Editor's Note

The present issue of *Prairie Forum* features six articles with a focus ranging from the study of hinterland provisioning in the late eighteenth century to the analysis of contemporary trends in prairie cinema.

George Colpitts' essay makes use of the quantitative analysis of original sources to show how sensitive the concepts of territory and catchment area already were on the Saskatchewan River two hundred years ago. Brian Titley offers an uncompromising portrait of J.A.N. Provencher, a political appointee from Quebec, and of his mismanagement of Indian affairs in Manitoba in the 1870s. Conversely, James Pitsula gives us as an example of political good will the uneasy yet productive relationship between the CCF government and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians around 1960.

We also have an article from Brittany, France, in which Jean Le Bihan gives an exhaustive account of the transition from small-scale European village life to prairie immensity on the part of a family who emigrated from Brittany at the beginning of this century. Frances Kaye then describes with some humour the recent chaotic controversies surrounding the unveiling of two statues of Louis Riel in two different prairie cities. And finally Gerald Horne, while outlining the history of prairie cinema, examines whether a region can adequately express its culture through film.

We hope that this issue continues to reflect our journal's eclectic yet thorough approach to the study of the prairie region in all its ramifications.

Patrick C. Douaud
Editor-in-Chief
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"Victuals to Put into our Mouths": Environmental Perspectives on Fur Trade Provisioning Activities at Cumberland House, 1775-1782

George Colpitts

ABSTRACT. Quantitative analysis of post journals helps illuminate features of a changing provisioning trade at Cumberland House, the Hudson's Bay Company's inland post on the Saskatchewan River. Rabbits, pheasants, moose, fish and wildfowl were available only in season and were periodically affected by natural population cycles. The post widened its provisioning hinterland because local moose populations, as indexed in "green" or fresh meat, were often unavailable to traders and hunter Indians. Post employees, then, welcomed and traded meat from ever more distant hunting grounds. By 1781, Cumberland House's provisioning hinterland had increased dramatically, finally tapping into distant buffalo grounds and even Beaver Indian hunting territory. At that point, dried buffalo possibly constituted a greater proportion of the fur trader's diet. This study brings a methodological framework for further quantitative study of the fur trade, its commercial viability, and such issues as the Indians' role in depleting game resources.

SOMMAIRE. Une analyse quantitative des journaux met en relief les changements intervenus dans le ravitaillement à Cumberland House, le comptoir de la Compagnie de la Baie d'Hudson situé sur la Saskatchewan. Lapins, faisans, orignaux, poisson et gibier à plume n'étaient disponibles qu'en saison et variaient avec les cycles de population naturels. Le comptoir dut élargir son champ de ravitaillement car la population d'orignaux locale, cataloguée "viande fraîche", était souvent hors de la portée des marchands et des chasseurs indiens. Les employés se ravitaillèrent donc en viande provenant de terrains de chasse de plus en plus éloignés. En 1781 ce territoire se trouva énormément accru, exploitant les terrains à bison et jusqu'aux territoires de chasse des Indiens Beaver. La viande de bison séchée constituait sans doute alors la plus grande partie de l'alimentation des marchands de fourrures. Cet article apporte une méthodologie aux futures études quantitatives sur le commerce des fourrures, sur sa viabilité, et sur des questions telles que le rôle des Indiens dans l'appauvrissement des ressources en gibier.

This article appraises provisioning activities at the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) post, Cumberland House, between 1775 and 1782. By analyzing the post's initial eight years of operation, it offers a quantitative assessment of the nature of provisioning in the North American fur trade. While historians, ethnologists and geographers have noted the important roles Indians played in providing country food to posts and have identified specialization among some provisioners like the Assiniboine and Cree,[1] few studies have fully assessed the extent of these activities, the size of provisioning

1 Ray identifies the seasonally changing roles of these groups: Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Roles as Trappers, Hunters and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974.) Ray also addresses the importance of Great Plains provisioning in the expansion of the fur trade: Arthur J. Ray, "The Northern Great Plains: Pantry of the Northwestern Fur Trade, 1774-1885," *Prairie Forum* 9, no. 2 (Fall 1984): 263-80. Morantz has pointed out post employees' dependency on home guard goose and "deer" hunters: Toby Morantz, *An Ethnohistoric Study of Eastern James Bay Cree Social Organization, 1700-1850*, National Museum of Man Mercury Series, Paper No. 88 (Ottawa: Canadian Ethnology Service, 1983). See also Dale Russell, "The Effects of the Spring Goose Hunt on the Crees in the Vicinity of York Factory and Churchill River in the 1700s," National Museum of Man Mercury Series, Paper No. 28, *Proceedings of the Second Congress, Canadian Ethnology Service*, Vol. 2: 420-32 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1975).

hinterlands, and other factors such as resource exhaustion that might have influenced the "victualling" of individual posts.

This shortfall in the historiography of the fur trade deserves more attention. An examination of several nineteenth-century post journals[2] reveals that posts often traded more for food than furs. As well as buying provisions from visiting or home guard Indians, many employees daily maintained gardens, fished, mended nets, hunted, and — in season — left their posts to live and hunt with Indians. The numbers of post employees dedicated to foraging activities represented a formidable operating cost for the HBC and other fur trading companies.

A quantitative analysis of Cumberland House's provisioning activities sheds further light on these features of post life. It also raises questions about a number of assumptions regarding Indian hunting behaviour during the fur trade, behaviour linked to resource depletion. A culmination of ruthless competition between rival trading companies and traders' long-term meat requirements is believed to have caused Indians to deplete the beaver and game resources of northern Ontario, central and southern Manitoba, and Saskatchewan by 1821.[3] To explain this apparently destructive behaviour, scholars have suggested that an ecological "disequilibrium" was achieved — that Indians fell out of traditional, harmonious relationships with nature into *unnatural* trapping and provisioning — or that economic profit motives existed and shaped Indian activities.[4] Our present understandings of such issues might benefit from a fuller historical analysis

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2 This study draws upon a number of late eighteenth and nineteenth century journals including: George Simpson, *Journal of Occurrences in the Athabasca Department, 1820 and 1821* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1838); Frederick Merk, ed., *Fur Trade and Empire: George Simpson's Journal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931); Glenbow Archives (hereafter GA), M941, Diary of Murdoch McPherson, 1834; GA, M272, Fort Resolution Post Journal, 1861; GA, M889, Qu'Appelle Lake Post Journal, 1857-1858; GA, M165, McLeod's Lake Post Journal, 1845-48; *Fort Pelly Journal*, 1863 (Regina: Regina Archeological Society, 1987); Duncan M'Gillivrey, *The Journal of Duncan M'Gillivrey of the North West Co. at Fort George ... 1794-5* (Toronto: Macmillan Co., 1924); A.N. McLeod's Journal, Fort Alexandria, 1799, in Charles Gates (ed.), *Five Fur Traders of the Northwest: Being the Narrative of Peter Pond and the Diaries of John Macdonnell, Archibald N. McLeod, Hugh Faries, and Thomas Connor* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1933).

3 See Arthur J. Ray, "Some Conservation Schemes of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1821-50: An Examination of the Problems of Resource Management in the Fur Trade," *Journal of Economic History* 1, no. 1(1975): 49-68. Charles Bishop examines the depletion of ungulates leading to changes in social organization among Northern Ojibwa: Charles A. Bishop, *The Northern Ojibwa and the Fur Trade: An Historical and Ecological Study* (Toronto: Holt Rineholt and Winston, 1974).

4 For ecological perspectives, see Rene R. Gadacz, "Montagnais Hunting Dynamics in Historicoecological Perspective," *Anthropologica* 17, no. 2 (1975): 149-68; David V. Burley, "Proto-Historic Ecological Effects of the Fur Trade in Micmac Culture in Northeastern New Brunswick," *Ethnohistory* 28, no. 3 (1981): 203-16. Martin presented crises in religious cosmology as another motivation: Calvin Martin, *Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships and the Fur Trade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

of the hunting effort required to deplete forests and watersheds,[5] and of the extent to which Indians significantly altered their seasonal activities to participate in the trade. Furthermore, food shortages periodically marking post life, raising the price of provisions, slowing the trade and threatening the existence of Indian and trader alike, can find a meaningful and informative context within a local environment and ecological setting.[6]

Cumberland House journals show that post employees collected their provisions seasonally and often according to wildlife population cycles. Periodic food shortages which became apparent almost immediately after the post was constructed can be attributed to the local environment and the post's social organization. Cumberland employees, after all, were members of a semisedentary society. They were required to seek alternative provisions when nearby meat resources could not sustain their needs. At Cumberland House, food scarcities forced employees to specialize in fishing and widen the post's provisioning hinterlands. In short, they changed their eating habits and got their food from farther afield. These changes can be recognized in a quantitative analysis of post journals over an eight-year period, when employees periodically consumed less fresh, or "green," meat and replaced it in their diets by eating more dried meat from ever more distant hunting grounds. Records are not explicit, but the buffalo seems to have played an increasingly important dietary role at Cumberland House by 1782.

This assessment has wider implications for fur trade studies. From its beginnings the trade clearly was burdened with a costly and onerous provisioning challenge that not only affected post life, but determined some of the post's interaction with Indians and tested some of the commercial viability of the fur trade itself.[7]

Cumberland House was established in 1774, the first HBC post on the Saskatchewan River. The company had sent Samuel Hearne to establish the house in response to the prior incursions and effective competition of Montreal pedlars.[8] Constructed in 1775 on Pine Lake in present-day

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5 Carlos and Lewis' work applies carrying capacity estimates within their quantitative analysis of beaver harvests: Ann M. Carlos and Frank D. Lewis, "Indians, the Beaver and the Bay: The Economics of Depletions in the Lands of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1700-1763," *Journal of Economic History* 53, no. 3 (1993): 465-94.

6 Some of the complex issues related to starvation reports are addressed by Mary Black-Rogers, "Varieties of 'Starving': Semantics and Survival in the Subarctic Fur Trade, 1750-1850," *Ethnohistory* 33, no. 4 (1986): 353-83.

7 Arthur J. Ray, "Periodic Shortages, Native Welfare, and the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1930," in Shepard Krech III, ed., *The Subarctic Fur Trade: Native Social and Economic Adaptations* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984), 1-19.

8 See E.E. Rich's Introduction to the post journals: E.E. Rich, ed., *Cumberland and Hudson House Journals 1775-1782*, 2 vols. (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1951), hereafter, *Cumberland*.

Saskatchewan, the trading post constituted the furthest step inland by the company after its construction of Henley House on the Albany River. It also marked the beginnings of an intensive trade rivalry between Canadian traders and the HBC that would extend along the North Saskatchewan and up the Athabasca Rivers. This trade rivalry resulted in the building of more posts and the placement inland of more men. It also increased food requirements.[9] Transporting provisions to the interior — corn, wild rice, oatmeal and flour — constituted a staggering expense, as did buying food from Indians. Alexander Henry the Younger's reference to "the vast quantity of provision we require yearly to carry on the trade in the northwest," included not only the thousands of pounds of meat required at posts, but the massive quantities vital for the success of canoe brigades going in and out of trading areas.[10]

Although strategically situated to tap both western and northern fur regions,[11] Cumberland House was less fortunate with respect to food resources. Unlike the posts situated in "Buffalo Country," Cumberland was located in the boreal forest, between the Precambrian Shield to the north and the edge of the Great Plains to the south. Philip Turner's late eighteenth century map shows a conspicuously empty game region surrounding Cumberland House, unlike the abundant "southern Indian country" along the South and North Saskatchewan Rivers.[12] At Cumberland House, conifers, especially white and black spruce, were dominant. Wildlife such as moose (*Alces alces*) were fairly abundant and Pine Lake held whitefish (*Coregonus clupeaformis*), sturgeon (*Acipenser fulvescens*), pike (*Esox lucius*), and perch.[13]

Indians had adopted seminomadic lifestyles to compensate for an environment noted for cyclical and seasonal food availability.[14] A.J. Ray has studied the seasonal migrations of the Cree and Assiniboine in this light. The former inhabited woodland areas where they hunted moose and

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9 Ernest Voorhis, *Historic Forts and Trading Posts of the French Regime and the English Fur Trading Companies* (Ottawa: Department of Interior, 1930).

10 A.S. Morton cites this quotation in his introduction to M'Gillivrey's diaries, *Journal of Duncan M'Gillivrey*, viii. Henry had stated that each canoe brigade consumed four ninety-pound bags of pemmican en route to Cumberland House.

11 "Cumberland House Historical Park," Government of Saskatchewan Museum's Branch, 1978. Also, J.E.M. Kew, *Cumberland House in 1960*, Report No. 2. Economic and Social Survey of Northern Saskatchewan, March 1962 (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1962).

12 A reproduction of Turner's map is appended to *The Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turner, 1774-1792* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1934.)

13 It is not clear what species of perch dominated in Pine Lake. Robins et al., provide common and scientific names for fish in Canada. C.R. Robins et al., *Common and Scientific Names of Fishes from the United States and Canada*, 5th ed. (Bethesda, MD: American Fisheries Society, 1991). Special Publication #20.

14 Bruce Cox, *Cultural Ecology: Readings on the Canadian Indians and Eskimos* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), 56.

beaver during the summer and early fall, and moved to the parkland belt during the winter. The Assiniboine spent the warmer months in the grasslands and moved into the parkland belt during winter.[15] This "exploitation" cycle allowed Indians to take advantage of the hunting opportunities of both environments.

Cumberland House employees did not enjoy such mobility. As a social organization the post was quite different from Native bands and the small, highly mobile groups of pedlars who operated extensively to the north, west and south of the house.[16] When Matthew Cocking replaced Hearne as the post's chief trader in 1775 and had to oversee the dietary requirements of fifteen employees, he immediately set out to exploit fish populations in Pine Lake, encouraged trade in provisions, and built up a meat surplus sufficient to withstand privations.[17] A "victualling shed" was built and a garden planted. Cocking's intention was to compensate for the sedentary nature of the post's social organization by stocking a surplus of food and exploiting nearby resources.

The strategy might have succeeded had nearby game resources not been susceptible to depletion. Country food was marked by seasonal availability and sometimes dramatic natural population cycles. Wildfowl was available only in spring and fall. Rabbits and pheasants also followed population fluctuations. Within a year of arriving at Cumberland House, Cocking heard from Indians that lynx (or "inland cats") were unavailable due to the scarcity of rabbits, this explaining why HBC men had no success snaring hares that winter and the next.[18] Even fish populations moved within Pine Lake according to seasonal water temperatures and oxygen levels.[19] Post employees set out virtually year-round with nets, but sturgeon, trout, perch and whitefish were abundant only in specific periods of the year, when schools were within reach. The catch generally fell off by January and remained poor until March.

During late winter, meat provisions began dwindling when weather conditions prevented trading Indians from travelling. While in summer and fall moose moved to watered areas where they could be hunted with relative ease and transported by canoe, by late October rivers and lake

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15 Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*. Theodore Binnema is presently investigating related issues.

16 Cocking noted that pedlars divided themselves into groups of six men during the winter and supplied themselves with nets and ammunition. See Rich, *Cumberland* 1: 28.

17 Rich cites the gifted "patience" and skills of Orkney fishermen. "Introduction," *Cumberland* 2: liv-lv.

18 On 11 December 1775, Cocking noted that both pheasants and rabbits "were scarce, particularly Rabbets [*sic*]." See Rich, *Cumberland* 1: 24. By July Indians attributed a lack of "cats" to declining numbers of rabbits: see ibid., 67.

19 Martin J. Paetz and Joseph S. Nelson, *The Fishes of Alberta* (Edmonton: Government of Alberta, 1970), 8-15. In 1777, post employees fished 140 days of the year; days not fishing were often spent mending nets.

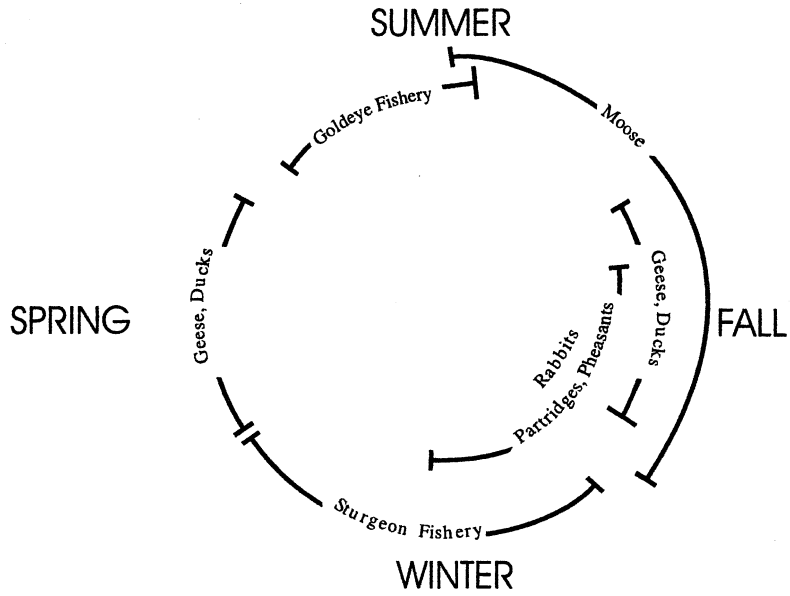

Figure 1. Major seasonal provisioning activities, Cumberland House: 1775-1782.

systems were beginning to ice over. A master learned that any significant stores of meat had to be collected by fall, "when the Buck Moose are Fat, and the Indians have the convenience of Canoes."[20] By January, with northern winds howling outside and few visitors likely to arrive, house rations were often cut in half.

Traders, then, faced periodic, if not predictable provisioning constraints throughout the year. As at all trading posts, a seasonal cycle dominated the provisioning activities at Cumberland House (Figure 1).

This provisioning cycle, however, raises a number of questions. The extent to which changing game populations affected traders is not fully known. This is of critical importance when considering big game. The primary meat resource at Cumberland House was moose, still relatively abundant in the lakes region of present-day Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Indians delivered moose in a variety of forms: fresh ("green"), "beat" (Indians pounded it between rocks and sometimes added dried fish to the composite), dried and "half-dried."[21] Of these, green meat was a favoured

20 Rich, *Cumberland* 1: 110.

21 Graham describes these meat preparations in ibid., 1: 77n. Cocking pointed out to York Factory officials that "half-dried" meat at Cumberland was the same as "dried" meat at York; half-dried meat was further dried to better preserve it, ibid., 1: 28. Ray also provides detail of these various meat productions: Arthur J. Ray, "Fur Trade Pantry," 265.

trade commodity, especially after long periods of rationing and dried meat consumption. It fetched higher prices for trading Indians.[22] The extent to which forests nearby were depleted of moose over time is not known, but a close examination of the post's green meat consumption ought to show whether numbers of moose killed locally, and sold fresh for higher prices, changed over time.

An expanding provisioning hinterland might also indicate local resource exhaustion. A growing scarcity in moose might have encouraged provisioning Indians from further west to trade. If that was the case, post records ought to indicate the arrival of more Indians from distant game regions and different meat being introduced, particularly buffalo.

Quantitative analysis of the post journals helps shed light on these issues. Few of Cumberland House's account books, which would have indicated changing prices of country food, have survived.[23] However, the HBC Archives preserved the post's journals of daily occurrences from 1775 well into the nineteenth century. The present study analyzes the first eight years of these journals in an attempt to find the *relative* amounts, description and origins of country foods reaching the post. At the end of the period studied, Hudson House was supplying Cumberland with more quantities of provisions, notably buffalo, and the complex relationship between these two posts beyond this period requires further investigation.[24] The Cumberland House journals which have been analyzed nevertheless provide valuable information about the size of fish catches, the numbers of rabbits snared and partridges shot — commodities often collected by employees which, because no trade items were exchanged for them, would not appear in account ledgers. These journals offer, then, a rich source of information for estimating the total effort directed towards stocking provisions at the post as well as the volume of the food trade taking place with Indians.

Seasonal and cyclical changes in game and fish resources have been assessed by comparing monthly totals of species reaching the post and appearing in the journals' daily entries. The sturgeon, geese, swans, ducks, partridges (known also as "pheasants"), and rabbits brought back to the post were frequently enumerated explicitly. Sturgeon, unlike smaller lake fish, attracted the attention of journal writers, possibly due to the species'

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22 On 26 September 1779, William Tomison, then chief trader at Cumberland House, noted that he purchased two canoes of green meat from Indians, even though the post had sufficient fresh geese. He did so not to "affront" the trading Indians: "me haveing it dried made it some little more Expences." See Rich, *Cumberland* 2: 16.

23 Accounts appear in the post's journals for the years 1796 and 1827. The post's account books are preserved in the HBC Archives for the years 1796-1797, 1804-1805, 1810-1816, and frequently for years between 1821 and 1870.

24 See the journals of Robert Longmoore and William Tomison at Hudson House, 1778-1782, HBC Archives, B/87 a/1-5.

size which ranged from fifteen to eighty-five pounds in weight. The specific number of this type of fish, therefore, was usually well recorded.

A number of problems arise, however, in the assessment of moose and of fish other than sturgeon. Often expressions such as "a few fish," or "three canoes arrived with moose," were used by the journal writers. For purposes of comparison, meat has here been measured by the numbers of canoes bringing it to the post. The total weight of meat carried in canoes obviously varied. It was sometimes as high as 250 pounds,[25] often the amount of meat taken from a killed moose. Difficulties with this unit of measure are encountered in winter entries, when the few provisions arriving at the post were listed by the number of sleds or the number of Indians arriving to trade. In these cases, the study has converted two "sleds" to equal one "canoe," for the sake of comparison. Likewise, individuals occasionally arrived at the post carrying between forty-five to eighty pounds of meat.[26] For the purpose of these estimates, four trading individuals have here been represented as carrying the equivalent of one canoe of provisions. As for daily fish catches described as "a few," "a great success at the nets," "not much success at the nets," and "a middling success at the nets," the values of three, ten, two and five, respectively, have been assigned to these occurrences in the journals.

Many of these figures, then, will not show real quantities of food resources. Only occasionally do the post journals clearly list inventories of meat (see Figure 2).[27] The journals rarely list the total number of pounds of provisions traded by Indians. What has been assumed is that expressions such as "a few" were used consistently, and just as wildlife population surveys are presently conducted with margins of error, it is expected that errors will occur consistently in the survey. The survey's value, then, lies not in its ability to show the actual number of moose and fish collected, but in its ability to indicate *change* in provisioning over time.

A final note on methodology is required. Post journals were often explicit about the canoes of fresh meat arriving at the post, possibly because they brought food more costly in terms of trade goods, and also because

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25 This is likely a high estimate. More often, canoes arrived with about 150 pounds of moose — see 26 September 1777. Two canoes often arrived with 200 to 250 pounds of green moose — see 3 and 14 July 1778. Similarly, 20 September 1781, two canoes arrived with 265 pounds of green and dried meat.

26 The journals record eight Sweet Herb Lake Indians arriving with 375 pounds of meat, an average of 45 pounds per person on 8 March 1777. Four men were often sent to collect meat from a killed moose. See 23 December 1777, when four men returned with 290 pounds of moose meat, an average of 72 pounds per person. On 17 February 1778, one man and three women arrivedat the post with 334 pounds of provisions, an average of 83 pounds each.

27 These should not be confused with the winter's total stock. The post went through staggering amounts of meat. For instance, on 23 January 1777, when Cocking made out that year's inventory of stock as 1,566 pounds total (represented in Figure 2), he lamented that it would last the post only thirty-seven days.

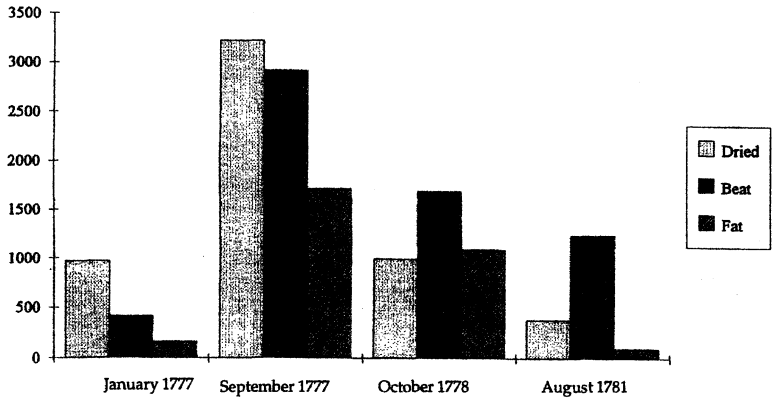

Figure 2. Inventories of provisions in Cumberland House, 1777, 1778, 1781 (in pounds).

employees preferred fresh meat to dried meat. On several occasions the expression "a canoe of provisions" was used by a journal writer to describe a cargo of green meat, its freshness identifiable only when men were assigned to smoke or dry portions of it the day after it was traded. These cargoes have been counted as "green." Furthermore, since the purpose of the green meat survey is to see nearby population cycles,[28] moose that were killed near the post by home guard Indians and post employees have been assumed to be green, even though portions of this meat were likely dried for future use.

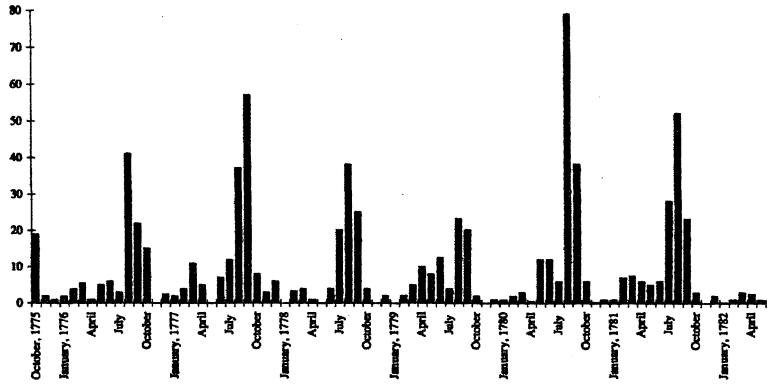

Figure 3. Meat, dry and green, reaching Cumberland House, 1775-1782 (by number of canoes).

28 The post rejected green meat brought from too great a distance or after it went bad. One canoe brought to the post meat that "had been too long kept for some part of it was running over with maggots." See Rich, *Cumberland* 2: 109. On 7 July 1777, a canoe carried "tainted" moose and was refused.

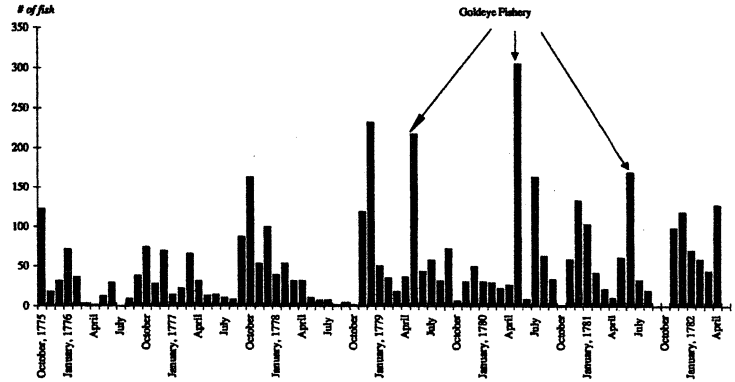

Figure 4. Fish, all species, Cumberland House, 1775-1782.

The post journals show that the total amount of meat arriving at Cumberland House varied according to the season. Canoes of provisions arrived in greatest frequency in August and September, while much smaller numbers of canoes reached the post in May (Figure 3). The meat trade ended abruptly in October, when rivers and streams finally froze over and Indians could bring only small amounts of meat by sled. Chief trader Cocking was quite surprised by the arrival in March 1777 of four Sweet Herb Lake Indians with a "trifle" of provisions, but "according to their Number [they had brought] much more Provisions than I could have expected at this Time of the Year such a Distance."[29] Fish (Figures 4 and 5), wildfowl (Figure 6), partridges and rabbits (Figures 7 and 8), meanwhile, display an availability

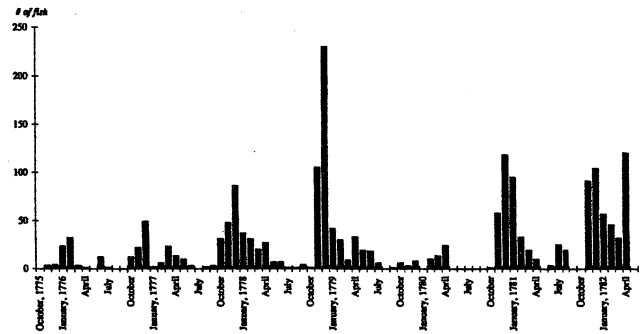

Figure 5. Sturgeon Fishery, Cumberland House, 1775-1782.

29 Cocking to Marten, 8 March 1777, Rich, *Cumberland* 1: 126-27.

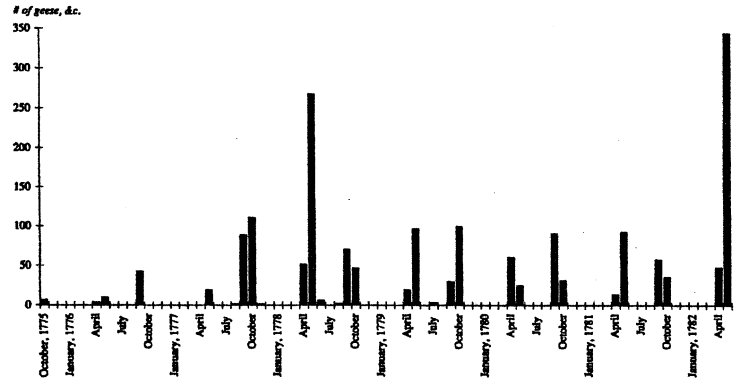

Figure 6. Geese, ducks and swans, Cumberland House, 1775-1782.

in specific seasons of the year. The figures also display peaks and lows in natural population cycles: for instance, an abundant year for pheasants is clearly discernible in 1780, while rabbits were reaching their cyclical peak in 1778.

William Cocking adapted his post's sedentary organization to such seasonal and cyclical population changes in a number of ways. In October of the first year inland Cocking sent William Walker, one of the post's employees, to winter with Indians at Cranberry Portage, "to be supported" by the Indians and aid in hunting. In late December, Walker returned with two sleds of moose and beaver flesh.[30] Sending post employees away "to be

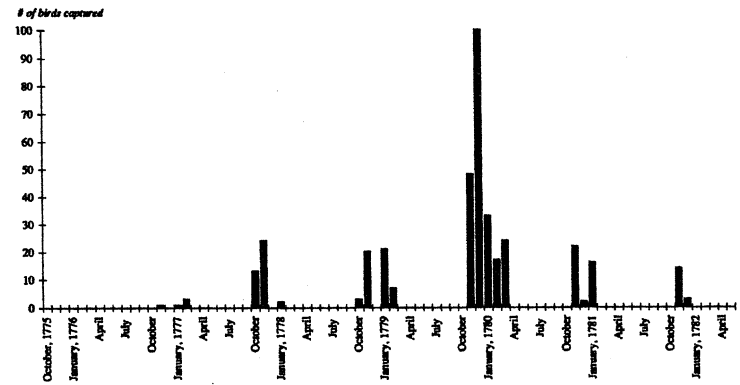

Figure 7. Total "pheasants" and "partridges," Cumberland House, 1775-1782.

30 18 October 1775, 22 December 1775. See Rich, *Cumberland* 1.

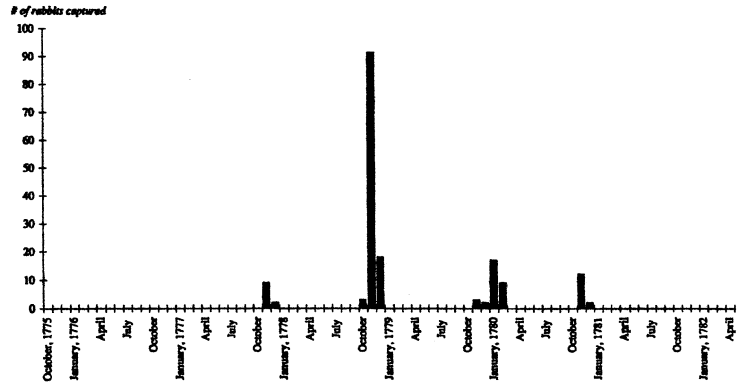

Figure 8. Rabbits captured at Cumberland House, 1775-1782.

supported" became a common strategy, especially when nets were falling off by January and provisions were scant. In those cold, hungry months in 1779, for instance, Nicholas Wishart was sent "away with Indians to be supported" and to "assist in bringing in provisions, when they may kill a moose."[31]

The post also drew provisions from home guard "hunter" Indians living nearby in camps. Some provided considerable food for the post, such as one unnamed individual described by Cocking as "the only Indian that has continued by us this Winter" and who supplied the post with 740 pounds of fresh moose meat.[32] Often encamped nearby in the late summer to trade

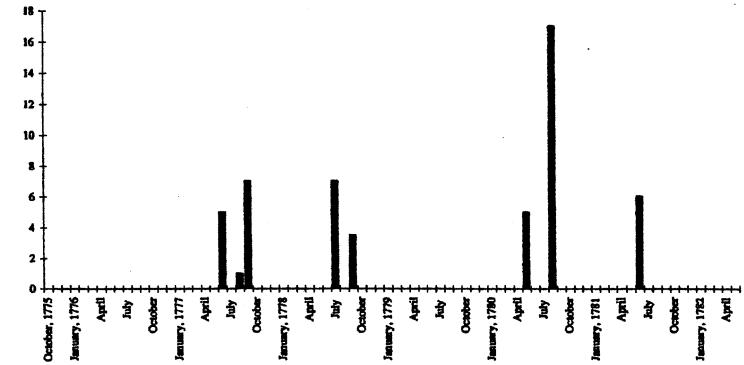

Figure 9. Buffalo provisions reported, Cumberland House, 1775-1782.

31 Ibid., 18 February 1779.

32 Ibid., 1: 214.

furs, some Indians were persuaded to stay on to hunt geese and, later, meat for the post in the winter. From their "wooder" camps, these hunters often sent for rum and ammunition, and shared portions of their animal kills with the post.

The limited returns of this local hunting, however, are apparent in the journals. The Basquio Indians who stayed on during the first winter to hunt for the post complained that "no moose are about,"[33] echoing the hunter Indians in 1778 who pointed out that there were "no moose stirring" in local forests.[34] Even when a hunter occasionally killed a moose that provided upwards of 300 pounds of meat, given the number of mouths to feed, one moose could be expected to serve only eight days of provisions.[35]

During inevitable periods of scarcity, post masters reduced rations accordingly and saw to it that food remained well preserved in the victualling shed. The shed itself was frequently upgraded, rotting floors replaced and provisions frequently "turned."

But always supplementing the pantry at Cumberland House was its "everlasting resource of fish."[36] It is apparent that the post modified both its fishing technology and technique in the face of meat shortages. At first, the post's fishermen used regular fishing twine, susceptible to damage, for their sturgeon nets. In fact, for every day that nets were being used, another was often spent repairing them. By 1777, the post had acquired "Italian" twine that proved better for sturgeon but tended to swell in the water. Jack twine, too rigid for the smaller species of fish, was eventually used exclusively for sturgeon. Together with these technological improvements, post fishermen adapted their techniques. Journals are not explicit but it seems that fishermen no longer fished at random in Pine Lake: they chose proven locations and netted individual species. The expression "sturgeon nets" was used more frequently after 1780, almost always in reference to the fishing taking place in late November and December; fishermen by then had found locations under the ice favourable to that species. Cocking, meanwhile, often sent men upriver to specific locations, and by 1779 the post had obviously discovered local runs of goldeye, with spring catches sometimes numbering eighty to ninety fish per day. By the third year, whitefish were netted more consistently in November.

The best evidence of changing technique can be seen in a significantly improved sturgeon fishery. As Figure 5 indicates, December 1778 was a record year for sturgeon, with some 225 fish netted that month alone. Although the following seasons declined, all winters after 1777 had more

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33 Ibid., 7 April 1776.

34 Ibid., 13 October 1778.

35 Cocking alotted 2.5 pounds of meat per man, in a post of fifteen men.

36 Rich, *Cumberland* 1: 67.

efficient fishing than the winters of 1775 and 1776. Indeed, in the early years most references to the fishery state that two or three sturgeon had been netted daily during favourable seasons — whereas, by 1781, fishermen were netting between ten and thirty per day. This was probably due to increased knowledge of the habits of these fish under the ice and to the introduction of deeper-sunk nets.

However, the post's men required more than fish. Desperate for meat to survive the winter, employees often traded significant quantities of goods, especially liquor and tobacco, to provisioning Indians and occasionally cut off the fur trade altogether to purchase food instead.[37] Even with these efforts, food was rarely abundant. In 1778, the post diarist noted that hunters were having no luck finding game, and "our whole dependence must be now intirely [*sic*] on a few Buffalo Indians who used to come down in the fall."[38] The next year, the post journal lamented the few provisions reaching the post; in August, the writer pointed out that "if it had not been for netting a few fish, we should not have had a mouthful to have puten in our mouths."[39] Between September 1779 and January 1780, the post received almost no green meat stores, except for partridges and one deer.[40] Finally, in 1782, William Tomison, then in charge of Cumberland House, noted that he had never seen such scarcity. That winter he had seen no more than six sides of moose; rabbits and partridges were scarce; and fish were not "plentiful."[41]

Such scarcity likely had many causes. Smallpox struck Indians around Cumberland and its outpost, Hudson House, in 1781, severely reducing the furs brought in by these disease-stricken people. Provisioning also dropped: strong competition from the pedlars also meant that provisions were often traded before they reached Cumberland.[42]

Whatever the causes for such scarcity, Figure 11 shows that green meat stores rose and fell dramatically. Rather than suggesting that local game populations were being depleted, the figure communicates a number of possibilities: that nearby moose underwent cyclical population change, or

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37 In August 1778, Cocking could not trade five canoes of furs because "my stock [of liquor] is so small I am obliged to preserve it for Provisions, for as yet I have but small stock considering the season of the year." See ibid., 19 August 1777.

38 Ibid., 1: 255.

39 Ibid., 2: 9.

40 Ibid., 2: 27.

41 Ibid., 2: 136.

42 Robert Longmoore wrote Cocking in 1779 from Hudson House, stating that "the Canadians are now so numerous that many are left inland, all the summer. These buy up all the food they can and hinder the Indians from carrying furs or food to your settlement." See Longmoore's Journal, Rich, *Cumberland* 1: 309. In 1779, Cocking noted that Le Pas Indians often promised to return with green meat, "but they having so many houses to go to they like to be near and there and everywhere." Ibid., 2: 29.

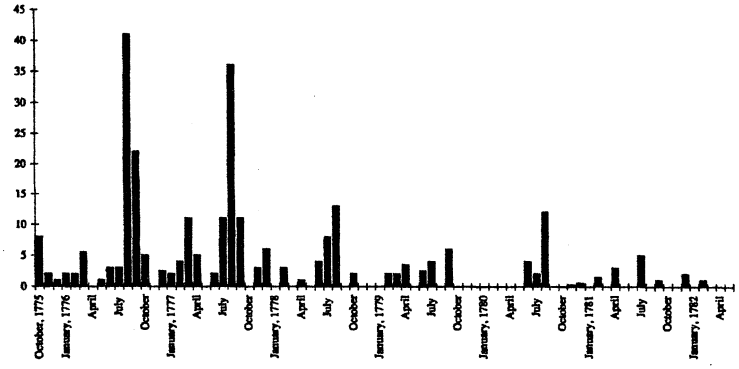

Figure 10. Declining "moose" provisions, Cumberland House, 1775-1782.

that local Indians and home guard "hunters" experienced variable success in finding moose. A third possibility is that local Indians participated inconsistently in the provisioning trade, took their goods elsewhere, or had little surplus to trade with the HBC. The important implication of Figure 11, however, is that moose seem to have been periodically available to the post, and periodically *unavailable*. The winter of 1776, for instance, had the greatest scarcity of fresh meat, while in 1777 the post enjoyed almost thirty canoes of green meat before a downward trend reached another low in 1779. At that point it is possible that moose populations in nearby forests began building up numbers by 1780, or else Indians began participating in the trade more frequently. A growth in the green meat trade can be discernible until 1782, when the numbers of canoes carrying fresh provisions dropped drastically once more.

Figure 10 suggests that moose were not available consistently and for that reason Cocking frequently encouraged Indians from further away to

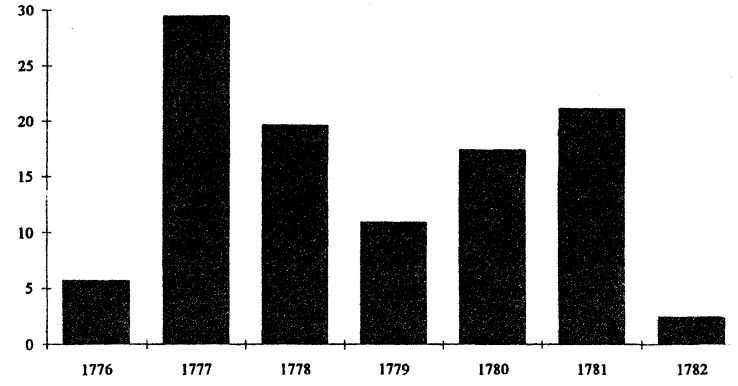

Figure 11. Canoes of "green" meat supplying Cumberland House, 1776 to May 1782.

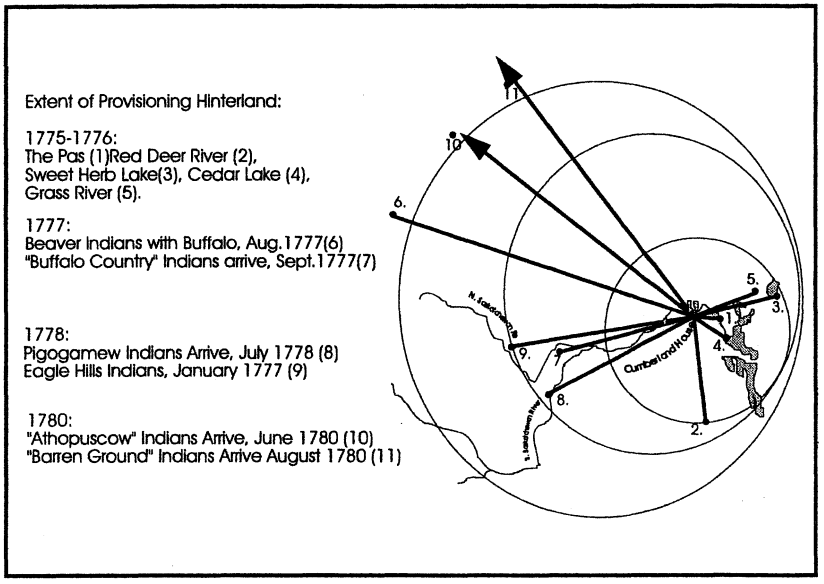

Figure 12. An expanding provisioning hinterland, Cumberland House, 1775-1782.

furnish the post with provisions. Initially the post journals record provisioners from The Pas, Red Deer River, Sweet Herb Lake, Cedar Lake and Grass River, all of whom probably supplied moose (see Figure 12). Evidently this provisioning hinterland was not great enough. In 1777 Cocking encouraged a Sweet Herb Lake Indian to bring provisions, and expressed the hope "that these [people] he came from or any others that he might meet with, would be diligent in Collecting Provisions and bring in Here."[43]

Cocking's call for Indian provisions was evidently answered. Although small groups of Pigogamew,[44] Beaver, and Eagle Hills Indians arrived in 1775, by 1777 many more Indians were bringing food from much further afield. In 1778 and 1780 they arrived in impressive numbers. In late June 1781, six canoes of "Athopuskow" Indians arrived, likely from Lake Athabasca, a few days before the arrival of eight canoes from the "Barren Grounds," possibly Chipewyan or Plains Indians. These groups, it should be pointed out, arrived with both provisions and furs. When sixteen canoes from the "Barren Grounds" arrived in late August "with provisions," what seems to be a significantly widened provisioning hinterland was in place, connecting Cumberland House to Lake Athabasca, Beaver Indian territory,

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43 Ibid., 1: 129.

44 Many of the names for Indians are identified in the synonymy section of "Western Woods Cree," *Handbook of North American Indians*, Vol. 6: *Subarctic* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1981). My thanks to John Foster for pointing out that "Beaver" may have been Sarcee from the Elk Island area, and "Eagle Hills," possibly Blackfoot. "Barren Grounds" Indians might refer to prairie Indians.

and the buffalo grounds along the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers where, by 1778, Assiniboine Indians were staking a monopoly in the buffalo trade.[45]

More provisions probably arrived from these buffalo regions as time passed. The journals first mention the pounding of buffalo by Assiniboine Indians near Alexander Henry's Upper Settlement in March 1775; little, if any, of that buffalo was brought to Cumberland House, however. Inland trading expeditions were started the following year by the post's employee, Robert Longmoore (eventually establishing Hudson House), but the distance was too great and the hands too few to bring back much buffalo meat. In 1777, Longmoore's inland expedition returned with some pemmican, although he stated that "they were obliged to eat it up" on the canoe trip back to Cumberland House.[46] The post's first reported trade in buffalo meat took place in September, when four canoes from "Buffalo Country" arrived. Out of nearly 6,000 pounds of dried and beat meat, the post's inventory of food lists 100 pounds of pemmican after this visit.[47] As Figure 9 shows, reports of buffalo provisions arriving at the post had become more commonplace by 1778; and it is likely that with the arrival of many Pigogamew, Eagle Hills and "Buffalo Country" Indians, many provisions traded were dried buffalo, without being reported as such. Figure 9 should possibly be read in light of Figure 10, which shows a decline in reports of "moose" provisions arriving at the post; what these two trends suggest is that dried buffalo and pemmican stores were replacing moose as a primary food source of the post.

This article suggests that quantitative analysis helps illuminate features of the provisioning trade at Cumberland House. The post's garden, probably an important source of food, has not been analyzed because of the scarcity of references to the amount of garden produce grown and used by the post. Emphasis has been placed on the source and availability of meat provisions and the important changes in their supply over time. Country food was subject to significant seasonal availability, as well as dramatic natural population cycles. Rabbits, pheasants, and possibly even moose, showed short-term population cycles; geese were available only in season; even fish had migratory movements that clearly determined the success of nets in specific seasons of the year.

Indians had adapted to the seasonal and cyclical constraints of country food by adopting seminomadic lifestyles. Cumberland House employees

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45 Both Canadian peddlars and HBC men at Hudson House noted that Assiniboine Indians were burning forage grass around their posts to ensure they could not hunt buffalo themselves. See Arthur Ray for more details on the Assiniboine trade in provisions and their seasonal lifestyle shared between plains and parkland belt environments.

46 Rich, *Cumberland* 1: 157-58

47 22 September 1777 in Rich, *Cumberland* 1.

engaged in a semisedentary post lifestyle and adapted in other ways: they specialized in fishing and became more efficient in sturgeon and goldeye netting through technological and technical improvement. To gain other sources of meat, the post had to ever widen its provisioning hinterland. Local moose populations, as indexed by the trade in green meat, showed inconsistent availability; even when local hunting was successful, it often could not provide the post with enough meat. The post employees, as a consequence, welcomed and traded meat from ever more distant hunting grounds. By 1781, Cumberland House's provisioning hinterland had increased dramatically, and finally tapped into distant buffalo grounds and even Beaver Indian hunting territory. By then, dried buffalo possibly constituted a greater proportion of the fur traders' diet.

At the beginning of this study, aspects of ecological and economic explanations for Indian behaviour in the fur trade were briefly discussed. Widening provisioning hinterlands have not been fully incorporated into studies of wildlife depletion and the Indian's role in over-hunting. The local environment at Cumberland House was never abundant enough to fully feed post employees; much of their food was drawn from other game areas, regions themselves likely susceptible to depletion. Some aspects of the issue of depletion, then, do not reflect destructive behaviour on the Indians' part as much as the collective effort of widely scattered Indians who had chosen on a particular year to provision distant posts. Certainly more research will identify the hinterlands which supplied posts with food after trade competition intensified. The periodic shortage of green meat also suggests that local Indians were making decisions, perhaps on a year-to-year basis, as to whether or not to supply the post with meat. Disease and pedlar competition obviously affected the quantities brought to the post, but the very fact that Indians were not bringing food to the post consistently, demanded larger provisioning hinterlands.

