplies for Annie and Lydia from Edinburgh.<sup>125</sup> Other parents sent items to their children directly via the canoe brigades or, more often, in the care of friends or family who were travelling nearby. Henry Budd wrote to Matilda Davis that he would send clothing for his daughter, Eliza, by his

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<sup>122</sup> Macleod, *Letitia Hargrave Letters*, 260.

<sup>123</sup> The St. Cross school was enlarged and re-purposed as the 'St. John's Boys' College,' and was demolished around the turn of the twentieth century. Bryce, "Early Red River Culture," 14.

<sup>124</sup> Jane Inkster married Robert Tait in 1858. Healy, *Women of Red River*, 91.

<sup>125</sup> Bill, Draper and General Merchant George Halcro, Stromness, 11 June 1867, P4724 fo.12; Mary Sinclair Christie to Matilda Davis, 4 January 1866, P4724 fo.4, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.



Red River carts.<sup>126</sup> Samuel McKenzie sent the items requested by Davis for his four daughters in the care of Mrs. Charles Thomas via canoe brigade from Île à la Crosse to Red River.<sup>127</sup>

Sometimes the items that parents sent along to their children were both practical and sentimental. Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie sent her son Duncan a pair of 'shoes' which were delivered by Nicol Finlayson when he arrived to visit the Mactavish brothers at school in Inverness. These shoes were most likely moccasins that were handmade by McKenzie herself, and were meant to reflect the love and care she felt for her son. To Duncan, they represented his presence in her life and her thoughts, even if he was far away. He wrote to his mother that, "I was very happy to find that you did not forget me by sending the shoes to me along with Mr. Finlayson."<sup>128</sup> Mary Sinclair Christie, who was known for her beadwork, similarly sent moccasins to her daughters at the Davis school.<sup>129</sup> Nancy Davis, the housekeeper at the Oakfield school, made hide mitts for her nephews Johnnie and Albert and sent them to them at The Nest.<sup>130</sup> In this way, these Indigenous women clothed fur-trade students in items that were practical and, through the time and care indicated by the sewing and beadwork, were tangible representations of their love and affection for the children.

Most often when children were away from home at school, however, other adults were put in charge of making sure the children were provisioned. Sometimes this was left to the

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<sup>126</sup> Henry Budd to Matilda Davis, 22 January 1867, P4724 fo.4, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>127</sup> Samuel McKenzie to Matilda Davis, 25 July 1870, P4724 fo.4, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM. Mrs. Thomas was also escorting his son, William, to the Davis school.

<sup>128</sup> Duncan Mactavish to Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie, May [1838], E.379/1 fo.8-10, Peter and Josette McKenzie Family Papers, AM.

<sup>129</sup> Mary Sinclair Christie to Matilda Davis, 3 January 1865, P4724 fo.3, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM. For more on Mary Sinclair Christie's beadwork see Susan Berry, "Recovered Identities: Four Metis Artists in Nineteenth-Century Rupert's Land, in *Recollecting: Lives of Aboriginal Women of the Canadian Northwest and Borderlands*, ed. Sarah Carter and Patricia McCormack (Athabasca: Athabasca University Press, 2011), 29-60.

<sup>130</sup> Johnnie Davis to Catherine Birston Davis, 21 November 1867, P2343 fo.11, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

school administrators. Matilda Davis was directed by several different parents as to how to provide for their children who were in her care. Generally, they instructed her do as she saw fit, and bill their HBC accounts. Her accounts with merchants William Kennedy, William Drever, the HBC store at Lower Fort Garry, Dr. Curtis Bird, and various other local businesses show numerous and ongoing purchases on her students' behalf; these bills included clothing, medical bills, photographs, and various other items.<sup>131</sup> Davis herself also imported items from England and sold them to her students.<sup>132</sup>

In other cases, family and friends were charged with provisioning and otherwise caring for the students. When Margaret and Mary Christie were sent to school in England in the 1840s, family friends Mr. and Mrs. Allan oversaw their "health and education." Alexander Christie Sr. wrote to his friend James Hargrave in 1841 that, without the "care and attention" of the Allans, Margaret would likely have been required to withdraw from school due to ill health and return to Red River.<sup>133</sup> Henry Rosser, Matilda Davis's cousin in London, was put in charge of both her financial affairs and the care of Albert Hodgson when he first arrived in London. Rosser, who had grown up in the same household as Matilda and her sister Elizabeth, paid the bills for Albert's tuition, clothing, and other expenses while Albert was at Forest School in Walthamstow. After Rosser was relieved of his role as Davis's proxy due to indiscretions stemming from his alcoholism, Marion Millar at The Nest Academy was put in charge of Albert and Johnnie's care.<sup>134</sup> In 1867, Albert wrote to his uncle, George Davis, that he and Johnnie

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<sup>131</sup> Notebooks 1-46, P4725, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>132</sup> An 1871 account shows a 'suit of clothes' sold to Duncan Christie and books to Miss McKenzie. "Sold Some Items I got From England," Notebook 43, P4725 fo.9, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>133</sup> Glazebrook, *The Hargrave Correspondence*, 409.

<sup>134</sup> Henry Rossar to Matilda Davis, 13 October 1863, P2343 fo.3, Matilda Davis Family Fonds, AM.

were going to Edinburgh to get new clothes and have “their likenesses taken.”<sup>135</sup>

Often, parents drew on many different sources to make sure that their children were provided for at school. When Henry Budd sent his daughter, Eliza, to the Miss Davis school, provisioning her required a multi-pronged approach that drew on his own resources at home, in Red River, and on the labour of his eldest daughter, Elizabeth Budd Cochrane. Budd wrote to Matilda Davis of Eliza that:

I have done what I can with provisioning her with clothing from here for the winter, and with bedding, and she will carry instructions to her sister, Mrs. Cochrane, to supply her from my boxes which are being freighted up from YF with what may be still wanting, and necessary, for her to have. I will furnish her with a slate and pencils from here, & copy books etc. but I’m afraid I won’t have any suitable books for her, as all I have will have to be given to her brother, James, who is accompanying her. I trust to my daughter, if she is in the settlement still, to furnish her sister with anything she may want.<sup>136</sup>

Ensuring that Indigenous fur-trade students were clothed and otherwise adequately outfitted for their schooling required the assistance of the schools, family members, and friends to provide for the children.

## VII. HOLIDAYS

Parents and teachers had to make arrangements for food, clothing, and accommodations while children were in school, and they also had to address what to do with student boarders when school was not in session. Students generally had a break at Christmas time, and then a longer six-week summer holiday. In the HBC territories, some boarding

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<sup>135</sup> Albert Hodgson to George Davis, 6 April 1867, P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>136</sup> Henry Budd to Matilda Davis, 3 July 1856, P2342 fo.16, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

students remained at their school over the holidays because it was too far for them to travel to their family homes at remote fur-trade posts. Bills for Samuel McKenzie's four daughters at the Davis school show that the girls remained at Davis's during the six-week summer break instead of returning to their father at Île à la Crosse.<sup>137</sup>

Most students, however, seem to have split their holiday time between their school and friends and family. The Mactavish brothers reported spending the holidays with "friends." Given that the boys were close with their grandmother and Duncan had lived with his cousin's family for three years, the boys probably spent some of their holidays with their Scottish relatives as well. Albert Hodgson split his holiday time in the first few years he was in England between his English cousins and Janet Braby.<sup>138</sup> Braby's other boarders all returned to their own homes for the holidays, however, leaving Albert without anyone his age to keep him company. Albert wrote to his Aunt Matilda of his holidays at Braby's that, "I enjoyed myself very much at Miss Braby's my last holidays but the worst was I had no companion to accompany me in my walks so I had to go by myself."<sup>139</sup>

Like Albert, the 'American' boys at The Nest Academy seem to have split their holidays between the school and time with family and friends. After Johnnie's arrival at The Nest, Albert, Johnnie, and four Christie boys all spent Christmas with George Fyfe, the headmaster of the school, and his wife, Margaret Millar Fyfe.<sup>140</sup> In 1865, the fur-trade boys spent their Christmas

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<sup>137</sup> "Account of Mr. Samuel McKenzie at Oakfield School," P4724 fo.9, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>138</sup> Albert spent part of his 1863 summer holidays with the Rossers. Henry Rosser to Matilda Davis, 13 October 1863, P2343 fo.3, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>139</sup> Albert Hodgson to Matilda Davis, 20 Nov 1864, P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>140</sup> Sisters Margaret and Marion Millar were both employed at The Nest initially as single women. Margaret Millar went on to marry Headmaster George Fyfe. Marion Millar to Matilda Davis, 24 Dec [n.d.], P2343 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

holiday with Alexander Christie Sr. in Edinburgh.<sup>141</sup> In the summer, the fur-trade boys generally joined the Fyfes for a seaside vacation in Whitby, and then some of them headed off to visit family. In July 1868, Johnnie reported that he was going to London to see his English cousins, and fellow fur-trade student John Cowan went to visit his aunt in Glasgow.<sup>142</sup> Roderick and Kenneth McKenzie sailed by ship from Glasgow to spend their holiday with their Scottish family in Ullapool.<sup>143</sup> For children who were able to spend time with relatives during their school holidays, kin networks helped to alleviate the routine of school and possibly the loneliness of being far away from family. At the same time, these holiday visits helped to build and maintain trans-imperial fur-trade kin networks.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

This chapter is the first of two that examine Indigenous fur-trade students' lived experiences of their time at school. In large part, children did not have a say in where they went to school, how they got there, and where they lived while they attended school. Parents made these decisions and these arrangements, and relied on social and family networks to get students to school and provide for their care. Children's correspondence and memoirs, however, provide rare insight into these Indigenous fur-trade students' educational experiences, as well as, for some students, their lives as trans-imperial children. The following

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<sup>141</sup> Marion Millar to Matilda Davis, 30 January 1866, P2343 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>142</sup> John Cowan was the son of Dr. William Cowan and Harriet Goldsmith Sinclair Cowan. Harriet had previously attended various schools herself as a Metis fur trade student, including the Red River Academy and Knox College in Illinois. Johnnie Davis to Matilda Davis, 4 July 1868, P2342 fo.11; Marion Millar to Matilda Davis, 26 June [n.d.], P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>143</sup> Roderick McKenzie to Jane McKenzie McKenzie, 3 October 1868, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, AM.

chapter will examine what students did at school and how these networks of family and kin sometimes failed to adequately care for fur-trade students.

## **CHAPTER 4 - INDIGENOUS FUR-TRADE STUDENTS AT SCHOOL, PART II: IN THE CLASSROOM**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Scholars of the British Empire have explored the numerous and varied ways in which white British men and women transmitted British imperial laws, class structures, religions, and culture to colonial sites around the world.<sup>1</sup> English school curriculums were one of the tools that were employed across the Empire to teach colonial populations how to be moral, Christian, British subjects.<sup>2</sup> Missionaries, scholars, governesses, and private tutors taught white and racialized children across the Empire curriculums that were similar in topic and content. In the colonies, there was a greater focus on religion and morality in an effort to ‘civilize’ racialized and colonial subjects, but the core messages about race, gender, and class remained the same. This curriculum connected imperial children across the Empire. The extent to which these messages were received and how they were understood in a colonial context did not necessarily reflect the intent of the educators’ messages. Rather, “local-level transformations and reinventions of the meanings and forms of colonialism” varied by colony and by each

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<sup>1</sup> E.M. Collingham, *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj, c.1800-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Peter H. Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Mary Procida, *Married to the Empire: Gender, Politics, and Imperialism in India, 1833-1947* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2002); Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The ‘Manly Englishman’ and the ‘Effeminate Bengali’ in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Vyvyan Brandon, *Children of the Raj* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005); Patricia Pok-kwan Chiu, “‘A Position of Usefulness’: Gendering History of Girls’ Education in Colonial Hong Kong,” *History of Education* 37, no.6 (November 2008): 789-805; Nancy Stockdale, “Palestinian Girls and British Missionary Enterprise, 1847-1948,” in *Girlhood: A Global History*, ed. Colleen Vasconcellos and Jennifer Helgren (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 217-233.

individual child.<sup>3</sup>

Elite Indigenous fur-trade children thereby studied similar curriculums at boarding schools in the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) territories, the Canadian colonies, and Britain. Parish schools in the HBC territories focussed on teaching students religion first, and reading and writing second. Elite and middling boarding schools offered a higher quality of education. Boys followed a classical curriculum meant to prepare them for leadership and the professions, and girls studied 'feminine' subjects that would produce middle-class ladies. These similar curriculums, however, were administered differently in the HBC territories than they were in Britain and the Canadas. In England and Scotland, where Christianity was generally ubiquitous amongst pupils, there was less focus on conversion and religious training. Missionaries in the Canadian colonies of Upper and Lower Canada established mission schools whose purpose was to convert and educate First Nations children.<sup>4</sup> In community schools in the colonies students were generally white and Christian, and education followed more in line with the British approach.<sup>5</sup>

In the HBC territories, the primary focus of schools was firstly on civilizing Indigenous children and only secondly on providing them with a basic education. Indigenous fur-trade students who studied in the HBC territories, however, were able to retain their connections to

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<sup>3</sup> Barnita Bagchi, Eckhardt Fuchs, and Kate Rousmaniere, "Introduction: Connecting Histories of Education: Transnational and Cross-Cultural Exchanges in (Post-)Colonial Education," in *Connecting Histories of Education: Transnational and Cross-Cultural Exchanges in (Post-)Colonial Education*, ed. Barnita Bagchi, Eckhardt Fuchs, and Kate Rousmaniere (New York: Berghahn, 2014), 2.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Axelrod, *The Promise of Schooling: Education in Canada, 1800-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) 73. Historical studies for Upper/Lower Canada and Canada East/West in the period under study here tend to focus either on missionary and state education of First Nations children, or on community-based schools for white children, with allowances made for immigrant and African-Canadian children.

<sup>5</sup> Susan E. Houston, "Politics, schools, and social change in Upper Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 53, no. 3 (1972): 249-271; Harry Smaller, "Teachers and Schools in Early Ontario," in *Schooling in Transition: Readings in Canadian History of Education* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 24-25.



colonial places, people, and practices. Children who went abroad for their education were immersed in metropolitan cultural and social practices that reinforced both their colonial roots and their role in the British Empire. Through exploring the lived educational experiences of Indigenous fur-trade students, this chapter considers these themes and how Indigenous fur-trade students' education varied between different sites of empire.

## II. DAY SCHOOLS IN THE HBC TERRITORIES

Some fur-trade children who lived at Red River, Victoria, or Fort Vancouver at just the right time, and at not too great a distance from the settlement were able to attend local schools for some or all of their formal education.<sup>6</sup> Students who attended the free or low-cost parish schools run by missionaries generally lived at home. They travelled to school regularly or semi-regularly as the weather and the family work schedule allowed.<sup>7</sup> Depending on the local population, day schools in the settlements and at the fur-trade posts catered to First Nations, Indigenous, and non-Indigenous students. Both Catholic and Protestant day schools provided an elementary-level education that focussed on the basics of reading, writing, and religion. According to Benjamin McKenzie Jr., who was first a pupil and then a teacher at Red River, the

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<sup>6</sup> For example, William Kennedy Jr. and Mary Kennedy, the children of Captain William Kennedy and Eleanor Cripps Kennedy, attended the Davis school as day students. Their home was only four miles from the Miss Davis School. Captain William Kennedy was the uncle of Alexander Kennedy Isbister and Caroline Isbister Christie. His wife, Eleanor, was English. Eleanor Cripps Kennedy to Matilda Davis, 6 August 1870, P2342 fo.4, Matilda Davis Family Papers, Archives of Manitoba (AM). Similarly, the non-Indigenous daughters of HBC engineer Edmund Abell lived with their parents at Lower Fort Garry and attended the Davis school. Annie Abell to Matilda Davis, nd, P2342 fo.14, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM. Several children who lived in the St. John's Parish in the Red River Settlement attended the St. John's parish school. W.J. Healy, *Women of Red River* (Winnipeg: The Women's Canadian Club of Winnipeg, 1923; reprint, Peguis Publisher, 1987) 86.

<sup>7</sup> Some children who attended parish schools boarded in the settlements in order to attend school. For example, Henri Laronde and Baptiste Beauchemin boarded at George Groat's house at St. John's in order to attend the parish school. Healy, *Women of Red River*, 86.

goal of the teachers in the parish schools was to “get his pupils advanced far enough to read easily and fluently, first of all the Bible and next other good books.”<sup>8</sup>

Elizabeth Setter Norquay attended the Park Creek day school in the Red River settlement before moving on to Indigenous schoolteacher Matilda Davis’s school at St. Andrew’s.<sup>9</sup> Norquay’s memories of her early school days highlight both the focus on religion in the parish schools, and how local conditions influenced the learning conditions in the classroom:

The first thing every morning at school was the reading of a chapter of the Bible. After recess there would be another prayer. The desks were sloping boards along the wall. The little children who were beginners had cards with the alphabet and little words on them. In the winter most of the girls used to come wearing coats made with two-point ‘H.B.’ blankets, with a leather cord to hold them together. And we wore woollen caps and moccasins, of course, outside of duffels made of the white or blue blanket-cloth and coming up to the knees and tied there to keep the snow out. At the school we had slates and slate-pencils. A boy or girl who had no pencil used a lump of clay instead, and if there were little pieces of stone in it they scratched the slate and you could rub the writing off, but not the scratches. When we came home from school at four in the afternoon there was always work for us to do, such work as teasing a great bunch of wool for the women to card the next day.<sup>10</sup>

School at Park Creek included recreation time as well. After the children ate their lunch of bannock, they played games. In the winter, they used an old buffalo robe to slide down the riverbank.

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<sup>8</sup> Benjamin McKenzie Jr. was the son of Benjamin McKenzie and Catherine Campbell McKenzie Clouston, and a grandson of Roderick McKenzie Jr. and Angeliq. Benjamin McKenzie Jr., “Reminiscences of the Reverend Benjamin McKenzie,” PRL-84-59 7593, Ecclesiastical Province of Rupert’s Land Archives, Archives of Manitoba (AM). Hereafter Benjamin McKenzie Reminiscences.

<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Setter Norquay was the daughter of George Setter and Isabella Kennedy, a granddaughter of HBC Chief Factor Alexander Kennedy, and a cousin of Alexander Kennedy Isbister.

<sup>10</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 146.

Jane Inkster Tait attended the St. John's parish school in Red River as a young child.<sup>11</sup>

"The school house was built of logs, and was heated with a Carron stove," she recalled. "Our ink was made from ink powder, and it used to be frozen in the mornings in winter. We used good quill pens, and when the schoolmaster mended them and put fresh points on them in the morning he was careful that each of us got his, or her, own."<sup>12</sup> Janet Bannerman, one of the daughters of the Scottish Selkirk settlers at Red River, attended the St. John's school alongside Tait. Her recollections of the school highlight the focus on religion in the curriculum, and the mix of French-speaking and English-speaking children in the same classroom:

When we were promoted from the class in which we began reading we went into what was called the Testament class and from that on into the Bible class. The New Testament and the Old Testament were used as reading books, and we all learned by heart the names of the kings of Judah and the kings of Israel and the Prophets and the names of the books of the Old Testament, of course, and in fact we were thoroughly grounded in scriptural knowledge, the boys and girls of the French-speaking families equally with us Scottish children. We were taught ciphering and writing, which was very carefully attended to. Every morning the master used to mend our pens with his pen-knife and make fresh points on them. We had slates and slate-pencils which came from England, but there was no blackboard. The children of the French-speaking families and the rest of us were the best of friends and companions.<sup>13</sup>

Bannerman's account of the St. John's school reveals that the divisions between class, race, religion, and language in the Red River settlement were blurred in the classrooms. In spite of

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<sup>11</sup> Other children who attended this school with Jane Inkster Tait and Janet Bannerman were Colin Sinclair (Harriet Sinclair Cowan's youngest brother), Andrew and Myles McDermot (sons of Andrew McDermot and Sarah McNab), and several children belonging to "well-to-do Catholic families up the river" including Margaret and Joseph Leclair, Emilie and Francoie Bovette, Ambroise Fisher, Henri Laronde, and Baptiste Beauchemin. Healy, *Women of Red River*, 86.

<sup>12</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 89. Janet Bannerman was the non-Indigenous daughter of Donald Bannerman (b.1807, Kildonan, Scotland) and Janet Matheson (b. 1808 Scotland, daughter of Samuel Matheson). She was born 1840 at Kildonan, Red River. "William Bannerman and Barbara," M-8736-7, Warren Sinclair's Metis Genealogy Collection, Glenbow Museum, <http://www.glenbow.org/collections/search/findingAids/archhtm/extras/sinclair/m-8736-7.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 88.

the ample attentions that historians have given to the meaning of these divisions at Red River, in the parish schools white, Indigenous, Catholic, Protestant, French-speaking, English-speaking, and Cree/Ojibwa-speaking children all learned alongside one another.<sup>14</sup>

For the children of HBC officers and other colonial elites, living away from home for at least part of their education was common. In the early nineteenth century, some officers' children attended school at the fur-trade posts.<sup>15</sup> As elite boarding schools became more numerous in the main fur-trade settlements in the 1830s and 1840s, however, middling and elite Indigenous children were more likely to be educated first in the home or at parish schools before being sent away to boarding schools.<sup>16</sup>

Fur-trade parents sought a boarding school education for their children for a variety of reasons. Post and parish schools generally only taught the basics of reading, writing, and sometimes arithmetic, and elite and middle-class parents sought a higher quality of education that would provide their children with the skills and knowledge they needed to live as ladies and gentlemen in colonial and metropolitan society. The purpose of this education, which featured classical studies and practical skills for boys and genteel studies for girls, was supposed

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<sup>14</sup> Gerhard J. Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Metis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University Press, 1996); John E. Foster, "The Country-Born in Red River Settlement, 1818-1870" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alberta, 1974); Doug Owsram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980); Frits Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Riel Resistance 1869-70* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1991); D.N. Sprague, *Canada and the Metis, 1869-1885* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988); D.N. Sprague and R.P. Frye, *The Genealogy of the First Metis Nation: the development and dispersal of the Red River Settlement, 1820-1900* (Winnipeg: Peguis, 1983); George F. G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* (London: Longman's Green and Company, 1936).

<sup>15</sup> Some of the HBC posts that had local schools in the nineteenth century, funded either by the HBC or one of the missionary societies, include: Albany, Moose Factory, Norway House (Rossville Mission), York Factory, and all of local parishes in the Red River Settlement. For more information on these post schools, see Denise Fuchs, "Native Sons of Rupert's Land 1760 to 1860s," (Phd diss., University of Manitoba, 2000), especially Chapter 3.

<sup>16</sup> John Norquay, for example, first attended the St. John's parish school and then moved to the St. John's Collegiate School under Bishop David Anderson. Norquay later became the premier of Manitoba.

to produce young Indigenous men and women who conformed to the ideals of what constituted ladies and gentlemen in the British Empire.

Boarding schools also offered a solution for parents who were highly mobile, or who wanted to remove their child from their home. Many of the fur-trade fathers in this study were white or Indigenous HBC employees, and were stationed at various fur-trade posts across the HBC territories. Fur-trade families were highly mobile, and moved from post to post. Given that only some fur-trade posts had local schools, this posed challenges to providing fur-trade children with a formal education outside of the home. Placing children at a boarding school meant that they had consistency in their routine and education. Some white fathers like George Simpson, Francis Ermatinger, and Kenneth McKenzie, who were reluctant to acknowledge their children by Indigenous women, sent their children to boarding school in order to absolve themselves of further parental duties.<sup>17</sup>

Fur-trade parents also sought boarding schools in order to isolate their elite Indigenous children from the influence of the 'wild' offspring of residents of First Nations and Indigenous servants. At Fort Vancouver, officers like John McLoughlin and James Douglas kept their children segregated from the servants' children. According to McLoughlin's daughter Eloise, his children were not allowed to play with anyone who did not have 'one fully white parent,' and her family "lived separate and private entirely."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Juliet Pollard, "The Making of the Metis in the Pacific Northwest Fur Trade Children: Race, Class and Gender," (PhD. diss., University of British Columbia, 1990), 253; Margaret Macleod, ed., *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1968), 177-178.

<sup>18</sup> Mrs. Daniel Harvey (née Eloisa McLoughlin), "Life of John McLoughlin, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company Possessions on the Pacific Slope of Fort Vancouver," Portland, Oregon, 20 June 1878, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, p.12.

At most fur-trade posts, however, officers' children mixed freely with other local children. Parish and post schools, moreover, generally included a mix of First Nations, Indigenous and occasionally white students. Boarding school classrooms, however, were gender segregated and the cost of tuition limited enrolment to children of the upper and middle classes. Fur-trade parents thereby viewed boarding school as the best way for elite Indigenous children to receive a quality, socially appropriate education.

### III. CURRICULUMS AND DAILY ROUTINES

The curriculums, daily routines, and classroom settings at schools in the HBC territories, the Canadian colonies, and Britain were diverse but were rooted in a common educational experience that prioritized routine, religion, and labour. In the HBC territories, however, educators, parents, and students all adapted the schooling experience in some way to allow for the realities of life in fur-trade country. Students in both locations adhered to strict classroom schedules. Donald Mactavish's daily routine at the Messers Gair Academy was characteristic of boarding school life:

We go to school at 7 o'clock in the morning and come out at 9, when we all get our breakfast and go to school again at 10 and come out at 1 o'clock [in the] afternoon and go in at 2 and come out at 4 when we get [our] dinner and come in at 6 and go out at 8 when we get supper, and off to bed at 10 o'clock. We go on that way for the whole year except 1 month when we go to see our friends.<sup>19</sup>

The schedule and classrooms at the girls' boarding schools in Red River were similar. Jane

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<sup>19</sup> Duncan Mactavish to Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie, E.379/1 fo.4-7, Peter and Josette McKenzie Family Fonds, Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA).

Inkster Tait recalled of her time at the St. Cross School under headmistress Ann Benton Mills that:

We used to get up at seven o'clock in the morning winter and summer and all go for a walk in charge of Miss Harriet Mills. We walked on the river in the winter, and out toward the plain in summer. Mrs. Mills was clever and kind, and we were all very fond of her. The school was a two storey building, heated with Carron stoves...Our fare was plain at the St. Cross School. We had bread and butter, with meat once a day. There were about thirty girls at the school when I was there. They were mostly daughters of what we called the Hudson's Bay families.<sup>20</sup>

Routine and schedules structured the daily lives of schoolchildren on both sides of the Atlantic.

Classroom settings were also often similar, if not a bit more rudimentary in the HBC territories. The boys' classroom at the Red River Academy was characteristic of many nineteenth-century classrooms. Red River Academy student Benjamin McKenzie Jr. recalled that, "the school was fitted up with desks nailed to the wall, as well lighted and for winter use was fitted with a large Carron stove (a square box stove burning wood)...We also had sturdy oak forms, that could easily last a generation with little care. At the North-East end stood the master's box-shaped desk with a fixed seat, and in front of him the receptacle for copies, quill pens, slate pencils, chalk, etc."<sup>21</sup> At Fort Victoria, the schoolhouse was less sturdy. The building was constructed of "squared logs not very carefully put together," which did little to keep the students warm or dry during inclement weather.<sup>22</sup>

Sometimes the rudimentary conditions and politics at the fur trade settlements posed

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<sup>20</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 90.

<sup>21</sup> Benjamin McKenzie Reminiscences, AM.

<sup>22</sup> James R. Anderson, "Notes and Comments on Early Days and Events in British Columbia, Washington and Oregon (c.1914-1925), MS 1912 p. 166, BC Archives. Hereafter James Anderson Manuscript.

challenges to teaching and learning. Reverend Herbert Beaver, the HBC chaplain nominally in charge of the school at Fort Vancouver in the mid-1830s, wrote in his 1836 annual report that:

To this school I was in the habit of devoting much daily attention, and Mrs. Beaver received the Girls in her own apartment every morning from nine till twelve, except on Saturdays and Sundays, the former being a holiday, and on the latter I was accustomed to catechise both sexes together.<sup>23</sup>

A year and a half later, however, Beaver wrote in his annual report that Mrs. Beaver by then spent little time with the female students because she was unable to secure domestic servants. Instead, her time was occupied by domestic tasks in their home. Beaver complained in his report that he did not “conceive it quite respectable that the only English lady here, filling her situation, should be continually, but unavoidably, employed in menial offices.”<sup>24</sup> The Beavers’ inability to secure ‘reliable’ domestic help, which the Beavers defined as white domestic help, hampered Mrs. Beaver’s efforts to attend to her teaching duties. Their reluctance to engage Indigenous servants left the bulk of the domestic duties to Mrs. Beaver, and the school was consequently left without a female instructor.

The lack of quality education for girls in the settlements was one of the reasons that both Catholic and Anglican clergy became advocates as early as the 1820s for an institution of higher learning at Red River. In an 1832 letter to Governor George Simpson, Reverend David Jones proposed to establish a private boarding school at Red River. The school, Jones wrote, would see to the “moral improvement, religious instruction and general education” of its

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<sup>23</sup> Thomas E. Jessett, ed., *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-1838: Chaplain to the Hudson’s Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver* (Portland: Champoeg Press, 1959), 3.

<sup>24</sup> Jessett, *Reports of Herbert Beaver*, 81.



pupils.<sup>25</sup> With Simpson's full support the school was established the next year. In 1835, Jones and his colleague, Reverend William Cockran wrote to the Church Missionary Society (CMS) about their progress at the Academy. The twenty-five girls and thirty boys followed separate curriculums that were modelled on English schools and heavily favoured religious instruction:

The course of instruction for the young ladies' school embraces reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, the use of globes, history and catechical information. In the young gentlemen's school, progress is made in reading, writing, arithmetic, bookkeeping, algebra, mathematics, Latin, Greek, etc. The younger ones read Delectus and study grammar, history, etc. while the newcomers are in the New Testament and Catechisms of various sorts.<sup>26</sup>

When John McCallum took over as headmaster in 1837, his goal was to "put the schools on the same footing as the best conducted Academies in England."<sup>27</sup> He added more advanced subjects to Jones' curriculum including Latin, Greek, Geometry, and English Literature. When the school transitioned to the St. John's Collegiate School after 1849, Bishop David Anderson maintained Macallum's classical focus but also added Italian, French, and German languages to the curriculum. In bringing the school under the umbrella of the CMS, Anderson sought to unite higher education and mission training for local and primarily Indigenous youth in one school.<sup>28</sup>

The subjects that fur-trade students in Britain studied at school were similar to those covered at the Red River Academy and St. John's Collegiate School. In almost every letter that

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<sup>25</sup> Reverend David Jones to George Simpson, 8 May 1832, transcript, P7540 fo.20, Transcript of Correspondence between Reverend David Jones and George Simpson, AM.

<sup>26</sup> David Jones and William Cockran, "Report on the state of religion, morality and education at the Red River Settlement and Grand Rapids, 5 June 1835," Incoming Correspondence, Volume 2, 1834-1837, pp.62-71, Mission Books C.1/M2 Reel 3, Church Missionary Society Archives, via St. John's College Library, University of Manitoba. Emphasis in original.

<sup>27</sup> Denise Hahn, "A 'Philanthropist's Bosom' Conflicted: The Reverend John Macallum of the Red River Academy," *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 35, no.1 (2015): 125.

<sup>28</sup> William Fraser, "A History of St. John's College," (MA thesis, University of Manitoba, 1966), 23.

was written by fur-trade students to their parents, they recounted the subjects they were studying and how they were doing in their courses. As discussed in Chapter 6, this focus on their studies in the students' letters reflected the students' perceptions of what they thought their parents would want to hear. In some cases, and particularly amongst the older students, it may have also been an acknowledgement of the family sacrifices in time, emotion, and finances that were needed to support Indigenous fur-trade students in boarding schools.

Duncan and Donald Mactavish both won prizes for their Latin studies at the Messers Gair Academy in 1834.<sup>29</sup> A few years later, Donald was considering becoming a doctor because of his facility with the "dead languages."<sup>30</sup> Johnnie Davis wrote home from The Nest Academy in Jedburgh, Scotland he was, "learning History, Geography, French, English and Arithmetic."<sup>31</sup> Students at The Nest also studied German, drawing, music, Latin, Greek, the Bible, recitation, algebra, and geometry.<sup>32</sup> In their spare time, students took magazines out of the library to read.<sup>33</sup> Roderick McKenzie, for example, reported in a letter home that he was reading *Cassel's History of England*, an illustrated periodical, and his brother Kenneth had borrowed *Chatterbox*, a weekly newspaper for children.<sup>34</sup>

There is less information available on Indigenous girls who attended schools in Britain and the Canadian colonies. Girls' schools in mid-nineteenth-century England and Scotland

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<sup>29</sup> *Inverness Courier*, 6 August 1834.

<sup>30</sup> Duncan Mactavish to Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie, May [1838], E.379/1 fo.8-10, Peter and Josette McKenzie Family Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>31</sup> Johnnie Davis to Catherine Birston Davis, 1 November 1867, P2342 fo.11, Matilda Davis Family Fonds, AM.

<sup>32</sup> Statement of Accounts, The Nest, 28 March 1868, and Roderick McKenzie to Jane McKenzie McKenzie, 6 June 1868, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA; Johnnie Davis to George Davis, 29 November 1867, P2342 fo.11, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>33</sup> Roderick McKenzie Jr. to Jane McKenzie McKenzie, 4 July 1868, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>34</sup> Roderick McKenzie Jr. to Roderick McKenzie, 6 November 1868, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA.

tended to be small, privately owned, and short-lived.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, there are few records from these small, private schools in the imperial archives and little is known about the schools that Indigenous girls attended in Britain. Mary Barnston's school near Edinburgh was quiet, rural, and cost-effective.<sup>36</sup> Mary and Margaret Christie attended school somewhere in Britain under the supervision of 'kind friends' Mr. and Mrs. Allan, and Mary Finlayson was at school in Aberdeen in 1851.<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth and Matilda Davis attended the Adult Orphan Institution in London as teenagers, which was a school that trained the orphans of British military men to work as governesses.<sup>38</sup> For the most part, details about these Indigenous girls' educational experiences in the metropole, along with many other female students who I have not been able to identify, have been erased from the imperial memory as a result of the intersections of gender, race, and the imperial archive.

Indigenous girls who attended school in the Canadian colonies and United States similarly left little correspondence or few recollections about their educations. In the Canadian colonies, Isabella Hardisty attended the Wesleyan Ladies College in Hamilton in Canada West.<sup>39</sup> Julia and Margaret McKenzie were taught by their aunt and uncle in their Montreal home for at least a year in the 1820s. Julia wrote a letter to her parents in 1828 that indicates that the sisters had not been sent to a boarding school as their parents had requested. The letter,

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<sup>35</sup> John Roach, *A History of Secondary Education in England, 1800-1870* (London: Longman, 1986), 151.

<sup>36</sup> George Barnston to James Hargrave, 1 April 1844, Box 2 Fo.5 MSS15, Margaret Arnett Macleod Papers, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (UMASC).

<sup>37</sup> "1851 Scotland Census," database, *Ancestry.com* (<https://www.ancestry.com>; accessed 29 June 2017), entry for Mary Finlayson, Parish: Old Machar; ED: 21; Page: 20; Line: 14; Roll: CSSCT1851\_40; Year: 1851.

<sup>38</sup> Unknown author to Matilda Davis, 11 August [nd], Currie Family Papers, private collection courtesy of Judy Kessler; H. Danford to Miss Davis, [1840], P2342 fo.1, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM; Margaret E. Bryant, *The London Experience of Secondary Education* (London: The Athalone Press, 2002), 348-349.

<sup>39</sup> Doris Jeanne MacKinnon, *Metis Pioneers: Marie Rose Delorme Smith and Isabella Clark Hardisty Lougheed* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2017).

however, is brief and Julia does not provide details about her education or her time in Montreal. Harriet Sinclair Cowan provided the detailed account of her trip to Illinois with her father and sister in the 1840s to attend Knox College, but offered no details about hers and her sister's time at school there.<sup>40</sup>

These Indigenous girls would have studied a curriculum that was typical of mid-nineteenth-century British and colonial girls' boarding schools. This included a mix of academics and 'accomplishments,' with the aim of preparing students to function as well-bred and genteel middle-class wives and mothers. Girls in middle-class boarding schools generally studied subjects including history, arithmetic, geography, and grammar, as well as music, drawing, dancing, and needlework.<sup>41</sup> HBC Governor James Douglas's letters to his daughter, Martha, reveal some of the aspects of her education in England in the early 1870s. Martha was eighteen when she left for school in England, and had previously attended the Anglican Female Collegiate Academy in Victoria. James Douglas was clear on what he expected Martha to learn at her English school, which was run by two sisters at Worcester Park in south-west London.<sup>42</sup> In a letter to his daughter Agnes' father-in-law in London, who helped to locate a school for Martha, Douglas asked Joseph Bushby to:

[Place] her at a proper finishing school, where she may have the comforts of a home, and a careful training in manners and general knowledge. Martha is 18 years of age and as far as literature goes, is fairly educated. She plays well, sings has a taste for drawing is well read, writes a good hand, and has a nice letter. What should now engage her attention is elocution and English Composition, the French language, which she has

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<sup>40</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 27.

<sup>41</sup> Christina de Bellaigue, *Educating Women: Schooling and Identity in England and France 1800-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 176.

<sup>42</sup> James Douglas to Martha Douglas, 31 October 1872, transcript, B/40/4A, Letters to Martha Douglas, Sir James Douglas Papers, BC Archives.

studied for several years – larger and broader views of life, and that expansion of the mind, which may be called the education of the eye, and cannot be acquired out here.<sup>43</sup>

To Martha, Douglas explained that the purpose of her time in London was to “get rid of the cobwebs of colonial training and give you a proper finish.”<sup>44</sup> Martha was expected to excel at her studies, with her father noting that, “I shall be proud indeed if you get the several prizes, you are aiming at, it will be a trophy of your diligence and ability.”<sup>45</sup> For Douglas, the quality of Martha’s academics was as important as learning the norms of metropolitan middle-class gender and social norms.

Other parents had somewhat more ambiguous perspectives on their daughters’ advanced education, and were concerned primarily with educating their daughters only as far as was needed to secure their position as Indigenous fur-trade ladies in the HBC territories. Flora and Jane Bell, the daughters of HBC Chief Factor John Bell and his wife Ann (Nancy) Dease, were the last two remaining female students at the Red River Academy when it was transferred to Bishop David Anderson in 1849. In 1852, John Bell wrote to his colleague Donald Ross that he was sending Flora to the St. Cross school under Ann Benton Mills, but that Jane, who was about eighteen years old, was “sufficiently educated for this country and the society in which she is likely to move.”<sup>46</sup> Bell was concerned enough with his daughters’ educations to make necessary financial investments, but only to a certain point.

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<sup>43</sup> James Douglas to Joseph Bushby, 10 August 1872, transcript, B/40/4A, Letters to Martha Douglas, Sir James Douglas Papers, BC Archives.

<sup>44</sup> James Douglas to Martha Douglas, 9-11 June 1873, transcript, B/40/4A, Letters to Martha Douglas, Sir James Douglas Papers, BC Archives.

<sup>45</sup> James Douglas to Martha Douglas, 10 October 1873, transcript, B/40/4A, Letters to Martha Douglas, Sir James Douglas Papers, BC Archives.

<sup>46</sup> John Bell to Donald Ross, 18 June 1852, MS0635 fo. 10-11, Donald Ross Papers, BC Archives.

The Protestant girls' schools that opened in the HBC territories in the 1850s and 1860s all taught a genteel English curriculum that balanced academics and social graces.<sup>47</sup> At the St. Cross school, the students learned music and modern languages. In addition to a 'solid' education, the girls were "trained in all the social etiquette of the day."<sup>48</sup> The Female Collegiate School in Victoria similarly aimed to "provide careful religious training, in combination with a solid English Education, and the usual accomplishments."<sup>49</sup> This curriculum included lessons in music and singing, drawing and painting, and needlework.

The HBC elite also sent their daughters to the Catholic schools in Red River, Victoria, and Oregon. The Sisters at Red River and Victoria both originated from mother houses in Quebec that consisted almost exclusively of French-speaking nuns, and the Sisters of Notre Dame du Namur in the Willamette Valley travelled from Belgium in the 1850s. The Grey Nuns arrived in St. Boniface in 1844, and the next year began taking in boarders.<sup>50</sup> By 1848, they erected a new building to house the Sisters, boarding students, orphans, and the indigent elderly.<sup>51</sup> In Victoria, the Sisters of St. Ann opened their first school in 1858, and began

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<sup>47</sup> Ann Benton Mills returned to England in 1857 with her daughter, Harriet. Her daughter Mary Louisa married Red River recorder Francis Godschall Johnson in 1856. Harriet Mills married Alfred Roche in England in 1858. Other sources state that Ann Benton Mills returned to London to work at Queen's College, where Harriet took classes. By 1861, Mrs. Mills was the headmistress of St. Mary Hall, a boarding school for the daughters of Anglican clergy in Brighton. Ann Mills later returned to Canada West at the request of Bishop Hellmuth to found and serve as principal of the Hellmuth Ladies' College. In 1878, her widowed daughter, Harriet, married Reverend Michael Boomer, the principal of Huron College in London, ON. Mrs. Mills' died at the Boomer home in 1898. "Mrs Ann Mills Dead," 8 April 1898, *Daily Mail and Empire*; "1861 England Census," database, *Ancestry.com* (<https://www.ancestry.com>; accessed 27 May 2017), entry for Ann Mills, Class: RG 9; Piece: 593; Folio: 18; Page: 30; GSU roll: 542668.

<sup>48</sup> Marion Bryce, "Early Red River Culture," *Transactions of the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba* 1, no.57 (February 1901): 11, <http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/transactions/1/redriverculture.shtml>.

<sup>49</sup> Tina Lowery, "The Needle Art of Kathleen O'Reilly," *BC Historical News* (Fall 2002): 12, [http://www.library.ubc.ca/archives/pdfs/bchf/bchn\\_2002\\_fall.pdf](http://www.library.ubc.ca/archives/pdfs/bchf/bchn_2002_fall.pdf).

<sup>50</sup> Diane Michelle Boyd, "The Rise and Development of Female Catholic in the Nineteenth-Century Red River Region: The Case of Catherine Mulaire," (MA thesis, University of Manitoba, 1999), 69.

<sup>51</sup> Boyd, "Female Catholic Education," 69.

educating the daughters of the fur trade and colonial elite families including the Douglasses, the Helmckens, and the McKenzies.<sup>52</sup>

The curriculum and codes of conduct at both the Grey Nuns' school and the St. Ann's Convent school were imported from their mother houses in Montreal.<sup>53</sup> The focus of the nuns' curriculum in the HBC territories was primarily to produce good Catholic wives and mothers who would serve as civilising influences on Catholic Metis homes and communities. The Virgin Mary was held up as a model mother and Catholic woman, and students' academic studies were grounded in religious teachings. Class lines were maintained at the St. Ann school by teaching 'the accomplishments,' including painting, drawing, and music to the boarding students only.<sup>54</sup> In some ways, the Sisters' teachings challenged the British imperial norms and ideals that Indigenous fur-trade students were learning in Protestant schools. The Catholic religion was central to what students learned, French was the primary language of instruction, and the British Empire had little role in the classroom. However, like the Protestant schools in the HBC territories, the primary aims of the Catholic schools were to Christianize and civilize their students. In these ways, the aims and curriculum of both the Protestant and Catholic boarding schools aligned.

The records for the Oakfield Academy for Young Ladies, under headmistress Matilda Davis, offer the most complete record of the curriculum offered at a girls' boarding school in

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<sup>52</sup> In 1858, Agnes (17), Alice (15) and Martha Douglas (5) were registered at St. Ann's Convent school. All three were de-registered in March 1859 after a conflict between the Mother Superior and James Douglas. Douglas's granddaughter, Dolly Helmcken (b.1862), also attended the school. Email, Carey Pallister, Province Archivist, Sisters of St. Ann Archives, 10 November 2016.

