



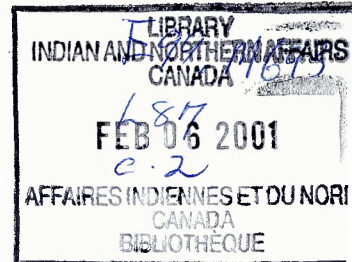
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Aspects of Canadian Metis History

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ASPECTS OF CANADIAN METIS HISTORY

by

Antoine S. Lussier

for

Research Branch
Corporate Policy
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

1985

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INTRODUCTION

This publication unites three essays, written during the spring of 1984, which deal with various facets of the complex subject, Metis identification.

The first essay, "The Question of Identity and the Constitution," examines the present dilemma of Metis identification. Here the principal concern is the identify problem created by past writers of Metis history and the difficulties faced by the modern writer in an era where no clear, unchallenged definition of Metis exists. A number of contemporary works are cited, each of which uses "Metis" within a specific context. Current definitions proposed by various political organizations are included--none of which is definitive.

In the second essay, "The Metis and the Non-Status Indians, 1967-1984 and the Metis and the Indians, 1960-1984," two principal areas are addressed: the problems of defining non-status Indians as Metis, and Indian-Metis relations in the last twenty years. Conflicts between the various groups are outlined in a discussion of overlapping identities and confused public perceptions.

In the final essay, "The Metis and the French Canadians, 1870-1984," the author explores some of the forces and circumstances which influenced early relations between these two groups in western Canada. Two distinct periods are recognized. The first five years formed an era in which the Metis found apparent support among their French-Canadian compatriots. Collapse of this unity in the years after 1875 is traced, focusing on Metis alienation and the evolution of a Metis identity no longer associated with the French language or with a Catholic faith.

Since these papers were written, many new developments have taken place on the political scene, as constitutional talks and the issue of aboriginal rights focus national attention on the question of "Who is a Metis?"

The views expressed herein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

The Question of Identity and the Constitution:
The Metis of Canada in 1984

by

Antoine S. Lussier

for

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Corporate Policy
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

1985

The Historical Differences Between Métis and Half-Breeds
According to certain 19th- and 20th-Century Writers

At the Newberry Library Métis-Mixed Blood Conference, held in September 1981, there appeared to be much confusion regarding the term to be used when discussing the mixed-blood people of nineteenth-century Canada and the northern United States. Some argued that the term half-breed was pejorative; others, that Métis should be used only when referring to French-speaking people of mixed blood. Still another term that could be used, or at least considered, is synethnics. Given that historians, anthropologists and sociologists often use a contemporary term to identify an historical group, it is no wonder that the group in question (in this case, people of mixed blood) are going through an identity crisis today.

The many Métis organizations in existence in Canada provide an insight into who can belong to the organization. The following definitions are used in defining a Métis:

- a) A person of mixed blood, Indian and European.¹
- b) One who considers himself Métis.²
- c) An enfranchised Indian.³

- d) One who received land scrip during the 1870s and '80s. ⁴

- e) One who is identified with a group that identifies itself as Métis.⁵

- f) A Native person who is not a registered Indian.⁶

- g) In some Manitoba Métis Federation locals, a non-Native can belong to the MMF provided he/she is married to a Métis. For the sake of the administrative records of the organization, that person is counted as Métis.⁷

It can be noted therefore that the traditional characteristics of language, lifestyle, history, religion, etc., no longer form the basis for this new identity. Economics has replaced history, and Indian background is now most important. These new criteria have not brought the diverse Métis cultural groups together but have more or less separated them. For instance, the Manitoba Métis Federation allows non-Natives the right of membership if they are married to Métis. The Union Nationale Métisse de St. Joseph du Manitoba constitution, on the other hand, states specifically that membership requires a person to be Roman Catholic,

French-speaking and Métis.⁸ Interestingly enough, the organization does not define 'Métis'. The fact that Métis organizations allow non-status Indian people the opportunity to join has not been without its problems.

In Canada's Forgotten People: The Metis, D.B. Sealey foresaw the problems of defining a Métis if the organizations continued to allow non-status Indians to become members. Sealey stated:

But the examples used show why many non-status Indians are striving to become Indians in a legal sense. They also show why an organisation comprised of both Metis and Non-Status Indians will almost inevitably be beset by conflict.⁹

The contemporary problem of finding a place for non-status Indians within the Métis community was also discussed by Norval Desjarlais in the January 1973 issue of the Manitoba Metis Federation News. Using his fictional character, Pierre Larocque, to describe the dilemma of defining a Métis, Desjarlais has "ole Pierre" conclude:

So I say to you Norval, dat is how we find de true Metis and de true Indian. Anybody who want to join de Indian den dey must first of all do de war dance, snake dance, grass dance and play de tom-toms...

And all dees guys who want to join the Metis Federation will have to do de jig and a square dance - dats de firt ting before dey join - like dey have in dem secret outfits - you know what I mean...¹⁰

But is this dilemma really a new phenomenon? Historical evidence suggests that the topic was also debated in the nineteenth century. Writing in the Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland in 1875, A.P. Reid classified the "mixed-blood race," as he called them, into nine categories. They were those who descended from:

1. An Anglo-Saxon father and Indian mother.
2. The French & French Canadian father and Indian mother.
3. The Anglo-Saxon father and mixed Anglo-Saxon and Indian mother.
4. The French father and mixed French and Indian mother.
5. The "Halfbreed" Anglo-Saxon and Indian as father and mother.
6. The "Halfbreed" French and Indian as father and mother.
7. The descendants proceedings from intermarriage of fifth class.
8. The descendants proceedings from intermarriage of sixth class.
9. The mixed or "Halfbreed" father and Indian mother.¹¹

It is important to note here that Reid includes the French-Métis in his definition of mixed-bloods. No cultural, linguistic or religious differences are described.

Dr. J. Foster, in The Metis: The People and the Term, suggests that historians and anthropologists are at fault for the contemporary dilemma because research is being done on

mixed-blood groups in nineteenth-century Canada using the contemporary definition of Métis -- that is, people who are of Indian ancestry but who are not registered Indians.

According to Foster, writers should not attribute a term or characteristics to a group of people who did not have those particular characteristics. If the Métis people of today are satisfied with their new-found identity or identities, it is imperative that the contemporary writer not attribute nineteenth-century cultural characteristics to Métis of today. The converse is also true. Writers should not use the contemporary definition of Métis or half-breed when describing nineteenth-century mixed-bloods.

Nineteenth-century writers have left us with a number of descriptions of the Métis and the half-breeds. Too often these writers have been overlooked because of our desire to make nineteenth-century mixed-bloods appear as a homogeneous group. A review of some of the nineteenth-century literature on the mixed-bloods will serve to prove my point.

II

In A Sketch of the North-West of America, Mgr. Taché devotes eleven pages to differences between the French-Métis and the half-breeds. He describes the French-Métis as "a race of handsome men, large, strong and well made; although generally swarthy, a great many of them are very fair, showing no sign of Indian extraction."¹² He then lists a number of traits; an instinct peculiarly Indian, their powers of observation, an excellent memory, sense of humor, intelligence and skill as horsemen. In a remarkable list of their virtues and faults, he includes their warm-heartedness, willingness to help, love for children, patience and honesty. His list of faults refers to drunkenness, frivolity, a desire for immediate gratification, love of pleasure, generous hospitality, love of freedom, independence and improvidence. He concludes by stating:

These traits of character are not peculiar to French-Metis, but belong as well to others.¹³

I esteem the English Half-Breeds, but they will excuse me for asserting that in character they are in nowise the superiors of their fellow countrymen -- the French Half-Breeds.¹⁴

Taché goes on to describe his contempt for the author (he does not mention the name) of Journey from the Atlantic to the Pacific:

The French Half-Breeds, being intensely superstitious and firm believers in dreams, omens and warnings are apt disciples of the Roman faith. Completely under the influence of the priests in most respects, and observing the outward forms of their religion with great regularity, they are grossly immoral, often dishonest and generally not trustworthy.¹⁵

Alexander Ross also described a major difference between the French Métis and the English half-breeds. In The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress, and Present State, Ross described the half-breed thus:

The North American Half-Breeds are by no means a people who treasure up animosity long, if they can resent it soon; they are a fickle people who act according to the impulse of the moment give free scope to their passions, quarrel this moment, and become friends again the next. This disposition is more peculiarly the case with those of French extraction...¹⁶

An anonymous writer suggested that:

They [the English Half-Breeds] have more self-respect than the French. The latter don't hesitate to marry Indian women; the former regard such marriages with abhorrence.¹⁷

And what was Taché's answer to this charge?

Let us again say to those who reflect, that the French population, and, 'a fortiori' the French, French Metis population were deprived almost entirely of the important influence of civilized women until the arrival of Sisters of Charity in the country...¹⁸

In his Arctic Searching Expedition, Sir John Richardson described the "Half-Breeds" in a most interesting manner:

In character the Half-Breeds vary according to their paternity, the descendants of the Orkney laborers being generally steady, provident agriculturalists of the Protestant faith; while the children of the Roman Catholic Canadian voyageurs have much of the levity and thought-lessness of their fathers combined with that inability to resist temptation which is common to the two races from which they are sprung.¹⁹

Early twentieth-century writers continued the tradition of describing the Métis and half-breeds as separate entities.

In Mgr. Provencher et son Temps, Donatien Fremont describes the French-speaking Métis as the group that took the longest to adapt to farming, basically because of their love of freedom and the hunt. According to Fremont, who obviously got his information from Fr. Morice, L'Histoire de l'Ouest Canadien, the Métis would not become like "les jardiniers" -- a term used to describe those colonists who tilled the soil.

Marcel Giraud in Le Métis Canadien quotes Mgr. Provencher's description of the French-Métis: "La pioche ne convient pas aux Bois Brûlés."

In The Birth of Western Canada, G.F.G. Stanley states:

They [the Métis] dressed like the Whites in common blue capote, red belt, and corduroy trousers: The belt was the simple badge of distinction, the Métis wearing it under and the Whites generally over the capote.²⁰

Southesk, writing about the Half-Breeds, described them thus:

Too many at home have formed a false idea of the Half-Breeds, imagining them to be a race little removed from barbarians in habits and appearance... I doubt if a Half-Breed, dressed and educated like an Englishman, would seem at all remarkable in London society. They build and farm like other people, they go to church and to courts of law, they recognize no chiefs (except when they elect a leader for their great hunting expeditions) and in all respects they are like civilized men, not more uneducated, immoral, or disorderly, than many communities in the Old World.²¹

Yet, according to both G.F.G. Stanley and Alexander Ross, the French half-breeds, as Ross described them, were not without faults. Stanley states:

At the same time the French Half-Breeds were indolent, thoughtless and improvident, unrestrained in their desire, restless, clannish and vain. Life held no thought of

the morrow. To become the envied possessor of a new suit, rifle, or horse, they would readily deprive themselves and their families of the necessities of life.²²

Alexander Ross adds:

A Half-Breed able to exhibit a fine horse, and gay cariote is in his glory; this achievement is at once the height of his ambition, and his ruin. Possessed of these, the thriftless fellow's habitation goes to ruin; he is never at home, but driving and carioling in all places, and every opportunity; blustering and bantering every one he meets.²³

Another observer described the French-Métis social life as one of constant intoxication, especially if a wedding was taking place.

They are a merry, light-hearted obliging race, recklessly generous, hospitable, and extravagant. Dancing goes on nearly every night throughout the winter, and a wedding, or 'noce' as it is called is celebrated by keeping open house, and relays of fiddlers are busily employed playing for the dancers all through the night and often far on into the next day. By that time most of the guests are incapacitated from saltatory exercise; for rum flows freely on these occasions, and when a half-breed drinks he does it, as he says, *comme il faut* -- that is, until he obtains the desired happiness of complete intoxication.²⁴

Cheadle contrasted the Métis and the half-breed, using the Scottish and English quality of thriftiness. According to Cheadle, the English and Scottish half-breeds:

Form a pleasing contrast to their French neighbours, being thrifty, industrious, and many of them wealthy, in their way... we met but few [who] equalled the French Half-Breeds in idleness and frivolity.²⁵

John McLean, in his 'Notes of a Twenty-Five Years Service in the Hudson's Bay Territory,' also stated:

The English half-Breeds, as the mixed progeny of the British are designated, possess many of the characteristics of their fathers; they generally prefer the more certain pursuit of husbandry to the chase, and follow close on the heels of the Scotch in the path of industry and moral rectitude. Very few of them resort to the plains, unless for the purpose of trafficking the produce of their farms for the produce of the chase; and it is said that they frequently return home better supplied with meat than the hunters themselves.²⁶

But, Stanley argues, though these differences existed, there were common bonds that held the two groups together.

Both sprang from a common race; both claimed territorial rights to the North-West through their Indian Ancestry; both, in a large measure, spoke their mother tongue in addition to French or English.²⁷

If Stanley is correct, then the bonds should have kept the many Métis cultural groups united against adversity. The events of 1870 and 1885 proved this to be wrong. Many Métis and half-breeds did not side with Riel in both insurrections. In 1870, the Métis of White Horse Plains, St. Laurent and the half-breeds of Kildonan did not support Riel. Regarding 1885, Fr. Morice argues that the Métis were coerced to fight or meet immediate death at the hands of Riel's soldiers.

It is important therefore to realize that there were many mixed-blood groups at Red River during the nineteenth century and that each was distinct religiously, linguistically and even geographically. To write now as if they were a homogeneous group is to distort history and, more important, attribute characteristics and historical drama to groups that did not see themselves as such.

