CHAPTER VII: METIS CULTURE AND ITS DECLINE AFTER 1885

A. Introduction:

Previously in this report we have discussed the origins of the Metis and the application of aboriginal rights theory to Metis national rights in law and in practice. We have also traced the emergence of the Metis as a distinct cultural group. The first part of this Chapter discusses the main attributes of Metis national culture. It then goes on to trace the impact of the Northwest Rebellion on that culture after 1885, including the decline of the Metis into poverty. It also examines Metis nationalism and Metis organizations, after 1885, with particular emphasis on the re-emergence of Metis nationalism in the 1960s.

B. Metis Culture From The Early 1700s to 1869:

1. Economics

a. The Fur Trade and the Voyageurs

The early Metis lifestyle was built around the fur trade. The primary mode of employment of the Metis was as middle-men in that trade. This included the well-known Metis boat brigades, the Red River cart brigades, the buffalo hunt, the Plains traders, and a variety of clerical, semi-skilled and labouring positions with the fur companies and, in particular, with the Hudson's Bay Company. Also in time, and in particular by the middle of the 19th century, agriculture became an important mainstay of the local economy in the Red River, on the Saskatchewan River and in other isolated locations.

Alexander Begg describes the role of the voyageurs, freighters, hunters and trappers, in the following excerpts

from The History of the Northwest, Volume 1:

"Harmon, in his journal of voyages and travels in the interior of North America in 1819, thus describes the character of the voyageur":

> "Like their ancestors the French, the Canadian voyageurs possess lively and fickle dispositions, and they are rarely subject to depression of spirits of long continuance, even when in circumstances the most adverse. Although what they consider good eating and drinking constitutes their chief good, yet, when necessity compels them to it, they submit to great privation and hardship, not only without complaining, but even with cheerfulness and gaiety. They are very talkative, and extremely thoughtless, and make many resolutions which are broken almost as soon as formed. They never think of providing for future wants, and seldom lay up any part of their earnings to serve them in a day of sickness, or in the decline of life. Trifling provocations will often throw them into a rage, but they are easily appeased when in anger, and they never harbor a revengeful purpose against those by whom they conceive that they have been injured. They are not brave, but when they apprehend little danger, they will often, as they say, play the man. They are very deceitful, are exceedingly smooth and polite, and are even gross flatterers to the face of a person, whom they will basely slander behind his back. They pay little regard to veracity or to honesty. Their word is not to be trusted, and they are much addicted to pilfering, and will even steal articles of considerable value, when a favourable

> opportunity offers. A secret, they cannot keep. They rarely feel gratitude, though they are often generous. They are obedient, but not faithful servants. By flattering their vanity, of which they have not a little, they may be persuaded to undertake the most difficult enterprise, provided their lives are not endangered. Although they are generally unable to read, yet they acquire considerable knowledge of human nature, and some general information in regard to the state of the country. As they leave Canada while they are young, they have but little knowledge of the principles of the religion which their priests profess to follow, and before they have been long in the Indian country, they pay little more attention to the Sabbath, or the worshop of God, or any other divine institution, than the savages themselves."

"Such is a description of the men who manned the canoes of the fur companies, and underwent the greatest hardships and privations during the long and arduous journeys they undertook for their masters. The picture may be over drawn, but from all we can learn they were a reckless, and at times a dissipated lot of men, ready for the most onerous duties when required of them, and, when not engaged in tripping, idle, wasteful and dissolute. According to Sir George Simpson, there were 500 of them in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company annually during his time."[1]

The above quotation indicates that a substantial number of voyageurs were employed in freighting and gives us some insight into the character of early voyageurs. Harmon implies that they were French Canadians but it is certain that in later periods they were the Metis of Rupertsland. It is

almost certain that Harmon has exaggerated and given a rather biased impression based on his limited observations. His view of the voyageurs is contradicted in a number of aspects by other writers. Begg then goes on to describe the mode of transportation as follows:

> "In the early days, canoes, some of them being very large and strong, were used, but these gradually gave way to boats, which were worked by nine men, eight of whom were rowers and the other the steersman. Brigades composed of from four to eight of these craft, were kept constantly going during the summer between the various posts, carrying supplies and bringing back the bales of fur collected during the season. When a strong rapid was encountered in river travelling, the boats were unloaded, and, along with their freight, were carried overland, sometimes a considerable distance, so that the work was often very severe. If the rapids were not sufficiently formidable to render a portage necessary, the crew, going ashore, would pull the vessels along by means of lines. On the lakes, the men rowed, unless the wind was favourable, when a large square sail was hoisted, and they, for the time being, were free from toil, but this only happened occassionally during the long trip.
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> The goods carried in the boats were usually done up in bales, each weighing about a hundred pounds, and there were generally from seventy to eighty of these in a boat, the task of portaging them was not an easy one. This, however, at one time, was the principal mode of freighting the supplies and furs which the Hudson's Bay Company had,

> and sometimes when the voyageurs mutinied and refused to carry the goods, it entailed heavy losses. The custom was to make advances to the men during their period of idleness, and as they generally spent a large portion of the money in drink and dissipation, when they came to start upon a trip, they were in a state of destitution. They would then frequently make unreasonable demands, and, if not complied with, would strike and refuse to carry out the contract they had entered into. The voyageur of the boat was as reckless, improvident and unreliable, as the voyageur of the canoe in the early days."[2]

b. 2 Overland Transport

Once the Hudson's Bay Company had established itself in the Red River, the Company began to supplement water transport with the overland transport of the Red River carts. In time, these Metis Red River carts carried the bulk of the freight overland to the interior. Begg comments on this development, as well, in the following excerpt:

> "The Company latterly transported much of their supplies by ox-cart over the plains, and the calling of the voyageurs became of less importance to the fur trade. The carts used were constructed entirely of wood without any iron whatever, the axles and rims of the wheels forming no exception. If a break occurred, it was mended by means of a strip of dried buffalo hide being soaked in water and wound round the injured part, and as this dried, it contracted and hardened, thus binding the break firmly, and making the cart as strong as ever. Each cart was drawn by one ox or an Indian horse, the weight of a load carried being from 900 to 1,200 lbs., and the common rate of

progress being about twenty miles a day. The number of carts in a train varied, sometimes amounting to several hundreds, and in that case it was divided into brigades of ten carts each, strung out in single file along the prairie. To each three carts there was one man, and the whole train had a supply of spare animals, varying in number according to the state of the tracks, in case of accident, or the giving out through fatigue, of oxen or horses, an event that frequently happened on a long trip. The rate of freight paid by the company from St. Paul, Minnesota, to which place the freighting carts went in large numbers, was from sixteen to eighteen shillings per 100 lbs., but a large portion of this was paid in goods, at Fort Garry prices, which reduced the actual cost of freight very considerably. Advances were made to the freighters during the winter, to be applied on their spring and summer work on the same plan as carried out with the voyageurs, but in the case of the former, the money was generally spent in support of their families, while in the latter it was usually spent in drink. It was estimated that the Hudson's Bay Company and petty traders employed about fifteen hundred of those carts, between St. Paul and Red River, and from three to five hundred more to the Saskatchewan and other inland districts, so that there were from 600 to 700 men engaged in this business."[3]

c. The Buffalo Hunt

Another important economic activity in the late 1700s and in the 1800s was the buffalo hunt. Both Tremauden and Begg describe the hunt quite extensively. The hunt is also described by McLeod and Morton in their book about Cuthbert Grant.