Possibly the most significant by-product of such a provisioning system was increased cost. Many Indians were well aware of a post's dependence on wild meat, despite York Factory's stern edict to chief traders to keep such information secret.[48] Indians clearly exacted higher prices when posts had few provisions. At Hudson House, Cumberland's outpost, Assiniboine Indians burning off grazing grounds (possibly to improve pasturage, possibly to monopolize the resource) made buffalo scarce around the post. William Tomison reported that he had procured a month of provisions from Indians there, but "that had been purchased at a very dear rate."[49] Waiting for Assiniboine Indians to bring in meat constituted, as he said, "a great Expence for Provisions."

Cumberland House provisioning problems, in turn, have relevance for

48 See Cocking's instructions in ibid., 12 September 1776.

49 31 December 1779 in ibid., 2: 27.

discussions of the later fur trade. Although the post system extended into parkland, grassland and woodland regions, each with unique game resources, the feature of widening provisioning hinterlands added significant costs to the trade and determined how it was to be undertaken. Duncan M'Gillivrey's journals, kept at Fort George on the Saskatchewan in 1794, share many of the same concerns as Cocking's at Cumberland House. While closer to buffalo grounds, Fort George employees experienced periodic problems gathering enough food and witnessed Assiniboine Indians burning grazing grounds to heighten their provisioning roles.[50] Moreover, when beaver were quickly depleted and the country around the post was "ruined," another post was built further up the Saskatchewan to trade furs while the original was maintained to continue the trade with the *gens du large* — the provisioning Indians who were unwilling to travel to the other post with their vital food supply. What was established was a significantly larger provisioning area and the maintenance of an expensive victualling post, later commonplace when a complex pemmican service for much of the fur trade had been established.[51]

Provisioning became all the more costly as the nineteenth century unfolded: big game animals were reduced in numbers, and such key resources as the buffalo began to disappear. At that time, the HBC had monopoly over a vast fur-trading region and had inherited a prohibitively expensive provisioning responsibility. By the 1860s, the cost of feeding both post employees and Indians trapping in barren game regions mounted significantly in London accounts.[52]

A close analysis of account ledgers would help determine the real cost of provisioning and whether its price increased over time. In the meantime, the feature of expanding provisioning hinterlands might have enabled posts like Cumberland House to exist; but when the interior trade flourished, posts multiplied and employee numbers increased. This strategy had a marked impact on the fur trade as a business endeavour; and, in time, it seriously undermined its commercial viability.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to acknowledge the comments and research suggestions of the late John Foster, Professor of History, University of Alberta.

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50 M'Gillivrey, *The Journal of Duncan M'Gillivrey*, 33.

51 GA, M889, Qu'Appelle Lake Post Journal, 1857-1858; *Fort Pelly Journal of Daily Occurrences, 1863* (Regina: Regina Archaeological Society, 1987).

52 "Country food," and "goods imported" to posts in the many districts rose significantly between 1874-1877. By then, the Northern Department was supplying Indians with provisions to survive while trapping. See "Report of the Governor and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, June 27, 1882," and "Report on the Fur Trade Accounts, 1879," CIHM no. 07873.

Unsteady Debut: J.A.N. Provencher and the Beginnings of Indian Administration in Manitoba

Brian Titley

ABSTRACT. In 1873 prominent Quebec journalist J.A.N. Provencher became commissioner of Indian affairs in Manitoba. In this capacity he was responsible for the Indians who were signatories to Treaties 1, 2 and 3, supervising their transition to settled life. A political appointee, he was a poor administrator and his unsuitability for the job soon became apparent. By 1877 incompetence was no longer the government's main concern; serious criminal allegations had been made against the Indian commissioner, and an inquiry into these charges began. When the inquiry concluded in March 1878, Provencher was found guilty of fraudulent use of public funds. He had been supplying the Indians with inferior goods in collusion with local businessmen who had granted him certain credits and considerations in return. Provencher was dismissed but the government seemed to learn little from the exercise; as it expanded its presence in the prairie West, the Indian Department continued to be little more than a source of patronage appointments at the disposal of those in power.

SOMMAIRE. En 1873 l'éminent journaliste québecois J.A.N. Provencher devint commissaire des affaires indiennes pour le Manitoba. A ce titre il était responsable des Indiens signataires des Traités 1, 2 et 3, et de leur adaptation à la vie sédentaire. Nommé à ce poste pour des raisons politiques, il s'avéra médiocre administrateur. En 1877 ce n'était plus son incompétence qui inquiétait le gouvernement, mais les sérieuses allégations qui pesaient contre lui et qui devaient faire l'objet d'une enquête. A la fin de ladite enquête, en mars 1878, Provencher fut reconnu coupable d'usage frauduleux de fonds publics: de connivence avec des hommes d'affaires de la région qui lui offraient certaines faveurs en retour, il avait fourni aux Indiens des denrées de qualité inférieure. Provencher fut licencié, mais le gouvernement n'avait pas retenu sa leçon: tandis qu'il étendait sa zone d'influence sur les prairies, le département des affaires indiennes poursuivit ses relations de copinage avec les personnes au pouvoir.

> Je ne veux pas y croire! lui, si fort, si robuste, si gai, si causeur, si remuant, lui l'homme d'esprit par excellence, l'écrivain distingué et correct, le journaliste sans fiel, ni haine, l'ami si dévoué, plein de coeur et de mots encourageants, cet appui des jeunes, lui toujours jeune et toujours brillant... . Il est tombé.[1]

The effusive tone of the panegyrics which littered the Quebec press following the premature death of Joseph Alfred Norbert Provencher in October 1887 was predictable. French Canada had lost one of its foremost journalists. In recounting the details of his distinguished career, his anguished admirers paid homage to the clarity of his prose, the superiority of his intellect, his prodigious memory, his energy and enthusiasm — traits which set his work apart from the pedestrian efforts of most newspaper reporters.

But the arcane details of one significant episode in his life were silently, if not conveniently, omitted: Provencher's role as "commissaire des Sauvages" in Manitoba between 1873 and 1878.[2] It is difficult not to believe that this omission arose from the ignominious manner in which he left the

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1 Léon Ledieu, "J.A.N. Provencher," *Le Monde Illustré* 12 November 1887, p. 221.

2 Ibid., 222. See also *La Minerve*, 29 October 1887, p. 1; *Le Monde* (Montreal), 29 October 1887, p. 4; *La Presse*, 29 October 1887, p. 2.

government service at the end of that period, a fact which, while not widely publicized, was hardly a state secret. Respect for the recently departed may have been a consideration, of course, but such an excuse cannot be claimed by those who have broached the subject in this century.[3] The purpose here, however, is not to tarnish the image of one so revered in a spirit of malicious revisionism, but rather to examine the critical years in the mid-1870s in which the structure of Indian administration was created in Manitoba under the unsteady guidance of Monsieur Provencher.

Provencher was born on 6 January 1843 in Baie-du-Febvre, Lower Canada. His father, a farmer, died when he was young but the generosity of his uncle, the bishop of St. Boniface, enabled him to study in the classical program offered at the Collège de Nicolet. A diligent and capable student, he completed this phase of his education at the age of sixteen. He then moved to Trois-Rivières where he articled in law. While thus engaged he founded his own newspaper, *La Sentinelle*, which survived for only a few months. His legal studies came to a successful conclusion in 1864, and he was called to the Montreal bar. For a man of intellect, ambition and with a creative disposition a career in law, understandably enough, proved unappetizing. Instead, he turned to journalism, a craft which he had already practiced as an enthusiastic amateur.

Provencher was invited to become night editor of *La Minerve*, a leading conservative newspaper. He entered fervently into the vibrant cultural and intellectual life and was one of the founders of *La Revue canadienne*. To this journal he contributed a number of well-received articles on constitutional and economic questions. Among his collaborators in *La Revue* was Joseph Royal, a man of similar background whose career would also lead to the West.

In physical appearance, Provencher was large and ungainly. His generous nose, abundant hair, bushy beard and general unkempt exterior were a cartoonist's delight. This was a bohemian, perhaps, but certainly no peasant, for his tastes were decidedly patrician. Politics, literature and art were his passions, although music left him unmoved. And for good conversation, preferably stimulated by wine, cigars and haute cuisine, there was no substitute. The café subculture of Montreal was the mecca of this gregarious *bon vivant* whose exuberance and infectious good humour won him a wide circle of friends. As one admirer observed: "Il était né pour le boulevard."[4]

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3 For example, Donatien Frémont, "Alfred-Norbert Provencher, 1843-1887," *Mémoires de la société Royale du Canada*, Tome 51, Troisième Série, juin 1957 (Ottawa: Imprimé pour la Société Royale du Canada, 1957), 29-41; Kenneth Landry, "Provencher, J.A.N.," in Frances Halpenny, gen. ed., *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. 11, 1881-1980 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 716; A.-G. Morice, O.M.I., *Dictionnaire Historique des Canadiens et des Métis français de l'Ouest* (Québec: Laflamme et Proulx, 1908), 235-36.

4 Henri de Lamothe, quoted in Frémont, "Provencher," 36.

In 1866 Evariste Gélinas resigned as editor-in-chief of *La Minerve* and Provencher succeeded him. But even this rapid advancement was insufficient to satiate the ambition of the young journalist. In the following year Provencher was chosen as the Conservative candidate for Yamaska, a Liberal stronghold, in the first federal election after Confederation. He lost by thirty-eight votes in a contest marred by fraud and intimidation.[5]

To be defeated in politics is not always to be disappointed; the faithful are inevitably compensated, although sometimes in surprising ways. In 1869, Provencher received his reward: he was appointed secretary of the North-West Council. This was the governing body that was to be established in the West when the Hudson's Bay Company lands were transferred to the Dominion on 1 December. The new lieutenant governor of the region, Ontario politician William McDougall, had apparently not been consulted in the selection of the secretary, and there is evidence that he never approved of the candidate chosen.[6]

Nevertheless, Provencher was among McDougall's ill-fated entourage that set out for the West in the autumn of 1869. Passing through American territory, this vanguard of Canadian authority arrived at Pembina on the boundary of the North-West on 30 October. But the Metis of Red River had already resolved to resist incorporation into the Dominion until certain rights were assured, and the Canadians were warned at Pembina not to proceed any further. McDougall was indignant at this rebuff, but accepted the inevitable. Provencher, believing perhaps that his religious and linguistic affinity with the disaffected might render negotiations possible, pressed onwards with McDougall's approval. He got no further than St. Norbert, the Metis headquarters, where he was detained by Louis Riel and his henchmen. He informed his hosts that many local residents representative of the diverse elements in the community would be placed on the North-West Council.[7] This assurance was insufficient to assuage Metis skepticism and Provencher was advised that the inhabitants of Red River would work out their own arrangements first, and later enter into dialogue with Ottawa. He was then escorted back to the border by armed horsemen.[8] There the

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5 These early details of Provencher's career are gleaned from the articles by Frémont, Landry and Ledieu cited above.

6 Lewis H. Thomas, *The Struggle for Responsible Government in the North-West Territories, 1870-97*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 18. W.L. Morton suggests that Provencher's appointment was in accordance with the usual Canadian custom of balancing English-speaking officeholders with a proportionate number of French-speakers. He noted, however, that Provencher was not a man of McDougall's calibre and that had Prime Minister J.A. Macdonald been better informed of the situation at Red River, a French-Canadian of greater stature would have been selected. "Introduction" to W.L. Morton, ed., *Alexander Begg's Red River Journal and other papers relative to the Red River resistance of 1869-1870* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1956), 43.

7 The council was to have between seven and fifteen members.

8 Thomas, *The Struggle for Responsible Government*, 35.

Canadians lingered for a few months in a futile sojourn while momentous events enveloped Red River.[9] McDougall and most of his party left for Canada on 18 December but Provencher remained until the end of February. Then he, too, retraced his steps.[10]

Another role in the federal service awaited Provencher the following year. He was appointed immigration commissioner in Manitoba with a mandate to encourage French-speaking settlement in the new province. He arrived in Winnipeg on 25 October 1871 to find that a semblance of order had been restored. Armed men no longer barred his way; in fact his welcome was exceedingly cordial. An old friend, Joseph Royal, had already established himself as a leading personage in the community: he was provincial secretary and proprietor of *Le Métis*, the mouthpiece of the Francophone inhabitants.[11]

Provencher remained in the West until April 1872, attempting to identify suitable locations for the establishment of French-speaking settlements. At the end of this period he was sent to Paris to encourage immigration to Canada from France, neglected for over a century. His joy in undertaking this assignment can only be imagined, since his European destination was the very centre of all he valued highly. And he ensured that his responsibilities did not deprive him of the leisure "de poursuivre des études personnelles, de fréquenter des gens de lettres, de visiter les bibliothèques et les musées, d'admirer les livres rares et les peintures des maîtres."[12]

These delights were brusquely interrupted before even a year had

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9 Enos Stutsman, an American lawyer and land speculator, visited the beleaguered McDougall party at Pembina in November and described Provencher as "a pleasant sort of man who had come up altogether wrongly informed regarding this country" and who did not appear to be in McDougall's confidence. Morton, *Alexander Begg's Journal*, 176. Dale Gibson, *Attorney for the Frontier: Enos Stuntsman* (Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Press, 1983), 1-7, 117. The details of the Red River resistance are too well known to require repeating here. See G.F.G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), 67-106.

10 Morton, *Alexander Begg's Journal*, 233. The reason for Provencher's extended stay in the West is not clear. It may have been to report to Ottawa on developments at Red River or, as he suggested himself, to assure the Indians of Canadian goodwill. Much of what he reported was either rumour or opinion since he was hardly in an advantageous position to gather intelligence. He seems to have expected contact with Col. J.S. Dennis, who had come to Red River heading a survey party and was still there trying to stir up resistance to Riel among Indians and Canadians. He appeared concerned that he had lost the confidence of the cabinet. National Archives of Canada (NA), MG 26F, Sir Charles Tupper Papers, vol. 3, p. 1385, Provencher to C. Tupper, 24 January 1870, p. 1404, Provencher to Tupper, 3 February 1870.

11 Royal's newspaper was not sparing in its praise for the new immigration commissioner: "Par ses hautes capacités et son intelligence pratique, M. Provencher est éminement propre à l'importante tâche dont l'a chargé le gouvernement d'Ottawa." *Le Métis*, vol. 1, no. 21, 26 October 1871, p. 2, "sans titre."

12 Frémont, "Provencher," 36.

passed. Early in 1873 Provencher learned that he had been appointed commissioner of Indian affairs in Manitoba and that the Red River Valley would once more become his home. A salary of $2,000 and considerable prestige went with the position; he would be the principal official of the federal Indian Department in the prairie West.[13] And yet it can only have been with heavy heart that he abandoned the boulevards of Paris for the mud of Main Street, where wooden sidewalks were still a rare luxury.

The vacancy in Manitoba was created by the resignation, in January 1873, of the incumbent commissioner, Wemyss Simpson. Simpson had presided at the signing of Treaties 1 and 2 in 1871, and since then had served the Indian Department in administering those agreements on a part-time basis. In October 1872, the Manitoba Executive Council urged the appointment of a permanent commissioner who would reside in Winnipeg throughout the year. Ottawa concurred and when Simpson, who had business interests in Sault Ste. Marie, was asked to devote himself fully to the job, he resigned.[14]

Provencher arrived in Manitoba to take up his new posting on 2 June. Shortly afterwards he was named a lieutenant colonel of the militia; the title was purely honorary and was designed to lend him an aura of authority when dealing with the Indians.[15] His headquarters were in Winnipeg, a thriving garrison town and government centre. Its population was less than 3,000 at the time, but it was growing rapidly as new settlers swarmed in, mainly from Ontario. The unpaved streets and wooden buildings were unimpressive, but the lively hotels and saloons meant that it was anything but a dull place.[16]

Nor was the Indian Department an impressive operation. There was one employee in addition to Provencher, Molyneux St. John. St. John had been

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13 NA, RG 10, Records of the Department of Indian Affairs, vol. 3583, f. 1084 Pt. 2, Lt. Gov. Alexander Morris to Joseph Howe, secretary of state for the provinces, 26 October 1872; Howe to W. Simpson, 12 November 1872; Simpson to Howe, 29 November 1872. Ibid., vol. 3590, f. 1356, Simpson to Howe, 27 January 1873. This file also contains the order in council of 28 February 1873 (No. 229) accepting Simpson's resignation and appointing Provencher in his place.

14 NA, RG 10, Records of the Department of Indian Affairs, vol. 3583, f. 1084 Pt. 2, Lt. Gov. Alexander Morris to Joseph Howe, secretary of state for the provinces, 26 October 1872; Howe to W. Simpson, 12 November 1872; Simpson to Howe, 29 November 1872. Ibid., vol. 3590, f. 1356, Simpson to Howe, 27 January 1873. This file also contains the order in council of 28 February 1873 (No. 229) accepting Simpson's resignation and appointing Provencher in his place.

15 Frémont, "Provencher," 37. See also *Le Métis*, vol. 3, no. 2, 7 juin 1873, p. 2, "Nouveau Commissaire des Sauvages" and "Nouvelles Canadiennes." Royal's newspaper was as enthusiastic as ever: "M. Provencher a déjà beaucoup étudié le Nord Ouest et ses connaissances et ses talents nous assurent des services précieux."

16 W.L. Morton, *Manitoba: A History*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 166-71.

present at the treaty negotiations of 1871 and styled himself "Indian agent."[17] These two men formed the nucleus of a bureaucracy that would grow inexorably in the decades that followed, until the lives of all Indians in Manitoba and the North-West were circumscribed by its dictates. Initially, however, its responsibilities merely extended to the signatories of Treaties 1 and 2.

The arrival of the new commissioner in Manitoba coincided with a major reorganization of federal administrative structures relating to the West. In July the Department of the Interior was created and it took over the management of Dominion Lands and Indian affairs, matters which until then had been within the purview of the Department of the Secretary of State. The first minister of the Interior was Senator Alexander Campbell, although his term of office was short-lived.[18] When the Liberals came to power some months later, David Laird, a newspaper man from Prince Edward Island, was given responsibility for the interior portfolio.

The government was also giving thought to the structure most appropriate for Indian administration in the West, since the superintendency system of Quebec and Ontario was not considered suitable.[19] An order in council of 16 June authorized the establishment of a Board of Indian Commissioners for Manitoba and the North-West Territories composed of the lieutenant governor, the resident Indian commissioner, and the chief officer of the Dominion Lands Granting Department in Winnipeg.[20] The Board was to determine the general policy with respect to Indians in the West under instructions from Ottawa, although routine administration was to be the prerogative of the resident commissioner, Provencher.[21]

This meant that Provencher would have to work closely with Lieutenant Governor Alexander Morris. Had a mutual respect developed between the

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17 When Molyneux St. John heard of Provencher's appointment, he expressed some resentment at being passed over for the position himself. NA RG 10, vol. 3603, f. 1987, M. St. John to W. Spragge, deputy superintendent general of Indian Affairs, 30 May 1873.

18 Thomas, *The Struggle for Responsible Government*, 60-61.

19 Joseph Howe suggested that the administrative machinery in use in the older provinces would be inappropriate because of the formidable distances involved and because missionary work in the West had not been proportionate to the "mass of ignorance and pagan superstition to be encountered." *Report of the Department of Secretary of State, Indian Branch, for the year ending 30 June 1872*, p. 2.

20 The Dominion Lands officer was Lindsay Russell and he refused to serve on the Indian Board. His place was taken by S.J. Dawson of the Public Works Department. *Report of the Interior for the year ended 30 June 1874*, report of Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Lawrence Vankoughnet, p. 8.

21 Thomas, *The Struggle for Responsible Government*, 69. A similar structure was authorized for British Columbia at the same time. In that province, however, Lieutenant Governor Joseph Trutch refused to serve on the Board and the direction of policy was left in the hands of I.W. Powell and James Lenihan, the principal officers of the Indian Department. NA, RG 10, vol. 3625, f. 5506, memorandum of David Laird, 11 October 1875.

two men, the Board might have functioned effectively. But it was quite the opposite. Provencher ignored Morris after he had established himself in Winnipeg, and only called upon the lieutenant governor when asked to do so. Morris's fragile sense of dignity was thus offended and the relationship was a strained one thereafter. When Chief Henry Prince of St. Peter's Reserve complained that the commissioner had not kept an appointment with himself and his Indians, Morris eagerly forwarded the letter to Ottawa adding, "This sort of thing cannot go on, and we are really with Provencher, as compared with his predecessor, 'out of the frying pan into the fire'."[22]

It irritated Morris that he was obliged to work with a man who failed to display an appropriate defence to the representative of the Queen and who appeared to be shouldering his responsibilities rather lightly. The Indian Board as a triumvirate of equals was unacceptable to him as he might be outvoted by subordinate officers. Were he, as lieutenant governor, declared head of the Board with veto powers, it might be a workable arrangement. He also felt that the responsibilities of the Board should be confined to administering the terms of existing treaties; new treaties should be negotiated by special commissioners appointed for the occasion, possibly from the membership of the North-West Council.[23]

Because of Morris's objections, the Indian Board never functioned properly. The lieutenant governor relied for advice on matters of general policy on the North-West Council; Provencher's role was limited mainly to fulfilling the terms of treaties already agreed to. With the exception of Treaty 3, Provencher played no part in the negotiation of the treaties conducted by Morris between 1873 and 1876.[24]

The failure of the Board of Indian Commissioners convinced Interior Minister Laird that it would be best abolished and a system of superintendencies and agencies created in its stead. By October 1875 he and his advisers had devised a scheme whereby the prairie region would be divided into two superintendencies. The Manitoba Superintendency, with its headquarters in Winnipeg, was to contain the area encompassed by Treaties 1, 2, and 5 and in addition, that part of Treaty 3 not included in Ontario when

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22 NA, RG 10, vol. 3590, f. 1356, A. Morris to A. Campbell, 26 June 1873. Provencher was reprimanded for his dereliction of duty. Ibid., vol. 3603, f. 2118 1/2, Provencher to Ottawa, 10 July 1873.

23 Ibid., vol. 3605, f. 2903, A. Morris to A. Campbell, 23 June 1873; ibid., f. 2946, Morris to Laird, 24 January 1874.

24 While Morris wished to have no role in mundane administrative matters associated with the Indian Department such as the requisition and distribution of supplies, he tried to establish himself in the role of watchdog or ombudsman in order to ensure that the Indians received what was due them. His willingness to listen to the complaints of Indians was resented by Provencher, who felt that this resulted in manipulation and undermined his ability to make tough decisions. NA, MG 27 1 C 8, Alexander Morris Papers, p. 556, Provencher to Morris, 7 July 1875.

the provincial boundaries were settled. The North-West Superintendency was to be confined initially to the area of Treaty 4, but would later extend its jurisdiction to lands ceded in subsequent treaties between Manitoba and the Rockies. Its headquarters were to be located in the capital of the North-West Territories, when that site was selected. Up to five Indian agents were to be appointed in each superintendency. Laird's plan was approved by an order in council of 7 December and it was instituted at the beginning of 1876.[25]

Morris objected vehemently to the new arrangements, preferring the Indian Board with veto powers accruing to himself. He pointed out that Indians insisted on taking their grievances to the lieutenant governor as the chief representative of the Crown. If all authority in such matters was now transferred to the superintendent, great difficulties and embarrassment would arise. So insistent was he in advancing this view that Laird felt it expedient, although with "serious misgivings," to seek a compromise. An order in council of 12 May 1876 granted Morris the honorary title of chief superintendent of Indian affairs in Manitoba, with power to receive deputations of Indians bearing grievances and the right to examine books and documents relating to Indian administration in the hands of the "local superintendent." Provencher had to content himself with the title of acting superintendent of Indian affairs in Manitoba, a designation he retained until his departure from the department.[26]

The Board of Indian Commissioners, then, never functioned as intended by its creators. Its only accomplishment, working as a unit, appears to have been Treaty 3. Towards the end of September 1873, the Board members, Morris, Provencher, and S.J. Dawson, made their way to the North-West Angle of Lake of the Woods to negotiate a treaty with its Ojibwa inhabitants. These Indians had refused to give up their lands in 1871 and 1872. The area in question was critical to the success of the Dominion's expansionist designs: it contained the Dawson road and the route of the planned Pacific railway. It also contained fertile land and, it was believed, mineral wealth. In all, 55,000 square miles of territory were at stake.

Because of the importance of the region and the fact that the Indians were reluctant to part with their lands, the terms offered were considerably more generous than those offered in Treaties 1 and 2. Annuities of $5 per capita were proposed rather than $3, and reserves of one square mile per family of five rather than 160 acres. Nevertheless, the negotiations were difficult and protracted. Gifts of cattle, implements and grain were promised by the

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25 NA, MG 27 1 D 10, David Laird Papers, Letterbook 1875-76, Laird to Morris, 10 December 1875. See also, NA, RG 10, vol. 3625, f. 5506, memorandum of D. Laird, 11 October 1875. The system of superintendencies was also created in British Columbia at this time.

26 NA RG 10, vol. 3625, f. 5506, Morris to Laird, 18 February 1876; ibid., vol. 3634, f. 6464, order in council, 12 May 1876, No. 420; confidential memorandum, 11 January 1877 (probably by L. Vankoughnet). See also, Thomas, *The Struggle for Responsible Government*, 70-71.

commissioners as additional inducements to the recalcitrant. And, at Provencher's suggestion, an annual grant of ammunition and twine to the value of $1,500 was offered. The commissioners also agreed that the chiefs be given medals made of silver, whereas base metal had been used in the medals of the earlier treaties. By 5 October the reticence of the Indians had faded and Treaty 3 was signed.[27]

This was the only treaty at which Provencher officiated. He would, however, be responsible for fulfilling Ottawa's obligations under a number of these agreements, and his thoughts on the subject are therefore worth recording. Provencher accepted that treaties were necessary because of the Native title to the soil based on occupancy. He believed that when these agreements were entered into in future, the government ought to determine precisely the terms beforehand, thereby avoiding the charade of negotiations between equal partners. But Ottawa's obligations should not end with the signing and gift giving; to abandon the Indians at this stage would condemn them to the status of a mendicant class. Rather, an active program of civilization should be pursued. Attaching the Natives to agriculture was the key to releasing them from dependency upon public charity. Equipment, animals and instruction would therefore have to be supplied, but it should be done cautiously in order to avoid "useless expense." The appointment of local agents would provide the constant supervision required in this program.[28]

There was nothing particularly original in what Provencher proposed. The promotion of civilization and economic self-sufficiency through agriculture and education had been going on in central Canada long before Confederation. Nonetheless, the commissioner's observations outlined the general principles of the policy that was to be applied in the West in succeeding decades.

Estimating, ordering and distributing the supplies to which the Indians were entitled under the treaties were Provencher's principal responsibilities as commissioner. These seemingly mundane tasks were complicated by a number of factors. No census of the Indian populations in question existed at the time, nor was one carried out in those early years. The number of Indians present at the original treaty signing was an unreliable guide. New adherents to the agreements continued to turn up at the annual treaty day

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27 Alexander Morris, *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories* (1880; reprint, Toronto: Coles Publishing, 1971), 45-65. See also, NA, MG 29 C67, S.J. Dawson Papers, "Notes on Proceedings of the N.W. Angle Indian Treaty." In fact, before embarking on the negotiations, Interior Minister Campbell authorized Morris to offer up to $7.00 in annuities should it be necessary to secure adhesion. Provincial Archives of Manitoba (PAM), MG 12 B2 K, Alexander Morris Papers; 38, A. Campbell to A. Morris, 5 August 1873.

28 Report of the Department of the Interior for the year ended 30 June 1874, report of Provencher, 31 December 1873, pp. 55-57.

payments for several years. They claimed not only annuities, but arrears on the same.[29]

To make matters worse, an undetermined number of mixed bloods were resident on reserves and had the option of either participating in the Metis land settlement provision of the Manitoba Act, or choosing Indian status. This choice had to be made, however, prior to the treaty payments of 1874. Those accepting annuities from the federal government in that year came under the jurisdiction of the Indian Department and were excluded from the Metis land grant scheme.[30]

In the years immediately following the signing of Treaties 1, 2 and 3, the Indians complained frequently at the tardiness with which the government was fulfilling its obligations. The supply of tools and livestock, for instance, was but a trickle.[31] The ponderous pace was deliberate; Ottawa's policy was to supply goods to the Indians only when they were ready to use them. Rumours that ploughs and harrows granted in 1874 had been bartered illegally by their recipients were hardly encouraging. Until such time as local agents were in place to take custody of such equipment, the department was reluctant to incur much expenditure.[32]

A further source of Indian grievance was the sluggish speed with which their reserves were laid out. Surveys had been delayed until Provencher's arrival in Manitoba in 1873. Most bands had selected the location of their reserves, but until surveys were completed, the precise limits of their property would remain in question. Squatters were taking advantage of this ambiguity by settling on lands claimed by Indians or helping themselves to the timber resources. The surveys did proceed and by 1877 Provencher was able to report that they were completed or almost so for the reserves under Treaties 1 and 2.[33]

One of the most persistent difficulties that plagued Indian administration in Manitoba during Provencher's incumbency was that of the "outside promises" — a list of goods contained in a memorandum attached to the written terms of Treaties 1 and 2 and offered to the Indians as an inducement

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29 Ibid., p. 54. Payments made to Indians in Treaties 1 and 2 amounted to $8,913 in 1871; $16,905 in 1872; and $14,169 in 1873. The estimate for 1874 was $18,780.

30 Ibid., p. 54. See also NA, RG 10, vol. 1922, f. 2970, Provencher to Laird, 20 July 1875; Laird to Provencher, 13 August 1875.

31 NA, RG 10, vol. 3613. f. 4057, Henry Prince to Laird, 28 September 1874.

32 Ibid., vol. 1966, f. 5111, Department of the Interior (Ottawa) to Provencher, 26 July 1875.

33 Report of the Department of the Interior for the year ended 30 June 1877, report of Provencher, 1 February 1877, p. 37 (this should have been in the 1876 *Annual Report* but Provencher did not submit it on time; thus, two of his reports appear in the 1877 volume); report of Provencher, 10 October 1877, p. 39. See also, NA, RG 10, vol. 3603, f. 2120, Provencher to W. Spragge, deputy superintendent general of Indian affairs, 5 July 1873; Spragge to Provencher, 18 July 1873.

to sign.[34] The value of these goods — clothes, buggies, livestock and agricultural implements — was not great considering what the Indians had surrendered in return. Ottawa, however, was reluctant to fulfill these promises arguing that they were not officially part of the treaties.

By the time Provencher was appointed commissioner, two years had elapsed since the signing of the treaties and little had been done about the outside promises. He found upon his arrival in Manitoba that there was widespread dissatisfaction among the Indians as a result. Chiefs, such as Henry Prince, refused to accept their treaty money and payment time dragged on for several days in some instances because of the heated discussion.[35] Prince (also known as Red Eagle) was arguably the most prominent Native leader in the province and was respected by the federal authorities. Head of the Saulteaux Band at St. Peter's, he was a son of the legendary Chief Peguis. In 1869 Prince had opposed Riel's government at Red River and had even volunteered to assist Ottawa in suppressing it.[36] He was not a man who could easily be ignored.

As the substantially more generous terms offered in Treaty 3 became known to Manitoba Natives, their sense of grievance grew accordingly. Provencher and Morris, cognizant of the tide of discontent lapping at their doorsteps, urged their masters in Ottawa to provide at least some supplementary benefits lest Indians begin to withdraw from the treaties.[37]

The government was predictably slow in responding. But when Laird visited the West during the summer of 1874, he experienced the intensity of Native disenchantment personally.[38] He gave the matter further consideration over the following winter and in April 1875 he was finally ready to act. At that time he recommended that the outside promises be regarded as integral parts of Treaties 1 and 2 and that they be fulfilled. He also proposed

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34 The outside promises were as follows: A suit of clothes and a buggy for each chief and two councillors; a bull for each reserve and a cow for each chief; a boar for each reserve and a sow for each chief; a male and female of each type of farm animal for every chief; a plough and harrow for each settler cultivating the land. The memorandum containing these promises was signed by A. Archibald, J. McKay, W. Simpson and M. St. John. NA, RG 10, vol. 3621, f. 4767, D. Laird to the Governor-General-in-Council, 27 April 1875.

35 Report of the Department of the Interior for the year ended 30 June 1874, report of Provencher, 31 December 1873, p. 55. See also, NA, RG 10, vol. 3603, f. 2118 1/2, Provencher to W. Spragge, 16 July 1873.

36 Chief Albert Edward Thompson, *Chief Peguis and His Descendants* (Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1973), 35-38.

37 NA, RG 10, vol. 3608, F. 3117, "Resolution adopted by the Board of Indian Commissioners at Government House, Fort Garry, 13 March 1874"; ibid., vol. 3607, f. 3008, Provencher to Laird, 21 April 1874.

38 Ibid., vol. 3613, f. 4058, "Memorandum of a conference held on the 15th of August 1874 between the Honourable the Minister of the Interior, and certain Indians residing on the Brokenhead River Reserve."

that the annuities be raised from $3 to $5. An order in council of 30 April 1875 endorsed these proposals.[39]

Provencher and Morris were informed of this decision and were asked to secure the Indians' agreement to the new terms. This they accomplished before the year was out, all bands signifying their satisfaction with the revised treaties, with one exception.[40]

The annuity increase became effective immediately; the other promises were not so forthcoming. Provencher believed that there was no urgency in supplying the livestock and implements contained in the agreement, and once again the funereal plodding which characterized all of the department's transactions made itself conspicuous.[41] Morris, however, was indignant at the procrastination and urged on a number of occasions that the terms be fulfilled to the letter without delay.[42] These were futile gestures, it seems:[43] the department's pathological abhorrence at spending money on Indians, in spite of agreements entered into, could not easily be cast aside.[44]

This parsimony was reflected in the manpower allocated to Indian administration in the West. While Native people in the twentieth century would complain of the burgeoning army of bureaucrats that directed their lives, in the 1870s it was quite the opposite. The entire Manitoba operation was in the hands of Provencher and one assistant, Molyneux St. John. When

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39 Ibid., vol. 3621, f. 4767, Laird to the Governor-General-in-Council, 27 April 1875; order in council No. 427, 30 April 1875.

40 Morris, *Treaties*, 126-32. The Portage Band under Chief Yellow Quill was the troublesome exception. These Indians were dissatisfied with the size of their reserve and dissentient groups opposed the leadership of the chief. In the following year they split into three bands, were given separate reserves, and eventually accepted the revised treaty terms.

41 NA, RG 10, vol. 3621, f. 4767, Provencher to the minister of the Interior, 2 December 1876.

42 Ibid., Morris to the minister of the Interior, 26 October 1876. Morris noted that he had given his personal pledge to the Indians in 1875 that the new terms would be strictly adhered to, "but I regret to say that another season has been allowed to pass without any effort to carry out the new promises, and I am exposed to reproaches from the Indians on this account."

43 Ibid., Commissioner Edgar Dewdney to the superintendent general of Indian affairs, 24 April 1880. Dewdney observed that the outside promises did not appear to have been carried out and that the Indians were still discontented. The St. Peter's Indians, for example, had received very few of the working cattle they were promised. Thirteen had been delivered, of which twelve were still alive and there were continual disputes about who should use them. There were plenty of ploughs on the reserve, but not enough animals to work them.

44 One problem that the department did attend to with some success in the mid-1870s was that posed by the Sioux. These refugees from American territory had arrived at Red River in 1862-63 and those who remained north of the boundary were perceived as a potential menace to settlers. The government refused to let them participate in the treaties, but in 1875 and 1877 they were granted reserves at Oak River, Bird Tail Creek and Pipestone Creek. See G.F.G. Stanley, "Displaced Red Men: The Sioux in Canada," in I.A.L. Getty and Donald B. Smith, eds., *One Century Later: Western Canadian Reserve Indians Since Treaty 7* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1978), 61-68.

St. John resigned in May 1875 Provencher was obliged to engage the services of James F. Graham of the Dominion Survey on a temporary basis. Graham's appointment as clerk in the Winnipeg office was not confirmed by Ottawa until February 1876.[45]

Nor were the physical facilities available of an elaborate nature. The Indian office was located in a poorly heated Winnipeg house. Provencher lived in the rooms not needed for departmental business — the sitting room, dining room, kitchen and bedroom. During the intense cold of the winter, only the bedroom was suitable for occupation. As department accountant Robert Sinclair observed upon visiting the West, "indeed it would be difficult to conceive of more comfortless quarters than those offered by the official premises in winter."[46]

Provencher complained frequently of being understaffed and overworked. And he claimed that his office routine was constantly interrupted by delegations of Indians seeking interviews. There was undoubtedly an element of truth in these assertions, but ultimately they failed to convince department headquarters that there were no serious problems with the management of the Winnipeg office.[47] Sinclair noticed with some concern that accounts were not always accurately kept. And evidence that the lowest tenders for supplies were not always accepted raised doubts of a more serious nature in his mind. In a memorandum to the minister on 2 April 1875 he pointed out the possibility of abuse in the prevailing financial arrangements. Large sums of money were placed to Provencher's credit in a Winnipeg bank and he could draw cheques on them as he pleased. These funds could be converted to the commissioner's own use "if he were so disposed." Rather than allowing Provencher to deal with local merchants directly, as had hitherto been the case, Sinclair proposed that all accounts be sent to headquarters for approval and payment. These new arrangements became effective on 1 July 1875. Provencher protested at the inconvenience and delay that this would entail, but in vain.[48]

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45 NA, RG 10, vol. 3622, f. 4879, Provencher to the minister of the Interior, 13 May 1875; memorandum of D. Laird, 5 June 1875; Provencher to the minister of the Interior, 9 December 1875; ibid., vol. 3627, f. 5946, R. Sinclair to E.A. Meredith, deputy minister of the Interior, 5 April 1876.

46 Ibid., vol. 3627, f. 5972, R. Sinclair to Laird, 29 January 1876. It could be argued, of course, that in comparison with the cabins then being constructed by the Indians on their reserves, Provencher's accommodation was palatial.

47 Royal's newspaper persisted in proclaiming that all was well. In reporting on a visit of Interior Minister Laird to Provencher's office in October 1874, it announced: "La manière économique, systématique, régulière et intelligente avec laquelle le Col. Provencher a organisé ce bureau depuis son arrivée dans le pays doit être un sujet de félicitations pour l'Hon. M. Laird et pour le titulaire." *Le Métis*, vol. 4, no. 17, 3 October 1874, p. 3. "Nouvelles locales."

48 NA, RG 10, vol. 3621, f. 4719, Sinclair to Laird, 2 April 1875; headquarters to Provencher, 22 April 1875; Provencher to Laird, 7 May 1875; memorandum of Sinclair, 30 May 1875. Provencher was allowed a contingency fund of $600.

The commissioner's administrative ineptitude remained a source of growing concern in Ottawa. In December 1875 Laird confessed to Morris that he was anxious to get rid of Provencher. "Not that I have anything personal against the man," he observed, "but he is generally unfit for the position. ... I need scarcely ask your opinion as to his unsuitableness. The difficulty is to know what to do with the man."[49]

A closer scrutiny of Provencher's modus operandi was called for; perhaps the situation could be salvaged without the removal of the incumbent. At Laird's insistence, Sinclair spent a week in Winnipeg early in 1876 examining procedures in the Indian office. His accountant's eye for detail was appalled at the disarray that lay before him. No ledger records of the monies disbursed in annuities during the previous year had been kept. And records of other expenditures — provisions, seed grain, implements and cattle — were more in the nature of memoranda than of regular accounts. Such procedures were "very objectionable and unbusiness like." As Sinclair reported to Laird:

> However good Mr. Provencher may be as an administrator of Indian Affairs there can be no possible doubt as to his incapacity as a mere office man for he is destitute of regular and methodical business habits of application and is most erratic in his manner of transacting business affairs.

The accountant laid out specific instructions on the procedures of record-keeping that were to be followed from then on and which might help Provencher to manage in spite of "his total ignorance of even the simplest method of bookkeeping." The commissioner, or acting superintendent as he was now called, admitted his shortcomings in such matters.

While in Winnipeg, Sinclair called upon Morris and discovered that the lieutenant governor was "not by any means favourably impressed by Mr. Provencher's administrative ability as an Indian agent even while admitting his talent as a writer." Morris's contention that Provencher was misplaced in his present position was not, however, readily accepted by Sinclair. The accountant observed that the acting superintendent was able to deal firmly with Indians while maintaining their esteem. Sinclair left the West recommending strongly the appointment of a permanent efficient clerk in the Winnipeg office and local agents in different parts of the superintendency.[50]

The appointment of agents had long been advocated by Provencher and in 1876 this recommendation was finally acted upon. In June of that year three agents were provisionally appointed, one each for the St. Peter's area,

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49 NA, Laird Papers, Letterbook 1875-1876, Laird to Morris, 10 December 1875.

50 NA, RG 10, vol. 3627, f. 5972, Sinclair to Laird, 29 January, 3 February and 4 February 1876; Sinclair to Provencher, 14 February 1876.

Treaty 2, and the North-West Angle. This experiment proved satisfactory and in May 1877 the appointments were confirmed and three additional agents were also hired.[51] The Indians themselves had been demanding agents for some time and Provencher believed that the appointments would remove many of their pretexts for complaining. And there would be a further advantage: "Their (the Indians') frequent visits to this office have been a source of great annoyance for the population of the city and its surroundings, and of demoralization for the Indians." They would now see their agents in all matters.[52]

As already alluded to, in 1876 the prairie region was divided into two superintendencies. In October, David Laird resigned his cabinet post and seat in Parliament to become lieutenant governor and Indian superintendent of the North-West Territories.[53] His successor as minister of the Interior was David Mills, a prominent Ontario Liberal.

This was also the year in which existing Indian legislation was revised and consolidated in the new Indian Act — a comprehensive piece of legislation which confirmed the Indians' status as minors and wards of the state, imposed restrictions on their civil liberties and created a mechanism whereby they could cast off these disabilities.[54] It was assumed that the Native peoples would ultimately acquire full citizenship, but that could only take place when they had become "civilized" — a transformation which would make them culturally indistinguishable from the white population. Agriculture and education were viewed by the authorities as the key mechanisms whereby this transformation would be effected.

Agriculture was not promoted with any great vigour or consistency on Manitoba reserves during the 1870s. Although his father had been a farmer, Provencher himself knew little about tilling the soil. Nor does the available

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51 The three original appointees were as follows: Dr. David Young, located at St. Peter's, was responsible for the Indians of that reserve and also those of Fort Alexander and Brokenhead River; H. Martineau, located at Oak Point, supervised the Lake Manitoba bands; George McPherson, located at Assabaskang, was in charge of the Lake of the Woods area. McPherson actually shared the Treaty 3 Indians with Robert Pither, an agent who had been stationed at Thunder Bay for a number of years. Only one of the new agents was appointed on a full-time basis: Willoughby Clarke. With headquarters at Norway House, he supervised the Treaty 5 Indians. Francis Ogletree, at Portage la Prairie, was given charge of the Yellow Quill, Short Bear and Riding Mountain bands; George Newcombe, the Dominion Lands agent at Emerson, became responsible for the Roseau River band. The full-time agents received annual salaries of $1,000; Ogletree's remuneration was $300 and Newcombe's $150. NA, RG 10, vol. 3648, f. 8162 — 1, order in council No. 476, 11 May 1877; Provencher to the minister of the Interior, 7 June 1877. See also, *Report of the Department of the Interior for the year ended 30 June 1877*, xii.

52 *Report of the Department of the Interior for the year ended 30 June 1877*, report of Provencher, 10 October 1877, p. 40.

53 John W. Chalmers, *Laird of the West* (Calgary: Detselig, 1981), 61-64.

54 The Indian Act, 1876. S.C. 1876, c. 18. (39 Vict.).

evidence suggest that the agents appointed in 1876 and 1877 were experienced agriculturalists. Provencher, in fact, did not regard knowledge of farming as a necessary qualification for the job. Nor did he see any need to instruct the Indians in their new way of life: their reserves were sufficiently close to white settlement for them to observe agriculture and industry for themselves. And he believed that the government was under no obligation to establish model farms or mills: once the Indians received the stipulated number of livestock and implements, the rest would be up to them.[55]

According to Provencher, the Indians practiced a "rather primitive system of agriculture," cultivating small plots rather than entire fields. Sustenance could still be obtained from fishing and the chase: tillage was a supplementary activity. Nevertheless, when the harvest of 1875 was destroyed by grasshoppers, considerable hardship ensued and the department was obliged to distribute emergency provisions.[56] This suggests that reserve residents were developing some dependency on the products of the soil. And their constant protests at the tardiness with which they were given the animals and implements promised in the treaties is one indication that they were serious about adapting to the sedentary way of life.[57]

The Indians were also generally supportive of schooling for their children. Indeed education was one of the services offered to them in the treaties, and it is likely that they wished the younger generation to acquire the skills of the whites in order to survive in the new order. There were four reserve schools in operation in the year of Provencher's appointment as "commissaire des Sauvages."[58] This number steadily increased until it reached nineteen in 1877.[59] These were primitive one-room, one-teacher institutions: it was not until the following decade that the more elaborate

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55 *Report of the Department of the Interior for the year ended 30 June 1875*, report of Provencher, 30 October 1875, pp. 32-33.

56 NA, RG10, vol. 3623, f. 5091, Provencher to the minister of the Interior, 4 November 1875. Sarah Carter's *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press,1990) bears out this contention in a larger context.

57 A tabular statement giving agricultural statistics does not appear in the annual report of the department until 1877 and even then, figures for the Manitoba and North-West superintendencies appear to be lumped together. "Progress," therefore, is difficult to discern. In Provencher's report for 1875, he mentioned that the St. Peter's and Fort Alexander bands were cultivating 2,000 and 1,000 acres respectively. No other bands were sufficiently involved in agriculture to merit statistical reference. *Report of the Department of the Interior for the year ended 30 June 1875*, report of Provencher, 30 October 1875, pp. 38-39.

58 *Report of the Department of the Interior for the year ended 30 June 1874*, report of Provencher, 31 December 1873, p. 58. The schools referred to were at St. Peter's, Fort Alexander, Pembina, and Fairford.

59 *Report of the Department of the Interior for the year ended 30 June 1877*, report of L. Vankoughnet, p. 7.

boarding and industrial schools would appear. In fact, Provencher believed that industrial schools would not work in the West, at least at this stage.[60]

The department showed little initiative in promoting education. Schools were invariably established at the instigation of missionaries, the Anglicans and Catholics being particularly active. The Indians of the reserve on which a school was to be opened, of course, had to be supportive of the idea. The Brokenhead River Indians, for example, were steadfast in their paganism and opposed a school as an insidious instrument of proselytism.[61] Teachers in reserve schools were usually missionaries or their nominees; their salaries, around $300 per annum, were paid by the department.

While the Indians persisted in a nomadic or seminomadic way of life, school attendance was understandably irregular and erratic. Provencher observed, however, that even when the parents were settled the problems did not evaporate. During the long Manitoba winters the bitter cold, lack of proper clothing, and the distance to school all contributed to a high absentee rate.[62]

Provencher considered education as an essential accoutrement of successful adaptation to a sedentary existence; but it was not necessarily the agent of cultural annihilation. Teachers in reserve schools should know the native tongue spoken by the children, he believed, so that they might give readily intelligible explanations. Nor was he sympathetic with the view that Indian languages ought to be obliterated:

> Now, if we go back to philosophical, ethnographical and historical reasons, we have the right to enquire whether every language has not its reasons to subsist, and whether it is the duty of a civilizing Government to use its influence to extinguish a language spoken by thousands, — a language well-formed, and well adapted for its purposes; the study of which may one day contribute to throw light on the darkest and most interesting points in the history of half a world.[63]

These were enlightened views for the age. Such sentiments were rarely heard from the generation of officials and missionaries that arrived in the West during the 1880s determined to accelerate the process of civilization.

The makeshift approach that characterized department policy in agriculture and education was also evident in its dealings with Native health problems. Hunger was an ever-present fact of life for many Indians: its spectre appeared whenever crops, fishing or hunting failed — and this

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60 *Report of the Department of the Interior for the year ended 30 June 1875*, report of Provencher, 30 October 1875, p. 26.

61 Ibid., p. 40.

62 Ibid, p. 35.

63 Ibid., p. 36. Provencher was fluently bilingual in English and French and saw no reason why Indians could not acquire one of the official languages while retaining their own.

happened frequently enough. Fearful that a dependency upon its largesse might develop, the government only interfered "in cases of unusual destitution."[64] Relief measures were sufficient to prevent death by starvation, but not to restore the afflicted to good health. Weakened by a diet that was often inadequate, many Indians were in poor shape to resist the ravages of new diseases introduced by settlers. When Dr. J.S. Lynch visited St. Peter's Reserve in March 1875 he was shocked to discover "so large a number of consumptive cases, spinal diseases and other serious chronic complaints — scarcely a family without a bed-ridden invalid."[65] It appears that nothing was done about these problems; health care was a private, not a public concern.

