

**University of Alberta**

**From Borderlands to Bordered Lands:  
The Plains Metis and the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel, 1869-1885**

by

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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For Mom and Dad

## Abstract

The following study is an attempt to comprehend the impact that the Canadian-United States border along the forty-ninth parallel had on the Plains Metis between 1869 and 1885, and how members of this community continued to manipulate the border to meet their own objectives. From the 1860s to 1880s, state definitions of Metis status, as well as government recognition and non-recognition of Metis identity, had a profound impact on the Plains Metis. Imposed state classifications and statuses limited the choices of many to enter treaty, be recognised as a citizen, or reside in a particular country. The implementation of these status definitions began after 1875 when the enforcement of the international boundary began in earnest, and it was this enforcement that represented the beginnings of the colonisation of the Plains Metis.

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## Introduction

The Canadian-United States border that divides the western half of Canada and the United States along the forty-ninth parallel is entirely political in origin. Aboriginal groups utilised this bioregion for decades with little thought of the supposed claims of British and American sovereignty. This border intersected the territory of many aboriginal groups who competed, cooperated, traded, fought with, and hunted across this arbitrarily drawn line. When the American Army and North West Mounted Police began enforcing the boundary in the 1870s, many of these groups were forced to choose a nationality and had their cross-border movements restricted by both American and Canadian governments, irrevocably changing the meaning of the forty-ninth parallel by 1885.

The international boundary superimposed on the Northern Plains had a profound impact on the traditional territorial claims of aboriginal groups, including the Plains Metis. These nation-making policies of both the Canadian and American governments in the 1870s restricted their aboriginal populations from traversing the border and subsequently affected their national identities. Despite these directives, the persistent movement of the Plains Metis across the international boundary continued to frustrate both governments. Indian agents, bureaucrats, War Departments and diplomats expressed growing frustration with the Plains Metis who refused to cease their movement across the Northern Plains. For many officials, continued crossing of the forty-ninth parallel frustrated the attempts of both governments to relegate their aboriginal population to reserves/reservations

where they would be nationalised, counted, and financial responsibility for each group designated. In particular, the Plains Metis succeeded in frustrating the nationalising efforts of both governments, as many Metis claimed the Northern Plains as their traditional hunting and wintering territory.

The following study is an attempt to comprehend the impact that the Canadian-United States border along the forty-ninth parallel had on the Plains Metis between 1869 and 1885, and how members of this community continued to manipulate the border to meet their own objectives. From the 1860s to 1880s, state definitions of Metis status, as well as government recognition and non-recognition of Metis identity, had a profound impact on the Plains Metis. Imposed state classifications and statuses limited the choices of many to enter treaty, be recognised as a citizen, or reside in a particular country. The implementation of these status definitions began after 1875 when the enforcement of the international boundary began in earnest, and it was this enforcement that represented the beginnings of the colonisation of the Plains Metis.

During this period of aboriginal incorporation on both sides of the border, the attempts at forced nationalisation required many Plains Metis to rethink their perceptions of their known world. Whereas the Metis had manipulated the border well before 1870, it now served to reorder their very existence. To discuss these profound changes that occurred in the last half of the nineteenth century, the Plains Metis borderland identity, defined by their relation to the border, has been divided into two phases; the first prior to the mid-1870s when the Metis were not impinged by the boundary and gave little thought to the border and crossing it, and the second

from the mid-1870s to mid-1880s when the border began to have a negative effect, which corresponds with enforcement of the forty-ninth parallel and forced government nationalisation. The forty-ninth parallel effectively formed not only a political boundary that separated a people with a remarkably similar cultural and historical experience, but had ethnic implications as Metis were recognised as a distinct group on one side and ignored on the other. Increasingly, residence on a particular side of the border influenced identities, relationships with governments and survival strategies. Despite attempts by both governments to nationalise the Plains Metis and force them into a subsistence lifestyle, these objectives failed to end Metis autonomy and movement across the border well into the twentieth century.

For the purposes of this study, the term 'borderlands' is used to refer to the territory that lies between the Lake of the Woods and the Rocky Mountains, encompassing the entirety of the border along the forty-ninth parallel as established in 1818.<sup>1</sup> The northern terminus of this region is the South Saskatchewan River, and the south is bound by the Missouri River. In contemporary terms, this includes the southern portions of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and the northern portions of Minnesota, North Dakota and Montana. Demarcated by the Joint Boundary Commission in 1872-1874, the international border was one of many boundaries established by the Canadian and American governments in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Other imposed boundaries included homesteading grids, railroad and telegraph lines, and less tangible divisions such as class, gender

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<sup>1</sup> The Convention of 1818 established the forty-ninth boundary as the international boundary between Canada and the United States from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains.

and ethnicity. Undeniably, the division of the Northern Plains was part of the larger nation-making policy of Canadian and American governments, as both states remained preoccupied with issues of sovereignty well into the twentieth century. Unfortunately, for government authorities, the enforcement of the border along the forty-ninth parallel did not terminate aboriginal movement across the border. In fact, for the Plains Metis who had strong territorial claims to the region, trade connections and family ties made continued crossings almost as a necessity.

Between 1840 and 1885, the meaning of the international border underwent a number of changes and influenced how the Plains Metis interacted with it. During the 1840s, the Plains Metis successfully used the boundary to circumvent the trade monopoly of the Hudson's Bay Company, and continued to manipulate the border for the purpose of trade throughout the course of this study. The meaning of the border began to undergo a significant shift in the late 1860s, which was cemented in 1875 when the governments of both Canada and the United States began enforcing their respective borders and removing 'unwanted' aboriginal populations from the borderlands. The border was again used in 1885 by the Plains Metis to evade the Canadian government following the Northwest Rebellion, after which many Metis took up permanent residence in the United States.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter One will provide an explanation of my interpretive framework and how this framework fits into the historiography of the Plains Metis and Northern Plains borderlands. Chapter Two examines the historical origin of the Plains Metis, starting in the Great Lakes region and their subsequent movement westward and emergence on the Northern Plains.

Using contemporary sources, the Plains Metis will be established as a transnational borderlands people that, I argue, requires a re-conceptualisation of their history. The final two chapters analyse both Canadian and American attempts to nationalise the Plains Metis and the Metis' response to these restrictions. Chapter Three highlights the policies and actions of the Canadian and American governments whose ultimate goal was to remove unwanted aboriginals from both sides of the border and restrict them spatially to reserves/reservations and assimilate them. Using United States Army Records, this chapter will attempt to show how both governments' understanding of Metis nationality was transformed during this pivotal phase, and that government policy played a fundamental role in the transformation of government understanding, definition and recognition of the Metis borderland identity from the 1870s to 1880s. Having established government aspiration of nationalising and removing unwanted aboriginal populations, Chapter Four provides a case study of the Turtle Mountain community during the second phase of Metis borderland identity. This study will illustrate that Plains Metis families continued their trans-border lives by using Indian treaty status, Canadian Metis scrip, and homesteading on both sides of the boundary. In turn, this manipulation of the forty-ninth parallel will show why families chose to reside on both sides of the international boundary as they negotiated their place in an increasingly contested territory.

Unsurprisingly, traditional qualitative sources leave little space for aboriginal voice, as non-aboriginal contemporaries generated most of these sources. These sources, however, especially the U.S. army records, provide an excellent window

through which one can glimpse governmental understandings of Metis nationality, as well as the relationship between Plains Metis, government officials, and incoming settler populations. U.S. army records, along with Canadian government records, have been used to explain or analyse the attempt to enforce the Canadian-United States border in the 1870s, and the program to nationalise the Metis.

The Metis perspective on the enforcement of the Canadian-United States border emerges more fully from different types of records. These include the biographical files of the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s and the Metis authored scrip applications taken in the period 1885 to 1901. The WPA sources contain information regarding spouse, parents, children, birth and death dates, nationality, and personal accounts of early 'pioneering' days in North Dakota. The Metis scrip sources contain much of the same data as the WPA, but allow the Canadian experience and context to be examined. The use of the Turtle Mountain community as a case study for this thesis is grounded in the fact that sources are available on both sides of the forty-ninth parallel, allowing for the successful tracing of Metis families as they moved back and forth across the border. In addition, the Turtle Mountains as a geographic area, transcends the border, allowing family members to remain in the Turtle Mountain community on both sides of the international boundary.

At this point, a brief discussion of terminology is required. When using the term Metis, it is done in reference to self-identifying individuals, families and communities who regarded themselves as distinct from both "Indian" and Euro-American society. This terminology and the ethnic boundaries they are based on

become somewhat blurred in the late nineteenth century when large numbers of Metis individuals entered the United States Chippewa Treaty and Reservation at Turtle Mountains and become, for government purposes, 'Indian'. This shift in status in other localities often led to a shift in ethnic identity as well, but given the number of Metis who resided on the Turtle Mountain Reservation as "status Indians" – outnumbering the 'full-bloods' – they retained their ethnic identity as Metis, holding Metis Days on the Reservation even today. This blurring of ethnic lines and identities will be addressed within the context of the following chapters. Although arguably an inappropriate term, the word 'Indian' has been retained in this thesis due to its use as a 'status' identifier in all the contemporary literature, as well as legislative records that deal with aboriginal rights and treaties on both sides of the border. The term aboriginal is used when describing individuals of either Metis or First Nation/Native descent, and although a rather homogenising term, it avoids using inappropriate language. When possible, the names of specific groups, such as Cree, are used – although this is not without its own complexities. Finally, the decision to use Chippewa and not Ojibwa needs to be discussed. Although in Canada this same group is identified as Ojibwa, south of the border they were known as Chippewa. Because the members of the United States Chippewa Reservation are dealt with in significant detail, the American terminology – Chippewa – is used to maintain consistency in terminology and avoid confusion.

## Chapter One: Plains Metis Historiography and a Borderlands Approach

*"I strongly recommend that neither the British Indians nor our own Indians be permitted to cross the boundary. The boundary is as plainly and definitely marked as it would be by the course of a stream or by the crest of a mountain ridge and it is beyond question that all Indians and half breeds know just where it is."*

-General Terry to General Sherman  
January 4, 1882<sup>1</sup>

Sentiments such as these serve to emphasise the belief held by government officials that the forty-ninth parallel, having been marked by stone mounds at three mile intervals during the boundary commission survey of the early 1870s, should be interpreted by Northern Plains aboriginal peoples as a tangible and geographic barrier.<sup>2</sup> Of course, this fails to recognise that a number of aboriginal groups were well aware of the border's location, but chose to ignore its bifurcation of the region. Prior to the border's enforcement, Plains Metis groups travelled the Northern Plains establishing hunting territories, wintering communities and trading routes, which the enforcement of the United States-Canadian border cleaved almost exactly in half. Although many groups remained indifferent to the border even after it was marked,

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<sup>1</sup> Commander of Dakota Territory Alfred Howe Terry in response to Commanding General of the United States Army William T. Sherman Memorandum, 1 January 1882; Record 9961, B 1881 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666, Roll 291); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC (NAB).

<sup>2</sup> Between 1872 and 1874 the Canadian-American border was surveyed from the North-west Angle of Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains. Known as the North American Boundary Commission, it was comprised of both American and British teams of surveyors who not only surveyed but marked the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel with earthen mounds and stone markers.



there were a number of examples where aboriginal peoples crossed the border to escape government persecution on one side or another. The 1862 Minnesota Uprising and the exodus of Sitting Bull and his followers to Canada following the 1876 Battle of Little Bighorn, as well as the movement of Metis south of the border in 1885, serve as just a few examples.<sup>3</sup> Not limited to aboriginal peoples, trends such as these continued into the twentieth century as the border became a source of refuge for American Draft Dodgers of the Vietnam War and the War in Iraq.

The creation of reserves/reservations was one way in which both governments attempted to nationalise their borderland aboriginal population. As was the case for the Blackfoot whose traditional territory previously straddled the forty-ninth parallel, they were divided, placed on reserves/reservations, and designated as either Canadian or American.<sup>4</sup> The Dakota, who had hunting territory on both sides of the border, later fled from the American Army by crossing the 'medicine line' into Canadian territory where they encountered a federal government hesitant to accept responsibility for what they considered an 'American' aboriginal group.<sup>5</sup> By the late 1860s United States authorities began to view the presence of both Cree and Metis as a hindrance to settling the west, decried their presence as foreign, and demanded their removal north of the forty-ninth

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<sup>3</sup> Also known as the Sioux Uprising, the 1862 Minnesota uprising began when a group of Dakotas broke into an Agency warehouse ending with the exodus of 40 000 settlers and 543 killed soldiers/settlers. The Uprising ended with the mass execution of 38 Dakota, and with the remainder being expelled from Minnesota and their reserves in the territory being abolished. Gontran Laviolette, *The Dakota Sioux in Canada*, 140 (Winnipeg: DLM Publications, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> John C. Ewers, *The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), 217.

<sup>5</sup> Gontran Laviolette, *The Dakota Sioux in Canada*, 140.

parallel. Before entering into treaty negotiations, both governments wanted to be explicitly clear about precisely which aboriginal groups they were financially responsible for. This need to define which aboriginal group belonged in each country did not allow for either Canada or the United States to acknowledge the borderland identity of these borderland peoples.

For the Plains Metis, who were not assigned reserves/reservations in Canadian or American territory, nationalisation was even more problematic. Acknowledged as a distinct ethnic group with special status in Canada but denied this designation in the United States, their story has largely been a Canadian one. As descendants of non-aboriginal fur traders and Native women, the Metis came to identify themselves as a distinct cultural group by 1818.<sup>6</sup> As early as 1830, the majority of Metis were situated at the Red River Settlement in British territory and at Pembina in present day North Dakota. The overwhelming belief that all Metis were British subjects had a profound impact on the Metis experience in the United States. Even though denied status in American territory, the southern movement of the buffalo, the enforcement of the border, and the 1885 Rebellion convinced many Metis to choose an American nationality. For those Metis who chose to reside permanently in the United States, they had three options available to them. They could choose to self-identify as Indian and enter into treaty; they could return to Canada and take scrip; or they could integrate themselves into the dominant 'white' society.<sup>7</sup> The latter was particularly difficult for British-born Metis, and as late as

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<sup>6</sup> Gerhard Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing World of the Red River Métis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 184.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

1896, the American government was still forcibly removing these 'Canadian Indians' north of the forty-ninth parallel.<sup>8</sup> Although the Canadian government acknowledged that the Metis had some aboriginal rights in the Manitoba Act of 1870, they resented the American assertion that all Metis were Canadian, and therefore a Canadian responsibility.<sup>9</sup> Due to American refusal to grant the Plains Metis a status equal to that in Canada, the implementation of scrip as a means of extinguishing Metis aboriginal title to land had no equal in the United States. It is this acknowledgement of Metis aboriginal title in Canada that has resulted in the Metis being studied largely as a Canadian phenomenon. This recognition in Canada and denial in the United States has had the most profound impact on the historical literature of the Metis.

However, issues such as these do not clearly emerge from the secondary literature in the discussion of the Plains Metis of the Northern Plains. The study of the Canadian and American Wests is well documented, but the historiography of their shared borderland region has received remarkably less attention. Unlike the borderlands of the American Southwest and Mexican North, which has a healthy scholarly literature, its equivalent at the forty-ninth parallel is significantly

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<sup>8</sup> Michel Hogue, "Crossing the Line: Race, Nationality, and the Deportation of the 'Canadian' Crees in the Canada-U.S. Borderlands, 1890-1900" in *The Borderlands of the American and Canadian Wests: Essays on Regional History of the Forty-ninth Parallel*, ed. Sterling Evans (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 7.

<sup>9</sup> Major of 7th Infantry at Fort Belknap Guido Ilges to Acting Adjutant General of Montana District, 22 October 1878; Record 12149, 1878 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666, roll 362); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

lacking.<sup>10</sup> The study of aboriginal groups in this region has occurred almost entirely along national lines despite their shared historical and cultural background. This is the legacy of groups being categorised as either American or Canadian by both governments through the treaty making process. By denying Plains Metis a borderland identity and limiting their historical experience to the spheres of either Canadian or American history, the impact of nationalisation has severely limited our understanding of this group. Indeed, few historians have specifically focussed on the impact of the border, the way it was enforced, how the Plains Metis contested it, and the direct impact it had on state definitions of Metis identity. Because historians have the power to decide who belongs within the historical narrative, they have a great influence on who becomes part of an imagined collective past.<sup>11</sup> Canadian and American historians have generally taken the border along the forty-ninth parallel for granted and have created two distinct narratives about the history of the Plains Metis. Instead of asking how the border impacted this group, historians have persisted in conceptualising the historical narrative of the Plains Metis along national lines.

A brief review of Plains Metis historiography illustrates how traditional historical discourse has largely confined the history of the Metis to the north side of the forty-ninth parallel, and when the American Metis are examined the border plays little part in the analysis. Marcel Giraud, a French ethnologist, published an

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<sup>10</sup> Sterling Evans, "Preface" in *The Borderlands of the American and Canadian Wests: Essays on Regional History of the Forty-ninth Parallel*, ed. Sterling Evans (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), viii.

<sup>11</sup> Sarah Carter, "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion: Constructing the 'Indian Woman' in the Early Settlement Era in Western Canada," *Great Plains Quarterly* 13 (1993): 147-161.

extensive two-volume work in 1945 entitled *The Metis in the Canadian West*. Heralded as the first study that did not focus solely on Louis Riel, Giraud instead produced an ethnohistorical study of the Metis in western Canada. Based on extensive research of the Hudson's Bay Company archive, Selkirk Papers, Catholic Missionary records, and Canadian and British documents, his study is well-researched and provided a much-needed new perspective on Plains Metis history. Giraud's monograph viewed the emergence of the 'new nation' of Metis in the nineteenth century as a very important ethnological event, but he conceptualised it as strictly a Canadian phenomenon. Giraud's study also racialised the Metis as a group of people genetically incapable of responding to industrialising society. Seen as nomadic and 'barbaric', unable or reluctant to adapt to incoming sedentary 'civilisation', Giraud attributed these failures to the Metis racial character.<sup>12</sup> Underemphasising and largely ignoring Metis borderland identity, Giraud's interpretation of the Metis as a Canadian phenomenon was to be adopted by later historians.

George Stanley's *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions*, researched and written at almost the same time that Giraud was doing his research, took a wider perspective, seeing the Metis and the Rebellions as manifestations of "normal frontier problems" including clashes between 'primitive' and 'civilised' peoples.<sup>13</sup> Although Stanley placed the Metis in a wider international perspective he, like Giraud, focussed exclusively on the Canadian Metis and presented their crises as

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<sup>12</sup> Marcel Giraud, *The Métis of the Canadian West*, volume 2, Translated by George Woodcock (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1986), 457.

<sup>13</sup> George F.G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960) reprint of 1936 publication.

largely Canadian ones. Although well researched and thorough, the work does little to build on the history of the Plains Metis beyond the context of the two Rebellions. When Stanley later wrote a biography of Louis Riel, his narrative follows Riel into the United States by necessity, not by choice.<sup>14</sup> That is, Stanley does not address the border as an actor in his narrative; instead he focuses on the Plains Metis experience as a Canadian phenomenon, with Riel's presence in American territory viewed as an anomaly.

D.N. Sprague's *Canada and the Metis, 1869 – 1885* continued the trend of interpreting Metis history through the two notable Rebellions. Sprague broadens his study by discussing the Metis 'dispossession' following the 1869-70 Rebellion, arguing that the Canadian state failed to act in good faith and deprived the Metis of promised land.<sup>15</sup> While this remains a contentious debate, Sprague's study does little to expand on Metis society in the years from 1869 to 1885, given his focus is the failings of the Canadian state. Likewise, Thomas Flanagan's rebuttal of the Sprague thesis focuses almost exclusively on the Manitoba Metis.<sup>16</sup>

This persistent conceptualisation of the Plains Metis as a Canadian phenomenon is derived from the traditional national historical narratives that accept as natural the nationalisation of borderland aboriginal peoples. This

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<sup>14</sup> George F.G. Stanley, *Louis Riel* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1963).

<sup>15</sup> D.N. Sprague, *Canada and the Metis, 1869-1885* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988), 177.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Flanagan, *Metis Lands in Manitoba* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1991). None of Flanagan's other books on the Metis deal with the Metis as a borderlands people. See *Riel and the Rebellion: 1885 Reconsidered* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Press, 1983); *Louis 'David' Riel: 'Prophet of the New World'* (Toronto; University of Toronto Press, 1979). To Flanagan's credit he has written a short journal article about the American Metis. See "Louis Riel and the Dispersion of the American Metis," *Minnesota History*, Volume 49, Issue 5 (1985).

historiographical approach, which posits very different Canadian and American wests, fails to acknowledge the striking similarities between the two nations' transnational aboriginal groups.<sup>17</sup> As products of their societies, historians have often come to reflect the exceptionalistic characteristics of their nation, and the popular collective memory of its citizens. Thus, it is unsurprising that this same exceptionalism has had a significant impact on the national histories of both nations. Two examples of this are R.A. Billington's *Westward* and Gerald Friesen's *The Canadian Prairies*.<sup>18</sup> Both Billington and Friesen take a homogenising approach to aboriginal history, denying borderland groups their borderland identity. This is particularly problematic when discussing the history of aboriginal groups prior to the formation of the Canadian and American states. Only Friesen offers a brief history of the Metis, but this is done primarily from the perspective of the fur trade. Little analysis is given to the fact that aboriginal peoples were not confined to the present-day political borders, and that many peoples continued to cross these borders well after they were drawn and enforced.

The impact of these national histories has had a number of implications. First, by limiting the history of aboriginal peoples to the confines of the nation state, there is little opportunity to acknowledge the borderland identity of many groups. Second, by accepting the Canadian-U.S. border as 'natural' these works fail to

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<sup>17</sup> Sheila McManus, *The Line Which Separates: Race, Gender, and the Making of the Alberta-Montana Borderlands* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2005), xv.

<sup>18</sup> Ray Allen Billington and Martin Ridge, *Westward: A History of the American Frontier*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001); Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).

address the role that the border itself played in the history of the Northern Plains. In overlooking the border, national narratives do not recognise the impact the border has had on borderland groups, or how they succeeded in manipulating it for their own use.<sup>19</sup>

This focus on the Metis as primarily a Canadian phenomenon began to change in the 1990s. In 1996, Gerhard Ens' *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing World of the Red River Métis in the Nineteenth Century* shifted the concentration from emphasis on the Metis as a 'new nation', and began the focus on a social and economic history of the Plains Metis.<sup>20</sup> His argument of social dynamics and emphasis on a proto-industrial Metis economy diverges significantly from the weight Fritz Pannekoek placed on religious and racial tension that led to the 1869-1870 Rebellion.<sup>21</sup> By arguing that the Metis responded to a new economic order associated with a trans-border buffalo-robe trade, Ens emphasised the importance of the border to the Metis, and makes reference to the role the border played in the social and economic trends at Red River. Neither the border nor the American Metis received any substantial analysis, however, given the book's focus on the Red River Metis.

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<sup>19</sup> Exceptions to this trend include John Milloy's *The Plains Cree: Trade, Diplomacy and War, 1790 to 1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988); Gontran Lavolette, *The Dakota Sioux in Canada* (Winnipeg: DLM Publications, 1991).; Hugh A. Dempsey, *Crowfoot: Chief of the Blackfeet* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1976); Robert M. Utley, *The Lance and the Shield: The Life and Times of Sitting Bull* (New York: Henry Hold, 1993).

<sup>20</sup> Gerhard Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, 146.

<sup>21</sup> Fritz Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Riel Resistance 1869-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing, 1991).