<sup>53</sup> Margaret Milne Martens and Graeme Chalmers, "Educating the Eye, Hand and Hearth at St. Ann's Academy," *BC Studies* no.144 (Winter 2004/2005): 37.

<sup>54</sup> Martens and Chalmers, "St. Ann's Academy," 38.

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**MANSION HOUSE**  
**Establishment for Young Ladies.**  
BY  
*Ms. A. R. Poole,*  
*Hanley Road Hornsey Road.*

**TERMS**

*For Board, Washing, & Instruction in the English & French Languages (the latter is taught by a resident Parisian Governess) Writing, Arithmetic, Music, Thorough Proof History, Composition, &c. Geography, the use of the Globes with plain & ornamental Needle Work.*

~~Forty~~ **Fifty Guineas per Annum.**

*Continuance of School during the Vacations.*

**Six Guineas Per Annum.**

**PROFESSORS.**

<i>Drawing</i> ————— 5. 5. 0	}	<i>Piano</i> ————— 10. 10. 0
<i>Dancing</i> ————— 5. 5. 0		<i>Italian</i> ————— 8. 8. 0
<i>Singing</i> ————— 8. 8. 0		<i>Latin</i> ————— 5. 5. 0

Each Young Lady to bring a Silver Fork, Spoon, and 6 Towels.

*12 months notice required previously to a Girl's leaving the School, or payment for that period to be made.*

Figure 4.1 - Prospectus, Mansion House Establishment for Young Ladies, Matilda Davis School Collection, Archives of Manitoba



the HBC territories. Davis's curriculum was modelled on what she had likely both learned and taught in England. The prospectus for her school was closely modelled on that of the Mansion House Establishment for Young Ladies, a school operated by her cousin, Matilda Poole, in north London. Family records indicate that Matilda and Elizabeth Davis may have worked at the school.<sup>55</sup> The Mansion House school prospectus indicates that the curriculum included "Instruction in the English and French Languages...Writing, Arithmetic, Thorough [Basic] History, Composition & Geography, the Use of Globes, with Plain and Ornamental Needlework."<sup>56</sup> For additional fees students could also take drawing, dancing, singing, harp, Italian, and Latin. Davis's records show that her students followed a nearly identical schedule of courses, excluding the availability of instruction in harp, Italian, and Latin.<sup>57</sup>

The records of the Davis school also reveal the extent to which the British Empire permeated what Davis's students learned in the classroom. In some ways, Matilda Davis's personal history as a trans-imperial fur-trade student and a teacher trained in England influenced the extent to which she drew on imperial ideas and material culture in her school. Davis imported most of the materials in her classroom from England. Her records contain an 1855 list of English schoolbooks that she imported for the opening her school circa 1856.<sup>58</sup> These selections were likely influenced by the instructional materials that she used as a governess in England. They were also influenced in part by her personal connections. A

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<sup>55</sup> Envelopes addressed to Matilda Davis and Elizabeth Davis at Mansion House School, Currie Family Papers, private collection courtesy of Judy Kessler.

<sup>56</sup> Prospectus for Mansion House Establishment for Young Ladies, P2342 fo.1, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>57</sup> Prospectus for Oakfield, St. Andrews Establishment for Young Ladies, P4725 fo.6, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>58</sup> "List of Textbooks, Sept 1855," Notebook 5, P4725 fo.2, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

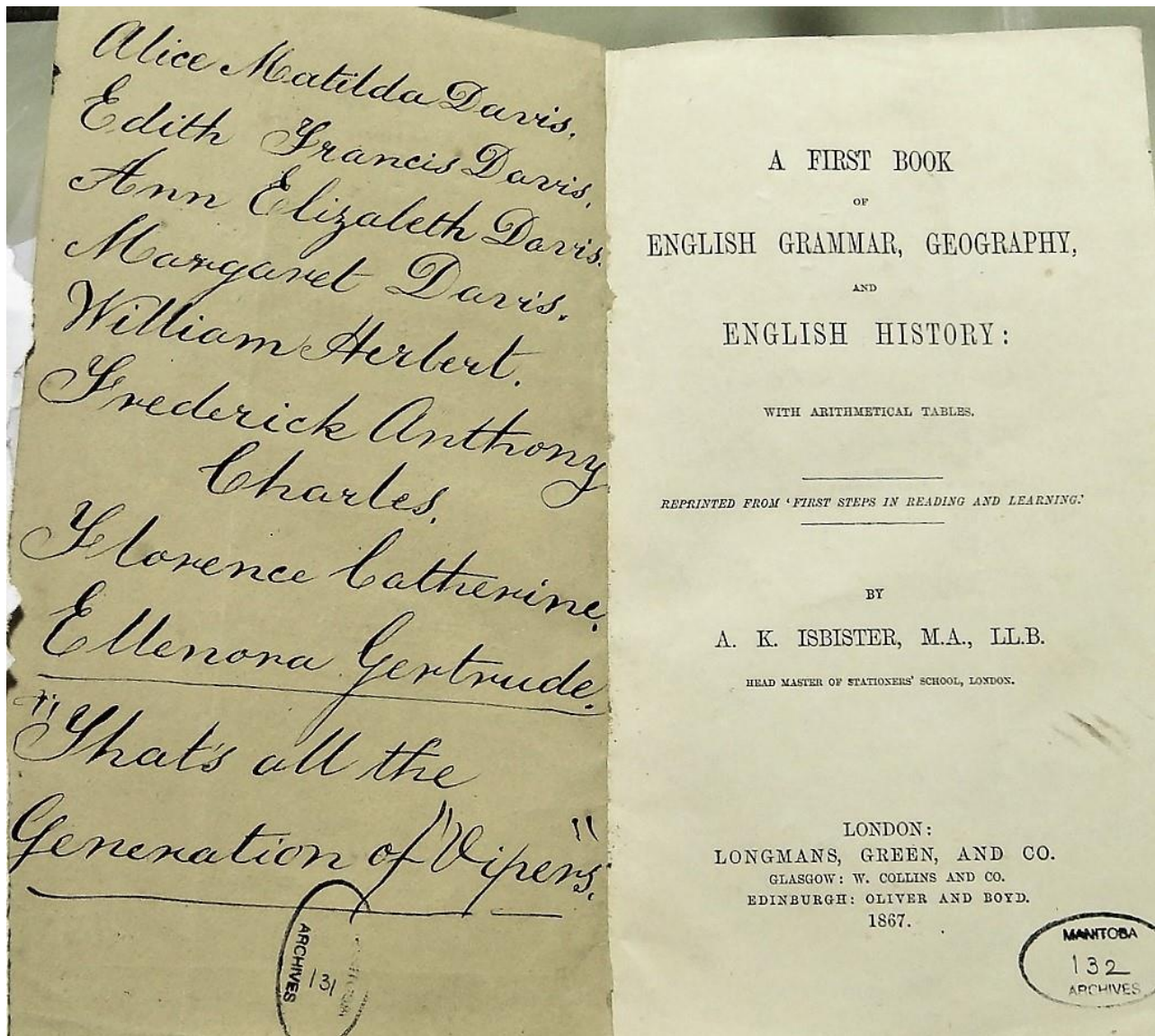


Figure 4.2 – Textbook written by Alexander Kennedy Isbister, Matilda Davis Family Papers, Archives of Manitoba

textbook written by fellow trans-imperial fur trade student and educator, Alexander Kennedy Isbister, was used by Davis's nieces and nephews at her school. Her own relationship with the Isbister-Kennedy family undoubtedly influenced her choice in textbook for her students.

Davis also introduced the Empire to her students in other ways. She had a subscription to the *Illustrated London News*, which students used in the classroom.<sup>59</sup> Davis drew on her own experiences of empire to translate her lessons to her students. Jane Truthwaite recalled of a geography lesson that, "Miss Davis told us that the world was round like an orange and slightly flattened at the poles, and she had to explain to us what an orange was like, for of course none of us had ever seen one."<sup>60</sup> Matilda Davis, on the other hand, would have encountered oranges as part of the many 'exotic' foods imported from the tropical colonies to the markets of London.<sup>61</sup> In this case, her experiences as a trans-imperial Indigenous student created a disconnect between her own childhood at the center and crossroads of the Empire and that of her colonial students. This incident may have prompted Davis to purchase the globe, produced in London in the 1840s, that was associated with her school and is pictured below.

The curriculum that Indigenous fur-trade students followed in Protestant schools in both Britain and the HBC territories were similar. In parish schools, teachers focused on instilling in children the basics of reading, writing, and religion. Boarding schools offered a more advanced

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<sup>59</sup> Receipt for subscription to *Illustrated London News*, P4724 fo.14, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>60</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 135.

<sup>61</sup> For more on the role of food in the British Empire, see Troy Bickham, 'Eating the Empire: Intersections of Food, Cookery and Imperialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain,' *Past and Present* 198, no.1 (2008): 71-109; Joanna de Groot, "Metropolitan desires and colonial connections: reflections on consumption and empire," in *At Home with Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, ed. Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 166-190; James Walvin, *Fruits of Empire: Exotic Produce and British Taste, 1660-1800* (New York: NYU Press, 1997); Susan Zlotnick, "Domesticating Imperialism: Curry and Cookbooks in Victorian England," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 16, no.2/3 (1996): 51-68.

level of education, and schooled boys in classical and practical subjects and girls in academics and the genteel arts. The goal of these schools was to produce middle- and upper-class ladies and gentlemen who were grounded in an understanding of the power and history of England.

#### **IV. IMPERIALISM AND BRITISH CULTURE AT SCHOOL**

The Indigenous fur-trade students in this study learned more than just academics at school. Their schooling also aimed to train them to become Christianized and Anglicized imperial ladies and gentlemen. Particularly for children who were sent abroad for school, their education included being immersed in the norms and etiquette of the British middle class and British culture. Travel exposed them to various sites of empire, living in English and Scottish communities immersed them in metropolitan social customs and morals, and religion occupied a different space in their education than it had in the HBC territories. Students who went to school in the HBC territories also absorbed lessons about the metropole and the British Empire, but often in different ways and from different sources than their counterparts at school in Britain.

Sports and physical activity figure largely in the letters that Indigenous fur-trade boys wrote from Britain. By the mid-to-late nineteenth century, sports were seen as a way to teach boys across the British Empire a version of English masculinity that would support and perpetuate the Empire.<sup>62</sup> Cricket in particular was central to this imperial enterprise in

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<sup>62</sup> Dominic Malcolm, *Globalizing Cricket: Englishness, Empire and Identity* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012); J.A. Mangan, ed., *The Cultural Bond: Sport, Empire, Society* (London: Routledge, 1992); J.A. Mangan, *'Manufactured' Masculinity: Making Imperial Manliness, Morality and Militarism* (London: Routledge, 2012).



Figure 4.3 - Globe from the Miss Davis School, Manitoba Museum, HBC 49-1 (A)

masculinity, and the fur-trade boys at the Nest, referred to as a group as ‘the Americans,’ frequently discussed cricket in their letters. Johnnie Davis explained to his father that, “we play football now since a week ago, we also play cricket but it is getting too cold for it.”<sup>63</sup> The Nest boys played cricket against other local schools, and had inter-mural games as well.<sup>64</sup> Cricket could also serve to reinforce the divide between the group of fur-trade students at The Nest, and the rest of the primarily Scottish-born students. Roderick McKenzie wrote that, “We played a cricket match on Wednesday and it was between the Americans and the rest, and the Americans were victorious by 33 runs.”<sup>65</sup> In this instance at least, a sport that was supposed to teach boys a specific version of imperial masculinity not only reinforced divisions between children from the colonies and children from the metropole, but also positioned the Indigenous colonials as the victors.

Students found a variety of ways to enjoy other outdoor pastimes of English and Scottish schoolboys. Skating was a favourite activity, and both Roderick and Kenneth McKenzie were supplied with new skates when they were at school.<sup>66</sup> The students were also given a certain amount of freedom to explore the outdoors. Going on walks was a popular pastime. Donald Mactavish wrote that on Saturdays at the Messers Gair Academy in Inverness the students “always take a walk and the Messrs Gair our masters go along with us. If there is

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<sup>63</sup> Johnnie Davis to George Davis, 4 October 1867, P2342 fo.11, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>64</sup> Roderick McKenzie Jr. to Jane McKenzie McKenzie, 6 June 1868 and 8 July 1868, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>65</sup> Roderick McKenzie Jr. to Jane McKenzie McKenzie, 7 May 1868, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>66</sup> Statement of Accounts from The Nest Academy, 25 December 1867, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA.

anything remarkable going on at any place they hire a coach to let us see what is going on.”<sup>67</sup> At the Nest, which was located along the banks of the Jed River, the boys took regular walks during which Roderick McKenzie reported finding “a great many birds nests.”<sup>68</sup>

Some of the schools had outdoor playgrounds and green spaces. At Forest School, the playground was a favourite space where students could engage in various activities. Albert Hodgson wrote to his Aunt Matilda that, “it is one half holiday here now but it is very muddy and the grass is wet and so the little boys cannot go on the grass so we have to play in the play ground, they have games at cross-touch and the game at babys [sic]. It is a game marked out with chalk and the games at prisoners’ base and cricket and hockey.” Students also found time to indulge in general childhood mischief. Albert wrote of his classmates at Forest School that, “the boys have some mouse traps as there are a great many in the coal cellar and different places. They have also bird traps they are called gins. They used to set them at Manor Cottage but Mr. Guy has stoped [sic] them and they set them in the play ground.” The relocation of the traps to the playground ended with Albert getting “three large holes in my hand” when he accidentally got his hand caught in one of the traps.<sup>69</sup>

Indigenous fur-trade students at English and Scottish boarding schools were also immersed in British culture through holidays and travel. The students at Forest School celebrated the Prince of Wales’ birthday and took trips to nearby local attractions.<sup>70</sup> Johnnie Davis was quite taken with the Halloween celebrations at The Nest, and wrote to his mother

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<sup>67</sup> Donald Mactavish to Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie, 14 May 1838, E.379/1 fo.4-7, Peter and Josette McKenzie Family Papers, HBCA.

<sup>68</sup> Roderick McKenzie Jr. to Roderick McKenzie, 2 May 1868, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>69</sup> Albert Hodgson to Matilda Davis, n.d., P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>70</sup> Albert Hodgson to Matilda Davis, n.d., P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

about the school party that, “we had Halloween last night. At first we had apples, and three tubs of water, all those that wished to get any had to put one in the tub before they could put their heads down in the water where the apples were going round and round, then we had some nuts, and after that saw the magic lantern.”<sup>71</sup>

The Nest students also took seaside vacations at Whitby, on the northeast coast of England. From there they explored the region on day trips and partook in cultural spectacles like Cooke’s Circus.<sup>72</sup> Children who had extended kin or friends to visit in England and Scotland also traveled to other parts of Britain during their holidays. Roderick McKenzie wrote of his holidays in 1868 that he enjoyed his time with his family in Ullapool very much, and on the way home stayed with Mr. Macleod in Edinburgh where he “saw mostly all the best views in the City.”<sup>73</sup>

The boys’ extracurricular activities also provided training in the manners and etiquette expected of middle-class gentlemen. The students frequently visited local friends, teachers, and relatives. The rituals associated with these calls versed colonial boys and youth in performing the codes of gentlemanly conduct that would be required of them as middle-class men. As entertainment moved into the home as part of the Victorian middle-class’s focus on domesticity, the practice of giving and receiving ‘calls’ at home became an integral part of middle-class recreation for both men and women.<sup>74</sup> Roderick McKenzie took tea with Mrs. Fyfe, the wife of headmaster George Fyfe, and was invited to the home of a fellow student for tea as

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<sup>71</sup> Johnnie Davis to Catherine Birston Davis, 1 November 1867, P2342 fo.11, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>72</sup> Roderick McKenzie Jr. to Roderick McKenzie, 9 August 1869, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>73</sup> Roderick McKenzie Jr. to Jane McKenzie McKenzie, 3 October 1868, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>74</sup> John Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 124.



well where he “enjoyed myself very much.”<sup>75</sup> Albert Hodgson had a “row in a boat” during a call at the home of a friend of Matilda Davis.<sup>76</sup> In these ways, fur-trade boys who lived in and went to school in England and Scotland learned how to operate in the metropolitan middle-class milieu.

For some children, the move from the HBC territories to the metropole could produce a distinct sense of cultural displacement. Duncan Mactavish, on arriving in Inverness, could not make sense of boys wearing kilts and wondered at “these boys wearing short petty cots [petticoats].” Duncan’s feelings of cultural displacement turned into physical displacement when he got lost in the Highlands. Duncan “could not bear the sight of girls,” and on his second day in Inverness he “went to see some of my friends along with my cousin, and I saw some girls looking at me and off I set home but I mistook my way.”<sup>77</sup> After spending some time lost in the countryside, a kindly shepherd showed him home. Duncan was likely used to the outdoor life and freedom offered to children at fur-trade posts, which included familiarity with the local paths and landscape. In a new country, however, he had no sense of place to safely guide him home.

At schools in the HBC territories, students engaged in many of the same activities as their counterparts in Britain, but in ways that were adapted to local conditions. At Fort Victoria, the boys at the Staines’ school spent a great deal of time outdoors. James R. Anderson’s reminiscences of his two years as a student leave the impression that the boys were given a lot

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<sup>75</sup> Roderick McKenzie Jr. to Roderick McKenzie, 5 Feb 1869 and to Jane McKenzie McKenzie, 6 Dec 1869, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>76</sup> Albert Hodgson to Matilda Davis, 1864, P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>77</sup> Duncan Mactavish to Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie, May 1838, E.379/1 fo.8-10, Peter and Josette McKenzie Family Fonds, HBCA.

of freedom to be outdoors in and near the fort. Anderson recounts horseracing, boxing, and stealing potatoes and cooking them on the beach.<sup>78</sup> School trips involved travelling by canoe with Reverend Staines to “explore all the unknown parts near the fort.”<sup>79</sup> At the Red River Academy, a swamp behind the settlement provided a variety of berries and wild plums on which the boys “duly made raids at the right season.”<sup>80</sup>

Female students had less personal autonomy than their brothers due to the gendered restrictions meant to protect their virtue and reputations. Fur-trade daughters who attended convent schools were expected to conform to strict codes of dress and behaviour, similar to those followed by the nuns themselves. Boarding students who lived with the Grey Nuns at St. Boniface were kept under close supervision by the Sisters, and at the St. Ann’s convent school in Victoria students were expected to adhere to a strict code of moral conduct.<sup>81</sup>

The students at Protestant boarding schools seem to have been allowed a bit more freedom. As was common for nineteenth-century middle-class ladies, however, they were expected to be in the company of a companion when they were out and about. Mary Christie and one of her cousins, for example, were out for a walk at St. Andrew’s when they met up with Mary’s brother, Alexander ‘Sandy’ Christie II, and his travelling companion Isaac Cowie.<sup>82</sup> At the St. Cross school, Miss Harriet Mills, Ann Mills’ younger daughter, attended the students on their

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<sup>78</sup> James Anderson Manuscript, 153 & 167, BC Archives.

<sup>79</sup> James Anderson manuscript, 198, BC Archives.

<sup>80</sup> Benjamin McKenzie Reminiscences, AM.

<sup>81</sup> Lesley Erickson, “At the Cultural and Religious Crossroads: Sara Riel and the Grey Nuns in the Canadian Northwest, 1848-1883,” (MA thesis, University of Calgary, 1997), 63-64.

<sup>82</sup> Isaac Cowie, *Company of Adventurers: A narrative of seven years in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company during 1867-1876 on the great buffalo plains with historical and biographical notes and comments* (Toronto: William Biggs, 1913), 148.

walks, and at Oakfield the students took “stately walks.”<sup>83</sup>

Some students still found time away from their teachers to exercise some autonomy. Most of the Indigenous daughters could ride horses and had at least some skills in hunting, trapping, and gathering. There are no mentions of the girls at the Red River schools engaging in these activities during their time as students, but it is likely that they continued these pursuits in some ways at Red River, whether it was during the school year or while on holidays at their grandparents’ homes at Red River. Girls were also not immune to the lure of mischief. Dr. John Helmcken lived in the Bachelor’s Hall at Fort Victoria, below the sleeping quarters of the boarding students. Helmcken was forced to complain to Mrs. Staines at one point that her female charges “had poured through the crevices of the floor above, dirty water on my bed, so that I had been obliged to make a canopy over it with cedar mats.”<sup>84</sup> Both male and female students sought out ways to exert some personal autonomy over their time and activities, even if the forms that autonomy took were gendered.

The spectacle of the British Empire, meant to awe and impress, was part of the childhoods of students who went to school in Britain and those who stayed in the HBC territories. The forms that this spectacle took and the messages it was meant to communicate, however, differed between the metropole and the colonies. Both Albert Hodgson and Martha Douglas reported visiting the Crystal Palace during their time in England.<sup>85</sup> The Crystal Palace was an exhibition hall built to house the Great Exhibition of 1851 at Hyde Park, London. The Palace and the Exhibition were meant to showcase the industrial innovation of the English and

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<sup>83</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 89, 135.

<sup>84</sup> Dorothy Blakely Smith, ed., *The Reminiscences of John Sebastien Helmcken* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1975), 125.

<sup>85</sup> Albert Hodgson to Matilda Davis, no date, P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

the might of the British Empire.<sup>86</sup> Visitors, both English and others from around the world, were to take away from this “protean event with numerous multiple meanings” the ‘peace, progress, and prosperity’ of England and the British Empire.<sup>87</sup> How visitors actually received these messages were diverse and contested, but the Exhibition, and its later reincarnation at Sydenham Hill, drew thousands of metropolitan and colonial visitors between 1851 and 1936. Albert did not record his opinions on the Crystal Palace, but Martha wrote to her father, who had also visited the site during an earlier trip to England, that she found the Exhibition “delightful.”<sup>88</sup>

Metropolitan sites like the architectural wonder of the Crystal Palace were not accessible to students in the HBC territories. The British military presence at Red River and Victoria, however, served a similar purpose in the context of a colonial setting. The spectacle of British military might was awe-inspiring, but it also sent a different message to colonial peoples than did the spectacle of English innovation at the 1851 Great Exhibition. Benjamin McKenzie Jr. and his fellow students were enamoured with the English soldiers who arrived at Red River in 1846.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> After the Exhibition was over in 1851, the Palace was dismantled and rebuilt on top of Sydenham Hill, outside of London. Thousands of people visited the site before the Palace burned down in 1936, including Albert Hodgson and Martha Douglas. For more on the Great Exhibition of 1851, see Jeffery Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999) and Jeffery Auerbach and Peter Hoffenberg, ed., *Britain, the Empire and the World at the Great Exhibition of 1851* (New York: Routledge, republished 2016).

<sup>87</sup> Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851*, 1-2.

<sup>88</sup> James Douglas to Martha Douglas, 23 May 1873, transcript, B/40/4A, Letters to Martha Douglas, Sir James Douglas Papers, BC Archives.

<sup>89</sup> In the summer of 1846 a portion of the 6th Regiment, along with artillery and engineering detachments consisting of 17 officers and 364 non-commissioned officers and men accompanied by 17 women and 19 children, left arrived at Lower and Upper Forts Garry. They remained in garrison until 1848 and then returned to Great Britain, and were replaced by a smaller contingent of Enrolled Pensioners, or retired soldiers. Canadian Military History Gateway, “Red River Volunteers,” Volume II (1755-1871), accessed 18 July 2017, <http://www.cmhg.gc.ca/cmh/page-466-eng.asp>.

One of the wonders of these early days was the arrival, by York boat, of some British soldiers of the 6<sup>th</sup> regiment, five or six hundred in number, who were quartered partly at Lower Fort Garry but principally at Upper Fort Garry. Then, too, we saw for the first time silver, coins, such as crowns, half-crowns, shilling, sixpences and three-penny bits...The first British officer we saw was Captain Beatty, in a red coat and on horseback...with his silver epaulettes gleaming in the bright sun, a magnificent creature, to our eyes.<sup>90</sup>

The spectacle of the troops not only delighted the boys, but also inspired them to mimic the British soldiers as part of their play:

After the arrival of the soldiers at Upper Fort Garry, we used to hear their regular bugle call in the evenings. This stirred [our] young blood, and tempted us many a time to disregard the 'bounds' and to take a two-mile race to the Fort to watch the soldiers parading, listen to the words of command and watch the manoeuvres. On our return we would diligently set to work drilling ourselves, using straight sticks as muskets.<sup>91</sup>

At Victoria the military might of the Empire made a lasting impression on James R. Anderson as well. The arrival of the British naval ship the H.M.S. *Portland* was "naturally a great event" for a ten-year-old boy. To the boys' delight, Reverend Staines hired a large canoe and accompanied the boys from the school onboard the ship, where Staines presented Admiral Moresby with a bouquet of flowers from his garden. A few days later, the fort residents were invited to a party on the ship. Anderson recalled that, during the transit from Victoria to the ship at Esquimault, "several things impressed themselves very vividly on my mind." One of which was seeing "the graves of the men belonging to the Navy who had died here and were buried on Brothers Island and the names of the ships which had previously been at Esquimault painted in black on the rocks."<sup>92</sup> In this way, the Royal Navy had already made imperial claims

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<sup>90</sup> Benjamin McKenzie Reminiscences, AM.

<sup>91</sup> Benjamin McKenzie Reminiscences, AM.

<sup>92</sup> James Anderson manuscript, 182, BC Archives.

to both space and history on the Indigenous lands near Fort Victoria.

When Staines and the students reached the ship, the party made a memorable impression on Anderson. It was the first event of that kind for the students, whose previous entertainments on festive occasions had primarily consisted of the men at HBC forts “[enjoying] themselves in the country dance, the music being furnished by a fiddle, and the menu a roasted dog.” Onboard, the children heard a full band play for the first time, over which they were “simply delirious with joy and astonishment.” Less exuberant occasions also left a lasting impression on Anderson. The pomp and circumstance of a military funeral was a spectacle for the schoolchildren. After the death of a crew member on board one of the naval ships, “the boats conveying the funeral party landed at the Hudson’s Bay Company’s jetty and formed up in the Fort yard, the firing party of marines in their red uniforms and white cross belts, long muskets, bright bayonets and ramrods was a sight long-remembered and talked about.”<sup>93</sup> If one of the purposes of the military presence at Victoria was to awe the local Indigenous and colonial subjects with the military might of the British Empire, Anderson and his cohort were duly impressed.

The military presence at Red River and Victoria also facilitated other types of celebrations. In March 1848, the officers of the regular troops held a ball at Upper Fort Garry in advance of their departure for England. Sixteen-year-old Harriet Sinclair, who was then a student at Red River Academy, attended the ball with her cousin, Margaret Sinclair. Harriet wore white kid gloves that her father had brought her from New York, and the attendees

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<sup>93</sup> James Anderson manuscript, 182-183, BC Archives.

danced the polka.<sup>94</sup> The ball not only gave the young Indigenous women of the settlement the opportunity to present themselves as genteel British ladies, but also facilitated the marriage of Margaret Sinclair and Deputy Assistant Commissary General Montague Darling at Norway House a few months later. At Victoria, naval balls held on docked British ships served a similar purpose. At these events, elite colonial women, some of whom were the daughters and nieces of Governor James Douglas, met naval officers. This led to marriages between the British men and local women.<sup>95</sup>

In these various ways, Indigenous fur-trade students learned not only academics while they were at school, but also the social norms and mores of the British middle-class. Both in Britain and in the HBC territories, the pervasiveness of empire influenced what children learned in the classroom and how they understood both their role in the British Empire as Indigenous people and colonial subjects. In Britain, however, students were immersed simultaneously in the long histories of England and Scotland and in Britain's nineteenth-century modernity. In the HBC territories, the presence of the British military in its various forms served to impress upon colonial students the military power of the British Empire.

## **V. CLASSROOMS AT HOME AND ABROAD**

The curriculums that fur-trade students learned in the classrooms in Britain, the Canadian colonies and the HBC territories were generally similar, but in the HBC territories both teachers and students adapted their educational experiences to suit the society, landscape and

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<sup>94</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 26.

<sup>95</sup> Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 225.

local cultures in fur-trade country. There were important differences, however, between the educational experiences of children who attended boarding schools in the HBC territories and those who were sent to schools abroad. The first is in the role that religion played in the classroom. All of the schools that educated Indigenous fur-trade children in the HBC territories were run by missionaries or were rooted in a religion-centric curriculum. These schools' primary goal was the Christianization of Indigenous peoples, and to provide what Bishop David Anderson described as a "solid, substantial and scriptural education."<sup>96</sup>

Secondly, students in the HBC territories faced challenges to their Indigenous heritage in some classrooms, but by residing in fur-trade country were able to maintain their connections to the land and their Indigenous kin and languages in a way that metropolitan students could not. Finally, the curriculum and educational focus at girls' schools in particular was adapted to address the colonial perceptions and realities of the lives of Indigenous women in the HBC territories. Due to the imperial rhetoric that positioned racialized women as inherently immoral, there was a particular focus in girls' boarding schools on deportment and morality in an effort to both curb any perceived immorality and safeguard the students' status as middle-class fur-trade ladies. Educators also sought to teach Indigenous girls the practical domestic skills that they would need to function as fur-trade wives in ways that were not necessary, or at least were perceived as unnecessary, in metropolitan girls' schools.

The role of religion in the schools figured prominently in official correspondence about the schools, whether they were located at Red River, Victoria or Fort Vancouver, and in the

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<sup>96</sup> David Anderson D.D. Lord Bishop of Rupert's Land, *A Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Rupert's Land, at his Primary Visitation* (London: T. Hatchard, 1851) 48pp, 6.17.21, University of Cambridge Library. Thank you to Gerry Friesen for sharing his research on David Anderson's sermons with me.



letters and memories of the students themselves. At Fort Vancouver, students' religious affiliations became the battleground over which Roman Catholic Chief Factor John McLoughlin and HBC Anglican chaplain Herbert Beaver fought for control of the school and the religious affiliations of the children at the school and fort.<sup>97</sup> Beaver wrote to his superiors in 1838 that:

Chief Factor McLoughlin forces, by the infliction and the threat of punishment, if they disobey his orders in this respect, several children, who are either orphans, or only by an Indian mother, not of course, from her ignorance, to be consulted on the subject, to attend, contrary to their wishes, as *expressed to me on it, the Roman Catholic prayers and catechism, as read and taught by the illiterate and immoral carpenter*...these children have signified their preference of Protestant services and instructions; they are sufficiently advanced in age and learning to comprehend the difference between the two religions, adequately for the purpose of making up their minds, as to which they prefer. There are other children, over whom the same undue influence is exerted, who are not sufficiently advanced, in one or the other of those respects, to judge for themselves; but whose situation, as to relatives, is either similar to the foregoing, or whose Fathers have privately, not daring publicly to do so, expressed their desire that I should educate them in the principles of my own faith.<sup>98</sup>

Religion at the Fort Vancouver school was not only the basis for education, but it positioned Indigenous children at the centre of a power struggle between two white men who sought to dictate Indigenous children's religious beliefs.

Prayers and church services were part of the school schedules. Studies at both Protestant and Roman Catholic schools were centred on religious texts, and regular church attendance was part of their education. Matilda Davis's students read Scripture twice a day, attended the St. Andrew's Anglican Church twice on Sundays, and sang in the church choir.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Herbert Beaver, "Experiences of a Chaplain at Fort Vancouver," ed. R.C. Clark, *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 39, no.1 (March 1838): 23. Emphasis in original.

<sup>98</sup> Emphasis in original. Jessett, *Reports of Herbert Beaver*, 51-52.

<sup>99</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 135.

Children at the schools were sometimes less enamoured with religious studies and practices than were their teachers. As a result of the conflict at Fort Vancouver, Beaver could only perform weekday services at eight o'clock in the evening, meaning that many of the children who had already attended school all day fell asleep during the service.<sup>100</sup> James R. Anderson described Sundays at Fort Victoria under Reverend Staines as a 'terror':

After morning prayers we had breakfast such as it was, bread and treacle and tea without milk. Church at 11 in the mess hall to which we were summoned by the ringing of the Fort bell, then dinner, potatoes and meat, sometimes fish, then a dreary afternoon learning the Collects; how I hated them. Frequently in spite of the hard wooden benches, I used to fall asleep and woe betide me if I were caught.<sup>101</sup>

Anderson had similar perspectives on the labour that he was required to perform at the fort. Student labour was an aspect of schooling that was part of the educational experiences primarily of fur-trade students who attended schools in the HBC territories. Part of the missionary aims to civilize and Christianize Indigenous peoples was to teach them the 'habits of industry,' to various ends.<sup>102</sup> Agriculture, for example, was closely associated with Euro-Christian assessments of what constituted 'civilized.' Missionaries and educators believed that inculcating Indigenous students with good work habits would make it easier to lead them away from traditional Indigenous pursuits and into the fields. In doing so, work would also keep their minds and bodies occupied, and therefore less interested in and able to engage in 'immoral' activities.

This labour at fur-trade country schools took various but gendered forms. At Fort Victoria, James Anderson and the other boys assisted Reverend Staines in the fort garden. Chief

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<sup>100</sup> Jesset, *Reports of Herbert Beaver*, 30.

<sup>101</sup> James Anderson manuscript, 160, BC Archives.

<sup>102</sup> Pollard, "Metis in the Pacific Northwest," 258.

Factor John McLoughlin dictated that all children, regardless of whether they were the children of servants or officers, were to contribute to the fort economy. Their labour served in lieu of school tuition fees. The boys were put to work beating furs, chasing cows out of the garden, turning the grindstone at the mill, hunting and fishing for the fort food supply, and working in the fields and garden.<sup>103</sup>

Reverend Herbert Beaver, who was critical of McLoughlin's use of the school's students for manual labour, complained in his annual report that, "little children, of eight and ten years of age, and officer's children, who will not have to earn their subsistence by manual labour, are so employed...I am persuaded that it induces habits of indolence instead of those of industry. To put a child to work like a man, while he is only old enough to play as a Boy, produces in after life a sort of mixture of idleness with labour, which is never to be overcome." Beaver was not wholly against student labour though. "Not that work should be banished from the school," he conceded, "but it should not interfere with its paramount duties, should be properly directed, and, in the case of the Girls, should be that appropriate to their sex."<sup>104</sup>

For the most part, as prescribed by Beaver, female fur-trade students were engaged in tasks that were both productive and taught them domestic skills. Boarding students at the Grey Nuns' school were responsible for doing chores alongside the sisters, and the Sisters of Notre Dame du Namur taught their students to cook, wash, sweep, milk the cows, and make butter.<sup>105</sup> At Fort Vancouver, the girls in the school were put in the charge of Marguerite Wadden McKay McLoughlin and they worked at domestic tasks in the Chief Factor's home.

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<sup>103</sup> Pollard, "Metis in the Pacific Northwest," 229.

<sup>104</sup> Jessett, *Reports of Herbert Beaver*, 123-124.

<sup>105</sup> Pollard, "Metis in the Pacific Northwest," 339.

Reverend Beaver complained that the daughters of Chief Factor McTavish were “used as servants by [Mrs. McLoughlin], without being taught anything useful.”<sup>106</sup> Beaver’s perspective on what constituted ‘useful’ for Indigenous fur-trade daughters should, however, be taken with a grain of salt. Mrs. McLoughlin, a fur-trade daughter and twice-over fur-trade wife, likely both took advantage of the girls’ labour and taught the girls who boarded with her the skills they would need as fur-trade wives.

Juliet Pollard argues in her study of Metis children in the Pacific Northwest that students at the Fort Vancouver school reported having enjoyed the work, and actually spent a good deal of their ‘work’ time playing.<sup>107</sup> As Herbert Beaver pointed out in his criticisms of McLoughlin and the fort school, however, the labour that children performed took away from their learning in the classroom.<sup>108</sup> There was also the possibility for the abuse of the manual labour system. American missionaries in the Willamette Valley seem to have had a particularly narrow view of mixed-ancestry children, referring to them as a group as ‘Indians.’ As a result, Indigenous fur-trade daughters in the Oregon schools were prone to be treated more like servants than like middle-class ladies.<sup>109</sup> In these ways, labour was part of Indigenous fur-trade students’ education in the HBC territories.

In Britain, religion had a different role in Indigenous fur trade children’s education than it did in the schools in the HBC territories. Religion was certainly a part of the curriculum in British schools, but was not central to the letters sent home either by the students themselves, by the educators, or other adults in charge of the children’s well-being. Donald Mactavish

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<sup>106</sup> Jessett, *Reports of Herbert Beaver*, 84.

<sup>107</sup> Pollard, “Metis in the Pacific Northwest,” 329.

<sup>108</sup> Jesset, *Herbert Beaver*, 123.

<sup>109</sup> Pollard, “Metis in the Pacific Northwest,” 294.

observed about Scotland that, “what a difference there is between this country and America. Religion here is kept by every one.”<sup>110</sup> His assessment of the differences in religions between the metropole and his homeland signals the fundamental difference between the approaches to religion in the schools.

In Britain, Christianity was ubiquitous and, for the most part, educators presumed that students and their parents were part of a church of worship. British historian Anthony Fletcher argues that religion in English public schools was learned as a “social habit” more than out of religious devotion.<sup>111</sup> The place that religion held in British classrooms was likely changeable depending on the school and local conditions. Two of the three Gair brothers who ran the Gair Academy had trained as Presbyterian ministers and one of them went on to serve the Church.<sup>112</sup> The brothers’ own connections to the church may have been reflected in their curriculum, and thereby influenced Donald’s pleas to his mother that, “I hope that you are not only trying to save your own soul but those of your neighbours for I know that there are many there that dont [sic] know that there is a god.”<sup>113</sup>

Religion was entirely absent from the correspondence between the Nest Academy at Jedburgh and the HBC territories twenty years later. Religion was undoubtedly part of their daily routines in the form of prayers and church services, but is marginal to the topics discussed

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<sup>110</sup> Donald Mactavish to Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie, 14 May 1838, E.379/1 fo.4-7, Peter and Josette McKenzie Family Papers, HBCA.

<sup>111</sup> Anthony Fletcher, *Growing Up in England: The Experience of Childhood 1600-1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 201.

<sup>112</sup> Brothers Walter and Alexander were trained as Presbyterian ministers. Both graduated from theological studies at the United Associate Hall in 1824. Alexander Gair went on to serve as a minister. Reverend William Mackelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church* (Edinburgh: Oliphant & Company, and Andrew Elliot, 1873) 676, <https://archive.org/details/annalsstatistics00mack>.

<sup>113</sup> Donald Mactavish to Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie, 14 May 1838, E.379/1 fo.4-7, Peter and Josette McKenzie Family Papers, HBCA.

in the Indigenous family correspondence. Religion was, in fact, so much absent from the letters sent from The Nest that Matilda Davis was concerned about her nephews' religious education. She consequently wrote to the Domestic Keeper, Marion Millar, to inquire about the details of Albert and Johnnie's religious studies.<sup>114</sup>

Teachers in the HBC territories could not make the same assumptions about the pervasiveness of Christianity amongst their students. In fur trade country, Indigenous peoples and their spiritual traditions far outnumbered those of Christian inhabitants. Religious instruction, therefore, formed the basis of the Catholic and Protestant school curriculum in ways that were unnecessary in English and Scottish school.

Schooling experiences in Britain and the HBC territories were also differentiated by the ongoing relationships between students and Indigenous languages and cultural practices in fur-trade country. All of the schools in the HBC territories employed First Nations and Indigenous servants, and were located within walking distance of Indigenous homes and settlements. Benjamin McKenzie Jr's descriptions of the servants at the Red River Academy and the Christianized First Nations families who lived adjacent to the Middlechurch settlement are evidence of his familiar relationships with the resident Indigenous men, women, and children. The freedoms the boys were given to explore the nearby terrain and race to Upper Fort Garry seemingly also encompassed interacting with locals. This included the 'Swampy Cree converts' described by McKenzie who lived across the river from St. John's and worked at the mission, and with whom he seems to have been on friendly terms. When the St. John's Collegiate School flooded in 1852, the students were removed to St. Peter's mission where they "frequently

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<sup>114</sup> Albert Hodgson to George Davis, 6 April 1867, P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

heard and saw” Chief Peguis.<sup>115</sup> McKenzie’s ability to name and identify the locals that he interacted with during the students’ refuge at St. Peter’s reveals a familiarity with First Nations people on a personal and daily level.

Students who attended schools in the HBC territories also ‘called’ on friends and family members like their counterparts in Britain. In part, this served to similarly teach fur-trade children the social norms and etiquette of the middle-class. In fur-trade country, however, social calls in the fur-trade settlements were less formal, and often underwritten by Indigenous kin networks or social ties. James Anderson fondly recalled Sarah Finlayson Work and his unannounced visits to the Work home in his memoir. He described her as someone who “was always ready to win the hearts of the boys by ministering to their appetites with such luxuries as were not to be had at the school.”<sup>116</sup> Red River daughters also went visiting. At Red River, social calls drew together Indigenous and non-Indigenous inhabitants, and engaged and reified kin networks. Janet Bannerman, for example, the daughter of Scottish Selkirk settlers, one day visited the McDermot store with her friends Nellie and Jane Inskter, the granddaughters of William Sinclair and his Cree wife Nahovay. They then had lunch at the home of Nellie and Jane’s uncle, James Sinclair.<sup>117</sup> These were families who were, in various ways, interconnected by family and social ties at Red River.

At Fort Victoria the schoolboys made connections with the local First Nations men and women in other ways. James R. Anderson’s memoirs, which were written as an adult, reflect a greater personal distance in his memory between the schoolchildren and First Nations

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<sup>115</sup> Benjamin McKenzie Reminiscences, AM.

<sup>116</sup> James Anderson manuscript, 172, BC Archives.

<sup>117</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 95.

employees at the Fort. First Nations men figure in his memories of his time at the Staines school primarily as servants or as spectacle. The 'Indian men' who paddled the canoes that he rode in are nameless, as is the 'Indian boy' with whom he engaged in a boxing match. The local First Nations village was a source of entertainment for the boys, where they would go to watch Indigenous ceremonies.<sup>118</sup> Anderson acknowledges in his memoir that the boys' mockery of the ceremonies was untoward:

Naturally we very soon took to ridiculing the ceremonies by grotesque imitation and, as may be supposed, to the horror and disgust of the natives. Indeed, I now think that we possibly ran some risk in thus ridiculing some of the most cherished and venerated customs of the Indians, and we were often warned to abstain from the foolish practice; usually [by] some native employed at the Fort.<sup>119</sup>

Anderson's callous attitude towards the First Nations people he came into contact with at Fort Victoria belies an estrangement from and lack of respect for his First Nations neighbours' ceremonies and culture. His accounts of First Nations peoples in his memoir, which was written in the early twentieth century, may reflect changing social and personal attitudes towards First Nations men and women. However, Anderson's early memories of his childhood at Fort Alexandria reflect a fear of the local First Nations peoples, both as individuals at the fort and as a looming presence in the wilderness.<sup>120</sup> Anderson, it seems, was not connected on a personal level with his First Nations neighbours.

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<sup>118</sup> Anderson refers to the local First Nations peoples in his manuscript as 'Stamish.' This may have been a misunderstanding of the name of the Squamish. However, it is unlikely that local peoples at Fort Victoria were Squamish (Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw), as their traditional territories are on the mainland of British Columbia and include the city of Vancouver. The First Nations village he is referring to here was likely Songhees (Lekwungen), a Coast Salish group whose traditional territories included what is now the city of Victoria. Songhee First Nation, <http://www.songheesnation.ca/>, accessed 26 August 2017; James Anderson Manuscript, 169, BC Archives.

<sup>119</sup> James Anderson manuscript, 169, BC Archives.

<sup>120</sup> James Anderson manuscript, 56-58, BC Archives.