Epidemics, of course, were another matter. In fact, Lynch's visit to St. Peter's was precipitated by an outbreak of measles. As Provencher reported to his minister, prompt action had to be taken to deal with the pestilence, lest it spread to adjoining settlements.[66] Likewise, when a smallpox epidemic afflicted the Icelandic colony in the newly created District of Keewatin in the autumn of 1876, swift measures were again called for. Provencher was a member of the Council of Keewatin which tried to control the contagion by establishing a quarantine around the area. Nevertheless, the malady reached a number of Native communities and forty Indians perished from it. Food, medicine, physicians' fees, and the cost of replacing infected possessions brought the department's share in dealing with this emergency to $9,000 — an "extravagance" in the opinion of Interior Minister David Mills.[67]

Crises of this nature were rare enough and Provencher was able to keep his office functioning at a relatively leisurely pace;[68] this was especially true when James Graham's appointment as clerk in the Winnipeg office was confirmed and agents were placed in a number of locations.[69] Hunting was one of Provencher's passions and Indians protested at his frequent absences in pursuit of this pastime.[70] Nor did the coarse environment prevent him

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64 NA, RG 10, vol. 3616, f. 4540, headquarters to Provencher, 15 April 1875.

65 Ibid., vol. 3621, f. 4723, Dr. J.S. Lynch to Provencher, 8 March 1875.

66 Ibid., Provencher to the minister of the Interior, 6 April 1875.

67 Report of the Department of the Interior for the year ended 30 June 1877, report of David Mills, xi-xii; report of Provencher, p. 38.

68 In fact, Lieutenant Governor Morris was continuing to receive complaints from Indians about Provencher's neglect of his duties and he never hesitated to make his displeasure known. For example, PAM, MG 12 B1, Alexander Morris Papers, Letterbook M: p. 52, Morris to Provencher, 21 October 1876; p. 57, Morris to Provencher, 4 November 1876; p. 105, Morris to Provencher, 14 March 1877.

69 In fact, in May 1876 Provencher was granted a month's leave of absence. He made his way back to Quebec where he married Marie-Louise Delagrave. Two children were born of the union: Norbert, who died at a young age, and Louise. See Frémont, "Provencher," p. 38; NA, MG 30 D1, F.J. Audet's Biographical Notes, vol. 25, pp. 477-78.

from attempting to recreate some semblance of the café life that he had once enjoyed in Montreal and Paris. Au Grand Vatel, a French restaurant, was located near his Winnipeg residence and he became one of its habitués. There he would gather with his friends in the evenings; liquor flowed and witty conversation was conjured up.[71] *Le bonheur* was not destined to last: Ottawa had silently endured Provencher's administrative incompetence over the years, but by 1877 its patience was on the verge of exhaustion. Indeed, incompetence was no longer the major issue: disturbing allegations of fraud and corruption in the allocation of government contracts in Manitoba began to reach the ear of the minister.

At the end of August, Interior Minister David Mills arrived in Winnipeg to examine the operation of the various branches of his department. On 8 September he visited St. Peter's Reserve accompanied by Provencher. There the visitors were treated to a speech of almost five hours' duration by Chief Henry Prince. It was mainly a litany of grievances delivered with the chief's "rugged eloquence and quaint illustrations." Provencher, presumably to his embarrassment, was accused of being invisible when called upon and of treating the Indians "like dogs."[72]

Mills remained in the West until 20 September. The barrage of complaints about the activities of the Winnipeg office which greeted him during this time convinced him that a closer examination was warranted. The man chosen to undertake this task was a fellow Ontarian, Ebenezer McColl, who was then resident in Winnipeg. He was given the title of inspector of Indian agencies and proceeded to make some discreet inquiries.[73] His findings were submitted to Mills on 15 October.

The inspector's report contained accusations that could not be overlooked. The Indians claimed that annuities frequently went unpaid, that they were given inferior livestock, equipment and provisions, and that Provencher was rarely available when they wished to see him. Many of these grievances were transmitted to McColl on behalf of the Indians by missionaries and prominent local politicians such as A.G.M. Bannatyne, W.F. Luxton and John Norquay. Norquay asserted that no amount of sophistry or white-washing would restore the Indians' confidence in Provencher and that unless he was replaced by an honourable man, trouble might ensue. Bannatyne was convinced that the management of Indian

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70 See, for example, NA, RG 10, vol. 3613, f. 4057, Enjekapow, Indegous, Miskoopenais, and others to Laird, 28 September 1874.

71 Frémont, "Provencher," p. 38.

72 *Manitoba Daily Free Press*, 10 September 1877.

73 McColl was born on 13 August 1835 to Scottish immigrants at Brock's Creek near Eagle P.O., Upper Canada. He was a Primitive Baptist in religion. NA, RG 10, vol. 3582, f. 957, Department of Indian Affairs information form, 28 February 1882; minister of the Interior to McColl, 19 November 1877. PAM, MG 14 C29, Ebenezer McColl Papers, "Biographical Sketch."

affairs was "a perfect swindle." His father-in-law, Andrew McDermot, one of the original Selkirk settlers, held similar views: he believed that the transactions of the Indian office "were carried on in a most reprehensible and disgraceful manner," and he warned that unless their grievances were resolved, the Indians might join forces with "the warlike Sioux" to avenge their wrongs. Some local businessmen added to the chorus of discontent. Winnipeg's "merchant prince," J.H. Ashdown, felt that government contracts were unfairly awarded to his competitors in spite of his lower tenders and superior goods. There were even suggestions that accounts were falsified to Provencher's pecuniary advantage.[74]

McDermot's reference to the Sioux evidently struck a nervous chord. Earlier in the year Sitting Bull and thousands of his followers had crossed to the safety of Canadian territory after their triumph at Little Big Horn. Mills noted that the hostility of these Indians to the American government arose from "the dishonesty of Indian agents" and Washington's failure to protect reservations from "an adventuresome and somewhat lawless white population." Ottawa, he proclaimed, would learn from the American experience and would root out abuses in Indian administration in Manitoba, should they be found. [75]

On 12 November a commission composed of McColl and Winnipeg barrister W.H. Ross was appointed by the federal government to investigate the charges made against Provencher. Shortly afterwards the acting superintendent was suspended from office and Graham was placed in charge pending the outcome of the inquiry.[76] The commissioners began their deliberations on 18 December at the Indian office in Winnipeg.

Provencher had gathered about him a loyal coterie of friends, many of whom were prominent French-Canadians. They now rallied to his defence. Joseph Royal, Manitoba's attorney general, and Joseph Dubuc, speaker of the Legislative Assembly, served as his lawyers. But they were excluded from the hearings after three days when Provencher chose a private rather than a public inquiry. Royal could still help and he showed no hesitation in using, or perhaps abusing, his position in the cabinet to salvage the career of his embattled friend. He readily advised witnesses that the commission had no power to compel them to give evidence (this was not true, in fact) and he pressured the provincial justice system not to cooperate with the inquiry. As a result of these obstructions, the commission failed to hear the testimony of five witnesses, including Royal himself. Devotion to a friend was not the attorney general's only motivation in these machinations, for he

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74 Ibid., vol. 3654, f. 8863, E. McColl to D. Mills, 15 October 1877.

75 *Report of the Department of the Interior for the year ended 30 June 1877*, report of the minister of the Interior, pp. xii and xviii.

76 NA, RG 10, vol. 3654, f. 8900, order in council, 12 November 1877 (No. 1004); headquarters to J.F. Graham, 20 November 1877; headquarters to Provencher, 20 November 1877.

was implicated personally in the shady business dealings of the hapless Indian superintendent.

Provencher was also adept at obstructionist tactics. Throughout the course of the inquiry he appealed regularly for adjournments, which were sometimes granted, but never with the frequency he demanded. Illness, or rather feigned illness, was another of his strategies; while thus indisposed, the commissioners allowed Provencher to be represented by anyone of his choosing. He declined this right, arguing that only he could conduct the cross-examination of his accusers. And cross-examine he did, but often in a frivolous and time-consuming manner which infuriated the commissioners.[77] He also wrote numerous letters to the federal Justice minister, Rodolphe Laflamme, objecting to certain aspects of the proceedings. He protested that he was not placed in possession of all the charges against him at the outset of the inquiry; that he was not allowed sufficient preparation time prior to the cross-examination of witnesses; that he was not granted ready access to documents in the Indian Office; and that evidence was recorded by the commissioners themselves, not by a neutral party.[78]

These objections were transmitted to the Interior Department. There was no problem, the department insisted, since no one was on trial; the purpose of the inquiry was merely to gather information. Nevertheless, McColl and Ross were cautioned that Provencher's rights should be protected.[79]

In all, sixty-four witnesses were called to the hearings: fifty-six were summoned by the commissioners; eight came at Provencher's behest. The inquiry concluded on 13 March 1878 and the commissioners proceeded to draw up a report for Ottawa.

The acting superintendent was found guilty of sixteen charges, the most serious of which are hereby recounted. Outright fraud was the principal problem, rather than mere incompetence or neglect, and Provencher's relationship with the hardware company of McMicken and Taylor was the major source of corruption. In examining the records, the commissioners discovered that the tenders for goods supplied to the department by that company were invariably higher and less specific regarding quality than those submitted by the rival firm of J.H. Ashdown, and yet were accepted in most cases. In fact, the manufacturer of the harrows supplied by McMicken and Taylor admitted that they were of poor quality. And a former clerk with the company confessed that it was standard practice to furnish the Indian department with "the most inferior articles." Even more curious was the fact that when many of these contracts were entered into,

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77 Ibid., vol. 3677, f. 11,451, "Report of W.H. Ross and E. McColl to the Secretary of State," 21 March 1878.

78 Ibid., vol. 3654, f. 8900, Provencher to the minister of Justice, 19, 22, 29, 31 December 1877.

79 Ibid., headquarters to McColl and Ross, 7 January 1878.

the company was in serious financial difficulty — a fact known to Provencher — and it was doubtful whether it could uphold its part of the transactions. Indeed, it became insolvent in October 1877.[80]

To compound matters, an examination of the books of McMicken and Taylor showed that the department had paid the company between $2,800 and $3,000 for goods which were never supplied. And there was a further discrepancy of $1,600 which was unaccounted for. In fact, Provencher had tried to cover up this problem by inventing fictitious accounts.

Nevertheless, the investigation unearthed no direct evidence that the acting superintendent had accepted commissions from McMicken and Taylor or from anyone else. There were some perquisites, however. He had been allowed to run up a large personal account with the firm between February 1875 and the time of its bankruptcy; during this time he had only remitted $13.50 while the balance stood at $528.50. The former bookkeeper with McMicken and Taylor confessed that he had been instructed not to press Provencher for payment; it was understood that the debt would not be collected.

An arrangement of a similar nature existed with the firm of C.W. Radiger, an importer of wine, Guinness stout, and other necessities. In that instance, the department was charged for greater quantities of tea and tobacco than were actually supplied. The balance was often transferred into Provencher's private account with the firm, which he drew upon when in need of wine, liquor or "potted meats." This information was divulged by a former bookkeeper; Radiger himself was one of those who had avoided appearing before the commission with Royal's assistance.

Royal, it seems, had not been above attempting to profit from his friendship with Provencher by taking a hand in supplying cattle to the department. The investigators could not discern the exact role he played in these transactions, however, since the accounts were in a state of confusion. Nevertheless, the evidence of J.B. Lapointe was particularly damaging. Lapointe looked after a herd of cattle owned by Royal, and late in 1876 was instructed to send forty of them to the North-West Angle. Upon arrival there, the Indians would only accept four of the beasts and the remainder were driven back to Winnipeg in the depths of winter, a number being lost

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80 J.H. Ashdown did rather well from the bankruptcy. He picked up the stock of McMicken and Taylor for 62 1/2¢ on the dollar. Ashdown was one of Provencher's principal critics and he evidently appreciated McColl's investigative zeal. On 5 January 1878 he treated his employees to an oyster supper at the Bodega and the inspector of Indian agencies was invited as a special guest. McColl's efforts were also appreciated by the Indians. On 19 January a Saulteaux group conferred the title of chief upon him — the English translation of the sobriquet he thus acquired was "The Bald-Headed Man." *Manitoba Daily Free Press*, "City and Provincial News," p. 1, 27 December 1877; 7 and 19 January 1878. For a biographical sketch of Ashdown, see Alan F.J. Artibise, *Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth, 1874-1914* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975), 29.

along the way. The thirty-two cattle that survived the return journey perished in the next few months. Provencher's explanation for this debacle was that the Indians had not been prepared to accept the cattle — neither shelter nor fodder being ready. But the Indians claimed, and this was corroborated by agents McPherson and Pither, that the cattle were wild and unmanageable. Royal had bought the creatures from T.J. Demers, a large-scale dealer who had imported them from Montana. Those who knew the herd estimated that the forty head supplied by Royal were worth about $1,045, whereas the department had been charged $2,004 for them. From this transaction the Indians had acquired four unruly beasts, Royal a tidy profit, and the public purse a gaping hole.

Accounts for cattle and carts amounting to $5,000 were made out to a mysterious J. Tremblay. Try as they might, the commissioners failed to discover the identity of this man and they concluded that if he did exist, he could not possibly be a cattle dealer.

These were the most glaring instances of fraud and corruption implicating Provencher that came to light as a result of the inquiry. He was also found guilty of extravagance in official expenditure, of being "indifferent and inattentive towards Indians seeking interviews with him," of supplying poor quality provisions, and of being generally neglectful of the duties attendant upon his position.[81]

There could be no second chances when the catalogue of damning testimony was weighed in the balance. On 2 May 1878 Mills informed the governor general that the charges against Provencher had been "substantially borne out by the evidence elicited in the investigation" and recommended dismissal of the acting Indian superintendent. An order in council of 9 May approved this course of action.[82] Provencher's successor was Molyneux St. John, who had left the Indian department some years earlier.[83] McColl remained in Manitoba as inspector of agencies.

Provencher's fall was reported in the local newspapers and fraud was given as the reason. Royal's role in the affair was also duly noted and some of those who resented his influence in the provincial governments of R.A. Davis and John Norquay tried to use the scandal to destroy him. The most uncompromising attacks came from an old rival, Henry J. Clarke, who was hoping to make a political comeback by pandering to incipient anti-French feelings among English-speaking settlers recently arrived from Ontario.[84]

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81 NA, RG 10, vol. 3677, f. 11, 451, "Report of W.H. Ross and E. McColl to the Secretary of State," and "Summary of Evidence," 21 March 1878.

82 Ibid., vol. 3654, f. 8900, Mills to the governor general, 2 May 1878; order in council, 9 May 1878 (No. 361).

83 Ibid., vol. 3668, f. 10,491, order in council, 8 October 1878 (No. 891).

84 "Clarke, Henry Joseph," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. 11 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 192-94.

In the pages of his short-lived *Manitoba Gazette*, Clarke described Royal as "a man plunged in corruption to the lips, steeped in the dark stream of selfish greed that he has been swimming in for years," and demanded that the federal government make public the details of the "Indian frauds."[85]

John A. Macdonald, leader of the opposition at the time of Provencher's dismissal, was advised not to press the government on the scandal since those embroiled in it were mainly Conservatives.[86] And when he returned to power some months later, Royal and Joseph Dubuc reportedly lobbied him successfully not to release the McColl and Ross report.[87]

Even so, Royal's reputation was seriously damaged. His leadership of the "French party" in the legislature was undermined and his unpopularity with the English-speaking population made rapid progress.[88] These developments undoubtedly contributed to his ouster from the cabinet in May 1879.[89]

What future now awaited Provencher? He was still a prominent member of the community. When the University of Manitoba was established in 1878, he had been appointed to its governing body as one of the representatives of St. Boniface College. This honorary position was not affected by his fall from grace. He now tried his hand at the practice of law in partnership with an Irishman, Michael Carey, and it seems that he did some writing for *Le Métis*. But politics also attracted him. The Yamaska defeat was a fading memory and in the provincial election of December 1879 he entered the lists for St. Boniface. The result was disastrous: Provencher secured a mere four votes; his opponent, experienced politician Alphonse LaRivière, received 122.[90]

This humiliation prompted Provencher's departure from the West. Early in 1880 he made his way back to Montreal where the world of journalism again beckoned. He wrote extensively for *La Minerve* in the following years, and also served briefly as editor of *Le Monde* (1883) and of *La Presse* (1884-85). His penchant for self-indulgence and high living remained undiminished and he suffered the ultimate consequence: on 28 October 1887 the

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85 *Manitoba Gazette*, editorials, 19 October, 9 November 1878.

86 NA, MG 26A, John A. Macdonald Papers, vol. 252A, pp. 114259-66, C.W. Allen to J. A. Macdonald, 8 March 1878.

87 *Manitoba Gazette*, 15 February 1879.

88 NA, Macdonald Papers, vol. 354, p. 163341, C.W. Allen to J.A. Macdonald, 11 January 1879. PAM, MG 14 26, Joseph Dubuc Papers, vol. 23, "Mémoires d'un Manitobain" (1912).

89 The complex events surrounding Royal's fall are analyzed perceptively by Gerald Friesen in his "Homeland to Hinterland: Political Transition in Manitoba, 1870 to 1879," *Historical Papers/Communications Historiques*, 1979, pp. 33-41. Friesen, however, makes no reference to the Indian fraud scandal and to its effect on Royal's reputation.

90 Frémont, "Provencher," 39; *Manitoba Weekly Free Press and Standard*, 20 December 1879, "Local Elections," p. 8.

ravages of cirrhosis of the liver brought his life to an end at the relatively early age of 44.[91]

The administration of Indian affairs in Manitoba under J.A.N. Provencher illustrates clearly that the federal government treated its obligations to the Native population rather lightly. To the Indians their treaties were binding agreements; Ottawa regarded them as a necessary nuisance. Once the ink of the signatories was dry on the page, the government was in no hurry to fulfill its part of the bargain. Surveys of reserves dragged on for several years while squatters exploited the lands claimed by Indians. Schools were gradually created, but upon the initiative of missionaries rather than the state. The wherewithal to engage in farming was slow in coming, and when it did, it was rarely sufficient in either quality or quantity. Scrawny oxen and inferior ploughs were no match for the unbroken prairie sod. To make matters worse, there was little or no instruction in this new way of life. It is small wonder that economic self-sufficiency through agriculture remained an elusive dream for Indians.

Provencher's administrative incompetence and corrupt practices bear much of the responsibility for this malaise. Yet the government which appointed him and its successor which kept him in office for so long cannot be absolved of blame, for Ottawa regarded the Indian department as little more than a source of patronage. Complaints about Provencher's performance filtered back to the capital almost as soon as he had taken up his position, but they were overlooked for many years. Indians were chronic complainers after all, it was reasoned, and since they lacked the franchise they could be safely ignored.

If inefficiency was a failing that might be condoned, the fraudulent misuse of public funds was not. As evidence of the latter came to light in 1877, the government was forced to examine matters more closely; the magnitude of the corruption that was revealed in the inquiry meant that Provencher had to go. His departure, however, did not usher in a new era of honesty and dedication in Indian administration in the West: as the service expanded rapidly in the following decade, it continued to provide jobs for men whose most conspicuous qualification was allegiance to the party in power.

The fall of Provencher can also be seen as a symptom of the declining fortunes of the French-Canadian community in Manitoba as Ontarian newcomers came to dominate the province and its politics; one of his principal accusers was W.F. Luxton, editor of the *Free Press* and a noted opponent of French rights. The Indian fraud scandal was a regrettable gift to those who sought to overthrow the tolerant bilingual principles upon which the province was founded.

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91 Frémont, "Provencher," 39-41; Ledieu, "Provencher," 221-22.

In his essay in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Kenneth Landry observes that Provencher was remembered "as a journalist of superior talent and a conscientious and honest administrator." The evidence for the latter contention would be interesting to see.[92]

92 Landry, "Provencher," 716.

"Educational Paternalism" Versus Autonomy: Contradictions in the Relationship Between the Saskatchewan Government and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, 1958-1964

James M. Pitsula

ABSTRACT. The Saskatchewan CCF government led by Tommy Douglas had a close, long-standing relationship with Indian political organizations. This article examines the relationship between the CCF government and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians from 1958 to the government's defeat in 1964. It argues that the government was caught between two incompatible goals: the desire to assist the development of the FSI as a strong, self-determining organization and the desire to promote the integration of Indians into mainstream society. The government pursued both goals with the result that relations with the FSI were enmeshed in contradiction. The relationship worked, however, because there were advantages to both sides and because of the knowledge, sensitivity and strength of both non-aboriginal and aboriginal leaders.

SOMMAIRE. Le gouvernement CCF de la Saskatchewan, dirigé par Tommy Douglas, fut pendant longtemps en relations étroites avec les organisations politiques indiennes. Le présent article passe en revue la relation existant entre le gouvernement CCF et la Fédération des Indiens de la Saskatchewan depuis 1958 jusqu'à la défaite du CCF en 1964. Notre thèse est que le gouvernement se trouvait coincé entre deux objectifs incompatibles: le désir d'aider la FIS à devenir une solide organisation autonome, et le désir de faciliter l'intégration des Indiens dans la société dominante. Les relations qui s'ensuivirent, bien qu'empreintes de contradictions, furent cependant fructueuses, grâce aux avantages qui existaient des deux côtés, et aussi grâce aux connaissances, à la sensibilité et à la force des dirigeants concernés, autochtones aussi bien que non-autochtones.

The Saskatchewan CCF government led by Tommy Douglas had a close, longstanding relationship with Indian political organizations. The premier believed that the treatment of Indians was "one of the blackest pages" in Canadian history and that a new deal for Indians was long overdue.[1] When the residents of Carry-the-Kettle Reserve conferred on him the honorary title of Chief We-a-ga-sha (Red Eagle) in July 1945, he said he did not regard the chieftainship as an "empty honour," and he encouraged his fellow chiefs to share their problems with him.[2] True to his word, Douglas invited the Indians of the province to an assembly in Regina in January 1946 to discuss the formation of a single organization to represent Indian interests. The result was the merger of three organizations (the League of Indians of Western Canada, the Protective Association for Indians and their Treaties, and the Association of Indians of Saskatchewan) into the Union of Saskatchewan Indians under the leadership of John Tootoosis.[3]

The next major intervention by the Douglas government in Indian affairs

1 Regina *Leader-Post*, 22 March 1946.

2 Ibid., 27 July 1945.

3 The formation of the Union of Saskatchewan Indians is discussed in detail in James M. Pitsula, "The CCF Government and the Union of Saskatchewan Indians," *Prairie Forum* 19, no. 2 (1994): 131-51.

came in 1958 when the government sponsored a conference of chiefs and councillors at Valley Centre, Fort Qu'Appelle. The delegates elected an Indian Advisory Committee, composed of one person from each of the nine agencies, to help plan the next conference and do "educational work" on the reserves. The Advisory Committee doubled as the provisional executive of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, an organization that was formed when delegates voted to merge the Union of Saskatchewan Indians with the Queen Victoria Protective Association.[4]

A joint meeting of the provisional FSI executive and the government's Committee on Indian Affairs was held on 12 December 1958. The latter had been established by cabinet in 1956 to deal with Indian issues and was chaired by John Sturdy.[5] The meeting dealt with the transportation expenses of FSI executive members engaged in organizational and educational work. The government agreed to provide up to $1,000 for this purpose.[6] Following the joint meeting, the FSI executive met separately to draft the constitution and bylaws of the Federation. At their request, Dr. Morris Shumiatcher, a member of the Committee on Indian Affairs, acted as legal consultant.[7] The constitution, which was approved by the FSI conference held in October 1959, stated that the FSI "would be a non-partisan organization with respect to matters of religion and politics." Its aims were to promote the welfare of Saskatchewan Indians by:

> 1. Protecting Treaties and Treaty rights; 2. Fostering progress in all fields of economic, education and social life of Indians; 3. Cooperating with all civil and religious authorities; 4. Constructively criticizing and discussing all matters; 5. Adhering to democratic principles and procedures; and 6. Promoting respect and tolerance for all.[8]

As is evident from the preceding discussion, the Douglas government

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4 The members of the committee were J.B. Tootoosis (Battleford), Absalom Halkett (sub Rev. S. Cuthand, Carlton), Joe Williams (Crooked Lake), David Knight (Duck Lake), David Greyeyes (Shellbrook), John Gambler (File Hills-Qu'Appelle), Louis Quewezance (Pelly), John Skeboss (Touchwood), Ernest Dillon (Meadow Lake). Saskatchewan Archives Board (SAB), T.C. Douglas Papers, R-33.1 XLV 864d (49) 4/6, Provincial Conference of Saskatchewan Indian Chiefs and Councillors, Valley Centre, Fort Qu'Appelle, 30 and 31 October 1958.

5 Members of the Committee on Indian Affairs attending the meeting on 12 December 1958 were John Sturdy, Lewis Thomas, Gordon Campbell, John Archer, M.C. Shumiatcher and W. Wuttunee. SAB, W.S. Lloyd Papers, R-61.1 I 34, joint meeting of the executive of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians and the government Committee on Indian Affairs, 12 December 1958.

6 SAB, Douglas Papers, R-33.1 XLV 864 (d) 49 4/6, Cabinet minute no. 8997 re: cabinet meeting of 9 January 1959.

7 SAB, Lloyd Papers, R-61.1 I 34, joint meeting of the executive of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians and the government Committee on Indian Affairs, 12 December 1958.

8 Ibid., R-61.4 IX 130a (9-12), "Indian Outlook," May 1963.

played a role in the formation of both the Union of Saskatchewan Indians in 1946 and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians in 1958. This article examines the relationship between the FSI and the CCF government from 1958 to the government's defeat in 1964. It argues that the government was caught between two incompatible goals: the desire to assist the development of the FSI as a strong, self-determining organization — the recognized "voice" of Saskatchewan Indians[9] — and the desire to promote the integration of Indians into mainstream society. The first goal implied that the CCF administration would not attempt to use the FSI to advance an agenda or for political gain. The second one prompted the government to steer the FSI to accept policies leading to integration. The government was torn between, on the one hand, scrupulously respecting the autonomy of the FSI and, on the other, promoting in a somewhat paternalistic way the CCF's program for the social and economic advancement of Indians. It tried to do both, with the result that Saskatchewan government/FSI relations were enmeshed in contradiction. Ironically, it would have been easier for the government had it been uncertain about what to do to improve the lot of Indians. The very clarity of its solutions created problems, because the desire to "do good" (as the government perceived good) tempted the government to stray from its avowed principle of letting Indians decide for themselves what they wanted to do.

The Federation of Saskatchewan Indians was in a vulnerable position because all of its funding came from the Saskatchewan government. Since the grant was not large enough for the FSI to hire its own executive director, it depended upon a government employee to do its administrative work. Thus, the liaison person between the government and the FSI doubled as the FSI's staff person. The closeness and dependency of this relationship created difficulties for the FSI. Suggestions came from the federal Indian Affairs Department that the Federation was "controlled" by the provincial government and was "essentially a political 'gimmick'."[10] Leaders of rival Indian organizations, such as John Gambler of the Qu'Appelle Indian Advisory Council of Chiefs Independent, voiced similar criticisms, even suggesting that a presenter of the FSI brief to the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on Indian Affairs, though "an Indian by colour," "holds the status of a white man."[11] Analysis of FSI/Saskatchewan government relations from 1958 to 1964 reveals, however, that the one who pays

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9 In the 1960 provincial election campaign, Premier Douglas promised that his government would "assist the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians to maintain a strong, democratic and positive organization devoted to the improvement and advancement of all people of Indian ancestry. Our relationship with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians will continue to be a non-political one and on a basis similar to our relationship with the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities." SAB, Douglas Papers, R-33.1 XLV 864e (49) 5/6, T.C. Douglas to "My Indian Friends," 30 May 1960.

10 SAB, Lloyd Papers, R-61.4 IX 130b (9-12), R. Woollam to E. Wood, 12 September 1963.

11 Government of Canada, Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on Indian Affairs, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, No. 7, 26 and 27 April 1961, 226.

the piper does not always call the tune. The FSI expected to be treated respectfully and consulted seriously. It would not allow itself to be patronized or pushed around, and on the key issue of the early 1960s, the provincial government's desire to take over the administration of Indian affairs, the FSI resisted pressure and withheld consent.

The relationship between the province and the FSI needs to be understood in the context of the CCF's commitment to integration. The government wanted Indians to "move off-reserve and into the mainstream of Canadian economic and social life while maintaining traditional rights and preserving the economic and social security now provided by reservations."[12] An important factor giving rise to this policy was Indian population growth. Population on Saskatchewan reserves rose 9 percent from 1941-1946, 15 percent, 1946-1951, 18 percent, 1951-1956, and 21 percent, 1956-1959.[13] Economic resources on the reserves — whether fish and fur in the north or agricultural land in the south — could not support existing residents at subsistence levels, let alone provide for future generations. The Saskatchewan government believed that the only solution was for Indians to move away from the reserves into permanent wage employment.[14]

The Saskatchewan government's brief to the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on Indian Affairs in 1960 was devoted to suggestions to ease and facilitate the process of integration. The discussion of traditional Indian culture was cast almost entirely in terms of how it handicapped aboriginals who were trying to "get ahead" in modern society. "Traditional" Indians were described as permissive in their child-rearing practices, averse to established routines, lacking in reliability and punctuality, and given to sharing, rather than accumulating, wealth.[15] The brief's message was clear — to succeed in the white person's world, Indians would have to adopt the white person's ways. The only hint that the Saskatchewan government recognized something positive in Indian culture came when John H. Sturdy, minister without portfolio in the Saskatchewan government and co-presenter of the brief, observed that the Indian philosophy of sharing lent itself to cooperative farming on reserves.[16] Sturdy saw value in Indian ways when they dovetailed with his own enthusiasm for cooperative farm experiments, such as the Matador project, underway in Saskatchewan.[17]

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12 Ibid., No. 12, 16 and 17 June 1960, 1071.

13 Ibid., 1033.

14 Ibid., 1071.

15 Ibid., 1034-36.

16 Ibid., 1110.

17 There is one communication from Sturdy that stands out because it contained a thought not usually expressed in the papers of Saskatchewan government ministers and officials during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Sturdy, in a letter to CCF candidates in the 1960 election, referred to a paper written by Fr. Leon Levasseur, O.M.I., which suggested that

Sturdy's belief in both the desirability and necessity of integration led to ambivalence about the future of reserves. He told the Joint Committee: "It will be a long time and then only with the expressed wishes and consent of the Indians before our segregated reservations pass out of existence and our native people are completely integrated into the social, economic and political life of our nation — if this is our objective — which I presume it is."[18] In a revealing analogy, he compared reserves to the pioneer Ontario farm where he had been raised. Since the farm was large enough to support only one son, the other children had moved to cities and taken up professional jobs. However, they still had fond memories of the family farm and liked to return for occasional visits. Sturdy said it was the same with Indian people who had migrated to urban centres, but liked to keep the connection to the home reserve.[19] He did not reflect on the inadequacy of the analogy — that the cultural distance from the reserve to the city was much greater than from his Ontario farm to Regina.

Notwithstanding the general thrust of the Saskatchewan brief, the CCF government's policy of integration should not be equated with a policy of assimilation. Ray Woollam, the executive director of the Provincial Committee on Minority Groups, who, together with Sturdy, presented the brief, addressed this question head-on:

> On the one hand, we could proceed on the assumption that sooner or later Indian communities will die out. Our policies are then suited to the needs of *individual* [emphasis in the original] Indians. Or we might assume that their elimination as an ethnic group is not predictable — in which case we would treat them as members of communities, having community traditions. ... Anthropologists who have given this matter a great deal of thought no longer are deluding themselves that the Indian community will disappear. They say that the chances are that it will be with us a thousand years hence. Therefore any realistic program must take both the individual factor as well as the community factor into its shaping. This dichotomy of policy would seem to commend itself.[20]

Woollam, when asked to choose between either integration for Indians or preservation of community traditions, answered "both."

To complicate matters further, Woollam testified that pride in ethnic identity could facilitate integration:

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from the 'Indian' culture in preference to the 'white' culture. 'Integration' is a process of two-way change. Only in 'assimilation' is the accommodation made entirely by the recessive culture." There is no evidence the government acted upon this idea. SAB, Douglas Papers, R-33.1 XLV 864e (49) 5/6, J. Sturdy to Candidate, 15 April 1960.

18 Government of Canada, Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on Indian Affairs, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, No. 12, 16 and 17 June 1960, 1081.

19 Ibid., 1141-42.

20 Ibid., 1141.

> Yet with other ethnic minorities in Canada we have seen how the security provided by an "in-group" experience makes possible the confidence that is prerequisite to acculturation. This "in" feeling — this feeling of "ethnocentricity" — may be used to promote acculturation.[21]

For this reason he welcomed the revival of powwows on the Prairies. In a memo to Premier Douglas, he wrote:

> I regard these as very wonderful opportunities for these people to regain the sense of dignity and worth of their culture. I feel that this rising "ethnocentricity" is prerequisite to any movement toward integration.[22]

It should be noted that these statements in support of Indian culture (even if only as a bridge to integration) were not part of the official government brief. That document, as we have seen, mentioned Indian culture as a barrier to successful integration, not as something valuable for its own sake or worthy of emulation.

At the same time, the brief explicitly affirmed that traditional Indian rights should be respected — integration, yes, but not forced integration. The government maintained that "full integration" could be achieved "without curtailing the Indians' traditional rights or reducing in any way the welfare and security they now enjoy."[23] It said that to repeal the Indian Act would be a great wrong: "The rights and privileges and traditional securities provided in the Act and the Treaties must be preserved as an irreducible minimum."[24] From today's perspective, the Saskatchewan government seems to be contradicting itself. If one assumes that treaty rights imply the right of self-government and, perhaps, sovereignty, how can they be compatible with "full integration?" However, the CCF government did not understand treaty rights in that way. Douglas, for example, said in 1959 with reference to the treaties: "We think the Indian was short-changed. Anything he has, he should be allowed to keep. It's little enough as it is."[25] Similarly, Sturdy remarked that Indians should receive the privileges of any Canadian citizen, and, in addition, "whatever few additional privileges they enjoy under their treaties."[26] They did not regard treaties as the foundation for separate development for Indians; rather, they thought

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21 Ibid., 1103.

22 SAB, Douglas Papers, R-33.1 CXXXIII 961a (150) 1/2, R. Woollam to T.C. Douglas, 10 August 1960.

23 Government of Canada, Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on Indian Affairs, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, No. 12, 16 and 17 June 1960, 1032.

24 Ibid., 1042.

25 SAB, Douglas Papers, R-33.1 XLV 864 (d) 49 4/6, news release, Department of Travel and Information, 22 October 1959.

26 Government of Canada, Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on Indian Affairs, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, No. 12, 16 and 17 June 1960, 1101.

treaty rights conferred only minor advantages and were entirely compatible with integration.[27]

In addition, the government assumed that Indians would choose full participation in Canadian social and economic life, and all the benefits of belonging to the mainstream, over the minimal security of the segregated reserve. The government's strategy was to avoid frightening Indians by threatening to take away the guarantees they enjoyed under the treaties and the Indian Act. To do so would not bring about integration, but quite the reverse. As Sturdy stated before the Joint Committee: "I think that federal, provincial and municipal governments have been remiss, and will continue to be remiss, if they cannot make life sufficiently attractive outside the reserve to attract a large body of the Indian population away from the reserves of their own volition. That is what we are hoping to achieve."[28] In other words, it would not be necessary to take away the securities to which Indians were accustomed; the Saskatchewan government hoped that Indians would give them up.

Saskatchewan CCF Indian policy of the early 1960s was reminiscent of a school of thought found in the United States in the 1950s. Brian Dippie, in *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy*, points out that the termination movement, which sought to free Indians from Bureau of Indian Affairs paternalism and give them status as equal citizens of the United States, drew support from two very different sources. One consisted of right-wing conservatives, who deplored ethnic rejection of the melting pot as "anti-American, un-Christian, outmoded, and perhaps disloyal or barbarous." On the opposite end of the political spectrum were liberals, who crusaded to abolish what they regarded as "artificial barriers blocking the way to a fully integrated society." They believed that "anything that serves to perpetuate the Indians' distinctiveness from the rest of the American community may serve also to perpetuate their second-class status in that community."[29] This was essentially the position of the Saskatchewan

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27 A more complete discussion of how the CCF government viewed treaty rights can be found in James M. Pitsula, "The Saskatchewan CCF Government and Treaty Indians, 1944-64," *The Canadian Historical Review* 75 (1994), especially pages 48-52. Interestingly, the Hawthorn report, a major research project undertaken by a team of Canadian social scientists in the 1960s, shared this "minimalist" interpretation of treaty rights. It concluded in 1966 that the "substantive effects" of the treaties were "minimal," imposing "marginal obligations on the federal government." H.B. Hawthorn, ed., *A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies* (Ottawa: Indian Affairs, 1966), vol. 1, 247-48.

28 Government of Canada, Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on Indian Affairs, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, No. 12, 16 and 17 June 1960, 1100.

29 Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), 342, quoting Robert A. Manners, "Pluralism and the American Indian," *America Indigena* (1962), reprinted in Deward E. Walker Jr., ed., *The Emergent Native Americans: A Reader in Culture Contact* (Boston: Little and Brown, 1971), 126.

CCF government, with one important caveat. CCFers wanted integration, but, unlike some American liberals, were not prepared to abolish "artificial barriers [for example, treaty rights] blocking the way to a fully integrated society." The Saskatchewan government wanted Indians to break through these "barriers" themselves. The goal was the same, but the method less coercive.

The CCF government's integrationist policy took shape in the provincial bureaucracy in the spring of 1956 when the cabinet established a Committee on Indian Affairs, chaired by John Sturdy. The committee produced a report recommending three specific initiatives: the granting of the provincial vote to Indians, removal of restrictions on the sale of liquor, and the transfer of responsibility for delivering programs to Indians from the federal to the provincial government. Underlying the proposals was the belief that equality of citizenship required the elimination of legal distinctions and uniformity in the ways citizens related to the government. It was by no means obvious that Saskatchewan Indians would favour these changes. William Wuttunee, the only Indian member of the Committee on Indian Affairs, sounded opinion on a number of reserves in the summer of 1958. He discovered that John Tootoosis, a key leader who had been active in Indian political organizations since the 1920s, viewed the franchise as "the thin edge of the wedge" leading to the destruction of treaty rights.[30]

Despite this sign of opposition, the government pressed ahead in the fall of 1958 with a conference to which Indian chiefs and councillors from across the province were invited.[31] A lineup of distinguished speakers who supported voting and liquor rights for Indians failed to sway the delegates, who opted not to make a decision about these touchy issues.[32] They chose instead to debate the matter again at another conference to be held the following year. However, the second conference also failed to produce an endorsement for the vote and liquor rights. The government now faced a dilemma. It believed in equality, but should it force that equality on Indians who had not asked for it?

At this juncture, a new element entered provincial government policy making in the person of Ray Woollam, who was appointed executive director of the Provincial Committee on Minority Groups (as the Committee on Indian Affairs had been renamed) on 1 March 1960. Raymond Herbert Woollam was ordained a United Church minister in 1951 and served in that capacity in Smithers, Cranbrook and Duncan, British Columbia prior to joining the Saskatchewan government in 1959.[33] He was

30 SAB, Douglas Papers, R-33.1 XLV 864d (49) 4/6, W.I. Wuttunee to J.H. Sturdy, 6 July 1958.

31 Pitsula, "The Saskatchewan CCF Government and Treaty Indians," 33-35.

32 Ibid.

33 United Church Archives, Raymond Herbert Woollam pastoral service card, Accession No. 92.164c, File 31-3.

recruited by Gordon Campbell of the Adult Education Division of the Department of Education to work as an adult education consultant. The Adult Education Division had helped organize the Indian conferences at Fort Qu'Appelle in 1958 and 1959, and, by that route, Woollam had become involved in Indian issues. He believed strongly that the government was not acting quickly enough to give Indians equal voting and liquor rights,[34] and was so frustrated by what he perceived as government temporizing and foot-dragging that he submitted his resignation. The next day he received an invitation to have lunch with Premier Douglas in his office. The conversation that ensued was recalled by Woollam in a 1995 interview. "What's this all about?" Douglas asked.

> I took a deep breath and I started in. "You've run this bloody administration here for 16 years or whatever it is, and you've got a mess of Indian goodies here that makes B.C. look like heaven. You've got pockets of unbelievable poverty and hunger here like I'm sure doesn't exist short of New Brunswick. Things are a mess wherever I look, and I've done my best to come to grips with some of it, and here's some of the places where I've tried to get something going, and each time I hit a brick wall. I don't know whether the brick wall is Campbell [Woollam's supervisor], or the deputy, or the Minister of Education. I don't know whether it's Jack Sturdy, but nothing happens, and I don't get answers." And I start going chapter and verse through all these things. ... At the end of 45 minutes I take a deep breath, sort of reaching for the next thing, and the first thing that he said in 45 minutes — "You should be careful. A guy could run out of material." It was the funniest thing I ever heard. ... And I looked at him, and I started to laugh. Like all the tension I built up for five months went into that laugh. And he started to laugh. And the two of us started to cry and laugh. ... It went on for 3 or 4 minutes. It was joyous. It was the finest moment I had in 6 months.[35]

Following this interview, Douglas gave Woollam primary responsibility for coordinating the government's Indian and Metis policy. The province moved unilaterally to grant the vote and to allow Indians to patronize bars and purchase alcohol at liquor board stores.[36] As executive director of the Provincial Committee on Minority Groups, Woollam reported initially to committee chair, John Sturdy, and when Sturdy retired after the June 1960 election, to the new chair, Premier Douglas.[37] The committee grew out of the Indian Affairs Committee, but had an expanded membership and mandate. It included representatives from various government departments, as well

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34 SAB, Lloyd Papers, R-61.3 E-27 21/21, R. Woollam to T.C. Douglas, 15 January 1960.

35 Ray Woollam, interview, 24 August 1995.

36 Pitsula, "The Saskatchewan CCF Government and Treaty Indians," 38.

37 R. Woollam Papers (private collection), Provincial Committee on Minority Groups, Minutes, 25 April 1960.

as members at large.[38] Among its responsibilities were to assist departments and the cabinet in formulating policies and developing programs for Indians, Metis, and Hutterites (despite the name of the committee, these were the only minority groups it dealt with), identifying "duplications, contradictions, or omissions" in government services, gathering data and encouraging research, and maintaining contact with officials of other governments as well as voluntary and religious organizations. Of particular interest was the committee's duty "to assist the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians to maintain a strong, democratic and positive organization devoted to the improvement and advancement of all people of Indian ancestry."[39] This was at odds with the FSI's stated primary aim of protecting treaty rights. Treaty Indians and "all people of Indian ancestry" were two different groups.

Woollam forged a close relationship with the FSI executive who invited him in November 1959 to be their "acting assistant secretary." He continued in this role, which he also characterized as "helper" or "consultant," until October 1964. He attended FSI executive meetings, asked questions, offered assistance, wrote speeches and letters, and helped organize conferences. He was the FSI's staff person, while at the same time collecting his salary from the provincial government.

From the beginning of his involvement with the FSI, Woollam was not afraid to take an active role. For example, at the 27 November 1959 meeting of the Provincial Committee on Minority Groups, copies of the FSI brief to the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on Indian Affairs were distributed and discussed. Woollam drew attention to the work done by Bill Wuttunee on the brief. Wuttunee was a lawyer employed by the Saskatchewan Government Insurance Office and the sole aboriginal member of the minorities committee. Woollam asked if arrangements could be made to have Wuttunee accompany the FSI delegation as legal consultant when they presented their brief in Ottawa. Sturdy said that he had already advised cabinet of the good work done by Wuttunee, and they were most appreciative. The minutes then noted: "It was realized that the decision to have Mr. Wuttunee accompany the FSI as legal consultant would have to be approved by the FSI executive."[40] At their next meeting, the FSI executive

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38 The Provincial Committee on Minority Groups included representatives from the departments of Cooperation, Education, Agriculture, Social Welfare, Natural Resources, Municipal Affairs, Health, and the Economic Advisory and Planning Board. In addition, the following were members at large: John Archer, Lewis Thomas, Morris Shumiatcher and William Wuttunee. SAB, Douglas Papers, R-33.1 CXXXIII 961a (150) 1/2, Provincial Committee on Minority Groups, attachment to Minutes, 4 December 1959.

39 SAB, Douglas Papers, R-33.7 I 291B, Lewis Thomas to T.C. Douglas, Report on a Permanent Organization for the Provincial Committee on Minority Groups, 26 January 1960.

40 R. Woollam Papers, Provincial Committee on Minority Groups, Minutes, 27 November 1959.

consented,[41] and Wuttunee went to Ottawa, along with John Tootoosis, FSI president, and David Knight, vice-president.

The FSI brief did not have the emphasis on integration found in the Government of Saskatchewan brief. The theme was "the overriding desire of all Indians to be permitted to run their own affairs."[42] The brief recommended the transfer of power from the Indian Affairs Department to band councils, more suitable remuneration for the chief as the "chief executive officer of the reserve," abolition of the permit system, and an end to Indian Affairs control over the wills of deceased Indians. The FSI's goal was to end paternalism and "the old vestiges of colonialism."[43] The Saskatchewan government brief had made many of the same points, but had presented them in a different context. It had argued that treating Indians as wards inhibited their integration into the community at large.[44] The FSI and the provincial government agreed that Indian administration badly needed reform, but they diverged in their hopes for what would replace the *status quo*.

The only area where the FSI brief had a clear integrationist component was education. The federal government was commended "for integrating Indian children with non-Indian children and we urge that this program be accelerated as much as possible."[45] With respect to health services, the FSI took a firm stand for treaty rights.[46] The brief criticized Ottawa for providing medical care on a welfare basis rather than as a legal obligation and for cutting Indians off from medical assistance if they had been away from their reserve for twelve months. It objected to the Saskatchewan hospitalization cards that had been issued to Indians and demanded they be replaced with treaty cards. A request was also made with respect to annual treaty payments. Their amount should be increased to compensate for monetary inflation since treaty signing.[47]

When the FSI delegation testified before the Joint Committee, Wuttunee did most of the talking, Knight intervened several times, but Tootoosis said almost nothing. He spoke only twice, and his first words were: "When the treaties were made at Fort Carlton, the Indians were given an understanding."[48] By saying so little and emphasizing these words, Tootoosis

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41 Ibid., 4 December 1959.

42 Government of Canada, Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on Indian Affairs, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, No. 6, 25 May 1960, 440.

43 Ibid., 556.

44 Ibid., No. 12, 16 and 17 June 1960, 1040.

45 Ibid., No. 6, 25 May 1960, 449.

46 Ibid., 451-52.

47 Ibid., 455.

48 Ibid., 529.

made a point. As far as he was concerned, everything in the relations between Indians and non-Indians flowed from the treaties.

The FSI delegates addressed the Joint Committee in May 1960. Woollam, in the meantime, continued to make himself useful to the Federation. In his first "activity report" as executive director of the minorities committee, he stated that he had made arrangements for FSI letterhead and membership cards.[49] He wrote a lengthy memo setting forth what he hoped to accomplish in the next three years. This is an important document because in it Woollam expressed his ideas about his relationship with the FSI. He knew that the Saskatchewan government, as part of its integration policy, wanted to take over the administration of government services, including health, welfare, and education, to Indians. The province believed that separate administration under the Indian Affairs Department entrenched segregation and made it more difficult for Indians to become part of mainstream society. Indians were reluctant to move because they feared losing the secure benefits to which they were entitled as reserve residents. If Indians received the same services through the same government channels as did all other citizens, a barrier to leaving the reserves would be removed. The province, in effect, wanted to abolish the Indian Affairs Department and have provincial government departments take over its functions. The federal government would, however, be expected to compensate the province financially for assuming what had been, since Confederation, a federal responsibility.[50]

Woollam's memo showed he was aware that the transfer of Indian administration from the federal to the provincial government was a sensitive issue for Indians. He saw as part of his job "to propagate a delicate interpretation of this merger to the Indian people, lest they regard it only as a 'breach of treaty'." He conceived his role as that of a guide, steering the FSI in the "right" direction. The Saskatchewan government would have to practice "educational paternalism":

> I am well aware that the interest of provincial departments on behalf of Indian people are sincere interests. On the other hand, it is clear to me that the Indian people themselves are often initially suspicious concerning the motivation of provincial government planners. In short, although various departmental plans are made to favour the Indian and on his behalf, these plans are often misunderstood and may even be seen as "interference" by the Indian people themselves. I suggest that provincial administrators have frequently "set their sails hopefully" in expectation of some miraculous attitudinal response from the Indian people. Such a positive response, however, comes as a result of "planned change" — and it involves educational cost. A very carefully

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49 SAB, Douglas Papers, R-33.1 CXXXIII 961a (150) 1/2, Provincial Committee on Minority Groups, Executive Director, Activity Report, 1 March to 22 April 1960.