III

The Contemporary Historiography

Before the 1960s the writing of Métis history was a rather simple exercise, because the Métis were linguistically and culturally defined. A Métis was a person of Indian-French ancestry who spoke French and was, in the majority of cases,

Roman Catholic. Those who weren't were referred to as half-breeds, country-born and/or Rupertslanders. In The Metis: The People and the Term, Dr. John Foster points to the religious and linguistic differences that tended to separate the mixed-blood groups. But since the 1960s the term has taken on different meanings and, as a result, now creates a dilemma for the writer of Métis history. A Métis is no longer defined as one whose ancestors are French-Indian but one of European-Indian mix. Secondly, it is now fashionable to accept as Métis a person who considers himself as such. The problem is that one who is Métis in one community may not necessarily be accepted as Métis in another Métis community. For instance, a French-speaking Métis may be considered a French-Canadian in a Métis community where Cree is the first language and English the second. Conversely, the French-speaking Métis may view the Cree-speaking person as an Indian.

The contemporary definition also includes enfranchised Indians -- those who have given up their status. Thus, language, religion, traditions and history are not used as criteria for the new definition. Culturally, the enfranchised person is Indian. However, since s/he cannot be white, nor Indian by law, s/he tends to drift toward the Métis.

Another point of Métis identification is reference to the land scrip of 1870. Those whose grandparents received scrip or land allotments are considered to be of Métis ancestry and

therefore Métis. Since scrip was used to extinguish the half-breed aboriginal title to the land, one would assume that proof of Indian ancestry was necessary. But according to W.P. Fillmore in the Manitoba Bar News of August 1968, scrip commissioners in northern Saskatchewan placed the onus on individuals to prove they had European ancestry before obtaining it. Thus, is one Métis because of white blood? Or because of Indian blood? Or both? To complicate matters further, the Manitoba Metis Federation Constitution (1976) allows non-Natives to be registered as associate members of the organization, provided they are married to Métis. Hence, whites can now be Métis by association. Then there is Riel's famous proclamation:

It is true that our savage origin is humble, but it is meet that we honor our mothers as well as our fathers. Why should we concern ourselves about what degree of mixture we possess of European or Indian blood? If we have ever so little of either gratitude or filial love, should we not be proud to say, "We are Métis!"²⁸

Perhaps Riel foresaw the future -- given his apocalyptic tendencies. Lastly, the province of Alberta has legislation that defines a Métis as a person with one-quarter Indian blood.²⁹

The problem then is how to approach Métis historiography using a narrow definition that might offend those segments of the community that consider themselves Métis. Perhaps Professor Jennings is correct; a term such as synethnics might just encompass all.

If the writers of Métis history have problems defining a Métis, the non-academic, non-Métis person is even more confused. Consider the following definitions given by non-Natives in 1959.

1. Actually, in our company we evade the issue by referring to all treaty Indians, non-treaty Indians, breeds, etc. as natives. But I would consider that anyone who has a white grandfather is a Half-Breed.
2. Any person of mixed white and Indian blood having not less than one-quarter Indian blood but that does not include Indians as defined in the Indian Act nor non-treaty Indians.
3. Half-Breeds are persons of Indian descent living in poor houses similar to those on the reserve, one-eighth being as far as I would go in searching for people of Indian background.
4. Any full-blooded or half-blooded Indian who is not living as a white person. In this connection, the attitude of the white neighbors may force certain families to remain Half-Breeds longer than they would otherwise.

5. The term "Half-Breed" refers broadly to persons of sufficient Indian blood to be barred from the white class and with enough white blood to be distinguished from Indians.
6. A person who when he has money lives like a white man and when he is broke lives like an Indian.
7. A Half-Breed is a person who has some degree of Indian blood plus an upbringing which combines factors of primitive living usually in conjunction with a hunting and fishing economy. This applies even when these people have almost embraced the white way of life. A person with a similar degree of Indian blood is accepted into the Canadian way of life only when he conforms to all general requirements of this society; the degree of blood is not too important.
8. People with Indian background who do menial tasks or are generally employed on part-time jobs. They usually live in poorer homes and have poorer standards of living. For example, I would not consider Mr. X as a Half-Breed because he is an office manager and a respected citizen in our community.
9. I would call Half-Breed any Indian not in treaty as well as any of those persons who have some white blood in their background.
10. Half-Breeds are individuals who possess half Indian and half White blood and those who live like the Indians. Métis are different in that they have their own ways and live differently from the Indian.

Jean Lagasse, who quotes these definitions in Populations of Indian Ancestry in Manitoba, draws the following conclusion:

From these definitions one must conclude that there exists a certain way of life in Manitoba which, in addition to physical characteristics, identifies one as a Metis or a Half-Breed. This way of life was described as "living in poor houses," "not living as a white person," "living like the Indians," non-conformance to the general requirements of this society," "performing menial tasks," "Poor standards of living," to mention but a few of the criteria used by the informants.

In the same study Lagasse noted that when Métis people were requested to state their nationality "less than one per cent, or three out of 295, said they would give "Métis" in answer to that question, 42 per cent or 123 stated that they would say that their nationality is half-breed, while 68 or 23 per cent would answer that they are Indian." Among the latter, however, were many enfranchised as well as treaty Indians. Ten per cent claimed that they usually say that they are Canadians, while 18 per cent give a European nationality (See Table 10 from Lagasse's study).

What has led to such confusion? Have scholars neglected to define clearly who they meant by Métis in their writings? A brief look at what has been written since 1934 may give a clue to the contemporary dilemma of writing Métis history. Between 1934 and 1967, the term Métis was synonymous with French-Indian mix. One finds this in the writings of Auguste de Tremaudan,

Table 10 Answers Received When 295 Metis Were Requested to State What Nationality They Gave When Asked to Say What Their Nationality Is.

<u>Nationality Stated</u>	<u>Number of Metis Answering</u>
Canadian	19
Scotch Canadian	1
French Canadian	10
Irish Canadian	<u>1</u>
Total Identifying Themselves as <u>Canadian</u> :	31 or 10.5 per cent
Indian	20
Saulteaux	3
Cree	44
Treaty	<u>1</u>
Total Identifying Themselves as <u>Indian</u> :	68 or 23.0 per cent
Half-Breed	58
Métis	3
French Half-Breed	37
Scotch Half-Breed	16
English half-Breed	2
French & Cree Half-Breed	1
Indian Half-Breed	4
Scotch and German Breed	1
French and Saulteaux	<u>1</u>
Total Identifying Themselves as <u>Half-Breed</u> :	123 or 41.7 per cent
French	20
Scotch	15
English	6
Icelandic	3
Irish	3
Ukrainian	2
Swedish	1
Lithuanian	1
American	1
Belgian	<u>1</u>
Total Identifying Themselves as <u>European</u> :	53 or 17.8 per cent

Others⁽¹⁾ Total Number of Answers: 295

(1) Others include 8 who answered, "I don't know," 4 who said, "I don't understand." Eight answers were worded in such a way that they did not fit in any of the above classifications (Mulligan Stew Canadian, Mongrel).

Source: Lagasse, Jean H. Populations of Indian Ancestry Living in Manitoba, 1959, p. 55.

L'Histoire de la Nation Métisse, (1936) a book that the Union Nationale Métisse de St. Joseph requested be published to give the Métis view of what occurred at Batoche in 1885. During the same year, Dr. G.F.G. Stanley's Birth of Western Canada appeared and it too used the term Métis to signify French-Indian mix. The book, however, has been criticized for its social Darwinist thesis of civilization versus the frontier. Nevertheless, the Métis are defined with the French element at Red River.

Marcel Giraud's Le Métis Canadien, a 1296-page study done in 1945, continues in the same tone. Once again, the Metis French heritage dominates. This trend continues on in E.B. Osler's The Man Who Had to Hang and Stanley's biography, Louis Riel.

A new approach occurs in Dr. Peter Charlebois's The Life of Louis Riel (1975). Suddenly, a left-wing twist is given to the events of 1869-70 and 1885. Howard Adams continues this trend in Prison of Grass (1975). Not only is Métis history now presented from a Marxist perspective, but the definition of the term itself has changed. Pan-Indianism in the 1970s made the Métis part of the 'Native people' category and, as such, the Métis were written about as part of the history of the Native peoples in North America.

The One and a Half Men (1982) by Murray Dobbin and Louis David Riel by Tom Flanagan are two publications that break with tradition. Dobbin writes about two men involved with the Alberta Metis Association during the twentieth century, while Flanagan presents a controversial biography of Riel. The One and a Half Men is invaluable because it is one of three books that deal with the Métis in this century. To date most Métis histories have dealt with events and issues of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

H. Bowsfield's Louis Riel: Rebel or Victim presents an account of the controversies surrounding Riel. The Last War Drum by Desmond Morton and the introduction to Alexander Begg's Red River Journal by W.L. Morton are valuable because the former presents evidence that French Canadian troops were sent to fight their Métis co-patriots in 1885; the latter is valuable because W.L. Morton analyses the different interpretations of the 1870 insurrection. Kinsey Howard's Strange Empire is a controversial book because of its lack of footnotes; also it tends to read more like a novel than an historical account. L'Espaces de Louis Goulet, which has now been translated as Vanishing Spaces, is a valuable source for anyone interested in reading about Métis folklore, culture and tradition. Unfortunately, the French version should have been published in Métis French, the language in which much of it was

originally written. Sealey and Lussier's Canada's Forgotten People: The Metis is especially useful to the student of contemporary Native organizations and Métis-Indian relations.

In all of these writings one important point becomes clear; the Métis are defined within the context of the specific writing. Thus, no clear definition emerges of who the Métis were and who they are today.

Part of the source of the problem in contemporary historiography stems from the 1950s. With the advent of the civil rights movements and Pan-Indianism, many Native people looked to a leader who had challenged authority. For the Métis it was Louis Riel. Suddenly in the 1960s it became fashionable to identify with a rebel leader. Prior to 1967 (I use this date because the discussions leading to the formation of the Manitoba Metis Federation took place that year), most Scottish half-breeds would have renounced Riel as a traitor. In fact there already existed a Métis organization known as the Union Nationale Métisse de St. Joseph, which catered to the French-Catholic Métis population. Given that it served mainly the Métis people of St. Vital in Winnipeg and two outlying communities, and given that it wasn't politically active, many French-speaking Métis instead joined the MMF because it offered housing, recreation, action on aboriginal claims and educational support.

Hence, the "half-breed" group joined with the French Métis group to form an amalgamation that to this day has not alleviated the old problem of Métis identity. In 1976 the MMF newspaper, Le Métis, was criticized by northern delegates for containing two pages written in French. Furthermore, the head office was staffed by a number of French-speaking Métis totally disproportional to the number of registered French-speaking Métis in the organization. Fearing that the French-speaking Métis element would take over the organization, the northern delegates complained and requested changes.

The writer of Métis history, then, should be aware of the vast cultural and traditional differences that exist within the group of people we call Métis. To make them appear as a homogeneous group is to distort history and to reinforce the confusion that exists today in attempting to define who is a Métis.

IV

The Metis Nationalism of Louis Riel

It is interesting to note that contemporary Métis organizations keep making reference to Louis Riel when discussing or describing Métis nationalism and identity. A

review of Riel's Métis nationalism will show that the organizations have not done their homework in this regard. In his diary and poetry, Riel seldom mentions Indian ancestry as an important element in Métis consciousness. Except for 1885, wherein,

C'est Riel qui introduira dans leurs revendications l'affirmation que les Métis ont un droit spécifique et collectif de propriété sur tous les "Territoires du Nord-Ouest" au titre de sang indien et ceci, en sus de leurs droits individuels de squatters.³⁰

Riel seldom mentions the Indians. In point of fact, he believed that in his New World in western Canada, the Indians would disappear. Through his immigration plan, Riel believed, the Indians would intermarry with immigrants and create "une race nouvelle: la race métisse qui vivrait selon le pays."³¹ Since he believed that the Indians would no longer exist as such, he affirmed that they therefore did not need any specific lands:

Pour les sauvages, ce ne sont pas les terres, c'est un septième du revenu à mesure qu'il augmentera.³²

Gilles Martel, in Les Indiens dans la pensée messianique de Louis Riel, concludes that Riel believed:

En autres mots, le sang indien, dans sa pensée messianique ne remplit que deux fonctions subsidiaires: premièrement, il

assure aux Métis un droit inaliénable à la possession du sol de la nouvelle Terre Promise; et, deuxièmement, le sang indien, en se mêlant aux sangs des diverses nations appelées à peupler le Nouvelle-Monde, les réunira en une large fraternité et leur permettra de participer ainsi aux bienfaits messianiques de la nation métisse canadienne-française seule dépositaire des promesses divines par son ascendance française et catholique.³³

Where, then, is Riel's Métis nationalism to be found? In the French-Canadian heritage of the Metis. When Riel referred to the Métis, he referred "only to the French-speaking element of the Western Half-Breeds. These were Riel's people."³⁴ Therefore, the modern term, which incorporates all half-breeds and even some non-Natives, did not have the same meaning during Riel's time.

Tom Flanagan, in The Political Thought of Louis Riel, notes that on 24 June 1874 Riel wrote the president of the St. Jean Baptiste Society of Montreal:

The French-Canadian Metis of the North (West) are a branch of the French-Canadian tree. They want to grow like that tree, with that tree; they never want to be separated from it, they want to suffer and rejoice with it.³⁵

Riel also wanted the Métis to adopt more French-Canadian customs.

More French-Canadian customs and traditions so that while we call ourselves the Metis people, we may become in fact assimilated to the province of Quebec through education -- without effect or recalcitrance.³⁶

Riel's Métis nationalism was tied not only to the French fact, but also to Roman Catholicism. Mgr. Bourget was asked by Riel to write the Pope and request him to

. . . bless the Metis nation. They are the youngest of all nations of the world. They are small. They love the Blessed Virgin. Bless them as Catholic nations, and the Metis nations will be your joy and your family composed of all the other peoples.³⁷

Riel even extended his religious views to include the Métis within the French-Canadian belief that they had a mission to expand Catholicism and the French fact to all of Canada. In a letter to a cousin, Riel noted

. . . we are working to make the French-Canadian Metis people sufficiently great to be worthy to receive the heritage of Lower Canada.³⁸

Catholicism was to be the uniting force among the Métis.