In 1999 Jack Bumsted documented the activities of Louis Riel and the Metis in both Canada and the United States, but stopped short of addressing the border and its impact on the region's inhabitants.<sup>22</sup> In "Louis Riel and the United States," Bumsted does not move beyond the well-documented reasons as to why Riel chose to reside in the United States, instead focusing largely on the political and economic factors that prompted Riel's move to the U.S. Nor does Bumsted question how the border was constructed, enforced, contested; or the ways in which Riel manipulated it during his movements between Canada and the United States.

Since the 1990s, the American Metis have also begun to find their historians. In 1996 Tanis Thorne's *The Many Hands of My Relations* explored Metis ethnogenesis on the Lower Missouri as arising out of the fur trade and a series of events similar to those in the Great Lakes and the Northwest.<sup>23</sup> Framed largely as a regional analysis, however, Thorne did not engage in a comparison with the more northerly borderland Metis. Indeed, her study remains strongly within the National historiographical tradition by noting that the American government's failure to recognize the Metis as separate status relegated the majority of these new peoples to either assimilation or retribalisation.<sup>24</sup>

More relevant to the present study is Martha Harroun Foster's study of the Montana Metis, as she explicitly recognises the origins of this group in the trans-

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<sup>22</sup> J.M. Bumsted, "Louis Riel and the United States" *The American Review of Canadian Studies* (Spring 1999): 20.

<sup>23</sup> Tanis Thorne, *The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1996).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 208-244.

border regions of the Northern Plains.<sup>25</sup> While this study marks the resurgence of interest in the Metis of the United States, and deals with the borderlands region, it does not acknowledge the border specifically, or the borderlands in general, as constituting causal factors in the history of the Lewistown Metis. Although the historiography of the forty-ninth parallel first emerged in the 1950s and has slowly materialised as a sub-field of its own, these early works cannot be conclusively characterised as borderland studies. While their research scope necessitated a transnational approach, and focused little analysis on the border itself, these early works provided the basis for future borderland studies.

This thesis takes as its organizing principle that the nationalistic dichotomy between the Canadian and American Wests must be reconceptualised in favour of a borderland analysis when dealing with the Plains Metis who were not bound by the colonial construction of the border along the forty-ninth parallel. Moving beyond the geographical limitations of 'nation', emphasis can be placed on borders as constructed and contested spaces. It is this type of study of the international boundary that will show how Plains Metis not only rose to prominence in the mid-nineteenth century, but how they survived as vital communities well into the twentieth century. To explain what is meant by a borderland focus it is necessary to see how it emerged in the scholarly literature.

The shift in focus to a borderland orientation originated in the early 1940s with Herbert E. Bolton, who focused on the American-Mexican borderland that was later broadened to encompass other borders in North America. Although the

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<sup>25</sup> Martha Harroun Foster, *We Know Who We Are: Metis Identity in a Montana Community* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006)

Boltonian school is now considered a dated approach, it has since been built upon by incorporating postcolonial analysis. The new literature proposes that the border has agency in history, and that it constitutes its own historical themes that differ from the national discourse.<sup>26</sup>

There are a variety of other approaches related to the study of the Northern Plains, and include themes such as continentalist/transnational and comparative.<sup>27</sup> Generally speaking, a borderland approach is unique for its focus on people who are physically adjacent to the forty-ninth parallel, or in some way associated with it. Postcolonialism, when applied to a borderland framework, seeks to focus on the fluidity of borders, culture and identity across this border. Combining the two, the focus is centred on how individuals and groups familiarise themselves in the midst of changing realities, and how they found a place and identity by manipulating the institutions and definitions imposed by the coloniser. Particularly intriguing is the concept that the border has its own agency in history, and that it creates border cultures and comprises its own historical themes distinct from, and perhaps dissenting, with national cultures.<sup>28</sup> Within this context, borderland studies remain

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<sup>26</sup> Bartholomew Dean, *At the Risk of Being Heard: Identity, Indigenous Rights, and Postcolonial States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 15.

Postcolonial Theory deals with the cultural legacy of colonial rule, and deals with issues of identity, gender, race, racism, ethnicity, and challenges of creating a postcolonial national identity.

<sup>27</sup> Continentalist /transnational conceptualises the Northern Plains as a geographic region of study, which can also be defined using cultural or economic terms. Within this context, the emphasis is typically placed on the numerous interactions that spanned the forty-ninth parallel. The second approach, comparative, generally analyses the similarities and differences that existed on both sides of the border, usually emphasising the differences.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas D. Isern and R. Bruce Shepard, "Duty-Free: An Introduction to the Practice of Regional History along the Forty-ninth Parallel," xxxi.

distinctive from other themes that appear to have similar characteristics. While it remains possible to have a borderland study that encompasses aspects of comparative and transnational approaches, these themes will typically lack a borderland perspective. By decentring the national and imperial narratives, it is possible to recognise that the border played a unique and significant role in the history of North America's Northern Plains.

An early example of a more borderland approach was Joseph Kinsey Howard's *Strange Empire: Louis Riel and the Métis People*, published in 1952. It provides a narration of the Metis history on the Northern Plains and the subsequent expansion of the Canadian and American states. Although Metis history is seen primarily as a Canadian phenomenon, Howard places more weight on their movement across the forty-ninth parallel. Further, he emphasises how the enforcement of the border made little sense to the people who lived in the borderlands, and how this enforcement succeeded in dividing peoples that shared a common background. Calling attention to the cross-border movement of the buffalo, which the Metis followed annually, Howard stresses the establishment of Metis communities in American territory. Also, Howard's concept of interchangeable citizenship successfully argues for a transnational Plains Metis tradition.<sup>29</sup> Howard argues that this ended in the 1880s when aboriginal freedom of movement across the border ended, and subsequently many aboriginal groups lost their social cohesion.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Joseph Kinsey Howard, *Strange Empire: Louis Riel and the Métis People* (Toronto: J. Lewis and Samuel, 1952), 49.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 288.

Paul Sharp's 1955 *Whoop-Up Country: the Canadian-American Wests, 1865-1885* is often touted as a path-breaking borderland study, and the first to use the border as an analytical tool. Sharp examines how the solidification of the border led to the collapse of Blackfoot autonomy, and how the illegal whiskey trade helped to implement this change.<sup>31</sup> Although Sharp consciously attempts to address the border in *Whoop-Up Country*, his thesis argues that ultimately nationalism was more powerful than the local circumstances in shaping regional history and identity. While Sharp acknowledges the transnational character of the Blackfoot, he argued that political and cultural identities on both sides of the border came to overwhelm social cohesion among the Blackfoot. While many community members crossed the border on raids, to visit kin, and to participate in regular seasonal activities, the United States Army and North West Mounted Police relegation of the Blackfoot to reserves/reservations ended their movement across the boundary.<sup>32</sup>

Although Howard and Sharp are celebrated as the pioneers of borderland studies of the forty-ninth parallel, it was not until the mid 1990s that historians began to actually consider the border as an active agent in the history of the North American Plains. Within the last decade, there have been a handful of historians on both sides of the forty-ninth parallel who have consciously addressed the history of transnational aboriginal groups, and the impact of the border on these groups. In 1999, Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron penned their infamous article claiming that the forty-ninth parallel serves as an excellent example of the transition from a

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<sup>31</sup> Paul F. Sharp, *Whoop-Up Country: The Canadian-American West, 1865-1885* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955), 133.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

fluid colonial borderland to a regional one, subsequently divided by more rigid national boundaries.<sup>33</sup> While the article successfully drew attention to the effect that the solidification of political boundaries had on pre-existing social and national groupings, the authors' political emphasis left little room for aboriginal agency in the border-making process.

Since then other historians have begun to examine aboriginal agency in the border-making process. In 2001, Beth La Dow's *The Medicine Line: Life and Death on a North American Borderland* emphasises how diverse local and individual identities overrode nationality, and that the 1880s were a turning point for the meaning of the forty-ninth parallel.<sup>34</sup> She focuses on a one hundred mile section of the forty-ninth, and how many aboriginal groups used the border to their advantage by crossing to escape persecution. Emphasising how power and status changed when the border was crossed, she draws parallels between the experiences of the Sioux and Metis in the region helping to debunk the grand national narratives.<sup>35</sup>

Another landmark in borderland studies of the Northern Plains is the work of Michel Hogue. His Master's thesis, "Crossing the Line: The Plains Cree in the Canada-United States Borderlands, 1870-1900", examines how general attempts to confine aboriginal people spatially and socially to the margins of society undermined their

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<sup>33</sup> Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *American Historical Review* Vol. 104, No. 3 (1999), 840.

<sup>34</sup> Beth La Dow, *The Medicine Line: Life and Death on a North American Borderland* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 78.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

attempts to guarantee autonomy previously gained by moving across the border.<sup>36</sup> He provides a number of specific examples of the Cree who were deported from the United States and returned, as well as showing how many Cree frequently visited North of the line without taking up permanent residence. In particular, his discussion of the Rocky Boy Reserve membership list emphasises how the American government attempted to impose order on a very complex ethnic reality. He surmises that this attempt confirms just how ambiguous the lines between the two nations were. By addressing the many ways in which both governments attempted to restrict Cree presence and movement in the borderlands, Hogue brings to light the various strategies the Cree used in attempting to remain within their territory. Ultimately, Hogue's greatest contribution in his MA thesis is his rejection of any approach that is confined to the geographic limits of the nation in favour of one that makes borders and their role the explicit focus of inquiry. Reflecting this reality, he emphasises that few historians question the border and the way that it was constructed and contested.<sup>37</sup>

Only a few historians have begun to apply this borderland framework to the Plains Metis. Gerhard Ens has examined the decisions of Metis families to settle in

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<sup>36</sup> Michel Hogue discusses the borderland experiences of both the Cree and Metis in "Crossing the Line: Race, Nationality, and the Deportation of the 'Canadian' Cree in the Canada – United States Borderlands, 1890-1900" in *The Borderlands of the American and Canadian Wests: Essays on Regional History of the Forty-ninth Parallel*, ed. Sterling Evans (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006) and in his Master's Thesis "Crossing the Line: The Plains Cree in the Canada – United States Borderlands, 1870-1900," MA Thesis, University of Calgary, 2002.

<sup>37</sup> David McCrady's 2006 *Living With Strangers: the Nineteenth-Century Sioux and the Canadian-American Borderlands* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006) likewise seeks to move beyond the national histories that have consistently split the transnational Sioux into two groups.

the United States in the aftermath of the disappearance of the buffalo.<sup>38</sup> While Ens does succeed in emphasising the significance of the border, he stops short of a full-blown analysis of the Metis as a borderlands people. As well, Michel Hogue has begun to more systematically study the plains Metis as a borderlands people, but there exists no study in print that articulates a clear conceptual framework of what a borderlands approach to the Plains Metis should be.<sup>39</sup>

Vital to this project of a new borderlands historiography on the forty-ninth parallel is a solid theoretical framework from which to approach the subject. While Hogue does discuss previous works that have been written regarding the forty-ninth, there is no clear initiative to create this type of a framework for Canadian-American borderland studies. The only historian who attempts to address this question is Sheila McManus in *The Line Which Separates: Race, Gender, and the Making of the Alberta-Montana Borderlands*. McManus states that nations are only as strong as the borders that separate one nation from the other, and that “...in the late nineteenth century, the forty-ninth parallel across the West was a site of that making and unmaking, because the West itself was the key site of their nation-

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<sup>38</sup> Gerhard Ens, “The Border, the Buffalo, and the Métis of Montana” in *The Borderlands of the American and Canadian Wests: Essays on Regional History of the Forty-ninth Parallel*, ed. Sterling Evans (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006) and “After the Buffalo: The Reformation of the Turtle Mountain Métis Community, 1879-1905” in *New Faces of the Fur Trade: Selected Papers of the Seventh North American Fur Trade Conference, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1995*, ed. Jo-Anne Fiske, Susan Sleeper-Smith and William Wicken (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998).

<sup>39</sup> Michel Hogue, “Between Race and Nation: The Plains Metis and the Canada-United States Border,” PhD dissertation in progress.



making efforts at the time.”<sup>40</sup> Both governments wanted this division clear, and the border was reinforced by spatial, racial, and gender categories to serve these ends. During this process, instead of getting a linear border, both countries developed a zonal border, grounded in local relationships of social and economic exchange.<sup>41</sup> In specifically addressing border agency and the impact it had on transnational aboriginal peoples, McManus encourages the study of borders as social constructions. By asking how a border came to be, how it shaped people, places, and processes on both sides, the traditional reliance on the nation can be destabilised. The emerging forty-ninth borderland studies questions the long-held assumption that “...sameness and not difference is what characterizes the border.”<sup>42</sup>

There are a number of historical themes that benefit from the use of this relatively new borderland framework.<sup>43</sup> Within each of these themes, a borderland analysis highlights the difficulty in overwriting the pre-existing emphasis on national histories, allowing for new interpretations regarding the social, cultural, economic and political themes as they relate to the historical discourse of the Northern Plains. In addition, by focusing on the forty-ninth parallel as a constructed and enforced colonial border, historians are able to examine the enforcement of

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<sup>40</sup>Sheila McManus, *The Line Which Separates: Race, Gender, and the Making of the Alberta-Montana Borderlands* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2005), xii.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, xii.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi.

<sup>43</sup> Frontier interactions and comparisons, agricultural and labour relations, gender history, aboriginal history, aspects of the borderland as a region of refuge, the history of natural resource use and conservation, and more recently, environmental history each profit from the use of a borderland investigation.

other colonial borders established on the Northern Plains.<sup>44</sup> Discussions on the perceptions and impact of the border, and its role as a colonising tool each contribute to the framework of borderlands studies. Flexible and fixed, open and closed, the forty-ninth parallel acted as a place of meeting, exchange, and change. In this regard, the border acted to unify as much as it divided. It is the “...existence of this difference and the processes by which they are marked, which animates the study of borderlands.”<sup>45</sup>

Within this borderland context, Richard Maxwell Brown’s concept of a “Western Civil War of Incorporation” can be applied to the experience of the Metis residing along the Canadian-U.S. border on the Northern Plains. Brown’s framework emphasises the conflict that existed between the state and westerners who opposed their forced incorporation within the emerging and expanding United States, which can just as easily be applied to Canada as well.<sup>46</sup> From the 1860s to 1880s, the Metis were challenged by the political and military force of both the American and Canadian governments, who wanted to solidify their national borders by limiting the movement of all aboriginal peoples across the international boundary. These “Wars of Incorporation” can arguably be tied directly to a borderland framework through the enforcement of the forty-ninth parallel, which was brought about by the

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<sup>44</sup> Other borders that were imprinted include homesteads, railways, telegraph lines, and roads, each of which had a unique impact on the region. Still others include the conceptualised boundaries of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and sexuality.

<sup>45</sup> Michel Hogue, “Crossing the Line: Race, Nationality, and the Deportation of the ‘Canadian’ Crees in the Canada-U.S. Borderlands, 1890-1900” in *The Borderlands of the American and Canadian Wests: Essays on Regional History of the Forty-ninth Parallel*, ed. Sterling Evans (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 166.

<sup>46</sup> Richard Maxwell Brown, “Western Violence: Structure, Values, Myth,” *Western Historical Quarterly* Vol. 24, No. 1 (February 1993); 6.

dramatic Sioux War of 1876.<sup>47</sup> Although seemingly unconnected to Metis history the Sioux War had a profound impact on the Plains Metis and their status as a borderland people. In response to increased settlement, railroad development, and the discovery of gold in the Black Hills of present day South Dakota, the Sioux began what was to be their last military campaign against the American State in the spring of 1876. Following the Sioux victory at the Battle of Little Big Horn and the subsequent pursuit of Sitting Bull and his people by the American Army, a large number of the Sioux fled north and across the forty-ninth parallel to Canada in 1877.

In response to the 1876 battle, the American Army sought to remove the threat of further Sioux violence by ensuring that their access to arms and supplies was eliminated. To this end, the army began removing 'Canadian' Metis from the American side of the forty-ninth, as they were perceived as a major military trading partner of the Sioux. It is this forced removal of the Metis and the destruction of their property that resulted in international tensions between Canada and the United States. Canada resented the assumption that all Metis were British citizens, and the United States refusal to accept British or Canadian born Metis as citizens caused a great deal of disquiet between the two nations. Most important, it was the movement of Metis and other aboriginal groups back and forth across the border that caused both governments the most anxiety. Since nations are made and

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<sup>47</sup> Similarities can be seen between Brown's "Western Civil Wars of Incorporation" and Irene Spry's "The Great Transformation." Spry analyses the economic transformation from communal to private property on the Northern Plains after 1870, arguably, making the "Wars of Incorporation" a conflict over the transition to private property. Irene Spry, "The Great Transformation: The Disappearance of the Commons in Western Canada" in *Man and Nature on the Prairies* ed. Richard Allen (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, University of Regina, 1976).

unmade at their borders, both nations sought to create concrete divisions that would strengthen their western expansion onto the Northern Plains. To this end, both governments began enforcing their respective border using the American Army and Canadian North West Mounted Police. A ramification of this enforcement was the undeniable forced nationalisation of aboriginal groups who resided on both sides of the forty-ninth parallel. This is exemplified by the forceful removal of 'Canadian' Metis and Cree from the United States, the creation of reserves and reservations, as well as attempts to terminate Metis movement across the international boundary. Although seemingly disconnected, this Sioux "Western Civil War of Incorporation" in 1876 had a profound implication for the Plains Metis who had previously resided on both sides of the international boundary. The Sioux War transformed a border that had been porous at best into a military garrison.

In interpreting the history of the borderland Plains Metis within the framework of Brown's "Western Civil Wars of Incorporation" it is, however, important not to assume that the state's goals were necessarily achieved. One of the findings of this thesis is that the Metis were able to continue to negotiate the borderlands after the 1880s, and Metis movements would continue to frustrate state making well into the twentieth century. The Metis proved to be particularly resistant to pigeonholing into racial and national categories even as the enforcement of the border and the "Wars of Incorporation" were changing them. Combining a borderlands approach with Brown's "Wars of Incorporation" makes it possible to interpret the Plains Metis in a much broader perspective – one that takes into account not only their own lived experience and agency, but also a sense of a

borderland identity that has been largely neglected in traditional historical discourse.

## Chapter Two – The Plains Metis of the Borderlands

Having dealt with the existing historiographical literature that focuses primarily on the Plains Metis and the various approaches to borderlands studies, this chapter will now turn to establishing this group as a borderland people. To appreciate the profound transformation that occurred on the Northern Plains in the latter half of the nineteenth century, a brief definition and discussion of the origins of the Plains Metis will be dealt with as well. This discussion will highlight how the *hivernement* (wintering) experience was of central importance to Plains Metis culture during the 1840s to 1850s. This Metis movement onto the Northern Plains was motivated by dramatic economic, social, and political change in Red River, which promoted a more mobile lifestyle that began as early as the 1840s. These changes necessitated moving across the borderland region in pursuit of the retreating herds of buffalo. This mobility then, in turn, created a borderland identity that had two unique phases between the 1860s and 1885. The first phase was prior to 1870 when the Metis could cross the border and manipulate it at will, and the second from the 1870s to 1880s, which corresponded to enforcement of the forty-ninth parallel and forced government nationalisation.

Before one can understand the complex changes that occurred within Metis society beginning in the 1840s, it is important to recognise the equally intricate origins of the Plains Metis and what factors led to their concentration at the Red River Settlement. Simply put, the origins of the Plains Metis lies in the relationship between Native women and European men who were employed in the fur trade. The

liaison between these two groups was largely a result of isolation and the realities of the fur trade business, in which the social and political characteristics of Native society played a major role. Gerhard Ens identifies the rise of distinct family units, which were a direct result of marriage *à la façon du pays*. Very similar to traditional Native marriage rites, this union became the basis of a mutually dependant economic relationship in the Great Lakes area, and later the Saskatchewan and Red River regions.<sup>1</sup> These unions did not automatically result in the creation of unique Metis communities, however, as many children continued to be raised in both Native and European society. Instead, as Ens describes, the emergence of Metis communities relied on the manifestation of specific political and economic conditions, from which the Metis were a rare product of events and circumstances.<sup>2</sup> This process began after the destruction of the Huron Confederacy in 1650, at which time many traders relaxed their ties to Montreal, and formed stronger ties to other mixed-blood descendants of the fur trade. Instead of joining Native bands, many carved out their own role as individual brokers, and through this role as middlemen, these individuals and their families constructed a separate identity. The consolidation of the Metis, particularly in the Great Lakes area, followed the British conquest of 1763 and the subsequent limitation of upward mobility, after which many Metis moved further west to establish smaller communities to provide for the growing number of fur brigades in the interior.

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<sup>1</sup> Gerhard J. Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland : The Changing Worlds of the Red River Metis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

On the plains, Metis genesis was also promoted by the growing number of European-Canadian men employed in the fur trade who decided to 'go free' with their Native families – that is leave the employ of the fur-trading companies and become free agents in the provisioning and trapping for the competing companies. Many of these men, who had worked for the North West Company (NWC) after the Conquest, became *freemen*, and had strong kinship ties to their wives' Native band. These individuals formed relationships with other *freemen* and proceeded to build separate communities in the interior. It is this particular group of *freemen* who produced buffalo hunters, and whose descendants were to become the Plains Metis.<sup>3</sup> By the early 1800s, the children of these NWC men were recognised as a distinct ethnic group, and began settling along the Red River, as well as areas of Saskatchewan, Alberta, North Dakota, and Montana.<sup>4</sup> In addition to these two patterns, there was a third in which the English Metis or country-born, emerged out of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). The origin of the country-born can be found with the Homeguard Cree, who although biologically mixed, remained culturally Cree.<sup>5</sup> This group was predominately located around HBC posts, and acted as middlemen, providing posts with furs from Native groups found further in the interior. The major evolution of this group occurred in 1790 after the HBC began the

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<sup>3</sup> This process has been most clearly articulated by John Foster in his "Wintering, the Outsider Adult Male and the Ethnogenesis of the Western Plains Métis," in Theodore Binnema, Gerhard J. Ens and R.C. Macleod (eds.) *From Rupert's Land to Canada* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Gerhard J. Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, 17.

<sup>5</sup> John E. Foster, "The Homeguard Cree and the Hudson's Bay Company: The First Hundred Years," in D.A. Muise (ed.), *Approaches to Native History in Canada* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1979).



process of establishing posts inland, and as a result, needed a readily available pool of labour to facilitate the policy shift. Tied to the British officers and Native bands of the interior, there emerged a social world order that promoted a unique Metis identity. Ens identifies the 1821 amalgamation of the HBC and the NWC as the final step in the historical and cultural process of ethnogenesis that encouraged a number of HBC mixed-bloods to leave the northern posts of the Hudson's Bay Company and settle in the Red River Settlement.<sup>6</sup>

The Settlement itself and its Metis character were established in the years from 1811 to 1830.<sup>7</sup> The North West Company's opposition to the Colony and the enlistment of their Metis kinsmen in the struggles against the HBC and the Colony would lead to the Battle of Seven Oaks in 1816, which temporarily dispersed the Settlement and established the Metis as a strong political and military group separate from their Native mothers and European fathers.<sup>8</sup> The battle also focussed the attention of the Colonial Office of Great Britain on the fur trade wars in British North America leading to the amalgamation of the NWC and the HBC in 1821. This merger, with its attendant restructuring and reduction of the fur trade labour force, had a number of far-reaching consequences for the Metis. With the merger, Metis opposition to the Red River Settlement ended, and with the reduction of the fur trade

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<sup>6</sup> Gerhard J. Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, 19.

<sup>7</sup> The Red River Colony or Selkirk Settlement was established in 1811 as a colonisation project created by Thomas Douglas, the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Selkirk. The total grant encompassed 300 000km<sup>2</sup>, and was granted to him by the Hudson's Bay Company for the resettlement of landless Scottish immigrants. It encompassed territory in the present day provinces of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, as well as the U.S. states of North Dakota, Minnesota, and South Dakota.