50 Pitsula, "The Saskatchewan CCF Government and Treaty Indians," 39-52.

> planned program of "educational paternalism" is, perhaps, prerequisite to the abandonment of "paternalistic programs."[51]

The Provincial Committee on Minority Groups discussed and approved the memo on 12 August 1960. Neither Premier Douglas nor any other committee member objected to its general thrust or to the specific passage quoted. Woollam was simply expressing what other provincial policy makers assumed concerning Saskatchewan government/FSI relations. The irony was that the province adopted a variation of the policy for which it condemned the federal government. The Indian Affairs Department had always acted as though it knew what was best for Indians. Now, the provincial government, in order to help Indians free themselves from Indian Affairs paternalism, was implementing its own form of paternalism.

The key was money. The FSI had no money other than what it received from the Saskatchewan government. Until budget year 1961-62 the province did not actually give the FSI a grant, but rather paid the travel and accommodation expenses of the chiefs and councillors who attended FSI conferences. The money was paid out of the premier's office, not out of FSI coffers. The Provincial Committee on Minority Groups, on 14 January 1961, decided to change this system. After much discussion, it agreed to give the FSI an outright grant of $7,500 for their operations in fiscal year 1961-62. The step was taken with some trepidation. The minutes record that "Mr. Woollam reiterated his conviction, on point of questioning, that the executive was quite ready for this kind of responsibility and was as capable as any other group would be to handle its own finances."[52] The committee recognized that $7,500 was not an adequate budget for the FSI. It would cover the expenses of the annual conference and the cost of "Indian Outlook," the FSI publication, but that was all. There would not be enough money for the FSI to hire its own executive director. That the FSI wanted to do this was evident from a resolution passed at its June 1961 conference. The incoming executive was urged "to establish a central office of the FSI and to employ a Treaty Indian as an executive-director if or when this is made possible by financial grants to the Federation."[53] A companion resolution petitioned the federal government to match the $7,500 grant given by the province and to allow bands to allocate funds for a small annual FSI membership fee.

Premier Douglas wrote Ellen Fairclough, the minister responsible for Indian Affairs, in support of these requests. He pointed out that the FSI was a democratic organization and that fifty-five of the sixty-seven Saskatchewan Indian bands had been represented at the last FSI conference.[54]

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51 SAB, Douglas Papers, R-33.7 I 291B, "Proposed Work Program, Executive Director, Provincial Committee on Minority Groups (Period of 1 March 1960 to 1 April 1963)."

52 R. Woollam Papers, Provincial Committee on Minority Groups, Minutes, 14 January 1961.

53 SAB, Douglas Papers, R-33.1 XLV 864e (49) 5/6, Agenda and Resolutions of a Delegation from the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, 26-27 October 1961.

54 Ibid., R-33.1 XXIII 733b (23-12) 8/8, T.C. Douglas to E. Fairclough, 7 June 1961.

Fairclough replied that it was not her department's policy to provide financial subsidy to Indian organizations. She also ruled out the use of band funds for this purpose, arguing that individual Indians might belong to different organizations, and that voting band funds for a particular organization could lead to complications.[55]

Compared with the federal government, the provincial government was generous in the support it gave the FSI. Tootoosis, during his many years as a political organizer, had encountered a great deal of opposition from the Indian Affairs Department and the RCMP.[56] It was a novelty for him to find a government eager to assist an Indian organization. Woollam recounted how the two of them used to travel the roads of Saskatchewan, visiting various reserves:

> We'd be driving along and suddenly — he was a dour, old guy — but suddenly, he'd be chortling away, laughing like hell. [I asked,] "What is it, John?" [He replied,] "I can't believe this. My whole life goes into fighting these goddamn government people and stupid white men. Now I've got this stupid white man ready to drive me anywhere in a new government car and he's going to buy lunch and he's going to buy supper and he's going to put us in a hotel tonight. And he asks me where do I want to go next, and he knows all I'm doing is politically organizing my own people. I just don't believe it." He just felt that Tommy was a great good thing in his life, that I was a great good thing in his life. And he was delighted how it was all coming together.[57]

Although Tootoosis and most of the FSI leaders of the early 1960s have passed away, Ken Goodwill, who served on the FSI executive in 1964-1965, was available for an interview in 1996. He confirmed that the FSI executive appreciated the help they received from the Douglas government: "First of all, they [the CCF] were the only group that it seemed were trying to help us, in spite of Indian Affairs, in spite of the federal government. They seemed to truly have some concern, some understanding, at least some concern, and probably compassion. And I think that grew out of Douglas himself and the people he surrounded himself with."[58]

Nevertheless, provincial financial support was insufficient to allow the Federation to hire its own executive director, with the result that a government official continued to perform that role. Thus, even in the act of allowing the FSI more autonomy, it restricted that autonomy. The matter of FSI funding revealed the contradictory aims of provincial government

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55 Ibid., E. Fairclough to T.C. Douglas, 13 July 1961.

56 Jean Goodwill and Norma Sluman, *John Tootoosis* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications 1984), 159-65.

57 Interview, Ray Woollam, 24 August 1995.

58 Interview, Ken Goodwill, interviewed by Vera Delorme, Denita Stonechild, and James Pitsula, 24 July 1996.

policy. It both practiced "educational paternalism" to advance the goal of integration and sought to promote the development of the FSI as a strong, democratic organization. Woollam was the person who insisted that the FSI was "mature" enough to handle its own budget, but he also did the FSI's administrative work despite the fact that he was a government employee. In the memo outlining his three-year plan, he sketched his plans for the FSI:

> I would work towards establishing the FSI over a period of several years, as a self-supporting non-governmental organization with whom our provincial relationships might be seen on a parallel to our relationships with the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities]. I would hope to make myself increasingly unnecessary to the welfare of the Federation.[59]

After a period of tutelage, the FSI would gain its autonomy. But why wait? It seems fair to assume that the provincial government did not want to lose the leverage it needed for its policy of "educational paternalism."

The tension between empowering and controlling the FSI was also evident in the way conferences were organized. In a memo to the premier, Woollam noted that he had spent the better part of a month making arrangements for the FSI conference held 26 and 27 September 1960.[60] The conference was "small group oriented" and focussed on the theme, "Learning to Help Ourselves."[61] Although most of the discussion group leaders were non-Indians from the Indian Affairs Department, the provincial Adult Education Division, the Department of Cooperation, and the Centre for Community Studies,[62] Woollam tried to involve the delegates as much as possible:

> Those of us who are "staff" should try to play background roles and our aim should be to encourage the fullest possible participation of the delegates — and to say as little as possible in bringing this about. It is suggested that we see ourselves as discussion group "helpers" rather than as discussion group "leaders."[63]

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59 Douglas Papers, R-33.7 I 291B, "Proposed Work Program, Executive Director, Provincial Committee on Minority Groups (Period of 1 March 1960 to 1 April 1963).

60 Ibid., R-33.1 CXXXIII 961a (150) 1/2, R. Woollam to T.C. Douglas, 11 October 1960.

61 Ibid., Federation of Saskatchewan Indians Conference Agenda, 26 and 27 September 1960.

62 Discussion group leaders included Orest Zakreski, placement officer, Indian Affairs Branch; Terry Phalen, Department of Cooperation; Dr. Peter Worsley and Walter Hlady, Centre for Community Studies; Peter Findlay, Gordon Campbell, and Billie McMath, Adult Education Division; Hon. O. Turnbull, Minister of Cooperation; John Webster, John Howard Society, and Fr. Bilodeau, principal of the Lebret Residential School. In addition there were some group leaders of Indian ancestry: Bill Wuttunee, Saskatchewan Government Insurance Office; Eleanor and Alex Brass, Regina Native Society; Rev. Adam Cuthand, Prince Albert Indian and Metis Service Council, and David Greyeyes. SAB, Douglas Papers, R-33.1 CXXXIII 961a (150) 1/2, Discussion Group Orientation.

63 Ibid.

The FSI members appreciated this approach. At the next meeting of the executive in December 1960, Tootoosis said the fall conference was the best yet "in that the Indian people themselves had been very free to determine the agenda, resolutions, etc." The executive "felt that group resource leaders had been much less manipulative this year, but in this regard there is still room for improvement. It was suggested that Mr. Woollam might spend more time next year getting the 'helper' orientation across to these resource people."[64]

The FSI conferences were typically held at Valley Centre, Fort Qu'Appelle, but in June 1961 Woollam organized something different. On the morning of Thursday, 29 June, the delegates boarded buses for Regina. They toured the Department of Natural Resources museum at 8:30 a.m., the RCMP museum at 9:30, and arrived at the Legislative Building at 11 o'clock to present resolutions to the cabinet. Following lunch with members of cabinet in the Legislature's cafeteria, they departed at 2 o'clock for visits to CKCK TV station, Interprovincial Steel Company, and Imperial and Co-op oil refineries. They reassembled at the Legislative Building at 4:00 p.m. for payment of travel expenses. At 4:30 special buses left for Saskatoon and Prince Albert.[65] For chiefs and councillors from many of the more isolated reserves in the north, a visit to Regina was a special event.

The formal meeting with the cabinet was, as Woollam scribbled on his agenda, an "historic" occasion.[66] The gathering took place in the Legislative chamber, with members of the FSI executive and band chiefs occupying the desks of the MLAs. Councillors and other delegates sat in a reserved section of the chamber. The cabinet was seated in front of the Speaker's dais, while the main Indian speakers gathered around the clerk's table facing them. Bill Wuttunee and Ray Woollam, the "resource helpers," were positioned behind the delegation. Ernest Dillon opened the proceedings with a Cree prayer, followed by remarks from the newly elected FSI president, David Knight, and the outgoing president, John Tootoosis. A number of resolutions were presented, the theme of which was that the FSI wanted more provincial government services to improve the quality of life of Indians. The resolution concerning social welfare stated that provincial child welfare services should apply to Indians living on reserves. The health resolution implied that Indians wanted to be part of the new medicare plan being developed in the province. Other resolutions suggested that reserve Indians were interested in receiving provincial agricultural and co-op extension services and assistance in road building.[67] The general tenor of the presentations suggests that

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64 Ibid., FSI Executive Minutes, 5 and 6 December 1960.

65 Ibid., R-33.1 CXXXIII 961 (150) 2/2, FSI Conference Agenda, Valley Centre, Fort Qu'Appelle, 26-29 June 1961.

66 Ibid., Outline of Procedure for FSI Delegation to the Cabinet, 29 June 1961.

67 Ibid., Resolutions to the Provincial Government from the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, 29 June 1961.

Woollam was having some success in alleviating suspicions Indians might harbour about increased provincial involvement in their affairs.

Douglas resigned as premier in November 1961 to lead the federal New Democratic Party. This meant that the Provincial Committee on Minority Groups lost its chairman, but even if Douglas had stayed, a shake-up of the committee structure would have been likely. As Woollam explained to the new premier, Woodrow S. Lloyd, in May 1962, the committee had not functioned very well:

> Premier Douglas did not have time for regular meetings of the Provincial Committee on Minority Groups. Latterly, the meetings which he called were called for a Saturday morning. Several of the members of the committee expressed resentment at this fact and attendance was sometimes limited. ... Most of these members, at points of a developing program, have been helpful and cooperative in terms of some particular interest shown or assistance to me. Together, however, it was seldom that any consensus of agreement could be reached, in meetings, with respect to particular problems.[68]

Woollam advised that the committee be scrapped and replaced with a "people-to-people agency which would create local government structures and invest the responsibility in these people which must precede any fact of rehabilitation." He said the best way to accomplish this would be through the establishment of a Community Development Branch of the Department of Municipal Affairs. This branch would extend its services in the north and to Metis communities in the south, "gaining experience toward the day when administration of Treaty Indian Affairs should be decentralized [that is, taken over by the province] by reason of an agreement with the federal authority."[69]

The Minister of Municipal Affairs, Everett Wood, supported by his deputy minister, Meyer Brownstone, favoured this scheme. Wood recommended pilot projects in community development at Canoe Lake and Green Lake. He said that community development was a widely applied technique used in underdeveloped Third World areas, the essence of which was to hasten the pace of change "through the cooperation and involvement of the local people, with a view to achieving social and economic security."[70] Lloyd was won over, and the Community Development Branch was launched on 1 September 1962. Brownstone explained that the "emphasis in the new Branch will be upon development of the community towards self-government and self-administration, rather than the former emphasis upon providing services to residents of the community."[71] The Provincial Committee

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68 SAB, Meyer Brownstone Papers, R-437 I 3b, R. Woollam to W.S. Lloyd, 25 May 1962.

69 Ibid.

70 SAB, Lloyd Papers, R-61.4 IX 130a (9-12), E. Wood to W.S. Lloyd, J.H. Brockelbank, R.A. Walker, A.E. Blakeney, 3 August 1962.

71 SAB, Everett Wood Papers, R-420 II 5a, M. Brownstone to deputy ministers of Health,

on Minority Groups ceased to exist, its activities subsumed by the new branch.[72]

Woollam spent some time doing community development work at Canoe Lake and Green Lake, but in February 1963[73] he left the employ of the government. He helped organize a consulting company, Group Resources Consultant Service, based in Edmonton, which received a Saskatchewan government contract to negotiate agreements with Hutterite colonies.[74] In addition, he continued his relationship with the FSI executive, who retained his services on a part-time basis for $100 a month. The method of payment was that Woollam received a "loan-advance" of $1,000, presumably to be paid back with ten months' work.[75]

For the first time, the FSI had a staff person who was not an employee of the Saskatchewan government. Interestingly, the Federation, at this juncture, had a dispute with the government on the subject of money. On 8 February 1963 Wilfred Bellegarde, FSI secretary-treasurer, requested a grant of $10,000 for 1963-64, up from the $7,500 that had been given in each of the two previous fiscal years. He mentioned that the FSI was in debt, having overspent its 1962-63 allocation by $1,400.[76] Cabinet decided on 19 March 1963 to keep the grant unchanged at $7,500.[77] This provoked a remonstrance to the premier from Bellegarde, who said that the FSI had been repeatedly assured they would get $10,000. They had already sent out notices to all the chiefs in Saskatchewan telling them the good news, as well as letters to service clubs referring to the increased grant in connection with a fund-raising appeal. Bellegarde accused the premier of breaking faith with Indian people: "We have found again and again that promises made to us by the federal government have been broken over the years. We have never before experienced an occasion when a promise of the provincial government was not kept."[78] The CCF government had always prided itself on being more

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Treasury, Education, Cooperatives, Social Welfare, Agriculture, Natural Resources, Industry and Information, and Mr. W.B. Baker, Centre for Community Studies, 1 October 1962.

72 SAB, Lloyd Papers, R-61.1 I 37 (M-1), M. Brownstone to L.T. McLellan, 17 August 1962.

73 "When Ray Woollam left the employ of the Saskatchewan government in February...". SAB, Wood Papers, R-420 II 13b, President's Annual Report to the FSI, John Tootoosis, 7 October 1963.

74 SAB, Lloyd Papers, R-61.4 IX 130a (9-12), Cabinet minute no. 2108, 5 February 1963; R-61.6 I 8e (4222b), R. Woollam to Don [Tansley], 13 October 1964 [*sic*] — the internal evidence of the letter makes it clear the date should be 1963.

75 The financial arrangements are not completely clear. See SAB, Wood Papers, R-420 II 13b, W. Bellegarde to E. Wood, 9 September 1963; Lloyd Papers, R-61.4 IX 130b (9-12), R. Woollam to E. Wood, 12 September 1963; Wood Papers, R-420 II 13b, E. Wood to W. Bellegarde, 16 September 1963.

76 SAB, Lloyd Papers, R-61.4 IX 130a (9-12), W. Bellegarde to E. Wood, 8 February 1963.

77 Ibid., Cabinet Minute no. 2218, 19 March 1963.

78 Ibid., W. Bellegarde to W.S. Lloyd, 3 April 1963.

enlightened than the Indian Affairs Department. It must have nettled Lloyd to be lumped in the same category.

Municipal Affairs Minister Wood replied on the premier's behalf: "Apparently there has been some misunderstanding." Wood denied that he or any member of the government had ever promised a grant of $10,000.[79] Brownstone also wrote, saying that as a deputy minister he could not make commitments on behalf of the government. He had merely told Bellegarde that he would support the FSI request to Treasury Board for $10,000:

> At no time during these steps did I indicate that the grant of $10,000 would be available. ... I must also say that I found it embarrassing to be confronted with this situation in the presence of Mr. McGilp.[80]

This last statement warrants comment. McGilp was the regional supervisor of Indian agencies in Saskatchewan. Brownstone was offended that an executive member of the FSI, who was supposed to be on the Saskatchewan government's "side," would expose a rift between the province and the FSI in front of the "opposition" — the Indian Affairs Department. The financial dispute was eventually resolved in September 1963, when cabinet agreed to given the FSI another $2,500.[81]

Woollam apparently had no desire to continue indefinitely in the role of consultant to the FSI. In September 1963 he suggested that Jack Emms, an official in the Municipal Affairs Department, take over the function.[82] Emms was a former Indian agent who had left the Indian Affairs Department to take up employment with the provincial government as the liaison officer in the Kamsack area, where his job was to try to ease tensions between the town and the neighbouring reserves. The position lasted one year, after which time work was found for him in the Community Development Branch. Martin Greenwood, the newly appointed director of the branch, vetoed the idea that Emms should take up the FSI work formerly done by Woollam. Greenwood was supported by G.J. Darychuk, who, in Brownstone's absence, was acting deputy minister of Municipal Affairs:

> Mr. Greenwood's response in which I concur, is that the FSI should try to stand on their own feet and rather than have a provincial employee do the administrative work for them they would do better by hiring a full time secretary for this purpose. I cannot see how Jack Emms, or any other provincial public servant, could act both as an agent of the FSI and as a representative of this department. And while it is essential that liaison between the FSI and the government be maintained, I think we can accomplish this better by making it clear to the FSI that both Mr. Greenwood and Mr. Emms are agents of the province at all times.[83]

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79 Ibid., E. Wood to W. Bellegarde, 8 April 1963.

80 Ibid., M. Brownstone to W. Bellegarde, 8 April 1963.

81 Ibid., R-61.4 IX 130b (9-12), Cabinet Minute 2587, 24 September 1963.

82 Ibid., R. Woollam to E. Wood, 12 September 1963.

83 SAB, Wood Papers, R-420 II 13b, G. Darychuk to E. Wood, 23 October 1963.

Greenwood and Darychuk held that if the FSI had its own executive secretary, both the province and the Federation would benefit. The FSI would have more autonomy, and the province would avoid a conflict of interest.

Darychuk also frowned on Community Development Branch employees becoming overly involved in FSI conferences. He informed Wood that FSI secretary-treasurer Bellegarde had asked the Municipal Affairs Department "for the use of some of our staff at their Convention." Darychuk discouraged the idea: "I should hope that the Executive of the Federation plays an active part in the development of the agenda for the Conference and in conducting the Conference. I should not want to have our staff in the position of running the Conference for the Federation."[84] In his conference postmortem, Greenwood reported that the event had gone "pretty well (without too many obstacles arising) although here the work of Emms and Woollam was evident." Greenwood said that personally he wanted "to see more responsibility for the day-to-day work of the Federation taken over by the Federation executive itself." He also thought that the Saskatchewan government should "not try to push the Federation in any way, lest its usefulness to the Indian be vitiated." The Indians of Canada were being "pushed and urged" too much by outside agencies, and such a situation inhibited the development of sound leadership within the Indian community.[85]

Greenwood, in theory at least, represented enlightened reform. In practice, he caused Saskatchewan government/FSI relations to deteriorate. Tootoosis complained to Premier Lloyd about the Community Development Branch director's conduct at a meeting at the Battleford Friendship Centre. His entire speech had been devoted to the work being done at Green Lake and Canoe Lake. Tootoosis pointed out that the Battleford Indian Agency didn't care about what was happening in Green Lake or Canoe Lake; they were interested in programs for the Battleford area. Furthermore, Greenwood, despite knowing that other people wanted to speak, ignored them and used up all the allotted time. The second area of grievance raised by Tootoosis was that Greenwood had not given the FSI executive sufficient time to study a government brief that had been prepared on the subject of medical care for Indians. He had called a meeting on one day's notice and then simply read the brief without leaving time for discussion. "Mr. Greenwood," Tootoosis concluded, "is shaking the trust between the Provincial Government and the Saskatchewan Indians." He asked that Greenwood be dismissed.[86] Although the director was not replaced, he

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84 Ibid., G. Darychuk to E. Wood, 19 June 1963.

85 Ibid., R-420 II 19a, M. Greenwood to G. Darychuk, 7 November 1963.

86 SAB, Lloyd Papers, R-61.4 IX 130c (9-12), O. Reiman to W.S. Lloyd, 13 January 1964.

resigned about a year later, following the election of the Liberal government under Ross Thatcher.[87]

Tootoosis's comments were illuminating with respect to FSI expectations of the Saskatchewan government. The Federation expected the province to address Indian concerns and not waste time with irrelevant matters. It wanted to be heard, not drowned out by the voices of government bureaucrats, and to be consulted in a serious, not a perfunctory, way. Since Woollam had understood all this, his relations with the FSI had gone smoothly. Interviewed in 1995, he expressed admiration for Tootoosis's political skills: "John was as much a politician as Tommy Douglas was, in his own way. He was a great politician."[88] Woollam said that working with the FSI executive was a delight:

> There's more sanity here than I find in any ten executive board rooms on the continent. There's not a flicker of anything in there that is other than dealing with reality, dealing with facts, and wondering what we can do about them.[89]

He knew the FSI leaders on a personal level, partied with them,[90] and had great affection for them. His feelings showed in his farewell letter in October 1964. With the Liberals in power, he knew his usefulness to the Federation was at an end:

> Getting to know, and to appreciate, each of you has given something of richness and meaning to my life, and for which I will always be thankful. I feel I can best serve you by no longer working in a consultant relationship to the FSI. ... I thank each of you for the memories which you leave me — Allan [Ahenakew] for his kind wisdom; Joe [Dreaver] for his humour and love of life; John [Tootoosis] for his stubborn determination to make things go — and his oratory; Wilf [Bellegarde] for his impatient ideals and his hard work; Emil [Gardypie] for his good nature and faithfulness; Sydney [Fineday] for his useful questioning approach; Ernest [Dillon] for his quiet and "earnest" ways; Roy [Musqua] for his warmth; Hilliard [McNab] for his friendship; Angus [Mirasty] for his concern about the North; Joe Williams for the depth of his feelings; John Skeeboss for having such a brave and kind wife! You are a real team of leaders. I pray that you will continue to believe in one another — and that every one of you will determine to give to the FSI "one more year" of everything you can put into it.[91]

Although Woollam saw his role as that of a guide, encouraging the FSI to accept provincial takeover of government services to Indians within the

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87 Ibid., R-61.8 IX 38 (900) 1/2, M. Greenwood to R. Thatcher, 16 January 1965.

88 Interview, Ray Woollam, 24 August 1995.

89 Ibid, 25 August 1995.

90 Ibid., 24 August 1995.

91 SAB, Lloyd Papers, R-61.8 IX 38 (900), R. Woollam to FSI Executive, 13 October 1964.

framework of a general policy of integration, his interpersonal skills were such that the FSI executive valued him. Greenwood, whose principles regarding FSI autonomy were perhaps more "politically correct," did not have a "feel" for what Tootoosis and the other FSI leaders considered acceptable behaviour. And yet, to compound the irony, on the main issue — the transfer of Indian administration from the federal to the provincial government — Greenwood had a better read of the FSI position than did Woollam.

Woollam was convinced by 1964 that the federal government was deliberately stalling what he called the "decentralization" process:

> We are consequently faced, on every front, with stated policies of intention to decentralize jurisdiction, to cooperate with the province to this end — and at the same time with actions that orient to the single goal of a strengthened relationship between the Branch and "their" Indians. Yesterday, for example, I had discussions with Alberta's regional suptdt. of the Branch — the day before with a leading Oblate priest in Alberta. In each instance, the story identical — "All this federal-provincial discussion will only end in the realization that the Indian is still 50 years away from any readiness for a 'normal' administration."[92]

Moreover, Woollam believed that the Indian Affairs Department had a strategy to neutralize FSI leaders by giving them jobs. David Knight had accepted federal employment, and Woollam feared Wilfred Bellegarde would be next:

> Three years ago Mr. Douglas and I were both aware that the Branch would try to undermine provincial interests and the potential of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians by the "wooing" of David Knight into the federal camp. After one very vigorous Ottawa delegation was headed by David as FSI president, I learned that Saskatoon [at that time provincial headquarters for the Indian Affairs Department] was instructed to pull his fangs with kindness, and if possible, with employment. The former regional suptdt. told me this, and a lot of other such, one recent and drinking evening! — The FSI were seriously set back on their heels when David finally, and with reticence, accepted the job which his family so needed. I want to prophesy that Wilfred Bellegarde is about to depart down the same trail. As with Dave, I've put three years of sweat into the cultivation of Wilf's current skills. ... Wilf has been our strongest CCF influence among Indians in the S. [south] of the province, and we are about to lose him.[93]

Woollam advised the Saskatchewan government to take a more aggressive approach and demand a *"complete transfer"* [emphasis in original] of Indian services to the provincial level. "If these situations are to be

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92 SAB, Wood Papers, R-420 II 13c, R. Woollam to M. Brownstone, 10 March 1964.

93 Ibid.

improved, at some point we must make a belligerent stand. Justice and idealism deserve an inning!"[94] Woollam assumed that "justice and idealism" were on the side of the province. Such conviction makes it easier to understand why the CCF government succumbed to the temptation to try to exert influence over the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians. It explains why Woollam wanted to "cultivate" FSI leaders like David Knight and Wilf Bellegarde, and why he regretted their "wooing" by the "federal camp."

Woollam believed he had made real headway in persuading the FSI of the desirability of provincial administration of Indian affairs. In a letter to Lloyd on 31 October 1963, Woollam said he was "convinced that we would not be hard pressed to generate a favourable response from the FSI on the matter of total decentralization."[95] The evidence suggests, however, that he was deceiving himself on this matter. Greenwood attended the FSI conference in October 1963 and came away with a different impression: "Some interest was shown on the possibility of a provincial take-over of Indian Affairs by a few, but this interest was not generally expressed."[96] Moreover, when Meyer Brownstone addressed the FSI executive meeting in January 1964 on the subject, the minutes record that he was asked many questions and that "no action was taken by the Executive on this issue but gratitude was expressed to Dr. Brownstone for discussing the matter so openly."[97]

The most definitive FSI statement on the issue came from Tootoosis. His letter to Lloyd on 13 April 1964 was politically very astute. On behalf of the Federation, he first thanked the premier for seeking the FSI's thoughts regarding the proposal to extend provincial services to Indians. He then said:

> We feel that we have not yet been given authority by our own membership to speak decisively with respect to these matters. We can say, however, that our executive members were pleased to note that both provincial and federal governments agree that the Treaties will not be broken in any way, that the views of the Indians will be sought, and that any changes with respect to our administration will take place slowly and carefully.[98]

He went on to say that, while the FSI could not express an opinion as to whether it was in favour of provincial administration of Indian services, it wanted Lloyd to give very careful consideration to a number of points. First, the consent of any Indian bands affected by such changes should be secured before any changes were implemented. Secondly, before any changes were

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94 Ibid.

95 SAB, Lloyd Papers, R-61.4 IX 130c (9-12), R. Woollam to W.S. Lloyd, 31 October 1963.

96 SAB, Wood Papers, R-420 II 19a, M. Greenwood to G. Darychuk, 7 November 1963.

97 SAB, Lloyd Papers, R-61.4 IX 130c (9-12), "Indian Outlook," March 1964.

98 Ibid., R-61.4 XXII 534 (21-32-9), J. Tootoosis to W.S. Lloyd, 13 April 1964.

initiated, a thorough program of education should take place. Third, the "existing values and standards" of Indians should be integral to any programs made available to them. For example, child welfare services on reserves "should be initially oriented to our own values and standards." Fourth, it should be clearly understood that any program not specifically dealt with by agreement between the two levels of government should remain the responsibility of the federal government. And, finally, any existing program benefits (for example, provision of glasses, dentures, and other benefits by the federal Indian health services and not included in provincial medicare) should be maintained or raised. Although various specific concerns were mentioned, the bottom line was that the FSI withheld consent to the transfer of services. This was the net result of "educational paternalism." At the end of the day, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians held fast to its autonomy and stayed focussed on its first concern — the defence of treaty rights.

The provincial government had always said that integration did not threaten treaty rights, but the government's interpretation of treaty rights was very narrow. This was the buried issue that lay at the heart of the misunderstanding between the Government of Saskatchewan and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians. As the Indian political movement evolved during the 1960s and 1970s, the issue surfaced and became more sharply focussed. The federal government's 1969 White Paper was not the only factor, but it helped polarize the debate. The paper made no attempt to reconcile integration with the protection of Indian status and treaty rights. The ambiguity upon which Saskatchewan CCF government policy depended was dissolved.

In the wake of the White Paper, Indian organizations became more assertive and the drive for self-government gained momentum. The period 1958 to 1964, in retrospect, was a transitional one, in which the Saskatchewan government promoted both integration and treaty rights and was both paternalistic and supportive of FSI autonomy. The contradictions were smoothed over because there was an advantage to both parties. The FSI received funds with which to build their organization and had an ally in their resistance to Indian Affairs control. The Saskatchewan government had friends in the Indian community through whom it hoped to advance the twin causes of Indian self-assertion and integration. The relationship also worked because of the knowledge and sensitivity of people like Ray Woollam and Tommy Douglas, who attempted to influence, but never to dominate, the FSI. It worked because of the strength and determination of leaders like John Tootoosis and Wilf Bellegarde, who accepted help, but guarded their independence.

The later 1950s and early 1960s were a unique time in the history of the relations between aboriginals and non-aboriginals in Saskatchewan. The period contained elements of the past and the future; paternalism mingled with Indian self-determination. In the years that followed, the former yielded to the latter, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians emerged as

one of the strongest and most stable Indian political organizations in the country, and Saskatchewan government/FSI relations moved to a new plane. The Government of Saskatchewan came to regard the FSI as an autonomous body in no way subject to paternalistic control or influence. The change occurred because of what had been accomplished from 1958 to 1964, when the CCF government and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians established a relationship which, though riddled with contradictions, was based on reciprocal advantage and mutual respect.

Enquête sur une famille bretonne emigrée au Canada (1903-1920)

Jean Le Bihan

ABSTRACT. Between 1903 and 1912 several members of a Breton family settled in Saskatchewan. A series of letters written by the emigrants from 1912 to 1920 document their journey and their first financial difficulties. They also describe with precision the complex mechanisms underpinning the family's integration into its new sociocultural environment. At the onset of the 1920's the correspondence stopped abruptly, revealing a sharp break between the settlers and their native Brittany. This act of bereavement was also the foundation of their newly found Canadian identity.

SOMMAIRE. C'est entre 1903 et 1912 que les différents membres d'une famille bretonne s'installèrent dans la province de la Saskatchewan. Une série de lettres, écrites par les émigrés entre 1912 et 1920, relate les péripéties du voyage et les premières difficultés économiques, et décrit surtout avec précision les mécanismes complexes qui commandèrent l'intégration de cette famille bretonne dans son nouvel environnement social et culturel. Au début des années 1920, l'arrêt subit de la correspondance est alors révélateur d'une rupture brutale entre les colons et leur Bretagne natale: acte de deuil fondateur de leur nouvelle identité canadienne.

La question de l'émigration bretonne au Canada a déjà fait l'objet de nombreuses publications, parmi lesquelles certaines études de cas très éclairantes.[1] Dans une perspective similaire, une enquête menée tant dans le Finistère qu'au Canada nous a permis de rassembler une importante documentation concernant une famille scaëroise émigrée au début du siècle dans la province de la Saskatchewan.[2] La confrontation des différentes informations[3] réunies permet de suivre d'assez près les péripéties familiales intervenues entre 1903 (date du premier départ) et 1920 (date à laquelle les relations épistolaires entre les émigrés et leurs parents restés au pays s'interrompent semble-t-il assez brutalement). Mais au-delà, la richesse documentaire de certains témoignages invite à s'interroger tant sur les rythmes et modes d'intégration des émigrés au sein de leur nouveau pays que sur l'évolution de leurs liens, matériels et affectifs, avec leur Bretagne natale.

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1 Exemple: Le Clech (G.), " L'émigration bretonne au Canada au début du XXe siècle: le témoignage du pionnier Joseph Béléguic, de Douarnenez", *BSAF*, t. CVI, 1978, pp. 219-237.

2 Ce travail n'aurait pu être mené à son terme sans les précieux concours de monsieur E. Carduner de Swift Current (Canada), madame L. Fulop de Swift Current (Canada), madame A. Kervision de Treffiagat, madame J. Le Bihan de Brest, madame M. Le Bihan de Scaër, madame M. Miklos de Edmonton (Canada), monsieur B. Petit de Lorient, madame M.-A. Riou de Scaër, et madame V. Vik d'Edmonton (Canada).

3 Ces informations proviennent essentiellement d'une série de lettres comportant, comme on le verra plus loin, de nombreuses fautes d'orthographe et imprécisions stylistiques. En cela, elles témoignent, chez les jeunes Bretons émigrés, d'un apprentissage récent et superficiel du français (pratiquement absent du quotidien dominé par le breton) et partant, d'une maîtrise très imparfaite de l'écrit. Dans cette perspective, on n'a pas jugé utile de corriger un lexique et une syntaxe dont les lacunes et les erreurs ont en elles-mêmes valeur de témoignage historique.

Scaër, la Bretagne et la France.

1903-1912: les "Eclaireurs"

Le premier départ pour le Canada eut lieu en 1903.[4] Cette année-là, Bertrand Le Bihan, tout juste vingt ans, fit seul le voyage. Quelles sont les raisons qui le poussèrent à partir? Bien que manquant d'informations précises à ce sujet, nous pouvons invoquer trois principaux types de motivations[5]:

1. Les causes traditionnelles de l'émigration, de nature socio-économique, jouèrent évidemment, à Scaër comme ailleurs. Ainsi, la population scaëroise enregistrait une hausse continue depuis le recensement de 1872,

4 Lettre de L. Fulop à l'auteur (30/01/1992).

5 L'élément religieux ne joua apparemment aucun rôle dans ce départ en dépit de son frappant synchronisme avec les lois de séparation de l'Eglise et de l'Etat. En cela, il se distingue de la plupart des départs de l'époque, essentiellement inspirés par des motivations religieuses (Le Clech (G.), "Les Bretons D'Amérique du Nord, d'Argentine et d'Australie", dans *Annuaire des dix mille Bretons*, Presses Universitaires de Bretagne, Saint Brieuc, 1971, p. 370).

augmentant de plus de moitié entre cette date et 1911,[6] et présentant même l'un des taux d'accroissement naturel les plus élevés du département du Finistère durant les dernières années du XIXe siècle (de l'ordre de 17 à 18 pour mille).[7] De là le morcellement continu des terres, la précarité économique sans cesse croissante, etc. Voilà qui ne pouvait échapper à Bertrand, d'autant plus que la ferme familiale de Kervars avait déjà été largement amputée à la génération précédente à l'occasion d'un partage intervenu entre son père et son oncle,[8] et qu'il était le quatrième garçon d'une famille qui comptait huit enfants. Pour sa dernière nièce aujourd'hui vivante, les raisons du départ ne font donc aucun doute: "C'était trop de monde à Kervars puisqu'on avait fait deux de la ferme, aussi c'était pour çà qu'ils étaient partis".[9]

2. Encore faut-il dire un mot des lieu et date du départ. Si la commune de Scaër ne fait certes pas partie du fameux triangle Quimper-Carhaix-Loudéac où sont localisés les principaux foyers d'émigration,[10] elle en est cependant toute proche: limitrophe de Leuhan, à peine plus éloignée de Roudouallec, Scaër ne pouvait guère ignorer les exemples déjà célèbres des Joseph Navellou et autres Nicolas Le Grand.[11] Par ailleurs, les départs pour le Canada commencèrent à se multiplier au tout début du siècle: en 1902, vingt-et-un Bretons suivaient l'abbé Gaire dans le Manitoba, avant que l'abbé Le Floc'h ne fît annoncer l'année suivante par *Ouest-Eclair* son prochain voyage pour la Saskatchewan.[12] Rien d'étonnant donc à ce que bon nombre de Scaërois ne fussent gagnés dès cette époque par ce que l'abbé Elie Gautier appelait la "contagion" du départ.[13]

3. On ne peut enfin négliger le tempérament de l'intéressé. A l'évidence, Bertrand comptait parmi ces jeunes pionniers rêvant fortune et réussite, qu'un état d'esprit nouveau distinguait de ses parents et amis restés au pays. Significatif à cet égard est le témoignage d'une de ses nièces canadiennes qui en 1976, quelques semaines après le décès de Bertrand, revint brièvement sur la vie de celui-ci: "Pourquoi était-il si pauvre? Le fait est que

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6 Charpy (J.), "Dénombrements de la population des communes du Finistère", *BSAF*, t. XCIX, 1972, pp. 849-887.

7 Collet (D.), "La population rurale du Finistère au XIXe siècle (1821-1901)", *MSHAB*, t. LIX, 1982, pp. 97-98.

8 "Partage de Kervars en Scaër" (Etude Le Duigou, 02/07/1873) (Archives de Me J.-B. Guerrier, Scaër).

9 Entretien avec M.-A. Riou (06/03/1994, Scaër).

10 Se reporter par exemple à Berard (L.), "L'émigration 'américaine' dans la région de Gourin? ses conséquences géographiques", *Norois*, t. IX, 1962, p. 188.

11 Se reporter à Le Clech (G.), "Les Bretons D'Amérique du Nord, d'Argentine et d'Australie", dans *Annuaire des dix mille Bretons*, op. cit., p. 375.

12 Gautier (abbé E.), *L'émigration bretonne*, Éditions Ouvrières, Paris, 1953, pp. 133-136.

13 Idem, p. 145.

presque toute sa vie il était en cherche d'une grande fortune et pour cela il est devenu (le mot français ne me vient pas) en anglais un 'gambler'".[14] Il a plongé tout son argent dans le "grain exchange". Lorsqu'il était encore cultivateur, il perdait en hiver ce qu'il avait fait en été. Je ne crois pas que pour bien des années, il rêvait encore de fortune, mais c'était devenu une mode de vie, son passe-temps".[15]

Toutes ces raisons se combinèrent donc pour décider Bertrand au départ. On ignore tout du voyage. Les premières années demeurent également obscures. On ne sait pas exactement à quelle date il s'installa sur son homestead[16] situé à proximité de Kennedy dans la Saskatchewan: dès son arrivée[17] ou plutôt deux ans plus tard?[18] Il est très probable en revanche que le jeune colon ne manqua pas dès son installation d'écrire de longs et savants courriers à sa famille bretonne.[19] Il sut probablement y mettre de l'enthousiasme puisque son frère Christophe, de trois ans son cadet, s'estima suffisamment convaincu pour le rejoindre.[20] Ses raisons ne pouvaient qu'être les mêmes que celles qui avaient animé Bertrand, avivées en outre par la commodité de se savoir attendu outre-Atlantique. Il semble toutefois que les premiers temps furent difficiles et qu'ils durent résoudre leurs difficultés matérielles en s'endettant auprès d'un de leurs frères.[21] Etaient-ce ces premiers problèmes qui les décidèrent à quitter Kennedy? Toujours est-il que Bertrand et Christophe vendirent leur homestead en 1909. A la même époque, de nombreux soldats canadiens se voyaient remettre, pour récompense de leurs services, des titres de propriété à faire valoir sur les vastes régions de l'ouest. Ceux d'entre eux que la vie agricole ne tentait pas, avaient toujours le loisir de vendre leurs droits. Bertrand sut profiter d'une telle opportunité et devint dès 1910 propriétaire d'une section[22] de terre non loin de Braddock.[23] Ce faisant, les deux frères s'enfonçaient de quelque trois cent soixante-dix kilomètres supplémentaires dans l'ouest canadien.

1912: les choix

Alors que leur situation matérielle semblait s'améliorer, Bertrand et Christophe continuaient de correspondre avec leurs frère et soeurs scaërois.

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14 "Flambeur" en anglais.

15 Lettre de M. Atkinson à J. Le Bihan (sd, 1976) (coll. M. Le Bihan, Scaër).

16 Ferme-type à défricher et cultiver d'une superficie de soixante-quatre hectares.

17 C'est-à-dire en 1903 selon L. Fulop, op. cit.

18 C'est-à-dire en 1905 selon E. Carduner, lettre à l'auteur (25/02/1992).

19 Courriers dont nous n'avons malheureusement pas retrouvé la trace.

20 En 1905 (L. Fulop, op. cit.), ou 1906 (E. Carduner, op. cit.).

21 M.-A. Riou, op. cit.

22 Deux cent cinquante-six hectares soit quatre fois la superficie d'un homestead.

23 L. Fulop, op. cit.

Ceux-ci, au nombre de trois, avaient épousé trois frères et soeur, ce qui avait eu pour effet de renforcer la cohésion familiale.[24] Or, il est intéressant de constater que les lettres des deux frères produisirent des effets contradictoires selon le destinataire:

1. Elles suscitèrent un refus sans appel chez deux personnes:

- chez leur soeur Marie-Renée, âgée de trente-deux ans et mère de cinq enfants en 1912. Les hésitations de ses frère et soeur lui paraissaient incompréhensibles: "Qu'est-ce que vous allez tous faire là-bas? Vous ne pouvez pas manger en France?"[25]
- chez une jeune fille de dix-neuf ans dont Bertrand demanda probablement la main en 1912 à l'occasion de son séjour à Scaër. Il lui fut d'autant plus facile de faire sa connaissance qu'elle était une nièce de ses trois beaux-frères et belle-soeur: il n'était guère compliqué pour les deux familles, qu'unissaient déjà trois mariages, d'en préparer un quatrième. La seule différence tenait à ce que sa jeune épouse aurait dû aussitôt suivre Bertrand vers ses lointaines terres canadiennes. Elle refusa donc et Bertrand repartit sans elle.[26] Le regretta-t-elle? Fut-elle sensible à l'ironique insistance avec laquelle l'un de ses cousins émigrés lui rappela quelques années plus tard ce qu'elle avait laissé échapper: "Eh bien si vous aviez accepté d'être Mme Le Bihan en 1912 vous auriez pu rouler dans une belle auto maintenant; hier dimanche, il a fait une promenade d'environ 200 kilomètres; ainsi vous voyez que l'on ne moisit pas ici le dimanche?"[27] On ne sait.

2. Elle surent au contraire emporter l'adhésion de deux autres parents:

- celle de leur frère Jean, trente ans et père de trois enfants à cette époque. De façon très significative, son épouse s'empressa de vendre sa coiffe[28] et de pourvoir toute la famille en habits neufs[29]: le départ était ainsi vécu comme une impérative séparation d'avec les éléments les plus visibles de la vie traditionnelle bretonne. Cependant, l'annonce d'une quatrième naissance pour décembre 1912 ajourna le départ. Puis le déclenchement des hostilités en 1914 obligea à le reporter une nouvelle fois.
- celle de leur soeur Marie-Jeanne, l'aînée de la famille. Elle avait épousé Jean Carduner en 1892. Installés sur les trente-neuf hectares de leur ferme de Lojou en Scaër,[30] ils y élevaient leurs neuf enfants. La conjoncture

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24 Marie-Jeanne Le Bihan épousa Jean Carduner, Marie-Renée Le Bihan René Carduner, Jean Le Bihan Marie-Jeanne Carduner.

25 M.-A. Riou, op. cit.

26 Bertrand devait rester définitivement célibataire.

27 Lettre de B. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (22/04/1918) (coll. B. Petit, Lorient).

28 Entretien avec J. Le Bihan (19/12/1993, Brest).

29 M.-A. Riou, op. cit.

30 J. Le Bihan, op. cit.

socio-économique ne s'était guère améliorée en dix ans: le recensement de 1911 confirmait l'augmentation continue de la population finistérienne et partant, de sa densité (115 hab/km^2).[31] L'avenir d'une si nombreuse famille n'était donc pas des plus assurés. En outre, la famille Carduner devait semble-t-il faire face à d'incessantes difficultés financières; elles précipitèrent sans doute leur décision: "Ces Carduner-là avaient une grande ferme, cent vingt journaux, mais ils ne pouvaient pas payer. C'était dur en ce temps-là. Alors, comme ils entendaient les frères canadiens dire qu'ils faisaient de l'argent là-bas, ils sont partis avec ces deux-là".[32] Ainsi, seuls Marie-Jeanne et son mari s'apprêtèrent à suivre Bertrand au Canada.

Curieusement, les Carduner renoncèrent à vendre leurs biens: ils préférèrent les mettre en location et charger en février 1912 leur frère et beau-frère Pierre Le Bihan de leur administration.[33] Espéraient-ils donc revenir un jour? La conservation de leur propriété au pays n'était-elle pas destinée à compenser affectivement la douleur d'une rupture dont on redoutait le caractère définitif? Quoi qu'il en soit, Marie-Jeanne combattit son appréhension en redoublant d'assiduité à la chapelle de Coadry. Au mois de mars, le jour du départ arriva enfin et fut fêté par un repas auquel toute la famille fut conviée. Mais les principaux intéressés ne s'y présentèrent pas: "Ils ne sont pas rentrés dans la maison, c'était trop dur pour alors de partir parce que c'était le jour qu'on partait, ah non, ils n'étaient pas venus, on avait beau supplier".[34] Pour ne pas ajouter à la douleur de chacun, Marie-Jeanne se contenta en effet de déposer devant la porte sa coiffe ainsi que les autres effets bretons de la famille. Sans tarder davantage, elle quitta Scaër en compagnie de son frère, de ses neuf enfants et peut-être de quelques autres[35] (son mari devant les rejoindre quelques mois plus tard).[36]

Le périple devait durer presque trois semaines. Il commença par Paris où vivait un parent, Alain Carduner, que l'on avait pris soin de prévenir.[37] Ce fut déjà un premier dépaysement: "une très belle ville. La plus belle que j'ai vu. Seulement pour traverser les rues il fallait bien faire attention. Car tu

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31 Callon (G.), "Le mouvement de la population dans le département du Finistère au cours de la période 1831-1920 et depuis la fin de cette période", *BSAF*, t. LXII, 1935, p. 13.

32 M.-A. Riou, op. cit.

33 "Procuration par M. et Mme Carduner à M. Le Bihan" (Etude Salaun, Plonéour Lanvern, 24/02/1912) (coll. A. Kervision, Treffiagat).

34 M.-A. Riou, op. cit.

35 Il n'est pas impossible que la famille Carduner ait voyagé en compagnie d'un groupe de Bretons, voire de Scaërois. Marguerite Carduner écrit en effet: "*Malheureusement au Havre Yvon Guiffant a été refusé.*" (Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (sd, probablement 03-04/1912) (coll. B. Petit, Lorient)).

36 Marie-Jeanne ne devait jamais revoir Scaër où elle avait vécu pendant quarante ans. Elle mourut au Canada en 1960 à l'âge de quatre-vingt huit ans.