Tremauden, of the four writers, was most sympathetic to the Metis and worked closely with the Manitoba Metis Historical Society in compiling information for A History of the Metis, published in 1929. (The English version, Hold High Your Head, was only published in 1982). He describes the buffalo hunt as follows:

> "Like all nomadic people in good game country, the chief occupation of the Metis was hunting. The most important game was the buffalo or bison because this animal provided not only food but a large part of clothing and shelter. Because of the abundance (at times incalculable) of these mammal herds there had to be sufficient numbers of hunters to overcome them. This hunt required a carefully planned technique and a rigid discipline. Everything was arranged so that there was not the slightest chance of error and the orders had to be rigorously obeyed. This demanded both leaders and regulations. The chiefs were chosen with so much care, the rules promulgated with such attention to detail, that a veritable administration body was formed. This affected everyone's life and each day's events; it was a government of patriachial simplicity which both leaders and subjects understood to be of great importance in times of emergency and crisis, even beyond the hunt and warfare. To the custom of organizing their great buffalo hunts the Metis owed their ability to size up a situation quickly, carefully determine all its details and act accordingly. Even today there is no public meeting where more order reigns, where parliamentary rules are better understood or more scrupulously observed than in a Metis assembly.

Because of the importance of the buffalo hunt as a source of food, many points had to be determined: the direction of the attack, the number of animals to be killed, the division of the spoils, the protection of the hunters from enemies both without and within. The first of these enemies were the fierce Indian tribes who resented the Metis hunting the same game in the same territory or who simply wanted to wage war and joined to do so in a dangerous way. The second were a few repudiated Metis or hangers-on who sought to take advantage during the heat of action to steal or commit havoc. Therefore, on the eve of a great buffalo hunt the Metis assembled and organized to maintain order in their ranks and be on guard against unfriendly Indians or other enemies.

They chose a leader called general or president and twelve councillors to whom was added a public crier responsible for bringing rules, orders and recommendations to the attention of people in the camp - men, women and children. Above all, it was his duty to declare that moment to charge the buffalo. Also, they chose guides from among those most suited to carry out these critical functions, who, during the entire expedition, had to lead the hunters to the land richest in game and free of enemies. The remainder of the men became soldiers. They were grouped in tens and each ten chose a captain. The first-comer could select one of his companions; it sufficed that nine others join him and group around the officer he had chosen for the ten to be formed.

This primitive but extremely effective system assured each captain the right to count on the total devotion of each of his soldiers because it was at their own request that he led them. Groups divided the duties among themselves and took turns in scouting the camp's march or protecting

the rear ranks.

> The Council was both a government and a tribunal. It not only laid down the laws designed for a sound conduct of the hunt in all its details but saw that they were respected. These rules were the law of the prairie. Captains and soldiers carried out the Council's orders and judgements. While the Council had a certain latitude in ordinary matters, in affairs of general importance, its authority was limited. In these it needed the assent of the entire camp."[4]

The numbers of persons involved in the hunt and its economic importance is evident in the following description by Tremauden:

> "Thus organized, number 500-1,000 men, women and children in the proportion of two men and two women for each child, the camp set out around June 15 of each year. Each family had its tent and its wagon. Each hunter carried a gun. The camp's needs required about 3,000 pounds of shot, 150 gallons of powder, 1,400 butchering knives, large and small, as well as 150 axes to insure a supply of firewood, the necessary blankets and clothing, a great quantity of tea and sugar and a multitude of other articles. To transport all these people, munitions, provisions and gear took no less than 450 saddle horses, 650 wagon horses and 600 oxen. The women and children travelled seated on hay, straw or blankets in the bottom of the seatless wagons. These expeditions, real gala affairs, entailed considerable expense for equipment and each family vied proudly with the others. The Hudson's Bay Company stores did a roaring trade at these times and their agents readily extended credit to the Metis, well-known for their honesty; none paid better than they.