Benjamin McKenzie Jr., on the other hand, was raised in part by his Ojibwa grandmother, Angelique, and went on to serve the Anglican Church at the St. Peter's Indian settlement. His recollections of the Indigenous employees at the Red River Academy and St. John's convey a warm and familiar relationship with them.<sup>121</sup> Although regular and personal contact with Indigenous peoples and cultures was a distinguishing feature of a fur-trade country education, students' own personal and family histories in part influenced the nature of these interactions.

Girls' education in the HBC territories and Britain in particular was distinguished from metropolitan curriculums by colonial approaches to behaviour and morality, and preparing girls for their roles as wives and mothers. Girls' schools in Britain prepared students for their roles as middle- and upper-class wives and mothers. In spite of the broadening of academics in girls' curriculum in the mid-1800s, female students continued to devote a good portion of their classroom time to 'the accomplishments.' These were the subjects that contributed to or reinforced social standing rather than academic knowledge, and consisted primarily of French, drawing, music, dancing, and needlework.<sup>122</sup> In the 1860s one study found that the accomplishments occupied forty percent of study time in Lancashire girls' schools.<sup>123</sup>

One of the attractions of British schools to some fur-trade parents was the wider array of 'accomplishments' offered in metropolitan girls' schools, including pianoforte, harp, and modern languages like Italian and German.<sup>124</sup> One of James Douglas's primary goals in sending

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<sup>121</sup> Benjamin McKenzie Reminiscences, AM.

<sup>122</sup> Fletcher, *Growing Up in England*, 252-254.

<sup>123</sup> De Bellaigue, *Educating Women*, 173.

<sup>124</sup> Prospectus for Mansion House Establishment for Young Ladies, n.d., P2342 fo.1, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

Martha to school in London was to draw on these offerings to refine Martha's behaviour. In counselling her on what she should aim to learn at school in England, he advised her to model her behaviour and deportment on the most lady-like woman in her acquaintance and that, "I wish you to be, in all respects, lady-like, both in speech and manner."<sup>125</sup> To some parents at least, the 'refinements' offered in colonial schools were insufficient to properly finish their daughters as British ladies.

Indigenous girls' behaviour and morality was also a focus in the fur-trade country schools, and girls' boarding schools thereby served dual purposes. The first was, as in Britain, to house and educate students who lived far from the school. The second, however, was to remove children from the influences of their Indigenous mothers, kin, and playmates. Imperial rhetoric on race, gender, and sexuality held that non-white and non-Christian women were inherently immoral. This was due in large part to British perspectives by which colonial women's conduct and values at colonial sites did not align with Euro-Christian standards of appropriate gendered conduct. In colonial schools, therefore, some educators articulated the need to separate female students from Indigenous women whose behaviour, morals, and attachments to aspects of Indigenous languages and culture might prove to be a 'negative' influence on their progression towards becoming middle-class ladies.

George Simpson suggested to Reverend David Jones in 1832 that Jones should recruit female servants from England for the new school because "the young ladies should have as

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<sup>125</sup> James Douglas to Martha Douglas, 20 October 1873, Letters to Martha, B/40/4A, Sir James Douglas Papers, BC Archives.

little intercourse with Native Women in the Country as possible.”<sup>126</sup> Reverend Herbert Beaver similarly sought to distance his students from their ‘maternal’ heritage. He wrote to his superiors that, “without proper restraint, example and instruction, especially female, the rising generation will be little removed from the barbarism, whether as it relates to manners, morals or religion, of their maternal ancestors.”<sup>127</sup>

Indigenous parents had different concerns about their children’s interactions with Indigenous peoples, and primarily with servants and the children of servants. They were wary of the influence of the ‘wild’ First Nations children at the fur-trade posts on their own children, and saw a boarding school education as the way to counteract any ‘wild’ habits their sons and daughters had acquired while living at fur-trade posts. Indigenous missionary Henry Budd wrote of his daughter, eight year old Eliza, that she had acquired the habit of “running wild from the Indian children” at Nepowewin.<sup>128</sup> William Hardisty similarly explained to Matilda Davis that, “it is very difficult in this District to keep the children away from the Indians who are always about the house,” and offered to pay her an extra fee to compensate for the “extra trouble” she had had with his children.<sup>129</sup> Both parents and educators, then, had concerns about how the children’s Indigenous relations and playmates might undermine the Euro-Christian codes of conduct and morality that a British-based education sought to instill in Indigenous colonial children.

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<sup>126</sup> George Simpson to Reverend David Jones, 14 July 1832, transcript, P7540 fo. 20, Transcript of Letters Between Reverend David Jones and George Simpson, AM.

<sup>127</sup> Jessett, *Reports of Herbert Beaver*, 83.

<sup>128</sup> Henry Budd to Matilda Davis, 3 July 1865, P2343 fo.15, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>129</sup> William Hardisty to Matilda Davis, 20 November 1869, P2342 fo.15, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

In the HBC territories, as there was a particular focus on religion in the schools as part of the civilizing mission of both the Protestant and Catholic missionary-teachers, there was also heightened awareness of the behaviour and comportment of female Indigenous students. At Fort Victoria, Mrs. Staines paid close attention to her students' demeanor. One observer recalled that, "she kept the girls in order—took them out—saw they were properly and neatly dressed—carried themselves properly and paid much attention to deportment and was really good to the girls, altho the latter did not like the change and her strictness."<sup>130</sup> The recollections of Matilda Davis by her former students highlight her personal calling to "help the women of her native country by education."<sup>131</sup> She did this in part by teaching her students both practical skills that would serve them as fur-trade wives and mothers, and impeccable deportment that would safeguard their status as Indigenous ladies in the HBC territories.

At the Oakfield school, Matilda Davis educated primarily Indigenous girls within a colonial context where both educators and some parents were concerned about Indigenous influences on Indigenous girls' morality. Her approach to the behaviour and deportment at her school was also contextualized by incidents in the 1850s, including the Foss-Pelly affair outlined in Chapter 1, which challenged ladies' morality and illuminated their tenuous claims to middle-class genteel identities. Davis was no doubt aware of what was at stake for her Indigenous students in a colonial society where they faced constant challenges to their legitimacy and social standing. Former student Jane Truthwaite recounted that Miss Davis was "extremely particular about the accuracy of our spelling, and even more particular about the propriety of

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<sup>130</sup> Smith, *Helmcken Reminiscences*, 125.

<sup>131</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 159.

our behaviour and our manner of walking and sitting. They used to say that after a girl came out of Miss Davis's school she sat down as though she had a basket of eggs balanced on her head, and that you could pick out Miss Davis's pupils anywhere."<sup>132</sup> Parents praised Matilda Davis's accomplishments with their daughters. Henry Budd wrote to Davis of his daughter Eliza that on a recent trip to Red River he was "extremely happy to find her so well informed, pretty well advanced in her manner and appearance."<sup>133</sup> Similarly, Caroline Isbister Christie, wife of Alexander Christie Jr., wrote to Miss Davis in 1863 that, "We are delighted to hear of dear Mary's good behaviour."<sup>134</sup>

Schools in the HBC territories further differentiated their curriculum from that in British schools by focussing on equipping girls with the practical skills they would need to become colonial wives and mothers. In English schools, needlework was part of 'the accomplishments' that female students were taught at British girls' school, but the focus of that instruction was primarily ornamental.<sup>135</sup> The expectation was that students would learn to embroider decorative pieces for their home and family, and not that they would be sewing their own clothing. Practical skills like weaving, cooking, and tending animals were also not part of the curriculum in these metropolitan schools. Students were certainly trained to become wives and mothers, but under the assumption that middle-class families would have domestic servants to perform such tasks.

Students at elite girls' boarding schools in the HBC territories were for the most part expected to go on and marry into the networks of HBC families and colonial officials. Often,

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<sup>132</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 135.

<sup>133</sup> Henry Budd to Matilda Davis, 22 January 1867, P4724 fo.4, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>134</sup> Caroline Isbister Christie to Matilda Davis, 28 January 1863, P4724 fo. 4, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>135</sup> De Bellaigue, *Educating Women*, 172.

they lived with their husbands at remote fur-trade posts where servants were difficult to secure. Mary Christie Macfarlane wrote to Matilda Davis after her marriage to HBC Chief Trader Roderick Macfarlane that, “though I am in the North, still I am almost always busy, for it is very difficult to get a good servant, in this part of the world, and as for a nurse that is quite out of the question. I have more than once been obliged to cook our meals.”<sup>136</sup>

In this context, sewing became an integral component of girls’ education in the HBC territories. Sherry Farrell Racette argues that, through the schools at Red River, the settlement “became a site for the merger of Indigenous knowledge, European notions of a lady’s education and the enduring demand for female production.”<sup>137</sup> Mary Lowman taught her pupils needlework for the two years that she was employed at the Red River Academy before the curriculum was changed by a male teacher to eliminate instruction in needlework.<sup>138</sup> The Nolin sisters at St. Boniface learned needlework in order to pass those skills on to the students at their day school, and the Grey Nuns likewise taught their female students practical sewing skills and decorative arts like floral embroidery.<sup>139</sup>

Other needlework teachers were not as competent. At the Fort Vancouver school, which lacked a female instructor due to Mrs. Beaver’s domestic responsibilities, the schoolmaster supervised the girls’ sewing. Beaver drew on this arrangement in his arguments to London for more resources to allow for separate education at the school. He complained that, “it is preposterous to see some of the elder ones, who are verging on womanhood,

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<sup>136</sup> Mary Christie Macfarlane to Matilda Davis, 22 August 1872, P4724 fo.5, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>137</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, “Sewing Ourselves Together: Clothing, Decorative arts and the Expression of Metis and Half Breed identity,” (PhD diss., University of Manitoba, 2004), 222.

<sup>138</sup> G. T de Glazebrook, ed., *The Hargrave Correspondence, 1821-1843* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1938), 71.

<sup>139</sup> Farrell Racette, “Sewing Ourselves Together,” 226.

executing needle-work, however coarse, under the inspection of a master, who cannot be supposed to give proper instruction in such matters, and who is moreover an unmarried man.”<sup>140</sup>



Figure 4.4 – Moccasins beaded in the Davis School style of beadwork, H4-0-772-2061, Manitoba Museum

Matilda Davis taught her students a British curriculum, but also adapted that curriculum to the practical considerations of local conditions and Indigenous women’s lives in the HBC territories. In the prospectus for the Oakfield Academy, Matilda Davis advertised ornamental and practical sewing as part of the school curriculum.<sup>141</sup> She ensured that her students learned the practical

<sup>140</sup> Jessett, *Reports of Herbert Beaver*, 123.

<sup>141</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, “Sewing for A Living: The Commodification of Metis Women’s Artistic

sewing skills that would equip them well for their future roles as wives and mothers in what was sometimes the isolated wilderness. Parents were pleased with their daughters' sewing instructions. Jane Bell Clarke, for example, wrote to her daughter Belle that she was very happy to hear from Miss Davis that her daughter had made all of her own clothes and could "sew very neatly."<sup>142</sup>

Davis also facilitated the instruction of Metis embroidery at the Oakfield Academy, to the extent that a specific and identifiable style of Indigenous handiwork is associated with the Davis school.<sup>143</sup> In at least some families, these beadwork skills represented a continued maternal heritage of Indigenous artistry. Annie and Lydia Christie's mother, Mary Sinclair Christie, for example, was a skilled artist.<sup>144</sup> She supported her daughters' instruction in sewing from afar by sending sewing supplies to the Davis school.<sup>145</sup>

Sherry Farrell Racette argues in her study of Metis clothing production that Davis was skilled at needlework, having won prizes for her handiwork, and that Davis's account records

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Production," in *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past*, ed. Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 20-21.

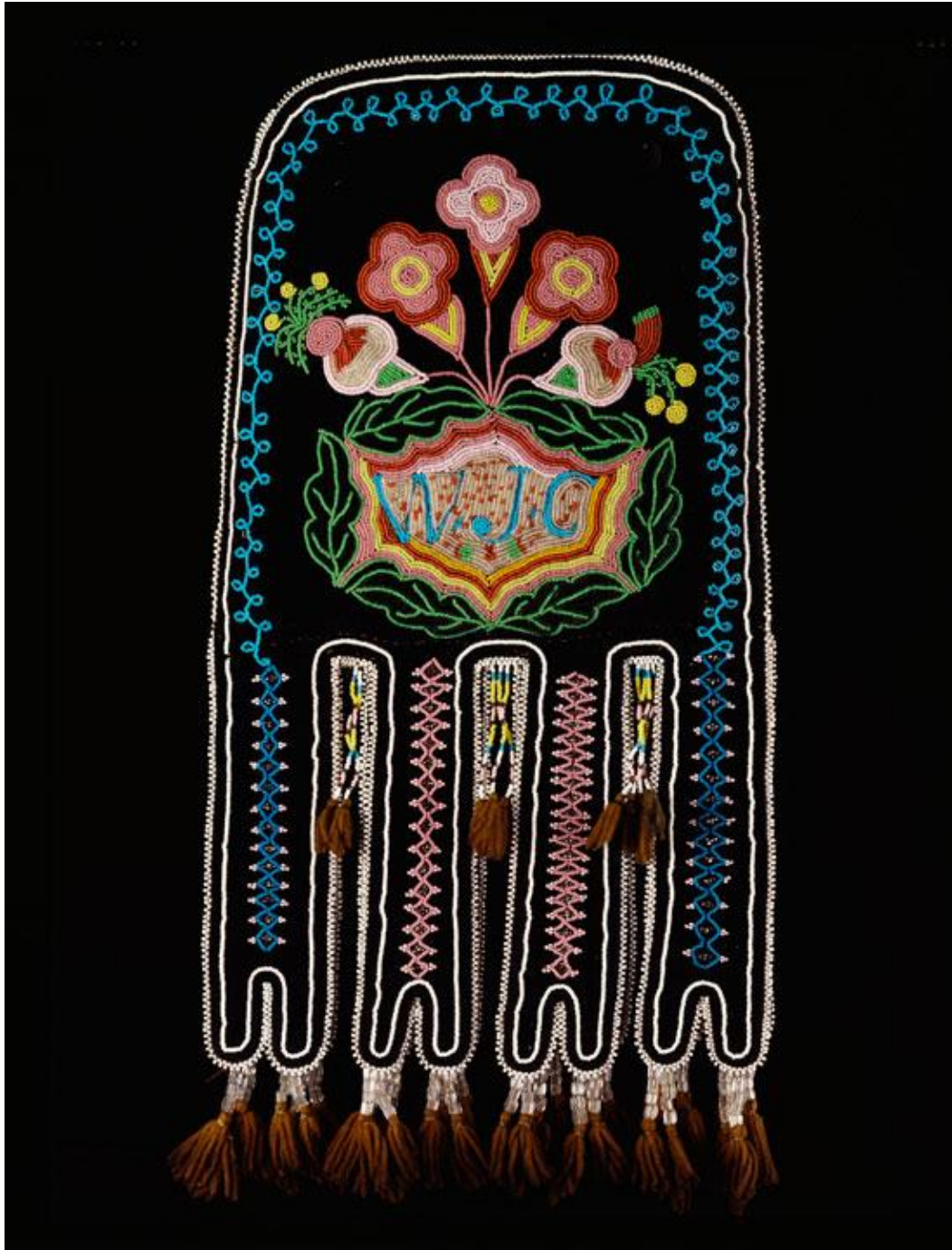
<sup>142</sup> Jane Bell Clarke to Daughter [Jane Belle Clarke], 1 Sept, P4724 fo.1, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM. Jane Bell was the wife of HBC Chief Factor Laurence Clarke. Her parents were John Bell of Scotland and Nancy Ann Dease, the daughter Indigenous parents Elizabeth Chouinard and HBC officer Peter Warren Dease. The letter is presumably to Jane Bell Clarke's daughter, Jane, born 1856. "Clarke, Laurence," HBCA Biographical Sheets, rev. 2002, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/clarke\\_lawrence.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/clarke_lawrence.pdf); William R. Sampson, "DEASE, PETER WARREN," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed December 20, 2016, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/dease\\_peter\\_warren\\_9E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/dease_peter_warren_9E.html).

<sup>143</sup> Personal Communication with Maureen Matthews, Manitoba Museum, April 2017; Angela Fey, "From Women's Hands: An Object Biography of the McTavish Collection," (MA thesis, University of Manitoba, 2016), 55. Thank you to Sherry Farrell Racette for her discussion and clarifications on embroidery and beadwork.

<sup>144</sup> For more on Mary Sinclair Christie as a beadwork artist, see Susan Berry, "Recovered Identities: Four Metis Artists in Nineteenth-Century Rupert's Land," in *Recollecting: Lives of Aboriginal Women of the Canadian Northwest and Borderlands*, ed. Sarah Carter and Patricia McCormack (Athabasca: Athabasca University Press, 2011), 29-60.

<sup>145</sup> Mary Sinclair Christie, "Contents of the Small Tin Box in the Packing Case," 4 May 1865, P4724 fo.11, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.





*Figure 4.5 - Fire Bag, Southesk Collection, Royal Alberta Museum. This octopus bag was likely sewn by Mary Christie Sinclair, and was a gift to the Earl of Southesk on his visit to Fort Edmonton in 1859.*

show regular purchases of silk thread and seed beads.<sup>146</sup> Farrell Racette intimates, based on these records, that Davis was skilled in traditional embroidery and embroidery instructor at the school. Matilda Davis certainly would have learned needlework in England, probably both in her aunt's home and in school. However, Matilda Davis left Rupert's Land when she was around three years old, and did not return for over thirty years. It is therefore unlikely that Matilda learned Metis artistry on her return to Rupert's Land in the mid-1850s at a level of skill seen in the Davis school handiwork. What is more probable is that Davis's purchases of embroidery supplies were on behalf of both herself and her sister Nancy, the housekeeper at the school.

Nancy may have grown up in part with her grandmother, Caroline Goodwin Hodgson, after the death of her father, John Davis, in 1824.<sup>147</sup> She certainly spent part of her childhood at Albany, and then relocated with her mother and siblings to Red River sometime after 1830. Nancy sewed the hide mitts that were sent to Johnnie and Albert when they were students at The Nest, and both the mothers of students at the school and past students themselves regularly sent Nancy the cured hides that were required for beadwork.<sup>148</sup> Nancy was the only woman who was a resident or employee of the school for the duration of its operation who would have had the opportunity to acquire such extensive skills in Indigenous artistry. Nancy Davis and Matilda Davis likely both played a role in developing and teaching the style of embroidery that has come to be associated specifically with the Davis school at Red River.

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<sup>146</sup> Farrell Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together," 223.

<sup>147</sup> There are no mentions of Caroline Goodwin Hodgson in the records that describe the Hodgson home at Lac des Chats. Initially, two of Caroline's grown children remained in Rupert's Land on their father John Hodgson's departure from Rupert's Land following his forced retirement. There are indications in the records that Caroline may have remained in Rupert's Land as well, and that Ann Nancy Hodgson Davis may have gone to her mother after the death of John Davis in 1824. Further research is required to trace Caroline's and Ann Nancy's paths in the 1810s and 1820s.

<sup>148</sup> Johnnie Davis to Catherine Birston Davis, 21 November 1867, P2343 fo.11, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

Although Matilda Davis herself may not have been a beadwork artist, her Indigenous heritage and kin connections to the community provided her with insight into what Indigenous girls needed to learn at school in order to be successful middle-class ladies in fur-trade country. The centrality of Metis beadwork and practical sewing skills to the curriculum differentiates what Indigenous students were taught at girls' schools in the HBC territories and in Britain. In these ways, educators in the HBC territories adapted their focus and curriculums to respond to the cultural heritage of their students and to the realities of Indigenous women's roles in the mid-nineteenth-century fur-trade country. Sometimes these adaptations benefitted students, and sometimes they did not. These concessions to local conditions, however, exemplify how parents and educators acknowledged how Indigenous skills, kin networks, and connections to land and people influenced Indigenous students' education.

In many ways, education achieved for Indigenous fur-trade children what parents wanted it to, which was to enable their middling and elite colonial children to be able to perform a version of British metropolitan gentility. The records are littered with uneven assessments of these children's adulthood, in which they are evaluated based on whether or not they were 'gentlemanly' or 'ladylike.' Some of these students lived this genteel identity while on a trip to Britain with her parents. In 1873, twenty-year-old Lydia Christie, a former student of Matilda Davis, sang in a concert at Portobello, Scotland. She wrote to Davis that, "I felt very nervous at first but it soon passed away. My dress was all white with lavender sash and trimmings and I



*Figure 4.6 - This photo of Lydia Christie was taken at Portobello, Scotland during her 1873 trip to Britain with her parents. NA-1010-38, Glenbow Archives.*

wore flowers of the same colour in my hair. Papa and Mama where [sic] there in full dress.”<sup>149</sup>

In participating in the concert, Lydia Christie was literally performing the middle-class identity that she had learned at school.

The extent to which the Scots accepted Christie’s self-identification as a middle-class lady, however, is unclear. Lydia also wrote to Davis that, “I think as a rule the Scotch people are very rude they will beat any people in the world for staring.”<sup>150</sup> Whether it was Christie’s racialized appearance, her clothing, or her speech, something about her marked her as different and drew unwanted attention from metropolitan Scots. Her upbringing as a trans-imperial Indigenous lady was not sufficient to allow her to blend seamlessly into Scottish society. Her later marriage to HBC Chief Factor Donald McTavish, however, secured her a union with a member of the emergent settler-colonial fur-trade elite and positioned her, like her mother before her, as the ‘lady’ of the Fort.<sup>151</sup> Other Indigenous girls, like Mary Finlayson Lamb and Margaret Sinclair Darling, integrated into metropolitan society in Britain. They married white British men, lived out their lives in England and Scotland, and, in some cases, were so successful at performing a middle-class identity that their descendants had no knowledge of their Indigenous heritage.

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<sup>149</sup> Lydia Christie to Matilda Davis, 30 June [1873], P2342 fo.16, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>150</sup> Emphasis in original. Lydia Christie to Matilda Davis, 30 June [1873], P2342 fo.16, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>151</sup> Donald Campbell McTavish served at Norway House from 1862 to 1881. McTavish married Lydia Christie on 14 July 1875 at St. John’s, Winnipeg/Red River.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Middle-class and elite Indigenous fur-trade students learned variations of the same British-based curriculum in schools in England, Scotland, the Canadian colonies, and the HBC territories. Reading, writing, religion, and middle-class social values were at the core of the teachings offered in classrooms at all of these sites of Empire. In the HBC territories, however, where missionaries were attuned to the project of civilizing and Christianizing indigenous peoples across the Empire, this curriculum was leveraged in different ways than it was in metropolitan spaces. In fur-trade country schools, students were taught the codes of the middle-class Empire, as well as directed in manual labour that was meant to teach them 'industry.' Students who attended these schools, however, were also able to retain connections to Indigenous kin, the land, and their languages in ways that students who went to school were not. In these ways, middle-class Indigenous fur-trade students learned 'respectability' in ways that were both ubiquitous to the British Empire and tailored to the local conditions of the metropole and colony.

## **CHAPTER 5 - DISTANCE, DISLOCATION AND DEATH AT SCHOOL**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

In his reminiscences of his childhood, former fur-trade student Reverend Benjamin McKenzie Jr. recalled his time at the Red River Academy in the 1840s. McKenzie, who himself had gone on to become a schoolteacher and missionary, deemed his time under Red River Academy headmaster and noted disciplinarian John Macallum as “bitter as Egyptian slavery.”<sup>1</sup> McKenzie’s account of his schooling provides a window into how Indigenous fur-trade students experienced the shift from home to boarding school.

While there has been much written on the late-nineteenth and twentieth century experiences of Indigenous children in Canadian residential schools, there has been little to no assessment of how mid-nineteenth-century education impacted Indigenous students.<sup>2</sup> Indigenous fur-trade children who attended boarding schools were first separated from their home and parents, experienced cultural dislocation of different varieties depending on where they attended school, and were sometimes subject to abuse or death. The fur-trade kin and

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin McKenzie Jr., “Reminiscences of the Reverend Benjamin McKenzie,” PRL-84-59 7593, Ecclesiastical Province of Rupert’s Land Archives, Archives of Manitoba (AM). Hereafter Benjamin McKenzie Reminiscences.

<sup>2</sup> On the Metis in residential schools, see Tricia Logan, “We Were Outsiders: The Metis and Residential Schools,” M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba (2007); Metis Nation of Alberta, *Metis Memories of Residential Schools: A Testament to the Strength of the Metis* (Edmonton: Metis Nation of Alberta, 2004); Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Canada’s Residential Schools: The Metis Experience The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Volume 3* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015). For broader histories of Canadian residential schools, see Theodore Fontaine, *Broken Circle: The Dark Legacy of Indian Residential Schools: A Memoir* (Edmonton: Heritage House, 2010); Isabelle Knockwood, *Out of the Depths: The Experiences of Mi’kmaw Children at the Indian Residential School at Shubenacadie, N.S.* (Roseway Publishing, 1994); J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision: A History of Native Residential schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999); Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Canada’s Residential Schools: The History, Part 1, Origins to 1939 The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Volume 1, Part 1* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015).

social networks that were enacted to support fur-trade students at times failed to protect and care for these children. This chapter explores how these children and their families negotiated distance, dislocation, and death in their educational experiences.

## II. BOARDING SCHOOLS, DISTANCE, AND CULTURAL DISLOCATION

Fur-trade parents' assessments of their Indigenous children's care and education while at school were generally positive. James Anderson, whose two sons attended the St. John's Collegiate School in the 1850s, thanked Bishop David Anderson for "the kindness and attention you have shown our dear children."<sup>3</sup> Samuel McKenzie, who sent at least five of his children to the Davis school, wrote to Matilda Davis that, "I often think of my dear children you brought up for us so well."<sup>4</sup> Henry Budd praised Davis's care of his daughter, offering his "hearty thanks for the care you have taken of my little Eliza."<sup>5</sup> In these cases, parents were writing to their children's caretakers. Their positive assessments of the teachers may have been an effort on the part of parents to maintain a positive relationship with their children's teachers, and should be critically assessed. John Helmcken, however, similarly wrote in his memoir that George Fyfe, the headmaster at The Nest Academy, "did his duty in every respect by the boys and I had every reason to be pleased as well with him as their progress—as also Mrs. Fyfe's maternal care."<sup>6</sup> For the most part, the correspondence reflects parents' satisfaction with the care their children received and indicates that most Indigenous fur-trade students who were sent away to school

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<sup>3</sup> James Anderson to Bishop David Anderson, 3 July 1856, MG19, A 29 vol.1, file 4, pp69-71, James Anderson Fonds, Library and Archives Canada (LAC).

<sup>4</sup> Samuel McKenzie to Matilda Davis, 12 March 1868, P2343 fo.6, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Budd to Matilda Davis, 22 January 1867, P4724 fo.4, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>6</sup> Dorothy Blakely Smith, ed., *The Reminiscences of John Sebastien Helmcken* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1975) 219.



were well tended within the context of nineteenth-century expectations of childcare and child rearing.

What were more common experiences for Indigenous fur-trade students were the emotional and psychological impacts of education, including cultural dislocation, separation from home and loved ones, and physical and emotional distress in the classroom. English psychologist Joy Schaverien has coined the term 'boarding school syndrome' to describe the "enduring psychological effects" that she witnessed in her patients who attended twentieth-century English boarding schools.<sup>7</sup> She argues that, although boarding school was considered a privilege available primarily to certain social classes, boarding schools were psychologically damaging to students. Students who began boarding schools at younger ages were more likely to suffer greater emotional trauma than students who began boarding school as older children or teenagers.

Through Schaverien's work with her patients, "it became evident that, even in the best of schools, there was an initial wounding. Although not put into words at the time, to the students, this felt like abandonment. For some, this was compounded by neglect, physical and/or emotional ill treatment and, less often, sexual abuse."<sup>8</sup> For most students, their parents' choice to leave children at boarding school was experienced as abandonment that in turn created emotional scars. Boarders could not "console themselves with the thought that their parents did not want them to go" because their parents had chosen to place them at school.

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<sup>7</sup> Joy Schaverien, *Boarding School Syndrome: The Psychological Trauma of the 'Privileged' Child* (London: Routledge, 2015), 1.

<sup>8</sup> Joy Schaverien, "Exiled: the girls' school boarders," *Therapy Today* 27, no.9 (Nov 2016): 20-23.

They had to attempt to understand why, if they were loved, their parents chose to send them away from home.<sup>9</sup>

Although Schaverien's theory derives from student experiences in the twentieth century, the memoirs and correspondence written by Indigenous fur-trade students who attended nineteenth-century British and Canadian boarding schools indicate that many of Shaverien's observations can be applied to this earlier period as well. At the boarding school run by the Sisters of Notre Dame du Namur in the Willamette Valley, one Indigenous student remembered, "crying herself to sleep every night because she thought she had been abandoned to the nuns."<sup>10</sup> James R. and Eliza Anderson certainly despaired of their separation from their family. Anderson wrote that the siblings took leave of their father at Fort Langley "amidst the bitterest of tears." He recalled the journey from Fort Langley to Fort Victoria as miserable, with his "feeling of loneliness increasing the further we got from shore."<sup>11</sup> The Anderson siblings' emotional reactions to being relocated to Victoria were confirmed by James Douglas, who wrote to their father of their arrival in Victoria that:

After arriving at this place there was amusement enough to keep their spirits up and they soon fell into the ways of the place. They remained with me until the accommodations were provided for them in school and I believe it was not until they were finally separated from my family that they felt the bitterness of the parting. The next time I saw Eliza was in school and she could not refrain from shedding tears.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Schaverien does acknowledge that some students had positive experiences at boarding schools. Many of these children, however, seem to have come from unstable homes and either enjoyed the stability of the boarding school experience or saw it as an escape from their abusive home lives. Schavarién, *Boarding School Syndrome*, 6-7.

<sup>10</sup> Juliet Pollard, "The Making of the Metis in the Pacific Northwest Fur Trade Children: Race, Class and Gender," (PhD. diss., University of British Columbia, 1990) 336.

<sup>11</sup> James R. Anderson, "Notes and Comments on Early Days and Events in British Columbia, Washington and Oregon (c.1914-1925), MS 1912 p. 140, BC Archives. Hereafter James Anderson Manuscript.

<sup>12</sup> James Douglas to A.C. Anderson, 28 October 1850, as transcribed in James Anderson manuscript, 142, BC Archives.

James and Eliza were nine and eleven when they arrived in Victoria, and were at least old enough to understand where they were going and why. Isabella Hardisty, Alexander Christie Jr., and Charles Christie were all sent away to school at ages four or five, when they would have been too young to fully understand what the trip to school meant and how long they would be separated from their parents.

Other fur-trade students like Albert Hodgson, Johnnie Davis, and Donald Mactavish were clearly impacted by their separation from home. Albert struggled with homesickness, and both Johnnie Davis and Donald Mactavish longed for word from their mothers. Donald begged his mother to write to him, and Johnnie Davis asked his mother to put aside her insecurities about her literacy so that he could have a letter from her that was written in her hand. "I would like to have a letter from Mamma," he explained to his father, "tell her that she writes well enough for me to read."<sup>13</sup> Being sent from their homes to attend school was a difficult and sometimes harrowing experience for Indigenous fur-trade students.

Children whose parents lived in the same country or region, as was the case for most English and Scottish students, were generally able to see their parents semi-regularly. Children of British parents who were born in colonial locations like India, the Caribbean or North America, and who were sent 'home' for school experienced the double trauma of abandonment and cultural dislocation.<sup>14</sup> Some schools in England catered specifically to these British-Indian families, and were often run by teachers who had themselves been British-Indian

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<sup>13</sup> Donald Mactavish to Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie, 14 May 1838, Peter and Josette McKenzie Family Fonds, E.379/1 fos.4-7, Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA); Johnnie Davis to Matilda Davis, 4 July 1868, P2343 fo.11, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>14</sup> Schaverien, *Boarding School Syndrome*, 154-156.

imperial students or who had connections to British-Indian families.<sup>15</sup> In these ways, these children's sense of isolation and displacement could sometimes be mediated by empathetic teachers and a cohort of similarly uprooted colonial children.

Indigenous fur-trade students, however, had few of these advantages. There was not a critical mass of Indigenous fur-trade students from the British territories in North America sufficient to fund entire schools. The Nest Academy in Jedburgh was unique in my findings in that it was a British school that drew more than a handful of fur-trade students; even then, only sixteen students attended the school over the course of a decade.<sup>16</sup> This left most fur trade students in schools outside of the HBC territories isolated from other Indigenous and colonial children. Indigenous students also had to negotiate being racialized in metropolitan spaces and adapting to a predominantly non-Indigenous society. The emotional, cultural, and physical impacts of mid-nineteenth-century boarding schools on Indigenous fur-trade students in many ways foretold the trauma that would be inflicted on Indigenous students by residential schools in the next generation.

Discipline was one of the areas where boarding school trauma and cultural differences intersected for many Indigenous fur-trade students. First Nations' traditional approaches to child rearing were generally based in positive reinforcement and behaviour modification. Acceptable behaviour was taught through modelling behaviour and discipline was accomplished by "group discipline and consensual decision-making." Respect was at the core of

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<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Buetter, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 150-152.

<sup>16</sup> Between 1861 and 1871, the following Indigenous fur-trade students attended The Nest Academy: Christie cousins Alexander III, James Thomas, Robert William, Duncan, William Joseph, John Dugald, James Grant, and Charles Thomas; Albert Hodgson and Johnnie Davis; John Cowan; Harry McAdoo Grahame; Henry and James Stewart; James and Harry Helmcken.

First Nations and Indigenous approaches to childrearing.<sup>17</sup> Ellen Smallboy's recollections of her life as a Cree child on the shores of the Hudson's Bay in the 1850s and 1860s reinforce this argument. Smallboy was born to Cree parents around 1853, and grew up at Kesagami Lake in what is now northern Ontario.<sup>18</sup> Her father, in particular, encouraged her and "he told me only good things." Her childhood consisted of learning through helping her parents with daily tasks, play, and family connections.<sup>19</sup> Similar Indigenous influences and practices tended to be dominant in many Indigenous families, including Indigenous languages and their accompanying world-views. Indigenous childhoods at fur-trade posts and fur-trade settlements up to the 1860s therefore likely had more in common with First Nations children like Smallboy than with their English and Scottish peers in Britain. Given that harsh physical discipline was generally inconsistent with the Indigenous views of childhood and children, it is likely that more temperate methods of discipline and learning were employed in many Indigenous households.

Some white fathers employed methods of physical punishments that were in line with British standards of childrearing, and the physical discipline of employees inherent to the fur trade. In the homes of Indigenous children, however, these methods may have been contrary to the care that they received from their primary caregivers - their Indigenous mothers and grandmothers. Dr. James Helmcken, who married James Douglas's daughter Cecilia, wrote in his memoirs that, "I used to find time to assist the boys with their lessons, Latin and otherwise and

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<sup>17</sup> Norma Hall, "Metis Children of Red River," *Provisional Government of Assiniboia: Acknowledging the Contribution of Original North American Peoples to the Creation of Manitoba*, 10 July 2012, <https://hallnjean2.wordpress.com/the-red-river-resistance/children-of-red-river/>.

<sup>18</sup> Ellen Smallboy was the daughter of Aniskowap, a Kesagami man whose territory was about seventy-five miles south of Moose Factory. Her mother was an Abitibi woman whose uncle was a Kesagami hunter. Regina Flannery, ed., *Ellen Smallboy: Glimpses of a Cree Woman's Life* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 8.

<sup>19</sup> Flannery, *Ellen Smallboy*, 17.

on Sundays made them go through their Bible lessons. My boys tell me now that I used to whip them pretty severely on account of unwillingness or slowness about their lessons.<sup>20</sup> The father's and sons' differing memories of these punishments may be indicative of intra-familial differences in perspectives on discipline. The boys' grandmother, Amelia Connolly Douglas, grew up with her Cree mother, Miyo Nipiy, and had a large role in raising the Helmcken children after their mother's early death. Helmcken's physical punishments were likely out of line with the Indigenous maternal care practices enacted by the children's mother and grandmother.

For some families at least, harsh physical discipline was frowned upon and was a consideration in choosing schools for Indigenous fur-trade children. James Douglas, who himself administered physical discipline to his HBC employees, objected to the use of such punishments in the schoolroom. He wrote to his son James William's British teachers to encourage them to guide him by respect rather than force. The "success of his future training," Douglas argued, "will be greatly influenced by the kind feeling [which] he may entertain for his Teachers, whether in fact he regards them in the character of friends or oppressors."<sup>21</sup>

An overly zealous schoolmaster could be a deciding factor for some parents in where children were sent to school. Letitia Hargrave, the Scottish wife of Chief Factor James Hargrave, noted in an 1845 letter that the clash between fur-trade parents' 'indulgent' ways and John Macallum's harsh regime at the Red River Academy was driving families away from the school:

Mr Macallum has quarrelled with Miss Allen [the girls' teacher] whom he accused of laziness, & eccentricity. She is very angry & brings as heavy charges ag'st him, going to the length of saying he is deranged. His school has fallen off to nothing & he told her it

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<sup>20</sup> Blakely, *Helmcken Reminiscences*, 217.

<sup>21</sup> James Douglas to Henry Doughty, April 30, 1862, C/AB/10.4/2, Correspondence Outward (Miscellaneous Letters), 30 November 1859–8 December 1863, Sir James Douglas Papers, BC Archives.

was her fault. She retorted & told him he was so despotic & overbearing that both boys & girls were terrified for him, & as their parents are all very indulgent they take them away. I know this was the case with Mr. Gladman's children & Dr. Todd, but I did not tell her so.<sup>22</sup>

Physical discipline was also a concern for parents who sent their children to school in England and Scotland. Indigenous fur-trade students' experiences of discipline in British schools were largely influenced by gender. In girls' schools, physical punishments were not the norm. Anthony Fletcher argues that girls at boarding and day schools were "never beaten" because girls were "being trained in different way for a different future from their brothers."<sup>23</sup> While 'never beaten' is almost certainly an overstatement, girls were generally sanctioned in different ways than male students. Rather than caning or whipping, punishments more often took the form of copying verses, being sent to bed early, and supervision of students' letter writing. These punishments were meted out for misbehaviour, faltering in their studies, or misdemeanors like failing to tie their shoelaces.<sup>24</sup>

Physical discipline and bullying were distinguishing features of boys' schools, and were believed to "foster in English boys a particular form of masculinity" that would sustain English society and English ideals.<sup>25</sup> Successive inquiries into English schools in the nineteenth century uncovered brutal abuse at the hands of schoolmasters and other students in both the elite

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<sup>22</sup> Margaret Macleod, *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1968), 200.

<sup>23</sup> Anthony Fletcher, *Growing Up in England: The Experience of Childhood, 1600-1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 253.

<sup>24</sup> Christina de Bellaigue, *Educating Women: Schooling and Identity in England and France 1800-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 146.

<sup>25</sup> Fletcher, *Growing Up in England*, 13.

public schools and smaller grammar schools.<sup>26</sup> The practice of ‘fagging’ at boys’ public schools and other boarding schools in England fostered a culture ripe for physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. Younger students were assigned to act as personal servants for older students, or the ‘fag-masters.’ According to one former Eton student, his senior student “owned me as his servant,” and being somewhat lazy “did nothing with his hands which others could perform for him.”<sup>27</sup> This practice was meant to “[inculcate] hierarchy and the principal of servitude on which imperial rule was based.”<sup>28</sup> Fur-trade students did not attend the elite public boys’ schools in England and Scotland, like Eton, that catered to the children of the upper classes. These ideals and methods of discipline, however, were also implemented in some preparatory and grammar schools that were in line with the types of schools that fur-trade sons attended in Britain.

Matilda Davis grew up in the English school system and was familiar with the methods of discipline employed in metropolitan boys’ schools. She consequently expressed ongoing concerns about discipline in the schools that her nephews Johnnie Davis and Albert Hodgson attended in Britain. Albert was seemingly removed from his first school in England despite the progress he had made there, most likely due to the disciplinary regime. In contemplating which school to move him to next, Janet Braby, with whom he was boarding at the time,

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<sup>26</sup> For example, the state of studies at Oxford and Cambridge were under review in the 1850s, and the Newcastle Commission (1859), the Clarendon Commission (1861), and Taunton Commission (1864) all examined different aspects of the education of English children and youth. John Roach, *A History of Secondary Education in England, 1800-1870* (London: Longman, 1986), especially Chapter 19.

<sup>27</sup> James Brinsley Richards, ed. *Seven Years at Eton, 1857-1864* (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1883), 26, <https://archive.org/details/sevenyearsateton00brinuoft>.

<sup>28</sup> Fletcher, *Growing Up in England*, 200.



recommended to Davis that Albert would not “get on as well under Strict School discipline.”<sup>29</sup> Johnnie’s and Albert’s letters to Matilda Davis also reflect her inquiries about the discipline at their schools. Johnnie wrote to her that there was “no flogging or caning” at The Nest Academy.<sup>30</sup> Treatment at the hands of their schoolmates was also a concern, and Albert wrote from Forest School that “the boys are very kind to me here I do not get bullied or played any tricks with.”<sup>31</sup>

The harsh physical discipline that was sometimes meted out in schools would have been disturbing for any child, but children who were reared according to Indigenous perspectives on childhood were particularly unprepared for such abuse. James R. Anderson remembered of Reverend Staines at the Fort Victoria School that Staines was “disposed at times to be unduly severe in administering corporal punishment.”<sup>32</sup> Benjamin McKenzie Jr was appalled by the discipline he overheard on his first day at Red River Academy:

Getting out of the York boat, and going up the bank, I began to explore and found an open door in a porch or lean-to attached to a long thatched building...with moccasined feet I could very easily enter the long, low porch to listen at the school door. It was my misfortune to hear someone being punished for unsatisfactory writing, stroke after stroke. It happened to be my own brother, and that, surely, was a warning and a prophecy as to what I was to expect.<sup>33</sup>

McKenzie welcomed the changes that occurred after Bishop David Anderson took over the school in 1849.

Other students reacted differently to the bullying and violence they encountered in

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<sup>29</sup> Janet Braby to Matilda Davis, 16 May 1862, P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>30</sup> Johnnie Davis to Matilda Davis, 4 July 1868, P2342 fo.11, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>31</sup> Albert Hodgson to Matilda Davis, n.d., P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>32</sup> James Anderson manuscript, 158, BC Archives.

<sup>33</sup> Benjamin McKenzie Reminiscences, AM.

British boarding schools. James William Douglas took the route of becoming a bully. His father chastised him for his behaviour, writing:

Who is the little boy, that you are so fond of 'licking.' My son must cultivate a kind and generous disposition and scorn to bully little boys. Tyranny is hateful in every form; the strong should never oppress the weak. It was rude and presumptuous to attack poor Lauder, in Mr. Allens [sic] presence, boys should have reverence for their pastors and Teachers and always behave themselves like gentlemen."<sup>34</sup>

Indigenous fur-trade students who were subjected to such treatment had little recourse other than to complain to their parents. Some parents, like Helmcken, were unfazed by the school culture. Others, like those who pulled their children from the Red River Academy in protest of Macallum's disciplinary measures, acknowledged that certain aspects of an English-style education did not align with their family values and expectations.

The cultural dislocation and disconnect that Indigenous students experienced in boarding schools could also be distressing, but impacted students in different ways depending on where they were attending school. In some ways, attending metropolitan schools freed Indigenous students from the pervasive and stifling civilizing mission that underwrote education in the HBC territories. British and Canadian schoolmasters were less concerned with civilising Indigenous students, in part because there were so few of them and in part because teachers in those locations were less likely to be missionaries on a religious campaign. There are no mentions in the family correspondence of metropolitan teachers suppressing fur-trade children's Indigenous languages, clothing, or knowledge. Admittedly this may not accurately reflect the students' experiences, but it seems that fur-trade students' Indigenous heritage was

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<sup>34</sup> James Douglas to James William Douglas, 1-7 November 1867, Private Letter Book, B/40/2A, Sir James Douglas Papers, BC Archives.

not targeted in the same concentrated and specific ways as it was in schools in the HBC territories.