<sup>8</sup> Ron Rivard and Catherine Littlejohn, *The History of the Metis of Willow Bunch* (Saskatoon: Rivard & Littlejohn, 2003), 7.

labour force, many fur trade families previously employed by the two fur trading companies chose to settle at Red River. Both Metis and Country-born families and some retiring Euro-Canadian employees of the HBC received land grants from the company, and schools were provided by the various churches in the Settlement, providing the institutional basis for continued Metis family cohesiveness in the west. Finally, the dramatic flood of 1826 decimated the new settlement, and some non-Metis, principally the de Meuron soldiers, chose to leave Red River for the United States.<sup>9</sup> The culmination of these events made the Red River Settlement a Metis homeland under the patriarchal control of the HBC.

With the establishment of both Metis and country-born in Red River, the economy of the Settlement began to change as well. In addition to the small-scale agriculture that most families engaged in as a subsistence pursuit, most families also began to participate in the bi-annual buffalo hunts on the plains and in response, the Settlement became the organizational base for these hunts. As a result, the Metis hunt leaders requested their priests accompany them on these two-month hunts. The Catholic clergy quickly realised that this divergence required an adjustment to the practice and structure of the church in order to accommodate the mobile nature of a Metis buffalo hunting society.<sup>10</sup> With this acknowledgement came the departure from customary parish interaction, and a new undertaking began that allowed for the

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<sup>9</sup> The Regiment de Meuron was an infantry originally raised in Switzerland in 1781. After entering British service in 1795, they were sent to Canada to serve in the War of 1812. Following the War, and at the request of Selkirk who wanted military stability in the Colony, the soldiers were sent to Red River.

<sup>10</sup> Raymond Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and Metis* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1996), 13.

adoption of *mission ambulante*. The practice of *mission ambulante* permitted the clergy to maintain contact with their Metis parishioners while on the plains during their annual, and later bi-annual, buffalo hunts.<sup>11</sup> While the *mission ambulante* was more successful in maintaining Catholic influence among the Metis community, it meant the adjustment of ecclesiastic structure to the local circumstance, and not the adaptation of Metis to the church. Although not always in agreement, the secular clergy generally supported this practice until ecclesiastical change came to the Red River Catholic Church in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

This departure meant that by 1849 missionaries had ceased travelling with Metis buffalo hunting parties, which was met with great resistance from within the Metis community. In response to growing pressure from the Metis community, as well as the popular itinerant actions of various missionaries, *mission ambulante* was reinstated in 1859.<sup>13</sup> Following this reinstatement, *mission ambulante* underwent a shift that reflected the changing realities of the Metis buffalo hunt. Built upon the practice of *mission ambulante*, *hivernements* communities began to emerge in the

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<sup>11</sup> The Metis annual and bi-annual hunts were affairs that included almost all members of the Metis community. Men, women, and children participated, while only the ill and elderly were left behind in Red River.

<sup>12</sup> In 1845, the Catholic secular clergy requested the aid of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), to help augment their meagre numbers, and to assist in the far reaching proselytising efforts of the Northwest. In response, members of the OMI were sent to Red River, whose primary responsibilities were to proselytise to Native groups who gathered annually around trading posts. It was with the arrival of the OMI that *mission ambulante* was abandoned, to be replaced by strategically placed permanent missions located on traditional Native gathering grounds. By 1871, the Ecclesiastical province of St. Boniface had been created, and the Oblates were given much more freedom to carry out their activities in the Northwest. Rev. A.G. Morice, *History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada: From Lake Superior to the Pacific, 1659-1895*, volume 2 (Toronto: The Musson Book Company, Limited, 1910), 87.

<sup>13</sup> Raymond J.A. Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and Metis*, 53.

early 1850s and grew significantly throughout the late 1850s and 1860s. As buffalo grazing grounds moved further from Red River, and the international community's demand for buffalo robes increased, Metis families began wintering in small temporary communities on the Northern Plains from November through February.<sup>14</sup> It was these Metis families who chose to winter on the plains that developed semi-permanent communities termed *hivernements*.<sup>15</sup> These communities comprised not only Metis, but included Native groups from both Canada and the United States. Within these communities, the missionary maintained a log building constructed by the community which functioned as the church.<sup>16</sup> Facilitating the changing realities of the Metis community, the OMI built upon the connection between church and community by remaining with the Metis while they resided on the Plains in these winter communities. It was the transition from *mission ambulante* to *hivernement* which allowed the OMI to make a relatively seamless transition when many Metis chose to permanently leave Red River for their wintering communities in the 1860s.

Due to the principal role the Catholic Church played in the Red River settlement, by 1849 missionaries were able to transfer their status into a socio-cultural role while on the Northern Plains. During the hunt and while at *hivernement* communities, missionaries performed morning mass, taught the women and children

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<sup>14</sup> These *hivernement* communities could be found in the Turtle Mountains, Souris Valley, Qu'Appelle Valley, Wood Mountain, and Saskatchewan River areas. Rev. A.G. Morice, *History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada: From Lake Superior to the Pacific, 1659-1895*, volume 1 (Toronto: The Musson Book Company Ltd., 1910), 77.

<sup>15</sup> Semi-permanent cabins were built in late fall within close proximity to anticipated grazing grounds of the buffalo herds, and were usually used for one or two winters.

<sup>16</sup> Mass, instruction, and Sunday school were frequent occurrences and regularly attended.

catechism during the day, and once food was secured, provided the men with instruction. Not only of cultural importance, missionaries provided the hunt with political continuity through their unique relationship with the Hunt Chief. Even though a missionary could be easily replaced by the Chief, their presence was mutually beneficial for both parties. The Chief gained added prestige due to the Metis community's preference of a resident missionary while on the Plains. Reciprocally, the missionaries' usefulness rested on his reputation, particularly in his ability to cope during times of crisis. The missionary also secured the opportunity to maintain his proselytising efforts, as well as the protection of the Metis while travelling the plains.<sup>17</sup>

In no way were *mission ambulante* and *hivernement* practices confined to the north side of the forty-ninth parallel. Many missionaries moved with the Metis as they crossed and re-crossed the border, and many resided in *hivernement* communities in both North Dakota and Montana after the border was drawn in 1818. The presence of these missionaries acted to legitimise *hivernement* communities on both sides of the international boundary, as *mission ambulante* morphed into the more semi-permanent *hivernement* settlements, and later, permanent Plains Metis settlements. Although many mid-nineteenth contemporaries felt that *hivernements* reflected a Metis regression from the 'civilisation' of agricultural Red River to

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<sup>17</sup> John E. Foster, "Le Missionnaire and le Chef Métis" in *Western Oblate Studies I: Proceedings of the first symposium on the history of the Oblates in Western and Northern Canada*, ed. Raymond Huel (Edmonton: Western Canadian Publishers et Institut de recherche de la Facluté Saint-Jean, 1990), 123.

'primitive' plains nomadic behaviour,<sup>18</sup> the OMI responded by openly supporting the itinerant practices of their missionaries.<sup>19</sup> It was during this period, from the 1820s to the 1860s, that the presence of missionaries in these *hivernements* communities produced a clear sense of the Plains Metis borderland identity.<sup>20</sup>

Up until the 1840s, Red River remained the centre of Metis life on the Northern Plains, but this began to change significantly by the second half of the decade due to economic changes. By far the largest changes were related to the response to the growing demand for buffalo robes, as American traders began establishing themselves along the international border in hope of gaining the coveted trade of the Metis. Having already drawn on the Metis trade from Pembina and St. Joseph, these traders now focused on the St. François Xavier Metis who had historic ties to Metis communities south of the border. In turn, the Metis of St. François Xavier frequently used the international boundary as a means to evade the HBC. The kinship ties that existed between these two communities not only allowed them to compare notes regarding trade opportunities, but played a role in drawing the St. François Xavier trade away from the HBC. The establishment of posts at White River in 1827, Fort Union in 1829, and the Turtle Mountains and Souris Basin in the early 1830s, allowed the Metis to choose a trading partnership that offered the greatest financial gain. The opening of Norman Kittson's post in 1844 at Pembina can arguably be defined as a catalyst in the fur trade north of the forty-ninth parallel.

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<sup>18</sup> For this interpretation see Marcel Giraud, *The Métis in the Canadian West*, 2 volumes (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1986).

<sup>19</sup> John E. Foster, "Le Missionnaire and le Chef Métis," 118.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

Located just south of the international boundary, the post at Pembina acquired much of the Metis trade due to better prices and the relative ease in evading the HBC monopoly. In response, the HBC implemented a tariff in 1845 of 7.5% to keep both Metis and their trade goods north of the International boundary, but despite this, American companies continued to increase their trade with Metis from north of the forty-ninth.<sup>21</sup> Thus, not only were the Plains Metis aware of the border, but often manipulated it in pursuit of better economic opportunities. The HBC's continued attempts at enforcing its monopoly ultimately culminated in the Sayer trial of 1849, which effectively broke the company's monopoly.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, the decade of the 1840s emerges as the genesis of steady migration of Metis from Red River.<sup>23</sup> The Metis' integration into the international economy via the buffalo robe trade, and the subsequent opening of American fur trade markets, allowed both economic and geographic mobility where little had existed before. The inconsistent nature of agriculture in Red River also facilitated this change, as many Metis saw the benefits associated with the reliable economic stability of the robe trade. This agricultural instability combined with the epidemics of the early 1840s, culminating in the devastating epidemic of 1846, would have prompted many Metis community members to leave for the safety of their many *hivernement* communities.

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<sup>21</sup> Ron Rivard and Catherine Littlejohn, *The History of the Metis of Willow Bunch*, 77.

<sup>22</sup> Pierre Guillaume Sayer was a Metis trader in frequent business with Norman Kittson at Pembina in direct competition with the HBC. Sayer was accused of illegal trading of furs, and was found guilty at trial in May 1849. Due in large part to the crowd of armed Metis men gathered outside the courtroom, no fine or punishment was levied against Sayer. The inability of the HBC to enforce the verdict resulted in the tacit termination of the HBC trading monopoly at Red River.

<sup>23</sup> Gerhard Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, 96.

Despite these early signs of migration, it was not until the 1850s that *hivernement* became a permanent migration from Red River, and the importance of residing in the borderland region becomes most evident.

During the early 1850s, it became clear that Red River was too far from the buffalo herds, and in response, *hivernement* camps began to expand dramatically. Temporary communities began to emerge at St. Joseph, Turtle Mountains, Souris Valley, Qu'Appelle Valley, Wood Mountain, and the Saskatchewan River valley, populated by the Metis from the various French parishes of Red River and Pembina. This growing specialisation in the robe trade was in response to Metis involvement in a newly emerging capitalist market, which required many to operate further west where border surveillance was less restrictive. The 1860s heralded in an era of considerable migration from Red River, with levels more than twice of what they were during the 1850s.<sup>24</sup> The distance of the herds from Red River, compounded by the dramatic crop failures and high mortality rates of the 1860s, made the decision of permanent migration easy for many Metis. Lastly, it was the proposed Canadian annexation of Rupert's Land that caused what Gerhard Ens calls, a crisis of the old order in Red River.<sup>25</sup>

With proposed annexation came the obvious implementation of Canadian law, tariffs, and border enforcement. With these new institutions, the Metis would lose the freedom of trade they had enjoyed for years with their American trading interests directly south of the Manitoba border. In moving further west, often

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<sup>24</sup> Gerhard Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, 154 .

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.



settling at their *hivernement* sites, the Metis could continue manipulating the undefended border, and trade on both sides of the border to acquire the best price for their commodity.<sup>26</sup> Thus it was Canada's annexation of Rupert's Land, the passing of the Manitoba Act in 1870, and the subsequent influx of protestant Ontario settlers that served as the final catalyst in migration, resulting in the Metis no longer viewing Red River as their homeland.<sup>27</sup> Instead, many Metis saw moving west as an opportunity to retain their economic niche in the robe trade, while maintaining the cohesiveness of their communities.

By the mid-1870s, the Plains Metis were living on both sides of the international border with many unaware on which side they had been born. As such, between 1818 and the mid-1870s, many developed a self-perception or identity that encompassed an interchangeable or no national citizenship.<sup>28</sup> The few records and observations we have of these mobile *hivernement* communities emphasize this trans-border orientation. The memoirs of Father Lestanc who travelled with these borderland Metis communities from the 1850s through the 1870s notes the significant numbers of Red River Metis from Pembina and St. Francois Xavier Metis who favoured the Milk River area as a hunting territory and who traversed the forty-ninth parallel at will. He notes living with Metis parishioners at St. Joseph in Dakota

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<sup>26</sup> Communities were established at Qu'Appelle, Wood Mountain, Saskatchewan forks, Lac la Biche, Cypress Hills, Fort Edmonton. Gerhard Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, 118.

<sup>27</sup> Gerhard Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, 222.

<sup>28</sup> Martha Foster, *We Know Who We Are: Métis Identity in a Montana Community* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 72.

Territory<sup>29</sup>, where in 1870, he describes travelling with his guide Antoine Hamelin who intended to winter on the plains while hunting buffalo, after which he would return to Red River in the spring with a winters harvest of furs to sell in the Settlement.<sup>30</sup> Lestanc also comments in some detail on the origins of those Metis travelling the plains, the majority of which hailed from Pembina and St. Francois Xavier, and who chose *hivernement* sites close to wood, water, grazing, and buffalo herds regardless on which side of the border it was located.

Given this orientation to the buffalo it is little surprise that Lestanc encountered Metis *hivernement* communities at Turtle Mountains, Pembina, Qu'Appelle, Woody Mountain, Mud River and Milk River.<sup>31</sup> These communities clearly lie within the borderland region, and with the exception of Qu'Appelle, each is almost cleaved in half by the forty-ninth parallel. Highlighting the mobility of these *hivernement* communities, Lestanc, who was at Wood Mountain from 1870 to 1874, chronicles how winter settlements varied from year to year, but had a continuous population of thirty to forty families spread out over one hundred miles of river.<sup>32</sup> As Father Lestanc's memoirs clearly emphasise, not only did missionaries maintain a close relationship with Metis communities at Red River and on the Northern Plains, they did so on both sides of the international boundary. Further, as a contemporary

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<sup>29</sup> "Memoirs of Father Jean Lestanc, 1910," Based on a photocopy in the possession of Mr. Dollard Bissonette of St. Victor, Sask. Accessed on-line at: <http://archives.chez-alice.fr/sarthissimo/montana1.html>

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

observer, Lestanc clearly places the Plains Metis in the borderland region, claiming residence on both sides of the forty-ninth parallel.

Another observer of these borderland Metis communities was George Mercer Dawson who travelled with the International Boundary Commission of 1872-1874, and who maintained a fairly detailed diary of his travels. In his journals of 1873 and 1874, Mercer often notes encountering Plains Metis settlements along the border. Beginning at St. Joe – which he identifies as a Metis Community – and travelling west to the Fort Whoop-Up Trail, Dawson’s journal highlights the extent to which the Plains Metis were settled or camped all along the borderland region. Encountering a train of Metis west of Turtle Mountain, the journal describes group movement from Wood Mountain back to Turtle Mountain after having spent the winter on the plains.<sup>33</sup> While in the south-western corner of present day Manitoba near Souris, Dawson illustrates stone circles indicating the position of old lodges used by Plains Metis, and the presence of artefacts such as this throughout the duration of his journey along the forty-ninth parallel.<sup>34</sup> Arriving at Woody Mountain on 22 June 1874, Dawson found only two or three families present, the rest being “...out on the plains...” participating in the summer hunt, with the intention of moving the

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<sup>33</sup> “General Diary & Note Book, George Mercer Dawson 1874, British North American Boundary Commission,” 31 May 1874. McGill University Archives. Accessed on-line at:

[http://www.ourheritage.net/index\\_page\\_stuff/Following\\_Trails/Dawson/Dawson\\_74/Dawson\\_1874\\_Intro.html](http://www.ourheritage.net/index_page_stuff/Following_Trails/Dawson/Dawson_74/Dawson_1874_Intro.html)

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 June 1874

*hivernement* community west to Cypress Hills the next year in pursuit of retreating buffalo herds.<sup>35</sup>

Upon his arrival at Milk River, Dawson noted the presence of at least 200 tepees and describes in detail the importance of the missionary, the residence of Metis on both sides of the border, and how signs of the Metis dotted the landscape along the border region.<sup>36</sup> Upon returning east in October of 1874, Dawson again encountered a large caravan of Metis leaving Turtle Mountain for Woody Mountain with the intention of residing in their *hivernement* communities during the winter buffalo hunt.<sup>37</sup> Dawson's journal not only clearly established Plains Metis movement east and west along the border, but the presence of Metis south of the border along the White Mud River, "...well into U.S. territory."<sup>38</sup>

As both Lestanc and Dawson show, the Plains Metis not only hunted and camped on both sides of the forty-ninth parallel, but had well-established *hivernement* communities on both sides of the international boundary. Further, observations made by both Lestanc and Dawson illustrate the presence of well-travelled Red River cart trails winding back and forth across the border, proving long standing presence in the borderland region and habitation on both sides. Even community histories, such as *The History of the Metis of Willow Bunch*, describe Metis

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<sup>35</sup> "General Diary & Note Book, George Mercer Dawson 1874, British North American Boundary Commission," 22 June 1874. McGill University Archives. Accessed on-line at:

[http://www.ourheritage.net/index\\_page\\_stuff/Following\\_Trails/Dawson/Dawson\\_74/Dawson\\_1874\\_Intro.html](http://www.ourheritage.net/index_page_stuff/Following_Trails/Dawson/Dawson_74/Dawson_1874_Intro.html).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, July 1874: buffalo caracasses, camping sites, old fire pits.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 October 1874.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 July 1874.

movements across the border, particularly through Glasgow, Montana. The authors of this book highlight how the Plains Metis would travel from Red River as far west as to be able to see the Rocky Mountains when hunting buffalo on both sides of the border.<sup>39</sup> Undoubtedly, the Plains Metis were comfortable not only to travel, hunt and trade on both sides of the boundary, but remained equally confident in their right to reside on either side in both temporary summer camps or more permanent *hivernement* communities.

Despite this self-perception of transnational citizenship, the American and Canadian governments did not share the Metis' view of their nationality. The American government was the first to see the 'threat' of the trans-border Metis, and conceived of them as illegal immigrants from Canada who were supplying the violent Sioux with arms and liquor.<sup>40</sup> In addition to questioning Metis rights to American citizenship, the U.S. government increased tariffs to preserve the remaining buffalo herds for American Indians, resulting in a serious threat to the economic and social survival of the Metis. The success of the Metis robe trade relied on close proximity to herds and the ability to move goods through Fort Benton, which became increasingly difficult throughout the 1870s.

The Metis migration from Red River to their *hivernement* communities was undoubtedly part of a larger aboriginal westward migration onto the Northern Plains, where various groups competed and cooperated for greater access to the dwindling buffalo herds. So much so, that by 1873, the Cypress Hills region had

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<sup>39</sup> Ron Rivard and Catherine Littlejohn, *The History of the Metis of Willow Bunch*, 43.

<sup>40</sup> Martha Foster, *We Know Who We Are*, 67.

become the last refuge for many aboriginal groups.<sup>41</sup> It was when the border survey came through the Cypress Hills region during the summer of 1873 that many Metis had to deal with the new reality of consciously crossing a politically charged international boundary for the first time. The ramifications of this new reality were first felt in May of 1874, when American officials seized the fur and property of Metis traders, who were automatically assumed to be Canadian. The traders François Ouellette and Jean-Louis Légaré were arrested and charged with trading on American soil, placing the borderland identity of the Metis onto the international stage. Despite the threats of arrest and destruction of property, starvation and economic hardship forced many Metis to continue crossing the border, with many using the forty-ninth parallel as refuge from the American Army.<sup>42</sup>

From 1818 to the mid-1860s, the forty-ninth parallel did not function as an enforced boundary in the minds of the Metis, but instead served as a porous boundary which could be passed through and manipulated to find the most beneficial economic opportunities. Kinship and trading relationships straddled the boundary, and the Metis gave little thought to crossing it at their convenience. This began to change in the mid-1860s, which resulted in a radical re-conceptualisation of the borderlands by the mid-1870s. Instead of a porous and political boundary to be manipulated, the border came to act as a centrifuge pushing the Metis to choose a nationality and negatively impacting the very foundation of the Metis economy. At

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<sup>41</sup> Within Cypress Hills, there were thirteen trading posts, allowing the Metis and other groups easy access to American trading companies

<sup>42</sup> Ron Rivard and Catherine Littlejohn, *The History of the Metis of Willow Bunch*, 138.

the same time, however, the border also offered protection from both the North West Mounted Police and American Army.

By the mid-1870s, the meaning of being a borderland people had changed dramatically. Where before the border had largely been an imaginary line, new dynamics forced the Metis to reconceptualise their place on the Northern Plains, and to adapt to new realities and specific government policies that had large repercussions on their lives and identities. In fact, it has been argued that the activities of the Joint Boundary Commission of 1872 to 1874 effectively ended the free movement of aboriginal peoples across the border – that the border signified the end of a way of life for many, among them, the Plains Metis.<sup>43</sup> Martha Foster argues that by the 1820s, the British government began pressuring the Metis to recognize the international boundary line. Rather, this transition did not occur until the trans-border character of the Metis was thrust upon the international stage in the mid 1870s. Further, Foster argues that by the mid 1800s, “...the option of a dual (or non-specific) national identity closed for the Metis people.”<sup>44</sup> Undoubtedly, the meaning of Metis borderland identity *changed* by the 1870s, but it did not end for the Plains Metis. Instead, the perception of being a borderland people had been transformed. Where before the Metis had passed freely across the permeable boundary, it now served as both a divisive force and a colonial construct that could still be manipulated to ensure the economic, social and cultural survival of Plains Metis

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<sup>43</sup> Joseph Howard, *Strange Empire: Louis Riel and the Métis People* (Toronto: James Lewis and Samuel, 1975), 286-290; Paul F. Sharp, *Whoop-Up Country: The Canadian-American West, 1865-1885* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955), 132-133.

<sup>44</sup> Martha Foster, *We Know Who We Are*, 17.

communities. The bordering of Metis horizons, and the Metis response to these new realities from the 1860s to the 1880s, forms the content of the next two chapters.

The government motivation to define and limit boundaries and determine who belonged within them were all part of a larger colonial process of land-appropriation and boundary determination. This process was also an attempt to consolidate ethnic identities, nationalise borderland peoples, and to enforce real and perceived differences between the region's inhabitants. To accomplish this, both the Canadian and American governments policed their aboriginal populations to facilitate the enforcement and maintenance of their national borders. During this process, both governments determined who had the right to enter, and who could be expelled from each respective nation. Ultimately, these decisions were enforced through the incorporation and exclusion of others. For the Metis, their uncertain status as a borderland people on the Northern Plains required them to perform a unique balancing act along the forty-ninth parallel.



## Chapter Three: Nationalising the Borderlands

Beginning in the early 1870s, efforts made to enforce and regulate the Canadian-United States border along the fourth-ninth parallel ushered in the second phase of Plains Metis borderland identity. This chapter will argue that the government policy of both Canada and the United States played a fundamental role in the transformation of Metis borderland identity. This will be argued by evaluating United States Army Records, which will demonstrate how both governments' understanding of Metis nationality changed during the two decades after 1870. Whereas the border had little impact on the lives of Plains Metis before the early 1870s, by 1885, Metis borderland identity had undergone a transformation that served to reorder their very existence.

Amongst growing tensions with the Sioux in the early 1870s, the United States government became convinced that the Metis were trading whiskey and guns with the Sioux, and when pursued by the Army, used the border to elude capture.<sup>1</sup> On 18 October 1870, in an attempt to stem this illegal trade, the Seventh Infantry stationed at Fort Shaw was ordered to the Milk River area where a large group of Metis had established a number of wintering communities. The Infantry's marching orders were to destroy all trade goods in the community and to drive the 'British' Metis and traders from U.S. soil.