Le Métis comprend que l'église
Est Reine à la tête de tout
Que du ciel étant la commise
Ses oeuvres seuls restent debout.³⁹

Another unifying force that would preserve a unique Métis identity was the intermarriage of the Métis with French-Canadians. In a letter to J. Lavallée in 1883, Riel postulates his beliefs in the development of a superior race, created by the intermarriage of the Métis and the French-Canadian. (See appendix A.) He believed that the Métis, the Canadians and the French language would also help to make them one.

Métis et Canadiens ensemble
Français, si nos trois éléments
S'amalgament bien, il me semble
Que nous serons un jour plus grand.⁴⁰

It is obvious, then, that Indian blood or Indian ancestry had practically no place in Riel's definition of Métis and of Métis nationalism. To him, the Métis were, and would continue to be, "Métis-Canadien-Français et Catholique".

At no time does Riel refer to a return to Indian ways or traditions. Indian religion is not mentioned. As Martel concludes:

En ce sens, il est permis de dire que la pensée messianique de Riel n'est pas à proprement parler du type "nativiste" puisqu'elle ne postule pas un "retour à des moeurs primitives", v.g. indiennes. En effet, Riel ne propose jamais à son peuple, l'adoption de moeurs ou de coutumes typiquement indiennes.⁴¹

In The Metis of Manitoba: Reformulation of an Ethnic Identity, Joe Sawchuk draws a comparison between the Métis of the nineteenth century and the Métis of the twentieth century. Besides the fact that the term Métis no longer holds the same meaning, Sawchuk notes:

Besides this major shift in philosophy (from remaining separate to working within the society) there are other important differences between the organization of the nineteenth-century and the contemporary Métis. One of the main factors in the organization of the New Nation was a principal occupation - buffalo hunting, and indeed the government at Duck Lake was modeled after the organization of the buffalo hunts. Today the Métis are rather organized around a lack of occupation and the need to improve their social and economic position in terms of the existing social structure. The provisional government at St. Laurent consisted of an elected president and council, and had a code of regulations covering nearly the entire life of the community, including the collection of taxes and law enforcement (Stanley 1936B:404). While the MMF has an elected president and council closely held

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subject to the desires of their constituents, the scope of the MMF is much narrower.

The factors that the Métis of today have in common with their namesakes of the nineteenth century are their Indian ancestry, their marginal status and a tradition from the past. This tradition, however, is being taken over by those who, in the strictest sense, cannot be said to be descendants of the bois-brûlé who roamed the plains in the last century. What has happened, in fact, is that the boundaries which defined the Métis as an ethnic group have been drastically changed to meet changing conditions. But in contemporary civilization, change is an ever-present fact of life, and survival depends in part upon a group's flexibility. Whether or not the adaptations the Métis have made to the twentieth century are sufficient to ensure their survival remains to be seen.⁴²

Obviously, then, the contemporary definition of a Métis holds no ties to the historical definition or even to Riel's concept of what the Métis Nation was about. The contemporary term is based on Indian blood and on economic conditions. History is used to reinforce the new-found nationalism. Unfortunately, Métis history of the nineteenth century has no correlation with the contemporary term Métis. Even Riel wouldn't accept it.

Some New Definitions

Since March 1983, when constitutional talks saw a new group at the constitutional table -- the Metis National Council -- new Métis organizations have also been formed in opposition to the MNC. In Saskatchewan, the National Metis Alliance of Saskatchewan was formed on 13 January 1983. This new group,

... opposes the idea of sovereignty. Nor does it associate Métis identity with land ownership or any claims that would flow from that concept...⁴³

It accused the Association of Metis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan (AMNSIS) of emphasizing "the Indian ancestry of this membership and, despite its name, [it] does not represent Métis people."⁴⁴ The National Metis Alliance also accused "Jim Sinclair and his senior staff and advisors" of not being Métis and therefore not representative of the Métis group.⁴⁵ The NMA of Saskatchewan defines the Métis as "those people whose roots can be traced back to the Métis settlers of the Red River Valley prior to the creation of Manitoba."⁴⁶ One could conclude that this is close to Riel's nationality position all

over again. However, a look at the declaration of the NMA's founding principles reveals that they too have failed to come to grips with the question of who is a Métis:

- (a) Métis and the Métis people be descendants of the Metis Nation of the Red River.
- (b) Métis and only Métis can identify Métis.
- (c) The sole role of the National Metis Alliance of Saskatchewan is
 - (1) to carry on the struggle and objectives of our original descendants
 - (2) to negotiate our union both politically and constitutionally with Canada.
- (d) The NMA of Saskatchewan is to be totally answerable and vulnerable to the Metis people only.
- (e) The NMA of Saskatchewan is non-partisan to non-Metis political parties. The NMA of Saskatchewan is non-sectarian.⁴⁷

In response to the division created by and at the constitutional conference, AMNSIS also set out to develop criteria for Métis identity. The following is their approved plan for determining who is a Métis.

ASSOCIATION OF METIS & NON-STATUS INDIANS OF SASKATCHEWAN

Metis Identification

A Métis is a person of Aboriginal ancestry, who:

1. can provide proof of his/her ancestry; and
2. declares himself/herself to be a Métis; and
3. meets one of the following tests:
 - a) is accepted as a Métis by the Métis community,
 - b) has traditionally held himself/herself out to be a Métis,
 - c) has been recognized by the community-at-large as a Métis.

Proof could include:

1. identification of ancestors who were Indians or who belonged to an Indian tribe;
2. identification of ancestors who received Half-Breed Scrip;

3. affidavits given by priests, lawyers, government officials or other officials with detailed personal knowledge of the individual Métis;
4. historical records or documents recognizing ancestors as Indian or Métis. (Examples are: books, letters, memorandums, etc.);
5. legal documents recognizing certain Métis (Examples are: Orders-in-Council, land titles registered to Manitoba Métis, birth records, etc.);
6. other documentation acceptable to the Association.⁴⁸

The Metis National Council defines a Métis differently. Ferdinand Guiboche, a spokesman for the Council, stated on 30 September 1983:

Non-status Indians shouldn't be included as Métis and that true Métis are descendants of French trappers, traders and hunters and Indians who now live in the three Prairie provinces, northwestern Ontario and the Yukon, Northwest Territories and northern British Columbia.⁴⁹

The Union Nationale Métisse de St. Joseph du Manitoba (as already mentioned) also has its own criteria for defining a Métis. Theirs is closer to Riel's concept of Métis identity -- Roman Catholic and French-speaking.

Conclusion

Thus the definition of the term Métis has changed drastically in one hundred years. One needs to simply consult Doug Sprague's The Genealogy of the First Metis Nation, (Pemmican Publishers, Winnipeg, 1983) to realize that many

French-speaking descendants of the original Métis list of 1818-1870 now consider themselves French-Canadians. No doubt many French-speaking Métis crossed the colour-line between 1870 and 1884 during the land grant fiasco. Until the descendants of those people come forth and present their cases regarding their identity and land claims, it will be left to the half-breeds' descendants to decide the fate of the Métis.

Endnotes

1. The Manitoba Metis Federation Constitution states "A non-registered person of Indian descent." MMF Constitution 1976 article III, 2(a).
2. See page 25 A.M.N.S.I.S. Metis Identification Criteria.
3. See Indian Act, section 108, 109. (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1951)
4. See Indian Act, section 12.
5. See Chart in Appendix.
6. See footnotes one, three and four.
7. Manitoba Metis Federation Constitution, 1976 Article III, section 2(b).
8. La Liberté, vendredi 22 octobre 1982, p. 3.
9. Sealey & Lussier, Canada's Forgotten People: The Metis, (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publishers, 1983) p. 176.
10. Ibid, pp. 171-173.
11. A.P. Reid, Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. 4(1875):45-52.
12. Mgr. A. Taché, Une Esquisse sur le Nord-Ouest de l'Amérique (Montreal: Laval, 1870), pp. 97-110.
13. Ibid
14. Ibid
15. Cited in Taché, pp. 97-110.
16. Alexander Ross, The Red River Settlement (London: Smith Elder & Col, 1856), p. 232.
17. Cited in Taché, Une Esquisse sur le Nord-Ouest, p. 104.
18. Taché, pp. 107-108.
19. Sir John Richardson, Arctic Searching Expedition, cited in Taché pp. 97-110.
20. G.F.G. Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), p. 7.

21. Cited in Stanley, p. 7.
22. Stanley, p. 8.
23. Cited in Stanley, p. 8, also Ross, The Red River Settlement, p. 196.
24. Cited in Stanley, p. 8.
25. Cited in Stanley, p. 9.
26. Cited in Stanley, p. 9.
27. Stanley, p. 10.
28. J.K. Howard, Strange Empire (Toronto: Swan Publishing Co., Ltd., 1952), p. 46.
29. See the Alberta Metis Betterment Act, 1940, Sec. 2(a).
30. Gilles Martel, "Les Indiens dans la pensée messianique de Louis Riel," in A.S. Lussier (ed.), Riel and The Metis (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publishers, 1983), p. 44.
31. Ibid., p. 42.
32. Ibid, p. 48.
33. Ibid, p. 51.
34. T. Flanagan, "The Political Thought of Louis Riel" in Lussier (ed.) Riel & The Metis, p. 114.
35. Cited by Flanagan in Lussier, p. 116.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Cited by Martle in Lussier, p. 42.
40. Cited by Flanagan in Lussier, p. 118.
41. Martel in Lussier, p. 51.
42. J. Sawchuk, The Metis of Manitoba: Reformulation of an Ethnic Identity (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates Ltd., 1978), p. 83-84.
43. Saskatoon Star Phoenix, Monday, March 21, 1983.

Issues affecting Métis and Indians in Manitoba between 1960 and 1980 point this out. This paper presents an overview of four main issues that brought the Métis organizations and the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood into direct confrontation over matters that should have helped the Native cause. Instead, the issues seemed to divide the groups. Paradoxically, the Métis organizations did not want to be identified with the Indians, yet many of the people represented by the Manitoba Métis Federation were non-status Indians. This point is of interest today in light of the recent constitutional talks, where Harry Daniels of the Native Council of Canada requested that the Métis be included in the definition of the term Indian in section 91 (24), much like the Inuit.

PART I

The Problem with Defining Non-status Indians as Métis

The Background

By the late 1960s Pan-Indianism was becoming a national force in the United States. The American Indian Movement, with its spiritual and militant factions, had returned Indian nationalism and Indianism to a new plateau.³ After all, had not Black Elk professed that after his death the fifth generation of Indians would restore the old traditions and values?

Interestingly enough, Pan-Indianism did not take hold in western Canada. It was more often a reason for division between the many Indian/Native groups than a source of unity.

But then, given that Indians are defined legally, the term Métis, which once meant only the mixing of French and Indian blood, but now includes anyone with Indian blood but not a registered Indian, and the rise of non-status Indian groups which neither the Indians nor the Métis had wanted -- it is possible to see why Pan-Indianism did not take root in western

Canada. Granted, attempts were made, but the Indians who are legally and not racially or culturally defined sought to preserve their treaty rights and Indian Act benefits. And rightly so.

In Canada, Indians are defined by a law and not by race or culture. It is possible for non-Native women to become Indians by marrying into a band.⁴ The Métis, once considered the descendants of the children of the fur trade, now include in their definition anyone who has Indian blood but is not a registered Indian as defined in the Indian Act.⁵ This definition poses problems because it allows non-status Indians to join Métis organizations.

The Métis organizations that were established in the late 1960s had their own objectives; not one emphasized a request for Indian status -- the Métis did not want to become Indians. The non-status Indians have as one of their objectives reinstatement in the status fold. But status Indians did not and still do not want them. Hence, since 1967 they have joined Métis organizations, which in 1983 decided to split from them.

Non-status Indians may be divided into three basic groups. One is composed of Indians who are "enfranchised".⁶ They, or their fathers, gave up the special status they once had as Indians and, in return for a sum of money paid to them by government, became ordinary Canadians. Many who did so continued to live on or near a reserve and their children grew

up as Indians -- culturally, but not legally. Still others were illegitimate children, suspected by an Indian band to have a non-Indian father. The band had the privilege of not granting membership to such children and exercised it in many instances.⁷ Still other non-status Indians became so because Indian women married non-Indians and, under the Indian Act, lost their status.⁸ If widowed or deserted by their husbands, the women often returned to live with relatives on the reserve, but Indian status could never be regained. Large numbers of non-status Indians throughout Canada belong to one of these categories. Still greater numbers live off the reserves in Métis communities or in urban areas. These people often want to return to the reserve, where friendship and security are more readily available.

The second category of non-status Indians consists of those, often young, people who never developed an identity as Métis or who found such an identity unsatisfactory. They appear to seek two things associated with Indians. One is to secure the special financial benefits that Indians derive from the treaties. The second is to be associated with the romance of being Indian.⁹ Often,

. . . they are those most desirous of dressing in buckskin and plumed head dress and dancing the newly manufactured "Indian" dances that are so popular with the public who flock to watch such productions. The spectators are pleased to see the "real" Indians. It is, one suspects, an escape

from the disappointing reality of seeing on television the Indian leaders who act, dress and negotiate as do non-Indians. These leaders are shrewd, intelligent and forceful -- anything but "quaint". As they do not fit the stereotype, the average citizen is often disconcerted by such modern Indians and turns with relief of the feathered and half-naked kind seen at dance exhibitions.¹⁰

The manufactured Indian-ness of certain non-status young people perhaps helps them through an identity crisis. Unfortunately, however, many of them appear to become anti-white, anti-Métis and anti-status Indian in an effort to persuade themselves and others of their true Indian-ness.¹¹ To attract attention, they often take wildly extremist views based not on logic but emotion.¹² As they are outspoken, the news media tend to devote an undue amount of space to their racist views. Such people embarrass both the Métis and the Indians and do a great deal of harm, for the public tends to believe that they are representative of all people of Native ancestry.¹³

The third category is composed of people who believe that unity of all people of Native ancestry is both desirable and necessary.