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> Thus provisioned, equipped and governed, the hunters advanced across the praire, following the buffalo herd which the scouts had already spotted. Once the immediate vicinity of this area was reached, the camp halted. Tents were raised in the order indicated by the Council, in as compact a group as possible, around which were placed the carts, shafts and poles upright. This formed a sort of rampart in whose shelter the camp's occupants could sustain and repel the attacks of enemies many times their number. Next they unloaded kitchen utensils and provisions. In front of each tent the family dug a hole and placed several stones in it to form a hearth. Above this, on a tripod of branches, hung a pot from which soon escaped the teasing cooking odors of some game killed along the way. And while the moon rose above the hills nearby, groups around their fires, these happy children of nature sang, told stories and laughed heartily, smoking their "kinikinik" until the small hours."[5]

Begg, in his description, portrays even more vividly the economic importance of the hunt in his following detailed description:

> "We now come to another class of men who were by far the most important in the North west at the period we are writing about. The hunters of the plains were, as a rule, as reckless, and nearly as improvident as the voyageurs, only they were a brave people, the nature of their calling bringing them face to face with danger in pursuit of the chase and in attacks from hostile Indians. The system of giving them almost unlimited credit which prevailed, at one time led these men to burden themselves heartily with debt, under which they struggled from one season to another. If the hunt proved successful, they were generally able to pay

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up arrears—if it was bad, they sank the deeper into debt, and so they went for years, few of them being able to accumulate wealth.

After the union of the fur companies, the plains hunters increased in number rapidly, the excitement and freedom of the life attracting many to follow it. In 1820, the number of carts assembled to go to the buffalo hunt was 540. In 1825, the number had increased to 680, in 1830 to 820, in 1835 to 970, and in 1840 to 1210, and to give some idea of the capital investment in the business we append the following statement relating to the outfit of the last named year:—

1,210	carts cost	£1,815	0s.	0d.
620	hunters' wages	1,860	0s.	0
650	women's wages	1,462	10	0
360	boys and girls wages	360	0	0
740	guns cost	1,480	0s.	0d.
150	gallons gunpowder cost	120	0	0
1,300	pounds trading balls cost	65	0	0
6,240	gun flints cost	13	0	0
100	steel daggers	15	0	0
100	couteaux de chasse cost	15	0	0
403	buffalo runners(horses) cost -	60,045	0	0
655	cart horses cost	5,240	0	0
586	draught oxen cost	3,516	0	0
1,210	sets of harness cost	484	0	0
403	riding saddles cost	161	4	0
403	bridles and whips cost	201	10	0
1,240	scalping knives cost	31	0	0
448	half axes cost	56	0	0
Camp equipage, tents, culinary utensils, etc., cost		1,059	16	0
		£24,000	0	0(sic)

or in the neighborhood of £120,000, one half at least of which being advanced to the hunters on credit."[6]

Begg also gave a detailed description of the hunt, which supports the description given by Tremauden, in the following excerpt:

"When all were assembled, the roll was called, a council of the principle men held, and a chief and staff officers selected. There were captains and guides appointed, the latter being the standard-bearers of the party, and the hoisting of the flag was the signal each morning for a start to be made, and when it was taken down it signified an order to encamp.

Thus they travelled on, day after day, under a regular systemized plan, until the haunt of the buffulo was reached, and not only were they under command of competent men chosen from amongst themselves, but they framed laws which had to be observed by all. Of these latter, the following will serve as an example:

1. No buffalo to be run the Sabbath day.
2. No party to fork off, lag behind, or go before without permission.
3. No person or party to run buffalo before the general order.
4. Every captain, with his men, in turn to patrol the camp, and keep guard.
5. For the first trespass against these laws, the offender to have his saddle and bridle cut up.
6. For the second offence, the coat to be taken off the offender's back, and be cut up.
7. For the third offence, the offender to be flogged.
8. Any person convicted of theft, even to the value of a sinew, to be brought to the middle of the camp, and the crier to call out his or her name three times, adding the word "thief" at each time.

Honesty was proverbial amongst the half-breeds of the plains, and the punishment in clause 8 was the worst form in which it could be administered, as the disgrace of being considered a thief was taken much to heart by the very worst of them.