37 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (sd, probablement 03-04/1912), op. cit.

n'as jamais vu un tel encombrement",[38] devait écrire quelques jours plus tard Marguerite Carduner, l'aînée des enfants alors âgée de dix-neuf ans. Après une courte halte dans la capitale, la famille reprit le train en direction du Havre. Assez curieusement, les émigrés voulurent impérativement voyager sur un bateau français: ils préférèrent donc le "Chicago" qui levait l'ancre pour New-York plutôt que tout autre navire étranger à destination de Montréal, ce qui eût pourtant écourté leur voyage. Raison matérielle? Soudaine superstition dans cet instant crucial? Peut-être les deux. La traversée dura une semaine et demi. Le témoignage de Marguerite mérite d'être cité in extenso:

> Le Chicago était un bateau tout neuf et très bien installé. Il n'y avait pas de première classe dessus de sorte que c'était nous qui les remplacions. Avant de partir on nous disait qu'on serait mort avant notre arrivé: je t'assure que [je] n'avait pas du tout envie de mourrir. Je me plaisais trop sur le navire. D'abord nous avions une eccellente cuisine. Quatre plats à tout les repas; un dessert de gateau, un dessert de fruit et du vin rouge et du vin blanc. Et puis pour tout dire un joli garçon pour nous servir à table. Ah ! Je t'assure qu'il était gentil et bien stylé. Nous mangions dans une grande salle à manger. Mais j'avais bien su choisir ma place à la table servi par le plus gentil. Quant au mal de mer j'ai fait connaissance avec lui aussi. Nous sommes partis le dimanche après midi et dès le lundi matin il m'a souhaité le bonjour. Il n'est pas venu me le souhaiter au lit car je m'était levée très tôt. Mais j'avais fini à peine de m'habiller quand j'ai commencé à vomir. C'était fini, il me fallut me recoucher le mal de mer avait gagné sur moi. Mais dans mon lit je ne sentais rien. Pendant deux jours je suis restée coucher. Mais je n'avais pas à me plaindre une femme de chambre me servait dans ma cabine. Ma mère et Marie Thérèse[39] ont senti le mal de mer aussi. Mais Françoise et Ernest et Jeanne[40] n'ont pas été malade du tout. Nous étions près de douze cent sur le bateau. huit cent soixante en 3eme et 3 cent dix en deuxieme. Nous avions trois musiciens sur le bateau et nous dansions tout les soirs sur le pont. Et ses danses là étaient très rigolos. Car il y avait des danseurs de differentes nations. Il y avait des italiens, des allements, des espagnols, des roumains et des français. Le Chicago ne marchait pas bien vite. Il a mis dix jours pour faire sa traversée. Nous avons eu tempête. Pendant trois la mer a été très houleuse.[41]

On débarqua enfin à New-York, "Une très grande ville avec ses maisons à 48 étages. Mais elle n'a pas le chic de Paris".[42] Puis il fallut un jour de train pour gagner Montréal et de là, quatre autres pour se rendre à Herbert dans la Saskatchewan.[43] Restait à enfourcher les chevaux que Bertrand avait

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38 Idem.

39 Sept ans et sixième enfant de la famille.

40 Les trois petits derniers, respectivement cinq ans, trois ans et quatre mois.

41 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (sd, probablement 03-04/1912), op. cit.

42 Idem.

achetés à Montréal et à s'enfoncer d'une cinquantaine de kilomètres dans le désert canadien: on était enfin arrivé à Braddock.[44]

Les premières années au Canada (1912-1920)

Aspects économiques

Comment pouvait-on s'établir comme agriculteur au Canada à cette époque? Henri Le Bihan, frère de Bertrand et Christophe, qui vint les rejoindre en 1919,[45] nous fournit de très précieuses informations à ce sujet:

> Des propriétaires qui se retirent vendent quelquefois leur propriété aux conditions suivantes: vous payez comptant 1/5 ou 1/3 et le reste est payable par moitié de récolte tous les ans jusqu'à extinction du paiement. Exemple: sur une section (qui a la superficie de 4 homesteads) vous payez au comptant 15 000 ou 20 000 et vous payez le reste par la moitié de la récolte. Avec 2 bonnes récoltes consécutives vous avez votre section toute payée. Encore une autre voie: vous louez une propriété dont le loyer est payable par la moitié de la récolte. Dans ce cas le propriétaire fournit la semence, paie la moitié de la ficelle nécessaire pour les gerbes et 1 moitié du battage et il prend les frais du transport de sa part de moitié du grain en ville. En cas de non récolte le propriétaire n'a rien et le fermier est quitte pour son travail. D'autres fois encore le propriétaire qui loue n'a droit qu'au 1/3 de la récolte. Dans ce cas le fermier donne semence, travail, ficelle et prend tous les frais du battage. Voilà mon cher frère les diftes manières de devenir cultivateur exploitant au Canada. Les voies d'achat ou de location sont presque les plus rapides pour arriver à la fortune à condition d'avoir un peu de fortune pour acheter l'outillage nécessaire comme tel est ton cas. On a ainsi l'avantage de s'installer selon son désir à proximité d'une ville ou d'une gare. Avec l'homestead c'est plus lent. La 1ère année on défriche la terre, mais elle n'est guère propre à recevoir la semence que l'année après. Il faut donc compter sur 2 ans avant de récolter. En plus il faut habiter son homestead 6 mois par an pendant trois ans avant d'en devenir propriétaire. Les colons à homestead viennent de préférence pendant les 6 mois d'hiver sur leur terre, y font le défrichement au printemps ou à l'automne et se placent garçon de ferme pendant la belle saison. Une fois leur terre totalement défrichée et suffisamment travaillée pour les récoltes consécutives, ils s'y installent définitivement. Voilà je crois de quoi te donner une idée de la façon de s'installer ici.[46]

Pour quelle solution les Carduner optèrent-ils? Ils décidèrent de devenir propriétaires et non fermiers d'une part, de défricher et construire plutôt que de reprendre une exploitation d'autre part. Ils achetèrent donc deux

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43 Idem.

44 L. Fulop, op. cit.

45 Henri dut quitter la France pour des raisons personnelles.

46 Lettre de H. Le Bihan à J. Le Bihan (04/12/1919), (coll. M. Le Bihan, Scaër).

cent cinquante-six hectares de terre près du bourg de Waldeck.[47] Ce choix était commandé par une double nécessité: s'établir tout près de la ferme de Bertrand et Christophe (située à une dizaine de kilomètres de là) mais aussi à proximité d'une ville où l'on pût scolariser les enfants (en l'occurrence Swift Current, distante de sept kilomètres et demi). On y construisit aussitôt une maison et on s'empressa de faire "casser la terre avec un engin trainant huit charrues après lui et mis en mouvement par la gazeline".[48] Comment financer ces premiers investissements? Les économies du ménage ajoutées au fermage de leur propriété scaëroise étaient insuffisantes: avant de gagner à son tour le Canada en décembre 1912, Jean Carduner dut donc se résoudre à hypothéquer leur ferme de Lojou.[49] On vécut donc, à compter de ce moment, au rythme des récoltes. La première ne fut pas très bonne, comme on pouvait le redouter.[50] On l'imputa au trop récent défrichement et on se remit à ensemencer six cents journaux de terre dès le printemps suivant.[51] Les années de guerre n'améliorèrent pas la situation: à la fin de l'été 1917, Bertrand Carduner, le fils aîné, faisait part de sa déception: "La récolte est mauvaise dans ce pays cette année. Il y a à peine un quart du rendement habituel".[52] Un an plus tard, le même désarroi s'exprimait: "La récolte ne sera donc pas encore lourde cette année, au lieu d'une centaine de milles francs ce sera peut-être presque rien".[53] La sécheresse, que l'on accusait de tous ces déboires, devait continuer de sévir, aussi l'immédiat après-guerre fut-il très difficile. A l'automne 1920, Henri Le Bihan constatait de nouveau que "Marie-Jeanne n'a pas trop de chance non plus, sa récolte dont la paille promettait aussi beaucoup va se traduire par un rendement au-dessous de la moyenne".[54] L'argent se faisait donc de plus en plus rare chez les Carduner.[55] A preuve, huit ans après leur départ, ils n'étaient toujours pas parvenus à s'acquitter d'une dette contractée auprès de leur frère et beau-frère scaërois: ne devine-t-on pas d'ailleurs une pointe d'amertume sous l'apparente gaité de Marie-Jeanne: "Chers Jean et Marie-Jeanne les intérêts que nous vous devons reste toujours impayés, mais j'espère qu'ils ne vous font pas défaut vus que vous êtes en train de devenir tous des richards au beau pays de Bretagne?"[56]

Comment les principaux intéressés s'expliquaient-ils leurs décon-

47 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (26/05/1912) (coll. B. Petit, Lorient).

48 Idem.

49 E. Carduner, op. cit.

50 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (12/11/1912) (coll. B. Petit, Lorient).

51 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (25/03/1913) (coll. B. Petit, Lorient).

52 Lettre de B. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (09/09/1917) (coll. B. Petit, Lorient).

53 Lettre de B. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (04/07/1918) (coll. B. Petit, Lorient).

54 Lettre de H. Le Bihan à J. Le Bihan (22/10/1920) (coll. J. Le Bihan, Scaër).

55 Lettre de B. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (23/12/1917) (coll. B. Petit, Lorient).

56 Lettre de M.-J. Carduner à J. Le Bihan (04/12/1919) (coll. J. Le Bihan, Scaër).

venues? Assez simplement: pour eux, vivre au Canada impliquait d'accepter un risque économique permanent. L'agriculture canadienne, plus mécanisée qu'en Bretagne, obligeait en effet à des investissements beaucoup plus importants. Sinon, comment espérer s'élever au niveau de certains colons plus anciennement installés et dont on admirait les "magnifiques fermes avec belle maison d'habitation, belle et immense écurie — 2 ou 3 graineries — poulailler, puits dont beaucoup avec moulins à vent ou moteur à gazeline, tous ces bâtiments peints en rouge, en blanc, en jaune suivant le goût de chacun?"[57] Les premières dépenses parurent donc exorbitantes à la jeune Marguerite Carduner: "Nous avons eu la machine pendant huit jours. C'est-à-dire 25 hommes à nourrir pendant huit jours!"[58] Et ce coût de la main d'oeuvre ne devait cesser de peser lourd au cours des premiers temps: "Ce pays commence aussi à rivaliser avec l'Europe au point de vue de la cherté de tout mais au point de vue de la cherté de la main d'oeuvre il dépasse de beaucoup la France. Cette année les domestiques aux gages par mois du commencement d'avril à fin octobre étaient payés 375 F par mois et nourris".[59] Ainsi, de si lourds investissements promettaient un bénéfice décuplé en cas de succès, mais aussi des pertes non moins considérables en cas d'échec. D'où la mise en garde de Henri à l'adresse de son frère scaërois: "Comme vous voyez les bonnes récoltes rapportent ici mais n'oubliez pas non plus ce que nous font perdre les mauvaises récoltes: les chevaux à nourrir, la main-d'oeuvre à payer, les nombreuses machines (charrues, herses, rouleaux, disques, semoirs, faucheuses, moissonneuses s'usent et sont à remplacer de temps en temps)".[60] En fait, leur nouvelle condition économique impliquait sans nul doute un changement de mentalité chez les Carduner, chaque nouvelle récolte étant un pari que l'on pouvait gagner mais aussi perdre.[61] Le présent n'engageait plus aussi nécessairement l'avenir qu'en Bretagne. Il ne fut donc à aucun moment question d'abandonner: on garda espoir et fit contre mauvaise fortune bon coeur, à l'image de Bertrand Carduner commentant philosophiquement une nouvelle récolte désastreuse: "mais on ne se bile pas pour si peu; que voulez vous, il faut prendre les choses en douce dans ce monde".[62]

Il fallut cependant tâcher d'améliorer la situation. Le Canada offrait par chance des revenus complémentaires à qui ne rechignait pas au travail. On pouvait devenir temporairement ouvrier agricole: ainsi à l'automne 1912 Bertrand Carduner gagna mille cinq cent francs en vingt-cinq jours de

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57 Lettre de H. Le Bihan à J. Le Bihan (04/12/1919), op. cit.

58 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (12/11/1912), op. cit.

59 Lettre de H. Le Bihan à J. Le Bihan (22/10/1920), op. cit.

60 Idem.

61 On peut ainsi penser que les colons redéfinissaient leur rapport à l'argent: on l'a déjà vu avec les spéculations boursières de Bertrand, on le constatera de nouveau plus loin sous la plume de Marguerite.

62 Lettre de B. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (04/07/1918), op. cit.

battage.[63] Mais on pouvait aussi se faire fermier en profitant de la solidarité familiale: ainsi René, le second fils Carduner, devint à des conditions avantageuses le locataire de ses oncles à partir de 1918.[64] On pouvait encore profiter du temps mort hivernal pour chercher un travail en usine ou dans les bois: c'est cette seconde solution que retint Henri Le Bihan, désireux d'économiser en vue d'investissements à venir, à la fin de l'automne 1920: "Pour ma part je suis décidé cette année à aller goûter la vie des bois [...]. Dans la forêt il ne fait jamais aussi froid que dans la ferme. Le rideau d'arbre protège du vent et aussi du froid. Du reste nous comptons aller dans la Colombie brittanique qui a le climat plus tempéré que celui d'ici".[65] Il restait encore une autre solution pour Jean et Marie-Jeanne: faire valoir leurs droits de colons à obtenir des terres gratuites.[66] Le problème était que de telles terres n'existaient plus à proximité de Waldeck. Ce ne fut pas un obstacle: les Carduner se rendirent acquéreurs d'une section, soit cinq cent douze hectares, à Mankota, pourtant distante d'une bonne centaine de kilomètres[67]: Jean Carduner obtint une demi-section, ses aînés Marguerite et Bertrand une demi-section chacun, les deux suivants René et Henri un quart de section l'un et l'autre.[68] Tous durent s'adapter à ces nouvelles conditions de vie. Ainsi au cours de l'année la famille devait se partager en deux équipes de travail: Jean et les plus jeunes demeuraient à Waldeck tandis que Marie-Jeanne et ses deux fils aînés allaient régulièrement travailler à Mankota pendant des périodes d'un mois et demi.[69] En outre, étant tenus en qualité d'"homesteaders" de vivre pendant au moins six mois de l'année[70] sur leurs nouvelles concessions, les Carduner résolurent dès ce moment d'y passer tout l'hiver.[71] La mémoire familiale conserve encore aujourd'hui le souvenir des sacrifices consentis par chacun pour parer au soudain surcroît de travail qu'impliquait le fonctionnement de deux fermes si distantes l'une de l'autre. A l'évidence, cet épisode eut un rôle décisif dans la psychologie familiale: il fut vécu comme le moment de peine par excel-

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63 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (12/11/1912), op. cit.

64 Lettre de H. Le Bihan à J. Le Bihan (04/12/1919), op. cit.

65 Lettre de H. Le Bihan à J. Le Bihan (22/10/1920), op. cit.

66 La vraie question, restée sans réponse, est de savoir pourquoi la famille Carduner n'obtint pas dès 1912 une concession gratuite: nécessité de s'installer en un lieu où l'on ne trouvait déjà plus de telles terres? Désir d'attendre que plusieurs enfants atteignent l'âge de dix-huit ans afin de "grouper" leurs concessions comme ce fut le cas à Mankota? Ou enfin ultime réticence devant ce mode plus long d'accès à la propriété qui empêchait de faire demi-tour en cas d'insuccès?

67 L. Fulop, op. cit.

68 Lettre de H. Le Bihan à J. Le Bihan (04/12/1919), op. cit.

69 L. Fulop, op. cit.

70 Pendant cinq ans selon G. Le Clech (" L'émigration bretonne au Canada au début du XXe siècle: le témoignage du pionnier Joseph Béléguic, de Douarnenez", op. cit., p. 236.), seulement trois ans selon H. Le Bihan (supra, op. cit.).

71 Lettre de H. Le Bihan à J. Le Bihan (04/12/1919), op. cit.

lence dans lequel s'éprouvait le mérite du colon et s'élaborait une identité nouvelle.[72]

Ce sentiment, selon lequel une période d'adversité devait nécessairement préluder à la réussite, était en outre conforté par l'expérience de Bertrand et Christophe. Etablis dix ans avant les Carduner, les deux frères avaient également connu des moments difficiles, comme on l'a vu. Leur situation s'améliora toutefois assez vite: en novembre 1912, Marguerite Carduner écrivait déjà: "Mes tontons ont eu une très bonne récolte. Ils ont eu 499 800 livres".[73] Cette nouvelle prospérité ne devait pas se démentir pendant les années de guerre, de sorte qu'au printemps 1918 les deux frères se retrouvèrent assez fortunés pour envisager l'achat d'une seconde exploitation agricole: quelque trois cent vingt hectares de terres situées à Success vinrent ainsi compléter leur patrimoine.[74] Ils ne regrettèrent pas la transaction: tout en affermant leur première ferme à deux de leurs neveux, ils allèrent de succès en succès dans la seconde:

> Bert et Chris cependant n'ont pas à se plaindre: ils viennent d'avoir presque la meilleure récolte des environs sur cette ferme-ci de Success [...] La récolte de cette ferme de Success devrait rapporter rien qu'en froment, à raison de 10 F le bushel[75] la somme de 70 000 F. Je ne parle pas des 860 bushels d'avoine qui seront gardés pour soigner les chevaux et des 1650 bushels de lin dont la valeur ira pour payer le battage qui a duré 10 jours.[76]

L'exemple de Bertrand et Christophe venait donc confirmer l'espoir dont ils étaient tous animés et dont la jeune Marguerite Carduner s'était fait l'écho dès leur arrivée au Canada: "On fait de l'argent plus vite ici qu'en Bretagne".[77] Cet exemple leur recommandait du même coup patience et ténacité, et leur promettait à ce prix des jours meilleurs sur leur nouveau sol.

Aspects sociaux

Lorsque la famille Carduner s'installa dans la Saskatchewan en 1912, la densité de population de cette province n'avait pas encore atteint 1 hab./km^2.[78] Il en résultait une organisation socio-spatiale spécifique qui ne pouvait manquer d'étonner les nouveaux arrivants. La première surprise vint naturellement du spectacle offert par ces immenses plaines quasi

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72 L. Fulop, op. cit.

73 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (12/11/1912), op. cit.

74 L. Fulop, op. cit.

75 "Boisseau" en anglais.

76 Lettre de H. Le Bihan à J. Le Bihan (22/10/1920), op. cit.

77 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (12/11/1912), op. cit.

78 D'après les chiffres fournis par Rougier (H.), Espaces et régions du Canada, éd. Marketing, coll. Ellipses, Paris, 1987, pp. 34 et 124.

inoccupées où le sentiment d'isolement semblait l'emporter sur tout autre et qui contrastaient tant avec le bocage scaërois: "Mais maintenent nous voilà arrivé chez tonton Bertrand et Christophe. Nous sommes au milieu d'une plaine d'ou l'on aperçoit près d'une lieu à la ronde. Je trouve le pays très beau".[79] La solitude n'était pourtant qu'apparente: les fermes de Braddock et de Burnham se trouvaient en effet à moins de dix kilomètres d'une "ville". Cette localisation était commandée par l'organisation du travail agricole: "Pendant la période de récolte ils [les Carduner et Le Bihan] font 2 voyages par jour pour envoyer le grain aux élévateurs".[80] Mais ces déplacements liés au travail ne constituaient pas l'unique forme de relation entre la ville et la campagne. Ainsi, quel que fût le moment de l'année: "On y va bien 2 fois par semaine, sans compter les commissions qu'on y fait faire par les voisins qui passent chez vous pour s'y rendre".[81] La fréquence de ces déplacements s'expliquait par le fait que, si peu important fût-il par sa population, le centre urbain concentrait une quantité de services bien supérieure à celle offerte par le bourg de Basse-Bretagne. Il en résultait du même coup chez les nouveaux colons un changement brutal dans leur perception et leur définition de la ville: "Ici on appelle ville une localité grande comme St Thurien ou Kernével. Mais dans toute ville il y a au moins 2 hôtels, une banque, des élévateurs pour recevoir le grain des récoltes, une école, une église (non: 2 églises, 1 ég. cath. et 1 égl. protestante), des magasins vendant tout ce dont vous avez besoin".[82] Si les contacts n'étaient pas rares, c'était aussi parce que l'on avait su se doter de moyens de transport et de communication adaptés à l'immensité du territoire: l'automobile, déjà largement répandue, semblait effacer jusqu'au souvenir du vieux char à bancs scaërois; ainsi que l'écrivait Marguerite Carduner au retour d'une de ses premières visites à Swift Current: "Nous y allions en automobile car ici, chère cousine se n'ait pas la mode de marcher".[83] Les colons s'étaient également adaptés à la rigueur climatique de l'hiver, utilisant dès les premières neiges des traîneaux qui faisaient la joie des enfants Carduner: "Cet hiver nous avons eu peu de neige. Les traîneaux ont circulés pendant un mois. Que c'est amusant et doux. Ils glissent sur la neige sans donner aucune secousse. Je les préfère aux voitures",[84] et suscitaient l'admiration des adultes: "Ici on voyage par tous les temps".[85] Par ailleurs, le transport des informations n'était pas en retard sur celui des personnes. La poste fonctionnait simplement mais efficacement. Quand on va en ville

79 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (sd, probablement 03-04/1912), op. cit.

80 Lettre de H. Le Bihan à J. Le Bihan (04/12/1919), op. cit.

81 Idem.

82 Idem.

83 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (10/08/1912) (coll. B. Petit, Lorient).

84 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (25/03/1913), op. cit.

85 Lettre de H. Le Bihan à J. Le Bihan (04/12/1919), op. cit.

on y porte les lettres à poster et on y prend celles qui vous sont adressées".[86] Mais c'était surtout le téléphone qui, aux yeux des colons, constituait l'innovation majeure: "Dans les régions bien habitées il y a téléphone dans toutes les fermes et le mardi ou mercredi le central (c'est-à-dire le phone du bourg) annonce par téléphone à tous les abonnés du lieu, l'heure et le prix du bal du vendredi. Comme tu le vois, on est assez avancé dans ce pays. Un fermier désire un service quelconque de son voisin, vite il lui phone pour s'enquérir s'il peut le satisfaire: comme c'est pratique et agréable. Qu'attend-on en France pour en faire autant?"[87] Les modes de contact, et partant les contacts eux-mêmes, étaient donc nombreux. A quelles fins les Carduner les utilisèrent-ils? Autrement dit, dans quels réseaux de sociabilité les colons cherchèrent-ils à s'intégrer sitôt arrivés?

Le premier cercle de sociabilité était limité à la famille dont la cohésion fut renforcée par le sentiment de déracinement qui prévalut au départ. Dans un premier temps, les relations sociales se calquèrent donc assez étroitement sur les relations familiales:

- au plan du voisinage: on a vu plus haut que les Carduner s'étaient installés au plus près de Bertrand et Christophe.
- au plan du travail: outre les grands travaux agricoles qui mobilisaient tous les membres de la famille, on a noté par exemple que René Carduner devint le fermier de ses oncles.
- au plan des loisirs: Bertrand Le Bihan en était le consciencieux organisateur. C'est chez lui qu'eut lieu en juin 1912 la première soirée dansante à laquelle prit part sa nièce. C'est encore en sa compagnie que cette dernière put se rendre au spectacle donné dans la ville voisine.[88]

Un second cercle, plus large, rassemblait apparemment les immigrés d'origine bretonne. Il fut là encore tout particulièrement prégnant au cours des premières années:

- au plan du voisinage: ainsi "A quatre milles de ma mère demeure une famille de Riec. Comme ils ne sont pas loin l'un de l'autre ils vont se voir souvent. Il y a une jeune fille de dix-sept ans qui est devenue ma grande amie".[89]
- au plan du travail: on apprend en effet que Bertrand Le Bihan avait un domestique breton qui plut fort à Marguerite: "Il est agé de 19 ans et est depuis 6 ans au Canada. Il est très rigolo".[90] En fait, ce jeune morbihanais d'origine, dont la famille s'était établie près de Whitewood, avait

86 Idem.

87 Idem.

88 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (10/08/1912), op. cit.

89 Idem.

90 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (26/05/1912), op. cit.

rencontré son futur patron lorsque celui-ci exploitait sa première ferme de Kennedy. En quête de travail, il l'avait suivi comme domestique à Braddock.[91] De même, lorsque Henri Le Bihan, installé depuis un an au Canada, décida d'"aller au bois" pendant l'hiver 1920, il prit soin de se faire accompagner par une vieille connaissance, probablement scaëroise,[92] en la personne de Pierre Lamandé.[93]

- au plan des loisirs: à l'occasion d'une soirée organisée pendant l'été 1912 au cours de laquelle Marguerite espérait faire la rencontre d'un "anglais",[94] son oncle Christophe s'avisa de déjouer ses plans en lui imposant pour cavalier un jeune homme d'origine bretonne.[95] Même exclusivisme national quelques jours plus tard lors d'une promenade en ville: "Nous étions quatre ensemble tontons Bertrand et Cris et un autre breton et moi".[96]

Ainsi, deux principaux réseaux de sociabilité, largement imbriqués, confisquaient la quasi-totalité des rapports sociaux. Du reste, les descendants Carduner entretiennent aujourd'hui encore le souvenir d'une famille extrêmement recroquevillée sur elle-même pendant les premières années.[97]

Très vite cependant, des signes d'ouverture apparurent: la jeune Marguerite Carduner, se soustrayant aux deux réseaux de relations précités, s'employa à nouer de nouvelles formes de contact: "A Scaër et Bannalec, l'on s'imagine que le Canada est un pays sauvage où l'on ne voit personne. Eh bien ici l'on est six jeunes filles toutes voisines l'une de l'autre. Plus qu'il n'y en avait dans la section de St Adrien. Il y en a une grecque, deux suédoises et deux norvégiennes. L'on est toutes de très grandes amies".[98] De façon plus significative, l'étude des lettres écrites par Marguerite à sa cousine restée au pays révèle un progressif détachement vis-à-vis de la vie sociale scaëroise. Durant les premiers mois la jeune immigrée manifesta un vif intérêt pour les mariages célébrés à Scaër depuis son départ: "Et en Bretagne comment ça va-t-il? Y a-t-il beaucoup de noces de commencées?"[99] "Si tu trouvais une carte postale représentant la noce de Reine Porodo tu

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91 L. Fulop, op. cit.

92 "Lamandé " était un patronyme présent à Scaër de longue date. De façon significative, les Lamandé étaient presque tous des sabotiers, fort nombreux aux abords de la forêt de Coatloch, ayant massivement émigré par suite des difficultés qui ébranlèrent leur profession.

93 Lettre de H. Le Bihan à J. Le Bihan (22/10/1920), op. cit.

94 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (26/05/1912), op. cit.

95 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (10/08/1912), op. cit.

96 Idem.

97 Lettre de V. Vik à l'auteur (15/03/1994).

98 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (26/05/1912), op. cit.

99 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (sd, probablement 03-04/1912), op. cit.

serais bien aimable si tu m'en envoyait une ensemble que ta lettre",[100] "Et la cousine Louise Goapper ou est-elle aller passer sa lune de miel?",[101] "Marie Derrien est-elle mariée?"[102] etc. Marguerite n'hésitait pas à s'étendre sur ses propres histoires de coeur, chargeant par exemple sa cousine de récupérer son mouchoir auprès d'un ancien galant.[103] La traversée de l'Atlantique ne semblait donc pas avoir altéré son sentiment d'appartenance à la jeune société scaëroise. A preuve, elle assurait encore sa cousine en novembre 1912 de sa présence à Scaër lorsque celle-ci se marierait et insistait même pour être fille d'honneur.[104] Au bout d'un an, le ton se mit toutefois à changer: il se fit moins sérieux, tournant volontiers à la plaisanterie, voire même à l'ironie: "Je vois que l'on ne se marie pas beaucoup en Bretagne. Toutes les roses des alentours de Lojou étant toujours en fleur. Pour toi, chère Jeanne c'est encore ton été. Mais il y a quelques unes tel que L. Riviere qui approchent de leur automne".[105] Une distance nouvelle séparait Marguerite de Scaër: son avenir ne pouvait plus être que canadien. Elle l'écrivit sans équivoque: "Quant je quittais la France il y a deux ans je pensais y retourner cette année. Mais alors je ne connaissais personne ici. Maintenant je vois que les jeunes gens d'ici peuvent faire de meilleurs maris que ceux de Bretagne".[106] La véritable rupture, affective celle-là, n'était plus très loin. On notera que Bertrand Carduner, frère cadet de Marguerite, connut un cheminement psychologique comparable, quoique légèrement décalé dans le temps. Son séjour à Scaër pendant la guerre avait été l'occasion de nouer ou renouer des liens avec le "pays". La première lettre écrite à son retour au Canada s'en fit l'écho: "Veuillez aussi me rappeler à Mlles Rouat et Braban ainsi qu'à quelques autres que j'ai eu l'occasion de voir par là".[107] Surtout, Bertrand ne cachait pas son profond attachement pour la France: "Quant à moi je vais travailler de mon mieux pour faire quelque argent; avec cela, quelques années après la guerre, lorsque les chagrins et le deuil auront diminué, je retournerai en France m'amuser un peu".[108] Pourtant, le ton de Bertrand ne tarda pas non plus à changer: "Les mariages continuent bon train à Scaër; cela ne m'intéresse pas beaucoup car je suis certain que l'on ne me volera pas ma connaissance puisque je n'en ai point".[109] La distance ne cessa d'augmenter puisque trois mois plus tard le jeune homme écrivait que

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100 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (26/05/1912), op. cit.

101 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (12/11/1912), op. cit.

102 Idem.

103 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (26/05/1912), op. cit.

104 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (12/11/1912), op. cit.

105 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (25/03/1913), op. cit.

106 Idem.

107 Lettre de B. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (09/09/1917), op. cit.

108 Idem.

109 Lettre de B. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (22/04/1918), op. cit.

si des nouvelles de Scaër devaient cesser de lui parvenir régulièrement, il ne tarderait pas à considérer la Bretagne comme "un pays étranger".[110]

Ce détachement vis-à-vis de la terre natale était indissociable d'un attachement nouveau pour le sol d'adoption. Ce dernier se devine sans mal sous la plume de Marguerite et s'exprime franchement au sujet de ce que l'on pourrait appeler la "condition féminine canadienne". Cette question n'était pas sans importance car elle définissait aux yeux de Marguerite son propre statut à venir, au sein de la société, de la famille et du couple. Rien d'étonnant donc à ce qu'elle s'y attardât longuement. Or chaque fois qu'elle s'en préoccupa, ce fut pour opposer les progrès canadiens aux pesanteurs de la société bretonne. Ainsi, le travail était moins pénible au Canada: "Et d'ailleurs en hiver les femmes ne sortent que pour se promener".[111] L'hiver était du même coup rendu plus supportable: "J'ai eu moins froid cet hiver au Canada qu'aux hivers que j'ai passé à Lojou. Quand je revenais de laver de stanq[112] tenant ma bassine de lessive je n'avais pas toujours trop chaud aux mains".[113] En outre, le partage des activités y était moins fonction du sexe qu'en Bretagne, à l'image de l'équitation que Marguerite, en authentique immigrée bretonne, s'étonna de pratiquer: "Depuis quelque temps je commence à aller en selle. Car par ici tout le monde va à cheval, filles et garçons [...] Maintenent mon plus grand plaisir c'est de faire une promenade sur ma petite jument Béret".[114] Mais la jeune fille fut surtout frappée par une générosité et une délicatesse de la gent masculine qu'elle n'avait jamais rencontrées à Scaër:

> Ils [les maris] sont trop avare en Bretagne. Et tu sais que je ne désirais pas un mari avare? En bretagne ils regardent pour quelques sous de bonbons. Tandis qu'ici j'en connais un qui l'année passée pour le 1er de l'an m'a fait cadeau d'un bracelet de cinquante francs. Celui que j'ai sur mon photo. Et au milieu de l'été il m'a acheté un autre de 60 F. Tu vois qu'ils ne regardent pas pour quelques sous.[115]

La conclusion s'imposait d'elle-même: "Aussi je pense bien que je vais choisir mon maître ici".[116] Comme on le voit, le comportement de repli familial et national n'avait pas empêché qu'un renversement affectif se produisît au bénéfice du Canada. Un désir d'intégration s'était fait jour. Restait à le concrétiser.

Ce fut chose faite avec le premier mariage que la famille Carduner vît se

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110 Lettre de B. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (04/07/1918), op. cit.

111 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (09/02/1913) (coll. B. Petit, Lorient).

112 Lieu-dit scaërois, signifiant "étang" en breton.

113 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (09/02/1913), op. cit.

114 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (10/08/1912), op. cit.

115 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (25/03/1913), op. cit.

116 Idem.

célébrer au Canada: au printemps 1914, Marguerite épousa à Swift Current Joseph Cloarec. Le 8 février 1915 la venue au monde de John Cloarec inaugura la longue liste des naissances sur le sol canadien[117]: suivirent chez les Cloarec Francine en 1917, Marguerite en 1918, Joséphine en 1920 (et plus tard Joseph, Jeanne et Valentine).[118] En fait, l'analyse de ce mariage appelle trois remarques importantes:

1. Joseph Cloarec était, on s'en souvient, domestique. Or l'écart social séparant les deux conjoints ne fit pas obstacle à leur union. Peut-on y voir le signe d'un certain affranchissement vis-à-vis des contraintes sociales prévalant dans la société rurale bretonne?

2. Ou bien peut-on penser que la condition d'immigrés provoqua une recomposition des critères en matière de choix matrimonial, la qualité de compatriote l'emportant dorénavant sur toute autre? C'est d'ailleurs de ce point de vue que ce mariage fut paradoxal: il témoignait certes de la forte prégnance des deux réseaux de sociabilité mis en évidence plus haut (Joseph Cloarec se situant à la confluence des cercles familial et national). Mais il provoquait dans le même temps le premier éclatement de ce système socialement clos: en quête d'une ferme, le jeune ménage s'expatria en effet à Vanguard où, seuls à une cinquantaine de kilomètres des leurs, les Cloarec durent s'intégrer dans un nouveau jeu de relations sociales (travail, voisinage...) désormais soustrait aux influences familiales et nationales.[119]

3. Un dernier point, très symbolique celui-là, mérite d'être souligné: en lui annonçant son prochain mariage, Marguerite Carduner écrivit à sa cousine scaëroise sa dernière lettre. Contrairement aux précédentes, très longues et riches de mille détails, cette ultime missive surprend par sa soudaine sobriété:

> Chère cousine fatiguée de faire la jeune fille je me désiste. Je vais être fiancée demain à Swift Current. Mon futur est jeune breton du Morbihan. Mais il demeure depuis longtemps au Canada. Mon mariage aura probablement lieu après la semaine pâques. J'aurais été heureuse de t'avoir pour fille d'honneur mais tu es si loin. Mon futur est très bon garçon il est très doux. Je serais la maîtresse dans le ménage. C'est ce qui m'a décidée à le marier. Il s'appelle Joseph Cloarec. Souhaite le bonjour de ma part a toute la famille et particulièrement a Soisic. Ta cousine qui t'aime et t'aimeras toujours. Margaret[120] Carduner.[121]

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117 Au total Jean Carduner et Marie-Jeanne Le Bihan eurent vingt-quatre petits-enfants entre 1915 et 1950 (L. Fulop, op. cit.).

118 L. Fulop, op. cit.

119 De façon assez significative, c'est à Vanguard, chez sa soeur Marguerite à qui il rendait visite, que René Carduner rencontra sa future épouse, laquelle était d'origine belge et non bretonne. (Lettre de M. Miklos à l'auteur, 15/03/1994).

120 Marguerite anglicisa pour la première fois sa signature en août 1912 et s'y tint définitivement à partir de février 1913.

121 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (sd, 1914) (coll. B. Petit, Lorient).

La cousine scaëroise ne reçut plus jamais le moindre mot. Comme si le mariage avait constitué pour Marguerite l'acte final de son intégration dans la société canadienne.

Aspects culturels

C'est sans doute au plan culturel que les signes de rupture étaient les plus visibles. Ils s'observaient jusque dans les faits les plus quotidiens. Ainsi en était-il des traditions vestimentaires et culinaires. On a vu que les Carduner avaient abandonné à Scaër leurs vêtements bretons traditionnels. Dès leur arrivée, Marguerite s'empressa de justifier ce choix: "Nous sommes mieux habillés contre le froid qu'on est avec le costume de paysanne. J'ai acheté un manteau d'hiver de 125 F et que le vent ne traverse pas".[122] La cuisine bretonne ne trouvait pas davantage grâce à ses yeux:

> Par ici on ne fait pas des crampous[123] pas plus que du bara ségal.[124] Mais en revanche nous faisons notre pain blanc nous même. Mais il est facile à faire. Il est bien meilleur que celui des boulangers de Scaër et de Bannalec. Car quoique je ne sois pas encore bonne boulangère je pourrais sans honte montrer mon pain à Christophe Moysan.[125] Par ici la cuisine est bien meilleur qu'en Bretagne.[126]

Tout était donc prétexte à dénigrer la Bretagne, au prix même d'une déformation de la réalité: contrairement à ce que dit Marguerite, les crêpes, entre autres mets, restèrent en effet très appréciées de tous pendant des années.[127] La jeune femme était-elle donc gênée par l'importation au Canada d'un ensemble de pratiques qui lui rappelaient trop ostensiblement sa contrée d'origine? Plus précisément, cette gêne n'était-elle pas propre à sa relation avec sa cousine bretonne, à laquelle Marguerite ne fit curieusement jamais part de la moindre déception et n'eut de cesse au contraire de vanter les mille bienfaits de la Saskatchewan? Autrement dit, l'exaltation d'un Canada fantasmé n'avait-elle pas pour fonction de compenser quelque réalité décevante? Quoi qu'il en soit, le désir de rupture était patent.

Il ne l'était pas moins en matière festive. L'évocation des distractions tenait une place importante dans les lettres de Marguerite. C'est sur les soirées dansantes qu'elle s'attardait le plus. Celles-ci étaient semble-t-il très fréquentes, se calquant tantôt sur le calendrier festif officiel (ainsi pour le premier de l'an 1913),[128] fêtant tantôt un événement familial ou local (ainsi

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122 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (09/02/1913), op. cit.

123 "Crêpes" en breton.

124 "Pain de seigle" en breton.

125 Boulanger scaërois, cousin germain de la mère de Marguerite.

126 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (10/08/1912), op. cit.

127 V. Vik, op. cit.

128 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (09/02/1913), op. cit.

pour l'arrivée des Carduner au printemps 1912).[129] La période hivernale, pendant laquelle les travaux agricoles étaient suspendus, concentrait toutefois la majorité des bals de l'année. Ils avaient lieu le vendredi soir pour des raisons essentiellement religieuses selon Henri Le Bihan: "Le jour du vendredi est préféré au samedi pour ces sortes d'amusements à cause du dimanche qui est plus sacré ici qu'en France. Si le bal avait lieu un samedi la danse devrait cesser à minuit pour ne point profaner le saint jour du dimanche".[130] Cette précaution n'était sans doute pas inutile puisque durant l'été 1912 "On a dansé jusqu'a quatre heure du matin".[131] Ces fêtes, toujours organisées par un adulte (en l'occurrence Bertrand Le Bihan), attiraient de nombreux participants. Ainsi, en août 1912 "La grainerie qui est très grande était comble",[132] tandis qu'en février 1913: "Il y avait beaucoup de monde. La maison était pleine quoiqu'elle soit grande et vidée de tout le mobilier à l'exception du poële et du buffet".[133] Mais il faut surtout noter que les nouveaux arrivants se trouvèrent confrontés à des pratiques culturelles nouvelles: "Nous ne dansons pas ici les mêmes danses qu'en bretagne. Les danses préférées sont la quadrille, la valse, le toutsteps, la french migonette. Mais la valse d'ici ne se fait pas comme en bretagne".[134] D'où la timidité bien compréhensible de Marguerite lors de sa première danse:

> Nous dansions au son des violons. La plupart des filles étaient habillés en blanc. Ne connaisant pas beaucoup les danses j'avais d'abord un peu de frousse. Car nous ne dansons guère les danses de Bretagne. Mais de suite au commencement du bal, un jeune homme qui s'était fait présenter par tonton Cris me demande pour une quadrille. C'était la danse que je redoutais le plus. Mais une fois la première honte passée j'étais très contente de danser et plus je dansais plus j'en raffollais.[135]

L'assimilation de cette pratique festive se fit donc rapidement et sans état d'âme. Elle ne le fut pas moins s'agissant des autres modes de distraction. Ceux-ci étaient de différents types. Certains étaient totalement inconnus des nouveaux colons: ce fut le cas du bridge qu'affectionnait tout particulièrement Françoise Carduner[136] ou encore du "bes-borl" (baseball) dont on s'empressa d'acheter un jeu complet dès l'arrivée au Canada "pour jouer le dimanche".[137] D'autres sports étaient en revanche connus des immigrés mais non pratiqués: ainsi en était-il de l'équitation citée plus haut. Enfin, le

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129 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (10/08/1912), op. cit.

130 Lettre de H. Le Bihan à J. Le Bihan (04/12/1919), op. cit.

131 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (10/08/1912), op. cit.

132 Idem.

133 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (09/02/1913), op. cit.

134 Idem.

135 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (10/08/1912), op. cit.

136 V. Vik, op. cit.

137 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (10/08/1912), op. cit.

cas de la couture est très significatif. C'était là l'une des distractions favorites de Marie-Jeanne et de ses filles. Du reste, tant que dura leur correspondance, Marguerite et sa cousine de Scaër s'échangeaient très fréquemment des pièces de couture.[138] Or loin de chercher à perpétuer la tradition vestimentaire bretonne, les soeurs Carduner utilisèrent leur maîtrise technique de la couture dans un autre but: se confectionner des vêtements selon la dernière mode canadienne à partir des nombreux modèles fournis par les magazines[139] — exemple d'une distraction antérieure au départ de Scaër mais réajustée à de nouvelles fins dès l'arrivée au Canada. Mais en matière de distractions, les colons se faisaient aussi bien spectateurs qu'acteurs. C'est que, nous l'avons vu, les relations étaient fréquentes avec les villes, où se donnaient périodiquement des spectacles en tous genres. Ceux-ci étaient de deux principaux types. Certains étaient réguliers et constituaient autant de sorties dominicales. C'était notamment le cas des courses et concours hippiques dont Bertrand et Christophe Le Bihan étaient semble-t-il des assidus. Marguerite y fit de nouvelles découvertes: "Il y avait des carrousels de toutes sortes que je n'ai jamais vus en Bretagne".[140] D'autres manifestations, plus ponctuelles, reprenaient à leur compte le jeune folklore canadien. Elles n'en frappèrent que davantage la jeune Bretonne:

> Une quinzaine après nous sommes allés voir un cirque de passage à Swift Current. C'était 5 francs l'entrée pour chaque. On y voyait des coboys lançant leur corde sur des chevaux sauvages que nous appelons brancos. Ils formaient un huit sur leurs pieds de devant et les jetaient par terre d'un coup sec. Il y avait aussi des filles qui montaient à cheval comme de vrais garçons. Des peaux-rouges avec leurs plumes sur la tête. C'était très amusant. Il y avait des filles très agiles elles jetaient un morceau de papier par terre et sans descendre de leurs cheveaux lancés au grand trop elles les ramassaient en passant.[141]

A Scaër, si la lecture de telles lettres ne manquait pas de susciter une certaine fascination, elle provoquait également l'étonnement. On notait ainsi que l'évocation des bals l'emportait de très loin sur celle de la pratique religieuse.[142] C'était même un euphémisme dans la mesure où on ne trouve pas la moindre allusion à la religion dans l'ensemble des lettres écrites par Marguerite et Bertrand Carduner à leur famille scaëroise. Est-ce à dire que l'assiduité religieuse, qui caractérisait les Carduner avant leur départ, s'était soudain démentie? Bien au contraire, Marie-Jeanne mit dès que possible son zèle au service de la *Catholic Women's League of the Sacred Heart*

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138 Lettres de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (10/08/1912 & 12/11/1912), op. cit.

139 V. Vik, op. cit.

140 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (10/08/1912), op. cit.

141 Idem.

142 M.-A. Riou, op. cit.

Church.[143] Ses enfants devinrent également de consciencieux pratiquants malgré une fréquentation de l'église rendue plus aléatoire qu'en Bretagne pour deux raisons: la difficile accessibilité de l'église du fait de la distance et surtout de l'impraticabilité temporaire des routes pendant l'hiver d'une part, et la faiblesse de l'encadrement religieux dont témoignait l'absence de prêtre permanent d'autre part.[144] On peut finalement se demander si le silence des lettres au sujet de la religion n'était pas en lui-même révélateur: ne signifiait-il pas qu'en matière religieuse la continuité avait prévalu sur le changement?

Ce fut évidemment l'inverse dans le domaine où la rupture fut probablement la plus spectaculaire: celui de la langue. Précisons qu'avant leur départ de Scaër les futurs colons, dont le breton était la langue natale, avaient acquis une solide maîtrise du français oral. Le père de Bertrand et Christophe faisait figure de lettré dans son village de Kervars pour avoir fait quelques études à l'abbaye de Langonnet dans les années 1863-1865.[145] Il avait tenu à ce que ses fils en fissent autant et les avait pour cela scolarisés à Quimperlé.[146] Il en résulta un bilinguisme breton-français. L'arrivée dans une Saskatchewan très majoritairement anglophone modifia cette donnée linguistique aux dépens du breton: parlé encore fréquemment au cours des premiers mois qui suivirent l'installation des colons,[147] il fut ensuite très vite abandonné. Il était en effet doublement moin commode que le français: il restreignait évidemment le champ des interlocuteurs possibles, mais surtout menaçait de poser des problèmes de compréhension pour certains enfants Carduner, trop jeunes à leur départ de Bretagne pour bien le maîtriser et à qui l'on jugeait incongru de l'enseigner désormais.[148] La pratique du breton chuta donc très vite, faisant encore parfois irruption au sein d'une conversation que tenaient les plus âgés entre eux, puis finit par complètement disparaître. Coupée de ses racines vives, la langue natale ne devait plus survivre qu'au travers de quelques formules figées à l'allure de clin d'oeil: "un grand Blavez d'eorch tout,[149] je connais encore mon breton !"[150] devait encore écrire Bertrand Le Bihan soixante-quatre ans après son départ de Scaër. En

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143 *The Leader-Post, Regina*, Saskatchewan, 30/06/1960, "memorial obituary."

144 M. Miklos, op. cit.

145 Le Bihan (P.), 1815. *Généalogie de la famille Le Bihan, de Goarem-Vraz en Scaër*, slnd, 7 pages manuscrites (coll. pers.).

146 M.-A. Riou, op. cit.

147 M. Miklos, op. cit.

148 Parmi les enfants Carduner, le degré de compétence en matière de langue bretonne fut donc exactement fonction de l'âge: les aînés (Marguerite, Bertrand et René) se souvinrent toute leur vie de leur idiome natal, leurs cadets (Henri, Pierre, Marie et Françoise) l'oublièrent peu à peu, et les derniers (Ernest et Jeanne) n'en connurent jamais le moindre mot.

149 "Une grande année à tous".

150 Lettre de B. Le Bihan à G. Corler (24/01/1967) (coll. G. Corler, Scaër).

fait, l'abandon du breton fut synchronique de l'apprentissage de l'anglais. Celui-ci était évidemment inconnu des colons. Du reste, si les descendants Carduner considèrent aujourd'hui la traversée du Canada que firent en 1912 leur aïeule Marie-Jeanne et ses neuf enfants comme un véritable mythe fondateur familial, c'est parce que le périple fut rendu extrêmement éprouvant par leur ignorance totale de la langue anglaise.[151] Pendant les premiers mois qui suivirent l'installation, l'anglais empêcha bien souvent de nouer des relations nouvelles. Ainsi, à l'occasion d'un bal au cours duquel chaque jeune fille devait vendre un panier, Marguerite soupira: "Si c'est un anglais qui l'achete on fera vraiment un beau couple ne pouvant pas parler l'un à l'autre".[152] Les quiproquos se multiplièrent et devinrent matière à autant d'anecdotes que devait pieusement conserver la mémoire familiale:

> Une aventure qui m'est arrivé dans la première quinzaine de mon arrivé ici: Une de nos voisines, dont le mari allait au bourg et qui devait y rester deux jours, avait peur seule la nuit et vient me demander pour aller dormir avec elle. J'y suis aller pensant trouver une occasion de rigoler encore. Elle me parlait assez souvent mais je ne comprenait goutte de ce qu'elle me disait. Mais le matin quant elle m'a dit de déjeuner avec elle il n'a pas fallu me répéter deux fois. J'ai bien compris de suite.[153]

Ainsi, à force d'efforts et de bonne volonté, les premiers contacts purent s'établir:

> Je ne comprend pas encore beaucoup l'anglais: Aussi quand je suis seule à la maison et qu'il arrive un anglais voulant me faire comprendre quelque chose et moi qui ne peut rien déchiffrer de ce qu'il dit c'est si amusant qu'a la fin je ne peut pas m'empêcher de rire. Mais à force de signe on parvient toujours à se comprendre.[154]

On s'achemina donc progressivement d'un bilinguisme français-breton vers un bilinguisme français-anglais. Ce dernier fut pérennisé pendant une dizaine d'années sous l'effet de deux enseignements parallèles:

- l'enseignement du français dans un cadre strictement familial. Les parents Carduner s'en chargèrent probablement eux-mêmes au départ puis sollicitèrent le concours de leur frère et beau-frère Henri Le Bihan. Instituteur de son état, le nouvel arrivant était tout désigné pour la tâche. Il s'en acquitta avec zèle pendant quatre hivers (les écoles étant fermées pendant cette saison).[155] Il s'agissait visiblement chez les parents d'un effort conscient destiné "à préserver leur héritage".[156] N'est-il pas

151 L. Fulop, op. cit.

152 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (26/05/1912), op. cit.