The salvation of the people in an overwhelmingly White North America can be accomplished, they believe, only by building one strong organization. They not only see the need for unity in Canada, but also envision a pan-American union. In many ways, their views are idealistic and

neglect the legal factors which are a basic cause of division. In another sense, the unionists are bluntly pragmatic. The myth of the "pure" Indian is challenged. It is maintained that the mixture of genes is so diverse that "Indian" should now be considered a cultural, rather than biological, group.¹⁴

It is on this important question that many Métis stand firm. The Métis are people of race and culture, neither Indian nor white. They do not, as a group, wish to be either. They are what they are -- Métis.

From an observer's viewpoint, Norval Desjarlais described the dilemma and commented on the problem.

By gosh Pierre, maybe we should set up an M.M.F. office on the Reserves and they could join the Federation. Norval, you crazy, said old Pierre angrily... Why in hell do George and them guys Friendship centre, if der is no Métis? Why dey call their newspaper "The New Nation"? It was the Métis who called themselves the "New Nation", not the Indians ...So I say to you Norval, dat is how we should find de true Métis and de true Indian. Anybody who want to join the Indians den dey must first of all, do de war dance, snake dance, grass dance, and play de tom-toms... And all doze guys who want to join the Métis Federation will have to do the jig and a square dance -- like they have in dem secret outfits...¹⁵

The problem was simply that the Métis did not want anything to do with the non-status Indians who wanted to gain status.¹⁶

One could foresee problems developing in Indian/Métis/non-status relations when, during an interview with the Saskatoon Star-Phoenix in 1976, Noel Starblanket, then president of the National Indian Brotherhood, stated that in Canada there were Indians and there were Natives. The Natives were the Métis, non-status and the Inuit peoples. What Starblanket was emphasizing was that Indians have special rights and privileges that the other groups do not have. The point needed to be made, because the federal government was contemplating the patriation of the Constitution. The Indians did not want the other Native groups to be included in the definition of Indian. Interestingly enough, the non-status group was the only group that continued to seek an alliance with their Indian brethren. The Métis continued to argue their own cause.

The Association of Métis and Non-status Indians of Saskatchewan (AMNSIS) had made its position clear on the issue of membership in its organization with respect to the new Constitution. The organization took the following position:

- Determine, through a registration process, who wants to be referred to as non-status, determine whether these people want a settlement with the Métis, want to return to the reserve, but desire a settlement separate from the Métis.

- Reject any attempts to determine its membership by federal-provincial agreement or by court reference.
- Federal responsibility over Métis and non-status Indians must be confirmed.
- Resolution and determination of the rights of the aboriginal peoples through the political process, not the courts.
- If a legal opinion is required, creation of a new court system which would permit the aboriginal peoples to present their cases fully, rather than being ham-strung by restrictive rules of evidence and narrow legal precedents which treat aboriginal and treaty rights as ill-defined historical artifacts.
- Provision that where existing aboriginal and treaty rights are infringed upon or breached that these rights can be enforced. Under the new Canadian Constitution, there is no way to legally protect these rights if they are breached, etc.
- Agreement that no further amendments be made to the Canadian Constitution without the consent of the aboriginal peoples directly affected by any proposed amendment.
- Provision for minority language educational rights. Such rights are provided for those speaking English or French out of public funds where the number of children warrant.
- Land set aside for the aboriginal peoples are to be exempt from all federal and provincial taxation.¹⁷

But these assertions prompted a group of Prairie Métis to seek their own position at the constitutional talks.

Elmer Ghostkeeper, president of the Alberta Federation of Metis Settlements, called for a new organization recently in a strongly worded letter to Canada's five Métis associations, which represent up to 500,000 Métis.

The new Métis nation will be seeking to gain a seat for Métis representation at the first ministers constitutional conference on aboriginal rights scheduled for April 1983. The NCC is the official spokesman for the one million Métis and non-status Indians across Canada and was to represent them all at the First Ministers Conference.

Jim Sinclair, President of the Association of Metis and non-status Indians of Saskatchewan (AMNSIS) said the matter was bound to have risen at some point in time. He said he has been talking about this question to the members in Saskatchewan because they will have to make decisions eventually as to where they want to be classified as Métis, non-status Indians, or Half-breed.¹⁸

Interestingly enough, this new "Métis Nation" was to devote itself "to the interests of the descendants of the Red River Rebellion." But not all Métis participated in the Red River Rebellion. Would they be left out?

More interesting, perhaps, was the revelation shortly before the beginning of the constitutional conference of the census count of Native people in Canada. The census showed 292,700 status Indians, 98,260 Métis, 75,100 non-status Indians

and 25,390 Inuit. The problem was obvious. The figures did not match the numbers the organizations claimed they represented.¹⁹

The prairie Métis group then sought to withdraw from the Native Council of Canada -- the national body that represents the Métis and non-status Indians. They believed that the NCC was devoting too much of its efforts to the objectives of the non-status Indians who formed the majority in the organization. It was then that the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) and the Alberta Métis Association withdrew from the NCC and formed the Métis National Council (MNC) which sought and obtained a seat at the constitutional talks under the threat of a court injunction to stop the conference. Interestingly, the leaders of this new organization still belong to their former parent bodies which also represent non-status Indians. The AMNSIS Board had not removed itself from representing non-status people. Thus, when the MNC was formed it split the provincial and national organizations on an issue that had yet to be solved at the provincial level. The president of AMNSIS could still speak on behalf of Métis even if there was a group representing the Métis cause at the talks.

The present problem for the Métis, however, is one of seeking federal jurisdiction over their lives without being defined by federal legislation. In that sense they still do not want to be Indians as defined in the Indian Act but wish to be defined as "Indians" under section 91 (24) of the Constitution. It might appear that the Métis have made a sudden reversal in demanding that their Indian ancestry be recognized as the non-status Indians wish theirs to be. The difference, however, is that the main Métis objective of requesting federal jurisdiction is not synonymous with identification with status Indians as a status aboriginal people. The Métis are not requesting federal legislation that would define them. The non-status Indians, however, wish to be included in the definition of Indian as found in both section 91 (24) and the Indian Act.

PART II

Problems Between the Métis and the Indians

Problems between Métis and Indians began early in the 1960s. The Manitoba Métis Federation came about as the result of a dispute between Indians and Métis. At a 1967 meeting sponsored by the Greater Winnipeg Community Welfare and Planning Council, discussion centred around whether the Indians should allow the Métis into their newly rejuvenated Indian Brotherhood. Fearing that the Métis (who are non-status) might jeopardize their funding position, the Indians rejected association with the Métis. It was then that a group of Métis walked out and decided to form their own organization.²¹ This rift marks the first of many between Métis and Indians during the 1960s and 1970s.

The Marlborough Case

On 14 November 1970, the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood filed a statement of claims against the Marlborough Hotel in Winnipeg. The MIB alleged that the hotel had discriminated against Indians and Métis people. James Burke, author of Paper Tomahawks, describes the reactions of the president of the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood and the president of the Manitoba Métis Federation.

As usual, the rivalry between the M.I.B. and the Manitoba Métis Federation had raised its ugly head.

For some time, many native people in Manitoba have felt that the two organizations should be reunited into a single body representative of all of the province's citizens of Indian origin, believing that in unity there is strength. This proposed reunification has been consistently thwarted by the leaders of the M.I.B. and M.M.F. who were concerned primarily with maintaining their respective political empires. While the Marlborough incident united many native people throughout the province, it did nothing to mend the rift between the two provincial associations. The M.I.B. and M.M.F. were, if anything, further apart than before.

Dave Courchene, apparently anxious to cultivate his image as the messiah of Manitoba's native people, decided against enlisting the support of the Manitoba Métis Federation in his suit against the Marlborough. His reasoning in this regard is unclear but there is a strong possibility that he was loath to share the glory accruing to a crusader for Indian civil rights. Consequently he shunned consultation with the Métis organization prior to filing his statement of claim. Notwithstanding the fact that Métis as well as Indians were named in the hotel's controversial memorandum, the leader of the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood made no effort to secure the support of M.M.F. president Angus Spence.

When Mr. Spence heard of the Brotherhood's suit, he salved his bruised ego by immediately denouncing Dave Courchene and divorcing his organization from any proposed boycott movement against the Marlborough. Taking dead aim at the M.I.B. leader, he declared that he didn't want to be "dragged into anything in this matter" because the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood,

under its president, Dave Courchene, had failed to properly inform the Métis Federation before it took action.

In an interview, Mr. Spence expanded on his position, saying his organization decided:

. . . 'not to get dragged into this thing' because it was never officially notified of the Indian Brotherhood charges.

'The Indian Brotherhood hasn't involved the Métis Federation in its claims,' said Mr. Spence. 'Yet, they are using the name Métis in their charges.'

'The fact of the matter is that we were never informed of their plans until we read about it in the newspapers on November 13.'22

Personal animosity between the two leaders did not help matters. Burke continues:

Mr. Spence added that the Métis federation was satisfied with Mr. Rothstein's explanation of the matter and didn't want to continue the issue further. In concluding, he stated:

What I am saying is that the Indian people under Dave Courchene are the ones screaming discrimination but the Métis people under Angus Spence are not.

We just do not want to get dragged into this thing because it has never been proved to us that their [the Indian Brotherhood] charges are factual.

Declaring that this organization could not support a general 'don't patronize attitude' as suggested by the M.I.B., he said:

We will leave the whole thing until such a time as we find out if some of these charges are true. If we had been involved right from the start, we may be now looking at it differently.²³

Burke summarizes the problem conflicting personalities played in the issue:

Angus Spence, therefore, refused to throw his organization's support behind the M.I.B.'s action against the Marlborough. Erroneously, he contended that the Brotherhood used the name 'Métis' in their charges when, in fact, it was the Marlborough memorandum that specifically referred to denial of lodging to Métis. Mr. Spence also seemingly placed more credence in the statements of Dave Rothstein than in those of his fellow native leader, Dave Courchene.

In spite of the Tuk memorandum, the M.I.B.'s testing procedure, and the issuance of an injunction against the Marlborough Hotel prohibiting discrimination, Angus Spence chose to disbelieve that the hotel had discriminated against native people. Why did he take such a position? Was it because he believed that the Marlborough was a bastion of brotherhood?

Those who were aware of the strained relationship between the president of the M.M.F. and his M.I.B. counterpart had their own interpretation, contending that personalities rather than principles had led to a lack of co-operation between the two native organizations.

Few, however, would have thought that self-interest and personal animosity would have been allowed to impede what should

have been a common front to eliminate discrimination against all native people: Indian and Métis. But that is what, in fact, happened.²⁴

The Brandon Petition and the 'Problem Métis Families'

On 23 September 1971, Manitoba Attorney General Al Mackling appointed James Toal to inquire into a situation that had occurred in Brandon. Some Brandon residents had petitioned to exclude Indians "from certain areas of the city." A Brandon University student had been given permission (by then-Mayor Wilton) to take a copy of the petition, as well as a report entitled "Problem Métis Families", both of which he gave to the Brandon Sun. The problem was that in the eyes of the public there was really no difference between a Métis and an Indian. In fact, the report and the petition were not related, but they soon became part of a single volatile situation. The petition respecting Indians read:

We, the undersigned, request that homes on 10th Street East, 11th Street East, Louise Avenue East and Victoria Avenue East be no longer rented or sold to Indian families as of this date, May 30, 1971.²⁵

On 29 July 1971, Police Chief D.A. McNamee was quoted in the Winnipeg Tribune as having stated:

A Brandon City Police report compiled on 11 problem Métis families in the city has nothing to do with a petition asking that Indian and Métis families no longer be allowed to buy or rent houses in one Brandon district.²⁶

But the Winnipeg Free Press of 30 July 1971 reported:

According to J.R. Bell, Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Brandon region, the report ("Problem Metis Families") was written at the agreement of himself, the Mayor and the Police Chief.²⁷

The police report respecting "Problem Metis Families" contained the following assertions:

... She has had one or two other men living with her since at various times but it is this Constable's opinion that there is absolutely no supervision of the children, at any age, and they get into trouble with her full knowledge. This family is on welfare and seems to be content to stay there. p.1²⁸

The most recent activities of this family are to get the female members of the family out on the streets and they invite unsuspecting youths to buy beer and take it to their home for a party. Once these youths are under the influence of liquor they are assaulted and tossed out of the home, usually without their beer or money. Very seldom do these victims lay complaints in these matters, however, it is known by the Police that they do occur. p.2²⁹

Shoplifting and Assault appear to be the occupation of the female members of the family with suspected prostitution involved to some degree. p.2³⁰

This family's main problem would seem to be liquor and lack of parental supervision, resulting from this over-abuse of spirits. p.4³¹

Numerous calls have been received from Mrs. X requesting Police to remove intoxicated guests from the home. Many times these people complained of being "rolled" while there although it has been impossible to get any evidence to substantiate same although it is believed that these incidents have occurred. p.4³²

The daughters are no trouble, although one is starting into the liquor route and it is felt that she may be a problem at some later time ... p. 4³³

The XX family does not really have a liquor problem the problem here is no supervision, no parental control and apparent lack of initiative to do anything but stay on the Welfare Rolls and steal anything they can possibly get their hands on and to generally make trouble. p. 6³⁴

This then is the list of the more problem families in the City of native descent, some are more of a problem to the Police than others as can be noted in the various resumes of the family activities. p. 7³⁵

In an attempt to shift the problem away from his administration, Mayor Wilton issued a press release on 17 August 1971. He declared that the commotion and protests were really being created by three Brandon University professors, Professors Tyman, Moore and Corrigan. According to

Mayor Wilton's press release, "Tactics used by this group are indicative of those used by communist agitators in other parts of the world and especially in the United States."³⁶

Thirty people who had signed the petition were interviewed by Nick Van Rijn of the Winnipeg Tribune. He reported their responses on 21 July 1971:

One [Indian] came in at about 2 a.m. to use the telephone. A person can't have that going on all the time. They also come around and pick up things that don't belong to them.

We have an Indian family living just down the block. Their kids are running around naked, they go to the bathroom outside, they don't keep up their place -- their yard is a disgrace.