That said, Indigenous students in metropolitan schools experienced distance and dislocation in other ways. Most fur-trade students were isolated in large part from other Indigenous or colonial students who spoke their Indigenous languages and shared their colonial life experiences. When handmade mitts and moccasins arrived from home in care packages, this Indigenous material culture may have been a mark of their colonial status and Indigenous ancestry that reinforced how their race and colonial status marked them as different and separate from British-born students.

It is unclear how Indigenous fur-trade children negotiated their colonial status in metropolitan schools. In part, this may have varied by child and by school. When Albert Hodgson was at Forest School, he was the only Indigenous student and only one of a few colonial students.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, the care packages that he received from home containing maple sugar and his Aunt Nancy's handmade items decorated with Metis beadwork may have reinforced his difference to his classmates. At the Nest Academy, however, Albert had a small but significant cohort of other fur-trade students who shared his racial and colonial heritage, and who received their own care packages from 'America.' How this grouping of students and their Indigenous identities were evaluated by themselves and by their peers and teachers at the school is unknown. The isolation of being different would have at least been reduced.

Some Indigenous fur-trade students, whose colonial status or perceived racialized appearance may have positioned them as 'savages' in a metropolitan setting, may have chosen

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<sup>35</sup> Email to author, Brian Hardcastle, Forest School, November 2013.

to self-censor their Indigenous heritage. James Douglas warned daughter Martha to keep her Cree heritage to herself while she was in London, telling her, “I have no objection to your telling the old stories about ‘Hyass’ but pray do not tell the world that they are Mammas.”<sup>36</sup> There are indications in the records that the students’ perceived racialized status influenced how they were treated in Britain. Albert was unable to secure an apprenticeship after leaving The Nest Academy; his English cousins implied in a letter to Matilda that his race was an issue and suggested that he would find more success in America.<sup>37</sup> Lydia Christie was a spectacle in Scotland in 1873, when she attracted the attention and stares of locals.<sup>38</sup> Britons were less interested in converting and civilizing these Indigenous fur-trade children, however, than their counterparts in the HBC territories. Indigenous students in small numbers were not a threat to the established order in Britain.

In the HBC territories, most of the students in schools in the region were Indigenous, and were therefore part of the overwhelming Indigenous majority in the ‘British’ colony. These children and their families were seen as a threat to attempting to establish British power and social order in fur-trade country. As such, they were targeted by missionaries in an effort to align their conduct and values with Euro-Christian standards of acceptable dress, language, and behaviour.

In language that is chillingly familiar to what would be implemented in Indian residential schools some sixty years later, Reverend Jones explained to George Simpson in 1832 that part

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<sup>36</sup> James Douglas to Martha Douglas, 6 April 1873, B/40/4A, Letters to Martha Douglas, Sir James Douglas Fonds, BC Archives.

<sup>37</sup> Matilda Hunt to Matilda Davis, 25 August 1868, P2342 fo.26, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>38</sup> Lydia Christie to Matilda Davis, 30 June 1873, P2342 fo.16, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

of the goal of the Red River Academy was to separate children from their Indigenous languages and relatives:

In such an establishment as is now projected the children would be entirely apart from other natives of the country and would have no opportunity of speaking any other than the English Language...I conceive that such children as may have relatives at the settlement should have but a very limited intercourse with them, being fully aware from experience of the facility with which such a perverse influence is obtained over the young mind by an untrained intercourse of the kind alluded to.<sup>39</sup>

There is no evidence in the records that students at the Academy were barred from speaking languages other than English, but that does not mean that such restrictions were not in place.

Certainly, when John Macallum took over as headmaster he went a step further in trying to separate fur-trade children from Indigenous aspects of their cultures and families. Students, for example, were required to dispense with their weather-appropriate Indigenous-style clothing and eat a British-style diet. Letitia Hargrave was critical of Macallum's approach, and his refusal to adapt school policies to the realities of colonial conditions:

Many girls have got ill, and as he makes them strip off their Indian stockings and adopt English fashions it is not surprising. They must take a certain walk every day, plungin thro' the freezing snow. They wear Indian shoes, but without the cloth stock'gs or leggings over them the snow gets in & I need not say that the feelings one undergoes are not comfortable. Then if the mothers are not legally married they are not allowed to see their children. This may be all right, but it is fearfully cruel for the poor unfortunate mothers did not know there was any distinction & it is only within the last few years that any one was so married.<sup>40</sup>

Other schools in the HBC territories, however, were more cognizant of the realities of colonial life and made concessions to the realities of educating Indigenous children in fur-trade

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<sup>39</sup> Reverend David Jones to George Simpson, 8 May 1832, transcript, P7540 fo.20, Transcript of correspondence between Reverend David Jones and George Simpson, AM.

<sup>40</sup> Macleod, *Letitia Hargrave Letters*, 178.

country. The boys at the Fort Victoria School were given a good deal of time and freedom to roam in and about the fort. They boys cooked meals on the beach, visited nearby neighbours, and explored the wilderness outside of the settlement.<sup>41</sup> At St. Andrews, Matilda Davis made regular purchases of pemmican and local foods. Handmade shoes and clothing along with hides to make them from were regularly sent to and from Oakfield as exchanges between family, friends, and probably payment in kind for services rendered.<sup>42</sup> In these ways, at least some schools adapted to acknowledge Indigenous heritage and fur-trade country realities.

### III. WHEN THE CARE NETWORKS FAILED

As discussed in Chapter 3, fur-trade parents relied on trans-imperial networks of family and friends to care and provide for Indigenous fur-trade students when they were at school. Parents had much anxiety over these arrangements, as is evident in the parents' correspondence that is assessed in Chapter 6. These anxieties about their children's care were reasonable. No matter the quality of care their children received, sending children off to be put in the charge of strangers or far-off family members was stressful. Moreover, in some situations fur-trade children were not cared for properly. In these cases, parents' reliance on and trust in school placement via their kin and social networks was misplaced.

Duncan Mactavish, for example, boarded in an abusive home when he was first placed at school in Inverness. In an 1838 letter to his mother, Duncan recounted his schooling in Inverness. When he first arrived, he boarded with a Mr. Lobban and his wife, and attended the

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<sup>41</sup> James Anderson manuscript, 179, BC Archives.

<sup>42</sup> Bill, Henry Cook to Miss Davis, 14 March 1865, P4724 fo.11, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

local parish school:

I was living with one Mr Lobban but he treated me very ill, for he was always thrashing & abusing his wife & me, so I went & told me guardian & he brought me with himself. I stopped with him for about three years in the country, and then he sent me to the principal [sic] boarding school in this town, where there are about 18 boarders & about a hundred day scholars.<sup>43</sup>

Upon learning of Duncan's ill treatment, Duncan's guardian, a cousin, removed Duncan from Lobban's home.<sup>44</sup>

HBC Chief Trader Donald McIntosh also relied on social networks and word of mouth to place his two young sons under the care of a minister named Fraser in the Canadian colonies. After Fraser's death McIntosh learned that his trust in the minister had been misplaced. McIntosh reported that Fraser had treated his sons "more like menials than like Gentlemen's children & allowed them to go through the country worse clad than the poorest farmers son in the Parish." One of his sons had also been removed from school due to Fraser's failure to pay the boy's tuition, in spite of Fraser having drawn the funds on McIntosh's account.<sup>45</sup> In this case, not only did McIntosh's care network fail, but he was defrauded of money as well.

Duncan Mactavish and the McIntosh boys were placed with strangers. David Vincent Stewart, however, was put in the care of family who failed to provide for him. In 1827, David's mother, Harriet Vincent Stewart, married George Gladman Jr. Not wanting to burden her new husband with three stepchildren, she kept her daughters Juliet and Harriet Stewart with her but sent her four-year-old son to England. In England, Stewart was under the guardianship of

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<sup>43</sup> Duncan Mactavish to Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie, May [1838], E.379/1 fo.8-10, Peter and Josette McKenzie Family Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>44</sup> Donald Mactavish to Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie, 14 May 1848, E.379/1 fo.4-7, Peter and Josette McKenzie Family Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>45</sup> Jennifer Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1980), 181.

Harriet's father, HBC Factor Thomas Vincent, who had retired to London in 1826 with his second wife, Jane Sutherland Vincent, and some of his Indigenous children.<sup>46</sup> Vincent sent David to a school run by Harriet's brother, James, and asked that James give his nephew "as good an education as if he was your own." According to Harriet Gladman, however, James Vincent pocketed the money for David's room and board and "used him as a footboy."<sup>47</sup> After Thomas Vincent died in 1832, David's tuition payments from his grandfather ceased and his uncle sued the HBC for David's tuition.<sup>48</sup>

When David's stepfather, George Gladman Jr., was in England on furlough in 1834, he heard of his stepson's mistreatment and arranged for David to be sent to his father in Quebec. David's time in his father's household, however, was equally unpleasant. David wrote to his mother in 1843 that his father had "not been ashamed to show that he had no natural affection, he need have no hesitation in telling her that his cruelty had been so great that he ran from his house and worked his passage home."<sup>49</sup> Having run away from his father's home, he returned to his uncle's school in England.<sup>50</sup> James Vincent, however, was unhappy to be burdened with his nephew, and David soon left to take a position as an assistant teacher in a 'gentleman's' boarding school.<sup>51</sup> Stewart's life as a trans-imperial student was marred by at the very least neglect and possibly abuse, even though he was in the care of family. His educational

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<sup>46</sup> "Gladman, George Jr.," HBCA Biographical sheet, rev. 1998 [http://www.gov.mb.ca/cgi-bin/print\\_hit\\_bold.pl/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/g/gladman\\_george-jr.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/cgi-bin/print_hit_bold.pl/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/g/gladman_george-jr.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> Macleod, *Letitia Hargrave Letters*, 155.

<sup>48</sup> Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 180.

<sup>49</sup> Macleod, *Letitia Hargrave Letters*, 155.

<sup>50</sup> David Stewart Jr. was at the school run by his uncle in 1841 and is listed as a pupil in the census. "1841 England Census," database, *Ancestry.com* (<https://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 25 November 2016), entry for David Stewart, Class: HO107; Piece: 652; Book: 2; Civil Parish: Edmonton; County: Middlesex; Enumeration District: 2; Folio: 26; Page: 46; Line: 2; GSU roll: 438772.

<sup>51</sup> "1851 England Census," database, *Ancestry.com* (<https://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 28 June 2017), entry for David Vincent Steuart, Class: HO107; Piece: 1506; Folio: 269; Page: 7; GSU roll: 87840.



experiences, as well as those of Duncan Mactavish and the McIntosh brothers, are evidence that fur-trade family networks did not always function in the ways that parents expected. When these networks failed to effectively support fur-trade students, it was the children who suffered.

## **V. DEATH, FAMILY, AND THE VALUE OF TRANS-IMPERIAL KIN NETWORKS TO INDIGENOUS FUR-TRADE STUDENTS**

Given the large size of fur-trade families, the lack of access to medical facilities, and rudimentary Victorian medical knowledge, most fur-trade families lost children to death as infants or later to illness and accidents. Some fur-trade students were part of this sad reality, made all the more tragic for their families because Indigenous students who died generally did so far from home. In absence of parents, however, fur-trade family networks were engaged to support ill and dying students.

Most of the fur-trade students in this study who died while they were away at school had support and care from extended family members in their final days. Certainly, there must have been nineteenth-century Indigenous fur-trade students who bore illness and death alone, with no family nearby. There are some students for whom I know only that they died while at school, and nothing about the circumstances.<sup>52</sup> However, this was not the common experience of the students in this study who died while they were at school. Whether the support of ill and dying Indigenous fur-trade students by extended family members is a unique function of the

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<sup>52</sup> For example, Joseph Corrigan, the son of HBC clerk Jacob Corrigan, travelled with John Davis and his daughters Matilda and Elizabeth on the *Eddystone* in 1822 to attend school in Britain. Joseph died while in Britain. "Corrigan, Jacob," Research File, MSS 336 A.11-28, Box 2 Fo. 27, Jennifer Brown Fonds, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (UMASC).

specific set of families under study here, or whether Indigenous and fur-trade extended kin networks really did reach this far as a whole to support students is something that I am not able to determine. What is certain is that the family support for dying children in their final days was a source of comfort for both children and their parents.

For some fur-trade families, the “tragedy of children sent to distant schools, pining away and dying” became their reality when a child died at school, far from home.<sup>53</sup> For at least one fur-trade family, the Davis school served as a refuge for their dying child. In 1858, after thirty years in Rupert’s Land as a missionary, William Mason moved his Indigenous family to London.<sup>54</sup> Some of Mason’s Indigenous children remained in Rupert’s Land, while at least two of his children, Sarah and Mary, travelled between London and York Factory.<sup>55</sup> After his wife Sophia Thomas Mason’s death in 1861, he returned to York Factory to serve as the curate there in the late 1860s.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Elizabeth Arthur, “Angelique and her Children,” *Papers and Records, Vol. VI* (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Society Museum, 1978), 121.

<sup>54</sup> Reverend William Mason came to Rupert’s Land as a Wesleyan missionary. He married Sophia Thomas in 1843. Sarah Thomas was the daughter of Governor Thomas Thomas and his wife, a Cree woman named Sarah. Mason served primarily at Norway House (Rossville Mission) until 1854, when he defected to the Church Missionary Society. At that point, he and his family moved to York Factory. The family relocated to London in 1858, and Sarah Thomas Mason died in London in 1861 leaving nine living children. The Mason’s family history after that point is unclear. In 1871, William Mason was living alone in London. Mason married an English woman, Lucy Alice Hassard Short, the next year and had a large second family. His Indigenous children are not listed as part of his household in the 1881 census or the 1891 census. Anne Lindsay and Jennifer Brown, “Memorable Manitobans: Sophia Thomas Mason (1822-1861),” *Manitoba Historical Society*, rev. 2009 [http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/mason\\_st.shtml](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/mason_st.shtml); Bruce Peel, “THOMAS, SOPHIA,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed May 23, 2017, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/thomas\\_sophia\\_9E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/thomas_sophia_9E.html).

<sup>55</sup> Sarah Mason is listed in the Mason’s London household in the 1861 census, but she later married at York Factory. “1861 England Census,” database, *Ancestry.com* (<https://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 29 June 2017), entry for Sarah Mason,” RG 9: Piece: 22; Folio: 59; Page: 44; GSU roll: 542558.

<sup>56</sup> In 1861 English census, Mason, his wife, young son and one daughter (Sarah) are listed as living in the household. By 1867, and likely before that, Mason was back at York Factory. When Isaac Cowie and Alexander Christie III arrived at York Factory from Britain, Mason’s daughter Mary was on board their ship with them. At York Factory, Mason was in residence in the parsonage, and Mary got married shortly after her arrival HBC accountant Samuel Parson, to whom she had been engaged to before she travelled to England. It is not clear where all of

At some point, Mason brought his daughter, Janet, who was most likely ill with tuberculosis, to York Factory in the hopes that the climate would improve her ill health. In 1870, he sent Janet to Red River to the Davis school for “the sake of her education,” with the understanding that her continued health issues might pose a problem for Davis.<sup>57</sup> He hoped that Janet would continue to improve in the climate at Red River. Unfortunately, this did not prove to be the case. Mason received word in London that Janet had relapsed. He wrote to Miss Davis that, “now I have no hope and resign her to God. I should wish her last days to be as comfortable as circumstances will admit.”<sup>58</sup> Knowing that his daughter’s days were numbered, Mason instructed Davis to send Janet to her Uncle William Thomas’s home where she could be nursed in her final days. Although Janet was far from her father, and presumably her siblings, she was cared for in her final days by her Uncle William and his wife, Eleanor Bunn Thomas.<sup>59</sup>

Louisa Peers was another Davis student who died while she was a student at the Oakfield Academy. Louisa was the daughter of Christine Bell Peers McKenzie and Augustus Peers, and was accompanied at school by her sister Jane and her Bell cousins.<sup>60</sup> Louisa died

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Mason’s other children were when the census was taken in 1861. According to a letter written by Mary Sinclair Christie recounting Sophia Thomas Mason’s death, Mason left behind nine children when she died. Isaac Cowie, *Company of Adventurers: A narrative of seven years in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company during 1867-1876 on the great buffalo plains with historical and biographical notes and comments* (Toronto: William Biggs, 1913), 114; Mary Sinclair Christie to Matilda Davis, 16 October 1861, P4724 fo.3, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.<sup>57</sup> Abraham Cowley to Matilda Davis, 28 June 1870, Matilda Davis Family Papers, P2342 fo.18, AM. Janet Mason is not listed as residing in the Mason household in the 1861 English census. It is unclear whether she remained at York Factory with her sisters when the family left for England in 1858, whether she was at an English boarding school in 1861, or if she was born after the 1861 census.

<sup>58</sup> William Mason to Matilda Davis, 29 June 1871, P4724 fo.5, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>59</sup> William Thomas was the brother of Sophia Thomas Mason. William Thomas was married 1829 to Eleanor Bunn, the daughter of Thomas Bunn and Pheobe Sinclair (the daughter of William Sinclair and Nahovay). “Bunn, Thomas,” Research File, MSS 336 A.11-28, Box 2 fo.4, Jennifer Brown Fonds, UMSCA.

<sup>60</sup> Christina Bell Peers McKenzie first married Augustus Peers and had two children, Louisa and Augustus. After Peers’ death, she remarried Alexander Black McKenzie, a son of Roderick and Angelique McKenzie. Louisa Peers and Jane McKenzie were half-sisters by their mother, Christina Bell Peers McKenzie, and were both students at the Davis School. Christina Bell Peers McKenzie was also a sister of Flora Bell Finlayson and Jane Bell Clarke, whose

sometime before 1867, without her mother in attendance.<sup>61</sup> Instead, Christina McKenzie wrote to Matilda Davis requesting a lock of hair from Louisa, “enough to make a bracelet”; presumably the hair was to make a Victorian mourning bracelet.<sup>62</sup> Although McKenzie was stationed with her husband at Green Lake at the time of Louisa’s death, Louisa’s aunt, Flora Bell Finlayson, sometimes lived nearby in the Red River settlement.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, Finlayson was a sister-in-law of Matilda Davis and a regular visitor to the school.<sup>64</sup> These maternal family ties may have positioned Louisa and Jane as ‘cousins’ in Matilda Davis’s own Indigenous family network, and connected Davis and a dying Louisa by extended kin ties. In addition to her cousins at the Davis school, Louisa was likely also supported at her time of death by her aunt and other kin.

Mary Christie Jr also died while a student at the Davis school. Mary Christie Jr., the daughter of William J. Christie and Mary Sinclair Christie, was born at Fort Edmonton in 1859. In

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daughters Caroline (Carrie) Finlayson, Harriet Finlayson, and Jane ‘Bell’ Clarke were also students at the school. Jane’s sister Aileen may have been a student as well, but that is not fully clear from the records. C. McKenzie to Matilda Davis, n.d., Matilda Davis School Collection, P4724 fo.1, AM; Augustus Richard Peers, Journal 1842-52, E/B/P34, B.C. Archives; “McKenzie, Alexander A,” HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev.1999, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mckenzie\\_alexander1846-1868.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mckenzie_alexander1846-1868.pdf)

<sup>61</sup> Christina Bell Peers McKenzie wrote to the HBC Committee in 1867, indicating that her daughter Louisa Peers had died. She asked the committee to transfer the balance of Louisa’s proceeds from her father Augustus Peers’s estate to that of her son, Augustus John Peers. Augustus Richard Peers, Journal 1842-52, E/B/P34, B.C. Archives. Thank you to Nancy Marguerite Anderson for sharing the information on the Peers journal with me.

<sup>62</sup> For more on Victorian mourning jewelry, see John Plotz, *Portable Property: Victorian Property on the Move* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

<sup>63</sup> Although Joseph Finlayson was not on furlough between his marriage to Flora Bell in 1857, and a possible furlough in 1879, Flora Bell Finlayson seems to have lived at the Red River settlement at some point during the late 1860s, or she was a frequent visitor. Her daughter, Carrie, who eventually died had health issues and this may be the reason for her residence in Red River while her husband was working in the English River district. Bell Clarke to Edith Davis, n.d., P2343 fo.7, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM; Alice Davis to Catherine Birston Davis, 21 April [1868], P2342 fo.4, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM; Flora Finlayson to Matilda Davis, n.d., P2342 fo.21, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM; Caroline Isbister Christie to Matilda Davis, 14 December 1864, P4724 fo.2, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM; “Finlayson, Joseph,” HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. 1999, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/f/finlayson\\_joseph.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/f/finlayson_joseph.pdf).

<sup>64</sup> Joseph Finlayson, the husband of Flora Bell Finlayson, was Matilda Davis’s half-brother by her mother, Ann Nancy Davis and HBC Chief Factor Nicol Finlayson.

January 1865, the girls' mother arranged to have clothing and other supplies sent straight from London to the Davis school for the six-year-old. Mary Christie Jr.'s headstone at the St. Andrew's Anglican church near the site of the Oakfield school, however, reveals that Mary Jr. died just days after her mother wrote to Matilda Davis. Although Mary was far from home, she was accompanied at school by her older sisters, Annie and Lydia, and her cousin Ann Mary.<sup>65</sup>

Other fur-trade students were tended by aunts and uncles in their dying days. Although the details of Julia McKenzie's death are not known, she lived with and was taught by her aunt and uncle in Montreal, and presumably died under their care as well.<sup>66</sup> In Scotland, John Ballenden and Sarah McLeod Ballenden's elder children (Anne, Eliza, and John) were put under the guardianship of their aunt, Elizabeth Ballenden Bannatyne, while they attended school.<sup>67</sup> In 1851, John Ballenden accompanied his five-year-old son, Duncan, to join his brother and sisters in Scotland. Unfortunately, shortly after his father's departure to return to North America five-year-old Duncan died at his aunt's home.<sup>68</sup>

Roderick McKenzie Jr.'s Scottish family was also a comfort to him in his last days. In 1870, fifteen-year-old Roderick McKenzie Jr. died while attending The Nest Academy in Jedburgh. A series of letters from his caretakers at the school, and from Roderick himself,

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<sup>65</sup> Mary Sinclair Christie to Matilda Davis, 3 January 1865, P4724 fo.3, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>66</sup> Julia McKenzie to Charles McKenzie, 10 April 1828, MG 19 A44 vol.1, Hector and Aneas McKenzie Fonds, LAC.

<sup>67</sup> Elizabeth Ballenden Bannatyne was the sister of John Ballenden, and the mother of A.G.B. Bannatyne. A.G.B. Bannatyne married Annie McDermot, the daughter of Andrew McDermot and Sarah McNab. Bannatyne is the Bannatyne with the unique walk in Jane Truthwaite's recollections of her grandfather Andrew McDermot given above.

<sup>68</sup> Duncan Finlayson Ballenden was born 8 October 1845. His 1846 baptism is registered in the St. John's Parish register. James Hargrave refers to the death of "Ballenden's boy" in an 1851 letter to Donald Ross. Duncan is the only child not listed as a beneficiary of his father's 1854 will. James Hargrave to Donald Ross, 10 December 1851, typescript, Margaret Arnett Macleod Fonds, MSS 336 A.11-18, Box 1, Folder 10, UMASC; "Ballenden, John," Research File, MSS 15, Box 3, Folder 1, Jennifer Brown Fonds, UMASC; John Ballenden, H2-136-7-6, transcript, Inward Correspondence 1853-1858, William and Harriet McMurray Family Fonds, HBCA.

document his decline and unexpected death. When Roderick wrote to his mother in February 1870, he reported that he had not been outside for the past three days, because he had a cold and the doctor was making him stay inside.<sup>69</sup> Roderick's 'cold' developed into a much more serious illness. One month later Marion Millar, the woman in charge of domestic affairs at The Nest Academy, informed Roderick's parents of his unexpected illness and rapid decline. Millar had contacted Roderick's father's family at Ullapool, and had received many letters from them in which "all the family there seem much grieved to hear of his illness."<sup>70</sup>

In her next letter, dated only eleven days later, Millar wrote to the McKenzies that Mrs. Maclean, Roderick's aunt, had arrived and served as Roderick's constant nurse. Unfortunately, Roderick was "fast sinking," coughing blood and growing weaker.<sup>71</sup> It is clear in the letter that Roderick's caretakers believe that his death was imminent. Just a week later, Roderick McKenzie Jr. passed away. Headmaster George Fyfe wrote to the McKenzies two months later to inform them that Roderick's remains were sent to his relatives at Ullapool as requested by the McKenzies. Although Roderick's death was undoubtedly a terrible blow to his parents, the comfort he received from his aunt and teachers in his dying days may have provided some solace to his parents.

The deaths of Indigenous fur-trade students while they were at school were the realization for some parents of the ultimate cost of seeking an elite British-style boarding school education for their children. At the same time, however, illness and impending death engaged extended fur-trade family networks in support of the dying children. This demonstrates the

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<sup>69</sup> Roderick McKenzie Jr. to Jane McKenzie McKenzie, 8 February 1870, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>70</sup> Marion Millar to Jane McKenzie McKenzie, 3 March [1870], H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>71</sup> Marion Millar to Jane McKenzie McKenzie, 14 March [1870], H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA.

extent to which fur-trade families infiltrated the Empire beyond the HBC territories, and how the education of fur-trade children connected the colonies with the metropole.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

Education was often an uneven experience for Indigenous fur-trade children. Going away to boarding school in particular separated them from their home and families in what was an emotional distressing event for many children. At schools in both the HBC territories and abroad, children's own colonial and Indigenous-centred upbringings clashed with the lessons that both metropolitan and colonial teachers were trying to teach in the classroom. Sometimes, and in spite of fur-trade parents' best efforts, the kin networks that were supposed to ensure the well-being of Indigenous fur-trade students failed and students were placed in potentially abusive and distressing care situations. In other cases, kin networks were engaged successfully to support students who faced illness and death as students at boarding schools. In these ways, the intersections of imperialism and childhood separated fur-trade students from their families, targeted them for their Indigenous heritage and status as 'Other' in the school, and simultaneously facilitated the comfort and support of family in their dying days.

## **CHAPTER 6 – ‘WRITE ME FOR ANY SAKE’: CORRESPONDENCE, AFFECT, AND TRANS-IMPERIAL FUR-TRADE FAMILIES**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

In 1838, Donald Mactavish, age nine, wrote to his mother from Inverness and beseeched her to “Write for any sake Write me as soon as possible.”<sup>1</sup> Donald, the son of Scottish Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) Chief Factor Alexander Mactavish and his Metis wife Josette Monier, had been sent to join his brother, Duncan, at school in Inverness after his father’s death in 1832.<sup>2</sup> The boys’ mother soon remarried, and relocated near Sault Ste. Marie with her new husband, Chief Trader Peter McKenzie.<sup>3</sup> Once Mrs. McKenzie moved with her husband, communication with her sons was sporadic, for reasons that are unclear. The Mactavish sons’ guardian, one of their father’s Scottish cousins, discussed contacting Josette McKenzie in his letters to Hudson’s Bay House in London, but seemingly never followed through. In December 1837, the boys’ Scottish grandmother, Isabella Mactavish, received a letter “making inquiries on the part of” Josette McKenzie as to her sons’ welfare and requesting that the boys write to her.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Mactavish to Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie, 14 May 1838, Peter and Josette McKenzie Family Fonds, E.379/1 fos.4-7, Hudson’s Bay Company Archive (HBCA).

<sup>2</sup> Duncan Mactavish to William Smith, 10 April 1834, Will and Legal Papers for McTavish, Alexander, H2-77-2-2 (A.36/10 fo.146), HBCA; “McTavish, Alexander,” Research file, Jennifer Brown Collection, MSS 336 A.11-18 Box 7, file 7, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (UMASC).

<sup>3</sup> Peter McKenzie was stationed at New Brunswick House, north-east of Lake Superior and north of Sault Ste. Marie at this time. Marriage contract for Peter McKenzie and Josette Monier, E.379/1 fo.1-3, Peter and Josette McKenzie Family Fonds, HBCA; “McKenzie, Peter,” HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. 2003, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mckenzie\\_peter1825-1852.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mckenzie_peter1825-1852.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Duncan Mactavish to William Smith, 18 June 1834, Will and Legal Papers for McTavish, Alexander, H2-77-2-2 (A.36/10 fo.146), HBCA; Duncan Mactavish to William Smith, 8 June 1836, Will and Legal Papers for McTavish, Alexander, H2-77-2-2 (A36/10 fo.154), HBCA; Duncan Mactavish to William Smith, 8 December 1837, Will and Legal Papers for McTavish, Alexander, H2-77-2-2 (A.236/10 fo.155), HBCA.



The news from Mrs. McKenzie, however, was apparently not passed along to her sons. According to Donald, the boys had not had word from her or known where she was for three years until they received a visit in 1838 from HBC clerk and family friend, Nicol Finlayson.<sup>5</sup> Finlayson, who was home in Scotland on furlough and resided nearby had stopped to check on the boys at the behest of Mrs. McKenzie. After three years, the boys finally had news of their mother and, more importantly, knew where she was living so that they could contact her.<sup>6</sup>

Mrs. McKenzie's silence was clearly distressing to Duncan. In his first letter to his mother in three years, Duncan wrote about his school and his health, the "bonny girls" in town, and his visits with Mr. Finlayson. What comes through most clearly in the letter, however, is Duncan's distress over his emotional and physical separation from his mother. Duncan outlines the plan that he has made for coming to visit his mother in North America. He explains that because he is going to study to be a doctor so that "in that way I may have a chance of seeing you again in about 6 years." After years of no letters from or other material evidence of his mother's affection, Duncan pleads with his mother to write to him, asking her to "Write me. Write me."<sup>7</sup>

Duncan Mactavish's letter to his mother and the circumstances surrounding its writing illuminate several of the themes that characterize the correspondence that passed between Indigenous fur-trade students and their families while the children were at school. For these

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<sup>5</sup> The boys' letters only identify their visitor as "Mr. Finlayson." This was most likely Nicol Finlayson, who was on furlough in Scotland in 1836-1838 and who retired to Nairn, Scotland in 1854. "Finlayson, Nicol," HBCA Biographical Sheets, rev. 1999, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/f/finlayson\\_nicol.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/f/finlayson_nicol.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> The boys' letters are addressed to Sault Ste. Marie. Peter McKenzie was stationed at nearby posts. It is unclear if Josette McKenzie was living in Sault Ste. Marie, or if the HBC post was forwarded to them via Sault St. Marie. "McKenzie, Peter," HBCA Biographical Sheets, rev. 2003, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mckenzie\\_peter1825-1852.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mckenzie_peter1825-1852.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Donald Mactavish to Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie, 14 May 1838, Peter and Josette McKenzie Family Fonds, E.379/1 fos.4-7, HBCA. Emphasis in original.

students and their families, letters were the primary means by which bonds of family affection and ‘emotional closeness’ were developed and maintained.<sup>8</sup> Examining family bonds and affective ties through the letters of imperial children and their families provides a unique window into the emotional experiences of Indigenous fur-trade students and their families. Students’ letters focused on their schooling and daily life, but also offer insight into the loneliness and anxiety that resulted from living at a distance from their parents. Fur-trade parents’ letters to their children, and to their children’s teachers and guardians, illuminate the challenges of parenting from afar, the anxiety that parents felt about their children’s health and well-being, and the sometimes bleak realities of death, illness, and separation for nineteenth-century fur-trade families. Indigenous fur-trade children’s educational experiences challenged Indigenous family connections by demanding long, and sometimes permanent, separations between students and their parents, siblings, and extended kin networks. These separations also facilitated a family correspondence that maintained fur-trade family ties that spanned the HBC territories and parts of the larger British Empire.

## II. FUR-TRADE FAMILY CORRESPONDENCE AND AFFECT

Scholars of the new imperial history have argued convincingly that the British family in its various formulations was central to the British Empire.<sup>9</sup> As Britons spread across the globe in

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<sup>8</sup> I borrow the term ‘emotional closeness’ from Laura Ishiguro’s discussion of the role of the post in maintaining and creating trans-imperial familial relationships in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century Britain and settler British Columbia. Laura Ishiguro, *Nothing to Write Home About: British Imperial Family Correspondence and the Everyday Foundations of Settler Colonialism* (Vancouver: UBC Press, forthcoming) 70.

<sup>9</sup> Vyvyan Brandon, *Children of the Raj* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005); Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press,

the pursuit of empire, it was common for British families to be separated as part of their roles as colonial administrators, missionaries, entrepreneurs, and emigrants. Letters were the primary means of communication for these trans-imperial families.<sup>10</sup> For all of the nineteenth century, including after the telegraph came into use, letters were the “key media of communication bridging the distances, near or far, between loved ones.”<sup>11</sup> Rising literacy rates in Britain, and reforms to first the English post and later the imperial post helped to facilitate both letter writing and letter receiving.<sup>12</sup> Family correspondence served to maintain affective family relationships during the long separations that became commonplace for imperial families in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>13</sup>

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2008); Esmé Cleall, Laura Ishiguro, and Emily Manktelow, “Imperial Relations: Histories of Family in the British Empire,” *Journal of Colonialism and Commonwealth History* 14, no.1 (Spring 2013), doi:10.1353/cch.2013.0006; Elizabeth Jane Errington, *Emigrant Worlds and Transatlantic Communities: Migration to Upper Canada in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007); Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Anne F. Hyde, *Empires, Nations and Families: A History of the North American West, 1800-1860* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011); Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, ed., *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility and Intimacy in and Age of Global Empire* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Eve Tavor Bannet, *Empire of Letters: Letter Manuals and Transatlantic Correspondence, 1688-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Elizabeth Elbourne, “The Bannisters and Their Colonial World: Family Networks and Colonialism in the Early Nineteenth Century,” in *Within and Without the Nation: Canadian History as Transnational History*, ed. Karen Dubsinsky, Adele Perry, and Henry Yu (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 49-75; Elizabeth Jane Errington, “Webs of Affection and Obligation: Glimpse into Families and Nineteenth Century Transatlantic Communities,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 19, no.1 (2008): 1-26; Catherine Golden, *Posting It: The Victorian Revolution in Letter Writing* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2009); Ishiguro, *Nothing to Write Home About*.

<sup>11</sup> Sonia Cancian's study examines the letters of Italian migrant families in the twentieth century, but her findings on this point hold true for nineteenth century migrants as well. Sonia Cancian, *Families, Lovers, and Their Letters: Italian Post-War Migration to Canada* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010), 4.

<sup>12</sup> Ishiguro, *Nothing to Write Home About*, 36-45; Bruce Elliott, Bruce, David A. Gerber, and Suzanne M. Sinke, “Introduction,” in *Letters Across Borders: The Epistolary Practices of International Migrants*, ed. Bruce Elliott, Bruce, David A. Gerber, and Suzanne M. Sinke (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Judith Beattie and Helen M. Buss, *Undelivered Letters to Hudson's Bay Company Men on the Northwest Coast of America, 1830-57* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003); Buettner, *Empire Families*; Ryan Eyford, “‘Close together, though miles apart’: Family, Distance and Emotion in the Letters of the Taylor Sisters,” *Histoire sociale/Social History* 48, no.96 (May 2015): 67-86; Ishiguro, *Nothing to Write Home About*; Sarah Pearsall, *Atlantic Families: Lives and*

Correspondence, and particularly personal and family correspondence, affords both challenges and benefits for historians.<sup>14</sup> The familial letters that were generated in response to imperial migration offer insight into the affective inner lives of trans-imperial families in ways that other sources do not. In particular, being separated from each other prompted family members to “articulate so much that they normally took for granted.”<sup>15</sup> When family members were required to communicate in writing that which otherwise might have been conveyed in-person by touch, look, or posture, such writings provide textual evidence of emotions that might otherwise have remained inner, or at least intimate, dialogues.<sup>16</sup> Family letters such as those studied here are “the repositories of emotion as much as information.”<sup>17</sup> These letters allow for an exploration of how Indigenous fur-trade families *felt* about separations, migrations, and the resulting challenges to affective family relationships that resulted from the children’s trans-imperial travels. This, in turn, is essential to understanding both the lived experiences of Indigenous fur-trade students at school, as well as the wider implications of their travels, their studies, and their family ties.<sup>18</sup> Most importantly, these family letters offer insight into the

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*Letters in the Later Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Kate Smith, “Imperial Families: Women Writing Home in Georgian Britain,” *Women’s History Review* 24, no.6 (2015): 843-860.

<sup>14</sup> Rebecca Earle, ed, *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600-1945* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999); Elliott, et al., ed., *Letters Across Borders*; David A. Gerber, *Authors of Their Own Lives: The Personal Correspondence of British Immigrants to North America in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: NYU Press, 2008); David Hall and Nigel Barton, ed., *Letter Writing as Social Practice* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2000).

<sup>15</sup> John Tosh, “From Keighly to St. Denis: Separation and Intimacy in Victorian Bourgeois Marriage,” *History Journal Workshop* 40 (1995): 204-05.

<sup>16</sup> Buettner, *Empire Families*, 130.

<sup>17</sup> Zlatko Skribš, “Transnational Families: Theorising Migration, Emotions and Belonging,” *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 29, no.3 (2008): 232.

<sup>18</sup> For studies of affect and Canadian family correspondence, see Eyford, “‘Close Together Though Miles and Miles Apart’”; Sarah Katherine Gibson, “Self-Reflection in the Consolidation of Scottish Identity: A Case Study of Family Correspondence,” in *Canada and the British World: Culture, Migration and Identity*, ed. Philip Buckner (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 29-44; Elizabeth Vibert, “Writing ‘Home’: Sibling Intimacy in a Scottish Colonial Memoir,” in *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire*, ed. Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 67-88.

“inner stories of ordinary people” that migration historian Sonia Cancian argues are often hidden from mainstream history.<sup>19</sup>

The letters themselves could also be a source of anxiety, joy, fear, grief, or sadness. The letter as a material item could itself be an artifact of love and affection for loved ones who were separated. Receiving a letter served as proof of affection and remembrance. In the same way, a lack of letters could also signal loss, forgetfulness, or death. The “acts of withholding and deceiving” on the part of letter-writers could similarly be a source of frustration.<sup>20</sup> Fur-trade parents, for example, repeatedly asked their children who were at school to provide more details in their letters about their thoughts, feelings, and daily routines. Former HBC officer and colonial governor James Douglas, for example, wrote to his daughter, Martha that, “you know I wish you to tell me every thing that is passing in your mind, to lay it open as it were the innermost recesses of your soul, so that with Gods [sic] help, I may be able to counsel and advise you, in all the varying scenes of life.”<sup>21</sup> Parents wanted more information about what was happening on a daily basis in their children’s lives. This helped them to overcome the physical and emotional distances separating them so that they could still be involved in their sons’ and daughters’ education and daily life.

The “inner stories” of children have been marginal within historical writing in general. In part, this is because children’s letters are not as abundant in the archives as those of adults or even young adults. As noted in the introduction to this study, children’s perspectives and papers were less likely to be deemed important and therefore less likely to be preserved in the

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<sup>19</sup> Cancian, *Families, Lovers and Their Letters*, 5.

<sup>20</sup> Gerber, “Epistolary Masquerades,” 141.

<sup>21</sup> James Douglas to Martha Douglas, 31 August 1872, B.40/4/A, Letters to Martha Douglas, Sir James Douglas Papers, BC Archives.

archives. Those that have been preserved were often first held in family collections, were written by elite children whose family thought to preserve family papers, and, in the Canadian and fur-trade context, were predominantly written in the late-nineteenth century or twentieth century.<sup>22</sup> Historians have also neglected children's letters as sources because the letters were considered too simplistic or lacking in detail to be useful.<sup>23</sup> Indigenous fur-trade children's letters that were generated as part of their educational experiences, however, provide insight into the affective bonds of fur-trade families, and are unique in the historical record in that they represent the voices and perspectives children who are often marginalized from historical accounts of the fur trade.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Studies that examine the letters of white Canadian or British imperial children include Kristine Alexander, "An Honour and a Burden: Canadian Girls and the Great War," in *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Service: Women and Girls of Canada and Newfoundland During the First World War*, ed. Sarah Glassford and Amy Shaw (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012); Diana G. Barnes, "Tenderness, Tittle-Tattle and Truth in Mother-Daughter Letters: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Mary Wortley Montagu Stuart, Countess of Bute and Lady Louisa Stuart," *Women's History Review* 24, no.4 (2015): 570-590; Kathryn Bridge, "Being Young in the Country: Settler Children and Childhood in British Columbia and Alberta, 1860-1925," (Phd diss., University of Victoria, 2012); Helen Brown, "Negotiating Space, Time and Identity: The Hutton-Pellett Letters and a British Child's Wartime Evacuation to Canada," in *Letters Across Borders*, 223-247; Claire L. Halstead, "'Dear Mummy and Daddy': Reading Wartime Letters from British Children Evacuated to Canada During the Second World War," in *Children, Childhood and Youth in the British World*, 92-108; Amy Harris, "This I Beg my Aunt may not Know: Young Letter-Writers in Eighteenth-Century England, Peer Correspondence in a Hierarchical World," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 2, no.3 (Fall 2009): 333-360.

<sup>23</sup> Emily Bruce provides an in-depth analysis of children's correspondence as historical sources in Emily C. Bruce, "Each word shows how you love me': The social literacy practice of children's letter writing, 1780-1860," *Paedagogica Historica* 50, no. 3 (2014): 247-264.

<sup>24</sup> Other studies that draw on the correspondence of imperial children include: Juliet Pollard examines the memoirs of Indigenous men and women to consider childhood and education in the mid-nineteenth-century Pacific Northwest. Juliet Pollard, "The Making of the Metis in the Pacific Northwest Fur Trade Children: Race, Class and Gender," (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 1990). Ellen Filor's study draws on records and letters about some racialized children in India in her study of white and mixed-race childhoods in Scotland and Madras in the early nineteenth century. Ellen Filor, "'He is hardened to the climate & a little bleached by it's [sic] influence': Imperial Childhoods in Scotland and Madras, c. 1800-1830," in *Children, Childhood and Youth in the British World*, ed. S. Robinson and S. Sleight (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016): 77-91. Cecilia Morgan explores some of the same letters discussed in this study in "'Write Me, Write Me': Native and Metis Letter-Writing Across the Empire, 1800-1870," in *Critical Perspectives on Colonialism: Writing the Empire from Below*, ed. Fiona Paisley and Kirsty Reid (New York: Routledge, 2013), 141-156.

### III. THE LETTERS: MID-NINETEENTH-CENTURY INDIGENOUS FUR-TRADE FAMILY CORRESPONDENCE

All of the fur-trade children and youth who wrote the letters that are at the heart of this study lived at a distance from their parents in order to attend school. These letters were a product of the mid-nineteenth-century educational opportunities available to fur-trade students in two ways. The first, and most essential, was literacy. Without education in some form, either in a formal school setting or in the home under the instruction of their parents or elder siblings, the children and youth who wrote these letters would not have been able to take advantage of this form of communication to write to their families. The second way that these letters are a product of the education system is that children only needed to write to their families *because* they were sent away from home for their education. Students who lived at home and had daily contact with their family had little need to write letters to their parents and siblings. Many of the Indigenous fur-trade students' letters were in fact preserved precisely because of the students' association with the Matilda Davis school at Red River, as they were archived with the Davis school and family records.

The length and distance of these separations were diverse, and changed over the course of the time period under study. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, children were often sent away to school at a young age. Alexander Christie Jr. arrived in Scotland in 1822 at age four and did not return to fur-trade country until 1834, after he had attended Marischal College at Aberdeen University and was old enough to take up a post as an apprentice clerk.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Alexander Christie to Donald Ross, 3 January 1844, MS0635 File 22, Donald Ross Collection, BC Archives; "Christie, Alexander Jr.," HBCA Biographical Sheets, rev. 2002, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/christie\\_alexander\\_jr1834-1873.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/christie_alexander_jr1834-1873.pdf)

His brother, William, and sisters, Mary and Margaret, also went to Britain to attend school.<sup>26</sup> In the next generation of the Christie family, the older sons were sent to Scotland to go to school like William and Alexander Jr., although only for the latter part of their education and generally not until they were around eight to ten years old.<sup>27</sup> It is unclear why this shift occurred, but the increased educational opportunities in the HBC territories likely played a role.