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<sup>1</sup> "Report of Edward McKay on the State of Affairs in the Northwest," encl. to letter of Pascal Breland to Lieutenant Governor Morris, 18 May 1873, Provincial Archives of Manitoba (PAM), Lieutenant Governor Morris Paper, MG 12 BI, #164.



Sketch Map 1 – Milk River Borderland Region

Source: Gerhard En

Upon their arrival on November 1 at Whitemud Creek (Frenchman's Creek), the Infantry located a camp of several hundred Metis, who were captured with very little resistance. A number of buildings, whiskey and trade goods were destroyed, after which the Metis were told they were in violation of American law by aiding the Sioux in their warfare against the United States. Ordered to remove themselves north of the border and not to return, upon request, they were allowed to remain on the condition that they followed American laws and did not engage in illegal trade with American Native groups.<sup>2</sup> Increasingly, Metis attempts to continue hunting the retreating buffalo herds and the establishment of their *hivernement* communities were in direct odds with a U.S. government that not only wanted to eliminate Metis trade with the Sioux, but also wanted to enforce the border between the two

<sup>2</sup> Adams Archibald to Secretary of State for the Provinces, 22 May 1872, Dispatch 68, Reel 3, MG 12 A1, Adams George Archibald Papers, PAM. Also discussed in Gerhard En, "The Border, the Buffalo, and the Metis" in *The Borderlands of the American and Canadian Wests: Essays on Regional History of the Forty-ninth Parallel*, ed. Sterling Evans (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 146.

nations. These actions in 1871 acted as an indication of what was to come to the Northern Plains and its Metis communities in the next twenty years.

In response to the climactic 1876 Sioux War, the American Army sought to remove the threat of further Sioux violence by ensuring their access to arms and supplies was eliminated. To this end the army again began to contemplate the status of 'Canadian' Metis on the American side of the forty-ninth, who were perceived as a major military trading partner of the Sioux. It was this popularly held belief that caused particular concern among American government and army officials.<sup>3</sup> Despite the Metis' self-perception of trans-border citizenship, the American government did not share the Metis' view of their dual-nationality. Instead, the American government conceived of the British or Canadian-born Metis as illegal immigrants who were supplying the violent Sioux with arms and liquor.<sup>4</sup>

In attempting to rationalise requests for the removal of 'Canadian' Metis north of the forty-ninth parallel, many army officials invoked political language and legislation that stated, "every foreigner who shall go into the Indian country without a passport from the Department of the Interior or its agents and who shall intentionally remain there is liable to a penalty of \$1,000."<sup>5</sup> For individuals like Alfred Howe Terry, commander of the Dakota Territory from 1872 to 1886, all Metis

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<sup>3</sup> Martha Foster, *We Know Who We Are: Métis Identity in a Montana Community* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 66.

<sup>4</sup> Commissioner of Indian Affairs Hiram Price to Secretary of Interior Henry Moore Teller, 1 May 1882; Record 1809, B 1882 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC (NAB).

<sup>5</sup> *New York Times*, July 14, 1894. "Ejected Foreigners Protest: International Questions Grow Out of the Indian Territory Strike."

camped on the Milk River south of the border were considered British subjects, and were to be removed to their own country.<sup>6</sup> Particularly problematic for Terry was the reported presence in 1878 of three hundred Metis families living on the Fort Peck Reservation, who had built homes, sown hay, and expected their presence to be sanctioned by an Act of Congress.<sup>7</sup> Based on the assumption that these Metis were Canadian citizens, the U.S. army intercepted a camp of 35 Metis who were moving towards Canadian territory in the company of Sioux Indians. In explaining to the Metis that if they were Canadian born they would not be allowed to remain south of the international border, Guido Ilges, Commander of Fort Browning, was clearly frustrated when many “...laugh[ed] at the idea of being interfered with by the American authorities.”<sup>8</sup> Clearly, not only were the Metis aware of the differences in government policy on both sides of the forty-ninth parallel, Native groups on the American side of the boundary were also aware of these differences and used them to their advantage. In response, Ilges, confiscated 40 carts, 80 horses and 18 rifles, believing that punishing this group of Metis would provide an example for other

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<sup>6</sup> Commander of Dakota Territory Alfred Howe Terry to Commander of Montana District Lieutenant Colonel Brooke, 1 April 1878; Record 4357, 1878 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666, Roll 362); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>7</sup> Fort Peck Indian Agent Wellington Bird to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Hiram Price, 3 October 1878; Record 11187, 1878 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666, Roll 362); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>8</sup> Major of 7th Infantry at Fort Belknap Guido Ilges to Acting Adjutant General of Montana District, 11 October 1878; Record 12149, 1878 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666, Roll 362); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

trespassing groups. The suggestion was made to take them as far as Fort Belknap, provide them with enough supplies to reach Fort Walsh, and march them north to the international boundary. Eager to burn the 60 homes identified as belonging to 'British half-breeds', Ilges turned the property of this group over to the U.S. Deputy Marshal, and told the Metis to move north of the border and not to return.<sup>9</sup>

It was not only the American government and army officials who were concerned with the presence of Metis south of the forty-ninth parallel. In October of 1878, The Gros Ventres and Assiniboine of Fort Belknap voiced their opposition to the growing Metis presence on their reservation. Accusing these Metis of befriending Natives hostile to the Gros Ventres and Assiniboine and bringing poverty to the reservation, they asked that they be removed, and became increasingly frustrated with their return to the area. In asking for their removal in 1878, however, both the Natives and Indian Agent requested that certain Metis be allowed to remain, but "...restricted to hunting only, on the north side of the Milk River."<sup>10</sup> Aware of dwindling buffalo herds and scarce resources on their reservation, they only felt an obligation to allow those related by kinship to remain on the reservation. Invoking the power of the boundary and drawing on the

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<sup>9</sup> Major of 7th Infantry at Fort Belknap Guido Ilges to Acting Adjutant General of Montana District, 22 October 1878; Record 12149, 1878 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666, Roll 362); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>10</sup> These individuals allowed to remain included Gabriel Azure, Pierre Berger, and their followers – equalling approximately forty families in total. Major of 7th Infantry at Fort Belknap Guido Ilges to Acting Adjutant General of Montana District, 11 October 1878; Record 12149, 1878 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666, Roll 362); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

American policy to remove Canadian Metis, the Natives of Fort Belknap asked for the army to forcibly remove the many Metis considered undesirable from their reservation.

Problematising the American army's decision to remove Canadian Metis and Natives north of the international boundary, was the inability of many to clearly state where the border was located. In the 1871 incident at Whitemud Creek, the Metis residents of the settlement argued that their camp had been well within Canadian territory.<sup>11</sup> Even as late as 1880, an officer from Fort Keogh described the trading establishment at Woody Mountain as an arsenal and safe refuge for murderers and robbers, and asked for permission to dismantle the post, which he considered a Metis stronghold. Upon investigation, the officer from Fort Keogh was "...respectfully informed that upon investigation it was ascertained that the trader was located across the line, within the Dominion of Canada...."<sup>12</sup> By 1880, the international boundary had been officially surveyed for nearly a decade, but it is clear that many officials remained unsure of its exact location. Undoubtedly, if government officials were unsure of its precise location, many of the Metis and Native peoples that had crossed the border for generations also remained ambivalent as to its exact location.

In reading the U.S. Army documents, it becomes clear that the American government was considerably more preoccupied with the Metis and foreign Native

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<sup>11</sup> John Kerler to Adams Archibald, 10 November 1871, Reel M3 MG 12 A1, Adams George Archibald Papers, PAM.

<sup>12</sup> Report from Fort Keogh to Post Adjutant of Montana Territory, 6 December 1880; Record 12255, 1880 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666, Roll 289); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

presence than their Canadian counterparts during this second phase in the 1870s and 1880s. It is the early 1880s that heralds a significant shift in U.S. Army correspondence and emphasises far less toleration for the presence of what they considered Canadian Indians and Metis south of the forty-ninth parallel. Building on the complaints from army officials and Indian agents, were a number of cattlemen from the Montana district who accused Canadian Metis and Natives of slaughtering their herds.<sup>13</sup> The complaints were considered severe enough, that scouting parties were dispatched from Fort Shaw to investigate the possibility that Canadian Metis and aboriginals were killing cattle in lieu of buffalo. Even though the commanding officer of one scouting party reported that there were no signs that cattle had been killed or consumed in abandoned Metis camps, American agency Indians and non-aboriginal traders clearly laid the blame with 'Canadian Indians', who had left for the border several days prior to the arrival of the scouting party.<sup>14</sup> Undoubtedly, previous complaints from American army officials, Indians, and Indian agents was further complicated and highlighted by official complaints made by the powerful cattle sector in Montana territory.

Although there were high-ranking military officials who advocated for a government policy of moderation, the vast majority supported the expulsion of

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<sup>13</sup> 2nd Lieutenant of 3rd Infantry from Fort Shaw Fred Thies to Post Adjutant of Montana Territory, 30 April 1881; Record 5607, 1881 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666, Roll 290); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>14</sup> 2nd Lieutenant of 3rd Infantry from Fort Shaw Fred Thies to Post Adjutant of Montana Territory, 30 April 1881; Record 5607, 1881 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666, Roll 290); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

Canadian aboriginals north of the border. One of those who counselled moderation, in contradiction to those officers stationed in the borderland region, was General William T. Sherman. He noted that "...[t]hese Indians cannot be expected to stop a hunt at the National Boundary Line, which is a parallel of latitude."<sup>15</sup> Instead, Sherman thought it more practical to designate the Milk River as the terminus of Canadian Metis and Native movement south of the forty-ninth parallel, implying that Sherman did not see Canadian aboriginal movement south of the border as a serious national concern, and understood at least marginally, the borderland tradition of these groups. Another interesting argument put forward by Sherman was that

...in view of the fact that our National policy has always been to encourage bonafide Emigration from all countries except China, it seems to me that it will seem harsh to 'order' our troops to break up and destroy the wagons, huts, and property of half breeds ~~Canadian~~ who come from the Canadian province of Manitoba to the unoccupied Regions of Milk River and the Upper Missouri. They speak a different language from that of our troops, and their acts and intentions as to permanent abode may be easily misunderstood.<sup>16</sup>

It was army officials stationed in the borderland area and who were more familiar with the situation that vehemently opposed the views expressed by Sherman. Colonial Thomas H. Ruger, Commander of the Montana District, believed "...it an error to regard the boundary line as imaginary with reference to the

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<sup>15</sup> Memorandum of Commanding General of the United States Army William T. Sherman, 18 October 1881; Record 9961, 1881 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666, Roll 291); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>16</sup> Commanding General of the United States Army William T. Sherman to Secretary of War Robert Todd Lincoln, 16 June 1882; Record 1408, 1881 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.



movements of Indians,” arguing that the boundary was well marked, and that the region’s Native population had been well informed of its location and significance.<sup>17</sup> Commander Alfred Howe Terry of the Dakota District also disagreed with Sherman’s memorandum, stating that Canadian and American Indians needed to be confined to their side of the border. He went on to state that “[t]he boundary is as plainly and definitely marked as it would be by the course of a stream or by the crest of a mountain ridge, and it is beyond question that all Indians and half breeds know just where it is.”<sup>18</sup> General Philip Henry Sheridan, head of the Department of Missouri, advocated that foreign Indians be removed north of the line, and that their huts, tepees, and all property that was not carried away be destroyed.<sup>19</sup>

Clearly, army officials stationed in the borderland region were uncompromising in their refusal to acknowledge a transnational tradition of either Metis or other Native groups. Although, the clarity of boundary markings in 1881 is debatable, these army officials felt that the presence of Metis in American territory needed to be seriously considered. Colonial Ruger understood that if Canadian Native groups were allowed to continue moving south, the nationality of some

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<sup>17</sup> Memorandum of Commander of Montanata Distirict Colonial Thomas H. Ruger in response to Sherman Memorandum, 15 December 1881; Record 9961, 1881 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666, Roll 291); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>18</sup> Memorandum of Commander of Dakota Territory Alfred Howe Terry in response to Sherman Memorandum, 4 January 1882; Record 9961, 1881 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666, Roll 291); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>19</sup> Memorandum of Commander of Department of Missouri in response to Sherman Memorandum, 9 January 1882 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666, Roll 291); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

would require definition within two or three years, on account of them having been continuously south of the boundary for more than a year.<sup>20</sup> Generals Sheridan, Terry, and Colonel Ruger maintained views entirely contradictory to Sherman. In response to these contradictory reports from the frontier, the U.S. Secretary of War agreed with the recommendations made by those individuals 'more familiar with the territory in question'.<sup>21</sup>

As a response to this shift in official American army policy in its dealings with Canadian Metis and Natives south of the border, there were two significant military campaigns undertaken in the fall of 1881 to ascertain the number and location of foreign Indians in American territory. The first in September of 1881 was led by Captain of the 2nd Cavalry, M.E. O'Brien, who left Fort Belknap with 110 men to locate foreign Indians in the area of Milk River (see Sketch Map 2). Throughout the campaign, O'Brien reported countless signs of recently abandoned camps along Milk River, but noted that these individuals had likely moved north four or five days prior to his arrival. Although the group had marched more than 950 miles, there remained nothing more than a few scattered families of Canadian Indians south of

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<sup>20</sup> Memorandum of Commander of Montana District Colonel Thomas H. Ruger in response to Sherman Memorandum, 15 December 1881; Record 9961, 1881 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666, Roll 291); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>21</sup> Commanding General of the United States Army William T. Sherman to Secretary of War Robert Todd Lincoln, 3 February 1882; Record 1408, 1882 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

the border. Aware of the approaching army, no doubt many chose to move north of the border until the army had vacated the region once again.<sup>22</sup>

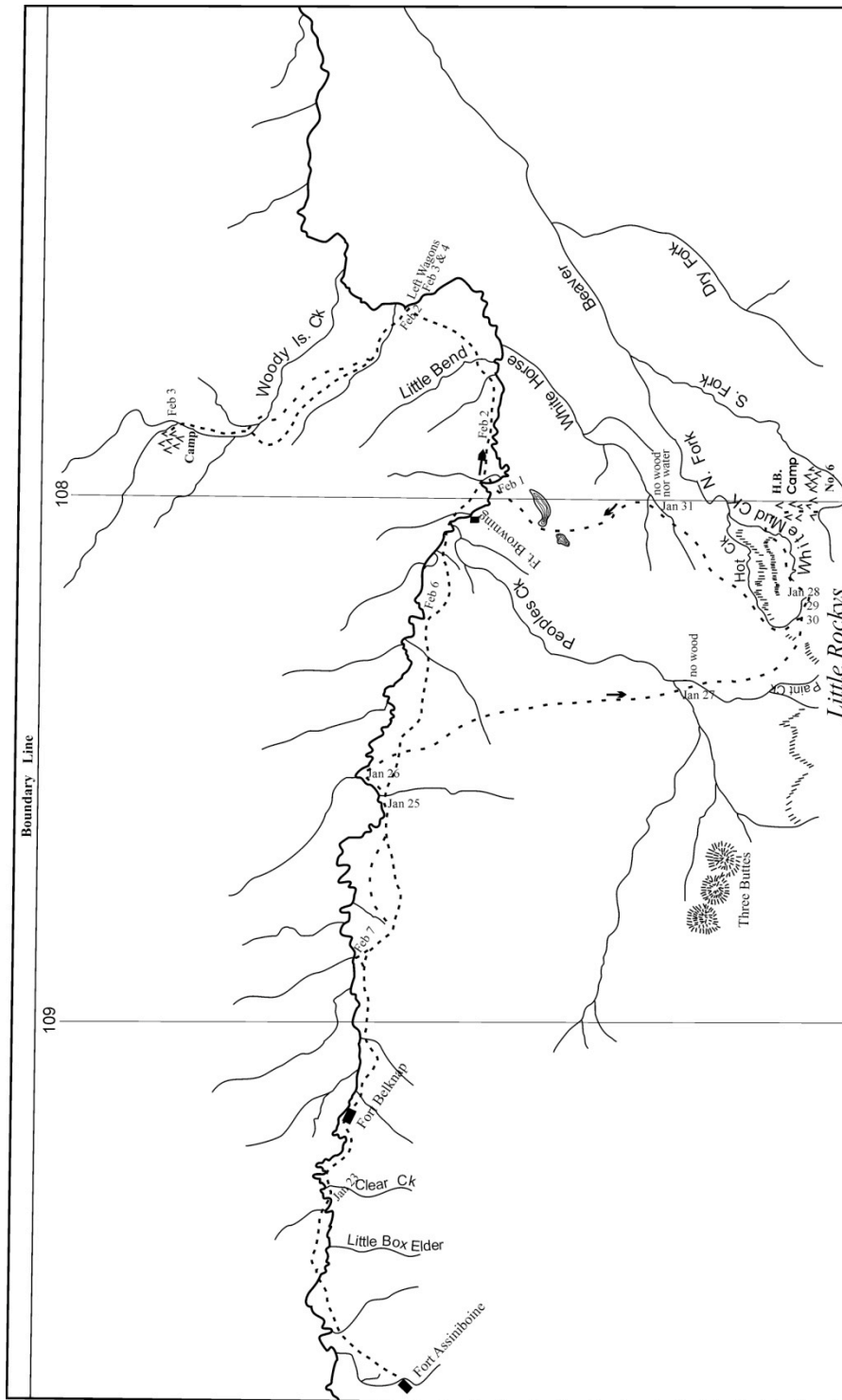
Another campaign, more successful by American army standards, was that of October 1881 when 239 men left Fort Assiniboine under the leadership of Captain Klein (see Sketch Map 3). Between October 12 and 17, 86 lodges were destroyed and their owners sent north, with a further 122 lodges demolished and the inhabitants told to leave American territory between October 20 and 24. In total, Klein estimated that at least 1 400 Canadian Metis and Indians were removed to the international boundary.<sup>23</sup> Many of these camps were located along the Milk River and its many tributaries, and were considered a place of illicit trade in whisky and ammunition, as well as being blamed for the depletion of buffalo herds on American reservation land.<sup>24</sup> In response to what they considered overwhelming numbers of Canadian Metis and Indians south of the international boundary, the American government began to officially pressure the Canadian government to maintain their own aboriginal population north of the border, and to police these groups to ensure they remained within Canadian territory.

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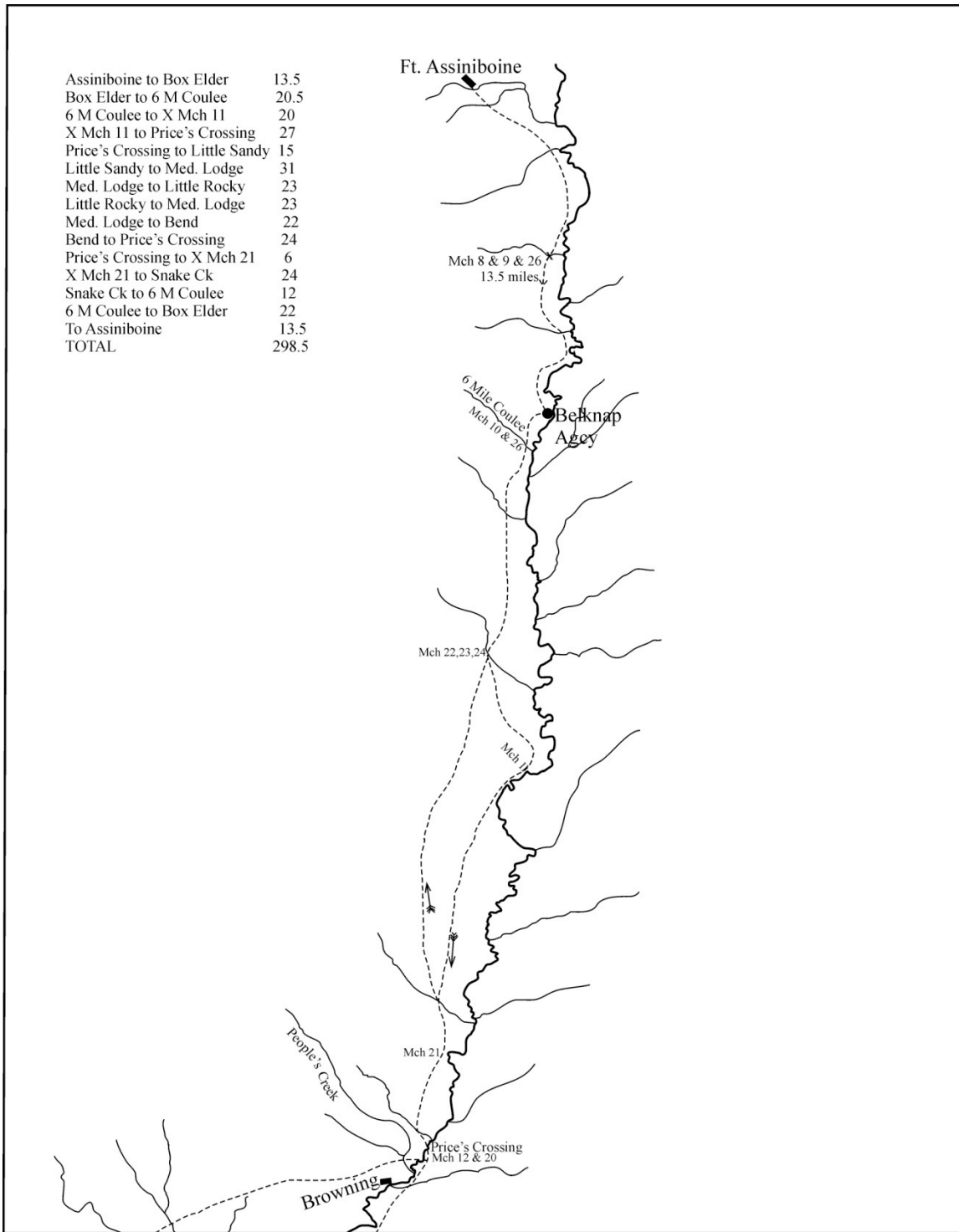
<sup>22</sup> Captain of 2nd Cavalry Fort Assiniboine to Post Adjutant R.J. Butes, 11 September 1881; Record 10923, 1881 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666, Roll 291); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>23</sup> Captain of 18th Infantry Klein to Fort Assiniboine Post Adjutant Bates, 29 October 1881; Record 11535, 1881 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666, Roll 291); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>24</sup> Captain of 11th Infantry Poplar River to Assistant Adjutant General of Dakota Department, 14 January 1882; Record 627, B 1882 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666, Roll 291); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.



Sketch Map 2 – Adapted from Captain of 18th Infantry Klein to Fort Assiniboine Post Adjutant Bates, 29 October 1881; Record 11535, 1881 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666, Roll 291); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.