153 Idem.

154 Idem.

155 Lettre de H. Le Bihan à J. Le Bihan (04/12/1919), op. cit.

156 V. Vik, op. cit.

significatif que face à l'anglais et en l'absence du breton, le français, que l'on ne parlait dans la famille que depuis une ou deux générations seulement, fût jugé constitutif de l'identité familiale et à ce titre digne d'être transmis?

- l'enseignement de l'anglais dans un cadre scolaire. Tous les enfants Carduner en bénéficièrent à l'exception des trois aînés, trop âgés en 1912. L'apprentissage de leur nouvelle langue fut semble-t-il très rapide, nonobstant l'évidente exagération de Marguerite: "Pierre et Henri vont depuis un mois à l'école anglaise. Ils lisent couramment l'anglais".[157] C'est que l'enjeu était de taille puisqu'il s'agissait, à en croire leur soeur aînée, d'"en faire de vrais canadiens".[158] La connaissance de l'anglais était donc explicitement pensée par les immigrés comme une condition essentielle de leur intégration et comme un attribut nécessaire de leur nouvelle identité. Ce bilinguisme apparemment serein recouvrait donc un douloureux conflit identitaire. Il fallut choisir. Ce fut chose faite au tout début des années 1920 lorsque furent abandonnés les efforts en faveur du français et que l'anglais s'imposa définitivement. Le français connut donc le même sort que le breton dix ans auparavant. En assurant une sorte de transition linguistique entre langues bretonne et anglaise, il avait ainsi contribué à amortir la brutalité des évolutions culturelles. Il en résulta une ultime conséquence: la difficulté croissante de maintenir le contact avec la Bretagne, à l'image de Henri Carduner écrivant en 1919 à son oncle et sa tante de Scaër: "Excusez moi de ne point vous écrire plus souvent. Si mes lettres sont si rares c'est que je ne suis point bien calé en français alors j'évite autant que possible aux mes fautes à corriger".[159] Ce fut la dernière lettre du jeune homme.

Les années 1920: la rupture

Au tout début des années 1920, les immigrés cessèrent assez brutalement de correspondre avec leur famille bretonne. On peut légitimement s'interroger sur les raisons de cette rupture et se demander si elle n'est pas significative d'une cassure beaucoup plus profonde. Deux principaux types de causes peuvent être avancés.

La conjoncture générale des années 1912-1920, dominée par la guerre, précipita le phénomène:

1) La Première Guerre Mondiale eut un effet paradoxal. Dans un premier temps, elle provoqua en effet le retour en France de Bertrand et Christophe Le Bihan dès 1914, et celui de leur neveu Bertrand Carduner l'année suivante. Les trois soldats séjournèrent à différentes reprises chez leurs parents scaërois, renouant ainsi des liens. Très vite cependant, l'expérience

157 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (26/05/1912), op. cit.

158 Idem.

159 Lettre de H. Carduner à J. Le Bihan (22/12/1919) (coll. M. Le Bihan, Scaër).

du combat ébranla la détermination des "canadiens" et notamment de Bertrand Carduner déclarant à sa famille de Scaër: "Pour laisser un bras à la guerre je serais content, mais laisser ma peau, non !"[160] Le jeune homme prit rapidement sa décision: il profita d'une permission pour quitter la France en mars 1917 et n'y plus revenir.[161] Ses deux oncles, caporaux au 118e Régiment d'Infanterie, l'imitèrent le 13 juin suivant, tandis que son frère cadet René avait jugé encore plus simple de négliger l'appel du 11 mars 1916 en restant au Canada.[162] Ces désertions eurent trois conséquences décisives:

a) elles compromirent pour une durée indéterminée toute possibilité de retour en France (les quatre hommes étant recherchés par les autorités afin d'être jugés pour insoumission).

b) elles suscitèrent l'indignation de certains membres de la famille bretonne à un double titre: les parents scaërois se retrouvèrent malgré eux comptables de leur fuite tant auprès des autorités (les gendarmes multipliant les visites à leurs domiciles respectifs)[163] qu'auprès de la communauté locale, terriblement meurtrie par la guerre et naturellement encline à la réprobation. Mais plus profondément, l'incompréhension s'empara de certains, à l'image de Marie-Jeanne Petit stigmatisant dans une lettre adressée à son cousin germain le manque de patriotisme dont celui-ci avait fait preuve.[164]

c) elles concrétisèrent inversement chez les intéressés une complète redéfinition de leur sentiment national, non plus français mais canadien. D'où en retour l'incompréhension visiblement sincère que provoqua chez Bertrand Carduner la lettre accusatrice de sa cousine: "Vous me dites que je ne suis plus patriote. Et bien si je suis toujours patriote. Je considère que je fais mon devoir ici".[165] Le malentendu était complet.

2) Faut-il invoquer un ralentissement général de l'émigration bretonne au Canada après la guerre?[166] Ou doit-on plutôt penser à une incompréhension naissante que les événements avaient soudain cristallisée? Toujours est-il que les colons ne devaient plus faire d'émules au pays. On se souvient que Jean Le Bihan, frère de Bertrand, Christophe et Marie-Jeanne, avait reporté par deux fois son départ avant la guerre. En 1918 enfin, plus rien ne s'y

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160 M.-A. Riou, op. cit.

161 ADF 5 Z 30.

162 Idem.

163 M.-A. Riou, op. cit.

164 Lettre de B. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (30/01/1918) (coll. B. Petit, Lorient).

165 Idem.

166 D'après A. Châtelain selon lequel "les arrivées les plus nombreuses se placent entre 1901 et 1914" (cité par E. Gautier, op. cit., p. 142). Noter l'avis contraire de G. Le Clech évoquant le "'rush' vers l'Amérique du Nord qui suivit la grande guerre" ("La fondation de la paroisse de Saint-Brieux (Saskatchewan, en 1904)", *BSAF*, t. XCIII, 1967, p. 288).

opposait. Et pourtant Jean ne partit pas. Son frère Henri vint certes au Canada en 1919 mais, fait inédit, regagna la France dès 1923.[167] Tous, en Bretagne comme dans la Saskatchewan, acquirent donc peu à peu le sentiment que la dynamique migratoire interne à la famille, si puissante quelques années plus tôt, s'était définitivement essoufflée.

On l'a dit, la conjoncture ne fit cependant qu'accélérer une évolution plus profonde, sensible de part et d'autre de l'Atlantique:

1) En France, les lettres en provenance du Canada s'étaient succédées pendant près de dix ans. Tous les courriers étaient lus, relus, commentés, construisant chez les lecteurs une certaine perception du Canada. Celle-ci se réduisit en fait aussitôt à une fascination non dissimulée pour une "modernité canadienne" que leurs correspondants s'ingéniaient à exalter à chaque ligne. Ainsi en était-il par exemple de la mécanisation agricole qui ne pouvait manquer d'impressionner des lecteurs eux-mêmes agriculteurs:

> Ils étaient beaucoup plus en avance que par ici puisqu'ils avaient des lieuses et puis [...] on ne faisait pas avec des batteuses comme ici, on faisait avec des moissonneuses. On mettait dans le sac tout de suite et nous on trouvait çà drôle puisqu'ici on faisait avec des faux.[168]

Tous les aspects de la vie quotidienne et sociale suscitaient une semblable admiration "et une envie pour leur réussite quand même parce que c'était moderne quand ils parlaient sur leurs lettres du téléphone par exemple".[169] Plus profondément encore, les savantes descriptions des bals et autres distractions avaient peu à peu convaincu la famille bretonne que "C'était plus gai".[170] En somme, chaque lettre participait à la construction d'un Canada imaginaire défini par son inaccessible modernité. Par un violent contraste, elle produisait du même coup chez le lecteur un nouveau regard sur une Bretagne jugée soudain fort archaïque ainsi que sur lui-même. En ce sens, chaque nouveau courrier présentait ce paradoxe de réactiver en apparence les liens familiaux et d'accentuer en réalité la distance entre les correspondants. Jusqu'à ce que la distance fît place à l'étrangeté.

2) Au Canada, l'intégration de la famille Carduner s'était réalisée lentement mais sûrement, alternant comme on l'a vu temps de résistance et temps d'accélération suivant des rythmes variables. Les années 1920 précipitèrent encore cette évolution. La famille avait grandi et vit se succéder les mariages: René se maria en 1927, Bertrand et Henri en 1929. Or, contrairement à leur soeur Marguerite, aucun des enfants Carduner n'épousa un Breton (et seule Françoise convola avec un Français): la femme de René était d'origine belge, celle de Bertrand d'origine anglaise, celle d'Henri d'origine américaine.[171]

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167 L. Fulop, op. cit.

168 M.-A. Riou, op. cit.

169 J. Le Bihan, op. cit.

170 M.-A. Riou, op. cit.

171 L. Fulop, op. cit.

Avec cette série de mariages se produisit un double phénomène: elle provoqua d'une part l'éclatement de la famille désormais composée de différents ménages dispersés dans la Saskatchewan, et acheva d'autre part de concrétiser l'appartenance de tous à la très cosmopolite société canadienne. Il est un indice qui ne trompe pas: on se souvient que les parents Carduner étaient restés propriétaires de la ferme de Lojou en Scaër. Or c'est en 1925 qu'ils décidèrent de la vendre, s'interdisant désormais toute possibilité de retour au pays.[172] Il avait donc fallu treize années pour que Jean et Marie-Jeanne Carduner fussent définitivement acquis à l'idée de ne plus revoir la terre natale[173] et de finir leurs jours au Canada. On a vu enfin qu'à bien des égards les colons avaient construit leur nouvelle identité canadienne contre leur ancienne identité bretonne, à l'image de Marguerite qui, à peine débarquée au Canada, se faisait déjà l'écho de ce douloureux conflit intérieur: "Nous comptons retourner en Bretagne un jour. Mais s'il me fallait retourner dans une ferme comme avant mon départ, alors pour rien au monde je n'y retournerais. Je resterais finir mes jours au Canada".[174] Quinze années avaient suffi à transformer cette hypothèse en certitude.

Conclusion: souvenir, deuil, mémoire: les temps de l'identité

L'histoire du sentiment identitaire de cette famille de colons apparait donc complexe et turbulente dès leur arrivée au Canada. On peut toutefois la lire comme la succession dialectique de trois temps nettement distincts:

1. 1912- années 1920: le temps du souvenir

Cette séquence, qui constitue le coeur de notre analyse, est bien celle du souvenir, qu'un historien a défini "comme un rappel, ponctuel et immédiat, unique et exemplaire, d'une expérience vécue".[175] Elle est, comme on l'a vu, le temps douloureux de la coexistence confuse et conflictuelle de deux identités: l'ancienne, encore présente, et la nouvelle, encore à venir. Elle s'achève donc dans et par un deuil, conçu très justement comme "espace et

172 Idem.

173 Au terme de l'analyse, il est tentant de vouloir préciser la notion toujours très floue de "terre natale". Si nos documents ne permettent malheureusement pas de conclure avec certitude sur ce point, ils autorisent cependant l'hypothèse d'une évolution sémantique au cours de la période envisagée: il semble qu'à leur départ de Bretagne, la "terre natale" des Carduner ait été identifiée à Scaër, à l'exclusion de tout sentiment d'appartenance plus large. Leur commune d'origine, unique cadre concret de leur vie passée, individualisée par un ensemble de pratiques culturelles et de comportements sociaux, recueillait ainsi l'exclusivité de leur attachement au "pays". C'est donc bien l'arrivée au Canada qui suscita une évolution décisive: la rencontre de Français non-Bretons chargea brutalement d'une puissante valeur identitaire la terre bretonne, tandis que la fréquentation d'étrangers donna soudain une réelle épaisseur au sentiment d'attachement à la France. La notion de "terre natale" ou de "pays" s'en trouvait ainsi redéfinie: devenue plurielle (significations locale, régionale, nationale), elle épousait désormais la complexité de la condition d'émigrés.

174 Lettre de M. Carduner à M.-J. Petit (26/05/1912), op. cit.

175 Mathieu (J.), "Expressions de mémoire", CEFAN, Université Laval, 1995, p. 19.

temps entre le souvenir et la mémoire",[176] dont nous avons cru repérer les manifestations réelles et symboliques.

2. années 1920- années 1960: le temps de la mémoire 1: la mémoire écartelée

"L'opération de deuil constitue en quelque sorte un acte fondateur qui permet de naître à autre chose."[177] L'acceptation de leur identité canadienne advint donc pleinement chez les colons au moment même où leur identité bretonne se transforma définitivement de souvenir en mémoire. Un saut psychologique essentiel s'était effectué. Saut incomplet cependant: on cessa certes de se penser comme des "Bretons-Canadiens" ou des "Canadiens-Bretons", mais on continua de se considérer pendant une quarantaine d'années comme des "Canadiens d'origine bretonne"; aussi l'origine bretonne récupéra-t-elle au plan de la mémoire toute la nécessité et l'efficacité dont était naguère chargée l'identité bretonne au plan du souvenir. La Bretagne restait en somme constitutive du sentiment identitaire. On comprend dans ces conditions que cette seconde séquence fût marquée par une série d'efforts destinés à maintenir les relations avec la famille scaëroise. Deux moyens furent utilisés: des lettres, désormais plus rares, écrites tantôt à l'occasion de la nouvelle année, tantôt à la suite d'un événement familial, heureux ou tragique; et des voyages, puisqu'il n'était évidemment plus question depuis longtemps de retour définitif. Il y en eut deux,[178] l'un et l'autre significatifs. Le premier eut lieu probablement au début des années cinquante. Curieusement, seuls les plus jeunes membres de la famille Carduner y prirent part. Leurs aînés, les seuls pourtant qui avaient vécu à Scaër autrefois, avaient préféré s'abstenir. La mémoire subissait-elle un traitement différencié suivant les générations? Le besoin de mémoire ne s'exprimait-il pas d'autant plus fortement chez les plus jeunes que pour ceux-ci, nés au Canada, la Bretagne n'avait jamais été un souvenir qu'il avait fallu douloureusement effacer? Un second voyage suivit: quelques cousins canadiens séjournant en Europe décidèrent de faire un détour par Scaër. Mal renseignés, ils ne surent trouver le chemin des fermes familiales et repartirent donc sans avoir vu personne. Dans son échec même, cette ultime tentative révélait symboliquement l'ambiguïté d'une mémoire écartelée cette fois entre deux origines. Cette nouvelle forme de malaise identitaire, moins manifeste mais tout aussi prégnante parce que plus intériorisée, ne devait trouver à se résoudre que dans et par un nouveau "saut psychologique" qui compléterait le premier.

3. Depuis les années soixante: le temps de la mémoire 2: la mémoire retrouvée

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176 Idem., p. 23.

177 Idem., p. 24.

178 Et aucun dans le sens France-Canada: Bertrand et Christophe proposèrent bien de payer un aller-et-retour à leur frère Jean après la Seconde Guerre Mondiale, mais celui-ci déclina l'offre (J. Le Bihan, op. cit.).

Un nouveau deuil s'imposait donc. Au sens propre tout d'abord: les années soixante virent les décès des colons les plus âgés: l'aïeule Marie-Jeanne Carduner en 1960, son frère Christophe Le Bihan en 1965, sa fille Marguerite en 1963, son fils René en 1959. C'est à la même époque que moururent en France les frères et soeur de Marie-Jeanne: Marie-Renée Carduner en 1956, Henri Le Bihan en 1957 et Jean Le Bihan en 1963. En somme, c'étaient les correspondants de naguère qui disparurent en moins d'une décennie. Ne restaient donc plus de part et d'autre de l'Atlantique que des cousins inconnus les uns des autres, que n'avait jamais unis le moindre souvenir commun. Il en résulta une rupture définitive: courriers et voyages s'interrompirent pour ne plus reprendre.[179] Par-delà cette séparation dans les faits, un nouveau deuil intervint qui prépara la recomposition de la mémoire.[180] Les témoignages des descendants Carduner permettent de préciser cette mutation[181]: leur mémoire est désormais limitée en amont par la venue au Canada. Les souvenirs concernant la période antérieure sont très vagues et de peu d'intérêt. Elle se révèle au contraire exceptionnellement précise eu égard au dix premières années dans la Saskatchewan, fonctionnant à la manière d'une authentique chronique. Elle redevient ensuite plus imprécise et moins riche de souvenirs. Cette stratification spécifique de la mémoire révèle donc que l'installation au Canada est à présent vécue comme le véritable acte de naissance de la famille, réduisant l'origine bretonne à une sorte de coquetterie généalogique; et que les dix premières années sont commémorées à la façon d'un temps d'endurance et de mérite, dépositaire des mythes familiaux et laboratoire de l'identité nouvelle.

Au terme d'un lent et douloureux déplacement de son centre de gravité, la mémoire est donc enfin parvenue à se définir positivement: quelque trois quarts de siècle après l'arrivée des colons, elle a accouché d'une identité définitivement canadienne.

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179 A une exception près: l'annonce du décès de Bertrand Le Bihan (dernier oncle commun aux Scaërois et Canadiens) au Canada en 1976. Cet ultime courrier tire son caractère tardif de l'âge avancé du défunt (quatre-vingt treize ans).

180 De même en France: la mémoire scaëroise se polarisa peu à peu sur les épisodes les plus saillants de l'aventure des «Canadiens» pour n'en retenir finalement que deux: la désertion des trois soldats pendant la Première Guerre Mondiale, condamnée par certains, excusée voire même niée par d'autres; et l'infortune que connut Bertrand Le Bihan au cours de ses spéculations boursières que, par un curieux renversement, certains transformèrent en une série d'éclatants succès financiers propres à s'inscrire dans la mythologie ambiante des fabuleuses fortunes réalisées outre-Atlantique.

181 E. Carduner, L. Fulop, M. Miklos et V. Vik, op. cit.

Any Important Form: Louis Riel in Sculpture

Frances W. Kaye

ABSTRACT. Two statues of Louis Riel commissioned at the time of the centennial (1967), one by John Nugent in Regina and the other by Marcien Lemay in Winnipeg, were controversial from the beginning. Their detractors were mostly Metis organizations, while those who praised the sculptures were mostly the cultural descendants of the real Louis Riel detractors. The story of the creation, controversy, deinstallation, and replacement of the sculptures illustrates not only conflicts between "high" and "low" in public art but, more significant, how contradictions and misconceptions in public policy toward people of aboriginal descent were reflected in art.

SOMMAIRE. Deux statues de Louis Riel commandées à l'époque du centenaire (1967), oeuvres l'une de John Nugent pour Régina, et l'autre de Marcien Lemay pour Winnipeg, furent aussitôt l'objet de controverses. Leurs détracteurs étaient surtout les organisations métisses, tandis que les louanges venaient principalement des descendants culturels des détracteurs du vrai Louis Riel. L'histoire de la création des sculptures, de la controverse, puis de leur désinstallation et remplacement, illustre les conflits entre différents niveaux d'art populaire; elle montre aussi comment cet art reflète les contradictions et idées fausses qui imprègnent les décisions publiques portant sur les personnes d'origine autochtone.

Louis Riel is arguably Canada's most ambiguous hero. Hanged as a traitor in 1885, he is now considered a "father of Confederation" and to some extent a representative leader of both the West and of peoples of Native descent, as well as a Francophone martyr to English imperialism. Not surprisingly, an icon with such a wide variety of meanings has proven problematic to interpret as a literal icon, a work of art. This article traces the histories of two controversial images of Louis Riel in sculpture, one by John Nugent in Regina (1968-91) and one by Marcien Lemay in Winnipeg (1971-94).

Canada's centennial in 1967 roughly coincided with the centennial of the province of Manitoba (1970) and the diamond jubilees of the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta (1965). Centennial committees were formed in every town and province and entrusted with the work of planning and executing civic undertakings to honour the country, province, and locality. Substantial federal funding was available for centennial improvements, and in the prairie provinces additional monies were available for provincial celebration. Both Saskatchewan and Manitoba planned, among a great many other installations, from flower gardens through curling rinks and municipal garages to patriotic pageants, sculpture competitions followed by the commission of a winning piece. As we will see, Manitoba went on with its competition and sculpture, a heroic if abstracted statue of Louis Riel, but Saskatchewan, for a while, put its plan in abeyance. Its Creative Activities Subcommittee decided that "because sculpture is practically non-existent in Saskatchewan in any important form, Clement Greenberg of New York" should choose an "appropriate piece" of sculpture for the province to purchase for "not over $15,000" and that the province should erect it in an art gallery or sculpture garden.[1] The entire sculpture project

1 Saskatchewan Archives Board - Regina (SAB), Minutes of Creative Activities Subcommittee of Saskatchewan Jubilee and Centennial Committee, 22 March 1964.

languished, however, until 1967, when it was suddenly revived as the special cause of Saskatchewan's Liberal premier, Ross Thatcher. What Thatcher originally proposed was a bust of Louis Riel, and then a full, larger-than-life statue of the Metis leader whose trial and hanging in Regina had been the city's first claim to fame.

In 1967 Wilf Klein, the executive director of the Centennial Committee, approached Lumsden sculptor John Nugent, then Saskatchewan's lone bronze caster, and eventually offered him $10,000 ($5,000 less than the committee had proposed spending for something chosen by the New York expert) to create the Louis Riel. It was unveiled 2 October 1968 and, after twenty-four years of controversy, decommissioned and carted away to the vaults of the MacKenzie Art Gallery. Manitoba's contest winner was also a statue of Riel, also destined to controversy and eventual removal. The stories behind these two centennial sculptures and several subsequent sculptural representations of Riel and his lieutenant, Gabriel Dumont, illuminate some of the odder intersections between arts and audiences on the Prairies.

The story of the Winnipeg sculpture was relatively straightforward. Manitoba's existence as a province had been determined by the resistance of Louis Riel and his provisional government to the new Dominion of Canada that had attempted to occupy lands in the Red River Valley before they had been formally transferred from the jurisdiction of the Hudson's Bay Company to the new country. Louis Riel was, in his own words, as inscribed on the shell containing the statue, "the founder of Manitoba," and Riel was unquestionably the person most clearly linked with Manitoba's birth. Though many Anglo-Canadians during the centennial years still thought that Riel's government had been illegal and that the government of Canada had done properly, fifteen years later, in hanging the Metis leader as a traitor, there really was no other figure appropriate to the occasion. Thus it is not surprising that the province, with the urging of Metis MLA Jean Allard and under New Democratic premier Edward Schreyer, chose to commission a statue of Riel, though the previous Conservative government had not responded to the Metis community's requests for a Riel commemorative. Franco-Manitoban sculptor Marcien Lemay entered a seven-foot plaster statue in the Manitoba Society of Artists show in March 1969,[2] and a modified version of that design was chosen from among eight by a committee headed by former Chief Justice C. Rhodes Smith. The final sculpture shows a nude and tormented "humanoid" figure, hands behind back, standing fifteen feet tall (Figure 1). It is surrounded by "an outer shell, 30 feet in height, in the shape of a hollow cylinder split in two from top to bottom"(Figure 2).[3] The shell, intended partly as a shield to the nudity of the

2 *Winnipeg Free Press*, 26 March 1969; interview, Jean Allard, "As It Happens," CBC Radio, 18 July 1994.

3 Centennial Library, Winnipeg, Riel File, Press Release, Manitoba Government Information Services Branch, 30 December 1971.

Figure 1. Marcien Lemay sculpture, original installation, Winnipeg. Photo by Frances Kaye.

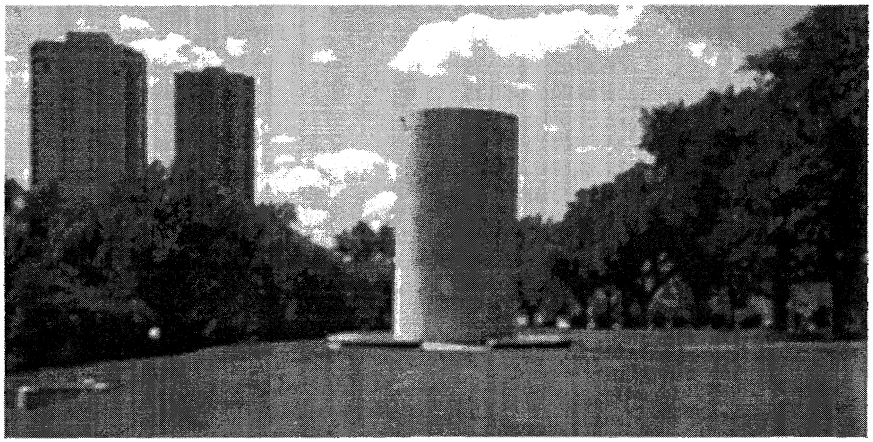

Figure 2. Shield for Lemay sculpture, by Etienne Gaboury, original installation, Winnipeg. Photo by Frances Kaye.

sculpture, bears inscriptions in English and French of some of Riel's words. The finished sculpture, unveiled at the end of December 1971, was considerably changed from the half-sized plaster model. The original figure was nude and "humanoid" but far more dynamic, its hands up in exhortation, its face lifted, carrying through the argument of the right hand. Premier Schreyer, Ida Carriere, secretary of the Union Nationale Métisse St. Joseph du Manitoba, and Tourism, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Minister Laurent L. Desjardins unveiled the piece.[4]

From its very inception, the sculpture was controversial. The abstract nude rendering had called up the shell even before the piece was finished. The final inscription on the shell, "I know that through the grace of God, I am the founder of Manitoba," was focus for more controversy, though Schreyer denied it[5]; and even the setting of the statue *behind* the Legislative Building (a fully clothed and realistic Queen Victoria sits in front) all offended various segments of the statue's audience. Manitoba Metis Federation president Angus Spence, invited to attend but not to speak at the unveiling, called the piece an "incongruous monstrosity." Although Spence thought the representation an insult rather than a compliment to the Metis people, he philosophically concluded that Riel did not "live, fight and die to have a statue erected in his honor." Riel, Spence speculated, would have responded to the unveiling by saying "Big deal! This is not what I fought for. Go and do something for my people."[6]

The idea of making Riel a hero was anathema to the ideological descendants of those who had opposed the Metis leader in Manitoba and Saskatchewan; but as Spence's comments show, the main objection came not from the anti-Riel faction but from among those who regarded Riel as their own cultural hero, including the descendants of mixed-blood peoples who had not necessarily backed Riel in the nineteenth century. The focus of the controversy never became the claim that Riel was not a fitting hero to represent the West. Riel was in many ways an odd choice for a representative of the Metis: even in the successful Red River Rebellion he had never had the support of the entire mixed-race community, which included the descendants of Scots as well as French-Canadian fur trade fathers, while

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4 *Winnipeg Free Press*, 26 March 1969; ibid.

5 *Winnipeg Free Press*, 11 December 1971, 1 January 1972.

6 *Winnipeg Free Press*, 10 January 1972. The term Metis currently includes all Canadians of mixed aboriginal and European descent. The mixed-blood peoples associated with Riel in the nineteenth century included those of French and Native (Ojibway, Cree, and Chipewyan, for the most part) and those of Scots and Native (mostly Cree) descent. Some "Old Settlers" of either French or British (mostly Scots) descent also supported Riel in 1869-70 and rather fewer of these Europeans supported him in 1884-85. More recently arrived Ontario settlers (especially those associated with the militant Protestant Orange Order) were the largest group of those who opposed him in the West. By the 1960s, the class of people claiming Riel as a culture hero had expanded beyond the descendants of his supporters in the nineteenth century.

in 1885 at Batoche only a very small portion of the people openly followed Riel (though many more may have covertly agreed with him); and the little settlement at St. Laurent was only a dot on the whole complex map of the West with its interlocking mixed-race and Native communities.[7] But the trial and hanging of Louis Riel crystallized him as a martyr to the cause, and his voluminous writings, the mysteries of his life, and even the extent to which he was used as a symbol by persons outside any definition of Metis or mixed-blood populations — Quebec Francophones or populist westerners, for instance — had made him the inescapable national image of the Metis. Just as the Canadian abroad always images forth a mounted policeman, the Metis have come to image forth Riel, thereby collapsing, at least as far as the image goes, three populations that had been separate in the nineteenth century — the Metis (mixed blood, mostly Catholic, people of French, French-Canadian, and Scots fur trade ancestry), the "English half breeds" (mixed blood, mostly Protestant, people of Scots or English fur trade ancestry), and other mixed-blood people who were the descendants of European and Native peoples not necessarily connected to the fur trade at all. Controversy that might have raged around choosing Riel as the image not only of the Metis but of Native Canadians never materialized. Rather the controversy was an aesthetic one: what was the legitimate manner to represent Louis Riel, Metis hero?

In its most elementary form, the argument is simply highbrow versus lowbrow. A sculpture competition carried out by a society of artists is by nature fairly highbrow, especially if it is to be judged by an intellectually, if not necessarily culturally, sophisticated panel. Lemay is a trained sculptor, cognizant of both traditional art history and the conventions of modern abstraction. But artists and cognoscenti are not the main audience for public art. Public art is exactly that — public; and while governments and intellectuals may try to use it to "educate" the masses, it is going to be seen by a mass audience. In this case the question of art "class" as it were, is complicated by race and racism. To be Metis, mixed blood, or Indian in the late 1960s and early 1970s in Canada was, by social if not by self definition, to be poor and ill-educated. Social scientists did not consider individuals who had acquired standing in the dominant Canadian culture as Native, and in many cases nor did the individuals themselves. To be successful was to stop being Metis, to stop being Indian. In fact, the Indian Act required, in a complex way, that someone who became successful and enfranchised was to cease, legally, to be an Indian: thus "highbrow" people of Indian descent were not defined as Indian or Metis. Of course, contrary to the government's hopes and expectations, people did succeed in Euro-Canadian culture and did continue to identify themselves as Metis or Indian, but they did so in defiance of social construction. People more readily defined as Metis, both by themselves and by society at large, were not likely to have

7 J.R. Miller, "From Riel to the Metis," *Canadian Historical Review* 69, no. 1 (1988): 1-20.

degrees in art history. Thus only a relatively small group existed who both identified with Riel and with the Metis, and were knowledgeable in "high-brow" art traditions. For most people who identified and were identified as Metis, modern art was a foreign concept.

In his Riel statuary, furthermore, Lemay had conflated four fairly separate artistic traditions: that of the classical nude (Michelangelo's "David"), that of the abstract form intended to represent humanity rather than a specific individual (a Henry Moore figure), that of heroic public art ("The Death of General Wolfe"), and that of the semi-nude and tortured Christ on the cross. Although the conventions of historical art sometimes call for clothing from an anachronistic but conventionally heroic period — Wolfe in a toga — they do not, unlike the classical sculpture or the twentieth-century abstraction, call for a nude. Then there is the question of religious propriety and "community standards": the Vatican for instance holds and displays some of the finest Renaissance statuary, but its figures are nearly all carefully fig-leafed. The Manitoba Metis community of French origin is overwhelmingly Catholic; traditional Cree or Ojibwa society evinces a happy raunchiness, with jokes and stories about the body and bodily functions, but such joking is not traditionally intended for permanent public display and usually includes some function of teaching about proper behaviour.[8] And even in non-Catholic, non-Metis, non-Native communities on the Prairies, nudity is more often tittered at or censored than displayed.

Furthermore, the placing of the Riel statue called forth inevitable comparisons with the Queen Victoria statue. A nude and gaunt Riel in the back yard, and a plump and fully clothed Victoria in the front yard are uncomfortably close to a social reality in which "Metis" was defined as poor and hungry and "Anglo" as rich and successful, however untrue these generalizations might be for individuals. A fat old lady in a dress remains a fat old lady in a dress, even if she was a queen, while a nude humanoid figure represents timeless human striving; however, this argument does not always seem particularly relevant to a public audience not concerned with such ideas.

The tradition of historical art is not to the universal but to the particular. Wolfe is not remembered as a universal hero but as an Englishman who died while his cause — the conquest of New France — succeeded. We memorialize winners, and if they themselves perished in ensuring the success of their cause, we may shed a silent tear and like them all the better because they never got old and fat and vain, but died in the glory of youth and triumph. Public statuary represents a kind of nationalism — that's our guy and he won. It is Queen Victoria in front of the Legislative Buildings, not the Faery Queen, and she represents the triumph of English ways in a new land. It is an American flag that the marines are raising on Iwo Jima.

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8 See, for example, Herbert T. Schwarz, *Tales from the Smoke House*, illustrated by Daphne Odjig (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1974) for examples of stories and an explanation of their uses.

More recent public monuments, like the Vietnam Memorial or the AIDS quilt, are moving in their very specificity: the listing of *each* name, like the cenotaphs to the Great War in so many small Canadian towns or the spires that list each one of the community's fallen children and have often been reengraved to honor those who died in World War II and Korea.

Part of the problem with the Riel monuments is in making the hero of one group serve as the representative of another larger group which he in some measure opposed. A tortured and naked Wolfe representing in his death the rise of Quebec independence might resemble the centennial Riels. As Maria Campbell asks graphically, "Universal, what the fuck do you know about universal when you think that we have a monopoly on oppression?"[9] Why are Metis and Native people portrayed as the universal image of suffering? Were not Euro-Canadians victims, too? Lemay, French-Canadian and Winnipeger though he be, was operating out of a Euro-North American artistic tradition that universalizes the Native figure as noble victim, at the same time as it valorizes the Euro-North American individual as a culture-specific hero. Metis opposition to the figure may in some cases come from cultural philistinism or pietistic prudery, or even from a kind of cultural balkanization — that's *my* hero, not yours — but it also comes from the sense that public statues of historical figures are, traditionally, representations of *our* heroes. Wolfe in toga, perhaps, but still Wolfe the dauntless hero, representing the maple leaf forever. And Wolfe is usually portrayed in authentic eighteenth-century garb, in the same way that the bronzes in the style of Russell and Remington that have always been so popular on the Prairies portray the universal cowboy, all right, but authentic down to the last hole in the cinch. The nude Riel also conjures up the iconographic tradition of the naked "savage" opposing the fully clad and "civilized" European carving an empire out of a so-called New World.

The continuing conflict over the Lemay statue, then, is an aesthetic one, having to do in some sense with what we have come to call cultural appropriation, but more fundamentally with the expectations of a primary audience that are out of sync with those of the artist and commissioning body. Politically and ideologically the project made sense from the point of view of the government and those involved, including people associated with the Metis community like Lemay and MLA Jean Allard, who had fought for a Riel statue. Riel had been born in what became Manitoba, and he had scored his greatest successes there, forming a provisional government and leading Manitoba into the new Dominion of Canada. Lemay was commissioned by an NDP government, and Riel had always been to some extent a hero of the left, the little guy who had stood up to the big guys and — to some extent — won. And, as Douglas Owram has pointed out, by the time of the centennial Riel's public image had changed from the predominant version

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9 Maria Campbell and Linda Griffiths, *The Book of Jessica* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1989), 35.

of the outlaw to that of the first spokesman for the West against Ottawa and central Canada as a whole — the first regional leader.[10]

Regina was a far less likely location for a Riel statue than was Winnipeg. Regina was the site of Riel's imprisonment, trial, and eventual hanging — not his success. Riel's intervention in the cause of the Metis settlers at Batoche had ended in defeat and failure. He had played little part, except for a colourful and dramatic side plot, in the development of Saskatchewan, and his name for some Euro-Saskatchewanians still conjured up lurid, if untrue, images of Indian uprisings, of murder and rapine. The Saskatchewan government was a Liberal one, led by Ross Thatcher, a former CCF MP who had crossed the aisle and who hated everything smacking of socialism or communism; sculptor John Nugent believes Thatcher would have hanged Riel again had he had the chance. His government certainly sacked Malcolm Norris, the Prince Albert Metis leader, originally from Alberta, who, in 1967, arguably came as close to Riel as anyone in the province. Why, then, did Ross Thatcher, the hardware magnate from Moose Jaw, make a personal commitment to the erection of a bronze statue of Louis Riel?

In order to come to any satisfactory answer to this question, one must look at the relationship between the Canadian government and Native peoples, and especially at the policies and ideologies of both the federal and provincial Liberals in the 1960s. In 1920 Duncan Campbell Scott, deputy superintendent general for Indian Affairs, told a parliamentary committee: "Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department."[11] This policy was followed strictly until the early 1960s. One could be either a Canadian (a citizen) or a legal Indian (a ward of the Crown under the Indian Act), not both. If one were enfranchised — received citizenship and the right to vote — one lost one's rights as an Indian. Indians only gained the right to be Canadian citizens and still be Indians in 1960, enfranchised federally by the Diefenbaker Conservatives and provincially in Saskatchewan by Tommy Douglas's CCF-NDP. As late as 1969 the federal Liberals, led by Pierre Trudeau and his then Indian Affairs minister, Jean Chrétien, tabled a White Paper that proposed the abolition of all special status for Indians, the abrogation of all treaty rights. Status Indian communities with rights guaranteed by treaties responded with outrage.[12]

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10 Douglas Owram, "The Myth of Louis Riel," *Canadian Historical Review* 63 (September 1982): 315-36; reprinted in Hartwell Bowsfield, ed., *Louis Riel: Selected Readings* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1988), 11-29.

11 Duncan Campbell Scott, quoted in Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992), 211.

12 Ibid., 201, 204-05, 213-18, Murray Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men: The Story of Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris, Metis Patriots of the 20th Century* (Vancouver: North Star Books, 1981), 202; James M. Pitsula, "The Saskatchewan CCF Government and Treaty Indians, 1944-64," *Canadian Historical Review* 75 (March 1994): 22-52.

Canada's complex and contradictory classification system of Native peoples also added to the intricacy of the relationships between Native peoples and the government of Saskatchewan. Treaty, or status, Indians lived on reserves and had certain rights, enumerated in their treaties. They did not vote or pay taxes, and they were not subject in wartime to conscription. They also had some particular hunting and fishing rights. They could not homestead or buy alcohol, and their ability to borrow money was curtailed by the fact that reserve lands, even those owned by individuals, could not be used as collateral for loans. Mixed-blood people were not treaty Indians: they could vote, buy liquor, and so forth; the economic constraints upon them were informal, not formal. In addition there were non-status Indians, people of either Indian or mixed blood who for some reason had lost their Indian status, voluntarily or involuntarily: for example an Indian woman who married a man who was not a status Indian lost her treaty rights, and so did her children. Metis and non-status people had no access to reserves or to treaty rights, and they suffered discrimination unless they assimilated so completely that they were not recognized as "Indian" or "Metis." As Antoine Lussier has written, part of the definition of Metis became the condition of being poor and seeming low caste.[13] This dual status system worked in effect as a divide and conquer mechanism for both federal and provincial governments, especially as welfare benefits were generally distributed to treaty Indians by the federal government and to Metis and non-status Indians by the provinces. This division had existed as long as the treaties, and part of the reason Riel had failed in rallying the majority of the Indians to his side in 1885 was the fidelity of the various bands' to their treaty obligations. Although leaders like Norris tried to persuade all aboriginal peoples to present a united front to the Thatcher government at a conference in Saskatoon in 1964, it was clear that the status and non-status peoples had too many differences at stake to speak to Thatcher with one voice.

According to many people in Regina who are interested in the arts or in politics, Thatcher commissioned the Riel statue as a purely political measure. Its formal commissioning allowed him to present himself as a friend of Native people three weeks before an election in which he hoped to attract still newly enfranchised voters in northern ridings and to draw Metis and non-status support away from the NDP. The latter was commonly supposed to have the majority of the Native vote, although since the federal government was Liberal, federal Indian officials were also supposed to have some influence among Native and Metis voters. Thatcher had done something of the sort to attract Conservatives to support him against the

13 Raymond Breton, Jeffrey G. Reitz, and Victor Valentine, *Cultural Boundaries and the Cohesion of Canada* (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1980), Part 2; Antoine S. Lussier, "The Metis: Contemporary Problems of Identity," in Antoine S. Lussier and D. Bruce Sealey, ed., *The Other Natives: The-Les Métis*, vol. 2, 1885-1978 (Winnipeg: Manitoba Metis Federation Press/Editions Bois-Brules, 1978), 187-92.

NDP, restoring the Diefenbaker family homestead and moving the former Conservative prime minister's cabin to the grounds of the legislative building in Regina. The Riel statue would eventually be placed between the Diefenbaker Homestead and the legislative building.[14] Certainly the timing had the air of electioneering about it: Nugent had originally met with Thatcher in May 1967 and Thatcher had written him in July, saying he was interested in a representational statue. Nugent was not presented with a contract for the work until 22 September 1967, three weeks before the election.

Yet, this argument continues, Thatcher did not really understand the meaning of his pet symbol. Thatcher commissioned a likeness of a man he despised, in order to gain the votes of a group of newly enfranchised Indians who did not like Riel either. Thatcher did not even know that it was not Riel but his lieutenant, Gabriel Dumont, who was the hero of the new generation of Metis leaders, such as University of Saskatchewan professor Howard Adams, whom he hoped to woo. Not only did Thatcher not know Indians, he did not know art. He had wanted a straightforward statue of Riel, dressed in a mackinaw; eventually he compromised with Nugent and accepted a statue that portrayed Riel dressed only in a cloak, under which the viewer may catch a glimpse of the figure's genitals (Figure 3). Like the nudity of the Lemay statue, the partial nudity of the Riel statue was offensive to many aboriginal people, including some devoutly Catholic Metis and perhaps traditionalists from those Plains cultures who held a display of genitalia the rankest possible insult a man could offer anyone. Even the placement of the statue, like the Lemay one, became an issue. Nugent wanted the piece across the lake from the legislative building, defiantly facing the government. The promoters of the "Trial of Louis Riel" play wanted the piece on the grounds of Saskatchewan House, where the play was held.[15] But the piece was placed, instead, to the east of the legislative building, between it and the Diefenbaker Homestead — lost, some viewers felt, in the shrubbery.

A mismatch between art and audience if there ever was one! Thatcher did win the election, though it is doubtful his commissioning of the Riel statue had anything to do with it. The unveiling of the statue the following year did give Thatcher the opportunity to invite Prime Minister Trudeau to Regina and to appear with him and with various Native and Metis leaders. It is very difficult to imagine what Riel may have meant to Ross Thatcher in 1967: his papers have not been archived and they are not available to scholars. Furthermore, public perceptions of Riel have changed enormously

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14 Dale Eisler, *Rumours of Glory: Saskatchewan and the Thatcher Years* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1987), 197-98.

15 Author's conversation with John Nugent, Lumsden, Saskatchewan, 23 June, 1994; SAB, memo, Tourist and Convention Committee, 2 May 1967, folder 1967, Administration, Saskatchewan House, #3.2-1224.

Figure 3. John Nugent sculpture, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina. Photo by Don Hall, courtesy of John Nugent and the MacKenzie Art Gallery.

over the last thirty years. He has acquired meanings that block the possibility of meanings he might have had in 1967. A figure as complex and ambiguous as Riel is never likely to be pinned down, and his meaning changes as the needs of his various potential audiences change. But none of that is to say that Thatcher was simply a bungler, creating a colossal joke in his commissioning of the Riel statue. Thatcher was a consummate creator of images: in 1964 he had staged a phoney confrontation over the Medicare crisis that resulted in a famous wireservice photo of him kicking the locked legislative chamber door. He did not win the battle, but he certainly got the image across.[16]

Thatcher needed something like the Riel he tried to create, not so much for the election, though he would not have been averse to milking it for all the political juice it could deliver, but to symbolize what he wanted to do for — or to — Native peoples in the province. Thatcher appears to have been genuinely committed to bettering the squalid living conditions on Saskatchewan reserves and in other status and non-status communities. Although he was generally an irascible man who showed little compassion for anyone, his desire to construct better lives for Native peoples seems to have been sincere and something that he worked at determinedly throughout his terms as premier. Of course, the salvation he offered was on his own terms and had little to do with what Native peoples might want for themselves. Although Thatcher was not a "self-made man" — his father had been moderately successful — he had certainly expanded his father's assets far beyond their original state, and he believed passionately in capitalism and entrepreneurialism. Socialism, he believed, was a cruel failure, and he thought the "poor Indian" deserved better. Thatcher may not have known anything about art, but he respected a man like Nugent who would stand up to him, and he understood the power of symbols. Whether or not Thatcher ever articulated the goal to himself, he seems to have understood that in his Riel statue — for he had made it *his* Riel statue — he was reinventing the Indian, taking him away from the likes of Malcolm Norris and the NDP and setting him up as the bourgeois, Europeanized, assimilated man.

Given the information available to Ross Thatcher in 1967, especially George Stanley's 1963 biography (still the standard historical work), he could have interpreted Riel as a symbol of exactly the kind of assimilated person he wanted Native people to become. That is how the NDP had been interpreting all Native and mixed-blood people in the province for decades. True, Riel was French, not English, but his family was bourgeois, he had been educated in eastern Canada, and his early biographers did not tie him either to the fur trade or to the buffalo hunt. Thatcher's public speeches about Indian people, though often condescending, were consistent in their

16 Eisler, *Rumours of Glory*, 103-4, photo facing page 142.

horror at conditions on reserves and in other Native and mixed-blood communities in Saskatchewan. There is no reason to doubt Dale Eisler's interpretation of Thatcher as a hard-headed man with a genuinely compassionate streak, though his compassion never extended to empathy. Certainly there was much to elicit compassion for peoples of aboriginal descent. As Murray Dobbin points out, the NDP government in Saskatchewan had set out to regularize both Metis and Indian relationships with the dominant society and provide education for their children, but it had inadvertently moved the peoples of northern Saskatchewan from a credit and subsistence economy of hunting, trapping, and gathering into a cash economy — minus the cash — thus compelling recently self-sufficient but poor people into welfare dependency.[17] And no matter what government policies would have been, increasing Native populations after the 1930s, coupled with a small land base and little market for furs, meant that the northern populations of Saskatchewan would have faced economic and social crisis. Fur trade regulations aimed at securing a decent price for trappers had instead destroyed the credit economy, while school regulations forbade the movement essential to northern subsistence life. Welfare plugged cash into the system but did not replace earlier livelihoods; idleness and the allowing of liquor sales led to increasing problems with alcoholism. For the last thirty years the problems that Ross Thatcher saw when he became premier — and that Native leaders had already been campaigning for decades to change — have changed very little. And Saskatchewan, with the highest proportion of Native population of any province,[18] has done little better than any other province in helping Native peoples reconstitute a viable way of life.

Thatcher was sure that the only possible answer to the woes of Native peoples was assimilation, which was essentially what the CCF-NDP government had been pursuing. At the same time, he knew that complete assimilation, with jobs for everyone, would not be easy to achieve. He had originally campaigned on a promise to help Indians,[19] but his plan was to develop a new provincial department of Native affairs. He started with a special branch on an existing ministry, and then in 1969 brought forth a bill to establish the "Saskatchewan Indian and Metis Department." Speaking for the bill, he said:

> The difficulties which we have encountered, to say the least, often have been discouraging and dismaying. Most government problems around here you find can be solved if you want to spend money to do it, but this

17 Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men*, 183-86; Pitsula, "The Saskatchewan CCF Government and Treaty Indians, 1944-64."

18 Breton, Reitz, and Valentine, *Cultural Boundaries*, 81.

19 Dobbin, *One-and-a-Half Men*, 216.

> is not the case with our native problem. Money, of course, can help, but it is by no means the chief difficulty.[20]

Thatcher was convinced that the solution was not just a new bureaucracy, but jobs, jobs, and more jobs. Characteristically, although he talked proudly about the consultation his committee had done, he called for the kind of top-down solution implied by phrases like "our native people" and "our native problem." The new department would place Native people in more civil service jobs and more jobs in the private sector. It would round up more Indian and Metis job candidates, and provide "educational upgrading and job-training programs"[21] and improved housing. Much like Scott, who wanted "not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic," or like the nineteenth-century reformers in the United States who sought to "kill the Indian to save the man," Thatcher consistently sought to integrate Native peoples into the dominant capitalistic society of Saskatchewan. Although the province assured treaty Indians that provincial initiatives would supplement, not supplant, their treaty rights,[22] the clear implication of Thatcher's policies and words, like those of the federal Liberals, was that Indians would have to move from the reserves into the cities and learn to work 8-to-5 jobs like anyone else. Liberal views on Indian affairs were very similar to NDP views, which had stressed the importance of treating all Canadians alike, regardless of the race of an individual: individual rights superseded group rights in the thinking of both parties. Thatcher's candidate for the head of his new "Indian and Metis Department" was Dr. Howard Adams, a Metis professor who had recently returned to the University of Saskatchewan with a Ph.D. Adams, whom the newspapers sometimes dubbed a "second Riel" (though Adams himself believed that Gabriel Dumont had been the real leader of the Metis in 1885) was a radical who, as leader of the Association of Metis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan, criticized the provincial government, but like Riel, he was also highly educated within the Euro-North American system.[23] When Adams turned down the post to stay at the university, Thatcher chose a non-Native for deputy minister — characteristically without consulting anyone in the Native community.