The Christie granddaughters were not sent overseas like their aunts, Margaret and Mary, but were instead educated at Red River. Alexander Christie Jr.'s daughters attended Matilda Davis's school at St. Andrews. By going to school at Red River, the girls lived far from their parents' residences at fur trade posts but were able to see Alexander and Caroline when they made trips to Red River. The Christies even spent a year on furlough at Red River, where Mary lived with her parents while her siblings, Emma and Duncan, attended the Davis school.<sup>28</sup> Closer proximity to some of his children while they were at school meant that Alexander Christie Jr. was able to maintain in-person contact with some of his children in a way that his parents had not been able to when he was away at school in Scotland.<sup>29</sup> Unlike his brother, William Christie and sister-in-law Mary Sinclair Christie, Alexander Christie Jr. never travelled to Scotland to visit his sons at school and did not see some of them for more than a decade.

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<sup>26</sup> G.P. de T. Glazebrook, *The Hargrave Correspondence* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1938) 409; Isaac Cowie, *Company of Adventurers*, 164-65.

<sup>27</sup> William Christie, Alexander Christie Jr.'s second son, was sent to school in 1867 at age 12. Johnnie Davis to Catherine Birston Davis, 21 November 1867, Matilda Davis Family Papers, P2342 fo.11, AM; "1871 Scotland Census," database, *FamilySearch.org* (*FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/VBGM-7WW>: accessed 12 Aug 2014), entry for Wm J Christie, Jedburgh, Roxburghshire, Scotland, PRO T 1, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> Alexander Christie Jr. to Matilda Davis, 28 July 1867, Matilda Davis School Collection, P4724 fo.4, AM; "Christie, Alexander Jr.," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. 2002

[https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/christie\\_alexander\\_jr1834-1873.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/christie_alexander_jr1834-1873.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Alexander Christie Sr. was on furlough in 1823-1824, and likely visited Alexander Jr. in Scotland during that year. "Christie, Alexander," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. 2002,

[https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/christie\\_alexander1809-1853.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/christie_alexander1809-1853.pdf)



Matilda and Elizabeth Davis were also sent to England at a very young age – three and five, respectively - and remained in England for thirty years.<sup>30</sup> Matilda Davis’s nieces and nephews, however, had different educational experiences, although ones still marked by separation. The sons and daughters of Davis’s brother, George, and his wife Catherine Birston Davis attended the Davis school. This allowed them to stay near their parents, who resided first downriver a few miles from the school at Lower Fort Garry and then relocated to Portage La Prairie in 1868.<sup>31</sup> George’s son, Johnnie, and nephew Albert Hodgson were not sent abroad to Britain until they were around ten years old, and they remained there for less than a decade.<sup>32</sup> Albert’s younger brothers, Joseph, Charles, and Henry all attended St. John’s College at Red River, and they boarded at the school even though their parents lived in the Red River Settlement at St. Andrew’s.<sup>33</sup> The educational experiences of the second generations of Davis-Hodgson and Christie fur-trade students were similar to those of their parents in that their education was characterized by distance. For some of the children, however, the distance was short, allowing for more frequent visits with their parents, and the children who did go abroad remained in their homes or at local schools until approximately age seven to ten.

These generational differences represented by the Davis and Christie families were the result of improved access to quality education at Red River and a shift in family fortunes in the

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<sup>30</sup> Matilda and Elizabeth Davis travelled to England aboard the *Eddystone* in 1822. They were accompanied by their father, John Davis. John Davis also escorted Joseph Corrigan, the son of Davis’s colleague Jacob Corrigan. “Corrigan, Jacob,” HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. 1999,

[https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/corrigan\\_jacob1790-1844.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/corrigan_jacob1790-1844.pdf); “Davis, John,” HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. 1999, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/d/davis\\_john.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/d/davis_john.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> George Davis was promoted to the rank of senior clerk in 1868 and given charge of the post at Portage La Prairie. He retired in 1871 and returned to St. Andrew’s to farm his plot of land there. Robert Coutts, *Interpretive Manual Lower Fort Garry National Historic Park* (Parks Canada, n.d.) 151.

<sup>32</sup> Albert Hodgson was in England from 1861 to 1870. Johnnie Davis arrived in Scotland in 1867, but was back at Red River by 1870 due to illness. Albert Hodgson was the son of Catherine Davis Hodgson and John Hodgson III.

<sup>33</sup> Board Proceedings, 1867-1881, UA1 Box 16 Fo.1, St. John’s College Papers, UMSCA.

third generation of these fur-trade families. John Davis and Alexander Christie Sr. were both high-ranking officers in the fur trade, and even with Davis's early death, had the resources to send some or all of their children away to school. In the next generation, however, the sons of Davis and Christie faced the race-based barriers to advancement discussed in Chapter 1. George Davis worked as an interpreter, postmaster, and clerk at Lower Fort Garry, never reaching the officer ranks of the HBC, before leaving the Company to take up farming.<sup>34</sup> Alexander Christie Jr. was made Chief Trader in 1858 but never reached the rank of Chief Factor.<sup>35</sup> William J. Christie fared better than his brother. He was named Chief Factor in 1868 and Inspecting Chief Factor in 1872.<sup>36</sup> Neither Christie son, however, reached their father's rank of Governor. The fact that this generation of sons did not attain the same rank and pay in the fur trade as their fathers put limits on the finances that were available to fund the third generation's education.

For both generations, distance and separation were a part of the educational experience, and letter writing was the primary means by which these families bridged this separation and attempted to maintain 'long-distance intimacy.'<sup>37</sup>

## VI. CORRESPONDENCE AND INDIGENOUS FUR-TRADE STUDENTS

Fur-trade children's letters to their parents and siblings offer the opportunity to explore a point at which the history of childhood and history of emotions intersect. Family letters are one of the very few ways to access the inner emotional lives of families of nineteenth-century

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<sup>34</sup> Coutts, *Lower Fort Garry*, 148-151.

<sup>35</sup> "Christie, Alexander Jr.," HBCA Biographical Sheets, rev 2002, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/christie\\_alexander\\_jr1834-1873.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/christie_alexander_jr1834-1873.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> "Christie, William Joseph," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. 2002, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/christie\\_william\\_joseph.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/christie_william_joseph.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> Buettner, *Empire Families*, 130.

children from their own perspectives and with their own voices. The trans-imperial reach of these letters, moreover, contributes to a history of childhood and emotion that challenges national borders and frames childhood, and particularly Indigenous childhoods, in a larger global perspective.<sup>38</sup> The letters under consideration in this study span a period of over forty years. In part, their form and content were shaped and constrained by the changing conventions of nineteenth-century letter writing.<sup>39</sup> What is striking about the body of letters, however, is the consistency of their content over that forty-year period. The topics that children and youth were interested in, or at least decided to write home about, were similar regardless of where the children were writing from or what year it was. Fur-trade students' letters most commonly described their day-to-day lives at school, responded to students' understandings of their parents' concerns and anxieties, and reflected their longing for home and need for reassurance of parental love and remembrance.

Fur-trade students' letters were both a means of communication with their families and part of their school activities. Students at boarding schools were directed to write letters home to keep in touch with their families. When Roderick McKenzie Jr. first arrived at The Nest Academy in 1866, he was encouraged to write to his parents once a week.<sup>40</sup> Three years later, however, either the school had adjusted its expectations about correspondence, or the older

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<sup>38</sup> Karen Vallgård, Kristine Alexander and Stephanie Olson, "Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood," in *Childhood, Youth and Emotions in Modern History: National, Colonial and Global Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 26.

<sup>39</sup> Willemijn Ruberg argues of elite Dutch families that the form and content of correspondence reinforced appropriate elite behaviours and elite identity. Willemijn Ruberg, "Letter Writing and Elite Identity in the Netherlands, 1770-1850," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 30, no. 3-4 (September 2005): 249-258. See also, Hall and Barton, ed., *Letter Writing as Social Practice*; Deirdre M. Mahoney, "'More Than an Accomplishment': Advice on Letter-Writing for Nineteenth-Century American Women," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 66, no. 3-4 (2003): 411-423.

<sup>40</sup> Roderick McKenzie Jr. to Roderick McKenzie, 4 October 1866, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA.

children were left in charge of their own letter writing because Roderick McKenzie Jr. noted in a letter to his mother that he and his brother Kenneth now “write a letter each to you at the beginning of every month regularly.”<sup>41</sup> Writing regularly was not always a strong point for children who were far from their parents. Ten-year-old Joseph James Hargrave, a non-Indigenous fur-trade child, wrote to his mother, Letitia Hargrave, from school that, “I might have written you sooner but I never thought about it but now I shall try and have one sent every week to you.”<sup>42</sup> Matilda Davis’s nephew, Albert Hodgson, was also apparently slow to write home and, as a result, Davis complained to Forest School headmaster Frederick Guy about Albert’s lack of correspondence.<sup>43</sup> It may have been important to children and youth to hear from their parents regularly, but no doubt the daily routines of school and friends sometimes took precedence over composing letters to their parents and family.

Children were also directed to write letters as part of their school curriculum. Writing letters home was part of the process by which they learned the social conventions of letter writing, which, in the nineteenth century, were “highly stylised and regulated by codes of

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<sup>41</sup> Roderick McKenzie Jr. to Jane McKenzie McKenzie, 6 December 1869, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA. Jane McKenzie McKenzie was the daughter of HBC Chief Factor Roderick McKenzie Sr. and Angeliqne Mailhot. She married another Roderick McKenzie from Scotland. Jane was both a former student and a former teacher at the Red River Academy. Information on Jane’s husband, Roderick, can be found in the HBCA Biographical Sheets. “M’Kenzie, Roderick (b. 1824) (fl.1847-1872),” HBCA Biographical Sheets, rev.1999, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mckenzie\\_roderick1847-1872.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mckenzie_roderick1847-1872.pdf). For information on Roderick McKenzie Sr. and Angeliqne, see Elizabeth Arthur, “Angeliqne and Her Children,” in *Papers and Records, Vol. VI* (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Society Museum, 1978), 30-40.

<sup>42</sup> Joseph James Hargrave (b. 1841) was the eldest son of HBC Chief Factor James Hargrave and his Scottish wife Letitia. Joseph attended school at Madras College in St. Andrew’s, Scotland. James Joseph Hargrave to Letitia Hargrave, February 1852, transcript, MSS 15 Box 2 Folder 4, Margaret Arnett Macleod Papers, UMASC.

<sup>43</sup> Frederick Guy to Matilda Davis, 6 April 1863, P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

Norway House,  
Aug. 29/66.

My dear Papa,  
I received  
your kind letter  
yesterday by Thomas  
Lyons who caught  
us up at the end  
of the Lake, he  
had a cup of tea  
with us and went  
on the whole night.  
We were seventeen days  
in the Lake but every  
day we had head  
wind.

I remain

My dear Papa  
Your affectionate son  
J. J. Davis

Figure 6.1 - Letter from Johnnie Davis showing corrections, 1866, Matilda Davis Family Papers, Archives of Manitoba.

courtesy, forms of address, wit, and repartee.”<sup>44</sup> For children who were old enough to write on their own, letters were also an exercise to practise their handwriting and composition.<sup>45</sup>

Letters by younger children in particular show evidence of corrections and spelling errors as they negotiated the learning process. Johnnie Davis’s letters home, for example, contain corrected spelling and grammatical errors. Other errors in letters came about in different ways. In a letter to her mother, Catherine, Alice Davis apologised for a scribble on her letter, commenting “excuse that little scratch it was George made me do it,” indicating that her younger brother, George, had perhaps bumped her arm or writing surface.<sup>46</sup> The effort and concentration that children put into their letters to their parents are reflected in the meticulous and carefully crafted handwriting, as well as these corrections. Although other scholars have outlined how the nineteenth-century parents often responded to children’s correspondence with advice on how to improve their letter writing skills, this was generally not the case with the letters written to Indigenous fur-trade children.<sup>47</sup> Fur-trade parents were more interested in their children’s health, education, and conduct than the particulars of their children’s letter writing skills.

The exception to this pattern was former HBC officer and colonial governor James Douglas who devoted a great deal of time to critiquing the letters that his teenage son, James

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<sup>44</sup> Paul White, “Lives and Letters: Correspondence and Public Character in the Nineteenth Century,” in *New Perspectives in British Cultural History*, ed. R. Crone, David Gange and Katy Jones (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 193.

<sup>45</sup> Bruce, “Each word shows how you love me,” 247-264; Willemijn Ruberg, “Children’s Correspondence as a Pedagogical Tool in the Netherlands, 1770-1850,” *Paedagogica Historica* 41, no.3 (June 2005): 295-312; Lucille M. Schultz, “Letter-Writing Instruction in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Schools in the United States,” in *Letter Writing as Social Practice*, 109-131.

<sup>46</sup> Alice Davis to Catherine Davis, 21 September [1868], P2342 fo.4, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>47</sup> Bruce, “Each word shows how you love me,” 256.

William, and his daughter, Martha, wrote from school in Britain.<sup>48</sup> Douglas commented on James' 1867 letters from Paris that they were 'meagre' in content, but that his previous letter had shown improvement in "manner and expression."<sup>49</sup> Later that year, Douglas acknowledged that the style of James' letters had improved, but that his writing was "coarse and slovenly."<sup>50</sup> Douglas was equally critical of the efforts of his youngest daughter, Martha, when she spent three years at finishing school in England.<sup>51</sup> In response to one of Martha's letters, he wrote, "My dear Martha you must not relax or cease your efforts to improve, as you know I am most particular about letters, and I don't like to see mistakes in yours – You have omitted at least two words in your last, and misspelt Sciatica. Pray don't be remiss in the future."<sup>52</sup> On another occasion he criticized the content, noting that her letter was "very brief and not so chatty as I expected."<sup>53</sup> Douglas, in fact, could not refrain from critiquing even his adult children's writing. In a letter to his married daughter, Jane Douglas Dallas, he encouraged her to "write freely and fully; jotting down, without reserve, whatever comes uppermost in your mind; it is precisely that sort of biting, confidential gossip which is the real charm of letter writing."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Sir James Douglas married Amelia Connolly Douglas, the daughter of HBC Factor William Connolly and his Cree wife, Miyo Nipay/Suzanne Bellefeuille, in 1828. For more information on Sir James Douglas and the Douglas Family, see Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

<sup>49</sup> James Douglas to James Douglas Jr., 23 September 1867, transcript, B/40/2A, Correspondence Outward, 22 March 1867-11 Oct 1870, Sir James Douglas Fonds, BC Archives.

<sup>50</sup> James Douglas to James Douglas Jr., 1 November 1867, transcript, B/40/2A, Correspondence Outward, 22 March 1867-11 Oct 1870, Sir James Douglas Fonds, BC Archives,

<sup>51</sup> For more on Martha Douglas, see W. Kaye Lamb, "Letters to Martha," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* (January 1937): 33-44, [http://www.library.ubc.ca/archives/pdfs/bchf/bchq\\_1937\\_1.pdf](http://www.library.ubc.ca/archives/pdfs/bchf/bchq_1937_1.pdf); and Perry, *Colonial Relations*, Chapter 6: "Governors, Wives, Daughters and Sons," 142-175.

<sup>52</sup> James Douglas to Martha Douglas, 6 November 1871, transcript, Letters to Martha Douglas, B/40/4A, Sir James Douglas Fonds, BC Archives.

<sup>53</sup> James Douglas to Martha Douglas, 30 October 1871, transcript, B/40/4A, Letters to Martha Douglas, Sir James Douglas Fonds, BC Archives.

<sup>54</sup> James Douglas to Jane Douglas Dallas, 15 May 1867, transcript, B/40/2A, Correspondence Outward 22 March 1867-11 Oct 1870, Sir James Douglas Fonds, BC Archives.

Although most fur-trade parents were more forgiving of epistolary form and content than James Douglas, the children and youth who wrote home to their parents from school did so with an awareness of how the contents of their letters would be received and interpreted at home. The letters are generally characterized by good cheer, news of the children's health and well-being, and an account of their studies. The tone and content of these letters were no doubt influenced by the letter writing conventions that students were learning, as well as the knowledge that it was very possible that their letters would be shared by the recipient with other family members or friends.<sup>55</sup>

Perceptions of their parents' anxieties about being far from their children also informed the students' letters. From the instructions issued by parents and the context of their education in general, children understood their parents' concerns about sending their children away from home. These child-filtered understandings of adult priorities influenced what children wrote about in their letters to their parents, and the students wrote in such a way as to respond to and assuage parental anxiety.

Most of the letters in this study written by fur-trade students to their parents were written by boys who were at British boarding schools. There are some letters from the Davis sisters at the Davis school to their parents; however, the sisters' letters tend to be brief and to contain little reflection on the girls' day-to-day lives at the school. This may have been a function of the relatively close location of their parents' home to the Davis school. More frequent in-person contact rendered it unnecessary to describe their daily routines.

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<sup>55</sup> White, "Lives and Letters," 193.



Indigenous boys provided more perspectives on their day-to-day lives in their letters. Their studies are the most-discussed topic. In almost every letter written to their parents or guardians, the children outlined what courses they were taking and how they were doing in their classes. Their discussions of their schoolwork, however, reflect little emotional investment in their performance at school. They were equally as likely to divulge that they were first in the class as if they were last. Alice Davis wrote to her father from the Davis school that she hoped to win a music prize, but children's discussions of their schoolwork otherwise tends to be brief.<sup>56</sup> Their schoolwork, however, was a frequent topic in letters both because it was the children's daily lived experience, and because they were aware of their parents' perspectives on the value of education. The letters do not offer insight into what fur-trade students themselves thought about the value of their education or their educational experiences.

Students also outlined some of their day-to-day pursuits in their letters. School-supervised walks were common at both the Nest Academy and at the Gair Academy in Inverness.<sup>57</sup> Roderick McKenzie Jr. was particularly keen on the birds' nests that he sometimes found on these walks.<sup>58</sup> The students discussed their favourite teachers, the cricket matches they watched, and their holiday plans. Roderick was pleased to tell his father that he received pocket money on Saturdays.<sup>59</sup> In this way, students' letters to their parents provided some sense of the lives that fur-trade children were living at school in their parents' absence.

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<sup>56</sup> Alice Davis to Catherine Birston Davis, 6 October 1868, P2342 fo.4, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>57</sup> Duncan Mactavish to Josette McKenzie, May [1838], E.379/1 fo.8-10, Peter and Josette McKenzie Family Fonds, HBCA; Albert Hodgson to Matilda Davis, 6 April 1867, P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>58</sup> Roderick McKenzie Jr. to Roderick McKenzie, 2 May 1868, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>59</sup> Roderick McKenzie Jr. to Roderick McKenzie, 6 Oct 1866, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA.

Another sign that parental anxieties influenced the content of children's letters are the reassurances and general platitudes about their welfare that the children wrote their parents. The Mactavish brothers, no doubt in response to the long period of silence between themselves and their mother, were keen to assure Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie of their well-being. Donald addressed his health in his letter, explaining that he was ill when he first arrived in Inverness but was now quite healthy. He also wrote of his school that, "we are there as happy as if we were all lords."<sup>60</sup> Duncan extended similar sentiments to his mother, telling her "do not be grieved about me as I am as kindly treated as though I were with yourself."<sup>61</sup>

The children's own anxieties about their parents' welfare are also reflected in their letters. The absence or infrequency of letters could cause concern that a parent was unwell, that their parents had forgotten them, or that the bonds of family affection were weakening due to the separation. Siblings did not often discuss their parents in their letters to each other, and thereby infrequent letters from mothers and fathers could lead to anxiety for students who were away at school.<sup>62</sup>

Given the very real possibility that parent or child could die while students were away at school, irregular letters, and silence on the part of the parents created anxiety for students who

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<sup>60</sup> Donald Mactavish to Josette McKenzie, 14 May 1838, E.379/1 fo. 4-7, Peter and Josette McKenzie Family Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>61</sup> Duncan Mactavish to Josette McKenzie, May [1838], E.379/1 fo.8-10, Peter and Josette McKenzie Family Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>62</sup> The meaning of what constituted a 'long time' varied according to time period and location. In the 1830s and 1840s, most families in Rupert's Land only received mail from Britain via the twice-a-year boats that arrived at York Factory, although 'local' mail within the HBC territories was often carried by friends, family and colleagues along the fur-trade brigades. Families that were located farther east and nearer Upper and Lower Canada could receive mail more regularly via Halifax and New York. This meant that expectations on how often one should receive letters differed based on time and place. Duncan and Donald Mactavish would likely have only expected to receive mail from their mother once or twice a year in the 1830s, whereas Roderick and Kenneth McKenzie's letters took only about three weeks to reach their parents.

were away from their home and family. Roderick McKenzie Jr. frequently noted in his letters that a long period between letters from his parents left him wondering about their well-being. He wrote to his father, Roderick Sr., in May 1868 that, “I am sorry to say that I have not received a letter from you now for a long time I hope there is nothing the matter with you.” The next month he conveyed a similar sentiment to his mother, remarking that, “I am sorry to say that I have not received a letter from you now for a long time and I hope there is nothing the matter with you when you are not writing to me.”<sup>63</sup> This anxiety was specific to parents, and was not expressed in regard to lack of letters from siblings and other extended family members.

Although fur-trade children rarely articulated their feelings about being separated from their parents in their letters, they did ask their parents to write to them. Letters from home were tangible evidence that their parents still loved and remembered them. The materiality of the paper and the envelope were in themselves artifacts of affection, in that a loved one had invested time, effort, and thought into selecting the paper and creating the letter. Their hands had touched the same paper that the child touched, and a scent of home might even linger on the paper. The contents of the letters, which will be discussed below, reassured students in writing that they were cared for and not forgotten. The emotional impact of infrequent letters from home is reflected in students’ requests that their mothers in particular write more frequently.

The topics that Indigenous fur-trade students did not write about are as important as those that they did discuss. Epistolary scholar David Gerber argues that “looking for what is *not*

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<sup>63</sup> Roderick McKenzie Jr. to Roderick McKenzie Sr., 2 May 1868, and Roderick McKenzie Jr. to Jane McKenzie McKenzie, 6 June 1868, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA.

in letters, whether because of silence or the telling of untruths,” reveals that silence in correspondence may have allowed emigrant sons and daughters a degree of power in negotiating parent-child relationships across distance.<sup>64</sup> The distance created by the education of the fur-trade children gave them a certain amount of autonomy. Roderick and Kenneth McKenzie were free to spend their Saturday pocket money without the opinion or interference of their parents. Martha Douglas travelled alone as she saw fit, in spite of admonishments from her father.<sup>65</sup> Fur-trade students were undoubtedly silent on many topics in their letters. Beyond the distance that created a delay in communication, what their parents did not know about, they could not forbid.

The children’s letters are also generally silent on topics that might have been too painful, too confusing, or too inconvenient to discuss.<sup>66</sup> Although fur-trade children must have missed their home and family, rarely do the children express such feelings in their letters. Nor do they address how their Indigenous heritage and colonial birth might have impacted how they were treated at school or in metropolitan society in general. Albert Hodgson’s own letters home from schools in England and Scotland are somewhat unique in the extent to which they address his emotional experiences at school. Albert Hodgson was sent to school in England in 1861 at the age of ten. He first attended a school in Sussex, where he boarded with a Miss Janet Braby, and then moved to the Forest School outside of London in 1863.<sup>67</sup> Forest School

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<sup>64</sup> Gerber, “Epistolary Masquerades,” 151.

<sup>65</sup> James Douglas to Martha Douglas, 24 January 1873, B.40/4/A, Letters to Martha, Sir James Douglas Fonds, BC Archives.

<sup>66</sup> Gerber, “Epistolary Masquerades,” 155.

<sup>67</sup> Janet Braby was English, but lived at Red River for a period of time. In London, Miss Braby maintained her Red River connections after her return to England through personal relationships with Reverend William Mason and his family, Alexander Isbister, and the Hargraves.<sup>67</sup> Albert boarded with Miss Braby until the fall of 1862, at which time

headmaster F.B. Guy wrote to Matilda Davis in 1863 to report on Albert's progress. His report was not positive:

You will not be surprised to know your nephew is backward. I don't think it of serious misfortune as he has ability, and I attribute a good deal of his poor progress since arriving in England to the shy and timid manner which I hope he is learning to throw off. He is so very shy in conversation – just as if he had been frightened very much. And he does not often use his mouth but speaks with his teeth shut.<sup>68</sup>

Two years later, Guy again reported to Miss Davis that Albert had the abilities to do well in school, but that the teachers “cannot get the boy to speak up, even in the most ordinary conversation.” Although Albert seemed to demonstrate the ‘mental prowess’ that should have enabled him to persevere in his studies, Guy speculated that “there [seems] to be in his nature traces of strong early bias which do not readily yield to our conventional ideas.” Instead, Albert's “great delight is to get away rambling in the Forest, and I suppose fancy himself free from all our English constraints.”<sup>69</sup> When Albert failed to thrive at Forest School, he was moved to The Nest Academy at Jedburgh, where the sons of three other fur-trade families were already in residence.<sup>70</sup> Albert seems to have done marginally better at The Nest, but, in the opinion of his English cousins at least, failed to live up to the expectations set out for him.<sup>71</sup>

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it seems he moved to the residence at Forest School. Email to author, Brian Hardcastle, Forest School, 27 November 2013; “List of incoming and outgoing correspondence,” Notebook 41, P4725 fo.9, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM; Janet Braby to Matilda Davis, 16 May 1862, P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM; M.P. Wilkinson, “The Episcopate of the Right Reverend David Anderson, D.D., First Lord Bishop of Rupert's Land, 1849-1864,” (MA thesis, University of Manitoba, 1950), 96.

<sup>68</sup> F.B. Guy to Matilda Davis, 6 April 1863, P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>69</sup> Frederick Guy to Matilda Davis, 9 June 1865, P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>70</sup> Frederick Guy to Matilda Davis, 6 April 1863, P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>71</sup> In their letters to Matilda Davis, her English cousins regularly implied that Davis was wasting her money on Albert's education. They did not offer the same criticisms of Johnnie. Matilda Poole to Matilda Davis, 13 February 1867, 4724 fo.4, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

Albert's letters expressed deep feelings of displacement and loneliness, particularly when he was younger and writing from Forest School where he was the only fur-trade student in attendance. Nature was his refuge, and escape to nature is a theme in his letters. Although he describes the playground and cricket matches to Matilda Davis in one of his letters, his descriptions of these events and activities are from a distance. He never writes himself into the action he describes. It is never *him* on the playground, or playing a game of cricket. He is most engaged with his personal narrative when he writes about solitary pursuits like playing in the grass or climbing a tree to watch a cricket match.<sup>72</sup>

Albert's connection to nature continued when he was not at school. In the first several years that Albert was at school in Britain, he stayed with Miss Braby for his most of his school holidays. All of the other students who boarded with Janet Braby, however, went to their own English homes for the holidays, leaving Albert with no companions his own age for the duration of the summer.<sup>73</sup> He wrote to his Aunt Matilda that, consequently, he had nobody to accompany him on his walks so, "I had to go by myself. Sometimes I used to take my dinner with me and used to go to the wood near us or to the devil's dike which is a very pretty place."<sup>74</sup>

Albert framed his sense of displacement and loneliness in descriptions of nature. In 1864, when he was thirteen, he wrote to Aunt Matilda, "I wonder when I shall come over to America. I should like to know very much. I like this place because there is a forest only not so thick as the American forest. It is not so thickly wooded. I can hardly remember anything about

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<sup>72</sup> Albert Hodgson to Matilda Davis, n.d., P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>73</sup> Janet Braby to Matilda Davis, 16 May 1862, P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>74</sup> Albert Hodgson to Matilda Davis, 20 November 1864, P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

America I have been away so long but all I know I hope I am coming over soon.”<sup>75</sup> Although he prefaced this statement with the qualification that “I am enjoying myself very much,” his descriptions of his time spent alone in nature along with the poor reports of his integration into school life signal that that was perhaps not the case. For Albert, the forest and nature were both a refuge from the metropolitan society where he perhaps felt that he did not fit in, and a reminder of his connections to home.

In spite of the overall lack of specifically emotional language and discussion in the letters that Indigenous fur-trade students wrote to their parents, they reveal the complexities of the inner emotional lives of displaced students living far from their parents. They also reflect some of the concerns and anxieties that were projected onto the children and youth by their parents.

Students’ letters to their siblings had a different tenor than those they wrote to their parents, though they also relied on such correspondence to build and maintain affective family relationships during the long absences made necessary by education. C. Dallett Hemphill, Lenore Davidoff, and Elizabeth Vibert have pointed to the importance of sibling relationships in America and Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the centrality of sibling relationships to fur-trade families is reflected in the family correspondence.<sup>76</sup>

In 1868, Alice Davis wrote a letter to her mother, Catherine, from her aunt’s school where both she and her younger brother George were pupils. In the letter, Alice asked after her brother Willie, showing her concern over his recent illness. She remarked that her little sister Maggie must be “as fat as ever,” and commented that her younger brother, George, was in the

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<sup>75</sup> Albert Hodgson to Matilda Davis, 20 April 1864, P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>76</sup> Lenore Davidoff, *Thicker than Water: Siblings and Their Relations, 1780-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); C. Dallett Hemphill, *Siblings: Brothers and Sisters in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Vibert, “Writing ‘Home,’” 67-88.

same room with her.<sup>77</sup> Alice's letter signals the role that age may have played in maintaining sibling relationships when siblings resided in different locations. Alice and older brother Johnnie Davis were a year apart in age, and wrote letters to each other between Red River and Scotland. George and Alice Davis were also close in age, were at school together and in daily contact with each other. These Davis siblings were able to reinforce existing affective sibling relationships through correspondence or daily contact at the Davis school. The Davis children who were too young to write, or too young to go to school, however, could not maintain the same level of familiarity with their siblings.

Similarly, Roderick and Kenneth McKenzie attended school together in Jedburgh, and wrote letters to their sister, who was at school in Montreal.<sup>78</sup> There is no reference to them writing to their younger siblings who still lived at home, although letters to their parents were read aloud to the younger children.<sup>79</sup> Age, literacy, and frequency of in-person contact no doubt all impacted the emotional relationships that siblings had with one another. Siblings who were able to live together, like Alice and George, or like Maggie and Willie, or Roderick and Kenneth, were likely able to construct and maintain closer ties to each other than siblings who were separated for years.

Sometimes siblings went long periods of time before they even met each other. Elizabeth and Matilda Davis left for England with their father, John Davis, two years before their youngest brother, George, was born.<sup>80</sup> Elizabeth and Matilda seem to have kept up a regular correspondence with their family in Rupert's Land, and it was George who opened his home to

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<sup>77</sup> Alice Davis to Catherine Davis, 21 September [1868], P2342 fo.4, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>78</sup> Roderick McKenzie to Jane McKenzie McKenzie, 6 December 1869, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>79</sup> Jane Clarke to Jane Bell Clarke, 1 Sept [nd], P4724 fo.1, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>80</sup> "Davis, John," Research File, MSS 336 A.11-28 Box 2 Folder 33, Jennifer Brown Collection, UMASC.



Matilda when she returned to Red River in the 1854.<sup>81</sup> In the next generation of Davis children, Johnnie's mother Catherine Birston Davis gave birth to at least one child in the years that Johnnie was away at school. He notes in one of his letters that he is pleased to learn that he has a new sister.<sup>82</sup> This was a sister, Maggie, whom he did not meet until he returned to Red River a few years later.

Letters between siblings were less formal than those that children wrote to their parents, and often reveal more of the author's personality.<sup>83</sup> In a letter to his sisters at the Miss Davis School, Johnnie Davis wrote from the Nest, and enquired about his younger brother, George. "I suppose George is as wild as ever," Johnnie wrote, "though he was proud of the bird he killed."<sup>84</sup> Johnnie's letter is representative of the less formal tone that siblings could use in letters to each other, as opposed to the more formal language and topics they wrote about in letters to adults. His comment that George had killed a bird also indicates an ongoing sibling correspondence in which the older Davis siblings at Red River and in Scotland carried on a discussion about their brothers and sisters who were yet too young to write letters on their own.

Alice Davis's letters to her brother Johnnie are filled with information about herself, her aunt's school, and Red River, as well as a good deal of sibling snark. In 1870, Alice wrote to Johnnie, who was then at their parents' home at Portage La Prairie that, "You asked me to send

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<sup>81</sup> Miss Davis to George Davis, 30 May 1843 and Elizabeth and Matilda Davis to Ann Nancy Hodgson Davis, 25 May 1849, P2343 fo.2, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM; William G. Smith to Matilda Davis, 18 June 1854, Matilda Davis School Collection, P4724 fo.2, AM.

<sup>82</sup> Johnnie Davis to George Davis, 29 Nov 1867, P2342 fo.11, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>83</sup> Alice Davis to Johnnie Davis, 6 November 1870, Matilda Davis Family Papers, P2342 fo.11, AM. Emphasis in original.

<sup>84</sup> Johnnie Davis to Alice, Edith and Annie Davis, 9 October 1869, P2342 fo.11, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

a list of your sisters [sic] clothing wanted for the winter, as if I were not one of your sisters also.” She continues, “I’m glad to hear that you succeeded in shooting a rat,” and, as an afterthought, noted in a post-script that she was glad to hear from their father that Johnnie’s cough had improved. Siblings also sometimes dispensed with the courtesy generally expected in letters to their parents or older relatives. Johnnie’s 1869 letter to Alice charged his sisters with reminding Albert, who was by that time back at Red River, to “tell him to write me when you first see him, and send me what he promised.”<sup>85</sup> No please or thank you was needed for siblings.

Siblings rarely wrote about how they missed each other, or wished to see them in person. An exception is the letters of Ann Mary Christie Macfarlane to her sister Emma and her brother Duncan. After the death of their mother, Caroline Isbister Christie in 1867, teenager Ann Mary’s letters to her siblings took on a decidedly maternal tone.<sup>86</sup> She wrote regularly of missing her two youngest siblings. In January 1870, she wrote to Duncan and Emma at the Davis school that, “the day before yesterday was New Years, I wonder how and where you both spent it, oh how often I longed to have you both with me.”<sup>87</sup> Two years later, by then married to Chief

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<sup>85</sup> Johnnie Davis to Alice, Edith and Annie Davis, 9 October 1869, P2342 fo.11, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>86</sup> Caroline Isbister Christie died at St. Andrews in 1867. “Christie, Alexander,” R190-43-X-E, Metis and Original White Settlers Affidavits, Dominion Lands Branch, Department of the Interior Fonds, LAC, accessed 26 August 2017, [http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/ourl/res.php?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&url\\_tim=2017-08-26T23%3A12%3A51Z&url\\_ctx\\_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft\\_dat=1500067&rft\\_id=info%3Asid%2Fcollectionscanada.gc.ca%3Apam&lang=eng](http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/ourl/res.php?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&url_tim=2017-08-26T23%3A12%3A51Z&url_ctx_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft_dat=1500067&rft_id=info%3Asid%2Fcollectionscanada.gc.ca%3Apam&lang=eng).

<sup>87</sup> Ann Mary Christie Macfarlane to Emma Christie, 22 Aug [1872], P2342 fo.28, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM. Mary Christie married Chief Trader Roderick Macfarlane in January 1870. The daughter she discusses in this letter is Kate Caroline Macfarlane, born 26 November 1871 at Fort Chipewyan. “MacFarlane, Roderick, for his living daughter Kate Caroline MacFarlane,” R190-44-1-E, North-West Territories Metis Scrip Applications, Dominion Lands Branch, Department of the Interior Fonds, LAC, accessed 26 August 2017, [http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/ourl/res.php?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&url\\_tim=2017-08-26T23%3A14%3A12Z&url\\_ctx\\_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft\\_dat=1512199&rft\\_id=info%3Asi](http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/ourl/res.php?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&url_tim=2017-08-26T23%3A14%3A12Z&url_ctx_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft_dat=1512199&rft_id=info%3Asi)

Trader Roderick Macfarlane and a mother herself, Ann Mary wrote to Emma that, “I often and often long to have you with me my dear sister, and I hope the day may not be far distant when we may meet again.”<sup>88</sup>

It is difficult to know whether this difference in tone was due to a larger age gap between Mary and her younger siblings, the death of their mother, or Mary’s own personality, but Mary also seems to have stepped into a parental role in terms of guiding her younger siblings. After her mother’s death, Mary’s letters to Matilda Davis, Emma, and Duncan focus on her siblings’ education and well-being.<sup>89</sup> She commented on the children’s studies, writing in a letter to Emma that, “I am glad my dear sister to hear that you are progressing in your studies, and I hope you will continue to do so.”<sup>90</sup> She also encouraged Emma to write to her brothers at school in Jedburgh and to her grandfather Alexander Christie Sr. in Edinburgh.

Mary also takes responsibility for reminding her sister of their mother’s wishes and entreating Emma to do her best to live by them:

You were young my Emma when dear Mamma died but not too young to remember all the good instructions she taught you, Emma, Emma, be warned by your sister, I neglected those golden opportunities. The days of my youth, in sinfulness and folly, remember, that youth is the seed time of our life, for “according as a man soweth that shall he also reap” it was dear Mamma’s wish and earnest Prayer that each of her children should follow her to heaven, and choose that better part which never be taken from them Emma I never gladden her kind and loving heart, by showing her that I was a child of God I often made her heart to ache; oh never show unkindness to a loving friend, it may gratify your angry feelings at the time, but you will regret it, I have

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[d%2Fcollectionscanada.gc.ca%3Aapam&lang=eng](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mcfarlane_roderick-ross.pdf); “Macfarlane, Roderick Ross,” HBCA Biographical Sheets, rev. 2000, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mcfarlane\\_roderick-ross.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mcfarlane_roderick-ross.pdf)

<sup>88</sup> Ann Mary Christie Macfarlane to Emma Christie, 22 Aug [1872], P2342 fo.28, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>89</sup> Ann Mary Christie Macfarlane to Matilda Davis, 26 December 1871, P2342 fo.28 Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>90</sup> Ann Mary Christie Macfarlane to Emma Christie, 22 Aug [1872], P2342 fo.28, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

suffered the bitter pangs of remorse and know its stings, rather ten thousandfold would I endure bodily anguish often and often have.<sup>91</sup>

Mary Christie Macfarlane's letters to her siblings illuminate the relationships between herself, Duncan and Emma, and also offer insight into her own grief about her mother's death.

Letters also allowed Indigenous fur-trade students to communicate with their extended family including cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents in the HBC territories, the Canadian colonies, and Britain. The Christie grandchildren, including Mary and Emma, wrote regularly to their grandfather, former HBC governor Alexander Christie Sr., in Edinburgh.<sup>92</sup> Roderick and Kenneth McKenzie kept up a correspondence with their Aunt Margaret McKenzie Anderson and cousin Eliza Anderson at Ainslea Hill in Sutton, Canada West, and with their Scottish relatives in Ullapool.<sup>93</sup> Sometimes fur-trade children knew their extended family members only through letters. Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie's mother-in-law, Wilhemina McKenzie, encouraged Josette to have her McKenzie sons write to their Scottish cousins. Such correspondence, Wilhemina McKenzie argued, would bring the boys pleasure and might be "of service to them" once they were of age.<sup>94</sup> In spite of the challenges to these kin relationships created by age,

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<sup>91</sup> Ann Mary Christie to Emma and Duncan Christie, 3 January 1870, P4724 fo.4, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>92</sup> Ann Mary Christie to Emma and Duncan Christie, 3 January 1870, Matilda Davis School Collection, P4724 fo.4, AM.

<sup>93</sup> Jane McKenzie McKenzie and Margaret McKenzie Anderson were both daughters of Roderick McKenzie Sr. and Angeliqne Mahilhot. Margaret McKenzie Anderson was married to HBC Chief Factor James Anderson. For discussions of Roderick McKenzie Jr.'s correspondence with his extended family at Ainslea Hill, see Roderick McKenzie Jr. to Jane McKenzie McKenzie, 6 Nov 1869, 6 Dec 1869, and 9 Oct 1869, and Roderick McKenzie Jr. to Roderick McKenzie, 5 Feb 1869, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, AM.

<sup>94</sup> Wilhemina McKenzie to Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie, 17 January 1854, E.379/1 fo.23, Peter and Josette McKenzie Family Fonds, HBCA. Josette McKenzie's sons by Peter McKenzie were Peter (b.1838) and George (b.1840). "Peter McKenzie," HBCA Biographical Sheet, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mckenzie\\_peter1825-1852.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mckenzie_peter1825-1852.pdf)

distance, and literacy, Indigenous fur-trade students used correspondence to enact and maintain kin relationships with their parents, siblings, and extended family members.

#### **IV. PARENTING FROM AFAR: FUR-TRADE PARENTS, CORRESPONDENCE, AND SCHOOLING**

Fur-trade parents wrote regularly to the family members, teachers, and guardians who were in charge of their children at school. These letters were often characterized by administrative concerns, like payment of tuition. Parents also expressed anxiety about their children's well-being and health, and frequently requested more regular communication from their children. Letters written by parents to their fur-trade children at school had a different tone than those written by the children. Parents' letters were characterized primarily by advice and guidance on their children's studies and their conduct, news of the children's siblings and parents, and expressions of love for their children.

There are few letters in the archival record, however, that were written by the parents of Indigenous students to their children at school.<sup>95</sup> This may be because children at school were less diligent about saving the letters that they received from their parents, and those letters were therefore less likely to be archived.<sup>96</sup> Parents generally did write to their children, however, as we know from the frequent references in the children's letters to receiving letters from their mother or father. Most of the surviving letters written from parents to Indigenous

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<sup>95</sup> There are more letters from adult parents to adult Indigenous children. For example, see the letters from Nicol Finlayson to his son John Finlayson, 1859-1871, E137/1 fo. 1-13, John Finlayson Fonds, HBCA; Letters from George Gladman Jr. to his son Henry Gladman, F 432, Gladman Family Fonds, Archives of Ontario; Letters from James Douglas to his various adult children, PR-1428, Sir James Douglas Fonds, BC Archives; Letters from Charles McKenzie to son Hector McKenzie, MG 19-A44 vol.1, Charles and Hector Aneas McKenzie Fonds, LAC.

<sup>96</sup> Martha Douglas is an exception. Her letters from her father, James Douglas, were archived in part because Martha saved the letters and brought them home from London with her when she returned to British Columbia.

fur-trade children are also from the later part of the time period under study. It is unclear whether or not this is indicative of a change in correspondence patterns, or, more likely, in the better durability of writing materials and value placed on family records from the 1850s and onwards.

The letters that the parents wrote to their children at school are characterized primarily by anxiety. Anxiety about their children's health, their conduct, and their education informs most the content of the letters that passed from parents to children. Parents, however, were also concerned that their children know that they were thought of and missed at home. Moreover, letters were a means by which fur-trade parents continued to parent their children as best they could from afar. Corresponding with fur-trade children, however, brought with it many challenges; there were limits on the affective and parental connections that could be sustained with children and youth through letter writing.