Sketch Map 3 –Adapted from Captain of 18th Infantry Klein to Fort Assiniboine Post Adjutant Bates, 29 October 1881; Record 11535, 1881 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666, Roll 291); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

Despite the communications sent to the Canadian government in 1881 and 1882, the lack of a prompt response resulted in increased tensions between the two nations. Taking a hardened stance in March of 1882, American Secretary of State Frederick Frelinghuysen notified Lionel Sackville-West, British Minister in Washington, that “...in view of all the facts he was constrained to recommend to the President that the military forces in Montana be instructed to remove the intruding Indians by force, breaking up their camps and sending them across the frontier.”<sup>25</sup> Expecting Canadian officials to police their own aboriginal population, a number of American officials became increasingly frustrated with Canadian unwillingness to adopt a similar hard line as that of the American. Instead, the Privy Council of Canada proposed a system of permits to be granted to individual aboriginals who wished to cross the line for the purpose of visiting family members, but who would be subject to arrest and punishment if any unlawful acts were committed in American territory.<sup>26</sup>

Since early 1881, Canadian officials had maintained that Canadian Indians were not the only transgressors of the international boundary. In September, the Privy Council of Canada explained in a report that “...[i]t must be borne in mind that

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<sup>25</sup> United States Secretary of State Frederick Frelinghuysen to British Minister in Washington Lionel Sackville-West, 31 March 1882; Record 1408, 1881 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>26</sup> British Minister in Washington Lionel Sackville-West to United States Secretary of State Frederick Frelinghuysen, 10 May 1882; Record 1408, 1881 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666, Roll 291); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

American Indians have crossed the border into Canada in search of game for many decades, and their movements have never been checked by the Government of the United States.”<sup>27</sup> This same report emphasised that the American government needed to be sensitive to the fact that many Plains Native groups crossed the border at will in pursuit of buffalo. John A. Macdonald, Minister of the Canadian Interior, explains that

This is a privilege which has been experienced by the Indian tribes of both countries as long back as their separate history extends – the traversing of an imaginary boundary line by nomadic Indians in search of their means of subsistence is not an offence against International Law....<sup>28</sup>

The Canadian government further criticised their American counterparts of being too critical of Canadian policy, when it was Canada who maintained a number of American Indians north of the forty-ninth parallel, primarily the Sioux, after the Minnesota Uprising in 1862, and as recently as Sitting Bull’s exodus in 1876 to Canadian territory. The Dominion attempted to pacify the American government by promising to try and prevent Canadian aboriginal groups from crossing the border if their American counterparts would do the same. In addition, the Dominion assured the American government that all pertinent information related to the movement of

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<sup>27</sup> Report of Minister of Interior John Alexander Macdonald, 16 September 1882; Record 9965, 1881 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666, Roll 291); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>28</sup> Report of Minister of Interior John Alexander Macdonald, 16 September 1882; Record 9965, 1881 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666, Roll 291); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

aboriginal groups across the international border would be revealed to the proper officials.<sup>29</sup>

When the American government refused to implement the Canadian proposal of a shared pass system, both administrations reached an impasse regarding the problem of the borderland Metis and other Native populations. U.S. government and army officials doubted that a general order or implementation of a pass system would solve the problem, and referred the problem to the Secretary of State while the army continued its policy of removing Canadian Metis and Indians north of the border.<sup>30</sup> In June of 1882, General Sheridan ordered that Canadian Indians who committed a crime on American territory were to be considered hostile, and to be forcibly driven across the border. While continuing this process of forced removal of 'foreign Indians', Sheridan also began officially categorizing groups as either American or Canadian, and removing them accordingly. In a letter addressed to U.S. Secretary of War Robert Lincoln, Sheridan explains that "...[a]t present the United States recognises the Sioux, Crows, South Blackfeet, and South Piegans to be our Indians,..” while “[t]he Canadian Government recognises the North

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<sup>29</sup> British Minister in Washington Lionel Sackville-West to United States Secretary of State Frederick Frelinghuysen, 5 April 1882; Record 1408, 1881 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>30</sup> Memorandum of Commanding General of the United States Army William T. Sherman, 16 June 1882; Record 1408, 1881 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.



Piegans, Blood, North Blackfeet, Crees, Salteaux and Assiniboines.”<sup>31</sup> Arguing that each government should restrict the movement of borderland aboriginal groups to their own territory, he explained that once the buffalo were removed from the plains, each government would be able to more clearly define which particular groups were the responsibility of either government.<sup>32</sup>

With little feedback from the Canadian government, the American administration grew increasingly frustrated with the lack of policy regarding borderland aboriginal groups. The Canadian government, on the other hand, believed that it could hardly be held responsible for the lack of a practical system of cooperation whereby the forces on either side of the line could effectively maintain their respective groups of aboriginals.<sup>33</sup> In a detailed report by the Privy Council of Canada, the Dominion government of Canada explained that prior to the transfer to Canada of Rupert’s Land, the aboriginals on both sides of the border were permitted to roam at will in pursuit of buffalo, and that “... in fact the International Boundary might be considered to be unknown to the Aboriginal Indians of the same tribe, race,

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<sup>31</sup> Commanding General of the United States Army William T. Sherman to Secretary of War Robert Todd Lincoln, 16 June 1882; Record 1408, 1881 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>32</sup> Commanding General of the United States Army William T. Sherman to Secretary of War Robert Todd Lincoln, 16 June 1882; Record 1408, 1881 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>33</sup> British Minister in Washington Lionel Sackville-West to United States Secretary of State Frederick Frelinghuysen, 5 April 1882; Record 1455, B 1882 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

and lineage who lived on both sides of the line and were as one people.”<sup>34</sup> Further, the Canadian government argued that the aboriginals of the plains could not be expected to abandon what they considered “their traditional rights” in the span of one season.<sup>35</sup> The Canadian government tacitly acknowledged the transnational character of many plains groups without explicitly stating so. In the same report, the Privy Council noted:

[t]hat in the cases of the Blackfeet and Assiniboine Tribes, allied by blood to each other, who are settled by Treaty, both by the U.S. and Canadian Gov<sup>ts</sup> near to each other, it is not reasonable to demand that these people should not visit each other, but regulations may be introduced to allow this, while any proved depredation committed by individuals may be punished.<sup>36</sup>

Indian Commissioner of the Canadian North West Territories, Edgar Dewdney, believed that the number of Canadian aboriginals moving south of the border would dwindle considerably within two year, and blamed American traders on the

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<sup>34</sup> Report of Privy Council of Canada, 24 April 1882; Record 1903, B 1882 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>35</sup> Report of Privy Council of Canada, 24 April 1882; Record 1903, B 1882 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>36</sup> Report of Privy Council of Canada, 24 April 1882; Record 1903, B 1882 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

Missouri River for enticing many of the Canadian aboriginals south of the international boundary.<sup>37</sup>

Despite the contradictory opinions of both governments and the support for moderate action from the Canadian government, the American government continued its practice of forced removal of 'foreign Indians'. American Indian Commissioner Price insisted that American law "makes no exception in behalf of foreigners who are in whole or in part of Indian Blood..." and that "... the presence of half breeds upon our soil is especially to be deprecated [as] they are [a] vicious and mischievous people."<sup>38</sup> Price was of the opinion that Metis camps should be broken up and their occupants driven to the border, and once they had been expelled, that it was an absolute necessity that their huts and remaining property be destroyed. He explained that "[w]e have thrown clods of earth at these people long enough; the time has arrived, I think, when we should begin to throw stones."<sup>39</sup> The Metis, who had for generations journeyed to the area of Milk River south of the forty-ninth parallel, were dramatically impacted by the official authorisation of forced removal,

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<sup>37</sup> Dewdney also states that previous to the establishment of the international boundary, the Piegan, Blood, and Blackfeet occupied the country of Southwestern Montana in U.S. territory, north in to the area of Fort McLeod in Canadian territory. Report of Privy Council of Canada, 24 April 1882; Record 1903, B 1882 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>38</sup> Commissioner of Indian Affairs Hiram Price to Secretary of Interior Henry Moore Teller, 1 May 1882; Record 1809, B 1882 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>39</sup> Commissioner of Indian Affairs Hiram Price to Secretary of Interior Henry Moore Teller, 1 May 1882; Record 1809, B 1882 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

arrest, and destruction of property of all 'foreign Indians'. With official government policy supporting their removal, Army officials and Indian Agents worked in tandem to locate Metis communities and remove them north of the border, destroying homes and property in the process.<sup>40</sup>

Further complicating the status of Metis in American territory was the saga surrounding Sheriff Healy of Choteau County and his collection of taxes from Metis and Natives along Milk River.<sup>41</sup> In 1882 Healy was taken prisoner by a group of Metis who were retaliating against the seizures made of Metis property in lieu of tax payments. Arguing that the trading was illicit, Healy confiscated a large number of robes that resulted in him being imprisoned by a number of Milk River Metis traders. In response, Captain Klein was again dispatched to find these Metis camps along the Milk River, and to assist in the arrest of those responsible for the imprisonment of Healy.<sup>42</sup> In total, the 148 men marched a sum of 296 miles,

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<sup>40</sup> Head of the Department of Missouri General Sheridan to Secretary of War Robert Lincoln, 5 June 1882; Record 1809, B 1882 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>41</sup> Healy held four commissions: Sheriff of Choteau County, Assessor of Choteau County, Deputy Collector of Customs, and Special Deputy U.S. Marshall. U.S. Attorney from Helena Montana Frank M. Eastman to Attorney General Benjamin Harris Brewster, 26 June 1882; Record 2889, B 1882 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>42</sup> Captain of 18th Infantry Klein to Fort Assiniboine Post Adjutant Bates, 4 April 1882; Record 2828, B 1882 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

destroyed 269 lodges, and allowed an additional 107 to be torn down and moved by their owners.<sup>43</sup>

All Metis and foreign Natives found along the Milk River were removed north of the international boundary either by choice or forcibly by Klein's troops. In total 400 robes, pemmican and dry meat were confiscated from a number of Metis traders along Milk River. When Klein, in cooperation with the 'liberated' Healy, attempted to arrest the Metis responsible for his imprisonment, they learned that the leaders had all safely crossed the line into Canadian territory. While a number of individuals questioned Healy's ability to collect taxes on an Indian Reservation, and went so far as to question his character, the Attorney General was of the opinion that counties had the right to tax Metis and other Natives upon reservations based on historical precedent.<sup>44</sup> Interesting is Klein's statement that "... I cannot understand – [s]everal presented their tax receipts in lead pencil seeming to think that taxation gave them the rights of citizenship."<sup>45</sup> Clearly, those Metis who paid their taxes were under the impression that payment of U.S. taxes granted them the rights of full American citizenship. The American authorities did not agree.

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<sup>43</sup> Captain of 18th Infantry Klein to Fort Assiniboine Post Adjutant Bates, 4 April 1882; Record 2828, B 1882 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>44</sup> U.S. Attorney from Helena Montana Frank M. Eastman to Attorney General Benjamin Harris Brewster, 26 June 1882; Record 2889, B 1882 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>45</sup> Captain of 18th Infantry Klein to Fort Assiniboine Post Adjutant Bates, 4 April 1882; Record 2828, B 1882 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

By 1883, with an absence of clear Canadian policy, the American government grew increasingly frustrated with their Canadian counterparts. With non-aboriginal settlement increasing in Montana, officials wrote frequently to Canadian officials regarding the incursions of 'foreign Indians' on American territory. For a number of months in 1883, Canadian and American senior officials continuously wrote back and forth denying the incursion claims, each blaming the other for the death of cattle and existence of traders who enticed Metis and Natives to cross the international border.<sup>46</sup> The American government even suggested that an agreement be entered into with the Canadian government similar to that of the arrangement between the United States and Mexico – that each administration would notify military authorities of raiding aboriginals on the northern frontier – allowing either party to pursue and punish the groups across the international boundary.<sup>47</sup> This was rejected by the Canadian authorities, but the proposals demonstrated the growing frustration of the American government.

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<sup>46</sup> See Record 568, B 1883 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Record 1199, B 1883 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Record 1253, B 1883 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Record 1367, B 1883 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Record 1674, B 1883 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Record 1982, B 1883 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Record 1977, B 1883 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Record 3274, B 1883 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>47</sup> Secretary of War Robert Todd Lincoln to Secretary of State Frederick Frelinghuysen, 12 April 1883; Record 1614, B 1883 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 93); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

It was not until the 1885 Rebellion in the North West Territories that the Canadian government came on board with the original American policy of border enforcement and nationalization of aboriginal peoples. Almost immediately after the outbreak of the rebellion, the Canadian government requested that the U.S. Army aid them in ensuring that any Metis located below the forty-ninth parallel be restricted from crossing the border.<sup>48</sup> In cooperation with Canadian authorities, American army officials from Pembina, Fort Buford, Poplar River, Helena and Fort Assiniboine provided regular reports to both their superiors and Canadian officials regarding the movement of Metis across the international border. Commander McKibben at Pembina reported that the "... majority of half breeds are now located about Turtle Mountain ..." and that "... fully two thirds of our population are Canadian by birth...."<sup>49</sup>

American motivation for assisting Canadian officials was two fold. First, they wanted what they perceived as a Canadian aboriginal groups removed from American territory. Second, they wanted to stop the influx of what they believed would be a significant number of Metis refugees following the Northwest

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<sup>48</sup> Bayan to United States Secretary of War William Endicott, 28 March 1885; Record 1563, C 1885 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 349); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

<sup>49</sup> Fort Pembina Commanding Officer McKibben to Department of Dakota Assistant Adjutant General Breck, 4 April 1885; Record 1875, B 1885 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 349); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.

Rebellion.<sup>50</sup> Thus, Canadian and American officials shared information across the international boundary, policed popular Metis trading routes, and attempted with varying degrees of success to prohibit the movement of Metis and arms across the border. The Northwest Rebellion and the Metis and Cree challenge to the Canadian State undoubtedly instigated this shift in Canadian policy to strict policing. In the end, the Canadian government, while slower to implement the nationalising of its aboriginal groups when compared to the United States, ultimately implemented policy with similar consequences for the borderland Metis.

In the early 1860s, advancing settlement in the United States, Sioux hostilities in Minnesota, and the Canadian Government's interest in acquiring the British Northwest made the border a major issue in how both governments determined their responsibilities in recognizing various aboriginal groups on the Northern Great Plains. During the first phase of the Plains Metis borderland identity from 1830 to the mid-1860s, the forty-ninth parallel did not function as a fixed boundary in the minds of the Metis, but instead served as a porous boundary that could be passed through to visit friends and family, and find the most beneficial economic opportunities. Kinship and trading relationships straddled the boundary, and the Metis gave little thought to crossing it at their convenience. This began to change in the mid-1860s, which resulted in a radical re-conceptualisation of the borderlands by the 1870s, which ushered in the second phase of Metis borderland identity. Instead of a porous and largely inconsequential line, the border came to act

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<sup>50</sup> Joseph Bookwalter to United States Secretary of Treasury, 3 April 1885; Record 1875, B 1885 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M689, Roll 349); Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1881-1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1775-1928, Record Group 94; NAB.



as a dividing force, fracturing kinship groups and negatively impacted the very foundation of the Metis economy. By the 1870s, the meaning of being a borderland people had changed for the Metis. Where before the border had little impact, it now forced the Metis to re-evaluate their place on the Northern Great Plains, forcing many to adapt to new realities and specific government policies that had large repercussions on their lives and identities.

Martha Foster argues that by the 1820s, the British government began pressuring the Metis to recognise the international boundary line as a tangible barrier. Like Chapter Two, this chapter has demonstrated that this did not occur until the transnational character of the Metis was thrust upon the international stage in the mid 1870s. Further, Foster argues that by the mid-1800s, "... the option of a dual (or non-specific) national identity closed for the Metis people."<sup>51</sup> Undoubtedly, the meaning of Metis borderland identity *changed* by the 1870s, but it did not end for the borderland Metis. Instead, the perception of being a borderland people had been transformed. Where before the Metis passed freely across the permeable boundary, it now served as both a divisive force and a colonial construct that could be manipulated to ensure the economic survival of Plains Metis communities. Despite the threats of arrest and destruction of property, starvation and economic hardship forced many Plains Metis to continue crossing the border, with many using the forty-ninth parallel as refuge from the pursuing American

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<sup>51</sup> Martha Foster, *We Know Who We Are: Metis Identity in a Montana Community* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 17.

Army.<sup>52</sup> The Plains Metis, who were well aware of the policy differences between the two states took advantage of and manipulated this disparity on a number of occasions. Crucial is how the border, as a social construct, played its own significant role in shaping differences and similarities among the Plains Metis on both sides of the international boundary.

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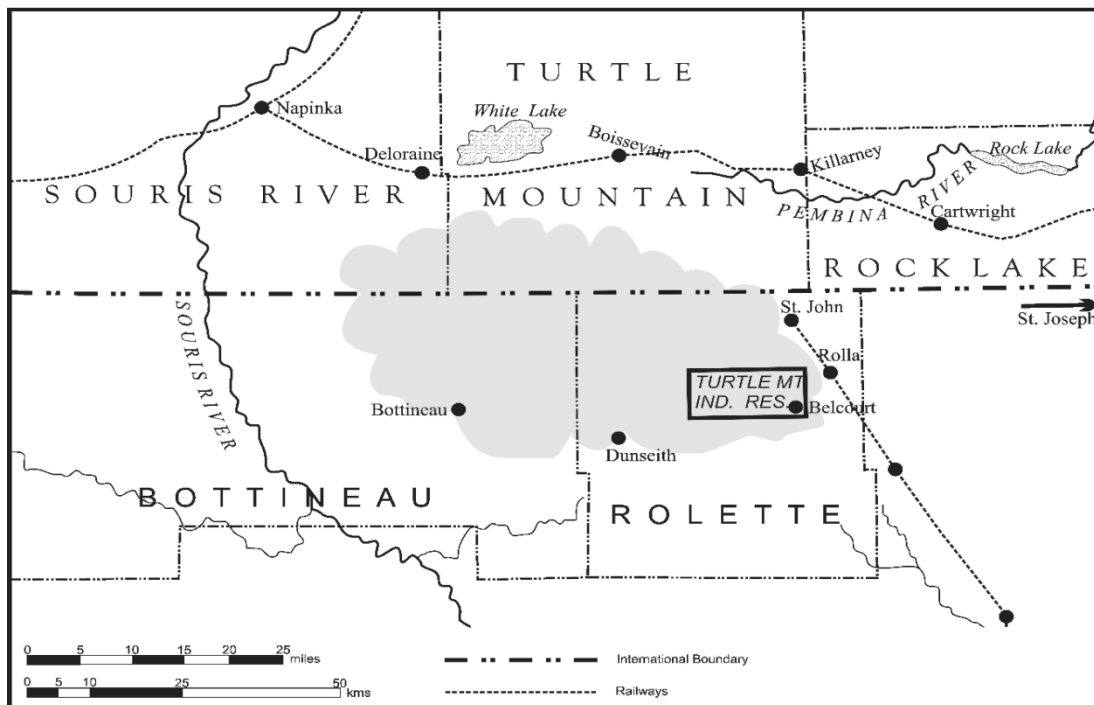
<sup>52</sup> Ron Rivard and Catherine Littlejohn, *The History of the Metis of Willow Bunch* (Saskatoon: Rivard and Littlejohn, 2003), 138.

## Chapter Four: Borderland Metis Communities, 1870s – 1880s: A Turtle Mountain Case Study

Straddling the forty-ninth parallel on the Manitoba – North Dakota border lies the Turtle Mountains. Home to Metis communities since the early nineteenth century, this locality provides an interesting case study of the impact the international boundary and state definitions of Metis identity had on Metis community formation during the second phase of Plains Metis borderland identity. After 1870 the border, which had previously been ignored by the Plains Metis, acted as a dividing force separating families and forcing individuals to choose a nation of origin. It compelled them to adopt new strategies in response to specific Canadian and American government policies, which had large repercussions on their lives. This chapter will argue that the Metis, although forced to choose a nation of origin after the mid-1870s, were able to maintain some aspects of their transnational focus. That is, the members of the Turtle Mountain community exercised a number of options available to them in both Canada and the United States, even as they were forced to choose a nationality by both governments. Indeed, the Turtle Mountain area of the border remained porous well into the twentieth century. In order to demonstrate these points, this chapter will briefly survey Metis/Chippewa relations in the Turtle Mountain region, and analyse the economic behaviour of selected Metis families from the area.

A cursory glance at a map of the Manitoba – North Dakota borderlands will reveal that the forty-ninth parallel divides the Turtle Mountains. These mountains are comprised of numerous hills that rise to an elevation of approximately 1 100

feet above the surrounding plain. Visually, they resemble an oasis in the middle of the prairie, containing an island of forest and over two hundred lakes. Extending roughly 45 miles east and west and 20 miles north and south, the mountains occupy roughly eight townships in today's Rolette and Bottineau counties of North Dakota and several hundred square miles of southern Manitoba. This region was a primary gathering place for the Plains Metis, as well as a number of other aboriginal groups, including Sioux, Cree, Assiniboine and Chippewa.<sup>1</sup> The Turtle Mountains were plentiful in resources including muskrat, fish, deer, beaver and buffalo, which allowed the Metis and Chippewa to maintain a pivotal role in the fur trade. At the same time, the secluded nature of the Turtle Mountains provided refuge from encroaching non-aboriginal settlement.



Sketch Map 4 - Turtle Mountain Region

<sup>1</sup> Gregory Camp, "The Turtle Mountain Plains-Chippewas and metis, 1797-1935," (PhD Dissertation, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1987).

The relationship between the Turtle Mountain Chippewa and Metis is integral to understanding this unique borderland community, as the interplay and deeply rooted ties between the two had profound ramifications for the Plains Metis experience in the Turtle Mountain region. The Plains Ojibwa, known by Americans as the Chippewa of the Plains, had extended their territory from the more eastern forest lands onto the Great Plains in both the United States and Canada by the end of the eighteenth century. One of these bands, known as the Pembina Chippewa, had by 1800 established themselves on the lower Red, Assiniboine and Souris Rivers with a base at around Alexander Henry's post at Pembina.<sup>2</sup> It is this band that would later become the nucleus for the Turtle Mountain - Pembina Band of Plains Chippewa.<sup>3</sup> Ultimately, it was the declining number of fur bearing animals and buffalo in the Red River basin that caused many Chippewa to move from their previous hub of Pembina, first to St. Joseph, and then to the Turtle Mountains (90 miles further west). What resulted were two divergent groups of Chippewa, the Pembina group that remained at the traditional trading hub, and the Turtle Mountain Chippewa.

The relationship that emerged between the Pembina – Turtle Mountain Chippewa and the Metis, unsurprisingly, stems from the North American fur trade. The Metis had developed cart traffic between Fort Garry, St. Joseph, Pembina and St.

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<sup>2</sup> John C. Ewers, "Ethnological Report on the Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy Reservation and the Little Shell Band of Indians" in *American Indian Ethnohistory: Chippewa Indians VI* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1974), 86.

<sup>3</sup> Stanley N. Murray, "The Turtle Mountain Chippewa, 1882-1905," *North Dakota History*, 51, No. 1 (Winter 1984): 16.

Paul, and many had built permanent homes along the banks of the Lower Red and Assiniboine Rivers. From 1820 to 1850, the relationship between the Chippewa and the Plains Metis was defined primarily by the buffalo hunt. After it was ascertained that Pembina was located within American territory, following the Convention of 1818, a number of Metis elected to not return to British territory and remained at Pembina and Turtle Mountains with their Chippewa kin. Instead, their friends and relatives came down from British territory and joined them at Pembina to organise before moving onto the Plains in the organised buffalo hunt. By 1840, some members of the Canadian Metis hunt bypassed Pembina entirely and met at the southern slope of the Turtle Mountains.<sup>4</sup> During this same time period, with the growing scarcity of game in the Red River Valley, more and more Metis families joined the Chippewa and wintered in the Pembina Hills<sup>5</sup> and Turtle Mountains. Increasing dissatisfaction with the Hudson's Bay Company's trade monopoly also encouraged more Metis to relocate to Pembina and later, St Joseph. It was in 1847 that a number of Plains Metis began to migrate to St. Joseph, largely as a result of the fur trade. With this significant influx of Metis the borderland region from St. Joseph to the Turtle Mountains became the centre of Metis activity along the Manitoba – North Dakota border.<sup>6</sup>

Declining fur-bearing animals in the Turtle Mountain region meant increased strain between the Chippewa and Metis over game, which would add to tensions during land negotiations with the United States government. The growing

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<sup>4</sup> Stanley N. Murray, "The Turtle Mountain Chippewa, 1882-1905," 18.