Malcolm Norris or Jim Brady, long-time Metis leaders, could never have had a role in Thatcher's government; in fact, the Liberals fired Norris from the position he held in Prince Albert. Norris and Brady were both ardent socialists, self-educated Marxists who had been teaching cooperation and class struggle in the north and who were the most successful Metis leaders

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20 Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, *Debates and Proceedings, Official Report*, session 1969, 5 March 1969, p. 959.

21 Ibid, p. 960.

22 Cf. Dobbin, *One-and-a-Half Men*, 216-17.

23 George Smellie, "Second Riel — or noisy illusion?" *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, 4 May 1968; "Dumont said main leader," *Regina Leader-Post*, 21 November 1967.

in the province. When W.J. Berezowsky, the NDP MLA from Prince Albert, and a longtime champion of Indian rights, complained that the Liberals had been "persecuting" Norris, David Steuart, Thatcher's most trusted caucus colleague, explained that he was "a Communist, Bill, and we had no use for him."[24] Norris had made history part of his activism. He was an admirer of both Riel and Dumont, speaking of their patriotism and attempting to clear their actions of the taint of treason at a 1962 commemorative service at Batoche. Instead of trying to learn from Norris or even to hear Norris's criticisms of the NDP-CCF policies among Native people, Thatcher rejected him — like abstract sculpture — as something self-evidently beyond the pale.

Thatcher was similarly dismissive of all other arguments against his proposed Indian and Metis Department, and in fact even those MLAs who objected voted for it. Nevertheless, their objections do point out some of what Thatcher deliberately chose to ignore in erecting his Department — and, I would argue, in erecting his statue to Riel. M. Kwasnica, NDP member for Cutknife, mentioned that the people on the reserves in his district favoured putting money directly into a development fund that would finance Indian-run projects on reserves, rather than into a department. Other NDP members suggested that the department should employ at least one-third Native staff, unlike the federal Indian Affairs ministry, which employed white workers almost exclusively. Kwasnica also mentioned that Native culture did not traditionally value personal gain and amassing capital, but rather providing for and protecting others. NDP members made further mention of the need for a type of schooling that encompassed Native values and skills. All emphasized the importance of consulting Native peoples, yet they could hardly stand on the strength of their own record in the north.[25] And so the bill was passed, with the rationale that it was better to do something, even if flawed, for Native peoples in the province than to allow real problems to continue to fester.

If Malcolm Norris and abstract sculpture were clearly anathema to Thatcher and his government, Louis Riel and Howard Adams were, at least to Thatcher's indomitably ethnocentric way of thinking, forces he might be able to utilize. Adams, like every contemporary Native leader, was controversial, and he soon made it clear that he shared none of Thatcher's particular views. An articulate leader, writer, teacher, and editor, he still continues to define and establish his own position within and among Native and Euro-Canadian communities nationwide and internationally, because issues of sovereignty, language, education, cultural autonomy, and so on are global issues for Native peoples and the various European and postcolonial societies in their countries. Thatcher may have assumed, in

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24 Legislative Assembly, *Debates*, 12 March 1969, p. 1215.

25 Ibid., pp. 1190-1218.

naive ethnocentrism, that anyone with a Ph.D. would "naturally" favour entrepreneurial capitalism and assimilation into the dominant culture. Certainly the underlying assumption of his Indian policy was that integration and assimilation were undeniably beneficial, and that resistance to them denoted a flaw on the part of those who refused:

> Far too often we have found that some Indians and Metis are not particularly anxious to take permanent employment. Far too often some have shown little initiative and have assumed little responsibility for their future. If any real solution is to be found, improvement must rest on a strong desire among all Indians and Metis to change their present condition. I am convinced that the great majority, however, want the opportunity to earn a decent living. They want the opportunity to see their children receive a decent education and they want an opportunity to leave welfare behind.[26]

Almost every recent study of Native peoples, from within or without the Native community, by novelists, autobiographers, government scholars, or academics, has confirmed that Native peoples want a "decent living" and opportunities for their children, and that many have worked hard and ingeniously to secure them, sometimes successfully, often not. They have made it clear how failure and poverty can lead to despair and its attendants: alcoholism, drug abuse, incarceration, prostitution, illness, and suicide. And they have also shown us that complete assimilation and integration are not possible in a society that, in many respects, is still racist. Many have shown that, in any case, detribalization is not desirable for many Indian, Metis, and other mixed-blood peoples: group rights or community rights, not just individual civil rights, are part of what Native communities want. Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*, Beatrice Culleton's *In Search of April Raintree*, Jeanette Armstrong's *Slash*, and many more recent books by Native writers testify eloquently to the value and necessity of the old ways; but these books come from the decades after Ross Thatcher commissioned a statue of Louis Riel for Regina.

The mid-1960s was a time of vast change in the meaning of symbols throughout North America. The civil rights and black nationalism struggles in the United States, with slogans like "black is beautiful," were certainly a catalyst for change; but so was Canada's centennial with its quest to define national and regional heroes, its emphasis on the mosaic rather than the melting pot, and the federal government's crusade to define the nation as originally *bi*lingual and *bi*cultural. Native peoples across North America were bringing about their own cultural and political renaissance. Complex and enigmatic, one of the most problematic figures in Canadian history, it is not surprising that Riel should have become a major focus for the redefinition of "Canadian," "Metis," and "Native."

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26 Legislative Assembly, *Debates*, 5 March 1969, pp. 960-61.

Ross Thatcher was not the only one interested in the idea of Louis Riel as part of Saskatchewan's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 1965; in fact the focus seems originally to have come from, of all places, the Chamber of Commerce. The Jubilee and Centennial committee came up with the idea of presenting a play based on the trial of Louis Riel. According to the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, "several committee members recalled a unique play they had seen in Deadwood, N.D. [*sic*], which portrayed the trial of a local outlaw." Looking for something that would draw tourists and promote local history, the committee members thought first of Louis Riel, whose name conjured up a Wild West flavour. "We didn't think we could stage a rebellion in downtown Regina, but we thought perhaps we could do the trial instead," recalled Les Donnelly, one of the original organizers, in 1982.[27] Lacking Wild Bill Hickock, Calamity Jane, or Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, Saskatchewan turned to Louis Riel for an outlaw.

John Nugent, the sculptor, knew little about Riel before receiving the commission, but he discovered in the book *Strange Empire*, by American author Joseph Kinsey Howard, a character whom he found intensely appealing. Like Riel, Nugent had had a Catholic education, but while Riel's was classical and ultramontane, Nugent's was in the Catholic worker tradition, with its powerful concern for social justice and its responsibility to the underdog. Riel, leader of his people against overwhelming odds, preferring hanging to a verdict of insanity that would have diminished the significance of his cause, was a figure Nugent could embrace. Riel the man caught Nugent's imagination, despite the fact that he had almost no interest in producing a realistic bronze sculpture of anyone. But with a family to support and a mortgage to pay, Nugent needed the commission: he thus prepared two submissions. One was the representational bronze; the other, which he himself preferred, was a soaring steel abstract inspired by a sculpture commemorating the late Dag Hammerskjold. Nugent thought Thatcher might accept the abstract because it would use the product of IPSCO, the fledgling Saskatchewan steel plant Thatcher was promoting. Thatcher greeted the abstract characteristically: "What the hell is that?" Nugent argued for the abstract, brought in local art experts to argue for it, and even began to convince Thatcher's cabinet. But the premier would have none of it. He wanted a representation, not a memorial. He wrote Nugent on 13 July 1967 that the government was still interested in a Riel statue: "Perhaps if you could put his true likeness into the face, we might be interested in the proposal in bronze. ... Under no circumstances would I personally be interested in the modernistic proposal." Nugent accepted the commission, but insisted on a classical figure wearing a robe, rather than the purely representational figure Thatcher wanted. For Nugent, this was a figure of "ultimate humiliation," naked and clothed in sackcloth, but still

27 "Centennial play on Riel becomes theatrical mainstay," *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, 3 June 1982.

defiant, still standing in opposition to government policy, his right hand toward the sky, his head tilted back as if he were seeking divine guidance — or, ominously, as if his neck had been snapped by the hangman's noose. At Thatcher's insistence, the statue was sited "in the shadow of the dome," as Nugent said; but the sculptor's contract gave him the last word on the base for the sculpture. Thatcher had opted for a massive base; Nugent insisted that his humbled Riel be at ground level. Thatcher was furious, but Nugent refused to hand over the statue; and, with Trudeau coming to unveil the piece, the premier had to give in to the sculptor.[28]

At the unveiling of the sculpture, Riel and the statue itself were almost upstaged by university students who used the prime minister's visit to the province as an opportunity to protest government cutbacks in funding for education. The student leaders, cognizant of issues of race and protest, were careful to be polite and to make sure that their protest was aimed at the government and not at the old-time rebel.[29] Nugent was not invited to the unveiling — though Thatcher later claimed that he was — and the Native and Metis leaders who were invited to come were not invited to speak. Instead, Steve Arsenych, the Ukrainian lawyer who had portrayed Riel in the Chamber of Commerce play, recited part of Riel's speech to the jury at his trial.[30] At the request of the Association Culturelle Franco Canadienne in Regina, the inscription on the base of the statue was in French and English.[31] No one thought to include a Cree inscription as well (and one would certainly have been anathema to Thatcher's goal of assimilation).

Except for Nugent, who believed it was not his job, no one seems to have thought to consult Indians or Metis people on anything to do with the statue, although the rather newly enfranchised Indians were the implied audience for the monument — as well as any Metis who could be wooed away from their traditional support of the NDP. Ironically, non-consultation of Native peoples seems to have been a hallmark of both federal and provincial Liberal policy. The same newspaper that carried the photo and story of the unveiling of the statue also carried, in the very next column, a story headlined "Discussion Said Not Necessary," which begins "Indian

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28 John Nugent to author, telephone, 22 June 1994, conversation, 23 June 1994; Thatcher to Nugent, 13 July 1967, original in Nugent's possession. The commission for the statue really did pay Nugent's mortgage in ways he did not anticipate. When it came time to pay the sculptor, the province discovered that, through a small business incentive program, it held the mortgage on the Lumsden studio and, apparently at Thatcher's urging, the commission was applied to the mortgage balance before the sculptor, who had had to purchase all the material himself, received a cash payment. (Documents in Nugent's possession.)

29 Bruce Shepard to author, 12 June 1994, Calgary, Alberta.

30 Nugent to author, 23 June 1994; Ross Thatcher to Jacob Kutarna, 8 October 1968, in Nugent's possession; "Riel statue in Place," *Regina Leader-Post*, 1 October 1968.

31 J.J. Moore, Economic Development Board, to John Nugent, 24 January 1968, in Nugent's possession; SAB, text of inscription in folder 1968, Projects, Nugent's "Riel" statue, #7.6.

Affairs Minister Chrétien said Wednesday he sees no reason to consult Indians on purely administrative changes within his department." Similarly, the story confirming Trudeau's visit to Regina shares the page with a story headlined "Indian Act Like Apartheid."[32] Nugent says sardonically that Thatcher did not consult his own cabinet on the statue, let alone the Indians or Metis.

While Nugent thought of Riel as representing contemporary Metis and Indian issues such as language rights, culturally appropriate schooling, and land rights, the side of Riel that seems to have appealed to Thatcher was the conservative one. Riel was, after all, on one level a successful and thoroughly assimilated man, far more European than Indian; his family was relatively prosperous, his father a miller and a political leader in his own right. Riel was not literally a "half breed," but was genetically 7/8 European; French was his first language, though he also knew English, some Cree, and perhaps some Lakota. Like Thatcher, he had had an eastern education. Louis Riel left the Red River as a boy of fourteen, and came home from Montreal a man with a good classical education. His dress was European, except for mocassins; and he was, like most Metis, profoundly Roman Catholic — if at times, after 1870, unorthodox. He was a politician, a writer, and a school master; if he was not an entrepreneur, and certainly not wealthy, he enjoyed the respect of learned men and had "proven himself able to hold down a job." Unlike Gabriel Dumont, he had little direct connection with the buffalo hunt or the "Indian" side of Metis life, except for two or three years in Montana in the early 1880s. He envisaged the North-West as settled by European Catholics, living in harmony with presumably Europeanized and Christianized Indians, and with the Metis as the keystone of society.[33] Although his plans were by many standards bizarre, they unequivocally supported a European social order that nonetheless respected Native rights and traditions.

Three decades after Canada's centennial the definitions of Riel have settled out, at least temporarily. After becoming a western French-Canadian and then a regional hero, he is now primarily a Metis hero and even a Native hero: his enshrinement as a "Father of Confederation" establishes (although arguably in a backhanded way) the third, Native, strand among the founding nationalities of Canada. Scholars and Metis and other mixed-blood communities are now looking at many issues that concern the community but have nothing to do with Louis Riel; yet the icon of Riel seems rather firmly fixed. In 1967, however, Riel's meaning in Canada was fluid and

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32 *Regina Leader-Post*, 3 October 1968, 18 September 1968.

33 Most of these details are consistent in all of Riel's biographies. See Joseph Kinsey Howard, *Strange Empire: The Story of Louis Riel* (New York: William Morrow, 1952); George Stanley, *Louis Riel* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1963); Thomas Flanagan, *Louis 'David' Riel: Prophet of the New World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979); and the most recent biography, Maggie Siggins, *Louis Riel: A Life of Revolution* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1994).

open for grabs. As we have seen in the case of the Winnipeg statue, he could be considered a regional hero, the founder of Manitoba and a symbol of collective western resistance to central Canada. For the Regina Chamber of Commerce he was a lively outlaw on whom to base a play that still appeals to tourists interested in the Wild West.

But for Thatcher there was no reason not to reinterpret him — reinvent him — as the new Native, bourgeois and Europeanized, that he was so eager to create then in his own Saskatchewan. Defeated, although both Thatcher and Trudeau acknowledged that he was correct in many of the issues he raised, in his attempt to rise against the government of Canada and the Queen, he was, unlike Gabriel Dumont or Big Bear or Poundmaker, a European man, European dressed, European educated, and European in his antecedents and in his hopes for his family, hopes that were certainly part of his reason for rebelling. Like Xavier Letendre dit Batoche, whose nickname as a place name marches along with the name of Riel, he was a bourgeois who could have expected to prosper in business had he, like Ross Thatcher, not turned away to work for the betterment of his people. In many ways, as Maggie Siggins' new biography of Riel shows, Thatcher's bourgeois Riel is not an improbable reconstruction of the man, who did work consistently for an integration of Euro-Christian and aboriginal societies. His strong Catholic beliefs would have separated him to some extent from a committed socialist such as Malcom Norris, or the Communist party of Saskatchewan, which, like Thatcher, attempted to reconstruct Riel in its own image. Thomas Flanagan's attempts to demonize Riel as an arrogant and scheming fanatic are probably convincing only to readers who share Flanagan's far-right agenda.[34]

The fate of Nugent's Riel has not been quite as lurid as that of Lemay's Riel in Winnipeg, which was seriously vandalized and was only removed after a protest of several days. The Nugent piece has, however, been removed from the legislative grounds: on 31 May 1991, the executive director of the Saskatchewan Family Foundation wrote to John Nugent to inform him "that the Provincial Cabinet has approved a proposal that the statue be removed from its present site, and that it be presented to the MacKenzie Art Gallery to be included in the permanent collection." The Metis community had complained about "the semi-nudity of the statue. ... [T]hey do not regard this image as an acceptable commemoration to Louis Riel." Accordingly, that August, the statue was carted away. There is a certain fitness to its being housed in the MacKenzie Gallery, as the original idea for the aborted sculpture contest had come from the then director of the gallery; but the piece is now merely a work of art, in the vaults of a gallery, to be displayed (maybe) in rotation with other pieces in the permanent collection, not a work of public sculpture for the edification of the entire

34 See entries under Communist Party in index to SAB; Thomas Flanagan, *Riel and the Rebellion: 1885 Reconsidered* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1983).

citizenry. As a tourist attraction, said Ron Coulson, executive director of Tourism Regina, the value of the statue is "zilch."[35] While it is tempting to see the removal of the statue, like its erection, as a joke, this time engineered by prairie prudery and philistinism, the issue is rather more complex than that.

The controversy over the statue concerned the history of European-style art in the province as well as the history of Native and Metis rights. Sculpture in Saskatchewan now blossoms in many important forms; but, from the point of view of art history, the anniversary of Confederation and the commissioning of the Riel statue came just a few years too early in that province. Both Clement Greenberg, the New York expert whom the original panel had asked to select a sculpture, and John Nugent, the actual sculptor, were associated with Emma Lake, the site of a very successful summer school of art in northern Saskatchewan. Under Greenberg's leadership, it had espoused the cause of high Modernism, formal and abstract, its values embodied in the steel memorial that Nugent wished to erect to Riel. The Emma Lake school's dominance in sculpture was challenged in the late 1960s and early 1970s when David Gilhooly, Joe Fafard, David Thauberger, and Victor Cicansky arrived in Regina and joined the faculty of the university art department. Fafard, himself a Francophone from Saskatchewan, rejected modernist formalism for a playful and highly polished yet self-consciously "primitive" style shared and influenced by the other three and by a growing group of Regina artists. Fafard would become one of the detractors of Nugent's sculpture, telling the newspaper when the piece was removed that "It's an awkward piece that is completely melodramatic and it seems to me it does not speak the language of sculpture. I agree with its removal. I think it should have never been accepted." Fafard himself produced a Riel and a Dumont, part of a series in ceramic he made from 1975 to 1979 that honoured men like his own father as well as the people of his small town — Pense, Saskatchewan — and the people involved in the area's history. Perhaps his Riel would have been more to the taste of Thatcher, the Metis community, and even the general public than Nugent's sculpture. But it was too late for the occasion and the monumental kind of thing that Thatcher had in mind could not have been produced by Fafard until he opened his own foundry.[36] The rivalry between the formal Emma Lake school and the representational postmodernism of Fafard, Cicansky, and their associates, plus the fact that Nugent's Riel was a departure from his own definitive style, something he himself regarded as a pot boiler,

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35 Keith Rogers, executive director Saskatchewan Family Foundation, to Nugent, 31 May 1991, original in Nugent's possession; Kevin O'Connor, "Riel statue to be moved," *Regina Leader-Post*, 2 August 1991.

36 Fafard quoted in *Regina Leader-Post*, 8 August 1991; John O'Brian, ed., *The Flat Side of the Landscape: The Emma Lake Artists' Workshops* (Saskatoon: Mendel Art Gallery, 1989), esp. 55-58; Matthew Teitelbaum and Peter White, *Joe Fafard: Cows and Other Luminaries 1977-1987* (Saskatoon and Regina: Mendel Art Gallery and Dunlop Art Gallery, 1987).

undermined support for Nugent's Riel within the Saskatchewan arts community. Given the wealth of present sculptural tradition in Saskatchewan and the enormous popularity of Joe Fafard's cows or Bill Epp's figures, it is hard to remember how rare sculpture was in the province in 1967.

Disputes in the arts establishment, however, were never the main issue concerning Nugent's Riel. As we have seen in discussing the Lemay statue, the depiction of a hero in utter humiliation is not a luxury that people who are themselves oppressed can easily afford. And the issue of Riel and nudity is a particularly delicate subject because it is linked to the question of Riel and insanity. Riel was confined to two insane asylums in Quebec from 6 March 1876 to 23 January 1878.[37] Upon this confinement, Riel's non-Metis, French-Canadian lawyers built his defence at the trial. He was, they maintained, insane on the subjects of politics and religion; if he was insane, he was not responsible for his actions at Batoche and could not be hanged. One of the greatest concerns of Riel's friends at the time he was admitted to the asylum was his tendency to rend his garments and cast them from him[38]: thus a naked Riel can be seen as a mad Riel. And as Riel insisted with great dignity, when he was finally, and too late, permitted to speak at his own trial, he was not insane at Batoche but was a patriot, making a legitimate case for the rights of his people. Riel's followers have, like the Metis chief himself, steadfastly maintained that he was a diplomat, a patriot, and even a prophet, not a poor crazy martyr doing he knew not what. The naked, tormented Riel of both statues is uncomfortably close to the naked and insane Riel evoked by his own defence lawyers who, not westerners or of mixed blood themselves, seemed not to have understood Riel's need to vindicate his actions and his thinking.

Although there is not room here to argue Riel's sanity, the question is clearly relevant to understanding portrayals of the man. Historians have only glancingly linked Riel to the Messianic traditions of various Native peoples of North America in the early 1880s, although he has been linked to millenarian leaders elsewhere in the world and among Euro-North Americans; but his mental state may be best understood in comparison to other Messianic Native leaders in North America in the late nineteenth century.[39] Although the Ghost Dance did not come to Riel's contacts among the Sioux until after his death, other millennial movements were in full swing during Riel's years in Montana; and his close relations with a number of different peoples in an area that was something of a cultural crossroads could surely have introduced him to the ideas of Wovoka or Smohalla. Certainly James

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37 Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 224-26.

38 Flanagan, *Louis 'David' Riel*, 57, 64.

39 Manfred Mossmann, "The Charismatic Pattern: Canada's Riel Rebellion of 1885 as a Millenarian Protest Movement," *Prairie Forum* 10 (Fall 1985): 307-25; reprinted in Bowsfield, ed., *Louis Riel*, 227-45. See also Gilles Martel, *Le messianisme de Louis Riel* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984).

Mooney's explanation of the rise of the Ghost Dance and similar revivals among other Indian groups rings true for the Metis. Explains Raymond DeMaillie, quoting Mooney:

> when a tribe found its very existence threatened, a prophet would arise "who strives to avert the disaster by molding his people to a common purpose through insistence upon the sacred character of his message." This, he concluded, led to rebellion: "Thus it is found that almost every great Indian warlike combination has had its prophet messenger in the outset, and if all the facts could be known we should probably find the rule universal."[40]

In the 1870s and 1880s religious revivals arose among the Paiutes in Utah and Nevada, and among the Cayuse and other peoples of the Columbia basin. Both were Messianic religions with marked Christian elements, and Riel could have been aware of both of them.

Riel's own travails and concerns for the Metis could have led him to develop the same kinds of doctrines evoked by other Native leaders, not only in North America but worldwide: from the Highlanders supporting Bonnie Prince Charlie with their claymores against the eighteenth-century English muskets at Culloden, to the "Mad Mullah" of Somalia fighting airplanes with spears and camels in the beginning of this century, to contemporary fighters against colonial rule in Angola.[41] Like Riel, the Native prophets of North America in the 1870s and 1880s were given to behaviour that struck ordinary white observers — and even some of their own tribespeople and followers — as insane or threatening; but, like Riel, they also preached peace, brotherhood, and reconciliation. What Mooney says of Smohalla could be interpolated into biographies of Riel, and no reader would be the wiser. Even Riel's detractors' suspicions of his honesty and devotion to the cause have their echoes in Mooney's descriptions of Smoholla: "We have to deal with the same curious mixture of honest conviction and cunning deception that runs through the history of priest-craft in all the ages." Insanity itself seems to be a part of the mixture: "If genius be a form of insanity, as has been claimed, intense religious enthusiams would seem to have a close connection with physical as well as mental disease. Like Mohammed and Joan of Arc, and like the Shaker prophet of Puget Sound, Smohalla is subject to cataleptic trances."[42]

Riel was no more unreasonable than Smohalla or the men he knew among the Lakotas who became Ghost Dancers in 1889 and 1890. The Metis, like the Lakotas, the Crees, the Blackfeet, the Assiniboines, and the other Native peoples of the northern Plains, were hopelessly outnumbered and

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40 Raymond J. DeMaillie, "Introduction," in James Mooney, *The Ghost-Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), xxii.

41 See Margaret Laurence, *The Heart of a Stranger* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976).

42 Mooney, *Ghost-Dance Religion*, 720, 719.

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42 Mooney, *Ghost-Dance Religion*, 720, 719.

outgunned. Although Gabriel Dumont and his troops could have carried out successful guerrilla warfare against the North West Mounted Police and the expeditionary forces under General Middleton, the Canadians would most likely have retaliated in the way that had been so very effective south of the border: burn out the villages. If the United States Cavalry defeated the Lakotas by burning the Dull Knife village in deep mid-winter and forcing old people and children into the snow with little clothing, their horses shot and their food burned; if they humbled the Blackfeet by massacring the Heavy Runner village, the Canadians could have borrowed the tactics — as they borrowed the Gatling gun at Batoche. The Metis settlements, far more sedentary than the lodges of the Plains tribes, would have fallen even more easily. Ontario soldiers, as it was, ransacked Gabriel Dumont's house and made away with his billiard table and his wife, Madeleine's, precious washing machine, as well as sacking other homes.[43] Furthermore, Riel and Dumont had little overt support among the majority of Metis communities in the North-West. Saint Albert, outside Fort Edmonton, the largest Metis settlement west of Red River, stayed out of the hostilities of 1885, as did Qu'Appelle. Even at Batoche, a significant number of Metis may have opposed Riel. The clergy had supported Riel in 1869-70 but for the most part opposed him in 1884-85. Even those Metis who believed in Riel were hesitant to support him in the face of the priests' disapproval; there is no reason to suppose any of the other settlements would have sustained a guerrilla campaign.

Riel was perfectly sane in recognizing it would take a miracle to protect his people: that no miracle was forthcoming reflects more on the nature of faith than of sanity. Both Riel and his opponents, after all, believed in a Jesus who doubted and cried aloud his forsakenness as he died on the cross. Early Christianity itself was the mystic defiance of a technologically superior society — the Romans — by a colonized minority — a small sect of Jews. Riel was steadfast in a tradition of martyr saints broken on the wheel; and it may be that his miracle has come, in a secular guise befitting a secular age, in the cultural and social renaissance of the Metis and other aboriginal peoples since 1968. The fact that most Plains Indians did not join Riel's rebellion is not so much a reflection on the justice of Riel's claims or the relative suffering of the Metis as it is on the leadership of different societies. Only the Metis had a Messianic leader—and only part of that settlement followed his vision.

Christian hagiography is, of course, replete with images of nude, gaunt saints and martyrs; its central figure is the semi-nude and tortured Christ on the cross. Canada has its Brébeuf. Both the Lemay and Nugent statues present Riel in this mode. In this sense, Nugent's Riel is diametrically opposed to the Riel in mackinaw and toque that Thatcher himself wanted.

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43 George Woodcock, *Gabriel Dumont: The Metis Chief and His Lost World* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1975), 215.

But as Riel's image has evolved since 1968, he has become a national hero, not a Christian martyr. (Strangely enough, Nugent points out that Thatcher himself took on some of the attributes Nugent had seen in Riel. Thatcher thought of himself as a prophet—during his 1964 campaign he told an aide, "Everyone has a place in this world, and I believe I've been chosen by God to get rid of these socialists."[44] After Thatcher lost the election in 1971 he was deserted by his colleagues, and Nugent said he felt sorry for the man, utterly humiliated as he was. A month later Thatcher was dead. Thatcher is memorialized on the legislative building grounds by a rather abstract-looking stone bench, not far from where the statue of Louis Riel once stood.)

The primary audience for representations of Riel is Metis; and most of that audience, to the extent it owns Riel as a national hero, wants to see the secular diplomat, not the martyr prophet with hints of madness and irrationality. Not all Metis agree on this or anything else, however, and in protest of the removal of the Lemay sculpture in Winnipeg, Jean Allard, a former NDP MLA in Manitoba, prime mover in the original erection of the statue, and great-grandson of a first cousin of Riel, chained himself to the statue to protest its dismantlement and move to St. Boniface College. Sculptor Marcien Lemay joined in the protest. Nevertheless, when the movers actually approached the statue, the protestors offered no resistance, and the Riel sculpture was taken down and carted off to a warehouse, pending its re-erection at the College of St. Boniface.[45] For Clifford Larocque, Regina chapter president of the Metis Society of Saskatchewan, speaking to reporters in 1991, the Regina statue was "demoralizing for Metis people and historically inaccurate." "This has been a thorn in the side of the Metis people for years," Laroque said. "If that's the kind of recognition we're going to get, they might as well throw it in the lake." Jim Durocher, president of the Metis Society of Saskatchewan, described the kind of statue the Metis would like: "realistic, dignified and respectful," recognizing "Riel for the hero he is." He added, "We want to make sure that Riel is not standing there with his testicles hanging down. Riel was a very important person in our history."[46]

Any group clearly has the right to define its own national hero and to disagree among themselves on that representation. The Metis certainly have reason to resent being shown as perpetual victims at the hands of the triumphant Euro-Canadians: Brébeuf, the closest thing, except for Riel, to a national martyr saint was, after all, French; the entire tableau of his martydom is of one who goes before, whose death paves the way for the

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44 Eisler, *Rumours of Glory*, 129.

45 Allard, *As It Happens*; *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 21 July 1994, p. A12; *Calgary Herald*, 24 July 1994.

46 "Sculptor says we're 'illiterate'," *Regina Leader-Post*, 6 August 1991; Kevin O'Connor, "Riel statue to be moved," *Regina Leader-Post*, 2 August 1991; Muriel Draaisma, "Regina statue panned," *Regina Leader-Post*, 9 August 1991.

successful conquest and conversion of the Iroquois by the Christians. In comparison, Riel's defeat is a defeat from which his people, more than a century later, still suffer. While the Jesuit is the martyr, his torturers are "savages," the flip side of the victim in the iconography of the Native peoples of the Americas. At a time when aboriginal peoples are still very much victims, a tortured martyr is not a useful national image; and then there is the problem of vandalism and disrespectful children, peeping and tittering.

Not surprisingly, the letters to the editor protesting the decision to take down the Regina statue are from Euro-Canadians. Rand E. Teed, a high school art teacher from Regina, wrote to praise the statue as presenting "the memory of Riel as an incredibly strong, intense and spiritual person who was reaching to grasp the future for his people." Muriel K. Griffin, an English immigrant, also wrote to praise the piece: "The statue is graceful and portrays an idealist with dignity. It belongs to no particular century in terms of artistic expression."[47] Different audiences need different kinds of art. The Metis community as a group did not have a part in picking the design for either of the Riel statues of the 1960s. Instead these came out of dialogues between governments and sculptors. The Regina sculpture represented a compromise that was not entirely satisfactory either to Ross Thatcher or to John Nugent, and that was wholly unsatisfactory to modern Metis leaders. The alternatives to the two sculptures are, perhaps ironically, quite close to what Ross Thatcher had wanted.

Since 1968 the Winnipeg area has received three new sculptures of Riel, in addition to a representation on his new and newly carved tombstone; and a fourth statue, also crafted by Lemay, and intended to replace the old one, had progressed to the maquette stage before the Manitoba Metis Federation cancelled its agreement with Lemay and asked another Franco-Manitoban artist, Miguel Joyal, to design a new statue. This piece, now erected on a plaza directly behind the Legislative Building (still not beside Queen Victoria), shows almost the same pose as the maquette of the second Lemay Riel. In Regina the former statue has been replaced by a cairn memorializing not Louis Riel but the *trial* of Louis Riel, and erected by the producers of the play, the *Trial of Louis Riel,* and by the Chamber of Commerce. The cairn (Figure 4) is only a few metres from a conventional bronze statue of Riel's nemesis, Sir John A. Macdonald, identified simply as "Father of Confederation." A bit of the rope used to hang Riel remains on display at the RCMP Museum, a few kilometres away on Dewdney Avenue. Meanwhile, in Saskatoon the student centre at the University of Saskatchewan is named Place Louis Riel, and a large equestrian statue of Gabriel Dumont, the face an unquestionably good likeness, stands in the park that runs along the river. Across the roadway from Dumont is a plaque memorializing Captain

47 *Regina Leader-Post,* n.d. (c. September 1991) and 9 September 1991, clippings in possession of John Nugent.

successful conquest and conversion of the Iroquois by the Christians. In comparison, Riel's defeat is a defeat from which his people, more than a century later, still suffer. While the Jesuit is the martyr, his torturers are "savages," the flip side of the victim in the iconography of the Native peoples of the Americas. At a time when aboriginal peoples are still very much victims, a tortured martyr is not a useful national image; and then there is the problem of vandalism and disrespectful children, peeping and tittering.

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Figure 4. *Trial of Louis Riel* cairn, Regina. Photo by Frances Kaye.

E.S. Andrews, the skipper of the steamer *Northcote* that joined Middleton's men against the Metis at Batoche. For some reason there is at present no plaque on the Dumont statue identifying either the figure or the sculptor, Bill Epp. A smaller version of the same bronze equestrian Dumont is on display at the museum at Batoche.

The three recent Riel representations in Winnipeg, as well as Lemay's rejected maquette, demonstrate what most contemporary Metis citizenry want as a representation of a national hero: all are portraits, even more deliberate and realistic than the equestrian Dumont. The centennial of the hero's death, 1985, saw two new Riel statues commissioned, both finished and erected in 1986. One is in St. Norbert, now a southern suburb of Winnipeg, one of the original Metis settlements in the Red River Valley and the site of Riel's election to Parliament. The sculpture is a granite relief, commissioned by a St. Norbert group and carved in New Hampshire (Figure 5).[48] On the left a panel shows the young Riel in a coat, a proclamation rolled in his right hand (rather like that proferred by Sir John A. Macdonald in the statue of him in Regina); on the right is Father Ritchot, the revolutionary priest whose support was integral to Riel's successes in Red River. Between the two is a plaque surmounted by the crest of the province of Manitoba and bearing quotations from Ritchot and Riel, though Riel's words are taken from the North-West Rebellion of 1885 rather than, more

48 "Sir John A. would envy all Riel's statues," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 20 April 1986.

Figure 5. Riel-Richtot monument, St. Norbert. Photo by Frances Kaye.

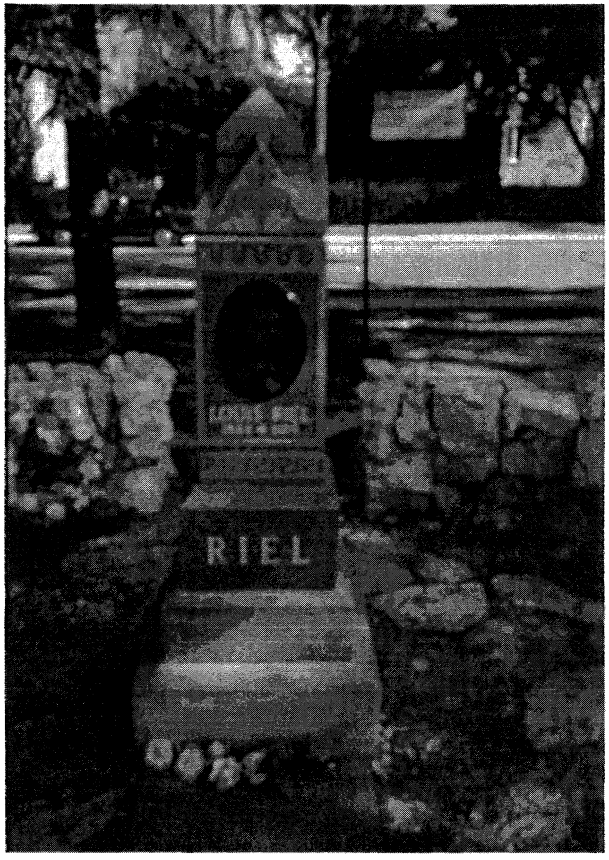

Figure 6. Tombstone of Louis Riel, St. Boniface. Photo by Frances Kaye.

appropriate to the site, the Red River Rebellion. Beneath the figures is a frieze showing the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, with modern Winnipeg in the centre, buffalo on the left, canoes on the river, and tipis and Metis fields to the right. Sited in front of the parish church and across the street from a shrine, the piece resembles a tombstone. It is, in fact, similar in style and material to Riel's tombstone in St. Boniface (Figure 6), done in his likeness for the centennial of his death. The second Riel statue in Winnipeg, also commissioned for the centennial of his death, is a giant bust on a pillar, overlooking the river in St. Boniface, near the point where Louis Riel Sr.'s millstones were moved to form a cairn at the Musée de St. Boniface in the late 1960s. The bust, intended as a portrait, is accurate and heroically noble (Figure 7).

The third statue, the Joyal piece, like the proposed second Lemay piece, is a photographic likeness showing Riel with a rolled document in one hand, similar to the depiction in the relief at St. Norbert or the Macdonald in Regina. Riel is dressed in conventional European-style clothing of the nineteenth century, except that he wears, as was the man's real wont, Indian-style moccasins (Figure 8).[49] Ironically, the mocassins may eventually make this seemingly uncontroversial statue seem disrespectful as tastes change. One of the earliest published descriptions of Louis Riel is William Butler's in *The Great Lone Land* (1872), in which the writer suggests that Riel's footwear makes the Metis chief look ridiculous: "He was dressed in a curious mixture of clothing — a black frock-coat, vest, and trousers; but the effect of this somewhat clerical costume was not a little marred by a pair of Indian mocassins, which nowhere look more out of place than on a carpeted floor."[50]

The original Lemay statue has been re-erected at St. Boniface College, though the representation remains controversial (Figure 9). But perhaps Aurèle Desaulniers, president of the Comité centenaire Louis Riel, which erected the St. Boniface bust, has best stated audience reaction to the disputed sculpture: "For ordinary people like myself, the biggest percentage don't feel Louis Riel in that particular statue."[51] For others, though, like Allard and Lemay, the nudity and vulnerability of the man in the sculpture vividly portray the troubles of the Metis people.

Although some historians prefer to shift the focus in Metis studies away from Riel and onto the survivals and successes of all the mixed-blood descendants of the fur trade, the complexities and ambiguities of Riel's life and death will keep his memory perpetually alive, simply because he can mean so many things to so many people. Aspiring bourgeois, regional rebel, visionary cultural revivalist, penitent prophet, Messianic hero, charismatic

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49 "Statue rejuvenates Louis Riel," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 13 May 1994.

50 William F. Butler, *The Great Lone Land* (1872; Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1968), 133.

51 "Sir John A. would envy all Riel's statues," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 20 April 1986.

Interpreting Prairie Cinema

G.S. Horne

ABSTRACT. Motion picture production is attracting a great deal of media attention in Saskatchewan and other centres across Canada. The economic "boom" in production is due in part to the fact that government agencies are investing in the motion picture industry to an extent never before experienced. The boom is celebrated as an opportunity to express prairie culture and ideas in a form that will reach a larger audience. This article will attempt to define the concept of "prairie culture" based on some ideas developed by scholars of prairie writing and visual arts, then will attempt to determine whether or to what extent cinema is able to carry on this tradition of cultural expression.

SOMMAIRE. La production cinématographique attire beaucoup l'attention des médias en Saskatchewan et partout au Canada. L'expansion économique qui s'y associe vient du fait que les agences gouvernementales n'ont jamais autant investi dans l'industrie cinématographique. Cette expansion est devenue une occasion rêvée d'exprimer la culture et les idées des prairies sous une forme accessible à un large public. Le présent article va d'abord définir le concept de "culture des prairies" sur la base d'idées émises par les spécialistes de la littérature et des arts visuels de la région; puis nous verrons jusqu'à quel point le cinéma est capable de poursuivre cette tradition d'expression culturelle.

Introduction

Can a region's culture be summed up by reference to a few generative ideas, and can these ideas be expressed in the cinema produced in that region?

If one speaks of the literature or the painting produced in the prairie region, the answer given by some critics, writers and artists is positive. Whether or not cinema conforms to the same generative ideas as art and literature must be explored by first examining the conditions which determine cinema as an expressive form. Some of these conditions include history, artistic tradition, the artistic community and the marketplace.

This article is not intended to be an exhaustive catalogue of films produced on the Prairies. Rather, it aims to answer the question posed above by citing a few examples in a roughly chronological fashion. As an organizing principle for this examination, we should first explore the factors which influence prairie cinema today.

The Prairie Environment

Prairie prose and poetry were first influenced by the journals of the early explorers and settlers of the region, who were struck by the isolation, by the harsh climate, and by the expansive look of the Prairies.

For Edward McCourt, only by exploring the works of these early writers "can we hope to come to something approaching a sympathetic understanding of our literature and of ourselves."[1] For example, there are the writings of British soldier Sir William Francis Butler:

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1 E.A. McCourt, "Prairie Literature and its Critics," in Richard Allen, ed., *A Region of the Mind: Interpreting the Western Canadian Plains* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1973), 162.

> There is no mountain range to come up across the skyline, no river to lay its glistening folds along the middle distance, no dark forest to give shade to foreground or to bring perspective, no speck of life, no trace of man, nothing but the wilderness. Reduced thus to its own nakedness, space stands forth with almost terrible grandeur. One is suddenly brought face to face with that enigma we try to comprehend by giving it the names of endless, interminable, measureless; that dark inanity which broods upon a waste of moorland at dusk, and in which fancy sees the spectral and the shadowy.[2]

Critics have contemplated the origin of myths and ideas manifest in the literary works of a region. Some have felt that the look and feel of the land and climate have had a significant influence on the creative processes of several generations of writers: "All discussion of the literature produced in the Canadian west must of necessity begin with the impact of the landscape upon the mind."[3]

The environment and its influences on the drama of life provide a starting point for novelists working in the prairie region. For example, W.O. Mitchell begins *Who Has Seen the Wind* with:

> Here was the least common denominator of nature, the skeleton requirements simply, of land and sky — Saskatchewan prairie. It lay wide around the town, stretching tan to the far line of the sky, shimmering under the June sun and waiting for the unfailing visitation of wind, gentle at first, barely stroking the long grasses and giving them life; later, a long hot gusting that would lift the black topsoil and pile it in barrow pits along the roads, or in deep banks against the fences.[4]

Prairie visual artists have been moved to paint dramatic skies, and have meditated on the subtle palette of colours of a prairie landscape.

The first landscape paintings from the Canadian prairie region look a lot like European landscapes. By the 1950s prairie painting escaped the conventions of the traditional nineteenth-century landscape art of Europe. Dorothy Knowles' impressionistic landscapes are an accessible median between the representational painting of the early landscape painters and the abstractions of William Perehudoff and Otto Rogers in Saskatoon, and Ken Lochhead, Art McKay and Ted Godwin in Regina. Each of these artists, including Knowles, was influenced in his or her way by modernism, which dominated the thinking of painters during the 1950s and 1960s and was nurtured by visits to Regina and Emma Lake by New York critic Clement

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2 Captain William Butler, *The Wild North Land* (London: n.p., 1873), 30-31, quoted in McCourt, "Prairie Literature and its Critics," 153.

3 Henry Kreisel, "The Prairie: A State of Mind," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, Vol. VI, Series 4 (June 1968), p. 173, quoted in Eli Mandel, "Images of Prairie Man," in Allen, ed., *Region of the Mind*, 203.

4 W.O. Mitchell, *Who Has Seen The Wind* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1947).

Greenburg; but each of these artists retained a strong connection with the colours, shapes and textures they observed on the Prairies.[5]

The next generation of prairie artists — David Thauberger, Donna Kriekle, Franklin Heisler and Jerry Didor, for example — looked beyond the Prairies for stylistic inspiration, but much of their subject matter, both visual and narrative, celebrates the prairie.[6]

Writers and artists alike have immersed themselves in the folkways of the early European immigrants, and have produced new forms that introduce the boldness and irony of modern art to the forms and themes of traditional stories, arts and crafts.[7] Aboriginal writers, and artists such as Bob Boyer, have sought inspiration from the traditional crafts and folklore of their people.

But what about cinema? Cinema is a pastiche drawn from various levels of culture, and many cinema images are strongly influenced by the stereotypes propagated by Hollywood and other commercial media centres. Some of the most authentic or aesthetically pure prairie cinema may consist of works which are a *homage* to the painting and writing of the region. Many short films celebrate the work of prairie artists and writers: these include biographies of Margaret Lawrence, Joe Fafard, Otto Rogers, and others.

In our era especially, "art" is one of many cultural expressive forms. Other forms include advertising, television programs, pop music,[8] as well as a variety of traditional arts and crafts maintained by churches, schools and ethnic communities. Cultural expression can also be described as a representation of other levels of sociolinguistic interaction borne by informal conversation and political discourse at all levels. To attempt to define cinema in terms of "high" culture — the culture identified by mainstream art criticism — would be to ignore most of what cinema has to offer as a vehicle for "culture" in its widest, anthropological sense.

So in cinema, all kinds of cultural content are considered fair game. This is because, in its broadest definition, "cinema" is a term for a representational process which involves technological practices. Some cinema is interesting because it seems to be an accurate *representation* of some form of reality, whether that be the "real world" as someone has perceived it, or of a popular cultural expressive form (music, dance, poetry and visual crafts).

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5 Norman Zepp and Michael Parke-Taylor, introduction to "The Second Generation: Fourteen Saskatchewan Painters," Regina, Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, University of Regina, 1985, pp. 8-13.

6 For example, the Chicago Art Brut style adopted by Jerry Didor, or the California Funk style adopted by ceramicist Franklin Heisler and others.

7 One of the best known is William Kurelek, whose dreamlike, sometimes surreal works were influenced by the colours and Christian iconography of pre-revolutionary Russian and Ukrainian painting, and by the colours and patterns of traditional Ukrainian folk arts.

8 Pop is not just music but a complex of interrelated subcultures from urban centres in the case of rap and soul, or from traditional and folk ways in the case of country and western music.

Cinema Aesthetics: Realism and Expressionism

Cinema is an outgrowth from photography and there is an assumption that its technology can render an accurate representation of reality. Cinema and photography are rooted in some here and now, and by necessity are associated with the ambiguity and multifarious meanings of human existence. Cinema theorist André Bazin has said that ambiguity is the essence of reality. According to Bazin's view, the artist who tries to impose some kind of external structure to the image by manipulating what can be manipulated — script, *mise en scène* and montage — could be accused of going against that which cinema can do best — the representation of what simply is. Another cinema theorist, Siegfried Kracauer, also celebrated the indeterminacy of realist cinema: ideally the filmmaker will let what is observed do the speaking, while avoiding the temptation to impose a structure. Kracauer said that plot is the natural enemy of realism.[9]

Cinema can be either *realistic* or *expression* or a blend of the two (which points to the trend in art known as "post-modernism"). Expressive cinema is often the least accessible because it eschews the forms and stereotypes of popular cinema. Instead, it attempts to communicate by way of lesser known symbols, which may be part of the visual vocabulary of only a few cinema artists and their followers. Realist art, on the other hand, can be quite easy to understand because it reflects the familiar look and feel of reality.

At its best, cinema, like opera and theatre, is a number of arts and crafts working together to provide an emotionally moving experience for the audience. Excellent expressive cinema can be difficult to achieve because of the high cost of production and the necessity in most production practices to involve many people with possibly conflicting ideas about what is aesthetically important. Some of these collaborative elements may have little to do with aesthetics and more to do with a tight budget, a desire to exploit the largest commercial market, or a political agenda of some kind.

Often the best cinema is the result of a strong creative force, an auteur, who translates a particular idea into cinematic language. The names Bergman, Fellini, Hitchcock, Ford and Scorsese are often connected with the French film critics' definition of "auteur." The auteur has an idea and a will to realize it, is skilled in the crafts of cinema, and has the support or the wherewithal to make the film as planned with little or no compromise. Auteurs are rare, but they do exist, even among regional filmmakers.

By recognizing some of cinema's strengths and shortcomings, we can begin to search for value among a wide variety of cinema and video images that have come from the Prairies. We should restate what it is that cinema does well. First, as an emotionally moving point of view about reality, cinema is unequalled: cinema can transport us to another time and place.

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9 J. Dudley Andrew, *The Major Film Theories* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976).

We learn about a worldview, and perhaps develop some understanding of why things are as they are. "Direct cinema," or "cinéma vérité," can be an excellent medium for phenomenological or ethnographic research. These ideas are also essential to an understanding of what has become known as "realist cinema." Realist cinema is a dramatized representation of reality. Most modern dramatic films could be called "realist," though most films warp their representation of reality to conform to the conventions of story telling (plot and a strong protagonist), or attempt to entertain the audience through the use of spectacular visual effects or overblown dramatic conflicts. The best realist dramatic cinema manages to capture the real while employing just enough dramatic and cinematic conventions to maintain audience interest. Second, film can be expressive, in the way that a piece of music is expressive. We bop along mentally, perhaps even fidgeting with excitement, as a series of images works on us at a primal level or stimulates our intellect with visual symbolism and poetry.