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> The formation of the camp was circular, all the carts being placed side by side, the trams outward, and within this line the tents were placed in double and treble rows, the animals being kept within the circle of barricades in time of danger, but when none was apprehended the horses and oxen grazed on the outside."[7]

The hunt itself, as described by all writers, must have been a magnificent sight, resembling an all out war. The most exciting version is possibly the one given by Tremauden:

> When the moment arrives to start the hunt—back in camp the scouts have announced the sighting of the herd of bison in some nearby valley—the crier, in lieu of a horn, rides headlong among the tents warning the hunters to get ready. Hastily, they capture their horses on the outskirts of the camp and ride to the point of departure. A moving sight! Hundreds of riders with elaborate headgear, their costumes bright with multicolored beadwork, keep still rein on their panicky mounts that fidget, whinny and stamp with impatience.
>
> The captains stand by to see that no one leaves before the word is given. The signal at last! The cavalcade springs forward in a swirl of dust midst yells that are echoed by the woods. But the buffalo also have their leader and their captains. Over there, the patriach of the herd, alert veteran of many pursuits, has sensed the approach of danger even before he hears the hunters' cries and the drumming of hooves beyond the hill. He raises his head, sniffs the air a moment and snorts with anger. The animals around him quickly sense his uneasiness and stop grazing. In a flash terror spreads through the herd. Suddenly, as if on signal with a common impetus, the mass of heavy

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> ruminants, panic-stricken, starts off at full speed across the prairies like an unleashed flood on which seem to float, in jerky bounds, myriads of black, woolly humps. Stampede: the frantic flight of a cohesive band all going in the same direction with sudden turns and brusque deviations that follow the uneven terrain. Galloping furiously, the hunters soon ride alongside the dangerous column, then gradually edge their way among the fleeing beasts. They choose the fattest and set upon them, shooting their victims that stumble and sink groaning on the trampled grass. The killing continues until the arranged signal—tumultuous slaughter of the plains!
>
> A hunt, full of emotion for both actor and spectator, and terrifying too because the buffalo may—and it has sometimes happened—upset horses and men in their passage and with their hooves trample them to death. So a priest always accompanies the expedition. It is difficult to describe the melee. He, from whom we have gathered these details, Louis Riel himself, has painted it in this apt and picturesque sentence: "From a distance," he says, "it is fusillade in a cloud."
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> The massacre had ended. Time now to decide whose spoils are scattered over the plains. Does a dispute arise? President and council intervene. Often to avoid misunderstanding, bullets are marked in a special way to determine easily the ownership of the slain beasts. Sometimes during the melee the hunters throw parts of their equipment on the animals and find them by this sign after the shooting."[8]

The hunt completed, the Metis then turned their attention to the work which followed:

> "Then follows the skinning and cutting up. The meat is soon spread out over ropes or ladders, Indian fashion. The skins are put

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aside for leather, the fur and carcasses are left for wolves and dogs always numerous on these expeditions. Pemmican is made with the meat brought to camp. The women and children busy themselves with its transport and drying in the sun. It has to be kept from all humidity, so when evening comes, no matter what the quantity, it is brought into the tents away from the action of the dew. While serious danger accompanies the hunt, the hunter's role lasts but a few moments; on the contrary the task of the women and children is long, difficult and tedious. Once the meat is well-dried, it is pounded in much the same way as grain is flailed into flour. The powder thus obtained is mixed with grease and put into bags. A final layer of fat, hot this time, and the pemmican is ready. Prepared in this way it can be preserved for many years.

While the departure for the hunt is made in a body, the return took place in little groups. As soon as a family had finished its pemmican it returned to the settlement to spend the winter. This was a time for revels, feasts, dances and weddings. The Metis never stopped celebrating even at the risk of being forced to go to the lakes for food to finish the winter. But because of the rigours of winter, fishing was far from being as attractive as hunting. No matter how stolid one might be, it was not amusing to spend entire days, when a brisk northwest wind blew the finely powdered, cutting snow, waiting beside a hole cut in the ice for a fish to get hooked on a line or caught in a net. So the most foresighted made their provisions of meat last as long as possible and resorted to fishing only for the strict needs of days of fasting and abstinence."[9]

d. 4. The Traders

Another important economic activity that some of the Metis engaged in was that of private traders and entrepreneurs.