Although fur-trade students had to rely primarily on letters from their parents and siblings to hear news of their family, parents were able to draw on a wider base of correspondents to monitor their children who were at school. They generally received information about their children from a variety of friends, family, and educators. HBC Chief Factor Rodrick McKenzie Sr. and his wife, Jane McKenzie McKenzie, for example, received letters from their sons Roderick and Kenneth; from George Fyfe, the headmaster at The Nest Academy; and from Marion Millar, the "Keeper" of the Academy in charge of the boys' domestic affairs. In 1867, Fyfe wrote to the McKenzies of Roderick Jr. and Kenneth that, "both are very good boys and give not the least trouble to me or any of the Tutors of any

misconduct.”<sup>97</sup> Matilda Davis received news of her nephews from teachers at their schools, from her English cousins who hosted the children during holidays, and from the parents of the other fur-trade students at the Nest Academy.<sup>98</sup>

Siblings who were at school together also reported on each other in their letters home to their parents. Duncan and Donald Mactavish both discussed the other in their letters to their mother. In fact, the responsibility of informing Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie of her son Duncan’s move to South Australia seems to have been left to his brother Donald. Donald wrote to Josette in 1841, explaining that Duncan had left for the colony to “pursue the business of sheep and cattle dealer.”<sup>99</sup> Roderick McKenzie Jr. informed his parents that his brother Kenneth was “well and strong,” and on another occasion that Kenneth had been unable to attend school for a day or so due to a boil on his back.<sup>100</sup> At Red River, sisters Annie, Edith and Alice Davis, all students at their Aunt Matilda’s school, reported on the progress and conduct of their younger brother, George.<sup>101</sup> Alice wrote to her mother that, “George is getting a very good boy I think,” and Edith commented in a letter to her father that, “George is a very good boy and he obeys Aunt.”<sup>102</sup> On occasion, siblings could offer insight into silences on the part of their siblings. Edith Davis, for example, noted in a letter to her mother that sister Annie was not going to send a letter because her eyes had been so bad that she was unable to read or write.<sup>103</sup> Parents, then,

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<sup>97</sup> George Fyfe to Roderick McKenzie, 1 December 1867, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>98</sup> Henry Rosser to Matilda Davis, 22 November 1864, P2343 fo.2, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>99</sup> Donald Mactavish to Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie, 22 July 1841, E.379/1 fo.11-15, Peter & Josette McKenzie Family Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>100</sup> Roderick McKenzie Jr. to Jane McKenzie McKenzie, 8 Feb 1870 and Roderick McKenzie Jr. to Roderick McKenzie, nd [1867], H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>101</sup> Annie Davis to Catherine Davis, 1 December 1870, P2342 fo.5, Matilda Davis Family Fonds, AM.

<sup>102</sup> Alice Davis to Catherine Davis, 21 September [1868], P2342 fo.4, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM; Edith Davis to George Davis, 1 June 1870, P2342 fo.7, Matilda Davis Family Fonds, AM.

<sup>103</sup> Edith Davis to Catherine Davis, 1 June 1870, P2342 fo.7, Matilda Davis Family Fonds, AM.

generally received information about their children who were away at school from a variety of correspondents.

Communicating with children posed particular challenges. When children were sent away to school at a very young age, communication between parent and child could only take place with the assistance from and through the filter of other adults. Parents had to wait for their child to learn to read and write before they could correspond directly and hear from the child in his or her own words. Until that point, parents had to rely on reports from teachers, family, and friends who had contact with their young children. Young children who could not yet read or write could only access information about their parents and siblings at home from adults or older siblings or cousins. Sometimes, parents wrote letters to young children that were written for the express purpose of being read aloud to their sons and daughters.

Alexander Christie Jr., for example, wrote to his daughter, Emma, at the Davis school in 1868, noting that she should “please ask Miss Davis to read this letter to you.”<sup>104</sup>

Similarly, when Isabella Hardisty, age four, was sent to live with her grandmother, Margaret Sutherland Hardisty at Red River before attending the Davis school, her father wrote her a letter that was meant to be read to her.<sup>105</sup> Because she was unable to read, her father

William Hardisty composed a letter written entirely in the third person and in simple language

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<sup>104</sup> Alexander Christie Jr. to Emma Christie, 29 June 1868, P2342 fo.16, Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>105</sup> Isabella Hardisty was the daughter of William L. Hardisty (son of Chief Trader Richard Hardisty and Margaret Sutherland) and Mary Ann Allen (daughter of Robert Allen and Charlotte Scarborough, born Fort Vancouver c.1840). Given that this letter is in the Matilda Davis Collection, presumably Isabella was sent to her grandmother Margaret in Red River either to attend the Davis school, or to reside with her until she was old enough to start school. Margaret Sutherland Hardisty’s husband, Richard Hardisty died at Lachine, PQ in 1861 and Margaret Hardisty died there as well in 1876. However, Indigenous fur trade widows often returned to fur trade country for a time after their husband’s death and it is possible that this is the reason that Isabella was living with her grandmother in 1865. “Hardisty, Richard,” HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev.2008, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/h/hardisty\\_richard.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/h/hardisty_richard.pdf).



addressing the basic concepts that a very young child would be able to grasp. Hardisty's letter focused on news of Isabella's parents and siblings. He assured Isabella that both her mother and her siblings, Dick and Little Ned, clamoured for news of her when he reached their home after taking Isabella to Red River and reassured Isabella that she was always in their thoughts. Hardisty closes the letter by noting that "By [sic] & Bye when Bell is able to read we will write more. Now we can only say, that we are always thinking and speaking about her and that we shall be very glad to see her again.... Dear Bell tho' you are far away we will never forget you."<sup>106</sup>

For four-year-old Isabella, who had been sent from her family home at a very young age, this letter offered a connection to her father, mother, and siblings. The content of the letter served as an affective link between Isabella and her family, but one that was filtered first through her father's perception of what a four-year-old could understand, and secondly through the limits on privacy afforded by the necessity of an oral reading of the letter. While four-year-old Isabella undoubtedly welcomed the letter from her father, its content and sentiment was constrained by a variety of circumstances. Until Isabella was old enough to write on her own, she and her family could only know each other through the filter of other adults.

Lack of literacy could also pose a challenge for some parents. Although the fathers of the children in this study were exclusively literate, some of the mothers were illiterate or only had limited literacy skills. HBC officer William Hardisty noted of his Indigenous wife, Mary Ann Allen Hardisty, that she was "uneducated," although Matilda Davis wrote letters addressed to

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<sup>106</sup> W.L. Hardisty to Isabella Hardisty, 12 November 1865, P4724 fo.4, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

Mrs. Hardisty.<sup>107</sup> Nancy Davis, Matilda Davis's sister and the housekeeper at the Davis School, was also likely illiterate as there are no letters to her, references to anyone writing to her, or letters written by her in the Davis family archive. The Davis family spent Nancy's youth at remote fur-trade posts where her access to education may have been limited.<sup>108</sup> She was, however, a central figure at the Davis School, and both students and family members wished her well when they wrote to Matilda. Other Indigenous women were literate or semi-literate, but lacked confidence in their writing abilities. Catherine Birston Davis, for example, Matilda Davis's sister-in-law and Johnnie Davis's mother, was literate but was not confident in her writing abilities and balked at writing letters to her son in Scotland.<sup>109</sup>

Some literacy-challenged mothers were able to work around their inability to write directly to their children. Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie signed her 1834 marriage contract with her mark, indicating that she was perhaps illiterate or not comfortable with

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<sup>107</sup> For comments on his wife's education, see W.L. Hardisty to Matilda Davis, 18 April 1869, P2342 fo. 22, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM. For reference to letter from Matilda Davis to Mary Ann Allen Hardisty, see William Hardisty to Matilda Davis, 10 July 1870, P2342 fo.22, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM. Hardisty notes in his letter that he is writing in reply to the letter addressed to Mrs. Hardisty.

<sup>108</sup> The Davis family was posted at various fur trade posts until the death of John Davis in 1824. At that point, Nancy Hodgson Davis likely relocated her young family to Albany, where her brother John Hodgson Jr. worked for the HBC as a cooper. At Albany she formed a relationship with Nicol Finlayson around 1828 or 1829, likely in between the birth of his last son by his first wife, and before his 1829 marriage to Elizabeth Kennedy, the Indigenous daughter of Chief Factor Alexander Kennedy and his wife Aggathas. Joseph Finlayson was born at Fort Albany in 1830. He was baptized at Red River in 1835. Finlayson reported in his scrip affidavit that he lived "6 years at James Bay [Albany], 12 years at Winnipeg," indicating that Nancy Hodgson Davis had likely relocated her family to Red River by 1835-36. Given that George Davis and Joseph Finlayson were both educated, it is likely that at least some of the Davis and Finlayson children of Nancy Hodgson Davis attended school at Red River. "Finlayson, Nicol," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev.1999, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/f/finlayson\\_nicol.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/f/finlayson_nicol.pdf); "Finlayson, Joseph - Concerning his claim as a head of family," North-West Territories Metis scrip applications, R190-44-1-E, Dominion Lands Branch, Department of the Interior Fonds, LAC, accessed 26 August 2017, [http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/ourl/res.php?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&url\\_tim=2017-08-26T23%3A16%3A04Z&url\\_ctx\\_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft\\_dat=1497689&rft\\_id=info%3Aasi%2Fcollectionscanada.gc.ca%3Apam&lang=eng](http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/ourl/res.php?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&url_tim=2017-08-26T23%3A16%3A04Z&url_ctx_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft_dat=1497689&rft_id=info%3Aasi%2Fcollectionscanada.gc.ca%3Apam&lang=eng).

<sup>109</sup> Johnnie Davis to Matilda Davis, 4 July 1868, P2343 fo.11, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

writing.<sup>110</sup> Instead of writing her own letters, she had letters written ‘on her behalf,’ indicating that she likely dictated letters to someone in her household. For other Indigenous women, however, their lack of literacy served as a barrier and a challenge to communication between themselves and their children who were away at school.

In the letters that have survived in the archive from fur-trade parents to their Indigenous children at school, the children’s studies are one of the primary themes addressed in the parents’ letters. In response to Matilda Davis’s report on her daughter’s progress at school, Jane Bell Clarke, the Indigenous wife of HBC Chief Trader Laurence Clarke, admonished her daughter to pay closer attention to her studies.<sup>111</sup> She wrote to Belle Clarke that, “I am glad my dear child to hear that you are improving,” but she adds that, “you are inclined to be idle at your lessons, now my child although you are only 12 years old and girls are fond of play and amusement, there is a time for everything.”<sup>112</sup>

James Douglas similarly responded to reports of his son’s academic achievements by writing to James William that he was glad to hear good reports of the boy’s character. He counselled, however, that, “you must however apply, with more vigour to your studies than you have hitherto done; the labour is, I admit, irksome and severe, but you must not mind that;

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<sup>110</sup> Marriage contract for Peter McKenzie and Josette Monier, E.379/1 fo.1-3, Peter and Josette McKenzie Family Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>111</sup> Jane Bell Clarke was the daughter HBC Chief Trader John Bell and Ann ‘Nancy’ Dease. She married Chief Factor Laurence Clarke sometime before 1856. Jane Bell Clarke to Jane Bell Clarke Jr., 1 Sept [1868], P4724 fo.1, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM; Joan Craig, “BELL, JOHN (d. 1868),” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed May 28, 2017, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/bell\\_john\\_1868\\_9E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/bell_john_1868_9E.html).

<sup>112</sup> Jane Bell Clarke Jr. was the daughter HBC Chief Trader Laurence Clarke and Jane Bell Clarke. Daughter Jane Bell Clarke went by the name ‘Belle.’ Her brother, Laurence Clarke Jr., attended St. John’s College in the 1870s.

there is no royal road to learning...you have a great deal yet to learn.”<sup>113</sup> Given the financial and emotional family resources that were invested in children’s educations, the fur-trade students were no doubt aware of parental expectations that they take their studies seriously.

Children who did not live up to their parents’ expectations were subject to parental censure and displeasure. One of Nicol Finlayson’s younger sons, Roderick, was a source of disappointment to his father. Finlayson arranged for Roderick to join the HBC after completing his schooling in Scotland, but Roderick decided to follow his own path. Finlayson wrote to his son John, Roderick’s half-brother, that “I have been at much expense on the education of your brother in this country & I sent him to Columbia in service of the Company which he left of his own accord & is doing nothing now but working on a farm in Victoria Vancouver Island, he has vexed me so much I do not write him.”<sup>114</sup> Roderick apparently did not find success in the absence of his father’s support; by 1871, he was living in his Scottish brother-in-law’s household alongside his father.<sup>115</sup>

The second theme in the parents’ letters to their children is the students’ conduct and behaviour. In their letters to their children, fur-trade parents also exhort their children to behave in polite and well-mannered ways. For parents who had to rely on other adults to teach their children values and manners, correspondence was one of the very few outlets they had to parent their children. In his letter to a very young Isabella Hardisty, William Hardisty counsels

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<sup>113</sup> James Douglas to James Douglas Jr., 8 April 1868, transcript, B/40/2A, Correspondence Outward, 22 March 1867-11 to Oct 1870, Sir James Douglas Fonds, BC Archives.

<sup>114</sup> Nicol Finlayson to John Finlayson, 9 April 1866, E137/2 p.4-5, transcript, Nicol Finlayson Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>115</sup> Mary Finlayson married Scottish banker James Dunbar Lamb. Mary and Roderick were both the children of Nicol Finlayson and his third wife, Elizabeth Kennedy. Elizabeth Kennedy was a sister to Captain William Kennedy and Mary Kennedy Isbister. “1871 Scotland Census,” database, *Ancestry.com* (<https://www.ancestry.com>; accessed 4 July 2017), entry for James Dunbar Lamb, Parish: Nairn Burgh; ED: 5; Page: 34; Line: 15; Roll: CSSCT1871\_23.

his daughter several times throughout the letter to be a “good girl” and closes by exhorting “Dear, dear Bell we shall always be so glad to hear that you are a good girl. Never tell fibs Never be cross never do anything that is bad.”<sup>116</sup> Similarly, Jane Bell Clarke wrote to her daughter, Belle, that, “Papa and I are always anxious to hear, my dear child that you are doing justice to your Teachers, trying to repay the trouble they take with you by being industrious and obedient.”<sup>117</sup>

Parents also used correspondence to discipline their children. While Albert Hodgson was at school in Britain, his younger brother Joseph attended St. John’s College at Red River. Joseph apparently got into some trouble for the “grievous sin of swearing” which left him facing expulsion. In an undated letter, his father, John Hodgson III, wrote to him, chastising him for his behaviour and instructing him to seek forgiveness from the Bishop:

You who ought to be an example to the other boys in the College. Surely you will humble yourself before God and ask the Good Bishop to overlook this on the condition that you are not guilty of such offence again. It pains me to think of the consequences should you be expelled [from] the school what should you do? It would be such a disgrace. Pray think it over and do not break your Mother’s heart by your conduct. She has enough [to] endure from her other sons try to be a comfort to her I have not [told] the family nor do I mean to do so.<sup>118</sup>

Here Hodgson explains how Joseph’s behaviour reflected poorly on himself, his family, and compromised his future. As a result, his father clearly outlines his expectations for how Joseph should proceed with rectifying the situation.

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<sup>116</sup> William Hardisty to Isabella Hardisty, 12 Nov 1865, P4724 fo.3, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>117</sup> Jane Bell Clarke to Jane Bell Clarke Jr., 1 Sept [n.d.], P4724 fo.1, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>118</sup> Unknown author [John Hodgson III] to Joseph, n.d., P4724 fo.1, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

In part, these reminders from far-off parents were simply expressions of the concerns of most parents for their children. However, Indigenous fur-trade students' racialized status made their claims to 'respectability' more tenuous and easily challenged than those of their non-Indigenous counterparts. Their conduct and deportment were thereby essential to attaining and maintaining the markers of social class that their parents were trying to achieve for them. Undoubtedly, awareness of the ambiguity of the intersections of race and class in the British Empire informed fur-trade parents' cautionary prescriptions to their children.

Behaviour that could compromise parents' goals for their children or undermine their children's status as ladies and gentlemen also came under parental scrutiny. Although marriages were generally a family affair, when families were separated by long distances and connected only by a slow system of mail, children could and did marry without their parents' knowledge.<sup>119</sup> Unsanctioned romantic connections could therefore be perceived by parents as a genuine threat to their children's future, particularly if such an attachment would interrupt a son's education or career advancement. Sixteen-year-old James William Douglas started a correspondence with a young lady while he was away at boarding school. His father received reports of this budding romance, no doubt from family friends or his daughters who lived in Britain. In response, Douglas wrote to his son that:

I see you are carrying on a correspondence with a young Lady and fancy you are in love with her. You must be very careful in such things. You are too young for any serious attachment and too honourable to trifle with a young Lady's affection. It will be time enough for you, in 8 or 10 years hence, to think of marrying, when you have finished

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<sup>119</sup> William J. Christie married Mary Sinclair at York Factory in 1848, after having known her for only a few days and without his father's knowledge or permission. Similarly, Ann Mary Christie married her husband, Roderick Macfarlane, in 1869 without her father Alexander Christie Jr.'s knowledge or consent. Alexander Christie Jr. to Roderick Macfarlane, 7 March 1870, MG 29-A 11, vol 2 file 2, Roderick Macfarlane Fonds, LAC.

your education and made your mark on the world and have wherewith to support a wife in comfort. Remember this Counsel and be wise.<sup>120</sup>

For both James William and Joseph Hodgson, the autonomy that being away at school afforded them clashed with their fathers' expectations for their behaviour and goals for the future. The boys were subject to fatherly censure, no matter how far they were from home.

The third theme that is common to the parents' letters is the spectre of death and disease, and concern for their children's health. Death and disease were a constant threat for imperial families who were separated during their imperial pursuits. In some colonies, like India, the threat of 'foreign' illness influenced the ways that imperial children were raised, and was often part of the justification for sending white children 'home' to Britain for their education.<sup>121</sup> Historians have explored death in the context of the Victorian family, and death in relation to 'sites of memory' in the Empire.<sup>122</sup> There has been little consideration, however, of the role of death and disease in the family experience of empire, or the trans-imperial impact that death and disease had on space, place, and identity in both the colonies and the metropole.<sup>123</sup> Cemeteries, for example, grounded the work of British colonialism in a physical space in the colonies. In Britain, however, burials in Scottish and English graveyards were a means by which Indigenous fur-trade families made their own physical claims to metropolitan

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<sup>120</sup> James Douglas to James Douglas Jr., 17 May 1867, transcript, B/40/2A, Correspondence Outward 22 March 1867-11 to Oct 1870, Sir James Douglas Fonds, BC Archives.

<sup>121</sup> Buettner, *Empire Families*, 28-36.

<sup>122</sup> Elizabeth Buettner, "Cemeteries, Public Memory and Raj Nostalgia in Postcolonial Britain and India," *History and Memory* 18 no.1 (Spring/Summer 2006): 4-42; Andrew Keating, "The Empire of the Dead and the Formation of National Identity," (PhD diss., University of California Berkeley, 2011).

<sup>123</sup> Pat Jallard, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Pat Jallard, "Bereavement in the English Family 1850-1980: Exploring Change over Time," *Family Science* 4, vol.1 (2013): 4-11; Deborah Lutz, "The Dead Still Among Us: Victorian Secular Relics, Hair Jewelry and Death Culture," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 39, no.1 (2011): 127-142.

spaces and served as evidence of how the Empire impacted the metropole.<sup>124</sup> Moreover, while Canadian scholars have begun to explore the tragedies of deaths of Indigenous students in Canadian residential schools from the nineteenth century onwards, the literature on imperial children is generally silent on the occurrence and role of death and disease for either racialized or white imperial children who were separated from their families.<sup>125</sup>

Somewhat understandably, the parents of Indigenous fur-trade students expressed great anxiety over their children's health, and this is reflected in their letters to their children, to the adults in charge of their children, and in the children's own replies to their parents' letters. Given the scarcity of letters written from fur-trade parents to their children, we can ascertain some of their anxieties and concerns through other correspondence about Indigenous fur-trade students.

In 1828, Montrealer Philip Byrne wrote to his brother-in-law, former North-West Company (NWC) man and HBC officer Charles McKenzie. Byrne, who was married to the sister of McKenzie's wife, Mary McKay McKenzie, acted as the guardian for his wife's nieces in Quebec.<sup>126</sup> He enclosed letters from both girls in the packet, expecting that the letters would

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<sup>124</sup> For more on the Empire's impact on Britain, see Andrew S. Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back: The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-nineteenth Century* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005).

<sup>125</sup> John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press 1999); Ian Mosby, "Administering Colonial Science: Nutrition Research and Human Biomedical Experimentation in Aboriginal Communities and Residential Schools, 1942-1952," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 46, no.91 (May 2013): 145-172; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, vol.4, "Canada's Residential Schools: Missing Children and Unmarked Burials" (Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015) [http://www.myrobust.com/websites/trcinstitution/File/Reports/Volume\\_4\\_Missing\\_Children\\_English\\_Web.pdf](http://www.myrobust.com/websites/trcinstitution/File/Reports/Volume_4_Missing_Children_English_Web.pdf).

<sup>126</sup> Charles McKenzie and Mary McKay McKenzie travelled to Montreal in 1823. While they were in Lower Canada, they were formally married and placed their two daughters at school under the care of their Mary McKay McKenzie's brother-in-law, Captain Philip Byrne. Byrne's wife was a sister of Mary McKay McKenzie. The McKenzies returned to the HBC territories, but Julia died and Margaret married Angus McDonald of Bytown. Their parents never saw either of the girls again. Elizabeth Arthur, "Charles McKenzie: l'homme seul," *Ontario History* 70,



convince his sister-in-law that both of her daughters were “in the land of the living & doing well.”<sup>127</sup> He addressed the girls’ health and well-being in the letter, noting that Julia and Margaret were both progressing in their studies. He also added that Julia had developed smallpox, in spite of being inoculated by her father, and had recently started her menses. Mary McKay McKenzie’s concerns about her daughters’ health were not unfounded. Although Margaret grew up to marry and relocate to the United States, her sister Julia died in Quebec.<sup>128</sup>

Some thirty years later, HBC Chief Factor James Anderson and his wife, Margaret McKenzie Anderson, also wrote about their children’s health and well-being. Although none of James Anderson’s letters to his children have survived, his letters to his sons’ guardian offer some insight into his worries about and perspectives on his children at boarding school. In 1849, Bishop David Anderson, the new Anglican Bishop of Rupert’s Land, arrived at York Factory. He took over the failing Red River Academy after the death of headmaster John Macallum and re-named it the St. John’s Collegiate School. Anderson’s two eldest sons, Alexander and James Jr., attended the school from at least 1854 to 1857.<sup>129</sup> During this time, Anderson and his wife were stationed at Fort Simpson. As boarders whose parents lived at a

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no.1 (March 1878): 42. For more on fur trade families in Montreal, see Jennifer Brown, "Diverging Identities: The Presbyterian Metis of St. Gabriel Street, Montreal," in Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S.H. Brown, ed., *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 195-206.

<sup>127</sup> Philip Byrne to Charles McKenzie, 12 April 1828, MG19-A44, vol.1, Charles and Hector Aneas McKenzie Fonds, LAC.

<sup>128</sup> Arthur, "Charles McKenzie," 42.

<sup>129</sup> Margaret McKenzie Anderson was the daughter of Roderick McKenzie Sr. and Angeliq. She was the sister of Jane McKenzie McKenzie. James Anderson and Margaret McKenzie married in 1839. Their children are as follows: Eliza (b. 1842), Alexander, James (1845), Allan, Roderick McKenzie, William and Robert. Anderson retired in 1858 to his estate, Ainslea Hill, at Sutton, Canada West. His estate was directly adjacent to that of his parents, Robert Anderson and Eliza Charlotte Simpson. MG 19 A.29 vol.1, Files 1-5, James Anderson Papers, LAC.

remote fur-trade post, the Anderson boys were under the care of Bishop Anderson and his sister, Margaret Anderson.<sup>130</sup>

A series of letters between James Anderson and Bishop Anderson (no relation) reveal some of the concerns that James and Margaret had about their children being away from home. The boys' health was a particular source of anxiety for the Andersons. In his letters, Anderson informed the Bishop that his eldest son, Alexander, had a recurring medical condition, and he expressed his concern that Alexander would try to hide this condition at school. He asked the Bishop to please report his concerns to the schoolmaster or medical attendant.<sup>131</sup> In this case, any letters that Anderson wrote directly to his son making inquiries or providing instructions about Alexander's health were insufficient to address the parents' anxieties about their child's health. Letters written to children could not assuage concern and anxiety in the same way as instructions issued directly to a guardian or caregiver.

Death and illness were fears that became realities for some fur-trade families. Isabella Hardisty fell ill with consumption while attending the Davis school. Unable to contact Isabella's parents quickly and directly, Davis consulted her friend and neighbour, Eliza Cripps Kennedy, on how to proceed with Isabella's care.<sup>132</sup> Although Isabella was attended by the local doctor, her recovery was either slow or stalled and her family removed her from the Davis school. She was

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<sup>130</sup> Bishop David Anderson was a widower. When he came to Rupert's Land in 1849, he brought with him his three young sons and his sister. Anderson was the head of the school, but he travelled frequently and in 1855 turned the running of the school over to Thomas Cochrane, the son of CMS missionary William Cockran. Frits Pannekoek, "ANDERSON, DAVID," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed May 24, 2017, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/anderson\\_david\\_11E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/anderson_david_11E.html).

<sup>131</sup> James Anderson to Bishop David Anderson, 29 November 1854, MG19, A29, Vol 1, file 3, pp.192-194, James Anderson Fonds, LAC.

<sup>132</sup> Eliza Cripps Kennedy to Matilda Davis, n.d., P4724 fo.1, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

instead sent to school in Hamilton in the hopes that a different climate would improve her health.<sup>133</sup>

Like Alexander Anderson, Johnnie Davis arrived at boarding school with a pre-existing health condition, and like Isabella Hardisty, tuberculosis was most likely the source of his health problems. The school was thereby instructed by Matilda and George Davis to send Johnnie home to Red River immediately if he “appeared at all delicate.”<sup>134</sup> Although none of the letters that George or Matilda Davis wrote to The Nest Academy have been preserved, the boys’ letters home reveal some of these parental concerns. Both Johnnie and Albert respond to queries about Johnnie’s health in their letters home. Johnnie wrote, “I never had a headache at leisure [or] play, I do not know what makes you think I am ill, I am as healthy as anyone here.”<sup>135</sup> Albert was also questioned about Johnnie’s health, and he informed his aunt that, “I was very much amused when I heard that you thought John was ill, for he is about the healthiest boy in the whole school, he is one of our best cricketers and is always on the gymnastics.”<sup>136</sup> Although the boys seem unconcerned with Johnnie’s health, his family’s anxiety was apparently well founded. Johnnie had issues with his health at The Nest, including a recurrent cough, and eventually he was sent home from The Nest on doctor’s orders.<sup>137</sup> By 1870, fifteen-year-old Johnnie was back in Portage la Prairie living with his parents, and he

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<sup>133</sup> Thomas Hardisty to Matilda Davis, 18 April 1869, P2342 fo.22, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>134</sup> Marion Millar to Matilda Davis, 5 April [n.d.], P4724 fo.1, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>135</sup> Johnnie Davis to Matilda Davis, 4 July 1868, P2342 fo.11, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>136</sup> Albert Hodgson to Matilda Davis, 20 June 1868, P4724 fo.4, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>137</sup> Marion Millar to Matilda Davis, 5 April [n.d.], P4724 fo.1, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

thereafter may have taken a clerkship with the HBC.<sup>138</sup> He died two years later.<sup>139</sup> The Davis family was fortunate in that they were able to reunite prior to Johnnie's passing.

Given that some fur-trade children never returned to their homes from attending schools abroad, parents' concerns about their children's health were justified. This real and imminent threat of death and disease contextualizes the affective sentiments that parents included in the letters to their children. Parents were anxious to hear regularly from their children in order to be assured of their well-being. Two years after non-Indigenous fur-trade student James Joseph Hargrave left his home at York Factory to attend Madras College in St. Andrew's, Scotland, Letitia Mactavish Hargrave confessed in a letter written from York Factory that, "I think I would feel easier about [Joseph] if I just heard once that he was well."<sup>140</sup>

## V. CONCLUSION

The correspondence of Indigenous fur-trade families, and particularly the students, examined in this chapter is part of a larger record of trans-imperial family correspondence that resulted from imperial families being separated by their duties to and lives lived as part of the

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<sup>138</sup> Letters written from Johnnie to his father from 'Fort Garry' indicate that he was drawing a wage, but that a doctor had examined him and deemed him too ill for a clerkship. Johnnie Davis to George Davis, 14 February [n.d.] and 17 January 1871, Currie Family Private Collection; "1870 Manitoba Census," database, *Library and Archives Canada* (accessed 20 August 2014), entry for George Davis, no.311-313, MG 9 E3, vol.3, <http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/1870/jpg/e010985657.jpg>.

<sup>139</sup> Agnes Schultz to Matilda Davis, 4 July 1872, P4724 fo.5, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>140</sup> Letitia Mactavish Hargrave was the Scottish wife of HBC Chief Factor James Hargrave. All four of her children (James Joseph, Mary Ann, Letitia and Duncan) were born at York Factory. Although Joseph James was a non-Indigenous fur trade child, his parents' wish and concerns are in line with those expressed by the parents of Indigenous fur trade children. Letitia Mactavish Hargrave to her mother, Letitia Mactavish, 1 April 1848, typescript, MSS 15 Box 2 Fo.4, Margaret Arnett Macleod Fonds, UMASC.

British Empire. The fur-trade families' letters served as the primary means by which students, parents, siblings, and extended kin could maintain affective relationships during the long separations that were often required for Indigenous fur-trade students' schooling. The letters examined here are also important in light of the scarcity of children's correspondence in the nineteenth-century archival record in general, and even more so in terms of that of indigenous imperial children. These letters provide insight into the emotional experiences of Indigenous fur-trade students and their families. Indigenous fur-trade children's educational experiences challenged Indigenous family unity by demanding long, and sometimes permanent, separations between students and their parents and siblings. They also facilitated a family correspondence that created and maintained affective fur-trade family ties that spanned the HBC territories and parts of the larger British Empire.

## **CHAPTER 7 - MOBILITY, EDUCATION AND TRANS-IMPERIAL FUR-TRADE KIN NETWORKS**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

In the mid-1860s, Roderick McKenzie Jr. and his brother Kenneth left their home at Cumberland House on the Saskatchewan River to travel to The Nest Academy in Scotland. The boys' father, Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) Chief Trader Roderick McKenzie, their mother, and two younger siblings accompanied Roderick Jr. and Kenneth as far as Sutton in Canada West. The family stayed at Ainslea Hill, the home of retired Chief Factor James Anderson and his wife, Margaret McKenzie Anderson. Roderick and Kenneth's mother, Jane McKenzie McKenzie, and the two younger children stayed at Ainslea Hill with Jane's sister, Margaret; the two older boys travelled to Scotland with their father.<sup>1</sup> On reaching Scotland, the McKenzies stayed in Ullapool, where Kenneth and Roderick were put in the care of their Scottish aunt, Mrs. Maclean. Mrs. Maclean escorted the boys to The Nest Academy several weeks later for the beginning of the school year.<sup>2</sup> She wrote regularly to the boys when they were at school, and the brothers went to Ullapool to visit their Scottish relatives during their holidays.<sup>3</sup> Roderick became quite close with at least one of his Scottish cousins, and on his deathbed at The Nest in 1870 bequeathed her a book.<sup>4</sup>

Roderick McKenzie's trans-imperial travels illustrate how fur-trade children's mobility as students both engaged and generated trans-imperial fur-trade kin networks that linked Britain

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<sup>1</sup> James Anderson to Roderick Macfarlane, 1 November 1865, MG29-A11, vol.1, Roderick Macfarlane Fonds, Library and Archives Canada (LAC).

<sup>2</sup> Roderick McKenzie Jr. to Roderick McKenzie, 8 October 1866, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA).

<sup>3</sup> Roderick McKenzie Jr. to Jane McKenzie McKenzie, 3 October 1868, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, HBCA.

<sup>4</sup> George Fyfe to Roderick McKenzie, 1 May [1870], H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA.

and Canada. Historian Tony Ballantyne has argued that, “mobility was the life-blood of empires.”<sup>5</sup> For a long time, however, historians and other scholars wrote about the British Empire mainly as if the colonies and the indigenous peoples who inhabited them were distant and separate from the imperial metropole, or with a national or colonial focus that failed to account for the larger imperial context.<sup>6</sup> The “circumscribed geographic imaginaries and fixed vantage points” that underwrote these histories, according to Bannatyne, “occlude or marginalise” linkages and various forms of mobility in ways that “[allow] national histories to offer their illusory stories of self-containment and cultural coherence.”<sup>7</sup> While Canadian historians have had much to say about the fur-trade, their studies have often prioritized the nation state to the detriment of situating fur-trade and the Indigenous peoples in broader transnational and imperial contexts.<sup>8</sup>

Much has been written about the connections between families and migration in the global context, but the focus of these studies tends to be on adult migrants or families as a unit. Other histories have examined the migration of white children, like the “home children” who were sent from the slums of London to the white dominions of the British Empire, or about

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<sup>5</sup> Tony Ballantyne, “Mobility, Empire and Colonisation,” *History Australia* 11, no.2 (August 2014): 7.

<sup>6</sup> John Gascogne, “The Expanding Historiography of British Imperialism,” *The Historical Journal* 49, no.2 (June 2006): 577-578.

<sup>7</sup> Ballantyne, “Mobility, Empire and Colonisation,” 8.

<sup>8</sup> For studies that incorporate an imperial perspective, see Krista Barclay, “From Rupert’s Land to Canada West: Hudson’s Bay Company Families and Representations of Indigeneity in Small-Town Ontario,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 26, no.1 (2015): 67-97; Patricia McCormack, “Lost Women: Native Wives in Orkney and Lewis,” in *Recollecting: Lives of Aboriginal Women of the Canadian Northwest and Borderlands*, ed. Sarah Carter and Patricia McCormack (Athabasca: Athabasca University Press, 2011), 61-88; Cecilia Morgan, “Write Me, Write Me’: Native and Metis Letter-Writing Across the Empire, 1800-1870,” in *Critical Perspectives on Colonialism: Writing the Empire from Below*, ed. Fiona Paisley and Kirsty Reid (New York: Routledge, 2013), 141-156; Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth Century Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). For cross-border studies of the Metis see Michel Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2015) and Émilie Pigeon, “Au Nom du Bon Dieu et du Buffalo: Metis Lived Catholicism on the Northern Plains,” (PhD diss., York University, 2017).

white imperial children who were born in locations like India and sent back to Britain for school.<sup>9</sup> Examining Indigenous fur-trade students' education, however, demonstrates that mobility and migration were common aspects of their educational experiences.<sup>10</sup> Their trans-imperial mobility is notable not because these children were special cases, but because their travels were part of an over century-long practice of Indigenous fur-trade children migrating from fur-trade country to metropolitan areas in the Canadian colonies and Britain to go to school.<sup>11</sup> These children relocated as individuals and not as part of a migrant family unit, and it might therefore be tempting to understand these children as autonomous in their separation from their parents. Mona Gleason has warned children's historians to avoid the 'trap of agency' when studying children's history, in which historians prioritize children's resistance and autonomy.<sup>12</sup> While fur-trade students did undoubtedly exercise autonomy and agency under certain circumstances, they were not fully autonomous. Rather, they were enmeshed in complex and supportive webs of trans-imperial social and kin ties that facilitated their travels, their education, and their well-being. Their migration and lived experiences as individuals are thereby situated and evaluated within the context of their place in these kin networks.

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<sup>9</sup> Ellen Boucher, *Empire's Children: Child Migration, Welfare and the Decline of the British World, 1869-1967* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Gail Corbett, *Nation Builders: Barnardo Children in Canada* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2002); Ellen Filor, "'He is *hardened* to the climate & and a little bleached by it's [sic] influence': Imperial Childhoods in Scotland and Madras," in *Children, Childhood and Youth in the British World*, ed. Simon Sleight and Shirleen Robinson (New York: Palgrave, 2016), 77-91.

<sup>10</sup> Durba Ghosh discusses some of the eighteenth-century Anglo-Indian children who attended school in Britain in *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> Jennifer Brown identifies several fur-trade children who were sent abroad to school in *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980) but does not explore the life stories of the children in any depth. Denise Fuchs has written about some 'native sons' who went abroad for school in her dissertation "Native Sons of Rupert's Land, 1760 to 1860s," (PhD diss., University of Manitoba, 2000).

<sup>12</sup> Mona Gleason, "Avoiding the agency trap: caveats for historians of children, youth and education," *History of Education* 45 no.4 (2016): 447.



This chapter is grounded in newer histories of empire that rethink the place, both figurative and literal, of indigenous peoples in the British Empire. Post-colonial studies and the new imperial history deconstruct and analyse categories of race, gender, and class in relation to colonialism, and rethink the connections between nation and empire.<sup>13</sup> In this vein, transnational history, which seeks to de-centre the nation as the analytical framework of historical inquiry, has “[focussed] on the connectiveness of sites and how people imagined their ties to multiple locations, forms of belonging beyond a simple inclusion or exclusion within a single national imaginary.”<sup>14</sup> In reconceptualising the relationships between colonies and metropole in the British Empire, some new imperial histories have also foregrounded the imperial family as central to the Empire.<sup>15</sup>

This chapter also explores the physical mobility of Indigenous fur-trade students, and considers what their mobility reveals about trans-imperial kin networks. Almost all of the students in this study were physically separated from their home and parents in order to attend school. Sometimes the distances were relatively short, and sometimes they required trans-Atlantic travel. While family correspondence had an important role in creating and maintaining affective family relationships between fur-trade students and their families at home, the personal contacts with extended kin that were part of Indigenous fur-trade children’s education

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<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of post-colonial studies and new imperial history in relation to histories of the British Empire, see Catherine Hall, “Thinking the Post-Colonial, Thinking the Empire,” in Catherine Hall, ed., *Cultures of Empire: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2000): 1-36.

<sup>14</sup> Karen Dubinsky, Adele Perry and Henry Yu, “Canadian History, Transnational History,” in Dubinsky, Perry and Yu, ed., *Within and Without the Nation: Canadian History as Transnational History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015): 9.

<sup>15</sup> For a more extensive discussion, see Esme Cleall, Laura Ishiguro, and Emily J. Manktelo, “Imperial Relations: History of the Family in the British Empire,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 14, no.1 (Spring 2013), DOI: 10.1353/cch.2013.0006.

also had a role in facilitating these kin networks. By creating and maintaining relationships with siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins both in the HBC territories and abroad, fur-trade students facilitated kin networks that connected Britain, the HBC territories, and the Canadian colonies. These kin networks linked Indigenous and English, Scottish, and Orcadian families in ways that transcended both the invisible barriers of race and class, and the physical barriers of the vast wildernesses of the Canadian west and the Atlantic Ocean.

Tracing kin networks as related to fur-trade children's education also illuminates the mobility of Indigenous women and the centrality of maternal kin networks to fur-trade families. The second part of this chapter explores what is revealed about Indigenous women and maternal kin networks through studying Indigenous fur-trade students. In the mid-nineteenth-century HBC territories, extensive and exclusively non-Indigenous kin networks were rare (and perhaps non-existent). Historians have demonstrated the many ways that Indigenous wives connected white men to maternal Indigenous kin networks, which in turn benefitted these fur traders and their wives in a variety of economic and personal ways. The Indigenous wives of the fur trade, however, have largely been depicted as tied to fur-trade country, while their white and Indigenous husbands travelled the vast lands of the HBC territories for work, and returned on furlough to the Canadian colonies and Britain. Tracing Indigenous fur-trade children's paths to school, however, reveals that Indigenous girls and women were highly mobile and many relocated permanently outside of the HBC territories. These women facilitated trans-imperial kin networks themselves, and in turn supported Indigenous fur-trade students who relocated to metropolitan areas for their education.

Finally, exploring the mobility of fur-trade students reveals the extent to which educational experiences were both influenced by and replicated maternal Indigenous kin networks. Cousin clusters of related Indigenous children were a central aspect of the educational experience for most of the Indigenous fur-trade students in this study. These cousin clusters, in turn, laid the foundations for the next generation of Indigenous families to maintain their ties to each other. Maternal family ties were the foundation of fur-trade family networks in the HBC territories, as is evidenced by the kin clusters that occurred in schools in both the HBC territories and Britain.

## II. STUDENT MOBILITY AND KIN NETWORKS: PARENTS, SIBLINGS, AND GRANDPARENTS

Sending children away to school was a decision that fur-trade parents felt was to their children's advantage. But these decisions came with uncertainty because children who left for school did not always return. Occasionally, students died while they were away at school. More often, however, students who completed their education moved on to marriage or employment without returning to their parents' home. Margaret McKenzie in Montreal, Donald and Duncan Mactavish in Inverness, and David Stewart in England never saw their parents, and particularly their Indigenous mothers, again after leaving for school.<sup>16</sup>

Fur-trade parents were aware of the children who never came home again. It might seem unremarkable that parents would make the effort to visit their children at school, but these visits are put in perspective when we consider the sometimes unpredictable life paths of

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<sup>16</sup> David Stewart briefly lived in his father's home in Quebec. His father was so hostile towards him, however, that he returned to his Vincent family in London shortly thereafter. Margaret Macleod, ed., *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1947), 155-156.

students that distanced them from their families once they were at school. Some students' parents lived in the main fur-trade settlements where their children attended schools. At Red River, 'local' children who boarded in the settlement were able to have semi-frequent contact with their parents due to the relatively short distance between their homes and the schools. Matilda Davis's sister-in-law, Flora Bell Finlayson, occasionally had Davis send her daughters home for tea.<sup>17</sup> When Alexander Christie Jr. and Caroline Isbister Christie moved to St. Andrew's for furlough in 1866, daughter Mary was a visitor to their home while continuing her studies at the Davis school for a time.<sup>18</sup> And when Albert Hodgson's younger brother Joseph attended the Davis school in the mid-1860s and later St. John's Collegiate School, his parents lived nearby on their farm at St. Andrew's.<sup>19</sup>

For students in the HBC territories whose parents lived farther afield, arranging visits could be more complicated. In response to a letter from his daughter, Hilda, who wrote to her father from the Davis school that she missed home, Charles Crowe attempted to arrange for Hilda to visit her family at Lac Seul. When a friend visiting Red River failed to bring Hilda back to

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<sup>17</sup> Flora Bell Finlayson to Matilda Davis, n.d., Matilda Davis Family Papers, P2342 fo.21, Archives of Manitoba (AM). The 'man' in question is Joseph Finlayson, Matilda Davis's half-brother. The daughters are Harriet Finlayson, born 7 June 1858 and Caroline Finlayson, born 2 June 1860 (d. August 1875). "Flora Finlayson, Concerning her Claim as Head of Family," R190-44-1-E, North-West Metis Scrip Applications, Dominion Lands Branch, Department of the Interior Fonds, LAC, accessed 26 August 2017, [http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/ourl/res.php?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&url\\_tim=2017-08-26T23%3A17%3A23Z&url\\_ctx\\_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft\\_dat=1497688&rft\\_id=info%3Asid%2Fcollectionscanada.gc.ca%3Apam&lang=eng](http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/ourl/res.php?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&url_tim=2017-08-26T23%3A17%3A23Z&url_ctx_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft_dat=1497688&rft_id=info%3Asid%2Fcollectionscanada.gc.ca%3Apam&lang=eng).

<sup>18</sup> Isaac Cowie, *Company of Adventurers: A narrative of seven years in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company during 1867-1876 on the great buffalo plains with historical and biographical notes and comments* (Toronto: William Biggs, 1913) 148.

<sup>19</sup> "1870 Manitoba Census," database, *Library and Archives Canada*, entries for John Hodgson and family, #1064-1072, MG 9 E.3 vol3, LAC, accessed 5 May 2014, <http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/1870/jpg/e010985448.jpg>; Board Proceedings, 1867-1881, UA1 Box 16 fo.2, St. John's College Papers, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (UMASC).