Part of the appeal of music videos, or any work of cinema which uses a great deal of contrived sound, is the action on the two senses simultaneously, thus creating many layers of meaning and the harmony or irony that develops between these levels of meaning. Early cinema theorists disliked sound films, claiming that the true art of cinema had its heyday during the silent era of cinema. This may be because dialogue and music in early sound films were often used as a crutch for weak visuals, or were used to transform cinema into another medium altogether: a kind of radio drama with pictures.

Expressive film might be able to evoke some ideas or emotions that are elemental to the prairie experience. Many expressionistic short films and videos, as well as realist dramas and documentaries reflecting prairie themes, have been generated by film students and filmmakers associated with film cooperatives in Regina and Winnipeg, and video cooperatives such as EM Media in Calgary and Video Vérité in Saskatoon.

As we begin to understand "prairie" film, we have to consider that much film and video is a means of delivering other forms of art, whether they be visual or literary. Some films are artistic in and of themselves due to the skill and artistry of the filmmakers, and can be considered either "realistic" or "expressive" in the terms outlined here.

Before we narrow the focus to exclude (somewhat arbitrarily) all but a few films, we should celebrate the fact that any films or videos with prairie themes have been made at all. Anyone who has taken the time to give birth to a script, then to knock on doors to raise the funds for a film or video, deserves great praise. Production is a long and difficult process, particularly in the Canadian prairie region where media has not been considered a key industry. Production is even more difficult if the subject is neither of great commercial interest nor of interest to those who grant funds from an agency concerned with the current definitions of "art."

Some Prairie Films and Filmmakers

The first prairie film was also one of the first films made in Canada. James

Freer, a Manitoba farmer, made a film about farm life in 1898.[10] The film was sponsored by the CPR to promote, in England, the sale of land on the Prairies. Though much talked about, no prints remain of this first prairie film, but one can speculate: being a promotional piece it is highly unlikely that it contained images of prairie blizzards or other elements which showed the harder aspects of life on the Prairies during this period.

Until the 1960s film activity on the Prairies was most notable for some film pioneers. For example, there were Bill Marsden, Ron Brown and Nick Zubko of Edmonton. Three Regina filmmakers who had done some work for the National Film Board of Canada were Dick Bird, a Regina nature photographer, who also did some contract filming for Walt Disney nature productions, and Lawrence and Evelyn Cherry of Regina, who produced films about agriculture and rural life in the prairie region for both the NFB and for the government of Saskatchewan. There are also many others worthy of mention.

When television came to the Prairies in the mid 1950s, prairie television stations produced some documentaries as part of their mandate to reflect the region for their viewers — usually in a style that showed the desire of early television stations to report or promote local events and institutions. Some programs and sequences from the films of Marsden, Bird and Cherry, as well as some early TV film documentaries, have been retained by provincial and national archives, and on viewing provide some insight into the social history of the region.

Other opportunities for the representation of prairie themes and stories were offered by the National Film Board of Canada. Notable early NFB films included *Listen to the Prairies* (1945), which features a choir singing over images of wheat fields blowing in the wind. In 1954, Roman Kroitor and Colin Low were sent west to make the short films *Corral*, about an Alberta cowboy rounding up and breaking wild horses, and *Paul Tomkowicz: Street Railway Switchman*, which incorporated a voice over by a Toronto actor reading lines based on the elderly Tomkowicz's account of working on the Winnipeg street railway line during a cold winter day. Though no more remarkable than an undergraduate film school student's thesis project, both films were hailed as artistic triumphs. They were innovative in terms of both theme and style, but their notoriety may have more to do with the extent to which the NFB promoted the films than with the quality of the films.

The Drylanders (1964) was one of the first feature film productions of the National Film Board of Canada. The only other feature films made by the NFB in the early 1960s were *Nobody Waved Goodbye*, about a rebellious

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10 Peter Morris, "Canadian Cinema, the First Six Decades," in Pierre Véronneau and Seth Feldman (eds.), *Self Portrait, Essays on Canada and Quebec Cinema* (Ottawa: Canadian Film Institute, 1980), 1-10.

suburban Toronto teenager, and *The World of Leopold Z*, a whimsical tale of a snowplow driver in Montreal. *The Drylanders* retells a classic story of a family of settlers who arrive from eastern Canada in the late 1800s to claim a piece of inexpensive land. The film examines two generations, ending with the patriarch's death in the 1930s. It includes such memorable prairie images as the family making their way west with an oxen cart, building a sod hut in which to live during their first winter, welcoming their first "bumper crop" of wheat, then watching as the land blows away and neighbours leave in the "Dirty Thirties."

Started in 1939 as the federal government's film office, the National Film Board of Canada was put to work making documentaries about Canada's role in World War II. After the war the NFB set to the task of "interpreting Canada to Canadians and the world." In the 1970s, regional offices were set up in Winnipeg, Edmonton, and other Canadian cities. Saskatchewan did not have an NFB production office, which has meant that few NFB films were made in Saskatchewan. Various attempts were made to right this regional bias. In the late 1970s short vignettes were produced on prairie themes and stories. Most notable was *The Shipbuilder*, based on a true story about a Finnish immigrant who builds a ship on his prairie farm and drags it to the Saskatchewan River with the desire to sail to his homeland. A half-hour comedy drama by Regina writer Ken Mitchell, *The Great Electrical Revolution*, also came out of this era.

The Prairies have also produced filmmakers working in the field of educational documentary. These include nature cameraman Robert Long of Saskatchewan, who is known for *Aspen* (1989), which was produced for the BBC and the PBS series *Nature*, and for the *Home Place* series (1995) based on the writings of Saskatchewan ecologist Stan Rowe. Another nature cinematographer, Albert Karvonen of Alberta, produced *Drummer in the Woods* (1976), *Lakeside Habitat* (1979), *High Country* (1982), *Country of the Muskox* (1990) and *Prairie Grasslands: Wind Country* (1993).

Many interesting educational documentaries and docudramas have been created by small production companies working in the Prairies with funding from provincial government and provincial educational television authorities. These films have often achieved wider exposure on educational television at home and abroad and have thus taken prairie ideas to a wider audience. They have also offered filmmakers an opportunity to gain the skills and confidence to take on more ambitious projects of the dramatic genre.

A few short dramatic films have also emerged since the 1970s. For example, Tom Radford of Alberta produced *Life after Hockey*, about a child's dream of playing hockey like Maurice "Rocket" Richard. Metis producer Gil Cardinal, also of Alberta, has produced a number of documentaries with the National Film Board, and has directed episodes of the CBC television series *North of 60*.

Manitoba's film industry was nurtured during the 1970s by the National

Film Board Prairie Studio and by the Winnipeg Film Group, a cooperative which helped independents to gain access to equipment and production facilities. Out of this rich soil came: Allan Kroeker, who made *God is Not a Fish Inspector* (1980), *The Catch* (1981) *and The Pedlar* (1982); Guy Madden, with *Archangel* (1990); John Paizs, who made *Crime Wave* (1985); Aaron Kim Johnston, with *The Last Winter* (1989); and many others who have continued working in the media of animation, short documentary and experimental film and video.

In Saskatchewan the cooperatives Filmpool and Video Vérité have helped many filmmakers to practice their arts and crafts, though feature film production is only beginning to emerge on the provincial scene. Some Saskatchewan filmmakers who have produced short dramas in the past fifteen years include Stephen Surjik *(Razor in the Wind)*, Will Dixon *(Heartline, The Garden, Guitar Man)*, Gerald Saul *(Wheat Soup)*, Gord McLennan *(Silence Amid Sound)*, Brian Stockton (The *Final Gift, The 24 Store, The Weight of the World)*, and Mark Wihak *(The Land of Cain, The Ballad of Don Quinn)*.

The 1970s was a period of expansion of the Canadian motion picture industry. New money was available in the form of loans and tax incentives through the Canadian Film Development Corporation (CFDC), later Telefilm Canada. The result of this was the production of a number of feature films on prairie themes. These included *Alien Thunder* (1973), directed by Claude Fournier, in which Donald Sutherland plays a mountie chasing a Cree Indian accused of murdering a sergeant. A town was built for the movie near Duck Lake, Saskatchewan. The film was later named *Dan Candy's War*, and, like most Canadian films, suffered from very limited theatrical distribution because of the monopoly of the multinational distribution companies.

The big distributors, who control most of the theatre screens in North America, need to make each of their screens pay a maximum, so they are compelled to distribute only big budget films with "star" performers and multi-million dollar promotion budgets. There are over a hundred feature-length independent films made in North America each year, but only a handful are purchased by big distributors for theatrical release. Most Canadian feature films have missed the big screen and ended up in limited distribution on video, or broadcast on television. Attempts by Canadian producers to gain distribution have met with demands by the multinationals to adopt a more "international" style of filmmaking, which means, in their definition, making films that look like mainstream Hollywood productions. Television and feature film executives believe that the largest audience wants a simple, dramatic story with a strong protagonist, visual spectacle and well-known "star" performers. Locale and local culture are used only as interesting or quaint backdrops for the dramatic action that dominates the screen.

In *Paperback Hero* (1973), directed by Peter Pearson, Keir Dullea (star of Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey)* plays a womanizing hockey player leading a fantasy life as a town gunslinger. Filmed in Delisle, near Saskatoon, the

title comes from a song by Canadian balladeer Gordon Lightfoot. *Who Has Seen The Wind* (1977), directed by Torontonian Allan King, was based on W.O. Mitchell's coming-of-age novel. Filmed in Arcola, Saskatchewan, the film provided crew and cast jobs for about twenty young Saskatchewan film craftspeople. After the production wrapped, six of them formed Filmpool, the Saskatchewan film cooperative, with Canada Council funding. The Saskatchewan government provided some equity financing for the feature in return for the apprenticeship positions on the production.

The Hounds of Notre Dame (1981), produced and directed by Fil Fraser, is a tale based on the early years of Père Athol Murray at Notre Dame College in Wilcox, Saskatchewan. Funded in part by alumni of the college, the film warmly remembers Père's rough language, anti-CCF sentiments and whisky drinking, as well as his strong resolve to make patriots of a motley collection of farm boys and small town hoods during the Depression years. The title comes from the name of a winning hockey team which Père Murray founded. *Why Shoot the Teacher* (1978) was based on the Max Braithwaite novel by the same name. Bud Cort plays a school teacher who begins his first job in a one-room prairie schoolhouse; Samantha Eggar plays a farmer's wife who has an affair with the young teacher.

Though these films disappeared quickly from theatrical and video distribution, *The Hounds of Notre Dame, Who Has Seen The Wind* and *Don't Shoot the Teacher* have found a home on late, late television movie shows across North America and have thus taken prairie culture far and wide. A friend reported to me having watched *Who Has Seen The Wind* on late night television in Miami.

One of the best prairie films of the era was made south of the border with private and American public funding: *Northern Lights* (1979) is John Hanson and Rob Nilsson's recollection of the struggles of farmers in pre-World War I North Dakota, with the protagonist attempting to organize the populist Nonpartisan League, an organization founded by farmers to fight for a better system of quotas and pricing for farm products. This is a period drama, with the present-day storyteller appearing in documentary segments before and within the dramatic sequences. The film expresses the feel of the prairie landscape, as well as the prairie community culture of the early 1900s. A similar film could have been made about Saskatchewan pioneers and the early years of the CCF, or one of the other social/political movements which grew out of the inequities of the prairie grain economy.

In the 1980s and 1990s, film development corporations were started in Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan to use provincial government funds to supplement federal government funding through Telefilm Canada. These funds have resulted in a number of half-hour and one-hour television dramas and documentaries. In addition, a few theatrical feature films have appeared.

Two women directors whose careers began in the 1980s were Norma Bailey of Winnipeg and Anne Wheeler of Edmonton. Bailey's *Daughters of*

the Country (1987), a four-part, made-for-television drama series, portrays the lives of four Metis women over a period of two hundred years. Wheeler directed *Loyalties (1986), Bye Bye Blues* (1989) — a story of Wheeler's mother, who, left alone by her husband during World War II, becomes a singer in a dance band touring the prairies,— *Angel Square* (1990), a children's story set in 1945 and *The Diviners (1992),* based on Margaret Lawrence's novel set in small-town Manitoba. *Loyalties* is the story of a Metis woman and an Englishwoman who settles with her doctor husband in the northern Alberta community of Lac La Biche. The Metis woman goes to work as a housekeeper for the aloof Englishwoman, and a friendship develops between the two as they discover they face similar problems with domestic abuse. The doctor husband, who has had to relocate several times when it was discovered that he had sexual relations with young girls, is eventually dealt with by the wife and her Metis friend, whose daughter is the latest of the doctor's victims.

In Saskatchewan, only one theatrical feature film has emerged from the local film community: *Wheat Soup.* This is a low-budget feature about a farmer who has lost his land and wanders the prairie. Set in the post-apocalyptic future, and produced by Filmpool, this 16mm black and white film captures the stark beauty of the prairie landscape. Several filmmakers had their beginnings with Filmpool. One of them, Brian Stockton, is one of the new creative voices in prairie filmmaking. Having attended Norman Jewison's Canadian Film Centre (where he produced *The Weight of the World* (1995)), he may yet have an opportunity to produce a feature film with wider release. Meanwhile, Stockton, like many prairie filmmakers, fights to acquire funding to do even low-budget short films.

SaskFilm and other Canadian film agencies use most of their budgets helping to finance $1 million to $4 million American television-style movies-of-the-week destined for the pay television market. These films employ some Saskatchewan actors or craftspeople and use Saskatchewan locations. Unfortunately the locations are seldom identified within these films, but appear as generic mid-western United States cities. This is done to appease the average American viewers, who would be unfamiliar with locations with names such as Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. The film agencies justify their investment by insisting on a Saskatchewan-based co-producer. They claim that medium-budget American-style television dramas provide training for the Saskatchewan producer and local actors and craftspeople. They also claim that their investment will have a good chance of payback, and that the money spent in the province by the film production amounts to spinoffs equivalent to a sum larger than their initial investment.

Indigenous filmmakers are unable to gain significant funding for their projects because these are not deemed financially viable. SaskFilm, like Telefilm Canada and other provincial film development agencies, seldom funds a project unless a large percentage of its budget has been secured from a major broadcaster or distributor. The regional story by an indigenous writer is less likely to gain the cooperation of an American co-producer or broadcaster. The more colloquial film project is not considered unless it can be proven to have wider appeal in the marketplace.

In spite of these odds, one of the strongest feature films to emerge from the Prairies in recent years was a made-for-television drama, which succeeds where many have have failed thanks to a well-written script: *Paris or Somewhere* (1993), directed by Brad Turner, produced by Credo Productions of Manitoba and Reel Eye Media (Gord McLennan and company) of Saskatchewan, is carefully construed and visually interesting. Unfortunately, the acting is uneven: Callum Keith Rennie and Molly Parker are sometimes captivating, but often over-the-top with their characterizations of Christie Mahon, a young drifter, and Peg Kennedy, a girl trying to manage an isolated prairie store owned by her lazy father (played by Francis Damberger). Swift Current, Saskatchewan writer Lee Gowan based the script on the Irish play *Playboy of the Western World* by John M. Synge. Synge's play is about a man who wins immediate respect when he tells people that he murdered his abusive father. Gowan's script succeeds in bringing Synge's mythic characters into the modern prairie landscape, although the use of television newscasts as the private monologue of the lead character's ego comes off as camp. Where Synge employed the cadence of Irish brogue, Gowan tries to utilize prairie vernacular, which is colourful, but lacks the old country charm that makes the Oedipal myth dramatically convincing.

The producers found an isolated coulee in the Qu'Appelle Valley system northeast of Regina as the setting for the farming community that embraces the young protagonist, then rejects him when his father turns out not to be dead, but merely injured, and comes looking for him. The producers are to be admired for attempting to bring a better quality of drama and poetry to the pablum format of made-for-television movies. To be a successful stand-alone feature, however, the film would have to be re-edited to avoid looking like a television program, with its use of fadeouts for commercial breaks, which are preceded by "stingers" — plot points designed to bring the audience back after the commercial.

Thanks to its writer, *Paris or Somewhere* succeeds in celebrating the people and the discourse of prairie Canada. One interesting point is the contrast between Canadian and American prairie people, with the comic misconceptions each has of the other. The young protagonist hitchhikes to Saskatchewan from Montana, and when he tells the man who gives him a ride about his plan to try Canada, the driver says: "Kid, you wouldn't be heading up to the deep freeze. Of course, there's no murders in Canada. That's the only reason people live there. They only speak French." When he drops the kid off he says "Here it is, the Big Empty."

In the end the young drifter decides to stay in Canada, if not for the independence he feels when he escapes his domineering father, then for his love for Peg, the young girl who first gives him refuge. *Paris or Somewhere* received funding support from SaskFilm, Film Manitoba and Telefilm Canada. This funding was contingent upon broadcast licenses, which provided a portion of the budget. If the film is able to recoup its investment through international sales, it will prove that an indigenous story, set in the Canadian prairie region, is of interest to broadcasters outside of Canada.

A Critical Perspective

We have sought a definition of the prairie aesthetic based on some ideas about art and literature, then attempted to identify these ideas in the cinema of the region; but in order to gain an understanding of the character and structure of the cinema of the Prairies, i.e. what "is" rather than what "ought to be," given the aesthetic roots of prairie stories and images, we must ask questions about the practices of film production and distribution.

Gilles Hébert has pointed out that most of the films which have emerged from the Prairies were produced by outsiders, and so may well reflect the views of the colonizers rather than the colonized.[11] This statement presupposes that prairie people are colonized, and to a certain extent history shows that this may be a cultural as well as an economic fact. For many years the fate of prairie farmers hung on the whims of Wall Street and Bay Street bankers, and multinational grain companies. Similarly, prairie culture has received little exposure in national and international media, except in the form of stereotypes.

International film audiences turned their attention to the prairies when the silent film *Back to God's Country* (1919) appeared. The film starred Nell Shipman, and was produced by her husband Ernest Shipman ("ten percent Ernie" of Calgary). In it Nell "lolls about in erotic play with Brownie the bear, nuzzling his snout and tweaking his ears, as skunks, squirrels, raccoons and baby foxes cavort about her."[12] Shipman's film, like most of the Hollywood films made or set in the Canadian Prairies — *Call of the Wild* (1914), *Calgary Stampede* (1925), and *North West Mounted Police* (1939) to name a few — differed only slightly from the classic American western in its portrayal of the myth of a people in conflict or in harmony with nature. Hollywood films set in the prairie region use the landscape as a background for conflict between lawmen and villains or between ranchers and farmers. Though Hollywood westerns seem to have a perennial appeal, films featuring Canada's western myths have seldom found support in Hollywood production boardrooms.

Where Hollywood left off as mythmaker and colonizer, the National Film Board of Canada took over. The NFB, though a proudly Canadian institution, nonetheless looked out on the regions of Canada from a lofty perch in Ottawa (later Montreal). Film crews were dispatched to record and interpret regional stories, then return to home base for post-production. An example of this is *Paper Wheat* (1976), a documentary about a troupe of prairie actors who toured a play about the social conditions that gave rise to the wheat pools. Though suggested by NFB Winnipeg producers, it was eventually filmed by Albert Kish and a crew from NFB Montreal.

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11 Gilles Hébert, "Growing Up on the Prairies" (unpublished manuscript, 1993).

12 Kay Armatage, "Dog and Woman, Together At Last," *Cineaction* 24/25 (1991): 38-44, quoted in Hébert, "Growing Up on the Prairies," 2.

An aggressive distribution system has always been part of the Film Board's corporate structure — presumably to show a presence in every community in the country. During the years before television, projectionists were regularly sent to prairie communities and other rural areas of Canada to show NFB documentaries. NFB founder John Grierson's mandate to "interpret Canada to Canadians" is an interpretation mediated by a style and a perspective honed in the NFB central office:

> The prairies were also subjected to this paternalistic (production) and colonizing (exhibition) system where the activity was that of outsiders dealing with (presumably) "prairie" issues or themes for local, national, and international consumption. This system meant genuine as opposed to authentic filmmaking prescribed for unwitting prairie audiences, in their best interests.[13]

Drylanders is an example of this system. Directors, crew and lead actors were from eastern Canada, and a few locals were hired for bit parts while local authorities were commandeered to provide services such as special effects. The Swift Current Fire Department, for example, provided a rain shower on cue. The resulting story could well be construed as a local tale in the NFB's realist "docudrama" sense, but for the most part it serves to keep alive the myth of the prairie pioneer settler for both local and national audiences.

In the late 1970s the NFB opened a regional production centre in Winnipeg, and although it has been a struggle for its producers, Mike Scott and Jerry Kreptekevich managed to maintain some autonomy from the Montreal head office, and helped to stimulate local production and provide an infrastructure for a small film industry in Winnipeg. Another regional office was later opened in Edmonton, while filmmakers in Saskatchewan have had to compete unsuccessfully with Winnipeg filmmakers for scarce funding.

Conclusion

This article is a search for a definition of prairie cinema. A pure prairie cinema may be an ideal, but the ideal is clear — it must begin with an accurate representation of the feeling one gets contemplating the prairie. It must capture the essence of prairie people, their idiom, their inflection, and their down-to-earth ethic. Prairie songwriter Connie Kaldor captured some of it in her song: "Spring on the prairie comes like a surprise; one minute there's snow on the ground, the next the sun's in your eyes."

The prairie ideal has been captured by certain prairie imagemakers, particularly painters. Some, like Dorothy Knowles, have done sensitive representations of the landscape; others, like Otto Rogers or William Perehudoff, have achieved a level of truth about the prairie through abstraction.

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13 Hébert, "Growing Up on the Prairies," 6.

In film, as in drama and in literature, it is not sufficient to merely reflect images of the landscape. There must also be a successful attempt to show how environment, economics and other social factors are manifest in the words and actions of the characters who people the story:

> True regional literature is above all distinctive in that it illustrates the effect of particular, rather than general, physical, economic and racial features upon the lives of ordinary men and women. It should and usually does do many other things besides, but if it does not illustrate the influence of a limited and particular environment it is not true regional literature.[14]

Whatever the medium, there is a core that is common and reflects a clear idea of prairie. It is an idea which is not overcome by ideologies such as modernity, nor by conformity to cinematic conventions. To make the drama function properly, conventions (plot, protagonist, genre) may have to be present, but they are there to provide a structure for an audience who hunger for a familiar yarn, not to overwhelm the thing being portrayed or represented.

In dramatic feature film, pure "prairie" has not yet been achieved, though certain experimental shorts and documentaries have attempted it. There have been glimpses, but seldom in a drama production. Nilsson might have achieved it in *Northern Lights* (1979). A film by the Cohn Brothers of Minneapolis, *Fargo* (1995), managed to capture the ennui of a prairie winter, and its actors and director captured something of the prairie idiom in their characterizations; but again, genre may have dominated this film. A murder story, complete with the bloodbath scenes now an inevitable part of the post-modern dramatic films from mainstream Hollywood, may be considered out of place among prairie scenes and characterizations. Or perhaps not. A film by Atlantis Productions of Toronto, called *The Painted Door* (1984), based on the short story by prairie writer Sinclair Ross, leaves one with the uncomfortable lump-in-the-throat one gets when confronting the reality of a violent death. In the case of the latter story, it is the death of a man driven to suicide by freezing in a prairie blizzard, and the feelings of guilt it raises in his adulterous wife.

Could violence be part of the prairie imagination? Prairie people have heard their share of grisly murder tales. The Colin Thatcher murder trial may be indelibly etched into the prairie memory — particularly after the national CBC broadcast of the television miniseries *Love and Hate,* based on real events and Maggie Siggins' book *A Canadian Tragedy,* about the former Saskatchewan cabinet member who was convicted of murdering his ex-wife.

In the context of post-modern story telling the murder or violent death story may fit very comfortably with the traditional idea that the prairie is

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14 Edward A. McCourt, *The Canadian West in Fiction* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1940), 55, quoted in Mandel, "Images of Prairie Man," 203.

cold and unforgiving, but it may work best in a story about death by nature rather than death at the hand of another human being. Everyone who has grown up on the prairie has heard about someone driven mad by loneliness, or by cabin fever brought on by isolation during a long prairie winter. This too may be part of the idea of prairie: there may well be a dark side to the prairie imagination. An early film by Filmpool called *Razor in the Wind* (1978) explored this theme.

So, whether the image be one of warmth and hope — the hope of a new beginning suggested by the Connie Kaldor song — or an image from the depth and darkness of a prairie winter, there is a solid idea of prairie to be found. People who have lived here for any length of time know the idea: it can be seen in the images of prairie painters, or in the words of prairie writers. Whether this idea of prairie can be achieved in film or video remains to be seen. Perhaps prairie filmmakers together will create a body of work that will achieve a perfect idea of prairie. Perhaps the demands of filmic genres, driven by the marketplace and the always-serious lack of funds for dramatic film production, will curtail such an endeavour.

To understand what perhaps ought to be strived for by prairie cinema, it is useful to examine what a famous prairie poet and literary critic has said about the possibilities for a true prairie literature. Eli Mandel chewed on the idea in a 1973 publication of the Canadian Plains Research Center. He begins by paying tribute to Kreisel and McCourt, who wrote about regional Canadian literature:

> three features will distinguish regional writing: one is accuracy in description; a second is poetic power in evoking the atmosphere of a particular environment; and a third is a kind of psychological insight into the influence of a particular environment on the lives of those who inhabit it.[15]

If this, by extension, is the definition of prairie cinema, then it may already have been achieved by some films from the Prairies — films which have reflected prairie images and the prairie idiom. Representation is not enough, however. Mandel goes on to say:

> if it is meaningful to talk about images of prairie man, one should be able to find in, say, prairie literature a certain coherence or unity or identity, but the attempt to find this in some kind of realism or accuracy fails, because accuracy of fact and of tone is essentially superficial, if not indeed a contradiction in terms. In brief, if there is a distinctive regional prairie literature, it would have to be, in Fiedler's terms, mythic; and (as by now you will suspect), I am prepared to argue that we do find in our best writers, precisely such a mythicized world.[16]

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15 Mandel "Images of Prairie Man," 203.

16 Ibid., 204. Mandel refers to Leslie Fiedler, *The Return of the Vanishing American* (New York: Stein and Day, 1968), 16.

Mandel explains myth in the context of prairie literature by reference to themes which Kreisel identified:

> the extraordinary sense of confinement by vast and seemingly unlimited space; the anxieties sharpened by this confinement; the definition of self by violation or conquest of land, a conquest which, he says, involves much more violence than we have been yet able to admit, even in our literature; the price paid by the conqueror; the sense of being possessed by the land; the austere puritanism bred in that harsh world; and the melodramatic eruptions of passion because of such restraint; the theme of the imprisoned spirit.[17]

If Mandel is correct, then, it is the mythical which should be the goal of prairie literature and not just the real. In film, realism is possible in documentary or *cinéma vérité;* and drama which imitates reality may reach a level of truth that moves an audience. This occurs during particular scenes in *Fargo* and in *Paris or Somewhere.* It may even be found at a higher level of abstraction in some films by prairie experimental filmmakers.

The best cinema, however, and the best literature or visual art for that matter, is the work which restates a truth residing deeper than mere representational truth — it is a truth that can only be explained by reference to myth. A work of art that successfully achieves mythical truth warrants the highest form of praise. Such a work may not yet have emerged from the prairie experience; but there is potential, given the funding support of provincial film agencies and prairie-based broadcasters, and the growing confidence of prairie filmmakers.

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17 Ibid., 207. Also see Kreisel, "The Prairie: A State of Mind," passim.

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Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l'Ouest et le Nord du Canada, 1845-1967, by Donat Levasseur, O.M.I. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1995. Pp. 345.

This book is the first in a series of major studies undertaken by western Canadian publishers to recognize the Oblates' commitment to the propagation of the Roman Catholic faith throughout the Canadian Prairies, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. Father Levasseur's purpose was to provide an historical survey, a reference guide, a broad framework for a number of major studies in progress which consist of biographies or deal with selected themes and which are to be published in the not too distant future.

To retrace the creation of missions, the establishment of parishes, the formation of Oblate provinces and the founding of dioceses, the author has divided his volume into three major sections: The Implantation Period, 1845-1871; The Development of Missions in the North, 1872-1967; and From Mission to Diocese in the South, 1872-1967.

After a brief survey on the status of the Roman Catholic Church in the Northwest and an analysis of the manoeuvring which led to the arrival of Mgr de Mazenod's *"fils spirituels,"* the author retraces the creation of each mission, the role played by the Oblates in each area, the concentration of aboriginals and Metis in each mission and the degree of success achieved in terms of the number of new adherents to the Roman Catholic faith.

The third part covers the impact of the advancing agricultural frontier and the transformation of the environment from aboriginal and Metis missions to the creation of parishes, colleges, industrial schools, novitiates and seminaries. The Oblates were masters at adapting to the new realities and recruited Irish, German and Ukrainian colleagues to cater to the new settlers. They also contributed to the creation of a handful of newspapers to disseminate their ideology throughout the four corners of the territory lying west of the Ontario border.

The appendices and the statistics provided on the Oblates' country of origin, the average age of these missionaries and the number of years they worked in the missions are important sources of information which historians will be able to analyze and interpret in future volumes.

This historical and statistical survey fulfills its mandate. It serves to whet the reader's interest. Who were the missionaries and what type of preparation and education were they given? What inspired these men to face an inhospitable environment and endure endless hardships? The reader searching for an answer to these questions should read Robert Choquette and Raymond Huel's new books on the Oblates in the Canadian West.

The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest, by Robert Choquette. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1995. Pp. 258.

As the title of the book implies, the author presents the arrival and penetration of the Oblates into Canada's hinterland in military terms. The Oblates resemble an imperial power vying for the conquest of territory, fighting for the conquest of souls in the face of competition from a formidable opponent, the Anglo-Protestant Methodist and Anglican Churches. The directors and officers of the Hudson Bay Company, the proprietor of the Northwest, were largely Protestant, but they refused to be drawn into the struggle for clerical control of the Northwest. Employees of the Hudson Bay Company provided the contenders with a level playing field.

With little or no special training to prepare them for the hardships they were about to endure in Canada's uncharted territory nor schooling to acquire an appreciation of the culture and language of the indigenous people they would encounter, the Oblate priests embarked on a crusade inspired by the Ultramontane ideology *"en vogue"* and a sense of duty, commitment and zeal.

From their initial foothold in the Red River district, the Oblates, who first arrived in the West in 1845, quickly penetrated inland to northern Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and finally, the Athabasca-Mackenzie district. As Choquette stated in his book, "by 1900 most of the Canadian land mass was spotted with Oblates or Oblate-related clergy" (p. 99).

The conquest of this vast expanse of land was achieved by men of fortitude and resolution who undertook long and arduous journeys, suffered innumerable deprivations, endured the brutal climatic conditions and experienced unending periods of loneliness. A number of biographical sketches are used to describe the hardships suffered by the Oblates, Albert Lacombe, Henri Faraud, Isidore Clut, Émile Petitot, Paul Durieu, Louis-Joseph d'Herbomez, Jean Séguin and several others. Not all of them, however, are always flattering. The author at times underlines the warts, foibles and blatant human weaknesses which were part and parcel of some of these clergymen's character. For example, Father Petitot is described as a paedophile who repeatedly suffered from bouts of serious mental derangement during which he would lapse into violent and irrational behaviour.

Aggravating the religious catholic-protestant struggle in the Northwest was racial animosity. The overwhelming majority of Oblate priests were either French or French Canadian while the Protestant ministers were English. The rivalry and at times the hostility which had characterized relations between the French and the English in Europe were extended to a new battleground in the New World after the Conquest. Fuelled by ultramontanism and imperialism, the clash of nationalisms reached a crescendo in Canada in the second half of the nineteenth century penetrating into the most remote areas of the Northwest.

In the end, the Oblates gained the upper hand. They studied and learned to speak the Indian languages; they tended to live more frugally than their

Protestant counterparts who often had to cater to a wife and children; they devoted a greater part of their life to their flocks in the West; and they were more in tune with the Natives' culture than many of the Anglican and Methodist ministers who tended to look down on the Metis and Indians.

This book constitutes a major contribution to the historiography of the Roman Catholic Church in the Canadian West. As in any study, however, many questions remain unanswered. Did the Oblates set different goals and proceed differently when dealing with the white settlers, the Metis and the Indians? Why did the Natives accept the presence of these clergymen in their midst? Why were they successful with some tribes as opposed to others? Did the Oblates always collaborate and get along with one another? Much has been accomplished in this volume but much remains to be done as Robert Choquette himself has pointed out.

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Piecing the Quilt: Sources for Women's History in the Saskatchewan Archives Board, by Barbara Powell and Myrna Williams. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1996. Pp. 177.

With the rise in social history in the 1960s and the emergence of women's history as a distinct field in its own right in the 1970s, the stories of common people, both men and women, began to be told. Because of a lack of archival source material on ordinary folk (few were created and even fewer collected), unconventional methods of historical research had to be exercised, and new ways of researching the past had to be found.

But I have often wondered why it is that women who were famous in their own times, even wildly famous, are so often neglected when it comes time for histories to be written? When memories have faded and fashions and tastes have changed, somehow the tales of great men seem to endure, while those of women disappear as if they had never been. One might be forgiven for thinking that there were no famous Canadian women — no great female painters beyond Emily Carr, for instance, no great female historians besides Hilda Neatby.[1] But that simply is not the case. *Herstory: The Canadian Women's Calendar*, published by the Saskatoon Women's Calendar Collective for over twenty years, is filled with the exploits and achievements of women, some who admittedly went about their tasks in quiet ways, but others who were feted and lauded for their accomplishments by the society they lived in.

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1 I don't care for the term "women worthies;" it makes it seem as if men can be great but women must be useful.

I have come to conclude that it is probably not the perfidious nature of male historians who are responsible for this sorry state of affairs. Indeed, there are more and more female historians and they too seem to give short shrift to the stories of outstanding females (partially, of course, reflecting trends in history to concentrate on social groups and to avoid lionizing individuals). At least some of the records on famous women exist in archives, but nobody knows they are there, and therein lies at least part of the problem that *Piecing the Quilt: Sources for Women's History in the Saskatchewan Archives Board* may help to remedy.

Piecing the Quilt is a listing of all the non-restricted collections and "fonds" held by the provincial archives, the Saskatchewan Archives Board, that were created by or include women.[2] In this sense, the work does not limit itself to "great women," but tries to cover women of all walks in life. The collections listed include those held by both the Regina and Saskatoon offices, and cover both private and governmental textual materials, oral histories and photographs. The authors, Barbara Powell and Myrna Williams, also describe the material they left out (certain broad genealogical works, community histories, restricted collections), but do not mention that they also included tapes (see entry no. 523), leaving one uncertain as to whether this means that all audiotapes were included. They also left out films and videos, but did not state why they did so. The entries are listed alphabetically by title, and each generally includes an entry number, accession number, dates, extents, and very brief descriptions. In addition to the listing of collections, there is an index of women's names where they do not appear in the titles of the collections. Interesting photographs featuring women are sprinkled throughout the guide, spurring the reader on.

This brings me to the one major (but certainly non-fatal) flaw of the book — readers need to be spurred on because if they want to find something, and they don't have any provenancial information (that is, they don't know the people connected to the topic), they have to go through the entire book, entry by entry, to make sure they find everything. No doubt a lack of time and resources affected the production of a subject index, but given that most readers will not know, for example, that Elizabeth Patton was active in the Canadian Red Cross Society, anyone interested in the role of women in health concerns will have a hard time tracking this item down. And the likelihood that people will not know the women connected to the topics the researchers are interested in because the women tended to be left out of all published sources is, unfortunately, only too real at this time and is the very thing this guide is trying to address.

Beyond the drawback of having no subject index to the guide, there are a few niggling concerns. The lack of consistency in describing material is

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2 The term "fonds" refers to all material created by or collected by an individual, a family, an institution, or an organization.

puzzling. Under entry number 627, the Ruth Kuhlman collection, for example, no date is given. If this means that the date is unknown, why did the authors not note that fact? In the case of entry number 901, the Estelle Paul collection, "n.d." is used to indicate the material is undated, but no extent of the essay is given. Sometimes the descriptions are so scant as to leave one wondering: entry number 743, the Marie Anne McDougall collection, simply states "Audiotape, 'Metis'." Is this tape about Metis people she knew in her community? Is it information about Metis in general? Was Marie Anne McDougall Metis? Possibly the authors were hampered by scant information provided by the archives, and did not have time to actually view the papers or hear the tapes themselves. And sadly, from an archivist's point of view, the authors' comment that the list of the oral histories in the Saskatoon office "was not made available to us," would certainly have hindered their descriptive process.

These concerns in general, however, pale in relation to the larger question: will this guide actually be used for the purpose for which it was intended, that is, to lead users to both specific repositories and collections? The answer is probably yes, although guides are definitely not the reference of choice. Michael E. Stevens' critical study of historians in 1977 found that "historians overwhelmingly indicated that the most useful sources are other historians, either in secondary works or by word of mouth."[3] A 1979 survey of users by the Committee on Finding Aids of the Society of American Archivists reinforced this finding, stating that "most users located materials equally by means of archivists' and teachers' suggestions, citations in the literature, and repository guides," but adding that all of these ranked well below suggestions from colleagues.[4] A survey by archivist Diane Beattie in 1989 of the members of the Canadian Committee on Women's History, although again restricted to historians, produced a slightly different finding, due to the different nature of the questions she asked. When historians were asked to rank tools for finding relevant information on women's history by the usefulness of these tools, published guides ranked higher than inventories, catalogues or indexes, and were equal to the usefulness of informal methods, such as consulting archivists, colleagues and the like.

With regards to the importance of names versus subject headings as reference points to accessing materials, studies by Stevens, Beattie and others have shown that historians and other users, not surprisingly, generally tend to use both, although provenancial indexes tend to come out ahead. I think most archivists and users would agree that it is absolutely essential to provide names of the people who created the materials, as well

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3 Michael E. Stevens, "The Historian and Archival Finding Aids," *Georgia Archive* 5, no.1 (Winter 1977): 68.

4 Diane L. Beattie, " An Archival User Study: Researchers in the Field of Women's History," *Archivaria* 29 (Winter 1989-90): 36.

as the names of those featured in the archival fonds, but as Beattie points out, subject access is also critical to the successful use of a guide.

Thus it is likely that although historians and general users will continue to consult archivists and colleagues for tips on where to find materials, a thematic guide to the holdings on women contained in the fonds of the Saskatchewan Archives Board will likely be consulted, possibly as much by archivists as by researchers. One hopes that the next effort by the authors of this guide will include a subject index as well as a name index. Where human resources do not permit undertaking the compilation of a thorough subject index, perhaps the publication of such a thematic guide on a CD-ROM will address the problem. If the guide were relatively slender, as this one is, full-text searching would be possible, and would provide multiple provenancial and subject access points. It is an intriguing area for the Canadian Plains Research Center to consider in publishing future efforts.

All in all, Powell and Williams are to be commended for their efforts. As researchers themselves, they no doubt felt the need for such a tool, and it is hoped that further guides on the subject of women's history will be prepared. Archivists, in the meantime, can do their part by being more conscientious about collecting the papers created by and about women, all women, to add a few more pieces to the quilt.

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Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools, by J.R. Miller. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996. Pp. 582.

> There is a sex abuse scandal unfolding in this province that has the potential to become our Mount Cashel. But where there were 38 victims of abuse at the Newfoundland orphanage, the federal government has received lawsuits from more than 100 former students who attended the Gordon Indian Residential School during the late 1960s and early 1970s (Cuthand 1997: A3).

The above quotation from Doug Cuthand's article in the 10 February 1997 edition of the Regina *Leader Post* typifies the alarming number of reports that have come to light regarding the experience that First Nations people were forced to endure during the latter half of the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth century. J.R. Miller in his book *Shingwauk's Vision*, attempts to illustrate what effects the residential school system in Canada had on First Nation's people and their communities. Miller breaks down his lengthy study into three main sections. The first section examines the evolution of Indian residential school policy in Canada in a more or less

chronological manner. The second section of the book attempts to illustrate what the residential school experience held for those who entered into the system. The final section of the book discusses the winding down of the residential school system and an assessment of the system by Miller.

The first section which analyzes the evolution of Indian residential school policy in Canada is well researched and thoroughly documented. Miller by way of introduction provides examples of traditional forms of education from various First Nations across Canada. This is done in order for the reader to have some comprehension of the totally different approach that residential schools administrators would take in their approach to the educating of First Nations children. Miller examines the early attempts by both the French in New France and the British in British North America to implement schools that were to begin to serve Indian people living in these territories. As Miller points out these early schools often received the support of Indian groups:

> A variety of Indian groups, especially Ojibwa, in those regions where immigration was greatest had come to recognize their inability to maintain a traditional hunting gathering economy. They acquiesced in the schooling of their young as the way to acquire the skills needed to deal with the invading society and to survive economically alongside it (83-84).

For the most part these early ventures did not meet with much success.

By 1830 it became clear that "assimilation through evangelization, education, and agriculture would have to be the policy" (75) adopted by the government. Miller suggests that this approach was necessary because, as the American experience had illustrated, efforts to force Indians off the land were "inimical, expensive and politically dangerous" (75). Miller concludes this first section by examining the evolution of the residential school system as it evolved to serve the assimilationist goals that the Canadian government had planned for Indian people. Both the government and missionaries had decided that the assimilation of Indian people could best be accomplished by removing children from the influence of their parents. It was the residential school system that was chosen to accomplish this goal.

The most moving and captivating portion of Miller's book is the second section which examines the impact that the assimilationist agenda of the schools had on Indian children and their families. Miller examines how classroom and class, race and assimilation, gender, work and play, child care, abuse, and resistance all played roles in the assimilation attempts of the residential schools. Miller draws examples from interviews and oral histories as well as archival materials to illustrate very vividly the conditions under which Indian children were forced to live. It was in this section that the reviewer found some shortcomings. Miller alludes to the ideas of scientific racism and how these were part of the social evolutionary thinking of Victorian Canada. His discussion of Victorian thinking in the opinion of this reviewer is not as complete as it might have been. It was Victorian thinking and the ideas of social evolution and progress that were driving

the assimilationist approach in Indian Affairs during the heyday of residential schools. Miller makes mention of Victorian thinking in chapters four, six and seven, but only in abbreviated forms. This reviewer would suggest that a better presentation of the concepts regarding Victorian thinking would have allowed readers the opportunity to come to a better understanding of the policies that developed regarding the residential schools. Without an understanding of the thinking driving policies one can fall into the trap of pointing fingers at officials and accusing them of racism. This is not to suggest that many of these individuals did not take very racist approaches to their work but at the same time these people were also products of their time. The approach and thinking was not out of the ordinary. Miller is aware of this and addresses this issue in his concluding section, however, a more complete discussion of Victorian thinking with respect to Indian people and race in general would give readers a greater understanding of both government and missionary approaches to Indian people in Canada.

Another shortcomings that this reviewer found with the work deals with the chapter regarding child care. In this chapter Miller outlines the harsh and adverse conditions under which the residential students were forced to live. He discusses the poor quality of food, the problems with disease, the lack of companionship with adults, and deplorable sleeping arrangements to name but a few. A discussion of how parental guidance was lacking at the schools and how this affected the parenting skills of those who lived through the residential school experience would have improved the quality of this chapter. A discussion along these lines would have reinforced the harmful effects that residential schools had on people even years after they had left them. Miller in his chapter on abuse identifies the emotional stress of not being able to be with one's family as the thing that most former students remember as being the worst. A discussion of the impact this must have had on the parents who lost their children to the schools would have added to the discussion of the emotional abuse suffered. It is evident that the residential school experience affected not just those who attended.

The above mentioned shortcomings, however, are minor. They are more topics for further study than actual criticisms. This is the real strong point of the book. By covering such a huge topic in both informational and geographic senses Miller has opened an important window for future study. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in the Indian history of Canada. It is well thought out and very well organized. Miller should be commended for his use of oral interviews as well as archival materials to tell his story. Very often historians are not willing to make use of oral histories or give them the same authority as the written archival materials. Miller is very conscious of the importance of oral history and his extensive use of it demonstrates his willingness to accept it. In fact most of Miller's conclusions are based on oral history rather than the written archival record. Finally, Miller makes use of endnotes in his book. This reviewer found this somewhat distracting as the book is well documented and this meant flipping to the back of the book again and again. Notes at the bottom of the page would have made the reading of the book more enjoyable. But this is

a moot point as it is more a matter of personal preference than it is content. *Shingwauk's Vision* is destined to become the new reference work on residential schools in Canada.

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Letters to a Friend

Union of Opposites: Letters from Rit Svane Wengel, edited by Craig W. Miller. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1996. Pp. 207.

Women's autobiographies sometimes take unconventional forms, especially if, for reasons of class or social situation, the writers have not had the desire or the ability to write their lives as stories of adventure and achievement. Many women, however, do keep records of their lives for themselves in their diaries or for their families in their personal letters, never imagining such records, edited after their deaths, would ever become their official autobiographies. Craig Miller, in *Union of Opposites: Letters from Rit Svane Wengel*, has edited a collection of letters to create autobiographies of both the letter writer and, in a way, himself. The book is primarily about a "union of opposites," or the marriage between Danish, university-educated governess Rit Svane and her childhood sweetheart Paul Wengel, who had emigrated to a farm near Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. The tale of this match not made in heaven is told primarily through Rit Svane Wengel's letters over the years to her friend Mrs. Miller, the mother of Craig W. Miller. The letters to Mrs. Miller span the years 1926 to 1959, and are supplemented by letters Mrs. Wengel wrote to others, including Craig Miller, her husband Paul, and her friend Dorothy Barritt McCutcheon.

One-sided correspondence always presents a mystery for the reader, since letters are usually intended for a very limited audience of one. Mrs. Wengel's letters to her friend Mrs. Miller are even more special, because they are a correspondence between two women who were close friends throughout their adult years. Mrs. Wengel says things in her letters to Mrs. Miller that she may not have been able to tell anyone else. We as readers, however, see only her needs and desires in this friendship, since the collection does not include Mrs. Miller's half of the correspondence. We can see how much Mrs. Miller's friendship meant to Mrs. Wengel as she struggled through years of a difficult and abusive marriage. But we have no idea what this friendship meant to Mrs. Miller.

Mrs. Wengel needed a friend like Mrs. Miller to whom she could tell anything. Paul Wengel drank too much, left his wife for flings with other women, refused Mrs. Wengel financial support when she needed it, and

abused her both verbally and physically. Mrs. Wengel held high ideals and stuck with the marriage through the most difficult circumstances and long periods of separation. Her determination was finally rewarded by more dedicated attention on the part of her husband late in her life, but only after years of the most painful suffering. This marriage, or "union of opposites" persisted in the face of all reason, and the letters document the stages through which it progressed, offering what editor Craig Miller calls a "profoundly complex" tale.

Miller was moved by the tale revealed through these letters to his mother, since Mrs. Wengel influenced him in his pursuit of learning as a child. Because Mrs. Wengel meant so much to him, Miller augments her story with photos, letters, and diary entries of his own. The Miller family smiles out to readers on several pages, while Mrs. Wengel remains absent and elusive. The happy story of the Miller family's successes in school, work, home, and family sets Mrs. Wengel's disappointments and sorrows in a poignant perspective. Because of his strong feelings for Mrs. Wengel, Miller has appropriated her story in parts, and has told it as his own. The counterpoint between the stories of the two families is ironic, and casts an oblique light on the content of the letters.

Mrs. Wengel yearned for a happy family life, and the Miller family provided her a window onto one for her. Her lasting devotion to Mrs. Miller is shown through these years of letters in which she bares her soul, sharing stories of troubles both personal and financial. These letters now hang in the world without the anchor of a reply, so that gaps and omissions become the feature of these accounts of Mrs. Wengel's life.

Craig Miller enjoyed Paul Wengel's company, and makes a call for sympathy for Paul when reading an account that portrays him as a thoughtless alcoholic and womanizer. Paul's side of the story, however, would be less interesting than Mrs. Miller's. The book is a story of two unions: the difficult one between the Wengels, and the supportive one between the two women correspondents. The conditions of the friendship between the two women is the untold story in this one-sided set of letters. Miller has framed the story as a tale of marriage and immigration, but it is also a story of determined female friendship. Mrs. Wengel apparently thought of Mrs. Miller often, and links her thought to special dates in Mrs. Miller's life such as birthdays and anniversaries. These two women lived their lives in parallel, even though miles apart. Because her marriage was so painful, Mrs. Wengel found herself living vicariously through Mrs. Miller, whose seemingly charmed life offset Mrs. Wengel's lifelong search for a home and love to fill it. Mrs. Wengel never did find her home of love, but she knew it was somewhere, with her friend Mrs. Miller.

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