And it's nothing to see two grown men in a mad fight outside. They don't live the same way we do -- we don't like to discriminate or anything, but this is a nice street. I believe they're on welfare. We just don't want to put up with this. It's a nice district and we want to keep it that way.

They lower property values. I have nothing against Indians, but they bother us at 4 a.m. to use the phone, they walk in without knocking -- I can't tolerate this. I've been told I could move out -- but I'm not going to move to accommodate them.

I am not prejudiced, but a person could become that way. We're bothered late at night, police cars are going up and down the street -- this could become kind of like living in a slum area if more move in.³⁷

Charges of discrimination were made by local Native residents against the Brandon mayor, the police chief and the populace in general. Requested to appear before the Toal Commission on 14 February 1972, the President of the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood did not appear until 21 February 1971. Though he withdrew from the proceedings, the Brotherhood president did file a six-page brief in which he requested an RCMP investigation of the Brandon Police Department. The Manitoba Métis Federation president, Angus Spence, took a different approach. He argued that "though he thought the petition discriminatory in content, he doubted that it was discriminatory in intent."³⁸

It is a clash of two cultures and a lack of understanding which results. The residents of the residential areas of Brandon frown upon and disapprove of the way native people carry on ... It is a lack of understanding.³⁹

Undoubtedly, the positions of the two organizations were miles apart. The MIB had argued that Brandon was a bigoted, racist city. The MMF saw the problem as a cultural dilemma -- a dilemma that could be worked out between Brandon residents and Native people. The President of the MMF also saw the situation as a public relations job by the president of the Indian Brotherhood. MMF president Spence stated that he too could create issues for days on end if he set out to do so --

were not many Métis unemployed? Were they not also discriminated against? Obviously Spence saw the Métis as different from the Indians. He did not want to see the Métis become dependent upon a government agency like the Department of Indian Affairs. His ambition was "to rehabilitate... an unfortunate forgotten people, into the mainstream of society."⁴⁰ This division between the two groups was based not only upon legal and personal factors but also on distinctive objectives.

James Burke describes the role of the Manitoba Métis Federation president in the matter:

Mr. Spence, taking the opportunity to blow his organization's horn, pointed to a recently completed position paper of the M.M.F. on the problems of transition from remote to urban life and concluded by asking for public support.⁴¹

In one of its recommendations, the Toal Commission Report stated:

In so far as race relations are concerned there is no evidence that Brandon is any different from other communities in the province.⁴²

Angus Spence, president of M.M.F., seemed to agree when he said "I'd have to say Brandon is no different from any other area as far as racism is concerned."⁴³ What he meant was that Native people in Native communities could be just as racist as the people of Brandon. Had he not said that Native people would do the same thing if non-Natives came to their remote communities?⁴⁴

The Native Education Branch

The area of Native education was the scene of another rift between Indians and Métis. During the spring of 1974, the province of Manitoba opened a Native Education Branch (NEB).

The objectives of the branch were:

1. To encourage and enable the Native people of Manitoba to participate more fully in the educational decision-making which affects them.
2. To improve the quality of education for Native people in the province.
3. To co-ordinate all activities relating to Native Education in the province of Manitoba.
4. To examine, develop and recommend priorities and policies related to Indian and Métis education for the Department of Education.⁴⁵

But what was this Native Education Branch? Its original structure included a director, a special projects section, a curriculum section, a field section, a headstart program and an administrative staff.

Its mandate was to look after the education of the Native children in the province of Manitoba. Discussions between government officials and representatives of the provincial Native organizations prior to the establishment of the NEB provide insight into the problems it was to face. Both the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) and the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood (MIB) were concerned principally with the approach the new branch would take and the possible results. The status Indian organization feared that NEB consultants, by going to the reserves, would erode federal responsibility for status Indians in reserve schools. The Manitoba Métis Federation, on the other hand, could not support "apartheid policies" concerning Métis people -- in other words the MMF did not want the establishment of an education branch whose sole responsibility would be Native people.

On 14 January 1975, Ferdinand Guiboche, president of the MMF, wrote to the premier of Manitoba, Edward Schreyer, expressing concern about the NEB. Guiboche attacked the branch for being too pro-Indian and for hiring personnel who lacked "educational expertise". Guiboche wrote:

Certainly the education of Indians on reserve is clearly a federal responsibility. Indeed, any interference in Indian education by the Province threatens the right of Indians enshrined in the treaties. We assumed the Native Education Branch would concern itself mainly with the Métis, but would offer assistance to Indians if they were in attendance in integrated public schools.

Secondly, we assumed the Native Education Branch would be concerned with all the Native people in the Province without an emphasis upon a particular area.

The Manitoba Métis Federation is dismayed at what happened. I submit the following concerns for you to reflect upon.

1. Not quite, but almost exclusively, the Native Education Branch is concentrating upon the educational problems of Indians, with an emphasis upon Indians on reserves. The Métis are almost completely ignored.
2. At the date of writing, the Native Education Branch is composed exclusively of non-educators. They do not appear to have objectives or the ability to set objectives for the branch. This leads to the third point.
3. Lacking an understanding of education and the ability to set objectives and then implement them, the personnel of the Branch apparently seek to fill the vacuum by indulging in romanticism. By that, we mean the fables of the noble Indians, the buckskins, bannock and the old culture.

Thus, there seems to be an emphasis upon the Indian, north of 53.⁴⁶

It is obvious that the MMF saw the NEB as a branch involved in upgrading the education of Métis and Indian students only in integrated schools. The MMF did not see a

role for the NEB on Indian reserves because of the legal distinctions that exist between the status Indians (federal responsibility) and the Métis. The MIB also saw the problem in the same manner, but for different reasons.

In 1969, the federal government's White Paper on Indian Policy had recommended that responsibility for Indians be shifted to the provinces. The Indian reaction to the White Paper has been documented elsewhere and needs no discussion here. However, in 1975, the MIB education budget had been reduced drastically by the federal government. The establishment of the NEB at approximately the same time raised suspicions. The MIB feared that federal monies had been transferred to the province to help establish the NEB and thus to introduce the White Paper recommendation that federal responsibility for Indians be shifted to the provinces by the back door. Though the suspicion was unfounded, it led to a resolution, at an all-chiefs conference in April 1975, to disallow the presence of NEB personnel on reserves.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, the MMF had continued its criticism of the branch. Quoting from the same letter by MMF President, Ferdinand Guiboche:

1. Is the Native Education Branch qualified educationally to tackle or even define the problems involving Métis people?

2. Does the Branch have the expertise to,
 - a) determine the problem in both short and long range terms? and
 - b) implement a series of steps to modify/solve the problems?
3. Is the Department of Education prepared to state that its responsibility is with children in the Manitoba School System and that it serves Federal schools in an advisory capacity only and even then upon request?
4. Is the Department of Education prepared to research the educational problems and attempts to modify the problems of its provincial Métis citizens who in educational matters are the sole responsibility of the Provincial Government?
5. Is the Provincial Government prepared to agree in principle, that the majority of Métis people, being educationally and economically deprived, need special educational assistance to overcome these handicaps?
6. Is the Provincial Government prepared to enter into a dialogue with the Manitoba Métis Federation to discuss the ways and means by which equality of education might be most reasonably assured?

If the Native Education Branch is not prepared to devote its efforts towards the betterment of Native children (mainly Métis) attending public schools, then it should be reorganized with new objectives and staff.⁴⁸

The director of the native education branch answered these allegations. In his letter of 3 March 1975, George Munroe

accused the MMF President of engaging in "an exercise in immature rhetoric, not responsible leadership." He denied that the NEB was dealing in romanticism:

As for your statement about our romanticism, I suggest you re-examine the facts and read the statements of our policy which make it quite clear that we are not concerned with such matters as beads and the like. That we do promote cultural efforts and spiritual growth as a source of pride for all our people is a fact we are proud to proclaim to all. But in no way can these efforts be slighted by anyone as "mere romanticism".⁴⁹

He also presented evidence to refute the accusation that the NEB was staffed with unqualified personnel:

Your charge that the workers of the Branch are not experienced in educational matters is ridiculous in so far as the workers in question have all had experience with community educational matters and are as familiar with the problems of the particular region as anyone can be. The Curriculum Section of the Native Education Branch, which produces the materials available to schools, is staffed by highly qualified professional staff, one of whom is a pioneer in the development of Métis materials for the schools. You, yourself, must be familiar with his work.⁵⁰

With respect to the question of relations between Métis and non-status Indians, Munroe responded eloquently:

As for your statement about the "Indian Game", it goes without saying that those of us who are related by blood and spirit to the Indian people do not find such a term

either complimentary or fitting. You may be leader of some of the Métis, but for many non-status Indians, your words are not only false, they are offensive. We work with all Native people in this province and recognize that the false divisions of the past hamper us more than any other problem.⁵¹

Not until the spring of 1976 would the MMF and the MIB endorse the branch and then only because staff changes had occurred in both the Native education branch and the Native organizations.

Conclusion

Between 1960 and 1980, many Native organizations accused the federal and provincial governments of using divide and conquer tactics with respect to Native people in Canada. The Indian Act and the absence of specific federal or provincial legislation to define and allot responsibility for Métis and non-status Indians were used as examples of this attitude. Ironically, at the 1983 constitutional talks, the Native organizations used the same tactic with one another. The Métis National Council threatened a court injunction if it did not obtain a seat at the constitutional table.

The issue arose again at the 1984 talks. The Native Council of Canada is now seeing its mandate as a Native rights organization threatened by Métis and by non-status Indians, especially women who have married non-Indians. They want to be recognized as status Indians. This would shift "many of the Native Council of Canada's non-status Indians constituents to status Indian organizations such as the Assembly of First Nations."⁵² Secondly, the Native Council of Canada's claim to represent "Canada's 400,000 Métis is denied by all the Métis associations of western Canada."⁵³ The Métis National Council argues for a Métis homeland in western Canada and the North. The Native Council of Canada favours a "pan-Canadian Métis encompassing all mixed-blood half-breeds in Canada."⁵⁴

The Native Council of Canada maintains that "Métis rights spring from Indian aboriginal title to the land; the Métis National Council takes a political stance based on a distinct Métis "nationhood" dating back to the fur trade, the Red River Settlement and the Riel Resistance."⁵⁵ If the two groups cannot agree on the definition of who is represented by each, the problem may have to be resolved unilaterally by the federal government deciding to define who the Métis are under section 35 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Premier Hatfield of New Brunswick has argued that there are no Métis in his province, thus supporting the position of the Métis National Council. Clem Chartier, spokesman for the Métis National Council, stated in an interview with the Edmonton Journal:

Because of the machinations of Native Council of Canada politicians, there may be people of mixed-blood out there who call themselves Métis, but they are not part of the historic Métis homeland or the Métis Nation. They can speak for themselves or the Native Council of Canada can speak for them.⁵⁶

In March 1984, the organizations were asked to enumerate the Métis population. Complicating this process is the Métis National Council's disagreement with the Native Council of Canada about the question of identity. But problems have also arisen within the Native Council of Canada regarding identity:

According to Bill Wilson, Vice President of the NCC, who spoke to New Breed through phone from British Columbia, he basically does not have any problem with the request being made by Ghostkeeper to have a seat in the First Minister's conference just as long as the Non-Status element was also equally represented. "The only time I would have a problem with it is if we had two contradictory positions but our positions are the same," he said. Wilson said he believes Ghostkeeper is sincerely trying to get the best deal for the Métis people but that he didn't really want to pay attentions to Duke Redbird's statements who apparently was at the press conference in Edmonton when the announcement was made to form a new Métis organization. "I can't have any respect for a man who was an Indian ten years ago but who now claims to be a Métis," he said. Redbird is the President of the Ontario Métis Association.⁵⁷

The problem facing the new Métis organizations now is really one of defining who is a Métis. The fact that recent census data do not support their population claims suggests that many 'historical' Métis people do not wish to be identified as such. Could it be that the Métis organizations are to blame for this? If not, why is the Union Nationale Métisse du Manitoba planning its own events for 1985 and not collaborating with the Manitoba Métis Federation?⁵⁸ Why are French-speaking Métis identifying themselves as French-Canadians on census forms?⁵⁹ D. Bruce Sealy was no doubt correct when he wrote,

But the examples used show why many non-status Indians are striving to become Indians in a legal sense. They also show

why an organization comprised of both Métis and non-status Indians will almost inevitably be beset by conflicts.⁶⁰

Recent events have proved Sealey's evaluation correct. But the NCC should have been aware long before this of the possible problems.

The Manitoba Métis Federation, the Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan, the Alberta Métis Association and the B.C. Non-Status group had at one time or another withdrawn from the Native Council of Canada over this issue.⁶¹ Furthermore, in its Pilot Study of Canadian Public Perceptions and Attitudes Concerning Aboriginal Rights and Land Claims, the NCC concluded that "to most people, the term Aboriginal Rights meant very little or nothing at all. Half said they had no idea what the term meant...".⁶² Report number 4 noted: "Out of 29 people only ten were aware of the existence of four different Native groups."⁶³ One could conclude from this evidence that the recent discussions at the constitutional table have not helped matters any.

If anything, the Canadian public might well be more confused about who's who in Native politics and what each group wants. Most Canadians would not be aware of the legal difference between Métis and Indians. To most Canadians, a brown-skinned person is "Indian", regardless of whether the

individual is legally an Indian. The incidents at the Marlborough Hotel and in the city of Brandon show that to be so. The NCC report suggests that public education is needed to persuade Canadians about the need for Native people to control their own destiny. Before reaching that goal, however, each Indian and Native organization must come to a clear definition of who they are and whom they represent.