Begg indicates that private trading began to develop in the 1830s. He describes the development of the trade as follows:

> "About the year 1834, private individuals began importing goods from England on their own account and for their own use. Gradually the system extended until those who commenced importing for themselves soon enlarged the field of enterprise, and sent for goods on speculation. This, for a time, was countenanced by the Hudson's Bay Company until agitation against exclusive trade in furs began, when they placed obstacles in the way of it, especially as the petty traders had taken part in the agitation. But this did not destroy the trade, for the petty merchants, being not altogether dependent on the English market, received a large portion of their supplies from the United States. Up to the time of the demonstration in favour of Sayer, in 1849, these petty traders confined themselves to buying and selling ordinary merchandise, the traffic in furs being forbidden, although undoubtedly they did a good deal in a quiet way in the trading and smuggling of peltries. After 1849, however, they became bolder in this respect, and gradually came to deal openly in furs, until they finally threw off all restraint, and openly outfitted men and sent them into the interior to traffic with the Indians. The Company, then, instead of endeavoring to punish them, entered with all the force of wealth and superior advantages into keen competition with them, in the hope of being able to crush them in that way."[10]

Begg devotes a complete chapter in his book to the fur trade movement. Tremauden, as well, describes the events of 1849 in some detail. It is not necessary to examine this struggle in depth, other than to note that it was an indication of the development of Metis power and influence in the Red River. It was also a struggle by the Metis to find new economic

outlets for their talents and ingenuity. This trade opened up competition in furs and goods with the U.S. traders. In addition, it gave the developing agricultural community in the Red River access to American technology and to a supply of farm animals and seed. It also seriously cut into the trade of the Hudson's Bay Company with the Indians and forced them to pay significantly higher prices for furs. It led to the Company becoming much less profitable and for the first time in 150 years the Hudson's Bay Company was faced with a challenge to the legal validity of its Charter.[11]

5. ~~e~~. Agriculture

As indicated in a previous Chapter, the other most important economic acticity in the Red River was agriculture. We have already quoted in some detail on the agricultural situation in the Red River from Begg. Agriculture provided the main food supply for the settlement and those who depended upon the settlement. It also provided commodities which could be sold for cash or bartered for goods in the St. Paul market.

One of the early settlements established on the Assiniboia west of Winnipeg on the White Horse Plain was founded by Cuthbert Grant. In a quote from Morton and McLeod, the extent and importance of agriculture is further illustrated:

> "These gains for civilization at White Horse Plain, the slowly ripened fruit of the example Grant had set for his people when he founded Grantown, are confirmed but modified by the Red River census of 1849. In that year there were 914 people at White Horse Plain. They owned 521 horses, 569 cattle, 36 ploughs, 394 carts, and one windmill. But they farmed only 526 acres—only 228 more than in 1833."[12]

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Tremauden, who tends to romanticize the nomadic activities of the Metis as more important to them than their farming, however, does confirm that agriculture existed and that, as well, the Metis practiced a variety of cottage industries:

> "The Metis was essentially nomadic, both from his mother, accustomed to the free life of the plains, and from his father, fond of hunting and adventure. Despite the comfort of his dwelling or the fertility of his farm he found it hard to endure a sedentary life. Work on the land held no charm for him. The idea of growing grain or vegetables by breaking the soil with mattock or plow meant nothing to him. He disliked tending chickens or pigs, mowing grass, stacking it and then feeding it to beasts of burden and cows, when to him it seemed so simple, so natural on the prairie and in the woods to gather wild fruit, kill game and let livestock and horses graze as they liked. The instincts from his mother drew him to life in a tent, transporting roof, baggage and provisions wherever his fancy dictated. It was in the midst of open nature, free to fill his lungs with invigorating air, to hear his vibrant songs echoed in the vastness which surrounded him, that the Metis gave most easily free expression to his exuberance and gaiety. That does not mean, however, that the Metis spent their days in idleness and negligence. In addition to the agricultural activities already widespread by 1800—thanks to the initiative of the Canadian missionaries—and the necessary work required for maintenance of garden, horse and cattle, the Metis busied themselves with the construction of their houses, furniture, sleds, wagons and canoes, etc. Their women prepared the leather for making clothing and moccasins, spending as much time on needlework as in the preparation of food—drying fruit, smoking meat and fish."[13]

Other accounts indicate that the farms on the Red River constituted the most important, the only significant, the only stable and the only well-organized agricultural settlement west of the Mississippi and north of the Missouri in the early 1800s.[14]

2. Metis Lifestyle and Culture

The issue of whether there was something called a unique Metis culture is often debated. However, only a few writers have addressed themselves to this question. Most have concentrated on the character of the people and/or their economic role. As seen from quotes in the proceeding section of this Chapter, some writers insisted on viewing the behavior of the Metis in simplistic and biased terms. Others always emphasized the difference between the French and the English half-breeds, emphasizing of course their belief that the English half-breeds were a "better bunch" than the Metis. One of the few writers to examine some of the lifestyle details of the Metis was Tremauden, who stated:

(a) The Metis Nation

> "But first it is important to study briefly the typical Metis, result of French-Indian and English-Indian alliances which multiplied during the comings and goings of the French expeditions of 1656, 1663, 1685, 1727 and the English expeditions of Anthony Hendry in 1754 and those of his successors, Alexander Henry and Samuel Hearne in 1761 and 1769. During a century then both English and French-speaking whites, rivals or allies, discoverers, explorers or traders, mixed their blood with that of the Indians and gave birth to a <u>new nation—the Metis nation</u>. This nation, while

still embryonic at the dawn of the 19th century, had nevertheless developed certain definite and dominant characteristics peculiar to itself. [emphasis mine].

We have seen that the Metis nation grew out of a mixture of red and white races. During this first hundred years when these unions were formed, that is from 1650 until the cession of Canada to England, the Metis nation was naturally only in the process of being formed. At that time it was composed of Canadian, French, Scottish or Irish fathers and Indian mothers. The descendents of these first ancestors did not yet form a very distinct element in the life of this young people. It was especially during the following century, 1760-1860, and even during its first fifty years, 1760-1810, with the arrival of the gentlemen of the Northwest and the Hudson's Bay Company men, that the diverse elements of the Metis nation became crystallized.

Thanks to their geographical position, which protected them from foreign invasion, their nomadic way of life and their social and military organization for defence against savage tribes, the Metis of the West were able to maintain their national homogeneity, while their brothers in Acadia and Quebec became fused with the dominant element of the Canadian people. [emphasis mine].

At the beginning of the 19th century the Metis nation, then in its full flowering, was made up of two fairly distinct groups—the French or Bois Brules whose paternal language was French, and the English Metis whose paternal language was English. Since the Bois Brules were more numerous and generally more developed, we must turn to them to note their respect for ancestral tradition and their most characteristic

traits in order to sketch a picture of the customs and mentality of the Metis nation. We should add that, in many cases, the first ancestors of the English Metis left the country once their period of service was ended, abandoning their Indian wives and children whom the French Metis often adopted and raised in the French culture. That explains why there are so many Metis families who speak French despite their Scottish or Irish names."[15]

2 ~~(b)~~ The Men:

"Metis men are generally tall—some even of colossal build. Their faces, with high prominent cheekbones under brilliant black eyes, are usually copper-colored, often crowned with long, jet-black hair or adorned with bushy beards. Their countenance is marked by nobility and pride...