Lac Seul as expected, however, Crowe had to seek alternate arrangements to get Hilda home.<sup>20</sup> Some fur-trade families, and particularly fur-trade men, were able to make the trip to visit children who were at school. In 1873, William Christie and Mary Sinclair Christie, accompanied by their daughter Lydia, visited Britain in the wake of William's retirement from the HBC. While in Scotland, they visited their sons at The Nest Academy.<sup>21</sup>

Fur-trade mothers who lived in the HBC territories sometimes made an annual or biannual trip to Red River to visit their children or bring them home for the summer months. Caroline Isbister Christie planned to visit her daughter Mary at the Davis school in the summer of 1863, writing that she would bring some cakes of maple sugar with her for Mary and her nieces Annie and Lydia.<sup>22</sup> Charles Crowe wrote to his daughter Hilda that he would try to come and visit her, but that "you must not be looking out for me, for I cannot at present be sure whether I come or not." In any event, he noted, "you will see Momma next summer."<sup>23</sup>

When mothers were unable to make this journey, it was undoubtedly a source of disappointment for both the mother and her children. Sometimes, it was their duties as mothers that prevented them making the long trip to visit their children at school. Mary Sinclair Christie had to defer her annual visit in 1865, writing to Matilda Davis that "as I have a little boy to take care of, I don't like travelling so far, to come back again immediately therefore I will not be in Red River next summer. Mr. Christie is not yet certain whether he goes or not."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Charles Crowe to Matilda Davis, 20 June 1873, Matilda Davis Family Papers, P2342 fo.19, AM.

<sup>21</sup> Lydia Christie to Matilda Davis, 30 June 1873, Matilda Davis Family Papers, P2342 fo. 16, AM.

<sup>22</sup> Caroline Isbister Christie to Matilda Davis, 28 January 1863, Matilda Davis School Collection, P4724 fo.3, AM.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Crowe to Hilda Crowe, 30 Sept 1871, Matilda Davis Family Papers, P2342 fo.19, AM.

<sup>24</sup> Mary Sinclair Christie to Matilda Davis, 3 January 1865, P4724 fo.3, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

Student mobility also facilitated closer sibling relationships than might have otherwise been possible by connecting siblings through their placement at schools. The large spread in ages between siblings in many fur-trade families meant that siblings and half-siblings often did not grow up together. I use the term half-siblings here in order to clarify the complicated fur-trade family trees involved in this study. However, in doing this I acknowledge that fur-trade sibling relationships were complex due to both serial remarriage in the fur trade, and the intersections of European and Indigenous ways of configuring family relations. In addition to European systems of figuring siblings, in the Cree and Anishnaabeg traditions first cousins were entitled to refer to their father's brother's children and mother's sisters' children as *ni-chisan*, or brothers and sisters.<sup>25</sup> It is unclear from the archival record how these Cree systems of family influenced the fur-trade families under study here, but what is clear is that sometimes the 'half' mattered in fur-trade families, and sometimes it did not. Joseph Finlayson, for example, seems to have been a fully integrated member of the Davis family.<sup>26</sup>

Differences in age seem to have been more of a barrier to sibling relationships than remarriage. In some families, older siblings and younger siblings did not know each other, as elder siblings had married or left the home for employment while the youngest children were still small or not yet born. Robert Logan, who was a fur trader, merchant and Red River official, had fifteen children by two wives. His eldest daughters, Elizabeth and Anne, were born to his first wife, an Indigenous woman called Mary in 1807 and 1809. His youngest child, Alice, by his

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<sup>25</sup> Norma Hall, "Metis Children of Red River," *Provisional Government of Assiniboia: Acknowledging the Contribution of Original North American Peoples to the Creation of Manitoba*, 10 July 2012, <https://hallnjean2.wordpress.com/the-red-river-resistance/children-of-red-river/>.

<sup>26</sup> Joseph Finlayson was the son of Nicol Finlayson and Ann Nancy Davis. He was thereby a half-sibling to Matilda Davis and her siblings.

second wife, widow and English schoolteacher Sarah Ingham, was born in 1845.<sup>27</sup> Anne and Elizabeth were married to HBC men and relocated according to their husbands' careers long before Logan's second marriage in 1839.<sup>28</sup> Both age and distance separated the older and younger Logan half-siblings from each other.

The geographical mobility of fur-trade families was also a barrier to sibling relationships. Duncan and Donald Mactavish left Inverness to emigrate to Australia, and in doing so never returned to North America. This meant that they never saw their mother again, but neither did they meet their two younger half-brothers, Peter and George McKenzie.<sup>29</sup> Harriet Sinclair Cowan was similarly estranged from her younger siblings by the intersections of age and mobility. In 1854, Harriet's father James moved his family, including Harriet's stepmother Mary Campbell Sinclair, and younger half-siblings, to Oregon.<sup>30</sup> Sinclair died two years later. Although Harriet and her husband, William, lived with James and Mary Campbell Sinclair at Upper Fort Garry prior to their departure for Oregon, the family ties were not strong enough to draw Harriet's half-siblings back to Red River.<sup>31</sup> Harriet was re-acquainted with her half-sister, Jennie, who was only two years old in 1854, for the first time when Jennie Sinclair Stanton visited Winnipeg in 1922.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> "Logan, Robert," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. 2005, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/l/logan\\_robert-a.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/l/logan_robert-a.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> "Logan, Robert (1773-1866)," Warren Sinclair's Métis Genealogy, M-8736-485, Glenbow Archives, <http://www.glenbow.org/collections/search/findingAids/archhtm/extras/sinclair/m-8736-485.pdf>, accessed 29 October 2017,

<sup>29</sup> "McKenzie, Peter," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev.1999, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mckenzie\\_peter1825-1852.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mckenzie_peter1825-1852.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> Lawrence Barkwell, "Sinclair Expedition to the Spokane Country in 1854," 24 April 2013, Gabriel Dumont Institute, <http://www.metismuseum.ca/resource.php/13790>.

<sup>31</sup> Healy, *The Women of Red River*, 51.

<sup>32</sup> Healy, *The Women of Red River*, 95.

Sibling relationships that were fostered by education were therefore important to fur-trade family relationships. Going to school together, particularly when siblings were sent away to boarding school, provided siblings with the opportunities to maintain and produce affective sibling relationships. Parents often tried to place same-gender siblings at school together. Brothers Colin and Benjamin McKenzie Jr., their nephews Kenneth and Roderick McKenzie, the sons of both Alexander Christie Jr. and William J. Christie, and brothers Alexander and James Anderson Jr. all attended boarding schools together. These brothers lived together, studied together, and spent their leisure time together.

An 1884 letter from Joseph Hodgson to his uncle, George Davis, illustrates the role that these school placements could play in future connections between brothers. Joseph Hodgson, one of the younger brothers of Albert Hodgson, attended St. John's College alongside his two younger brothers, Charles and Henry (Harry). By the 1880s, Joseph had for the most part lost touch with his older brother Albert, who had spent ten years in Britain during their youth. Joseph wrote somewhat bitterly, that Albert, who was then living in Saskatchewan, "manages to send me a letter every six or seven years, when he wants to get something out of me the rascal." Joseph was in regular contact with his brother Harry, who was, according to his brother, along with 'Mrs. Harry' "awful breeders" who would soon have "more mouths than they can fill."<sup>33</sup> Amongst the Hodgson brothers, schooling may have played a role in Joseph's adult relationships with his brothers.

Sisters were also placed together for their education. Julia and Margaret McKenzie were taught by their aunt and uncle in Montreal in the 1820s, and two daughters of John Work were

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<sup>33</sup> Joseph Hodgson to George Davis, 23 July 1884, P.2342 fo.24, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.



students at McLoughlin's school at Fort Vancouver in the 1830s.<sup>34</sup> At the Red River Academy, Jane and Flora Bell were pupils, and in the 1850s Jane Inkster and her sisters attended the St. Cross school under Mrs. Mills.<sup>35</sup> In the 1850s and 1860s, the daughters of Samuel McKenzie, Annie and Lydia Christie, and Alice, Edith, and Annie Davis all lived and studied together at the Davis school. These sisters shared dormitories, meals, classrooms, holidays, and free time with each other. In the next generation, and as I will discuss later in this chapter, sisters who had studied together placed their own children at schools together. The Bell sisters, for example, placed their daughters at the Davis school in the 1860s.

It was more difficult for brothers and sisters to attend school together. The local parish and fort schools were generally not gender segregated, so brothers and sisters attended classes together. Children who were sent away to school, however, were generally sent to gender-exclusive boarding schools. The Red River Academy was one of the exceptions to this. The Academy housed both male and female students, although the boys and girls lived and were taught separately. A former student of the girls' school described the geography of the school thusly:

The [school] enclosure took in the pretty ravine formed by a creek in the neighbourhood...It consisted of two large wings, one for the boys and one for the girls,

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<sup>34</sup> Julia McKenzie to Charles McKenzie, 10 April 1828, MG 19 A44 vol.1, Hector and Aneas McKenzie Fonds, LAC; Lois Halliday McDonald, ed., *The Fur Trade Letters of Francis Ermatinger: Written to his brother Edward during his service with the Hudson's Bay Company, 1818-1853* (Glendale, CA: Arthur Clark, 1980), 209.

<sup>35</sup> Jane Inkster was the daughter of John Inkster, Sheriff of Red River, and Mary Sinclair, a daughter of William Sinclair and Nahovay. Her cousins, Maria and Harriet Sinclair (Cowan) also attended the school. Healy, *Women of Red River*, 89; "Scrip affidavit for Tait, Jane," R190-43-X-E, Metis and Original White Settler Affidavits, Dominion Lands Branch, Department of Interior Fonds, LAC, accessed 26 August 2017, [http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/ourl/res.php?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&url\\_tim=2017-08-26T23%3A18%3A56Z&url\\_ctx\\_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft\\_dat=1504236&rft\\_id=info%3Asid%2Fcollectionscanada.gc.ca%3Apam&lang=eng](http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/ourl/res.php?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&url_tim=2017-08-26T23%3A18%3A56Z&url_ctx_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft_dat=1504236&rft_id=info%3Asid%2Fcollectionscanada.gc.ca%3Apam&lang=eng).

joined together by a dining hall used by the boys. There were also two pretty gardens in which the boys and girls could disport themselves separately.<sup>36</sup>

The creek separated the Academy from the St. John's parish school, which shared the site with the Academy and the St. John's parish church.<sup>37</sup> So although the boys and girls were housed separately and taught separately, the shared campus and proximity to the parish school undoubtedly provided opportunities for boys and girls from the Red River Academy and students from the parish school to intermingle in their free time. Student reminiscences and other accounts of the school indicate that students spent a good deal of time outside as the weather permitted.<sup>38</sup> Siblings like Hector and Catherine McKenzie, or Caroline and Alexander Kennedy Isbister thereby would have been able to have contact with each other even if their meals, studies, and dormitories were gender-segregated.

After the Red River Academy became defunct in the late 1840s, Bishop David Anderson converted the Academy buildings to the boys-only St. John's Collegiate School in 1849. In 1852, after being recruited by Anderson and the Anglicans of the settlement, Ann Benton Mills opened a girls' school at St. John's. The school operated out of a building on the same site as Bishop Anderson's school, the St. John's church, and the parish school.<sup>39</sup> Brothers and sisters who were sent to the two schools were therefore essentially on the same campus. When Alexander and James Anderson Jr. attended the St. John's Collegiate School in 1850s, their

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<sup>36</sup> Marion Bryce, "Early Red River Culture," *Manitoba Historical Society Transactions* 1, no.57 (February 1901): 11, <http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/transactions/1/redriverculture.shtml>.

<sup>37</sup> Reverend Benjamin McKenzie, "Reminiscences of the Reverend Benjamin McKenzie," PRL-85-59 7593, Ecclesiastical Archives of Rupert's Land, AM. Hereafter Benjamin McKenzie Reminiscences.

<sup>38</sup> Benjamin McKenzie Reminiscences, AM; Macleod, *Letitia Hargrave Letters*, 178.

<sup>39</sup> Bryce, "Early Red River Culture," 11.

older sister Eliza was in residence at the St. Cross school.<sup>40</sup> Like siblings who had attended the Red River Academy, the proximity of the two schools, combined with the more genial atmosphere at the schools under Anderson and Mills, allowed for the Anderson children to have contact with each other.

Some brothers also attended the Davis school alongside their older sisters, in spite of the school being dedicated to “young ladies.” The parents of Matilda Davis’s female students pressured her to take in their younger sons until they were old enough to move on to another school at Red River or in Britain.<sup>41</sup> George Davis Jr., Duncan Christie, Richard Hardisty, and William Kennedy Jr. were all pupils at the Davis school alongside their older sisters.

Older siblings who otherwise would have had limited contact with their younger siblings were often put in charge of their younger siblings who were at school. Elizabeth Budd Cochrane, the married daughter of missionary Henry Budd, lived at the Red River Settlement and oversaw the well-being of her siblings James, Eliza, and Alice when they attended school there.<sup>42</sup> When Duncan Christie arrived at York Factory en route to join his brothers and cousins at The Nest Academy, his oldest brother, seventeen-year-old Alexander ‘Sandy’ Christie III, was

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<sup>40</sup> James Anderson to William McMurray, 28 November 1854, H2-136-7-3 (E.61/3), Inward Correspondence, 1854-1855, William and Harriet McMurray Fonds, HBCA. Eliza Anderson later attended the Davis school, perhaps due to the departure of Mrs. Mills in 1856.

<sup>41</sup> William Hardisty to Matilda Davis, 20 November 1869, P2342 fo.22, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM; Alexander Christie Jr. to Matilda Davis, 11 July 1869, P4724 fo.4, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>42</sup> Elizabeth Budd Cochrane was the daughter of Reverend Henry Budd and Elizabeth Work. Elizabeth married Henry Cochrane, a Cree minister and schoolmaster. Sister Eliza Budd attended the Miss Davis School, and her brother James attended school in the Red River Settlement as well. Elizabeth Budd Cochrane also attended the Matilda Davis School before her marriage. Henry Budd to Matilda Davis, 3 July 1865, P2342 fo.15, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM. Tolly Bradford, *Prophetic Identities: Indigenous Missionaries on British Colonial Frontiers, 1850-75* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012), 59; Frits Pannekoek, “COCHRANE, HENRY,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 12, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed May 29, 2017, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cochrane\\_henry\\_12E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cochrane_henry_12E.html).

on site to welcome Duncan and see him off safely on his ship.<sup>43</sup> Sandy Christie had attended the Nest Academy in Jedburgh, and returned to Rupert's Land in 1867 to serve as an apprentice clerk at York Factory.<sup>44</sup> Duncan likely had no personal memory of his brother, since he would have been a toddler when Sandy left for Scotland. However, given that Duncan was not accompanied by any family members on his journey, being welcomed and hosted by his brother at York Factory must have been a welcome respite for Duncan. Moreover, his older brother, who had already lived in Britain and attended The Nest Academy, could offer advice and information on Duncan's destination.<sup>45</sup>

The Douglas sisters in Britain also provided support and assistance to their younger brother and sister when James William and Martha attended schools in Scotland and England. Three daughters of former HBC officer and colonial governor James Douglas all relocated to Britain or spent extended periods there when the two youngest children, James William and Martha, were in Britain in the 1860s and early 1870s. James William was sent to England for school in 1862 at the age of eleven, and attended three different schools during his time in Britain. After arriving in England, he was put in the care of his cousin and her husband until James William's sister, Jane, and her husband Alexander Dallas moved to Scotland in 1864.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Cowie, *Company of Adventurers*, 111.

<sup>44</sup> "Christie, Alexander 'C,'" HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. 2002, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/christie\\_alexander1867-1883.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/christie_alexander1867-1883.pdf).

<sup>45</sup> Duncan was being accompanied to Britain by Anglican missionaries Taylor, Smith and Dahl and their families. Cowie, *Company of Adventurers*, 111.

<sup>46</sup> Jane and Alexander Dallas were married in 1858. Dallas served the HBC in various capacities until retiring to his estate in Scotland in 1864. The cousin in question is Edith Cameron, who married Henry Montagu Doughty in 1860. W. Kaye Lamb, "DALLAS, ALEXANDER GRANT," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 27, 2017, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/dallas\\_alexander\\_grant\\_11E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/dallas_alexander_grant_11E.html); Perry, *Colonial Relations*, 234.

Having family near James William in Britain provided James Douglas with some measure of peace of mind about his son being so far from home. He wrote to his daughter Jane in Scotland in 1867 that, “I have often felt for poor James, when he was alone in a far country without a friend near him...It was very hard for the poor boy, and both we and him feel the comfort of having you and Alick so near.”<sup>47</sup> Jane was expected to act as a parental substitute not just in providing support for her younger brother, but in guiding and disciplining him as well. James William struggled at school and in metropolitan society in general. When it came to light a year later that James William had pawned a gold chain that was a “parting token of [his mother’s] love” and a silver watch from his father, James Douglas wrote to Jane and counselled his daughter that she must act as a parent to James William in his absence:

You must act as the kind mediator and do everything in your power to keep him in the right way. This is the most dangerous period for him – the turning point of life – he is now a perfect simpleton led easily away, in a year or two more he will have sense and experience enough to take care of himself...You my dear Jane must be a mother to him as well as a sister.<sup>48</sup>

James had more pleasant interactions with the Dallas family as well, and travelled to their home for holidays.<sup>49</sup>

The youngest of the Douglas children, seventeen-year-old Martha, arrived in London in 1871 with her sister, Agnes Douglas Bushby and Agnes’ two children. Martha and Agnes were met by Agnes’ father-in-law, Joseph Bushby, and their sisters Jane Dallas and Alice Douglas Good. Joseph Bushby and Alice Good had, in consultation with James Douglas, selected a school

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<sup>47</sup> James Douglas to Jane Douglas Dallas, 15 May 1867, transcript, B/40/2A, Private Letter Book, Sir James Douglas Papers, BC Archives.

<sup>48</sup> James Douglas to Jane Douglas Dallas, 18 June 1868, transcript, B/40/2A, Private Letter Book, Sir James Douglas Fonds, BC Archives.

<sup>49</sup> James Douglas to Alexander Dallas, 13 April 1868, transcript, B/40/2A, Private Letter Book, Sir James Douglas Fonds, BC Archives.



*Figure 7.1 - Jane Dallas Douglas and Martha Douglas, c. 1871-1873, BC Archives, 193501-001.*

near Wimbledon for Martha to attend. Martha, like James William, was put under the guardianship of Alexander Dallas while she was at school.<sup>50</sup> Martha developed a close friendship with her older sister, Jane, and travelled frequently to the Dallas home at Dunain.

The relevance of these close trans-imperial sibling relationships that were kindled by James and Martha's educational travels were apparent a decade later. In 1883, a very ill James William, who had long suffered ill health, returned to the London home of then-widowed Jane Dallas to seek medical attention. There, he was attended by his nephew, Dr. James Helmcken, who had attended The Nest Academy and gone on to medical school at the University of Edinburgh.<sup>51</sup> James unfortunately died on the trip back to British Columbia. The trans-imperial sibling relationships that were maintained or facilitated by the Douglas children's educational mobility, however, provided stability and comfort for James and Martha both during their time at school and in adulthood.

Fur-trade children's educational mobility also connected them to their grandparents and other relatives at Red River. Grandparental homes served as kin centres where students spent time with aunts, uncles, and cousins who also resided in or visited the home. Grandparents who had retired to the main settlements in the HBC territories hosted children who were sent to school. Emerald Lodge, the home of Irish merchant Andrew McDermot and his Indigenous wife Sarah McNab at Upper Fort Garry, was one such grandparental home. Various children and

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<sup>50</sup> James Douglas to Joseph Bushby, 10 August 1872, transcript, B/40/4A, Letters to Martha Douglas, Sir James Douglas Papers, BC Archives. Bushby served in several colonial posts in the Vancouver Island and New Westminster colonies. For more on Arthur Bushby see Dorothy Blakey Smith, "BUSHBY, ARTHUR THOMAS," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 10, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 27, 2017, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/bushby\\_arthur\\_thomas\\_10E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/bushby_arthur_thomas_10E.html).

<sup>51</sup> Dorothy Blakey Smith, ed., *The Reminiscences of John Sebastien Helmcken* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1975); John Adams, *Old Square Toes and His Lady: The Life of James and Amelia Douglas* (Victoria: Horsdal & Shubert Publishers, 2001), 212.

grandchildren lived with the McDermots over the years, and there were sometimes up to a dozen family members living at Emerald Lodge.<sup>52</sup> In addition, some of their children settled on lands adjacent to the McDermot house.<sup>53</sup>

The fluidity of household composition at Emerald Lodge facilitated close relationships between fur-trade children, their McDermot grandparents, and their various cousins, aunts, and uncles. Granddaughter Jane Truthwaite's recollections of her grandfather provide some insight into Andrew McDermot's relationships with his grandchildren, as well as the critical mass of grandchildren who seemed to be a regular fixture in the household:

My earliest recollections of my grandfather are that he was always very good to us children...I remember playing as a child on the verandah of Emerald Lodge that faced south to Fort Garry. I remember too the log sill of the door of my grandfather's store, for I stumbled over it many a time. He was always fond of teasing, and I remember that when he was quite old and used to sit in his square chair smoking his pipe, with his hands resting on the oak stick he always liked to have, you could never be sure what trick he wouldn't play on you if you got within reach of him. When we were going somewhere and were all dressed up, with the trains we used to have to wear, we used to have to hold our trains and keep well away from him or he would suddenly put out his stick and try to hold the train of a dress to the floor with it.<sup>54</sup>

Another of Jane Truthwaite's memories of her grandfather illustrates the place that children continued to have in the household when Jane herself was an adult.<sup>55</sup>

I remember one Hallowe'en when the children had masks and were making great preparations for playing pranks. They persuaded Mr. Bannatyne to put on a mask and

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<sup>52</sup> Todd Lamirande and Lawrence Barkwell, "Annie (McDermot) Bannatyne," Gabriel Dumont Institute, 17 June 2008, <http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/07426.Annie%20McDermot.pdf>.

<sup>53</sup> Thomas Bird and Elizabeth McDermot lived adjacent to Emerald Lodge. Thomas Bird managed his father-in-law's windmill. Healy, *Women at Red River*, 135.

<sup>54</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 133.

<sup>55</sup> After Sarah McNab McDermot died in 1875, Jane and her widowed mother, Kathleen McDermot Truthwaite, moved to Emerald Lodge to care for Andrew McDermot and run his household. Andrew McDermot died in 1881. Healy, *Women of Red River*, 133.



draped a shawl about himself and walk up to my grandfather as he was sitting in his chair, just when the evening was growing dark. They were all watching from around the corner of the verandah to see what would happen...Mr. Ballantyne had a very deliberate walk and planted his feet heavily with the toes well out. Just as he came in front of grandfather, and the children were ready to break out in shrieks of laughter, the old gentleman said solemnly, 'Andrew Graham Ballantyne, you forgot to put masks on your feet!' That was just like him.<sup>56</sup>

This memory of Truthwaite's, featuring her uncle, A.G.B. Bannatyne, also illustrates how the McDermot home brought together the different generations and branches of the family.<sup>57</sup>

The home of Aggathas Kennedy at Red River also functioned as a retreat for her children and grandchildren, and the centre of a familial pattern of settlement that kept the extended family close to each other at St. Andrew's. When Alexander Kennedy died in 1832 in England, Aggathas lived in Red River with her children Isabella and Philip.<sup>58</sup> As her children grew and married, they clustered in and around her home. Alexander Kennedy Jr., who was a clerk of the vestry at St. Andrew's church, lived first in his mother's home and then that of his widowed sister, Mary Kennedy Isbister.<sup>59</sup> In 1835, Isabella Kennedy married George Setter, and settled on land across from the St. Andrew's church. After Thomas Isbister's death in 1836, Mary Kennedy Isbister and her six children joined her mother and brothers at St. Andrew's. By the time of the 1843 Red River Census, Aggathas Kennedy's household comprised two adult sons, three adult daughters, and one son under the age of sixteen living with her in what was likely a

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<sup>56</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 134.

<sup>57</sup> A.G.B. Bannatyne married Andrew and Sarah McDermot's daughter, Annie.

<sup>58</sup> Alexander Kennedy to Aggathas Kennedy, 18 August 1829, MG1/D1 fo.4, Kennedy, Alexander, AM.

<sup>59</sup> Dr. E.C. Shaw, "The Kennedys: An Unusual Western Family," *Manitoba Historical Society Transactions* 3, no.29 (1972-1973), <http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/transactions/3/kennedys.shtml>.

combination of children and grandchildren.<sup>60</sup> In the following years, the families of her sons Philip Kennedy and William Kennedy also settled on or near her land at St. Andrew's.<sup>61</sup> Caroline Isbister Christie, Aggathas's granddaughter, and her husband Alexander Christie Jr. joined the Kennedy family at St. Andrews in 1866 for two years of furlough.<sup>62</sup>

The Kennedy, Isbister, and Setter children who attended the Red River Academy, the Davis school, and other Red River schools all found a family foundation at the Kennedy home at St. Andrews. The travels of William Kennedy, Mary Kennedy Isbister, Alexander Kennedy Isbister, and Eliza Isbister from St. Andrews to London continued the family tradition of trans-imperial relocations that had been established when the Kennedy sons attended school at St. Margaret's Hope in Orkney. These patterns of mobility were continued in the third generation by the Christie grandsons who attended school at The Nest Academy. Other children and grandchildren, however, were unable to join in these travels. Due to Alexander Kennedy's unexpected death, Aggathas and Alexander's son Philip never attended school in St. Margaret's Hope like his older brothers, and none of Alexander Kennedy's daughters were educated abroad.

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<sup>60</sup> The 1843 Red River Census lists the 'Kennedy Widow' as living alone, but this is clearly not accurate as Mary had extensive farm holdings including a stable, barn, horse, oxen, other livestock and seven acres of farm land under cultivation. "Manitoba and Red River Census Returns," Census returns 1843, H2-136-1-2 (E.5/11 fos. 32d-33), Digital Image HB13-002880.JPG, AM; "Manitoba and Red River Census returns," database, *Heritage Canadiana*, Manitoba Census Vol 1 Red River, 1831-1847, MG 9 E.3 vol.1, C-2170 (accessed 2 August 2017) [http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac\\_reel\\_c2170/596?r=0&s=6](http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c2170/596?r=0&s=6).

<sup>61</sup> The Setters were an exception, settling at Park's Creek and later relocating to Portage La Prairie.

<sup>62</sup> Caroline Isbister Christie died at St. Andrew's during this furlough. "Scrip Affidavit for Christie, Alexander," R190-43-X-E, Metis and Original White Settlers affidavits, Dominion Lands Branch, Department of the Interior Fonds, LAC, accessed 26 August 2017, [http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/ourl/res.php?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&url\\_tim=2017-08-26T23%3A20%3A01Z&url\\_ctx\\_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft\\_dat=1500067&rft\\_id=info%3Aasi%2Fcollectionscanada.gc.ca%3Apam&lang=eng](http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/ourl/res.php?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&url_tim=2017-08-26T23%3A20%3A01Z&url_ctx_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft_dat=1500067&rft_id=info%3Aasi%2Fcollectionscanada.gc.ca%3Apam&lang=eng).

Grandchildren's desires to travel to the 'mother country' were sometimes thwarted as well. Aggathas' granddaughter Elizabeth Setter Norquay recalled with poignancy as an adult her disappointment in being barred from following the family tradition of travelling to Britain:

Our family came from the Orkneys and were here long before the first of the Selkirk settlers came...I used to hear my father [George Setter] telling stories about the Orkneys which he had from his father and many a time I used to wonder what it was like in the old country. Once, when I was a young woman, before I was married, my mother's sister [Eliza Kennedy] was going to the old country and she wanted to take me with her. I wanted to go with her. There have been very few things I have longed for more than I longed to go on that voyage with my aunt across the Atlantic. But my father would not let me go.<sup>63</sup>

Grandparents could also serve as a refuge for fur-trade students in times of crisis. In 1869 and 1870, the events of the Red River Resistance, the post-resistance violence incited by the Canadian troops, and the resulting social changes in the settlement threatened the stability of Red River society. Parents who were far from Red River were unsure as to what to do about their children who were at school, or whether the schools would even remain open. Matilda Davis's brother, Joseph Finlayson, wrote to Davis from Fort Pelly in February 1870 to inquire as to whether or not he should remove daughter Harriet from Red River.<sup>64</sup> In February 1870, Thomas Cook wrote to Matilda Davis to inform her that, in the event that she had to close her school, his daughter Mary Ann could go and stay with her Grandpapa.<sup>65</sup> In these ways,

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<sup>63</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 147-148.

<sup>64</sup> Finlayson proposed to move Harriet to Fort Ellice where she would be under the care of Thomas McKay, where she could be brought up with McKay's children. Joseph Finlayson to Matilda Davis, 15 February 1870, P4724 fo.4, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>65</sup> Thomas Cook to Matilda Davis, 22 Feb 1870, P4724 fo.4, Matilda Davis Family Papers. Reverend Thomas Cook was the son of Joseph Cook (William Hemmings Cook and Kahnawpawamakan) and Catherine Sinclair (William Sinclair and Nahovay). Thomas cook married (1) Catherine McKenzie (daughter of Charles McKenzie and Mary McKay, sister to Julia and Margaret McKenzie who attended school in Montreal), and (2) Ann Bruce (daughter of Mary McNab and James Bruce). The 'Grandpapa' in question would be James Bruce, as Cook's father died in 1848

grandparents' homes served as a refuge and a source of stability for their Indigenous grandchildren who were sent away from their parents to go to school.

### III. TRANS-IMPERIAL INDIGENOUS KIN TIES TO ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, AND THE CANADIAN COLONIES

The educational mobility of Indigenous fur-trade children both created and was facilitated by kin networks in Britain or the Canadas that connected Indigenous and non-Indigenous family members in the HBC territories, the Canadian colonies, and Britain. Indigenous fur-trade students were put in the care of English, Scottish, or Orcadian grandparents, aunts, uncles, or cousins whom they had previously never met and who lived outside of the HBC territories. Indigenous studies scholars have explored Indigenous families through transnational frameworks, but their work has prioritized North American cross-border family networks. These studies have generally excluded family ties that reached beyond the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>66</sup>

Indeed, trans-imperial Indigenous men, women, and children seem to have been written out of both Canadian and British histories. As Coll Thrush has recently argued in his study of Indigenous peoples in London, “Indigenous people who remain in or move to urban

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and he had no children by Catherine McKenzie. James and Mary Bruce and four of their children lived at Kildonan in 1870. “1870 Manitoba Census,” database, *Library and Archives Canada*, (accessed 15 June 2017), entry for James Bruce, #422-427, MG9 E.3 vol.3, <http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/1870/jpg/e010985428.jpg>.

<sup>66</sup> For transnational studies of Metis families see, Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004); Brenda Macdougall, *One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010); Lucy Eldersveld Murphy, *Great Lakes Creoles: A French-Indian Community on the Northern Borderlands, Prairie du Chien, 1750-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); Sylvia Van Kirk, “Tracing the Fortunes of Five Founding Families of Victoria.” *BC Studies* 115/116 (Autumn/Winter 1997/1998): 149-179.

places are all too often portrayed, if at all, as somehow out of place, and that out-of-place-ness is all too easily trans-formed into absence. The result is a blindness read back onto the past from the present, an inherited silence where history should be.”<sup>67</sup> This certainly seems to be the case for Indigenous fur-trade children who went to school in Britain. Even though they were enmeshed in British society by their physical presence in England, Scotland, and the Orkneys, and through the extensive kin networks that tied them to the people of Britain, memory of them has generally disappeared and, in particular, any memory of them as Indigenous.<sup>68</sup>

This forgetting of these students’ indigeneity may have been easy on the part of their British families because their non-Indigenous British kin lacked a tangible connection to the HBC territories. The English, Scottish, and Orcadian men who were drawn to the fur trade were themselves often part of imperial families who had family ties to the fur trade. Brothers Duncan, Roderick, and Nicol Finlayson, and James and Alexander Caulfield Anderson, and Francis and Edward Ermatinger were all connected to the fur trade and the Empire through family ties. The white women who came to the HBC territories as wives were also often part of imperial fur-trade families. Letitia Mactavish Hargrave, the Scottish wife of Chief Factor James Hargrave, was related to Simon McTavish, one of the principal traders of the North West Company. Through Simon McTavish, her uncle, John George Mactavish, and three of her brothers entered the fur trade.

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<sup>67</sup> Coll Thrush, *Indigenous London: Native Travelers at the Heart of Empire* (New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 2016), 14.

<sup>68</sup> The exception to this is the Orkneys. As Patricia McCormack outlines in her article on Indigenous wives in the Orkneys, and by the history, memories and celebrations of its residents, Orcadians continue to recognize and feel a connection to their Indigenous pasts. McCormack, “Lost Wives,” 75.

These imperial families had direct experience with fur-trade country, and the fur-trade employees used their furloughs to return to Britain or the Canadian colonies to visit their white families. For the most part, however, non-Indigenous family members from Britain rarely travelled to the HBC territories to visit their fur-trade kin. They were privy to their kin's stories of the 'wild' fur-trade country, were often presented gifts that their brothers, uncles, or cousins had brought 'home' from North America, and sometimes met their Indigenous fur-trade nieces, nephews, or grandchildren. But British men and women who were not employed in the HBC territories or married to an employee rarely traveled to the HBC territories, and the tales of the fur trade and Indigenous peoples remained only stories told to them by a visiting relative. In this way, it may have been easy for family memories to erase their 'Indian grandmothers' from their collective family memories.

Fur-trade children who relocated to Britain for their education, however, established significant and affective relationships with their British kin. Isobel Mactavish, the Scottish grandmother of Duncan and Donald Mactavish, had a warm relationship with her grandsons when they lived at Inverness to go to school. Duncan wrote to his mother in 1841 of his brother's departure for Australia that, "my old Grandmother was nearly breaking her heart when he left."<sup>69</sup> Fur-trade children in the metropole also connected with non-Indigenous aunts, uncles, and cousins. Matilda and Elizabeth Davis grew up with their English aunts, uncles and cousins in London, and Matilda maintained close ties and extensive correspondence with her English family after she left England for Red River. These affective kin relationships extended

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<sup>69</sup> Donald Mactavish to Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie, 22 July 1841, E.379/1 fo.11-15, Peter & Josette McKenzie Family Fonds, HBCA.

into the third generation of the Davis family when Albert and Johnnie were sent to school in Britain. Albert and Johnnie both spent holidays with their English cousins. In 1863, Albert spent a week of his summer break with his London kin. Cousin Matilda Poole wrote to Matilda Davis of Albert's city adventures that, "Abbie had different treats during the week. He went up the Monument, his cousin Matilda took him to the Crystal Palace one day. I took him to Highgate to see his relatives there and he seemed to enjoy himself."<sup>70</sup>

During the same visit, Matilda Poole took Albert to visit the grave of Matilda Davis's sister and Albert's aunt, Elizabeth Davis. Poole wrote that, "I took Abbie through the cimetary [sic] and shewed [sic] him his dear Aunt Elizabeth's grave & made him read what was engraved on the stone, Aunt Rossers also Miss Banns I shewed him, the latter is situated immediately at the head of our dear Elizabeth's. It made me very sad to behold the resting place of those whom we once loved so dearly, but our loss is their gain."<sup>71</sup> Albert does not address this incident in his surviving letters, so we cannot know what it meant for him to stand in a place that so clearly demonstrated his English's family's connection to London through the burial of their dead, and his dead.

Given the limits of the archival record in relation to children and their histories, there are fewer details available about other Indigenous children's connections with their kin in Britain. Family and official correspondence, census data and family wills do, however, allow me to trace the outlines of some of these kin relationships. John Ballenden and Sarah McLeod Ballenden's older children, John, Anna, and Harriet, for example, were under the guardianship

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<sup>70</sup> Matilda Poole to Matilda Davis, 17 Sept 1863, P2343 fo.2, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>71</sup> Matilda Poole to Matilda Davis, 17 Sept 1863, P2343 fo.2, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

of John's sister, Elizabeth Ballenden Bannatyne, while they were at school in Scotland.<sup>72</sup> The children of William Cowan and Harriet Sinclair Cowan also developed relationships with their kin in Britain. Anna and Harriet Cowan attended school in Glasgow, near William Cowan's Scottish family. When William and Harriet took furlough in Scotland in 1870, they chose to live in Glasgow.<sup>73</sup> Given that William was seemingly on good terms with his family, his daughters were likely in touch with their Glasgow kin while they were at school. Their brother, John Cowan, who was a student at The Nest Academy, visited his father's family in Glasgow during school holidays.<sup>74</sup> It is reasonable to assume, then, that the Cowan children developed affective ties with their Glasgow kin.

Harriet Sinclair Cowan's cousin, Margaret Sinclair Darling, also lived in England.<sup>75</sup>

Although there is no information about the Darlings' relationship with the three Cowan children who attended school in Scotland, William and Harriet visited the Darlings on their British travels.<sup>76</sup> Given that the Darlings maintained contact with their Ermatinger kin in Ontario, it is likely that they took an interest in the Cowan children as well.<sup>77</sup> There are several other

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<sup>72</sup> John Ballenden, transcript, H2-136-7-6, Inward Correspondence 1853-1858, William and Harriet McMurray Family Fonds, HBCA; Norma Hall, "Anne 'Annie' McDermot Bannatyne," *Provincial Government of Assiniboia*, 28 November 2012, <https://hallnjean2.wordpress.com/the-red-river-resistance/women-and-the-resistance/annie-mcdermot-bannatyne/>.

<sup>73</sup> "1871 Scotland Census," database, *Ancestry.com* (<https://ancestry.com>: 24 June 2017), entry for William Cowan, Parish: Glasgow Barony; ED: 99; Page: 22; Line: 20; Roll: CSSCT1871\_138.

<sup>74</sup> Marion Miller to Matilda Davis, 26 June [n.d.], P2342 fo.23, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM.

<sup>75</sup> Margaret Sinclair Darling was the daughter of William II Sinclair and Mary McKay. Margaret married Captain Montague Darling was part of the British troops sent to Red River in the 1840s. In 1848, he married Margaret Sinclair at Norway House on his way home from Red River to England. Margaret's father, William II and Harriet's father, James were brothers. For information on the William Sinclair family tree, see Norma Hall, "Family Network of Capt. Colin Robertson Sinclair," *Doing Canadian History n.0*, accessed 27 August 2017, <https://hallnjean.wordpress.com/seafarers/lecture-transcript-an-introduction-to-the-history-of-aboriginal-sailors-of-hudson-bay/captain-colin-robertson-sinclair/family-network-of-captain-colin-robertson-sinclair/>.

<sup>76</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 44.

<sup>77</sup> Margaret Sinclair Darling and Catherine Sinclair Ermatinger were both daughters of William Sinclair II and Mary McKay. In 1863, Catherine and Francis' daughter, Frances (Fanny) married John Crawford in Elgin, ON. Their



Indigenous children who relocated to or lived in Britain as well, including Mary Finlayson, Mary Christie, James and Harry Helmcken, and the two daughters of former Red River Academy headmaster John McCallum and his Indigenous wife Elizabeth Charles McCallum. These children all had English or Scottish family in Britain, but there is little to no information on their relationships (or lack thereof) with their British kin.

Indigenous fur-trade students' travels for education also connected them to Indigenous kin who had relocated outside of the HBC territories. William Davis, for example, the eldest surviving son of John Davis and the brother of Matilda Davis, was sent to Lac Des Chats in 1818 for schooling.<sup>78</sup> His maternal grandfather, John Hodgson, moved to the Lower Canadian community with some of his children in 1814, and William was likely put under his grandfather's care.<sup>79</sup>

Travels to and from the Nest Academy in Jedburgh allowed Alexander 'Sandy', James, William, and Duncan Christie got to know their Isbister relatives in London during their time at school in Scotland. Their uncle, Alexander Kennedy Isbister, their grandmother, Mary Kennedy Isbister, and Aunt Eliza Isbister all lived in Alexander Kennedy Isbister's home at Bolt Court in

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daughter Emily Ermatinger Crawford married her cousin and Margaret Darling's son, Ralph Montague Sinclair Darling sometime after 1881. "County Marriage Registers 1858-June 1869," database, *Ancestry.com* (<https://ancestry.com/>: accessed 3 July 2017), marriage record for Frances Ermatinger and John Crawford, Series: MS248; Reel: 5 and 6, Archives of Ontario; Norma Hall, "William Sinclair II," *Doing Canadian History n.0*, accessed 28 June 2017, <https://hallnjean.wordpress.com/seafarers/lecture-transcript-an-introduction-to-the-history-of-aboriginal-sailors-of-hudson-bay/captain-colin-robertson-sinclair/family-network-of-captain-colin-robertson-sinclair/william-sinclair-ii/>.

<sup>78</sup> In 1818, HBC clerk Robert Miles reported, "Received under our care a youth named Davis, son of a Mr. D of the Southern Department." Robert Miles, 1 June 1818, Portage Des Chats. "Davis, John," Research File, MSS 336 A.11-28 Box 2 Fo. 33, Jennifer Brown Collection, UMASC.

<sup>79</sup> HBC Chief Factor John Hodgson Sr., some of his children and possibly his Metis wife Caroline Goodwin Hodgson retired to Lac Des Chats on the Ottawa River in 1810. Jennifer S. H. Brown, "HODGSON, JOHN," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 29, 2017, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/hodgson\\_john\\_6E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/hodgson_john_6E.html).

London.<sup>80</sup> Isaac Cowie noted in 1867 that, while he felt badly that “the motherless lad” Duncan Christie was being sent off to school in Britain, Duncan would find “a new home [there] with his grandfather, old Governor Christie, in Edinburgh, and with his uncle, Dr. Isbister, and aunts in London.”<sup>81</sup> All of the Christie boys who attended The Nest had regular contact with their grandfather, former HBC Governor Alexander Christie Sr. and, before their deaths, their grandmother Ann Thomas Christie and their aunt Mary Christie Patterson.<sup>82</sup>

These travelling Indigenous children and their kin ties to both white and Indigenous families in Britain have been in large part overlooked in the historical record and erased from both Canadian and British historical memory. Tracing the kin connections that these fur-trade students made in the HBC territories, the Canadian colonies, and Britain demonstrates that Indigenous children were mobile in the mid-nineteenth century and had a place in the metropolitan centres of the Empire. They were integral to Catherine Hall’s ‘mutually constitutive’ British Empire, in that their lives, personalities, and identities were influenced by

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<sup>80</sup> There is little surviving correspondence from Isbister of a personal nature. Census information provides the members of his household. In 1851, Isbister lived only with two servants. By 1861, his mother Mary Kennedy Isbister had joined him, and in the 1871 and 1881 census results both his mother and his sister, Eliza Isbister were members of his household. By 1891, both Mary and Alexander were dead and Eliza was living with Isbister relatives in London. Eliza died in 1900, and is buried in the same cemetery as her brother in London. “Isbister, Eliza,” Abney Park Cemetery, Stoke Newington, Borough of Hackney, Index 4S10, Burial # 100752, Find A Grave Memorial# 177815096, database, accessed 26 August 2017, <https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=isbister&GSiman=1&GScid=658404&GRid=177815096&>; “1891 England Census,” database, *Ancestry.com* (<https://www.ancestry.com>: 18 May 2017), entry for Eliza Isbister, Class: RG12; Piece: 1339; Folio: 52; Page: 13; GSU roll: 6096449.

<sup>81</sup> Cowie, *Company of Adventurers*, 111.

<sup>82</sup> Mary Christie and William Patterson married in 1857. The 1861 Scottish census shows that the Pattersons were living with Alexander and Ann Christie when the census was taken in April 1861. Mary Christie Paterson died sometime between the April 1861 and May 1865. In his May 1865 will, Alexander Christie refers to his “sons-in-law John Black...and William Patterson...the respective husbands of my now deceased daughters Margaret Christie or Black and Mary Christie or Patterson.” Will and Legal Papers for Alexander Christie Sr., Officers’ and Servants’ Wills, H2-77-1-6 (A.36/4 fos. 115-173), HBCA; “1861 Scotland Census,” database, *Ancestry.com* (<https://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 11 May 2014), entry for Alexander Christie, Parish: Edinburgh St Cuthberts; ED: 68; Page: 14; Line: 9; Roll: CSSCT1861\_129.