Footnotes

1. Conversation between two Métis people. I was present during the conversation. The people involved do not wish their names published.
2. Winnipeg Free Press, Tuesday, 10 April 1979, Volume 86 #162.
3. During 1976 a Chief from an Alberta Indian Band referred to the A.I.M. members as "Assholes in Mocassins".
4. See Indian Act section.
5. See Lussier, "The Metis; Contemporary Problems of Identity," Manitoba Pageant, Summer, 1978.
6. Sealey & Lussier, Canada's Forgotten People: The Metis, p. 169.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid, p. 170.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid, p. 170-171.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid, p. 170.
15. Ibid, also Manitoba Metis Federation News, January 1973, Vol. I Issue 5, p. 4.
16. Sealey & Lussier, p. 171-172.
17. The New Breed Journal, October, 1982, p. 5.
18. Ibid.
19. Saskatoon Star Phoenix, 2 February 1983.
20. Comments of Harry Daniels, Vice-President, NCC at 1984 Constitutional Talks.

21. Interviews with Ferdinand Guiboche and Angus Spence who were involved with drafting the first constitution.
22. James Burke, Paper Tomahawks, (Winnipeg: Queenston House Press, 1976), p. 111-112.
23. Burke, p. 112-113.
24. Ibid.
25. Racism in Brandon; A Case Study, no author, no date. Its contents include: 1) letter to Mayor Wilton 2) cover of Police Report 3) Selections from Police Report 4) On police Chief McNamee 5) On Mayor Wilton's letter 6) Facts on the Social and Economic condition of Indians and Metis people 7) Reply to Brandon Sun Editorial, 31 July 1971 (Ken Hanly).
26. "Is Police Chief McNamme A Liar?" in Racism in Brandon; A Case Study.
27. Winnipeg Free Press, 30 July 1971.
28. "Selections From the Brandon Police Report": Problem Metis Families 26 May 1971 p. 1.
29. Ibid. p. 2.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid. p. 4
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid. p. 6.
35. Ibid. p. 7.
36. Office of the Mayor of Brandon, Press Release 9:00 p.m., 17 August 1971.
37. The Winnipeg Tribune, 21 July 1971.
38. Burke, p. 182.
39. Toal Commission Report, Manitoba Human Rights Commission, 1972, p. 51.
40. Toal Commission Report, p. 52.

41. Burke, p. 182.
42. Cited in Burke, p. 186.
43. Cited in Burke, p. 186.
44. See footnote 39.
45. Lussier & Sealey, The Other Natives, Volume III, p. 39.
46. Lussier & Sealey, p. 42-43.
47. I was present at that conference.
48. Lussier & Sealey, p. 43-44.
49. Ibid., p. 44-45.
50. Ibid., p. 45.
51. Ibid.
52. Edmonton Journal, 2 March 1984.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Edmonton Journal, 3 March 1984.
57. The New Breed Journal, October 1982, p. 5.
58. La Liberté, vendredi 22 octobre 1982, p. 3.
59. In St. Laurent, Manitoba a French-speaking Metis answered "No, I'm a French-Canadian" to the census question. "Are you a British Subject?"
60. Sealey & Lussier, Canada's Forgotten People: The Metis.
61. Winnipeg Free Press, 7 February 1978 "Metis Vote For New Provisional Government."
62. N.C.C. Pilot Study of Canadian Public Perceptions and Attitudes Concerning Aboriginal Rights and Land Claims, November 1976, p. 3.
63. Ibid., p. 17.

The Métis and The French-Canadians, 1870-1984

by

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In "Les Rapports entre les Métis et les Canadiens-français au Manitoba 1870-1884"¹ the late Dr. Robert Painchaud argued that relations between the Métis² and the Franco-Manitobans were hardly ever written about because "a conspiracy of silence"³ had always existed between the two groups. Neither group wanted to expose the issues that divided them because faith and language had created a common bond. Interestingly, it was the issue of faith and language that eventually divided the two groups after 1874. What kept the groups together prior to 1874 were the question of Riel's amnesty, the issue of Métis lands and the recognition of the List of Rights of 1869-70.⁴ Included in the List of Rights were provisions for the protection of the Catholic faith and the French language. In reality, the Métis had little choice but to accept a religious and linguistic merger with the French Canadians after 1870. Dr. G. Friesen states:

In the first few years after the uprising, after Riel had been forced into exile, leadership of the Metis had fallen to Archbishop Taché and his priests, on the one hand, and French-Canadian newcomers like Girard, Royal and Dubuc on the other⁵.

But why have the differences that occurred between the two groups never been fully explained? Surely a conspiracy of silence is not the sole reason for the lack of investigation.

Writers such as G.F.G. Stanley,⁶ Kinsey Howard,⁷ Marcel Giraud⁸ and Auguste de Tremaudan⁹ "imaginait les intérêts des Canadiens-français rejoignaient parfaitement ceux des métis."¹⁰ Hence, it is not surprising to find that these authors made no distinction in their work between the issues facing the two groups. Since both groups were French-speaking and Catholic, the two were assimilated into the French-speaking community.

This concept that the Metis believed themselves to be French-Canadians, which has been promoted by writers of history, is the subject of this paper.

I

1870 - 1875

The person most responsible for allowing the French fact to dominate the Métis during this period was Louis Riel. Writing to Joseph Dubuc on 23 April 1870, Riel noted: "Je suis seul pour diriger les affaires du pays et tenir tête aux intrigues des ennemis. Il me faudrait un auxiliaire instruit... Je te connais. Si tu voulais me rejoindre, tu rendrais d'immense services à notre chère population métisse."¹¹ Mgr. Taché, Archbishop of Saint Boniface, was

also convinced that the Métis were not demographically strong enough to assure their own collective security. He encouraged them to co-operate with the French-Canadians on questions of political and social importance.

Between 1870 and 1875 the Métis and the French-Canadians presented a united front fighting for Riel's amnesty, the recognition of the List of Rights of 1869-70 and the land claims issue. Because they had no leadership of their own, the Métis succumbed to French leadership more from necessity than conviction. The French-Canadians played upon the fact that both groups could claim their respective heritage from Lower Canada. After the Métis representatives Breland, Beauchemin, DeLorne and McKay, Joseph Dubuc would write in La Minerve:

La population française a donné l'exemple d'une union et d'une entente vraiment remarquables. Sur douze représentants (pour l'élément français), huit ont été élus par acclamation. Les métis, étant en général du même parti, se sont accordés sur le choix d'un homme pour chaque division, et ont, par là évité les dissensions ordinairement créées par les luttes électorales. Puissent-ils conserver cette ligne de conduite?¹²

At the St. Jean Baptiste celebrations in June 1871, Marc-Amable Girard announced "que les rivages de la Rivière Rouge fussent témoins de notre rivalité et qu'ils redisent que

nous aussi nous sommes et voulons rester
Canadiens-français.²¹³ The assumption that Girard was making
was that the Métis considered themselves French-Canadians. In
fact, nothing could have been further from the truth. The
Métis faced more pressing issues than simply preserving their
French heritage. Their major problem was the land question --
a problem the French-Canadian group did not have but still
considered pressing for their compatriots. This contradiction
is noted in Le Métis, founded by Joseph Royal on 10 August 1871;

... les métis ont un droit sur les terres
du pays, d'abord un droit primordial en
vertu de leur origine; ensuite le droit de
premiers colons, de premiers occupants du
sol ayant amené, eux ou leur pères, les
premiers éléments de la civilisation dans
cette contrée, et ayant fait le pays ce
qu'il est.¹⁴.

This editorial suggests a major difference in priorities
between the two groups. Furthermore, it reveals that the
groups could not really come together. On the one hand, the
new French-Canadian immigrants needed land that the Métis were
to receive; at the same time, the immigrants were asked to
defend the issue of land on behalf of the mixed-bloods.

In 1871, Mgr. Taché and other French-Canadian leaders
attended parish meetings to discuss the issue of block

reserves, as opposed to individual allotments, for Métis people.¹⁵ The idea was to establish five Métis reserves in the new province, with the Church having an eminent presence within each, all the while using the reserves as mechanisms by which the French community should be preserved.¹⁶

In the first two years after 1870 it appears that the French fact existed as a collectivity more in perception than in reality. For the Métis the issue was land; for the French-Canadians the issue was unity and preservation.

The arrival of Riel as a candidate for the riding of Provencher in 1872 reinforced the differences that existed between the two groups. Painchaud argues:

Aucun des chefs de file canadiens -- ni Girard, ni Dubuc, ni Royal -- n'avait réussi à s'imposer comme chef reconnu et accepté de toute la population française d'origine, pas plus qu'une personnalité métisse n'avait réussi à s'attirer l'appui du groupe canadien. Il revenait donc à Riel de tenter d'effectuer un tel rapprochement.¹⁷

Though the presence of Riel raised the issues of amnesty and land, later events will show that his presence brought about the eventual split between the two groups. Riel's primary objectives were Métis objectives as well as his own amnesty. French-Canadian rights were secondary. Furthermore,

Riel was a wanted man and as such could not really do much for his constituents even if he were elected. The land agent in Winnipeg noted:

Was Riel to be elected and shew himself here he would never leave Winnipeg alive -- and if he was arrested for trial the result would be the same. There are men who would shoot him down in the very courtroom or Parliament Chamber. They know or at least believe that it would be impossible to obtain a conviction against one here for killing Riel. Every day or two this feeling is intensified by the intimacy with and subserving to Riel by Bishop Taché and the Quebec French -- Royal, Dubuc, LaRivière -- are with him every week -- dine together and plot together. Only on Sunday last Royal was elected Prest [President] of St. Jean Bapt [Baptiste] Society with Riel as first Vice Prest [Vice President] -- and it is remarked that it does not look well for a member of the Government [Royal] to assume such intimate relations with a denounced murderer.¹⁸.

In 1874, three issues served to divide the two groups. The first was Riel's election in the riding of Provencher in February, his expulsion from the House of Commons and his re-election in September. Quickly the French-Canadian political leadership questioned the reasoning behind such political machinations. Was Riel really that necessary for the preservation of the French-Canadian cause? The background to such questions was simple enough -- the Mennonites, an Anabaptist German-speaking group, had just been given land on the east and west sides of the Red River. French colonization

was now to be the new issue of emphasis. The need for new French-speaking people was great. The French-speaking Métis were leaving Manitoba because of the land grant fiasco.

D.B. Sealey outlines what had happened:

1. May 1870. Section 31 of the Manitoba Act states that children of Half-breed heads of families will receive 1,400,000 acres of land.
2. August 1870. A census is taken to determine the number of Half-breeds in the province. There were 9,800.
3. April 1871. The Canadian Government rules that every Half-breeds is to receive land. A new census is ordered.
4. January 1872. A third census is ordered.
5. April 1872. Lieutenant-Governor authorized to distribute land based on the 1870 census.
6. September 1872. Gouvernement orders that every Half-breed receive 140 acres.
7. Fall 1872. Land speculators begin buying land from the Métis on an assignment basis.
8. March 1873. The Manitoba Legislature passes the Half-breed Protection Act. It declares all sales, assignments, etc. nul and void before actual title is received.
9. March 1873. Land distribution begins.
10. April 1873. Government declares that only children of Half-breeds are eligible to receive land. All previous land allotments are cancelled.

11. November 1873. Land distribution begins again.
12. Conservative government defeated. Liberal government stops distribution and cancels all land allotment.
13. April 1873. Selkirk Settlers and their descendants each to receive 140 acres of land.
14. September 1873. Children of Half-breeds to receive 190 acres. Land Commission to be established to determine eligibility.
15. May 1874. Land and money scrip introduced for Half-breed heads of families and any white settlers at Red River between 1813 and 1835.¹⁹

The third divisive issue was the sudden French-Canadian preoccupation with preserving their schools and language.²⁰ These new sources of division became evident in the election of 1874. In the ridings that were mostly French-speaking, people found themselves having to make a choice between a French-speaking Métis and a French-Canadian. In the Provencher riding, a by-election was held to elect a new member of Parliament. Three candidates presented themselves. Elie Tassé, Joseph Lacompte and A.G.B. Bannatyne. Bannatyne won by acclamation since the other two candidates withdrew their candidacy. The French-Canadian owned newspaper, Le Métis, declared that Bannatyne was "le constans ami des Métis."²¹

By 1874, when the Archbishop's assurances of amnesty and rapid settlement of land claims were still unfulfilled, the metis

had begun to listen to the anti-French message of men like Nolin. Crop failures, loss of freighting contracts, and the diminution of animal resources further handicapped the métis, and when scrip allotments began to arrive, they sold them to speculators at such a pace that Le Métis, the French party's journal, began to quote weekly prices for the certificates. Taché himself, despairing of unity amongst the metis, purchases quantities of scrip in order that incoming French Canadians might be settled in homogeneous islands of faith and culture.²²

The Métis were not blind to the role of their French-Canadian compatriots and leaders. The years 1875-1900 would reveal the real distance between the two groups.

II

1875 - 1900

Painchaud refers to this time as the French-Canadian period in Manitoba history. This was the period when the "société de colonisation du Manitoba" was to make its impact, since many of the French Métis were leaving the province. Sealey notes the following events regarding the issue of Métis lands:

1. April 1875. Land Commission established to determine eligibility for land, land scrip and money scrip.

2. September 1876. Regulations for land distribution issued. Each child to receive 240 acres.
3. October 1876. Begin land distribution.
4. 1880. Land distribution largely completed.²³

Joseph Dubuc, in his Memoirs, noted:

On voyait avec regret diminuer le nombre des Métis français. Ils vendaient leur terres et allaient planter leurs tentes dans les Territoires du Nord-Ouest, sur les bords de la Saskatchewan ou dans les environs. Ils furent remplacés au fur et mesure, par ceux des nôtres qui arrivaient de l'Est. Non seulement la population française eut l'avantage de ne pas perdre de terrain dans les vieilles paroisses, mais elle se trouva renforcée par la formation de plusieurs paroisses nouvelles.²⁴

What Dubuc does not mention is that the new parishes being established were French-Canadian parishes first and foremost and, as such, were interested more in preserving their language and their faith. In 1877 Le Métis editorialized that certain Protestant ministers wanted the legislature to pass laws allowing "des écoles mixtes dans la province."²⁵ The amnesty and land rights issues were no longer in the forefront of French-Canadian concerns. Métis discontent towards the French-Canadians revealed itself in the elections of 1879. In the La Verendrye riding the vote went Métis against French Canadian.²⁶ In the Provencher riding, which previously had

been won by Joseph Dubuc by acclamation, the 1879 by-election had Joseph Royal challenged by Salomon Hamelin, a Métis. The issue of land claims was not the only source of aggravation.