<sup>5</sup> The Metis settlement in the Pembina hills was St. Joseph and founded by Father George Belcourt.

<sup>6</sup> Gregory Camp, "The Turtle Mountain Plains-Chippewas and metis, 1797-1935," 72.

Chippewa and Metis numbers, and the United States government's desire to ensure the Turtle Mountains region would be available for incoming non-aboriginal settlers, prompted the early treaty negotiations. The Pembina – Turtle Mountain Chippewa and Metis first entered negotiations with the United States Government in 1851, when Alexander Ramsey, governor of Minnesota Territory, prepared the foundation for future treaty negotiations with the Turtle Mountain Chippewa. It was during these preliminary negotiations that the Metis made the claim that they were the rightful owners of the Red River Valley, but their claims were ignored in favour of their Chippewa counterparts.<sup>7</sup> This decision would plague the treaty negotiations of 1863 and 1882, fracturing relations between the Chippewa and Metis, and forcing the Turtle Mountain Metis to adopt different survival strategies in the face of a United States government that undercut Metis treaty rights on American soil. Much of the confusion surrounding the establishment of the Indian reservation at Turtle Mountain was in defining exactly who qualified as a member of the Turtle Mountain Band. The 'full-blood' Chippewa had few problems being recognised, but the many Metis living in the region by the 1880s and who wanted treaty status encountered additional problems. They were a mixture of Chippewa, Cree, Ottawa, Assiniboine, French and other European descent, and Chief Little Shell (a full-blood Chippewa) opposed the inclusion of many of these Metis in the treaty rolls.<sup>8</sup> This dispute resulted in widely divergent membership numbers when

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<sup>7</sup> Gregory Camp, "The Turtle Mountain Plains-Chippewas and metis, 1797-1935," 86.

<sup>8</sup> *St. Anne's Centennial 100 Years of Faith: Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation*, (Rolla: Star Printing, 1985), 107.

various Commissioners and Indian Agents reported their findings to the U.S. Department of Indian Affairs.

The Old Crossing Treaty of 1863 provided the precedent by which the American government chose to treat the Metis population of the Turtle Mountain region. In 1851, the Metis were made aware that if they wanted to be recognised by the American government, it would have to be through the claims made by their Chippewa kin.<sup>9</sup> In total, the Chippewa claimed a land base of ten million acres located in present day north-central North Dakota. This claim was disputed, largely due to the Turtle Mountain band's small numbers, but calls by the Chippewa, Metis, Indian agents, and pressure from non-aboriginal settlers prompted the government to again enter into negotiation with the Chippewa in 1863. The 1863 treaty negotiations saw a gathering of 1 015 Pembina and Turtle Mountain people, of which 663 were Metis and 352 were full-blood Chippewa.<sup>10</sup> The Metis were not recognised as treaty Indians by the United States during these 1863 negotiations, but based on their significant numbers, treaty negotiators agreed to grant homesteads of 160 acres to the 464 Metis. This was changed in 1864 to scrip redeemable for 160 acres.<sup>11</sup> While avoiding explicit recognition of Metis rights, providing them with scrip was an implicit recognition that the Metis had some rights south of the forty-ninth parallel. As Gregory Camp argues, this decision to

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<sup>9</sup> Gregory Camp, "The Turtle Mountain Plains-Chippewas and metis, 1797-1935," 97.

<sup>10</sup> Stanley N. Murray, "The Turtle Mountain Chippewa, 1882-1905," 19.

<sup>11</sup> Gregory S. Camp, "Working Out Their Own Salvation: The Allotment of Land in Severalty and the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Band, 1870-1920," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 14:2 (1990): 19. Likely where the Canadian Government adopted the term 'scrip' for Metis.



grant scrip allowed the disappearance of much of the Metis land rights.<sup>12</sup> Although a cession of Chippewa land was agreed upon, no reservation was granted, and instead, members of the Chippewa band were expected to move to the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota. Based on the 1863 treaty negotiations, it is clear that a significant number of Turtle Mountain Metis wished to become party of the Chippewa treaty in the Turtle Mountain – Pembina region, but the U.S. government opposed their treaty status.<sup>13</sup>

Following the 1869 Riel Resistance in Manitoba, many Metis who preferred to continue their buffalo hunting economy rather than shift to agriculture, chose to join relatives and friends at Turtle Mountain. More than ever, the Metis outnumbered the full-blood Chippewa, and this growing community continued to divide itself internally. The Pembina and Turtle Mountain Chippewa had their own varying interests, highlighted by their various locations after 1870. Members of the original Pembina band continued to reside in the Pembina Hills around current-day Walhalla.<sup>14</sup> Despite their claims to the area, the United States government refused to create a reservation along the Pembina River between Pembina and St. Joseph, an area long preferred by the Metis. This refusal by the U.S. government prompted 200 Pembina Chippewa to relocate to the White Earth Reservation in 1877. Conversely,

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<sup>12</sup> Gregory Camp, "The Turtle Mountain Plains-Chippewas and metis, 1797-1935," 98.

<sup>13</sup> The 10 million acre cession of land was made in return for the annual payment of twenty thousand dollars to be distributed among the Chippewa in per capita payments over a period of 20 years. This was changed to five and ten thousand per annum for the Pembina and Red Lake groups respectively in 1864. Gregory Camp, "The Turtle Mountain Plains-Chippewas and metis, 1797-1935," 102.

<sup>14</sup> Stanley N. Murray, "The Turtle Mountain Chippewa, 1882-1905," 21.

the Turtle Mountain Chippewa, separate from those in the Pembina region, remained in the Turtle Mountains.<sup>15</sup>

Even though many Metis chose to winter at Turtle Mountain, a good number did not wish to permanently align themselves with their Chippewa relatives. Instead, many chose to move west, building homes at wintering areas in Montana, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Many of these Metis, however, returned to Turtle Mountain after 1880 when the Buffalo disappeared. In the early 1880s, this already tense situation was made problematic with the influx of non-aboriginal settlers to the Turtle Mountain region. It was Chief Little Shell who posted signs stating, "It is here forbidden to any white man to encroach upon this Indian land by settling upon it before a treaty being made with the American government."<sup>16</sup> In response, the U.S. government dispatched troops from Fort Totten, and incoming settlers petitioned the government to open lands then claimed by the Chippewa.

In response to this increased demand for open land, in 1882 the U.S. government reserved a twenty-four-by-thirty-two township area within Rolette County for the Turtle Mountain Chippewa.<sup>17</sup> The tract of land contained productive farmland, and most of the Turtle Mountain region south of the forty-ninth parallel.

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<sup>15</sup> Gerhard Ens, "The Border, the Buffalo, and the Métis of Montana," ed. Sterling Evans, *The Borderlands of the American and Canadian Wests: Essays on Regional History of the Forty-ninth Parallel* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 144.

<sup>16</sup> Stanley N. Murray, "The Turtle Mountain Chippewa, 1882-1905," 22.

<sup>17</sup> Despite claims made by the Turtle Mountain Chippewa band, the government opened their ten million acre claim to settlement in 1882 following to the conclusion of the 1882 treaty. The Chippewa were promised their individual land claims would not be challenged provided they could prove improvements had been made to their land. This statement was the equivalent of an eviction, as many were not engaged in farming, and unable to meet the government's requirements to protect their land. Gregory S. Camp, "Working Out Their Own Salvation," 21.

This decision eliminated a great deal of uncertainty that had plagued the Chippewa since the 1863 Treaty. Effectively, the 1882 Treaty provided the group with a permanent tract of land to call their own. Despite the creation of the reservation, it only met the needs of 300 to 400 individuals, not the 300 Chippewa and 1 000 Metis that actually called the Turtle Mountains home by that time.<sup>18</sup> Further complicating the matter were growing divisions that existed among those on the reservation itself. The Chippewa opposed the idea of settling on individual tracts of land, preferring a smaller reservation to hold in common. The Metis, more experienced in sedentary activities, eagerly anticipated owning individual 160-acre homesteads. Many of these individuals had given up or lost their claims in Manitoba for Manitoba Half Breed Scrip, and hoped to start over on the newly created reservation for their Chippewa kin and friends.<sup>19</sup>

This reprieve of 1882 was not to last. As a result of reports made by special agent Cyrus Beede in 1883, the U.S government reduced the twenty-two township Reservation to two townships. Beede's report significantly understated the population of the reservation, assuming that most of the Metis in the area were Canadian, despite their claims stating otherwise.<sup>20</sup> As a result of the land reduction, viable agricultural land was removed from the reserve, and most of the traditional Turtle Mountain territory now fell outside the two townships. Based on the smaller land allotment, the U.S. government suggested that the Metis locate on the now

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<sup>18</sup> Stanley N. Murray, "The Turtle Mountain Chippewa, 1882-1905," 23.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Gregory S. Camp, "Working Out Their Own Salvation," 21.

public lands adjacent to the reservation.<sup>21</sup> This decision paralleled that of the Red Lake – Pembina Treaty of 1863, where government officials refused to recognise the Metis as eligible treaty members, but did provide them scrip for homestead lands.

Overcrowding and disunity on the small reservation and tensions with incoming white settlers, served to further exacerbate friction among the Chippewa and Metis following the 1882 treaty. Survey data taken following the reduction of the reservation to two townships showed the presence of 183 Chippewa, 731 Metis claiming U.S. citizenship and 400 individuals described as Canadian Metis, living on the reservation.<sup>22</sup> By 1887, these numbers had increased as a result of individuals and families returning to the Turtle Mountains as a place of refuge following the 1885 North West Rebellion. In particular, Chippewa and American Metis were unhappy with what they clearly considered Canadian Metis who had given up or lost their land allotments in Manitoba, but anticipated gaining land through the 1882 Chippewa Treaty.

These tensions between the Chippewa, Metis, United States government and non-aboriginal settlers shows just how precarious the Metis situation in the Turtle Mountain region was, and how carefully this group had to exercise its options. If they opted for Canadian Nationality, they could enter treaty and become ‘Indian’ during the negotiations that led to the signing of the numbered treaties between 1871 and 1877 or, after 1885, choose a Metis ‘status’ and receive land or money

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<sup>21</sup> Stanley N. Murray, “The Turtle Mountain Chippewa, 1882-1905,” 23.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

scrip in 'extinguishment' of their native title.<sup>23</sup> If, like those on the Turtle Mountain Chippewa reservation, they chose an American Nationality, their options were much starker. They could enter into treaty and become 'Indian' if allowed onto treaty rolls, or they were simply accorded rights as immigrants and/or citizens of the United States, effectively becoming 'white'. In some cases they were also eligible for Canadian Metis scrip after 1900. In the United States, unlike Canada, Metis identity carried no legal status rights.

The various strategies of the Turtle Mountain Metis on both sides of the border becomes clearer when one examines how specific families adapted to the enforcement of the Canadian-United States border that split the Turtle Mountains in half. The purpose of the following case studies is to show how several Metis families of the Turtle Mountain community adapted to this reality and remained, at least to some extent, transnational people. Although many members of this community were forced to adopt a nation of residence in response to Canadian and United States policy, these individuals and families continued to exercise a great deal of agency in their attempt to gain stability in a dramatically changing Great Plains environment. Members of this case study predominantly lived on the American side of the border within the Turtle Mountain region, but had deep roots in both Canadian and American territory. They negotiated their options using Canadian and American policy, and continued to manipulate and cross the Canadian-American border well into the twentieth century.

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<sup>23</sup> These land rights were first introduced into Western Canada by the Manitoba Act of 1870 and extended west of Manitoba by amendments to the Dominion Lands Act of 1878 and 1879.

To carry out these family studies, two main sources of data have been used: the biographical files of the Works Progress Administration in the United States collected in the 1930s, and the Canadian Metis scrip applications collected during the period 1885 to 1901. Particularly useful is the data collected from the Works Projects Administration Historical Data Project Records, which compiled biographical files of over five thousand individuals living in North Dakota during the 1930s. The WPA program was created in 1936 as an attempt to provide employment during the depression and to conserve the history of the United States. This source is particularly useful, as it gathered biographical and historical information on the early settlers of North Dakota. To narrow the scope of those interviewed, a pioneer was defined as an individual who was born before 1870 and who lived within the Dakota Territory prior to the creation of North and South Dakota.<sup>24</sup> The interviews of these individuals were processed through either a 'Pioneer Data Form' or an 'Old Settlers Questionnaire Form', which contained information regarding the name of the pioneer, his/her spouse and their parents, children, birth and death dates, nationality, date of marriage, occupation, date of immigration to the United States, date of migration to Dakota Territory, and family history. Each file also contains biographical information, photographs, reminiscences and newspaper clippings. These records are an invaluable source, as they provide a glimpse into the lives of the early Metis 'pioneers' who were living in Rolette Country, or Turtle Mountains, from the 1870s to the 1930s.

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<sup>24</sup> State Historical Society of North Dakota, "Pioneer Biographies," State Historical Society of North Dakota, <https://www.state.nd.us/hist/sal/gen/infwpa.htm> (accessed January 5, 2009).

The second source, Metis scrip applications, provides somewhat similar Metis information on the Canadian side of the border. Scrip for the North-West Metis was implemented in 1885 to provide them with the same land rights accorded the Manitoba Metis in extinguishment of their claims to Indian land title.<sup>25</sup> The 1885 scrip commission allocated scrip for those Metis born in the Northwest Territories prior to 15 July 1870 and not residents of the original 'Postage Stamp' province of Manitoba.<sup>26</sup> In response to the exigencies of getting Treaty 8 signed in 1899, it was later decided to also grant scrip to those Metis born between 15 July 1870 and 1885 in the ceded Northwest Territories. The last scrip issue, 1900-1901, did not differentiate between Metis children and heads of family, and granted scrip for either 240 acres or \$240. The largest problem faced by the 1900 scrip commissions were those Metis who had been born in the Canadian Northwest, but had subsequently moved south of the forty-ninth parallel. James A. McKenna led the

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<sup>25</sup> With the passing of the Manitoba Act in 1870, the precursor to Metis scrip was introduced when 1.4 million acres were allocated for distribution among the children of half-breed head of families who resided in the province of Manitoba on 15 July 1870. As such, after 1870, 240 acres of land were to be allocated for each Metis child as a means of extinguishment of aboriginal title to land. In 1874, the concerns of Metis parents were reconciled when the Parliament of Canada passed another bill that allocated scrip for \$160 redeemable in dominion land to Metis parents who resided in the original province of Manitoba on 15 July 1870. This early 'scrip' was distributed by parish in the old 'postage-stamp' province of Manitoba. Dominion of Canada Act 33 Victoria, Chapter 3, Section 31 assented to 13 May 1870.

<sup>26</sup> Dependant children received scrip for 240 acres or \$240 provided they were born prior to and unmarried on 15 July 1870. Heads of each Metis household received scrip for 160 acres or \$160 if they were born prior to and married before 15 July 1870. The 1885 scrip policy allowed those heads of household who were born in the Northwest territories before 1870 but absent at time of application to apply, but children born in the North West Territories prior to 1870 whose parents/relatives resided in the United States were considered ineligible. Act 33 Victoria, Chapter 3, Section 31 assented to 13 May 1870.

Assiniboia/Alberta Commission, and with more applications closer to the U.S. border, dealt more extensively with claims made by 'American' Metis.<sup>27</sup> McKenna disallowed many of these claims based on the position that only children of Metis born and living in the Northwest Territories had claims, and that no claim should be recognised for those now living in other parts. Further, he believed that those who moved prior to 1885 were disqualified from the 1900 scrip benefits on the grounds that moving to the United States removed any claim to their land title in the Northwest Territories. The Department of the Interior decided in favour of allowing American claims, but McKenna largely ignored this, resulting in serious discrepancies between the two commissions.<sup>28</sup> The 1901 commission appointed McKenna as the only commissioner to deal with the claims of Metis who had been unable to apply in 1900. All claims were referred to McKenna, and as such, the Canadian government sanctioned his stance from the Alberta/Assiniboia commission, and many scrip applications from Metis residing south of the forty-ninth parallel were disallowed.<sup>29</sup> This was eventually corrected by an Order in

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<sup>27</sup> The two commissions created were for the District of Alberta and Assiniboia and the District of Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Both were authorized to investigate Metis claims and to issue scrip certificates for 240 acres or \$240. Order in Council, 2 March 1900 (PC 438).

<sup>28</sup> Analysing scrip applications shows that the Alberta/Assiniboia commission disallowed claims on the basis of In his report McKenna noted that the grounds of: foreign residence, Manitoba birth, insufficient evidence, born prior to 1870, and membership in Indian Treaty. Report of J.A.J. McKenna and James Walker dated 11 March 1901; attached to Order in Council 16 March 1901 (PC 575).

<sup>29</sup> This decision and the alleged mishandling of claims by McKenna would result in additional scrip policy changes in 1904 and plague the Department of the Interior well into the twentieth century.



Council of 1904, when the Department of the Interior received a legal opinion that McKenna's actions were contrary to a strict reading of the regulations in place.

Despite the convoluted and perplexing way in which the Canadian government chose to handle Metis claims, there is a great deal of information to be garnered from individual applications. Like the WPA biographical files, scrip applications contained the name of the applicant, his/her spouse and their parents, and whether their parents were 'halfbreeds'. Applications also included place and date of birth, as well as locations the family had lived prior to and at the time of the application. Many applications also include the names of children, their date and place of birth, and whether the applicant had ties to any native band or treaty. Application forms also allowed space for additional comments where notations can be found regarding the family's reason for moving across the border, reason for marriage, location of extended family, and other family members who had received scrip. The witness testimony to scrip applications also provides an external view for motivation behind family movement, reasons for application, and a means to reconstruct community membership at the time of application. These scrip applications highlight the Metis experience on both sides of the border, suggest family motivations for relocating, and allow for some reconstruction of Turtle Mountain families in the period from the mid-1870s to the turn of the twentieth century.

The Allary family of the Turtle Mountain community emerges from the Metis scrip records as having originated in the Red River Settlement around the turn of the nineteenth century. Antoine, Louison and Michel were brothers, each of which

had kin that first travelled to, and later settled in, the Turtle Mountain region.<sup>30</sup> In particular, the descendants of Michel and Louison settled extensively in and around the Turtle Mountains on both sides of the border (see appendices 2 and 3). Prior to the 1870s, members of the Allary family were plains hunters and traders, and following the enforcement of the border, would have viewed the Turtle Mountains region as the last refuge for a way of life they were accustomed to. The 1885 scrip records show that a number of Allary family members were born and/or baptised in the area of St. Joseph, and although many lived in the area around Willow Bunch in 1885/1886, many of their applications record regular trips to the Turtle Mountain region.<sup>31</sup> It was the children of these 1885 applicants, who when they applied for scrip in 1900/1901, noted that their extended families moved to the Turtle Mountain region between the mid-1870s and late 1880s.<sup>32</sup>

Born in 1797, Michel Allary Jr. and Marie Serpente were married, and between them, had three children.<sup>33</sup> Of these three children, Pierre and Andre lived and travelled extensively in the Turtle Mountain region. Their children later took up permanent residence on the American side of the Turtle Mountains. The descendants of Pierre settled almost exclusively in the St. John region on the eastern slopes of the Turtle Mountain, while the kin of Andre remained in the area around Pembina south of Winnipeg, some 130 miles east of the Turtle Mountains. For those family members that remained on the Canadian side of the line, the scrip records

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<sup>30</sup> Gail Morin, *Metis Families: A Genealogical Compendium Volume One* (Pawtucket: Quintin Publications, 2001), 17, 20, 23.

<sup>31</sup> Library and Archives Canada (LAC), RG15, D-II-8-b, Vol 1343, File 1572. Metis Scrip Application of Joseph Allary.

<sup>32</sup> LAC, RG15, D-II-8-c, Vol 1333, File 203. Metis Scrip Application of Andre Allary.

<sup>33</sup> Gail Morin, *Metis Families: A Genealogical Compendium Volume One*, 23.

highlight their residence in the areas of Baie St. Paul (Red River Settlement), Killarny (just north of Turtle Mountain on the Canadian side), and to some degree, Wood Mountain.<sup>34</sup>

Louis Allary, son of Pierre, provides an excellent example of a family group living in the region of St. John and Belcourt in the United States, with extended family members that resided close by the Canadian side of the forty-ninth parallel. Born in 1855, Louis' biographical interview also successfully highlights the options available to an individual male Metis in the period after 1870 and how the enforcement of the forty-ninth parallel failed to terminate Metis movement across the border. Clearly trans-border, he and his family resided on both sides of the international boundary, marrying and raising children on both sides.<sup>35</sup> Residing primarily on the American side of the border around St. John, Louis was forced to adjust to a new economic order that no longer included buffalo hunting, as well as struggle for an uncertain claim to the land his family resided on. In this regard, the Turtle Mountain region provided an opportunity for Louis and his family to continue a subsistence lifestyle including a small level of hunting and trapping. This lifestyle, however, became increasingly difficult as the region filled with settlers and other relocated Metis. Like many Metis families in North Dakota and Montana, Louis also collected buffalo bones from the plains and ranged as far as Wyoming and Montana

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<sup>34</sup> LAC, RG15, D-II-8-c, Vol 1333, File 155. Metis Scrip Application of Francois Allary; Library and Archives Canada, RG15, D-II-8-c, Vol 1333, File 1004. Metis Scrip Application of Charlotte Alary.

<sup>35</sup> LAC, RG15, D-II-8-c, Vol 1333, File 1720. Metis Scrip Application of Alexander Alary; Biographical file of Louis Allary, Works Projects Administration (WPA), Historical Data Project Records, Series 30529, Pioneer Biography Files, State Historical Society of North Dakota Archives.

in order to make a living. Louis also exercised his rights to homestead in the United States, filing on land in the Turtle Mountain region he was never able to prove up. He then filed a second time, disposing of the land to move within the town limits of St. John.<sup>36</sup> In fact, during the time of the interview, all of Louis' children resided within the town limits of St. John on the eastern side of the Turtle Mountains.<sup>37</sup>

Metis self-identity is difficult to clearly define and varied by individual, but in his 1930 interview, Louis told an interviewer that he was very proud of the fact that he was a Dakota Pioneer and also that though he was an Indian he had been a tax payer of Rolette County for fifty-three years.<sup>38</sup> This statement says a great deal both about self-identity and about the limits of ethnic labels. In the 1930s, both the term 'Metis' and its ethnic status would not have been recognised in North Dakota, as the term 'Metis' had neither legal status nor recognition as an identifiable group. To be Native was to be 'Indian', but given he was not, nor wanted to be, in treaty, he differentiates himself from other 'Indians' by identifying himself as a taxpayer. In the terminology accessible in the 1930s, this was as clear as he could be in describing himself as Metis.

Born in 1826, Andre Allary, Pierre's brother, had at least ten children, all of whom were born in the Pembina River region just south of the international boundary and east of the Turtle Mountains. Although many of his children chose to

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<sup>36</sup> Louis' difficulty in maintaining his first homestead is undeniably tied to his work, which kept him far from home.

<sup>37</sup> Biographical file of Louis Allary, Works Projects Administration (WPA), Historical Data Project Records, Series 30529, Pioneer Biography Files, State Historical Society of North Dakota Archives.