British ideals of race, gender, class, and morality and by the physical geographies of Scotland and England. At the same time, however, their physical presence in Britain, their connections to their white and Indigenous kin, and the knowledge about the colonies that they shared with their family, teachers, friends, and fellow students unsettle historical perceptions about the place and role of racialized peoples in the Empire.

#### **IV. MATERNAL INDIGENOUS KIN NETWORKS AND FUR-TRADE STUDENTS**

The travels of Indigenous fur-trade students highlight the extent of fur-trade kin networks. Almost every journey and relocation made by the Indigenous students in this study engaged their kin ties in some way. Understanding how these webs of trans-imperial kin ties connected students and families on both sides of the Atlantic reveals much about how important maternal Indigenous kin ties were to the lives of Indigenous students and their families, and how often these kin relationships have been glossed over by historians. Tracing these webs of trans-imperial kin relationships also illustrates a phenomenon that has generally been underrepresented in both Canadian histories and the histories of Britain and the Empire, and this is the mobility of Indigenous women. The letters and other records generated by Indigenous children's educational mobility reveal a pattern of female Indigenous relocation to areas outside of the HBC territories.

Coll Thrush argues in his study of Indigenous peoples in London that the Indigenous people who came to London were generally male, and that the "defense of Indigenous lands"

was central to their reasons for being in the city.<sup>83</sup> That is not the case for the Indigenous women that I have identified by following the imperial movements of the Indigenous children and youth in this study. Instead, I have found that Indigenous women relocated to the Canadian colonies and Britain at a higher rate than Indigenous men. Some of the women were themselves Indigenous fur-trade students, and some of them were the mothers of Indigenous fur-trade students. These women and girls migrated permanently to Britain and the Canadian colonies, and, in turn, facilitated trans-imperial Indigenous kin networks by hosting and aiding Indigenous fur-trade students and their families.

Historians of both the fur trade and the British Empire have begun to explore these mobile Indigenous women. Jennifer Brown has drawn attention to some of these women, and Patricia McCormack has written about the Indigenous wives of HBC men who relocated to the Orkneys when their husbands and fathers retired from the fur trade.<sup>84</sup> Cecilia Haig-Brown has explored the trans-Atlantic quest of Anishnaabek woman Nahnebahwequa/Catherine Sutton to regain title to her land at Credit River.<sup>85</sup> Cecilia Morgan has examined interracial intimacies in the context of Indigenous peoples' movements across British North America, Canada and Britain.<sup>86</sup> More recently, Adele Perry has studied the colonial ties of the women of the James

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<sup>83</sup> Thrush, *Indigenous London*, 24.

<sup>84</sup> Jennifer Brown, "Diverging Identities: The Presbyterian Metis of St. Gabriel Street, Montreal," in Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S.H. Brown, ed., *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America* (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1985); Brown, *Strangers in Blood*; McCormack, "Lost Wives."

<sup>85</sup> Cecilia Haig-Brown, "The 'Friends' of Nahnebahwequa," in *With Good Intentions: Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal Relations in Colonial Canada*, ed. Cecilia Haig-Brown and David Nock (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 132-157.

<sup>86</sup> Cecilia Morgan, "Creating Interracial Intimacies: British North America, Canada and the Transatlantic World, 1830-1914," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 19 no.2 (2008): 76-105.

Douglas family, and Krista Barclay has focussed on HBC families who retired to Ontario and Britain.<sup>87</sup>

While there were certainly Indigenous men who made the move from fur-trade country to the Canadian colonies and Britain, their numbers seem to be lower and men were more likely to return to fur-trade country than their mothers and sisters. The reasons why Indigenous women chose to emigrate outside of the HBC territories and remain there are unclear. Jean Barman has speculated that mixed-ancestry women had an easier time integrating into nineteenth-century settler-colonial culture in British Columbia because they were less threatening to the established (or, trying-to-be-established) white settler society than their brothers.<sup>88</sup> This may be true of metropolitan spaces as well. Jennifer Brown argues in *Strangers in Blood* that Indigenous women faced less racism and racial barriers in the Canadian colonies.<sup>89</sup> Krista Barclay points to a more nuanced experience of race and settler society by showing that fur traders' wills reveal a significant amount of anxiety about the well-being of their Indigenous wives and daughters in Ontario communities.<sup>90</sup> There were more pressing and practical concerns that influenced Indigenous women's decisions to follow their husbands to England, Scotland, and the Canadian colonies. Affective ties to their husbands and children and financial considerations were likely their foremost considerations in choosing to remain in or leave fur-trade country.

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<sup>87</sup> Barclay, "From Rupert's Land to Canada West," 67-97; Perry, *Colonial Relations*.

<sup>88</sup> Jean Barman, "Invisible Women: Aboriginal Mothers and Mixed-Race Daughters in Rural British Columbia," in *Beyond the City Limits: Rural History in British Columbia*, ed. Ruth Sandwell (Vancouver: University of Vancouver Press, 1998), 174-175.

<sup>89</sup> Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 193.

<sup>90</sup> Barclay, "From Rupert's Land to Canada West," 69.

Examining Indigenous women's experiences outside of the HBC territories, and why they were less likely to return to fur-trade country than their brothers is beyond the scope of this study. What is relevant in the context of this study of Indigenous students, however, is that tracing maternal Indigenous kin networks reveals extensive trans-imperial connections linking the HBC territories and other sites of empire; these kin networks were, in large part, facilitated by these emigrant Indigenous women.

For the most part, however, the mobility of Indigenous women has not been sufficiently recognized in the historical scholarship. The number of Indigenous women who relocated outside of the HBC territories just from the families in this study is surprising. Catherine Sinclair Ermatinger and her daughter Frances Ermatinger retired to Ontario with former HBC officer Francis Ermatinger in the 1850s. Margaret McKenzie Anderson lived with her husband and children, including her daughter, Eliza Anderson, on the family estate on the shores of Lake Simcoe, north of Toronto in 1859. The Cummings, Corrigan, Cameron, and McMurray families all retired to Canada West as family units before Confederation, where they became community builders.<sup>91</sup> Mary Sinclair Christie and William Christie retired to Brockville, Ontario. Most of these women remained in Ontario, where their children and grandchildren married and established families of their own.<sup>92</sup>

Indigenous women who emigrated to England and Scotland similarly became integrated into local communities through marriage, kin ties, and social relationships. Mary Finlayson Lamb travelled to Scotland first as a student, and then remained there after her father's

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<sup>91</sup> Barclay, "From Rupert's Land to Canada West," 74-79.

<sup>92</sup> Some women did leave their homes in the Canadian colonies and Britain to return to the HBC territories. Krista Barclay argues that there is pattern of Metis widows returning to western Canada after their husbands' deaths. Email to author, Krista Barclay, 26 June 2017.

retirement to Nairn. She married a banker and had a Scottish family.<sup>93</sup> Mary Christie Patterson moved to Scotland with her parents when they retired to first Aberdeen and then Edinburgh. She married an Edinburgh cabinetmaker and the couple lived in her father's home until her death in the early 1860s.<sup>94</sup> Margaret Sinclair Darling never returned to North America after her marriage at Norway House and quick departure for England, although her son, Ralph, returned to Ontario to marry his Ermatinger cousin in the 1880s. Many of the Indigenous girls who relocated to England and Scotland as children have disappeared from the historical record as Indigenous children. The colonial archive obscures these women's Indigenous ancestry.<sup>95</sup> Without family correspondence or genealogy, tracking Indigenous daughters through census data and other metropolitan records as they grew to become married women is often frustratingly difficult and sometimes impossible.

Indigenous wives are often easier to trace through ship's records, family correspondence, and census data. Jane Sutherland Vincent and Nanette Sutherland Keith relocated to Britain when their HBC husbands retired from the fur trade.<sup>96</sup> Elizabeth Charles McCallum, the widow of Red River Academy headmaster John McCallum, moved to England with her children when her father, Chief Factor John Charles, retired from the HBC.<sup>97</sup> Mary

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<sup>93</sup> Mary was HBC Chief Factor Nicol Finlayson's daughter by his third wife, Elizabeth Sinclair. Elizabeth Sinclair was a daughter of William Sinclair and Nahovay, making Mary Finlayson a niece of Margaret Sinclair Darling. Nicol Finlayson to John Finlayson, May 1859, transcript, E137/2, John Finlayson Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>94</sup> Mary Christie Patterson died sometime between the April 1861 and May 1865. Will and Legal Papers for Alexander Christie Sr., H2-77-1-6 (A.36/4 fos. 115-173), Officers' and Servants' Wills, HBCA.

<sup>95</sup> Ghosh examines how this occurred in British-Indian colonial archives in *Sex and the Family in Colonial India*, 17-19.

<sup>96</sup> Jennifer S. H. Brown, "KEITH, GEORGE," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 25, 2017, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/keith\\_george\\_8E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/keith_george_8E.html). Thank you to Krista Barclay for the information on the Keiths and the Gladmans.

<sup>97</sup> John Charles married Margaret McCallum, the sister of John Macallum. Mrs. Charles was therefore Elizabeth Macallum's sister-in-law and step-mother.

Kennedy Isbister and her daughter Eliza Isbister went to live with their son and brother Alexander Kennedy Isbister in London, and remained there until their deaths. Sophia Thomas Mason similarly relocated to London with her husband, Reverend William Mason, and some of their children in 1858. There she worked on completing the couple's translation of the Bible into Cree syllabics before her death in 1861.<sup>98</sup>

For other women, we can only know the outlines of their experiences. Mary 'Sally' McDermot, the daughter of Red River merchant Andrew McDermot and his wife Sarah McNab, traveled to England with her husband, HBC Governor William Mactavish in the wake of the Red River Resistance. Only days after landing in London, William Mactavish died. The McDermots were a wealthy family and could have easily paid to bring Sally and her children home to Red River. Sally, however, decided to remain in England, where her four children were at school, and took up residence with her spinster sister-in-law, Florence Mactavish.<sup>99</sup> It is not clear why Sally McDermot chose to remain in England, far from her close-knit Red River family, or what her life was like as an Indigenous widow in Britain.

Locating these women does not tell us much about how they experienced their lives outside of fur-trade country. There are no mentions of race in any of the correspondence written by Indigenous women in this study, so I cannot know how they configured their identities as racialized women from the colonies living in the city. Unlike in the HBC territories,

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<sup>98</sup> Mason died three months after giving birth to her youngest child, daughter Caroline Anne Maude Mason, baptised 12 September 1861. "London, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813-1906," database, *Ancestry.com* (<https://www.ancestry.com>: 29 June 2017), entry for Charlotte Mason, London Metropolitan Archives, Kensington St Paul, Register of Baptism, p84/pau, Item 001; Bruce Peel, "THOMAS, SOPHIA," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 28, 2017, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/thomas\\_sophia\\_9E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/thomas_sophia_9E.html).

<sup>99</sup> William Mactavish was one of the brothers of Letitia Mactavish Hargrave, and Florence Mactavish is one of Letitia's main correspondents in the letters published in *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave*.



where family histories were public knowledge, these Indigenous women would have been more anonymous in Britain. It was likely easier to disappear into metropolitan society and submerge their Indigenous heritage if they wished to do so. As scholars have documented, Indigenous women and families in various colonial locations often made the choice to camouflage their Indigenous heritage in order to avoid racism and the social and economic repercussions that accompanied an Indigenous identity.<sup>100</sup>

Some Indigenous women were seemingly comfortable as racialized women in Britain. When Letitia Hargrave visited with Nanette Sutherland Keith, and her daughter, Betsey Keith Swanston near Aberdeen in 1852, she described the two women:

Mrs. Keith & Mrs. Swanston came to call for me the day after I arrived here. The Duchess is splendid in her own way & they both precipitated themselves upon me & declared themselves my friends... Mrs. Swanston speaks high English & “well can she speak it” & told me that she called upon me that my brother might see that she did not neglect his sister after his kindness towards her. She has 5 children home with her & the Duchess complains bitterly of the expense of feeding so many. The old lady trades a little, keeps fowls & sells their eggs & also disposes of her garden produce. She is hideously black & ugly but is wonderfully lively, even hilarious in her manner. Old Squirly was however more of a lady, for she gives utterance to the most fearsome Indian yell & her daughter and she are too much for a small room when they express astonishment.<sup>101</sup>

Letitia also offered her perspective on Ann Thomas Christie and Mary Christie Patterson, writing to her husband that, “Mr Christie’s kindness to me knows no bounds. The old lady and her

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<sup>100</sup> Barman, “Invisible Women”; Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada’s Prairie West* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997); Melinda Marie Jetté, *At The Hearth of the Crossed Races: A French-Indian Community in Nineteenth-Century Oregon* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2015); Sylvia Van Kirk, “Colonized Lives: The Native Wives and Daughters of Five Founding Families of Victoria,” in *In the Days of Our Grandmothers: A Reader in Aboriginal Women’s History in Canada*, ed. Mary-Ellen Kelm and Lorna Townsend (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 170-199; Angela Wanhalla, *Matters of the Heart: A History of Interracial Marriage in New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2013).

<sup>101</sup> Letitia Hargrave to James Hargrave, 28 March 1852, MSS 15 Box 2 Fo.4, Margaret Arnett Macleod Fonds, UMASC.

daughter are more than agreeable. They are very comfortable here and their circle is most respectable. We would not like it, but I will tell you all about it when I see you.”<sup>102</sup> Ann Thomas Christie had voiced reservations about moving to Scotland prior to relocating to Aberdeen after her husband’s retirement. However, the Keiths and Christies seem to have found acceptance in Scotland in the 1850s, although it is unclear the extent to which their ‘circles’ were aware of their mixed ancestry.

By inhabiting space in the metropole, however, they challenged both historical and imperial ideas about the place of Indigenous women in the Empire. These were mobile Indigenous women who were part of the ‘mutually constitutive’ empire that shaped English and Scottish culture and society in Britain. As Coll Thrush has demonstrated, it is important to recover these women’s stories as part of “[insisting] on the personhood of Indigenous children, women, and men who came to the city, willingly or otherwise, and wherever possible to restore their agency to the heart of the story.”<sup>103</sup>

Mapping maternal Indigenous family trees can be a challenging task. As in other parts of the Empire, the intersections of gender, race, and colonialism obscures the identity of Indigenous women by failing to name them, or by failing to identify their Indigenous heritage. Brenda Macdougall has argued that Indigenous studies have often focused on the “paternal and patriarchal nature of family structures to the exclusion of female lineages.”<sup>104</sup> This focus marginalises the importance of Indigenous women to the fur trade, early settler-colonial

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<sup>102</sup> Emphasis in original. Letitia Hargrave to James Hargrave, 28 March 1852, MSS 15 Box 2 Fo.4, Margaret Arnett Macleod Fonds, UMASC.

<sup>103</sup> Thrush, *Indigenous London*, 24-25.

<sup>104</sup> Brenda Macdougall, “*Wahkootowin*: Family and Cultural Identity in Northwestern Metis Communities,” *Canadian Historical Review* 87, no.3 (September 2006): 437.

society in western Canada and to Indigenous societies. More importantly, perhaps, it decentralises the maternal Indigenous kin networks that underwrote Indigenous-settler relationships in the HBC territories.

One of the ways to recover these maternal kin ties in the stories of Indigenous fur-trade students is to assess the student lists of the schools they attended. Patriarchal naming practices in the colonial archive provide a specific challenge to identifying the maternal Indigenous kin relationships that underwrote the lives of the Indigenous children in this study. Evaluating the student lists of these schools is a complicated and complex task that draws on decades of work by Indigenous genealogists to pick apart the family connections that are obscured in the archival record by patriarchal naming practices. Assessing the student lists for some of the schools in this study reveals that Indigenous maternal kin ties played an important role in dictating where fur-trade children were sent to school. Cousins who were related through their maternal kin line congregated at schools together in cousin clusters where they lived and studied together.

Cousin clusters gave Indigenous fur-trade students the opportunity to get to know their cousins in ways that would otherwise not have been likely given the high mobility of many fur-trade families. Many extended fur-trade families did not live near each other and otherwise rarely or never saw each other in person. Although some fur-trade families congregated near each other at Red River, Fort Vancouver, or Victoria, most fur-trade patriarchs were posted to remote fur-trade posts, or moved from post-to-post every few years.<sup>105</sup> When cousins

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<sup>105</sup> Several extended family groups lived side-by-side in the Red River Settlement. The Mowats and Hodgsons, for examples, lived on adjacent plots of land at St. Andrew's. Harriet Sinclair Cowan, the daughter of James Sinclair

congregated at schools, however, they had the opportunity to spend time together and develop close ties, which in turn facilitated the next generation of maternal Indigenous kin networks.

The student rolls of the Davis school are the most complete lists for any of the schools in this study. Davis's accounts and school records conform to colonial norms for record keeping in that the students are identified primarily by their last names, and the parent whose name is most closely associated with children in the school records is the father who paid the bills. Davis's correspondence, however, reveals clues to family ties and discussions of family affairs.

Cross-referencing these records with the work of genealogists, baptismal and HBC records, and census data to assess the student lists reveals extensive maternal kin ties between students at the Davis school. Cousins Ann Mary, Lydia, Mary, and Annie Christie attended the school together, as did Annie, Edith, and Alice Davis and their cousins Flora and Carrie Finlayson.<sup>106</sup> The Finlaysons were also cousins with Belle Clarke, Jane McKenzie, and Louisa Peers; these cousins were related through their mothers, who were all daughters of Chief Factor John Bell and Nancy Dease.<sup>107</sup> There were also several grandchildren of Roderick McKenzie Sr. and Angelique Mailhot who attended the Davis school. Their son, Samuel, sent four of his daughters and his son, William, to Oakfield where they attended school alongside

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and Elizabeth Bird, reported that her extended family lived on adjacent plots centred around the Andrew McDermot home. She noted that "the Rosses, McDermots, Logans and ourselves were like one family." "1870 Manitoba Census," database, *Library and Archives Canada* (accessed 20 August 2014), entries for John Hodgson and John Mowat Families, #1064-1074, MG 9 E3 vol.3,

<http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/1870/jpg/e010985448.jpg>; Healy, *Women of Red River*, 18.

<sup>106</sup> The Davis and Finlayson daughters were related through their fathers – George Davis was half-brother to Joseph Finlayson, the son of Nancy Hodgson Davis and Nicol Finlayson. The Finlayson girls were related to Jane Bell Clarke through their mothers. Flora Bell Finlayson and Jane Bell Clarke Sr. were sisters.

<sup>107</sup> Flora Bell Finlayson, Jane Bell Clarke and Christina Bell Peers McKenzie were all daughters of Chief Trader and explorer John Bell and his wife Ann 'Nancy' Dease. Christina Bell Peers McKenzie was married first to Augustus Peers (d.1853) and then to Alexander Black McKenzie, a son of Roderick McKenzie Sr. and Angelique. Louisa Peers and Jane McKenzie were half-sisters. For letters from Christina McKenzie to Matilda Davis, see P4724 fo.1, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

their cousins, Katie and Annie McBeath.<sup>108</sup> Eliza Anderson was also a McKenzie cousin by her mother, Margaret McKenzie Anderson, as was Jane McKenzie by her father, Alexander Black McKenzie, and Roderick McKenzie Jr.'s sister by their mother, Jane McKenzie McKenzie.<sup>109</sup>

Several Kennedy cousins were also students at the Davis school. William and Mary Kennedy, the children of Captain William Kennedy and Eliza Cripps Kennedy, were students. The children of George Setter, who was the widower of William's sister Isabella Kennedy, by his second wife, Jessie Campbell, may also have attended the school, along with their cousins Margaret, Helen, and Flora Murray.<sup>110</sup>

The fluidity of household composition at Andrew and Sarah McNab's home, Emerald Lodge, seems to have facilitated McDermot cousin clusters at local schools as well. Sisters Henrietta and Jane Truthwaite, the latter of whom was born at Emerald Lodge in 1853, attended the Davis school with their cousin, Maria Lane, and their aunt, Harriet McDermot.<sup>111</sup> By the early 1870s, McDermot granddaughters Jessie Lillie, Sarah and Jessie McDermot, Lizzie

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<sup>108</sup> Samuel McKenzie to Matilda Davis, 25 July 1870, and Katie McBeath to Matilda Davis, 16 March 1868, P4724 fo.4, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM.

<sup>109</sup> Roderick McKenzie Jr. to Jane McKenzie McKenzie, 6 Dec 1869, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie Fonds, HBCA.

<sup>110</sup> George Setter married Isabella Kennedy at St. John's in 1835. They had three children – John James, Caroline and Elizabeth. Isabella died in 1846, and Setter remarried Jessie Campbell in 1853. Jessie and George's daughter Nellie, was likely the "Miss Setter" on the Davis school roster. Jessie's sister, Ann, married Alexander Hunter Murray in 1846. Murray retired to his home near Lower Fort Garry in 1867. There is a "Miss Murray" listed in the student lists, but it is not clear which Miss Murray this is. Eliza Cripps Kennedy mentions the Murray sisters in a letter to Matilda Davis in which she also discusses 'Mrs. Setter' (Jessie Campbell Setter). Murray's daughter, Helen Hunter Murray, later became the wife of W.J. Maclean. Eliza Cripps Kennedy to Matilda Davis, n.d., P2343 fo.27, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM; "Washing List for Miss Murray 1868," Notebook 25, P4745 fo.5, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM; "1870 Manitoba Census," database, *Library and Archives Canada*, entry for Matilda Davis school, #815-822, Manitoba Census 1870, MG 9 E.3 vol3, accessed 20 August 2014, <http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/1870/jpg/e010985668.jpg>; Gordon Goldsborough, "Memorable Manitobans: Alexander Hunter Murray," *Manitoba Historical Society*, rev. March 2017, [http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/murray\\_ah.shtml](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/murray_ah.shtml). Gary Still, "George Setter (1815-1899)," *redriverancestry.ca*, rev. 06 May 2016, <http://www.redriverancestry.ca/SETTER-GEORGE-1815.php>.

<sup>111</sup> Postal Covers, P4725/10, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM. Henrietta and Jane Truthwaite were the daughters of Catherine McDermot and Thomas Truthwaite.

and Laura Bannantyne, and Mary and Lily Logan all attended a short-lived Presbyterian girls' school opened by Mrs. Marion Bryce in her Winnipeg home.<sup>112</sup>

The cousin clusters are evident at the schools attended by Indigenous boys as well. At the Nest Academy, cousins Albert Hodgson and Johnnie Davis attended school alongside the Christie cousins Alexander, Charles, John George, Duncan, two Jameses and two Williams.<sup>113</sup> The Christie boys are the only cluster of cousins related by their father's family line that I identified in the schools under study.

These congregations of cousins at school are not identified in the family correspondence as purposeful kin groupings. Certainly, however, given their prevalence and the fact that they occurred both in the HBC territories and abroad, sending Indigenous children to school alongside their maternal cousins was a pattern that reiterates the relevance of maternal kin ties to fur-trade families. For some cousins, their time at school fostered life-long relationships as is evidenced by the correspondence between Benjamin McKenzie Jr and his cousin, James Anderson Jr., in which McKenzie reminisced about their time together at St. John's Collegiate School.<sup>114</sup>

These Indigenous fur-trade children's ancestry was rooted in the land, their ancestral Indigenous languages, and in the maternal kin networks that first supported white fur traders

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<sup>112</sup> Marion Bryce was the wife of Presbyterian minister and founder of Manitoba College, Dr. George Bryce. She had previously been the principal of the Brantford Ladies' College. Her school operated for only a few years, until the St. John's Ladies College opened in the late 1870s in the wake of the closure of the Davis school in 1875. Healy, *Women of Red River*, 259. For the McNab-McDermot family tree, see Norma Hall, "Sarah McNab," *Mothers of the Resistance 1869-1870*, <https://resistancemothers.wordpress.com/about/mcnab/>.

<sup>113</sup> Sons of Alexander Christie Jr. and Caroline Isbister Christie: Alexander, James, William and Duncan. Sons of William J. Christie and Mary Sinclair Christie: William, John George, James and Charles.

<sup>114</sup> Benjamin McKenzie to James Anderson Jr., 17 December 1921, E.37/19 fo. 110-111, James Anderson Family Fonds, HBCA.

who arrived in North America and required the aid of Indigenous women to survive. Brenda Macdougall has argued of the Metis community of Île à la Crosse, where the Cree language and concepts of family were dominant in the nineteenth century, that “family, place and economic realities were historically interconnected, the expression of a world view that laid out a system of social obligation and mutual responsibility between related individuals – between members of a family – as the foundational relationship in communities.” This Cree concept of *wahkootowin*, she argues, underpinned the Metis community at Île à la Crosse, where family was a “‘style of life’ that reflected a shared cultural community.”<sup>115</sup>

It is clear from the ways in which these maternal kin ties influenced these children’s education that, even while Indigenous fur-trade children were attending school to acquire the trappings that would mark them as British ladies and gentlemen, maternal Indigenous kin networks were reinforced and replicated in these colonial settings. In these ways, and as in Macdougall’s study of Île à la Crosse, kin networks continued to be the foundation of their family life and community.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Mobility was often an integral part of the educational experiences of elite Indigenous fur-trade students. For some, this meant travelling to attend school only within the HBC territories, and for others it meant going further abroad to the Canadian colonies or Britain. In doing so, students were enmeshed in complex and supportive webs of trans-imperial social and

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<sup>115</sup> Brenda Macdougall, “Wahkootowin: Family and Cultural Identity in Northwestern Metis Communities,” *Canadian Historical Review* 87, no.3 (September 2006): 432-33.

kin ties that facilitated their travels, their education, and their well-being. At the same time, their educational mobility perpetuated kin ties in the next generation. Tracing Indigenous fur-trade students' engagement with these trans-imperial kin networks reveals the centrality of maternal Indigenous kin network to these children and their families, and in particular to the roles that mobile Indigenous fur-trade women played in maintaining these kin ties.



## CONCLUSION

As I write this conclusion, I am sitting in my office at St. John's College, a university college that has its roots in the Red River Academy and the St. John's Collegiate School that are discussed in this dissertation. I have conceptualized, explored, fretted over, and ignored this study of Indigenous fur-trade students from my home in Winnipeg near the forks of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers. From there, I can hear the bells of the St. Boniface Cathedral a block away ringing to call worshippers to service, announcing marriages, and reminding us that it is dinner time. Le Musée de St. Boniface Museum, the former home and school of the Grey Nuns who taught some of the students in this study, is just down the block from my house. I drive past the former site of the Hudson Bay Company's (HBC) Upper Fort Garry every morning.

This study is deeply steeped in this place, in this land as Treaty 1 territory, the homeland of the Métis Nation, and in the histories of the interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals who are at the heart of the fur trade. My perspectives on Indigenous fur-trade children's history are also rooted in my own personal history as a non-Indigenous spouse of an Indigenous partner, and the mother of two children whose identities are defined by state categories of belonging that have become ambiguous in twenty-first century western Canada. It has often been easy, and sometimes far too easy, to see the faces of my children in place of the young Indigenous boys and girls who were sent off to school at very young ages.

Three of these children, William J. Christie, Donald Mactavish, and David Vincent Stewart, embarked together aboard the Hudson Bay Company (HBC) ship the *Prince of Wales* in

1831 and sailed to London.<sup>1</sup> As outlined in the preceding chapters, from there the three boys went their separate ways. All three received an education in Scotland and England, and all three had family in Britain to support them, or in the case of William and his brother Alexander Jr, at least join them in their educational journeys.

These elite Indigenous fur-trade boys, who were the children and grandchildren of Hudson's Bay Company officers, were able to draw on their class and gender privilege in order to live their lives as respectable middle-class gentlemen in various sites of empire. William J. Christie became one of the highest-ranking HBC officers of his generation. After retiring from the HBC he served as a Treaty Commissioner for Treaty 4 and Treaty 6 negotiations, and relocated with his family to Brockville, Ontario. His daughters married HBC officers, and his sons took up various middle-class occupations including doctor, banker, and HBC officer.

After being forced into leaving his Uncle James Vincent's school, David Vincent Stewart worked as a schoolteacher for some years.<sup>2</sup> At some point, he transitioned into chemical manufacturing and in 1870 married the daughter of a wealthy industrialist.<sup>3</sup> He lived in England until his death in the early twentieth century. The third shipmate, Donald Mactavish, followed his brother Duncan to Australia in the 1840s. By 1841, Donald was working as a clerk in a post

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<sup>1</sup> 1831, Ships' Logs, *Prince of Wales*, C.1/1824 fo. 2-2d, Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA).

<sup>2</sup> "1851 England Census," database, *Ancestry.com* (<https://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 28 June 2017), entry for David Vincent Steuart, Class: HO107; Piece: 1506; Folio: 269; Page: 7; GSU roll: 87840.

<sup>3</sup> David Vincent Stewart (Steuart) married Jessie Eliza Spence in Manchester in 1870. Spence was the daughter of Peter Spence, the owner of Manchester Alum Works and owner of several related patents. By 1881, the Stewart household contained Stewart, his wife, their four children, his wife's three-year-old niece, and three servants. In 1896, Stewart was the head of the Albert Chemical Works near Manchester (*London Gazette*, 17 March 1896). Stewart died in 1907. "1881 England Census," database, *Ancestry.com* (<https://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 15 July 2017) entry for David S. Stewart," Class: RG11; Piece: 3888; Folio: 38; Page: 30; GSU roll: 1341929. "Manchester, England, Marriages and Banns, 1754-1930 (Cathedral)," database, *Ancestry.com* (<https://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 15 July 2017), entry for David Vincent Steuart," Anglican Parish Registers, 1870, Manchester, England. "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915," database, *Ancestry.com* (<https://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 15 July 2017), entry for David Vincent Steuart, July-Aug-Sept 1907.

office, and Duncan as the manager of a sheep farm. Their guardian and cousin, Duncan Mactavish, had gone bankrupt, and in doing so had lost the brothers' inheritance from their father and their financial security. In spite of some financial hardships, Donald explained to his mother that he saw great opportunity in New South Wales, and therefore "I think I shall always remain here I have made this the 'Land of my adoption.'"<sup>4</sup>

Indigenous fur-trade daughters lived similarly diverse lives. Three out of four daughters of HBC employee William Sinclair II and wife Mary McKay married HBC men. Mary Sinclair Christie and Catherine Sinclair Ermatinger later retired to Ontario with their officer husbands. Maria Sinclair married William Calder, who only reached the status of clerk in the Company.<sup>5</sup> Maria and William may have split sometime before 1878, at which time Maria filed a scrip affidavit at St. Andrews as the 'head of household' and 'wife of William Calder.'<sup>6</sup> Margaret Sinclair married English military man Montague William Darling, and thereafter lived the somewhat transient life of a military wife. After their 1848 marriage at Norway House and return to England, Margaret accompanied her husband on his posting to St. Lucia in the West Indies, where their first child was born, and reportedly also gave birth to a child in Montreal in 1865.<sup>7</sup> After their time in St. Lucia, Margaret settled in Sunderland in northeast England to raise

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<sup>4</sup> Donald Mactavish to Josette Monier Mactavish McKenzie, 1 May 1849, E.379/1 fo.16-20, Peter and Josette McKenzie Family Papers, HBCA.

<sup>5</sup> "Calder, William," HBCA Biographical Sheet, rev. 2002, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/calder\\_william1848-1883.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/calder_william1848-1883.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> "Calder, Maria (daughter of William Sinclair and wife of W.m. Calder)," R190-47-7-E, Money Scrip to Metis, Dominion Lands Branch, Department of the Interior Fonds, LAC, accessed 26 August 2017, [http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/ourl/res.php?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&url\\_tim=2017-08-26T23%3A21%3A12Z&url\\_ctx\\_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft\\_dat=4562897&rft\\_id=info%3Asid%2Fcollectionscanada.gc.ca%3Apam&lang=eng](http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/ourl/res.php?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&url_tim=2017-08-26T23%3A21%3A12Z&url_ctx_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft_dat=4562897&rft_id=info%3Asid%2Fcollectionscanada.gc.ca%3Apam&lang=eng). William Calder reputedly remarried Marie Madeleine Betsy Hamelin. Hall, "William II,"

<sup>7</sup> According to family trees compiled by descendants, Kathleen Sinclair Darling was born in Montreal on 14 July 1865 and died in Calais, France in 1933. I have been unable to locate a birth record for her. "Kathleen Sinclair

her family while her husband was sent to colonial spaces as a military officer.<sup>8</sup> By 1881, Montague Darling had retired from the military to settle into a career as a grain importer.<sup>9</sup> He died in South Africa 1901. Margaret thereafter went to live with her daughter, Kathleen Darling Watney, in Boulogne, France. She died in Lewisham, Kent, England in 1906.<sup>10</sup>

The lives of these Indigenous men and women highlight some of the main themes of this study. Fur-trade parents believed that a British-style education would equip their elite Indigenous children to thrive in the HBC territories, the Canadian colonies, and often in Britain and its Empire as well. Education gave sons the best access to upwardly mobile employment prospects within the Company, and equipped daughters with the attributes expected of Victorian middle-class wives and mothers. The lived realities of life in fur-trade country challenged how Indigenous children could achieve these objectives, and racial stereotypes were in constant tension with their ‘respectability.’

This attempt to secure success within the racial, class and gendered boundaries of the British Empire did not mean that these fur-trade families were attempting to become something other than what they were. Education was not a means by which to dispense with or

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Darling,” accessed 26 August 2017, [https://www.ancestry.ca/genealogy/records/kathleen-sinclair-darling\\_117884498](https://www.ancestry.ca/genealogy/records/kathleen-sinclair-darling_117884498).

<sup>8</sup> “Montague William Darling,” Discussion Boards, *Ancestry.com*, accessed 26 August 2017, <https://www.ancestry.ca/boards/surnames.darling/1296.1/mb.ashx>.

<sup>9</sup> “1881 England Census,” database, *Ancestry.com* (<https://ancestry.com>: accessed 26 August 2017), entry for Willm Darling, Class: *RG11*; Piece: *4995*; Folio: *132*; Page: *39*; GSU roll: *1342202*.

<sup>10</sup> *Manitoba Morning Free Press*, 26 March 26 1902; “July-Aug-Sept 1906,” *England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915*, database *ancestry.com* (<https://www.ancestry.com/>: accessed 26 August 2017), search for Margaret Darling, died September 1906, Lewisham, Kent County, vol. 1d, p.671. According to descendent Gail Darling, Margaret’s son Ralph Montague Darling and Emily Ermatinger Crawford also spent time in Boulonge, France. Norma Hall, “William Sinclair II,” *Doing Canadian History n.O.*, accessed 26 August 2017, <https://hallnjean.wordpress.com/seafarers/lecture-transcript-an-introduction-to-the-history-of-aboriginal-sailors-of-hudson-bay/captain-colin-robertson-sinclair/family-network-of-captain-colin-robertson-sinclair/william-sinclair-ii/>.

disguise their Indigenous heritage. Indeed, in the context of the HBC territories where kin networks were extensive and gossip circulated quickly and freely, it would have been virtually impossible to do so. Rather, the elite fur-trade children and families in this study drew on various First Nations and European ancestries to negotiate the shifting racial and social boundaries in Canada and the British Empire.

These children were not trying to be anyone besides who they already were – elite Indigenous children of the British Empire. Their educational experiences and life histories reveal a continuity of Indigenous skills, language, kin ties, and material culture through to at least the 1870s. These aspects of their Indigenous heritage existed alongside and intersected with the privilege they were able to access as the children of the colonial elite and trans-imperial families. Indigenous fur-trade children were furthermore rooted in the HBC territories through their connections to kin networks, the traditional Indigenous languages and knowledge that most of them learned from their parents or other kin, and their relationships with other Indigenous peoples.

At the same time, they were part of a group of imperial mixed-descent children who were the source of a great deal of anxiety for both their parents and British administrators, missionaries and entrepreneurs. The curriculum that was meant to teach Indigenous children the performance of British middle-class identities was similar across the HBC territories, in Britain, and in schoolrooms across the Empire. Reading, writing, religion, and middle-class social values were at the core of the teachings offered up in classrooms at all of these sites of empire. In the HBC territories, however, where missionaries were attuned to the project of civilizing and Christianizing Indigenous peoples, this curriculum was leveraged in different ways than it was in

metropolitan spaces. Students who attended these schools, however, were also able to retain connections to Indigenous kin, the land and their languages in ways that students who went to single-culture British and Canadian schools were not. In these ways, middle-class Indigenous fur-trade students learned ‘respectability’ in ways that were both ubiquitous to the British Empire and tailored to the local conditions of the metropole and colony.

Exploring Indigenous fur-trade children’s education also provides insight into students as mobile Indigenous peoples in the Empire. These children and their families lived trans-imperial lives that were connected to and that served to connect the HBC territories, the Canadas, Britain, and beyond. For these families, the HBC territories were not an isolated outpost of the British Empire but were instead only one site of an imperial circuit of family mobility. An extensive network of British and Indigenous kin spanned these sites of Empire, and supported fur-trade students who were at school. Moreover, their educational mobility provides a window into the reciprocal movement of people, ideas, and culture between the HBC territories, Britain, and other parts of the Empire that formed what Catherine Hall described as the ‘mutually constitutive empire.’

My exploration of the lives of these Indigenous fur-trade students points the way to further studies that will help to understand how these elite Indigenous fur-trade families lived in and influenced both the British Empire and the burgeoning Canadian settler-colonial state. As the details of the lives of William Christie, David Stewart and Donald Mactavish show, the life paths of fur-trade students were diverse. The Indigenous fur trade sons carried their class and gender privilege and multicultural ancestries forward with them into their adult lives. Those who remained in or returned to Canada often became lawyers, doctors, teachers, judges, and a

premier of Manitoba. One fought and died for the Canadian forces at the Battle of Batoche in 1885, while others, like the brothers of Albert Hodgson, became missionaries. Some relocated or retired to Ontario and Quebec or, like David Vincent Stewart and Donald Mactavish, they followed the circuits of people who moved throughout the British Empire.

The life stories of the Indigenous fur-trade daughters in this study also point to areas for further study. Indigenous girls and women were more likely than their brothers to remain in the Canadian colonies and Britain. The reasons why are unclear. Sometimes they arrived there as students, sometimes as daughters, and sometimes as wives. Women like Margaret Sinclair Darling, Mary Finlayson Lamb, and Mary Christie Patterson all married British men and lived out their lives in England and Scotland. In some cases, their children or grandchildren returned to Canada and re-established links to their families and colonial past.<sup>11</sup> These women's trans-imperial lives challenge the associations between racialized women and their place in the historical literature. While Indigenous men's mobility is obtaining more recognition from scholars, Indigenous women continue to be associated most often with the local in Canadian and fur-trade histories. Why did these women choose to remain in the metropole? How did they configure their imperial identities as racialized and colonial women in Britain? How was their Indigenous heritage remembered by their British families?

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<sup>11</sup> Ralph Darling, the son of Margaret Sinclair Darling and General Montague Darling, married his Canadian cousin Emily Ermatinger Crawford sometime after 1881. Emily was Margaret Darling's great-niece by her sister, Catherine Sinclair Ermatinger. Mary Finlayson Lamb's son, John, served with the Canadian Expeditionary Force during World War I. Her son, John William Lamb, served in the Canadian Expeditionary Force during World War I, and died during the war. "Private John Lamb," Canadian Great War Project, 11 November 2016, <http://www.canadiangreatwarproject.com/searches/soldierDetail.asp?ID=57042>; Hall, "William Sinclair II."

The Indigenous fur-trade girls who remained in Canada in many ways contributed to and contested the developing Canadian nation-state. For women whose occupations were most often that of wives and mothers, this occurred in the mundane details of everyday life. They reinforced and replicated the British middle-class norms and values that they had learned at school, and passed them on to their children. Material culture collections like the Metis beadwork produced by the Christie women in the McTavish Collection at the Manitoba Museum, however, demonstrate that women continued to pass along their Indigenous knowledge and skills through their roles as mothers and grandmothers.

Women also engaged in more public ways with the ongoing constructions and negotiations of race, class, and gender in the Canadian west. Helen Murray McLean was most likely one of the Miss Murrays on the student rolls at the Miss Davis School in the 1860s.<sup>12</sup> She married Chief Factor W.J. McLean and, in 1885, she and her daughters became famous for holding off the warriors of the Big Bear band at Fort Pitt during the 1885 North-West Resistance. The McLean sisters, who could ride, shoot, and speak Cree and Saulteaux became a source of fascination and discussion in the discourse of race and civilization surrounding the

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<sup>12</sup> Helen Murray McLean was an Indigenous fur trade daughter who was connected to the Kennedy family through extended kin ties. George Setter married Isabella Kennedy at St. John's in 1835. After Isabella died in 1846, Setter remarried Jessie Campbell in 1853. Jessie's sister, Ann, married Alexander Hunter Murray in 1846. Murray retired to his home near Lower Fort Garry in 1867. There is a "Miss Murray" listed in the student lists, but it is not clear which Miss Murray this is. Eliza Cripps Kennedy mentions the Murray sisters in a letter to Matilda Davis in which she also discusses 'Mrs. Setter' (Jessie Campbell Setter). Eliza Cripps Kennedy to Matilda Davis, n.d., P2343 fo.27, Matilda Davis Family Papers, AM; "Washing List for Miss Murray 1868," Notebook 25, P4745 fo.5, Matilda Davis School Collection, AM; "1870 Manitoba Census," database, *Library and Archives Canada* (accessed 19 August 2017), entry for Alexander Murray family, #815-822, MG 9 E.3 vol3, <http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/1870/jpg/e010985668.jpg>; Gordon Goldsborough, "Memorable Manitobans: Alexander Hunter Murray," *Manitoba Historical Society*, rev. March 2017, [http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/murray\\_ah.shtml](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/murray_ah.shtml).



Resistance.<sup>13</sup> One of the daughters, Amelia McLean Paget, later married a Canadian civil servant who worked in the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA). In 1906, Paget was commissioned by the DIA to write an account of the Northwest Cree. In 1909, she published *People of the Plains*, a sympathetic depiction of First Nations peoples that “complicated boundaries of identity and difference” in the settler-colonial state.<sup>14</sup>

In these ways, the intersections of multicultural ancestries and class privilege in these Indigenous fur-trade children’s lives carried on into adulthood. This complicates too-often accepted national narratives of the rise of the Canadian state, in which First Nations and Metis peoples were pushed to the sideline in order for white men and women to construct settler-colonialism in western Canadian. The childhoods and life histories of the children in this study show that we require a better understanding of the roles played by elite Indigenous men and women in this period. A new generation of historians is working to remedy our lack of knowledge of the histories of the Metis in Canada after 1885.<sup>15</sup> An exploration of these former fur-trade students as Indigenous nation builders and resisters should be part of this re-assessment of late-nineteenth and early twentieth century Metis history.

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<sup>13</sup> The family was taken hostage by the warriors, and were part of a forced march across the Treaty 6 territory as the band tried to escape the Canadian forces. Several of the family members including sister Kitty, brother Duncan and father William all published accounts of their captivity. For more information and a list of sources, see Sarah A. Carter, “McLEAN, AMELIA ANNE (Paget),” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 15, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed August 18, 2017,

[http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mclean\\_amelia\\_anne\\_15E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mclean_amelia_anne_15E.html). On discourses of race and gender related to the McLean women during the 1885 Resistance, see Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada’s Prairie West* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> Sarah Carter, “The ‘Cordial Advocate’: Amelia McLean Paget and *The People of the Plains*,” in *With Good Intentions: Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal Relations in Colonial Canada*, ed. Celia Haig-Brown and David A. Nock (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006) 199. See also Amelia Anne McLean Paget, *The People of the Plains*, ed. and intro. D. C. Scott (Toronto, 909).

<sup>15</sup> For example, see Jesse Thistle, “The Puzzle of the Morrissette-Arcand Clan: A History Of Metis Historic and Intergenerational Trauma,” (MA Thesis, University of Waterloo, 2016).

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