Friesen notes:

At the root of the problem was the disagreement between French-speaking métis and French-Canadians over such crucial matters as public appointments, land and financial policies, and political representation. The specific focus of discontent in Ste. Anne lay in the decision of J.B. Lapointe, a prominent farmer and defeated candidate in the 1878 provincial election, to contest the victory of Charles Nolin, an equally prominent métis spokesman, on the grounds that Nolin had bribed the electors. The subsequent court case brought about the ministerial crisis of 1879.²⁷

Charles Nolin had become the new spokesman for the Métis (in his mind at least). Nolin was not at all content with the French-Canadian leadership and the role that Mgr. Taché had taken in Métis affairs.

In the preceding five years, Charles Nolin had grown suspicious of Archbishop Taché and the French-Canadian politicians whom Taché had endorsed as political leaders amongst Manitoba's Roman Catholics. Nolin had some education and had made a living as a farmer and carter in Red River. When the trouble erupted in 1869, he stayed aloof; and when asked by Taché to aid a Church-nominated representative in Ste. Anne in the first provincial election in 1870, he did so. But, perhaps because

of his impatience with French-Canadian political leaders, his request to the local priest for support in the 1874 election was refused. He won the seat of Ste. Anne despite the parish priest's neutrality and the active opposition of the Hudson's Bay Company agent. From that time on, he waged a serious campaign on behalf of the métis and against French Canadian.²⁸

When appointed to the cabinet in 1875, Nolin had tried to deal with some of the Métis grievances, only to be opposed by the French-Canadian politicians.

... he immediately tried to get his colleagues to appoint metis rather than French Canadians to government posts; he resigned his portfolio when his appeals failed. He worked assiduously for the reduction or cancellation of Dominion relief loans, which dated from the grasshopper invasions of the mid-1870s; because he knew that these debts could drive, or be used to drive, his compatriots from their farms. When he learned that he would be opposed in the 1878 election, presumably by someone more sympathetic to the Church and the French Canadians, he said he would ally with the English, if necessary, to prevent the victory of a "Canadien".²⁹

Nolin was not alone in his dissatisfaction. Friesen notes two other incidents:

At Rivière Salle, the métis were so forthright in their dissent that one of their own community admonished them for showing animosity toward their French-Canadian brothers; the speaker said the métis need not agitate for

representatives from their own nation because the few who held public office had disgraced themselves.³⁰ When an Irish Catholic visited Baie St. Paul, a French métis parish, to determine his chances for election, he discovered that the métis believed they had made two French Canadians rich by sending them to the Legislature and that now it was their turn; or, as the Irish Canadian put it in a letter to Taché, they want "a black man, one of their own."³¹ ...An electoral conflict in Ste. Agathe arose in part from similar sentiments.³³

III

Thus there were two distinct periods in Métis-Franco-Manitoban relations after 1870. The first five years in which the Métis found support for their grievances among their French-Canadian compatriots. It must be remembered, however, that this support was cloaked in the guise of the rights of Franco-Catholic Métis interests and were not supported simply because they were Métis interests. The collapse of any unity that existed during this period would not have occurred between 1875 and 1879 had the unity been based on a solid foundation. Racial animosity developed after 1875 because of the arrival of the new French-Canadians who needed land,³³ because of Riel's exile and because of the sudden shift in priorities of the French leaders to supporting only those issues that affected their linguistic, cultural and religious rights. Métis reactions were not unexpected. Their ambivalence towards the French-Canadians continued into the twentieth century.

IV

By 1900 the French-speaking Métis had become a minority within a minority. They had few common bonds with the French. Métis French was considered patois, not French. In French-speaking communities, the Métis sections were defined as "Le Fort Rouge,"³⁴ "la coulée"³⁵ and "le coin nord".³⁶ The Métis had been segregated by the French, who referred to them as "les sauvages".

The first event that marked a rift between the Métis and the Franco-Manitobans in the twentieth century occurred in 1916. At issue was the constitutionality of the French language. In 1890 French had been removed as an official language of the province of Manitoba. At the same time, however, instruction in French had not been curtailed, primarily because of the Laurier-Greenway compromise of 1896. But in 1916 Premier Norris sought to remove the bilingualism clause in the Public Schools Act. Up to that point it had been possible for nationalities other than the English to teach in their native tongues. Norris sought to remove that privilege and at the same time to assimilate the non-English-speaking groups. Unfortunately the removal of the clause also affected the French-speaking element in Manitoba. In an attempt to restore French as an official language of the province, the

Métis rallied behind J.P. Dumas, the Liberal member of the Legislature representing St. Boniface.

Dumas³⁷ is an interesting character whose role in this affair is clouded by conflicting accounts. Robert André in La Liberté (6 March 1980) suggests that local newspaper accounts made Dumas appear to have been set up by Norris, who hoped to create a schism with l'Association d'Éducation française du Manitoba, an organization fighting for French educational rights. Furthermore, there is little evidence to suggest where Dumas came from. He was supposedly an American citizen who had been naturalized and had found his way into the Legislature.

The Dumas-Barribault case was a major source of conflict between the Métis and the Franco-Manitobans. Barribault had failed to deliver on a promissory note to Dumas.³⁸ Through his lawyer, Dumas presented his statement of claim before the Court of King's Bench -- a claim he made in French. The Prothonotary of the court refused to accept it, thus creating both a legal confrontation as to the constitutionality of the French language and a division between two French-speaking groups, the Métis and the French-Canadians. L'Association d'Éducation française du Manitoba immediately took the position of strict neutrality on the matter:

Nous ne connaissons rien de cette poursuite
Nous n'avons été consultés en aucune
manière, et nous le regrettons
profondément.³⁹

The Association argued that its mandate was to continue to lobby the Norris government for, at the most, the preservation of French as a subject of instruction in the schools. It did not see itself becoming involved in a court case affecting the constitutionality of the French language in Manitoba.

Je suis autorisé à dire que cette action est, à notre avis, inopportune et mal avisée et nous le regrettons extrêmement. Nous désirons surtout que ce soit bien compris: nous sommes complètement étrangers à cette action.⁴⁰

If the Association d'Éducation, which purported to represent 30,000 French-speaking Canadians, would not support Dumas, the Union Nationale Métisse was prepared to do so. To them, "la cause Dumas" had great historical significance. They thought the case could have two results: should Dumas win, the government would be forced to publish government documents in the two official languages. Secondly the case

... a pour but de nous faire rendre l'officialité de la langue française et si le résultat est atteint il serait difficile de ne pas faire enseigner dans les écoles une langue officielle.⁴¹

Obviously, the Union Nationale Métisse, which presented itself as the spokesman for all French-speaking Métis of the province, saw in the Dumas case a method of resolving once and for all the question of French not only as an official language but also as a language of instruction in schools.

Furthermore, Dumas' actions presented the Union Nationale with a mechanism forcing the government:

... de faire respecter le traité fait entre "le Gouvernement Provisoire de la Rivière Rouge en 1870 et le Gouvernement Canadian" traité sanctionné par le Gouvernement "Impérial".⁴²

Accusing the Association of being assimilationists, the Union Nationale Métis met at St.Vital on 16 July 1916 and declared:

Nous ne pouvons approuver l'Association d'Éducation pour deux raison; premièrement parce qu'elle n'avait pas le droit de condamner un homme sans connaître ses moyens. Elle aurait pu se contenter de le surveiller et de le laisser agir. Quel tort pouvait-il faire? Deuxièmement les Métis ne peuvent renoncer à lutter pour la langue. Libre aux Canadiens-français d'abandonner le legs de Montcalm ainsi que les libertés gagnées par la loyauté et l'héroïsme de leur pères en 1775 et en 1812 et par les martyrs de 1837, ils sont maîtres de leurs attitudes et nous n'avons rien à y voir. Mais savent-ils ce que c'est que de nous demander à nous Métis, de

ceser la lutte pour notre langue? C'est de demander à la nation métisse d'oublier et de déclarer comme nul ce que leur résistance calme et digne de 1869-70 a obtenu; c'est lui demander d'oublier les persécutions dont elle a été l'objet, c'est de demander à Riel d'oublier l'échafaud de Régina que les années à venir feront un autel : comme le bûcher de Rouen d'où s'envola l'âme de Jeanne d'Arc qui est aujourd'hui le palladium de la France dans sa lutte gigantesque contre le despotisme teuton; c'est demander à Lépine d'oublier l'exil et les cauchemars qui lui faisait voir le gibet et lui demander d'oublier les chaînes qui l'ont fait gémir longtemps dans les sombres prisons; c'est de demander aux Goulet d'oublier la vision qui leur montre une ligne de sang qui traverse la Rivière Rouge; c'est demander à André Neault, d'oublier les poursuites acharnées de malfaiteurs altérés de sang, c'est lui demander de ne pas regarder ses mains et ses pieds jadis chargés de fers, c'est lui demander de ne pas mettre sa main sur sa tête pour ne penser à la profonde cicatrice qu'on laissée les baionnettes des soldats de Wolseley; c'est de demander aux Lagimodière, aux Harrison, aux Proulx, aux Larivière, Tourond, Vermette et tant d'autres d'oublier ce qu'ils ont à la nation métisse d'oublier une des plus belles pages de son histoire en renonçant de suivre ses traditions.⁴³.

This recourse to history and tradition served to unite all members of the Union Nationale Métis behind Dumas and against the Association d'Éducation. Three Métis members elected to the executive committee of the Association resigned their positions to protest the actions of the Association d'Éducation. In his letter of resignation to the Secretary-General of the Association, M.A.J. Papineau,

Alexandre Riel stated: "Je ne puis consentir, à ne plus nous réclamer des traités qui ont tant coûté à la nation métisse."⁴⁴

Patrice Beauchemin of St. Charles also resigned. In describing the actions of Beauchemin, Camille Teillet, spokesman for the meeting at St. Vital, stated:

Patrice Beauchemin, seul isolé à St. Charles, a su maintenir sa dignité comme homme et comme métis en refusant de prendre la place qu'on lui assignait dans le comité local formé à la demande de l'Association d'Éducation; car on avait agi là comme on agit partout ailleurs en reléguant les métis au second plan alors que leurs situations les mettaient au tout premier rang.⁴⁵

In reply the Association attempted to downplay their lack of participation by resorting to reason:

L'Exécutif de l'Association d'Éducation n'a pas et n'a jamais eu l'intention d'abandonner aucun des droits qui sont garantis à l'élément français catholique de cette province en vertu de la constitution de ce pays. Il entend plutôt réclamer au temps et lieu qu'il croira le plus favorable. Pour le moment, nous croyons que l'action prise par M. Dumas est de nature à nuire à nos intérêts; et c'est la raison pourquoi nous ne pouvons appuyer cette démarche actuellement.⁴⁶

Events during this confrontation also took on racial overtones. Writing to a Monsieur Bérard on 1 August 1916, Joseph Riel accuses the Association d'Éducation of being a group of racists:

Nous désapprouvons la "Société d'Éducation" parce que son attitude est lâche, maladroite et vexatoire pour les Métis ... si Dumas est condamné par eux - c'est probablement parce qu'il est Métis, et que leur attitude laisse à croire que ce que les Métis ont gagné aux prix de tant de sacrifice n'a aucune valeur.⁴⁷

Dumas, who had appealed the original verdict on 5 July 1916, showed his gratitude towards the Métis in a letter to Patrice Beauchemin in which he stated: "Je n'attendais pas moins des Métis. Cette Résolution me donne force et courage pour continuer la lutte jusqu'au bout."⁴⁸

But Dumas never fulfilled his ambition of making French an official language of the province, and the Métis could only look back to another lost battle. French instruction was allowed for one hour a day. The Métis would have to wait for Georges Forest, who through a court case in the 1970's would challenge the validity of the 1890 Manitoba Act respecting the French language.

The second event that created confrontation between the two groups were the editorials of Donatien Fremont, editor of La Liberté, a French-Canadian newspaper published in St. Boniface. Fremont, a naturalized Frenchman, published an account of what he said had actually occurred at Batoche in 1885.⁴⁹ In his editorials, he accused the Métis of:

1. Objurgations et menaces du clergé;
2. Les droits de propriété accordé par télégraphe;
3. Obstination de Riel;
4. Les Métis forcés de prendre les armes et d'apostasier;
5. Apostasie de Riel;
6. Prise de possession et profanation de l'église de Batoche;
7. Instauration d'un nouveau culte;
8. Riel s'installe au confessionnal;
9. Les pères de les soeurs prisonniers dans le presbytère de Batoche;
10. Soulèvement des Indiens par Riel;
11. Soulèvement insensé des Métis.⁵⁰

The Métis, who were in the process of having de Tremaudan, their hired historian, write their history, took exception to Fremont's charges. By resolution the Union Nationale Métisse and the Société Historique Métisse informed the Métis populace:

Qu'il est dangereux pour nos familles de recevoir ce journal dans leur foyers, parce qu'il viendrait briser des traditions familiales, ferait perdre le respect que les enfants doivent avoir pour leur parents; que de tels sentiments enlèveront à ces enfants le courage et la fierté nationale si nécessaires pour se diriger dans la vie.⁵¹

The Métis then declared La Liberté, "un organe de faction et sentiment qu'il est leur devoir de la bannir de leurs foyers..."⁵² If the newspaper was damned, so was Fremont. The Métis depicted the editor as "anti-métisse et anti-patriotique."⁵³ Fremont was accused of defending the missionaries⁵⁴ (of 1885) at the expense of the Métis. Adding insult to injury, Fremont had apparently created a false impression in the public mind about the Métis of 1885. In his letter to Fremont on 6 February 1932, Guillaume Charette, secretary of the Métis Historical society, demanded: "Était-il besoin pour cela, de montrer au public Canadien et au public Français que nos pères ont été des criminels ou des fous?"⁵⁵

The Métis then proceeded to attack each of Fremont's points and attempted to disprove his accusations. To the charge that Riel had taken over the confessional, Martin Jerome, a leading member of the Métis group, demanded proof that Métis people had actually gone to Riel for confession. To the accusation that the Métis had received word by telegram that their title to the land would be recognized, Jerome countered with evidence to show that the opposite had been the case.