<sup>38</sup> Biographical file of Louis Allary, Works Projects Administration (WPA), Historical Data Project Records, Series 30529, Pioneer Biography Files, State Historical Society of North Dakota Archives.

live in the area, Andre Jr. provides an excellent example of how many Metis not only continued to cross the border, but also manipulated it well into the twentieth century. Married to Josette Hamelin, Andre Jr. was employed by Jean-Louis Legaré, a fur trade merchant from the Willow Bunch district of southern Saskatchewan, as a scout and freighter during the time of the rebellion carrying supplies for the North West Mounted Police.<sup>39</sup> In 1900 at Willow Bunch, Louise Amiyot née Allary, sister to Andre Jr, served as witness to his Metis scrip application and explained the unique family situation of her eldest brother. While she lived near the children of Andre Jr and his wife Josette, she explained that “Andre Allary is a poor man and his poverty has prevented him from bringing his children with him.”<sup>40</sup> Through her and Andre Jr’s testimony, it is clear that Andre Jr used the border as a means of first working on the Canadian side of the border for Legaré while sending his income back to his family in the Turtle Mountains, and second, that while he applied for scrip for both himself and his children, he had no intention of moving to the Canadian side of the forty-ninth parallel. Instead, in response to the financial predicament of his family, Andre Jr chose to take advantage of the Metis scrip process in Canada with the intention of selling whatever scrip he received. It is clear that Andre decided to leave his wife and children behind in the Turtle Mountain community because of extensive number of Allary kin members throughout the region on both sides of the border.

Antoine, the third son of patriarch Michel, had nine children, almost all who decided to remain in Canadian territory with the exception of Pierre Henry (see

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<sup>39</sup> LAC, RG15, D-II-8-c, Vol 1333, File 203. Metis Scrip Application of Andre Allary.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

appendix 1). Pierre Henry married Angelique Parisien and had ten children, a majority of whom resided in the Turtle Mountain region. In Angelique's 1901 scrip application at Killarny, she explains that although born in Canadian territory, she moved to the Turtle Mountain region in the United States to be with her new husband's family. Although Alexis L'Esperance, her witness, emphasised that "[t]he family is now broken up, some living in the Territories and some on the other side," her application serves to demonstrate how the Antoine branch of the Allary family remained primarily on the north side of the international boundary within the Turtle Mountain region.<sup>41</sup> She further noted that although the family occasionally travelled to the United States to hunt game and pick bones, "[t]he family regarded Canada as their home...."<sup>42</sup> All three sons born to patriarch Michel at the turn of the nineteenth century thus had direct descendants that settled in and around the Turtle Mountain community on both sides of the border. The Allary family highlights the manipulation of the international border, as well as the family's use of Metis scrip to gain financial security at the turn of the twentieth century. The experience of the Allary family also shows that although the border 'divided' the family by 'nationality', kin continued to cross at will and maintain strong cross-border family ties.

Antoine Brien, the patriarch of another large Metis family, was born at St. Boniface in 1820 and married Josephite Azure at Pembina in 1849 (see appendix 4). Antoine and Josephite had thirteen children, seven of which were born south of the

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<sup>41</sup> LAC, RG15, D-II-3-c, Vol 1333, File 1003. Metis Scrip Application of Angelique Alary.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

forty-ninth parallel.<sup>43</sup> Of particular interest are Antoine's children, Theodore and Gregoire, both born at Pembina. Although both sons were born about 140 kilometres east of Turtle Mountains, by the time of the 1900/1901 scrip applications both they and their children resided on the eastern slopes of Turtle Mountain in the vicinity of Belcourt. Although there is nothing in the scrip records that explain this move, it is possible to argue that the Brien family participated in a larger Metis movement to the Turtle Mountains in the late 1870s.<sup>44</sup>

The experience of Gregoire Brien's family not only illustrates a borderland tradition, but also points to the various family motivations behind permanent relocation.<sup>45</sup> Although both he and his wife Nancy's parents considered their permanent residence to be in Canadian territory, he recounts his earliest memories of travelling the Milk River region in the company of forty other families south of the forty-ninth parallel.<sup>46</sup> While he did spend most of his life travelling north of the international boundary, his wife's 1901 scrip application explains the family's decision to permanently relocate to Belcourt in the United States. In this well documented explanation, the witness to Nancy Brien's scrip application, Joseph Rolette, explained that Gregoire's father Antoine had been ill for approximately five years, and in 1898, Gregoire moved his entire family in order to care for his ailing

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<sup>43</sup> Gail Morin, *Metis Families: A Genealogical Compendium Volume One*, 308.

<sup>44</sup> Glenbow Archives, Edgar Dewdney Fonds Series 17 M320, pp 1290-1297. Report on Halfbreeds in Montana and Dakota. 7 May 1886 – St. Johns.

<sup>45</sup> Biographical file of Gregory Brien, Works Projects Administration (WPA), Historical Data Project Records, Series 30529, Pioneer Biography Files, State Historical Society of North Dakota Archives.

<sup>46</sup> Biographical file of Gregory Brien, Works Projects Administration (WPA), Historical Data Project Records, Series 30529, Pioneer Biography Files, State Historical Society of North Dakota Archives.

father, "...and have remained across the line since."<sup>47</sup> After Gregoire Brien's family decided to permanently move to the Turtle Mountains, Nancy Brien applied for Canadian Metis scrip to gain financial security. The application goes into great detail arguing the Canadian ties of the family, and explains the move to the Turtle Mountains in 1898. Having called the area home for two and a half years before the death of Antoine, and having developed ties to the community, the family decided to permanently call Belcourt home.<sup>48</sup>

The Brien family also presents an example of the economic options available to Metis families following the enforcement of the border, and how these families chose a side to best suit their familial and economic needs. The WPA biography of Gregoire Brien is interesting, as it highlights employment opportunities available to the Metis following the disappearance of the buffalo. Leaving for Montana in 1883, Gregoire remained for twelve years working as a cowboy and ranch hand, and later went to the Flathead Indian Reservation where he worked as a harness maker and married his wife Nancy in 1893.<sup>49</sup> Gregoire's biography highlights the new economic niche that many Plains Metis adapted to during this period. Working as trapper, buffalo bone collector, cowboy, ranch hand, harness maker, wood hauler and mail delivery man, his experience successfully underlines the new economic

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<sup>47</sup> LAC, RG15, D-II-3-c, Vol 1338, File 1034. Metis Scrip Application of Nancy Brien Cardinal.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Biographical file of Gregory Brien, Works Projects Administration (WPA), Historical Data Project Records, Series 30529, Pioneer Biography Files, State Historical Society of North Dakota Archives.



order the Metis embraced after the mid-1870s, one which at times worked against permanently settling in one location.<sup>50</sup>

The 1901 scrip application of Liza Daisy Brien, daughter of Theodore, highlights her family's reason for moving to the Turtle Mountain region south of the international boundary, and further, how this decision impacted the success of their scrip applications in 1900/1901. In the case of Liza Brien, her claim was disallowed for two reasons: first, on the grounds that her father resided in the United States on the 15 July 1870, and second, that she and her family appear on the Turtle Mountain Chippewa reservation membership list in 1901.<sup>51</sup> Despite Liza's claims that she was not a member of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa band, W.W. Cory, Deputy Minister of the Interior, denied her scrip application because her name and that of her parents appeared on the membership rolls of the Turtle Mountain band.<sup>52</sup> Although her mother received scrip, Liza's fourteen-year residence in the United States, combined with ties to the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Band, resulted in her claim to Canadian Metis status being denied. This was done despite her uncle Gregoire's testimony that emphasised her family's long residence in Canadian territory.<sup>53</sup> Clearly, Liza Daisy Brien's family felt that being tied to the Chippewa Indian reservation would yield them the benefits of a stable land base and access to government rations during a time when the changing economic order of the Plains Metis resulted in a

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<sup>50</sup> Biographical file of Gregory Brien, Works Projects Administration (WPA), Historical Data Project Records, Series 30529, Pioneer Biography Files, State Historical Society of North Dakota Archives.

<sup>51</sup> Those applying for Metis Scrip had to be a resident of Canada on 15 July 1870.

<sup>52</sup> LAC, RG15, D-II-3-c, Vol 1338, File 1037. Metis Scrip Application of Liza Daisey Brien.

<sup>53</sup> LAC, RG15, D-II-3-c, Vol 1338, File 1034. Metis Scrip Application of Gregoire Brien.

great deal of financial insecurity within Metis families and communities.

Permanently settled in the Turtle Mountain region, Liza likely applied for scrip in order to sell it, and not to permanently relocate to Canadian territory.

Unfortunately, her family's decision to join the Turtle Mountain Band severely limited her ability to apply for increased economic stability through the Canadian scrip process.

The Brien family history highlights the motivation behind the family's move to the eastern slopes of the Turtle Mountains in the United States, as well as how family obligations convinced 'Canadian' members to permanently relocate to American territory. Further, the Brien family shows how individuals and families took advantage of both treaty and scrip with varying degrees of success, and how specific policy changes could affect a family's ability to survive.

Born in 1777, the patriarch of the Davis family, Jean Baptiste, was born in Red River, and with his wife Josephte Saulteuse, had six children (see appendix 5).<sup>54</sup> Of those children, Jean Baptiste Jr and William were the two that eventually came to call the Turtle Mountain region home. The experience of the Davis family speaks not only to the options Metis families had available after the mid 1870s, but how decisions made by the family unit were affected by the 1863 Chippewa Treaty negotiations and scrip policy changes of 1900/1901. William Davis Sr was born in 1824 at Red River, and married Marie Enno with whom he had ten children who were born along the Canadian-United States border from Cypress Hills to the Turtle

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<sup>54</sup> Gail Morin, *Metis Families: A Genealogical Compendium Volume Two* (Pawtucket: Quintin Publications, 2001), 29.

Mountains.<sup>55</sup> Of particular interest is the account of Michel Davis. Born in 1852, Michel was the fourth son of William Sr., and his WPA interview highlights in significant detail the decision his family made in moving to the Turtle Mountains region in the United States.

For the Davis family who returned to the Turtle Mountains on a seasonal basis, the treaty negotiations of 1863 compelled them to permanently call the community home. Michael Davis explains that “[w]hen the Red River land was deeded to the U.S. Government in 1863, [William and Marie Davis] came with their families to settle in the Turtle Mountains, which they had always regarded as their hunting territory.”<sup>56</sup> Michael’s parents, William and Marie, who were born on the Canadian side of the boundary in the Red River settlement, clearly felt justified in claiming rights to territory on both sides of the border despite their strong ties north of the forty-ninth parallel. Although they did not permanently reside in the Turtle Mountains after 1863, it is clear through scrip applications that they returned to the location frequently when not hunting buffalo on the prairie.<sup>57</sup> For example, in 1877, his family and ten others travelled from Milk River, Bear Paw, the Judith Basin, the Little Missouri and the Cypress Hills before returning again to the Turtle Mountains.<sup>58</sup> The Davis family, and others like them, considered the Turtle Mountains a home base, where many chose to reside when not on the plains hunting

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<sup>55</sup> Gail Morin, *Metis Families: A Genealogical Compendium Volume Two*, 30.

<sup>56</sup> *St. Anne’s Centennial 100 Years of Faith: Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation*, 314.

<sup>57</sup> LAC, RG15, D-II-3-b, Vol 1326, File 1642. Metis Scrip Application of Josephine Davis; Library and Archives Canada, RG15, D-II-3-c, Vol 1343, File 360. Metis Scrip Application of Alexandre Davis.

<sup>58</sup> Biographical file of Michael Davis, Works Projects Administration (WPA), Historical Data Project Records, Series 30529, Pioneer Biography Files, State Historical Society of North Dakota Archives.

buffalo. Following the end of the buffalo herds, many of those that had resided at Turtle Mountains on a seasonal basis chose to return to the one area that still allowed a certain level of hunting, trapping, and privacy from increasing settlement.<sup>59</sup> This, combined with the extensive family ties in the region, made the Turtle Mountains an ideal area for the Davis family to settle.

The testimony of Michael Davis also emphasises his own self-ascribed identity, and that of his family in the Turtle Mountains. This can be seen in his WPA interview when he goes into some detail regarding the taxation issues that plagued many members of the American Turtle Mountain community. In his recounting of taxation problems within Rolette County, he illustrates that on a number of occasions, U.S. Customs Officials attempted to collect taxes from the Metis, and when unwilling or unable to pay, their cattle and horses, provided by the government, were confiscated. According to Michael, the taxes were used to force many Metis off their land and onto the two-township reservation.<sup>60</sup> Not alone in this belief, many others felt that the government intended to force the issue of taxation to remove many Metis from their land.<sup>61</sup> Despite Michaels' interpretation, the actions of customs officials were a direct result of the 1882 Chippewa Treaty. Many Metis resided off the reservation with the belief that the 1882 treaty allowed half-breeds

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<sup>59</sup> See Gerhard J. Ens "After the Buffalo: The Reformation of the Turtle Mountain Metis Community 1879-1905." In *New Faces of the Fur Trade: Selected Papers of the Seventh North American Fur Trade Conference, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1995* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998).

<sup>60</sup> Biographical file of Michael Davis, Works Projects Administration (WPA), Historical Data Project Records, Series 30529, Pioneer Biography Files, State Historical Society of North Dakota Archives.

<sup>61</sup> Glenbow Archives, Edgar Dewdney Fonds. Series 17 M320, pp 1290-1297. Report on Halfbreeds in Montana and Dakota. 7 May 1886 – St. John.

to live off the reservation and maintain the rights of those that resided on the reservation, which included their exemption from taxes. Despite this belief, customs officials continued to tax the Metis off the reservation. In his 1888 report to the Commissioner of the North West Mounted Police, G.H.L. Bossange explained that “[a]s long as being white means to vote and get drunk, the breeds pretend to be white; but when it means to pay taxes, then they are Indians.”<sup>62</sup> For customs officials, the fact that these individuals resided off the reservation meant that they were ‘white’, could be taxed accordingly, and if they refused to pay their taxes, have their property and land confiscated. Conflict between the off-reservation Metis and U.S. Customs Officials continued into the twentieth century, and successfully highlights the negotiation of families and their community in order to survive in the Turtle Mountain region.

The case of Priscilla Rose Davis highlights how the decision of her immediate family to move to the Turtle Mountains was influenced by the 1882 Chippewa Treaty, and how ties to that community subsequently affected her residential status on the Turtle Mountain Reservation. Because the Turtle Mountain Chippewa band exercised a great deal of power in determining its own membership, after the treaty of 1882, the only way Metis get onto the band rolls was through permission of the band. If denied, the only other option available to Metis individuals and families who wanted to live in and around the Turtle Mountains south of the border was to apply for homestead, purchase land outright, or move within town limits. These

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<sup>62</sup> Glenbow Archives, Edgar Dewdney Fonds, Series 17 M320, pp 1337-1355. G.H.L. Bossange Report to Commissioner of North West Mounted Police on the Activities of the halfbreeds in Dakota and Montana. 25 April 1888 – Dunseith.

reserve politics could have profound ramifications, as was the case with Priscilla Rose Davis. In her application for Canadian Metis scrip, she emphasises her place of birth and strong ties to Canada, and her disassociation with any “...reservation on either side of the line.”<sup>63</sup> Her application explains how she had been married to the deceased Leandre Davis of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa for three years, and that he was in fact a member of the reservation receiving annuities at the time of his death. Priscilla claimed, “I never lived in the Turtle Mountain Reservation. I had no connection with the Reserve before I married. My husband was in the roll. I was refused. I was told I had no right... I have left the United States....” It was at this time that she moved back to Canadian territory to be with her mother’s family.<sup>64</sup>

In Priscilla’s case, her decision to marry into the Turtle Mountain band was not enough to guarantee her membership, but her marriage and residence was enough for Canadian officials to perceive her as ‘American’, and thus, deny her claim for Metis scrip. What makes Priscilla’s case interesting is it highlights that while most members of the Davis family chose to reside in the Turtle Mountains community, Leandre Davis appears as one of the very few descendants of Jean Baptitse Sr. who chose to enter treaty with the Turtle Mountain Chippewa. After marrying Leandre, as an outsider to the community, Priscilla was refused rations and told she had no right, despite her marriage to a member of the community. When Leandre died after four months of marriage, Priscilla left the community for that of her mother, Eliza Sheer, near Prince Albert in Canadian territory. This is an

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<sup>63</sup> LAC, RG15, D-II-3-c, Vol 1343, File 921. Metis Scrip Application of Priscilla Rose Davis.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

interesting example of how the Davis family, aware of the options available to them in the Turtle Mountain region, chose to take advantage of those opportunities that would best suit the family unit. Further, that when those opportunities were not realised, members of the Davis family continued their cross-border movement in order to gain economic stability. The common denominator among the extended family was to remain within the Turtle Mountain community. Some members chose to apply for Canadian scrip in the hopes of gaining financial benefit, and others chose to become members of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa reservation as a means to economic stability. Others still, particularly the descendants of Jean Baptiste Jr who were born in the Pembina region, chose to homestead in the region. Despite the varied options available to the family, the Davis' utilised the options of scrip, treaty, and homestead as a means of remaining within the Turtle Mountain community proper as one family unit.

Although there is no one identifiable patriarch of the Lafontaine family from Red River, there were two Jean Baptiste Lafontaines born at the turn of the nineteenth century who had descendants that settled throughout the Turtle Mountain region (see appendices 6 and 7).<sup>65</sup> Primarily settled along the eastern slopes of the Turtle Mountains from Belcourt to the international border, the Lafontaine family first appears in the records of this region in the 1885 Metis scrip process, when Julie Lafontaine, born at St. John in 1848, recounts how the family had generally resided in Canadian territory before 1883 when they chose to relocate to

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<sup>65</sup> Gail Morin, *Metis Families: A Genealogical Compendium Volume 3* (Pawtucket: Quintin Publications, 2001), 213, 218. The first married Madeline Rocheblave, and the second wed Madeleine Florin.

the Turtle Mountains. Although the family travelled the region extensively as plains hunters, and had a number of children born in the region, prior to the mid 1880s the family made its base of operations in the area around Cypress Hills.<sup>66</sup>

Born in 1850, Louis Lafontaine's WPA biography underscores the Lafontaine family's motivation for returning to the Turtle Mountain region in the 1880s. Following the end of the buffalo and difficulty finding work thereafter, Louis went to the Indian Agency at Crooked Lake, Saskatchewan in the hope of receiving provisions or rations where he was told, "...that he did not belong..."<sup>67</sup> Not accepted as a Canadian Indian, Louis crossed the border where the possibility remained that he might be able to join the Turtle Mountain Chippewa band. After having sought out Chief Little Shell and gaining his permission to remain within the community, Louis was accorded the status of an American Chippewa and was able to permanently reside on the Turtle Mountain reservation after 1882. It is possible to argue that Louis was able to join the Turtle Mountain Chippewa band due to longstanding trade and hunting ties to the community, as well as long standing kinship ties with a number of its members. Following the North West Rebellion of 1885, a number of Louis' family members who had remained in the North West Territories elected to join him on the American side of the Turtle Mountain.<sup>68</sup> The locality allowed the members of the Lafontaine family easy access to the Canadian

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<sup>66</sup> LAC, RG15, D-II-3-c, Vol 1353, File 1061. Metis Scrip Application of Ambroise Lafontaine.

<sup>67</sup> Biographical file of Louis Lafontaine Sr., Works Projects Administration (WPA), Historical Data Project Records, Series 30529, Pioneer Biography Files, State Historical Society of North Dakota Archives.

<sup>68</sup> LAC, RG15, D-II-3-c, Vol 1353, File 425. Metis Scrip Application of Louis Lafontaine.



side of the border to visit the significant number of relatives north of the boundary, as well as protection from Canadian authorities in the aftermath of the Rebellion.<sup>69</sup>

As the preceding case studies have illustrated, Plains Metis families who chose to settle in the Turtle Mountains between the 1870s and 1880s exercised and manipulated all options available to them on both sides of the border. Utilising American Indian treaty, Canadian Metis scrip and homesteading on both the Canadian and American sides, they negotiated their place in an increasingly divided territory. By 1882, Metis, Chippewa and non-aboriginal settlers began to compete for land in the Turtle Mountain region. The considerable influx of Metis from Canada after the 1885 Rebellion caused significant overcrowding and increased anxiety in an already crowded Turtle Mountains region, and as the decade progressed, American Chippewa and Metis began to oppose the presence of many Metis who they considered Canadian.

The movement of the Metis to the Turtle Mountains was also facilitated by continued access to small game, fishing, hunting and trapping, which had become scarce in other parts of the plains. Further, in the onslaught of increasing settlement from Ontario, the Turtle Mountains provided a reprieve in the face of increasing non-aboriginal settlement in the Canadian west. Encompassing a territory 45 miles east and west and 20 miles north and south, the communities of St. John, Killarny, Belcourt and Dunseith became the towns that contained the highest Metis populations. While by today's standards this is a considerable amount of territory to consider one community, for the Turtle Mountain Metis, these towns became a

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<sup>69</sup> LAC, RG15, D-II-3-c, Vol 1353, File 800. Metis Scrip Application of Marie Anna Lafontaine.

hub of Metis activity along the Manitoba-North Dakota borderland. As chapter three illustrated, the previously borderland Metis were forced to choose a nation of origin in the mid 1870s, but this did not eliminate the borderland identity of the Plains Metis. Instead, this chapter has shown how Metis families living on both sides of the international boundary continued to manipulate the policies of both governments to meet the needs of their immediate and extended families. In doing so, they continued to move across the border as necessity dictated. As William Davis stated in his WPA interview, he considered the Metis the rightful heirs to the Turtle Mountains, and that “if such is the case, it is not to be wondered that the half-breeds stubbornly held on to their rights.”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Biographical file of William Davis, Works Projects Administration (WPA), Historical Data Project Records, Series 30529, Pioneer Biography Files, State Historical Society of North Dakota Archives.

## Conclusion

The enforcement of the Canadian-United States border not only succeeded in bisecting the territory of the Plains Metis, but also had profound ramifications for their mobility and economic stability. Using the North West Mounted Police and the American Army to enforce the border and relegate borderland aboriginal groups to reserves/reservations, both the Canadian and American government's began the process of identifying which aboriginal groups they were accountable for and nationalising them accordingly. During the first phase of Metis borderland identity, Plains Metis individuals and communities frequently used the international border for their own benefit and rarely encountered a negative consequence for having crossed it. During the second phase of Plains Metis identity from the mid-1870s to mid-1880s, increased enforcement of the international boundary and the subsequent nationalisation of aboriginal populations changed the meaning of the border for the Metis. After marking and patrolling the border, both national governments made residence on a particular side a condition of citizenship and this had a profound impact on status categories and available survival strategies. Despite these attempts to nationalise the Plains Metis and force them to adopt a permanent sedentary lifestyle, however, many Metis maintained their autonomy and continued to use the international boundary to ensure family and community survival.

Demarcated by the Joint Boundary Commission in 1872-1874, the international boundary was one of many borders implemented by the Canadian and

American governments in the latter half of the nineteenth century. As part of the larger nation-making policies of Canada and the United States, both governments wanted a strict enforcement and recognition of the border in order to strengthen their western expansion onto the Northern Plains. These dynamics also impacted the writing of the history of this region. Slotted into national historiographies, the history of the Plains Metis has overwhelmingly been told from a Canadian perspective given the Metis were only officially recognized north of the border. By using a borderland framework it is possible to tell a more comprehensive story of these borderland peoples: how the Plains Metis responded to the enforcement of the border, how they contested it, how they were impacted by state definitions of identity and belonging, and the impact it had on community cohesion. Focusing on the international boundary as a constructed and contested space, the traditional focus on the nation can be destabilised and the examination can turn to how the border affected people, places and processes on both sides of the border.

Tracing the origins of the Plains Metis, it is clear that some of the Plains Metis had established themselves as a borderlands people by the early nineteenth century. This examination has highlighted how the practice of *hivernement* was of great importance to Plains Metis culture, and further, how these temporary wintering communities became permanent following dramatic economic, social and political change among the Metis on the Northern Plains. In no way confined to the north side of the forty-ninth parallel, permanent Metis migration from Red River and the establishment of permanent Metis communities was observed throughout the borderland region. Manipulating the largely undefended border to take advantage

of trade opportunities on both sides, moving west allowed many Metis the opportunity to retain their economic niche on the Northern Plains while maintaining the cohesiveness of their borderland communities. This reality is reflected in the self-perception of an interchangeable citizenship among the Plains Metis.