... quand on sait que précédemment Riel avait préparé et expédié à Ottawa une forte pétition contenant toutes les réclamations des Métis dont paraît-il Lawrence Clark, Bourgeois de la Baie d'Hudson au Fort Carlton étant le porteur, à Ottawa, et aussitôt son retour, les Métis lui demandèrent qu'elle était la réponse du gouvernement à leur pétition. La seule réponse, il leur dit: "c'est des fers pour les principaux et des balles pour tous les Métis." Riel leur dit donc: "C'est notre extermination qu'ils veulent," il convoqua de suite une assemblée de tous ses gens et leur dit: "Peut être serait-il préférable que je m'en retourne aux États-Unis" mais tous crièrent, "Non tu resteras avec nous" c'est de là que commença l'organisation armée des Métis, et le fameux Clark excita et conseilla la police montée de Prince Albert d'aller arrêter Riel et les Métis de Batoche.⁵⁶

Suffice it to state that the polemic continued on the other points.⁵⁷ The publication of de Tremaudan's Histoire de la nation Métisse did not help matters. In La Race Métisse, Father Morice, a rather eccentric character, rebutted de Tremaudan's accusation that the clergy was at fault for the Métis defeat in 1885. Morice argued that de Tramaudan distorted history to make the clergy look like the culprits; he criticized de Tremaudan's work for being too anti-clerical. Who was right and who was wrong cannot be gauged. Both de Tremaudan and Morice had obtained information from the Métis of Batoche. But it appears that both were told what they wanted to hear. The editorials of Fremont went on for three years, with the Métis refuting each accusation. Eventually, discussion on the issues subsided -- in all probability because only a fraction of the Métis populace was interested.

IV

If the Union Nationale Métisse of 1916 was prepared to defend its rights with respect to the French language so that the Métis would remain "une race distincte. Nous voulons qu'elle soit toujours Métisse-Canadienne-Française," such was no longer the case in 1975.

In 1975 the Métis no longer saw themselves as culturally associated with the French-Canadians. Speaking the French language had simply become a cultural element -- something one did because of one's heritage. Métis identity was no longer associated with the French language or with the Catholic faith. As one resident of S. Lazare put it: "Si qu'on parle pas Français ils nous traitent de sauvages quand même." To some Métis, then, the preservation of the French language no longer appeared necessary for Métis identity. The issue that brought the matter to the fore was Bill 113 respecting unilingual French schools introduced in the Manitoba Legislature by the provincial N.D.P. government in 1970.

In "Pour un réseau d'écoles françaises au Manitoba," Oliver Tremblay, the Director of the Bureau d'Education française (BEF), elaborated on the need for French language schools in the province of Manitoba.

Citing Bill 113, which allows for French as a language of instruction, Tremblay and his staff went about the province explaining this and other options to French-speaking parents.⁵⁸ Interestingly, in such communities as Elie, English-speaking parents were in full support of French immersion classes. The BEF did not appear to have any problems with "les Anglais" -- their problems came from Francophones and from "les Métis." In a letter to the White Horse Plains School District #20 newsletter, INFO, 26 parents from St. Eustache opposed both instruction in French and the immersion program.⁵⁹ Eight of the 26 parents who signed were Métis.

The situation was more volatile at St. Lazare. There some Métis parents actually removed their children from the school, because they saw the French program as an attempt at cultural genocide.⁶⁰ If events moved quickly in the communities, they were even more cataclysmic within the department of education. The BEF had been established to promote French-language schools. Meanwhile, the department had established the Native education branch (NEB) with a mandate to oversee the education of Native children in provincial schools. The dilemma was the question of which branch had responsibility for French-speaking Métis students.

In a memo to his superior, the director of Native education demanded clarification of the situation:

I have already been asked by two school boards what are our responsibilities to French-speaking natives in comparison or contrast to the B.E.F.⁶¹

The result of the memo was a continuing debate between the BEF and the NEB about jurisdiction. The fear of everyone involved was that division within the department would also become an issue in the communities. Eventually the furor subsided. The Métis simply removed themselves from the action, and unilingual French schools became a reality.

These three issues must not, however, be viewed simply as a Métis reaction to their minority status vis-à-vis French Canadians. In all three instances, the Métis were treated as inferior by the French. Their patois was not recognized as French, and Métis communities were and are still segregated from the French community.

The fourth and perhaps most distressing issue of all occurred in 1980 -- distressing because it involved the Roman Catholic religion. Catholicism has always been an important element in the culture of the French-speaking Métis. It is

insulting enough to note that in most French-speaking parishes, the Métis have always sat at the back of the church. Whether this is done consciously or not is a matter of opinion, but when someone attacks a statue of the blessed Virgin Mary and describes it as ugly and idolatrous -- that is the ultimate insult.

The issue -- a statue of Our Lady of Red River.

On 1 January 1980 at St. Boniface Cathedral, a statue of Our Lady of Red River was unveiled by Mgr. Antoine Hacault. The statue had been given certain Métis characteristics, exemplifying the Indian-Métis people who inhabited the Red River area at the time of the missionaries' arrival.

However, some took exception to the statue. In a letter to the editor of La Liberté, Mme Albert Auger of Fargo, North Dakota, who had been visiting St. Boniface, referred to the statue as "Une dame à la tapette."⁶²

Je viens seconder la lettre de
Mme Guénette du 26 janvier 1980, concernant
les "montruosités" dans la cathédrale.

Je me demande qui est en tête de ce
mouvement "Métis" pour une cathédrale.
Premièrement, c'est un espèce de Jésus,
idole mexicaine aztèque. Ensuite c'est une
vierge sauvagesse ou une "dame à la
tapette" on l'a si bien surnommé parce que
n'est-ce pas qu'on dirait qu'elle veut
taper les mains?

Pensez-vous que ces idoles nous incitent à la dévotion? On se baisse la tête à l'élévation plutôt que de lever les yeux de peur d'apercevoir des faces laides dans un lieu saint.

Il y a plusieurs musées où ces choses seraient peut-être appréciées mais l'artiste n'est certainement pas un artiste pour une cathédrale.

Avez-vous oublié que la sainte Vierge était la plus belle et la pure de toutes les femmes?

A bas les idoles!!

Her letter implied that the Métis were forming a movement to change the cathedral into a Métis shrine.

A resident of Saint Boniface had also written expressing disapproval of the statue. On 26 January 1980 this letter appeared in La Liberté;

Et aussi la statue qu'ils ont mise dans la Cathédrale, c'est une honte d'avoir de telles monstruosités. C'est rire de notre Seigneur et de sa Sainte Mère que de les représenter si laids. S'il y avait un beau crucifix, ça serait très favorable, car si vous voulez toucher le coeur d'un homme, c'est avec un beau crucifix, n'est-ce pas?

Heureusement que je n'appartiens pas à cette partie de Saint-Boniface.

But all was not lost. Several readers wrote to express support for the statue, including one who asked: "De quelle couleur est la peau de Dieu?"

The most interesting aspect of this issue was the silence on the part of the Métis -- there were no letters to the editor, no discussion of the issue. Perhaps they had finally won something without having to fight publicly with the French-Canadians. And perhaps, just perhaps, the prize this time was worth more than any other battle.

Footnotes

1. Robert Painchaud, "Les Rapports entre les Métis et les Canadiens-français au Manitoba 1870-1884", in A.S. Lussier and D. Bruce Sealey, The Other Natives: The Métis, Volume 2 (Winnipeg: Manitoba Métis Federation Press), 1978, pp. 53-74.
2. The term Métis used in this paper refers to the French-speaking Métis. In French it is pronounced Métisse or Métifs.
3. Painchaud believed that neither group wanted to offend the other. In all probability the main reason is because no one has ever thought to investigate race relations between two groups that have certain common bonds.
4. Painchaud, pp. 56, 57.
5. G. Friesen, "Homeland to Hinterland: Political transaction in Manitoba, 1870-1879". C.H.A. Historical Papers, 1979.
6. G.F.G. Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada.
7. J.K. Howard, Strange Empire.
8. M. Giraud, Le Métis Canadien.
9. A.H. deTremaudan, L'Histoire de la Nation Métisse dans l'Ouest Canadien, (Montreal: Editions Albert Levesque, 1935).
10. Painchaud, pp. 53-54.
11. P.A.M., Joseph Duduc Collection, Autobiography, p. 76.
12. La Minerve, 23 January 1871.
13. Le Métis, 22 June 1871.
14. Le Métis, 10 August 1871.
15. Le Métis, 8 June 1871, describes what transpired at each meeting.
16. Friesen, p. 40. See footnote 22 in text.
17. Painchaud, p. 62.
18. P.A.C., M.G. 26A, Macdonald papers, vol. 246, pp. 110786-110791, Winnipeg, 29 January 1873, McMicken to Sir John A. Macdonald. Cited in Painchaud, p. 63.

19. D.B. Sealey, "Statutory Land Rights of the Manitoba Métis" in The Other Natives: the Metis, Volume 2, Lussiers & Sealy, eds., p. 2-3.
20. Painchaud, p. 67.
21. Cited in Painchaud, p. 69.
22. Friesen, p. 40.
23. Sealey, p. 3.
24. P.A.M., Joseph Dubuc Collection, "Mémoires d'un Manitobain", pp. 48-50.
25. Painchaud, p. 70-71, also Le Métis, January 18, 1877.
26. Painchaud, p. 72.
27. Friesen, p. 38.
28. Friesen, p. 39.
29. Giroux to Taché, 29 March 1878. Cited in Friesen.
30. Cyrille St. Pierre (Priest) to Taché, 18 November 1878. Cited in Friesen.
31. Frank McPhillips to Taché, 6 August 1878. Cited in Friesen.
32. Friesen, p. 40.
33. Friesen, p. 40. Painchaud, p. 73-74.
34. Le Fort Rouge refers to the Red Fort - red association with Peau Rouge.
- 35.-36. La coulée and "le coin nord" are names given by French-Canadians to signify a geographical area where Métis people are living.
37. The sudden appearance of Dumas on the scene is inexplicable. Why, for instance, would Bernier, the sitting member of the Legislature and a Conservative, at that, join Judge Prendergast, a Liberal, in asking Dumas to seek the nomination in St. Boniface? Dumas not only won the nomination but also won the election. Yet he is not listed in either the Parliamentary Guide or the Legislative Guide as having been a member of the Legislature in 1915-1916. He appears to have sat for only four months and resigned. Perhaps Robert André is correct in his interpretation of the events. Dumas was set up.

Dumas might have had dual citizenship since he was born on 21 February 1875 in Leroy, North Dakota. If he did not have dual citizenship how could he have become naturalized so quickly? He arrived in St. Boniface four months before the 1916 election.

38. Statement of Claim to Court of King's Bench, June 16, 1916.
39. Le Manitoba, Saint Boniface, mercredi 28 juin 1916, Volume XLV.
40. Ibid.
41. Le Manitoba 5 juillet 1916.
42. P.A.M., Riel Papers, 596. Minutes of a meeting of Métis people at St. Vital, 16 July 1916.
43. P.A.M., Riel Papers, 596. Minutes of a meeting of Métis people at St. Vital, 16 July 1916. Present at the meeting were: Joseph Riel, Alexandre Riel, Colin McDougall, Duncan McDougall, Martin Neault, Camille Teillet, Alexandre Neault, Jean-Marie Poitras, Patrice Beauchemin, Williams Beauchemin, Simon Marchand et Roger Goulet.

M. Joseph Riel est nommé président et M. Patrice Beauchemin est nommé secrétaire de l'assemblée.
44. P.A.M., Riel Papers, 596.
45. Ibid.
46. P.A.M., Société Historique Métisse papers. Papineau to Alexandre Riel, 1 August 1916.
47. P.A.M., Société Historique Métisse Papers. Joseph Riel to Mr. Bérard, 1 August 1916.
48. P.A.M., Société Historique Métisse Papers. Dumas to Beauchemin, 22 July 1916.
49. P.A.M., Société Historique Métisse papers. M610F1 Box 1. extrait du Procès-verbal de l'assemblée de la Société Historique Métisse du 19 décembre 1931. See also, La Liberté, mercredi, 20 janvier 1932. Volume XIX.
50. La Liberté, 9 décembre, 16 décembre 1931.
51. P.A.M. Société Historique Métisse Papers. MG10F1 Box 1. Résolution envers La Liberté signed by Jos St. Luc and Frederick Berriault.

52. P.A.M. Société Historique Métisse Papers. MG10F1 Box 1.
53. P.A.M. Société Historique Métisse Papers. MG10F1 Box 1.
54. P.A.M. MG10F1 Box 1. Lettre ouverte à M. Donatien Fremont, Rédacteur de La Liberté, Winnipeg, 6 février 1932 par Guillaume Charette.
55. P.A.M. MG10F1 Box 1. (Emphasis in the original).
56. P.A.M. MG10F1 Box 1, Narration by Martin Jérôme, January 12, 1932.
57. See La Liberté, mercredi, 20 janvier 1932, Volume XIX, No. 34; 3 février 1932, Volume XIX, No. 36, 10 février 1932, Volume XIX, No. 37, 2 mars 1932, Volume XIX, No. 40.
58. The options were: A/ English Program; B) Total French Immersion (to become bilingual); C) Français Program (Francophones).
59. White Horse Plains S.D. #20 Newsletter INFO, May-June issue 1976, pp. 12-13.
60. Interview with members of Manitoba Métis Federation Local at St. Lazare. M.M.F. Annual Assembly, Rivers, May, 1977.
61. Memo from N.E.B. Director to J.G. Campbell, Assistant Deputy Minister, 9 April 1976.
62. La Liberté jeudi, 21 février 1980.

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