The policies and actions of both Canadian and American officials reflect how government understanding of Metis nationality changed, and how this change affected policy, which in turn played a role in the transformation of Plains Metis borderland identity between the 1870s and 1880s. The American government belief that all Metis were Canadian born, and therefore a Canadian responsibility, forced many Metis to re-conceptualise their lives in relation to the enforced international boundary. This newly enforced border, however, was often manipulated and used by the Metis. The Plains Metis frequently used the border to escape American Army persecution, and after the 1885 Rebellion the Metis again used the forty-ninth parallel to protect themselves from the Canadian State by choosing to permanently move south of the international boundary.

Using the Turtle Mountain community as a case study, the Plains Metis response to government nationalisation and categorisation during the second phase of Metis identity emerges. Many Metis families continued their trans-border lives by using Canadian Metis scrip, Indian treaty status and homesteading on both sides of the border in order to meet the economic and social needs of their immediate and extended families. Despite attempts by both Canadian and American governments to forcibly nationalise the Plains Metis, the families of the Turtle Mountain

community continued to regard the region as a single homeland, albeit one divided by a border. Up until the mid-1860s, the forty-ninth parallel failed to function as a fixed boundary, but rather as a porous zone that could be crossed at will in order to find the best economic opportunities. After the mid 1870s, the borderland identity of the Plains Metis was directly challenged by both the Canadian and American state, forcing Metis families and communities to reconceptualise their place on the Northern Plains. Ultimately, the Plains Metis were still able to negotiate the borderlands after the 1880s, and despite the nationalising efforts of both governments, would continue to do so well into the twentieth century.

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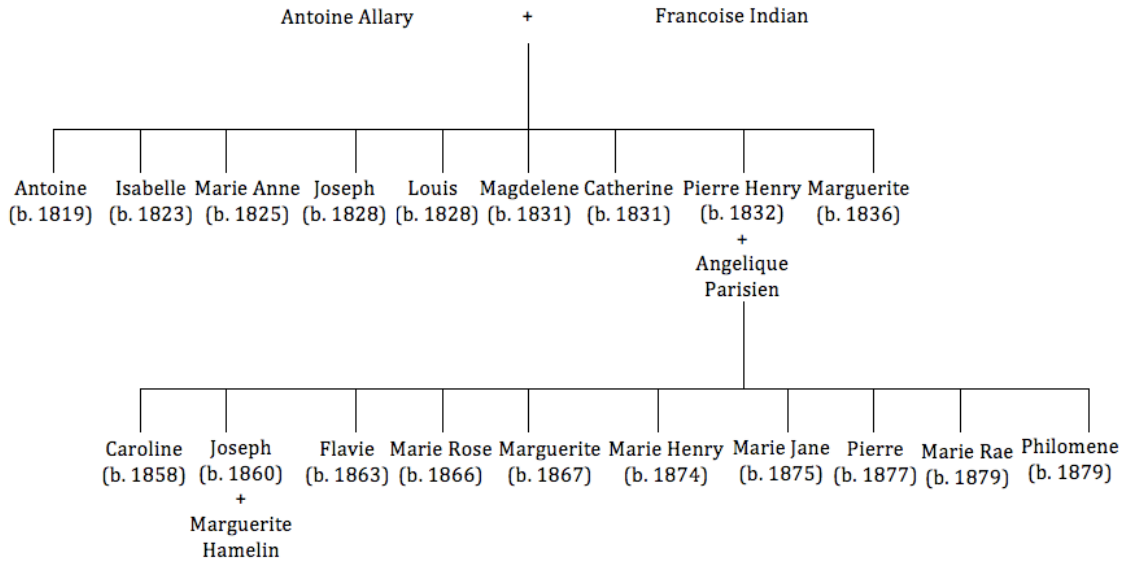
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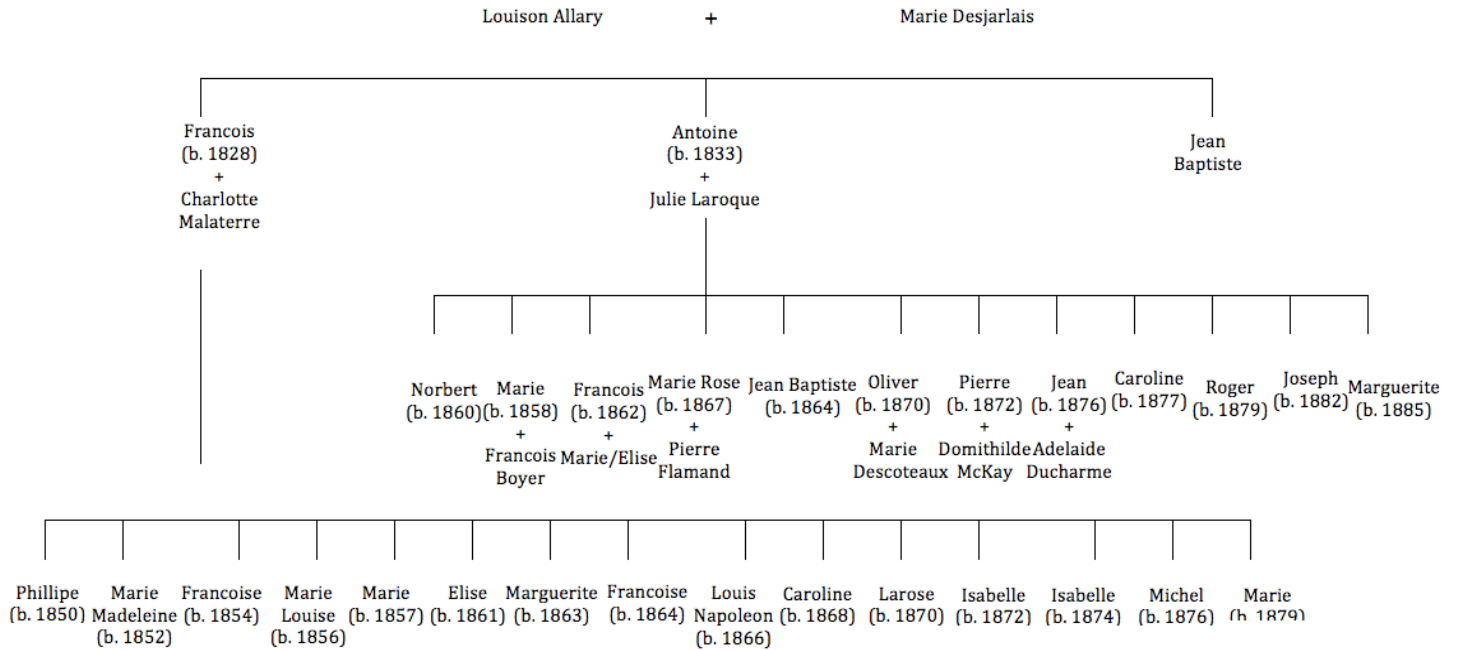
**Appendix 1**



**ANTOINE ALLARY FAMILY**

Sources Used:  
 Gail Morin, *Metis Families: A Genealogical Compendium Volume 1* (Pawtucket: Quintin Publications, 20  
 Canada Department of the Interior, Applications of 1885 Made by North West Half-Breeds, Application  
 of 1886-1906. RG 15, 1325.

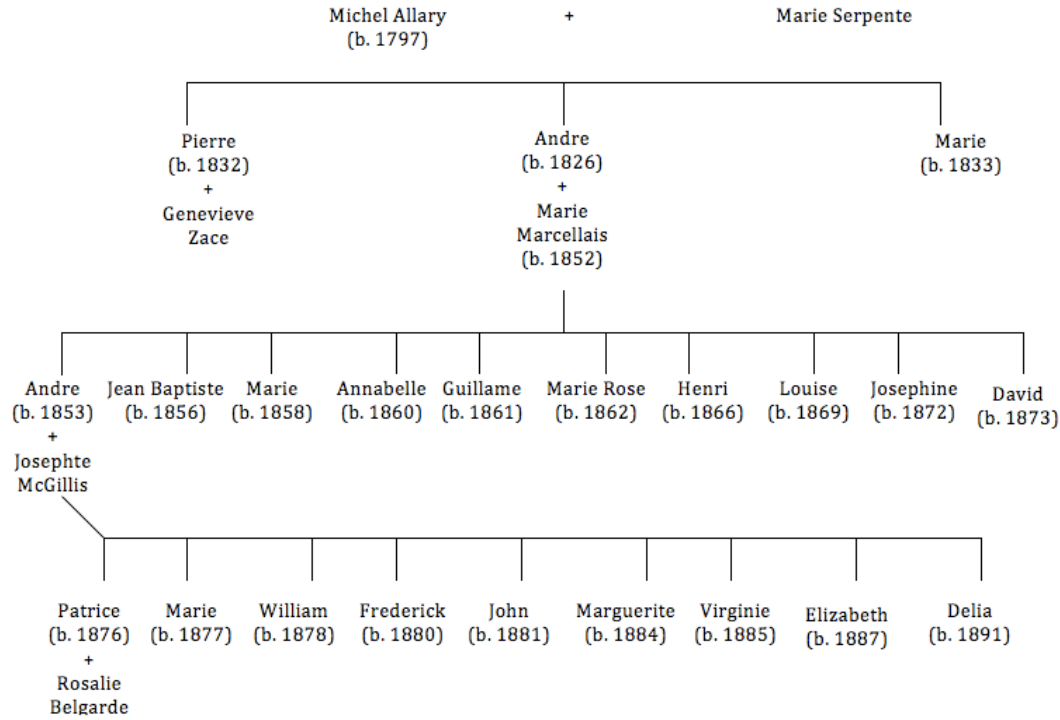
**Appendix 2**



**LOUISON ALLARY FAMILY**

Sources Used:  
 Gail Morin, *Metis Families: A Genealogical Compendium Volume 1* (Pawtucket: Quintin Publications, 21  
 Canada Department of the Interior, Applications of 1885 Made by North West Half-Breeds, Application  
 of 1886-1906. RG 15, v. 1325; v. 1333.

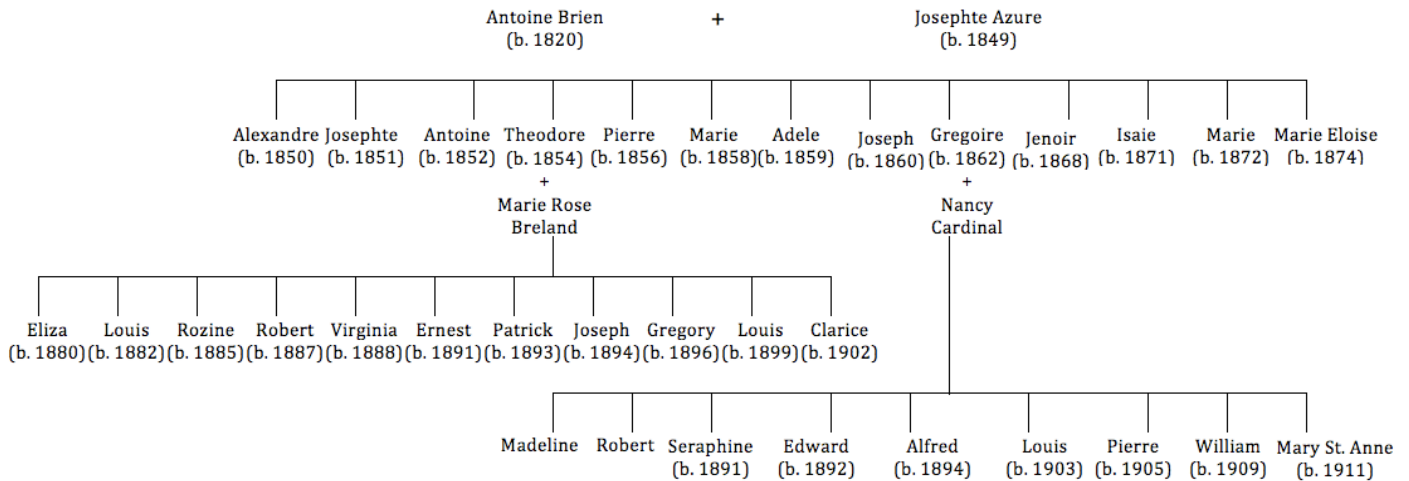
### Appendix 3



#### MICHEL ALLARY FAMILY

Sources Used:  
 Gail Morin, *Metis Families: A Genealogical Compendium Volume 1* (Pawtucket: Quintin Publications, 2000)  
 Canada Department of the Interior, Applications of 1885 Made by North West Half-Breeds, Applications of 1886-1906. RG 15, v. 1325; v. 1333.

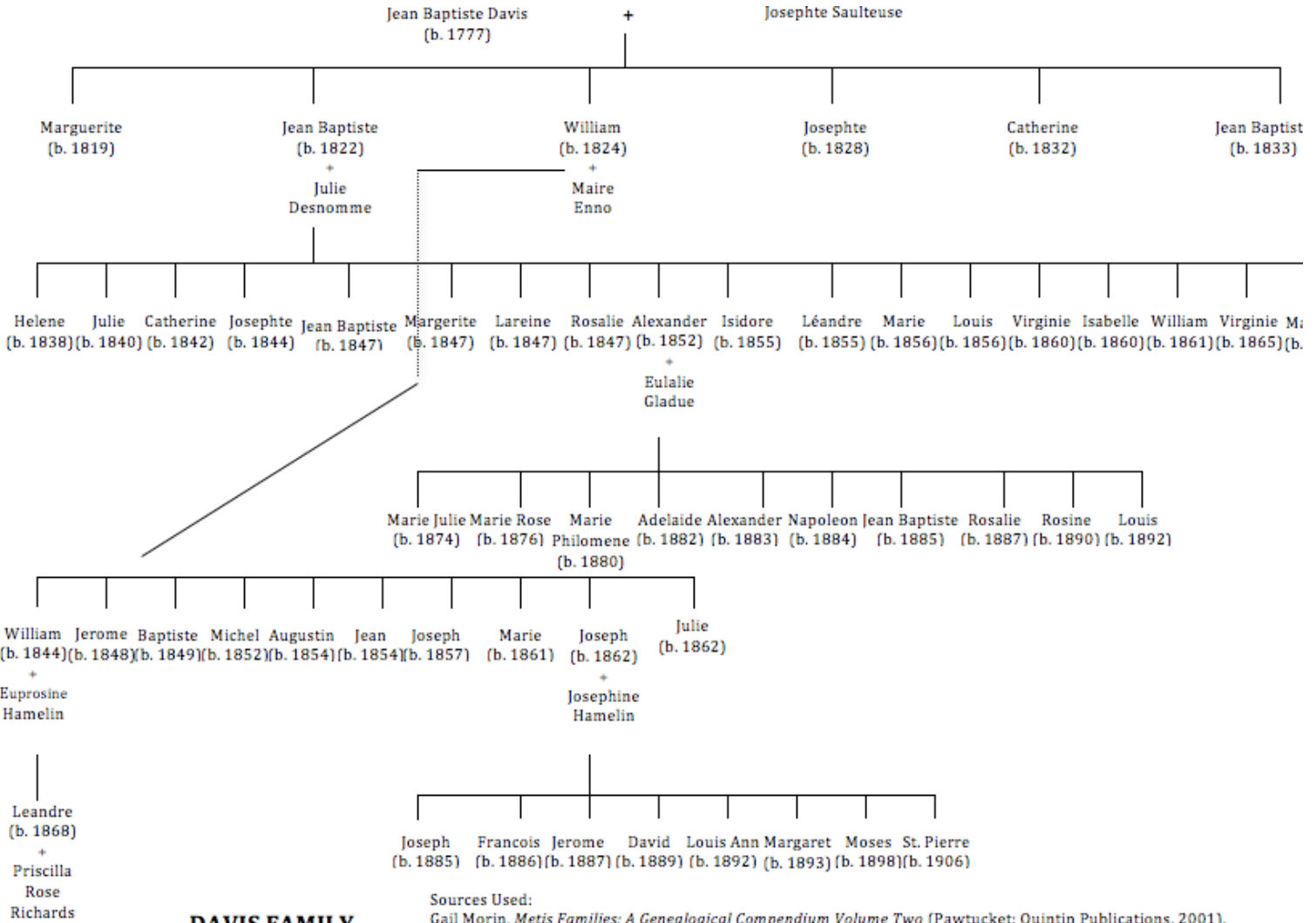
### Appendix 4



#### ANTOINE BRIEN FAMILY

Sources Used:  
 Gail Morin, *Metis Families: A Genealogical Compendium Volume 1* (Pawtucket: Quintin Publications, 2000)  
 Canada Department of the Interior, Applications of 1885 Made by North West Half-Breeds, Applications of 1886-1906. RG 15. 1338.

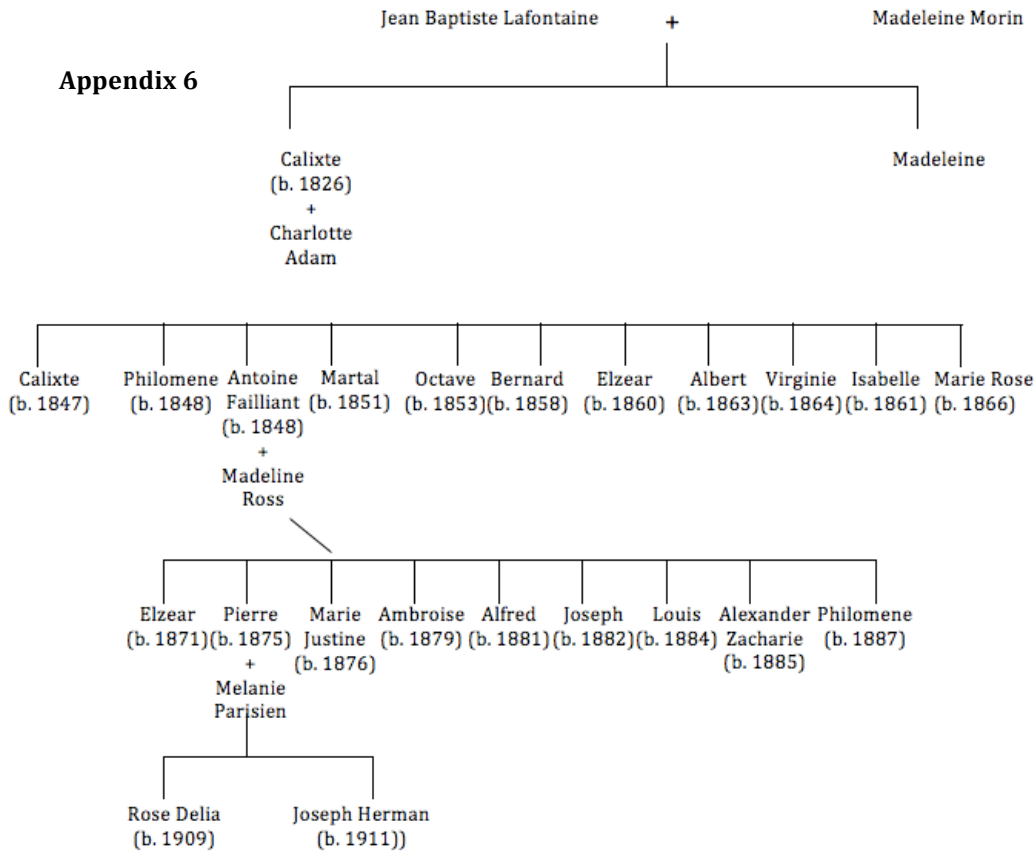
Appendix 5



**DAVIS FAMILY**

Sources Used:  
 Gail Morin, *Metis Families: A Genealogical Compendium Volume Two* (Pawtucket: Quintin Publications, 2001).  
 Canada Department of the Interior, *Applications of 1885 Made by North West Half-Breeds, Applications of 1886-1906*. RG 15, D-II-8-c; v. 1325; v. 1343; v. 1325.

**Appendix 6**

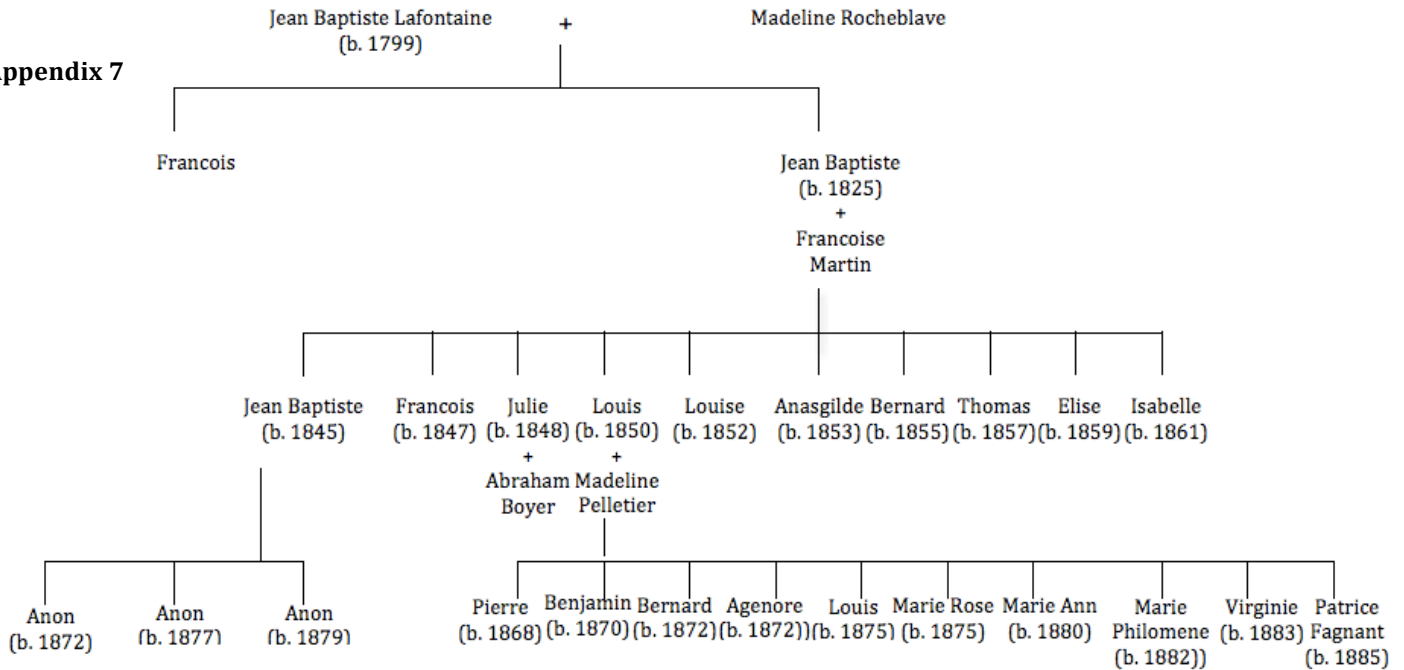


Sources Used:

Gail Morin, *Metis Families: A Genealogical Compendium Volume 3* (Pawtucket: Quintin Publications, 2001)  
 Canada Department of the Interior, Applications of 1885 Made by North West Half-Breeds, Applications of 1886-1906. RG 15, 1353.

**LAFONTAINE FAMILY**

**Appendix 7**



Sources Used:

Gail Morin, *Metis Families: A Genealogical Compendium Volume 3* (Pawtucket: Quintin Publications, 2001)  
 Canada Department of the Interior, Applications of 1885 Made by North West Half-Breeds, Application of 1886-1906. RG 15. D-II-8-c: v. 1325: v. 1353.

**LAFONTAINE FAMILY  
 (born 1799)**