The first Metis were giants. As we have seen, they inherited their strong physique from their fathers—mainly trappers, hunters, or adventurers and from the rich untainted blood of their Indian mothers. Moreover, their manner of life contributed to their muscular development and the molding of their character through endurance and tenacity. Paddling, portaging, hunting, sleeping under the stars and living outdoors contributed to a future generation endowed with herculean strength and a morale able to endure hardship and privation.

The Metis adopted their clothing from both Indian and European fashions. All ornamentation was modelled on patterns dear to the Redskins. On the other hand, all that was simple and practical came from European styles. The men's vests and trousers

were cut from tanned moose hides as soft as cloth. A thick wollen shirt, often many-colored, a loose handkerchief about the neck, a round tanned leather or fur cap sometimes decked with a tail or a feather according to individual fancy, leg coverings, mitasses and moccasins completed the man's costume. In winter he wore a fur capot while in summer he was content with a simple shirt. The trousers were held up by a large wollen cloth belt and often in winter another sash of the same make was wrapped around the capot to conserve body heat. Everything was decorated with fringes and beadwork, especially on the legs, arms and head."[16]

3 (c) The Women:

"Metis women have a less bony facial structure and more regular features than that of the men. Their walk is graceful and their shyness and modesty pleases from the start. Like their male companions their eyes and hair are very black. Their skin coloring, however, is lighter—sometimes almost white. The women were most simply dressed, draped from the head in an ample shawl, nearly always black. Nevertheless, like most women, they were fond of pretty ornaments. Although their dresses were of simple calico, cotton, wool, or later of imported fabrics, they knew how to make trimmings out of dyed horse-hair, painted shells and various other articles, ornaments for the neck, wrists, ears and hair revealed great taste. In the winter they added thick shawls and moccasins that covered female feet of remarkable slenderness. French shoes and stockings did not easily supplant their leggings and moccasins."[17]

Tremauden goes on to describe the dwelling sites, the dwellings and their furnishings as follows:

4 (d) Metis Dwellings:

"In their gradual adaptation to a more settled way of life, the Metis selected the best land locations. The geographic situation of Fort Garry, now Winnipeg; of Fort Auguste, today Edmonton; of Prince Albert, Calgary, Le Pas and others show clearly that these groups appreciated the advantages offered by those sites. So Louis Riel could write with truth: "The Metis settlements were the foundations of future civilization. Well-chosen sites became centres on which emigration depends in everyway for colonization and development."

Their dwellings, sheltered by wooded headlands, bordered the rivers and lakes. The cabins where the Metis spent the winter were made of squared tree trunks dovetailed one into the other. The axe was the only tool used for this work. They filled the chinks between the logs with clay. The inside and outside walls were whitewashed and the triangular roofs covered with thatch, bark or clay. A single door in the middle between two windows with panes of scraped skin allowed both light and inhabitants to enter into the only room of the dwelling, which often had no floor. Until stoves made their appearance, a large clay fireplace filled part of the wall at the far end. A big curtained bed for the parents and cots for the children stood against the other walls. A solid table flanked by two benches, a roughly-made armchair, a rocking chair for the elderly, a simple set of cooking utensils, a small mirror, some chests, a few buffalo robes, a flintlock or musket on the wall, a powder horn, a bag for shot or bullets, some nets, an axe, apparatus for lighting the fire, a

crucifix or saint's statue and a few holy pictures made up the furnishings of most cottages. The kitchen cupboard where food was kept was simple and sparsely stocked. At that time flour was too rare for the Metis to use for bread or bannock. To make up for this there was meat, dried or cooked fresh over the hearth fire, smoked or boiled fish, tea, occasionally sugar, preserves or jelly made from wild fruits such as strawberries, raspberries, saskatoons, pembinas*, gooseberries, blueberries or cranberries and, at times, desserts of dried apples, prunes or raisins from the trading posts. The Metis prided themselves in maintaining cleanliness and order in their dwellings and farm buildings, not only equalling their neighbors, but surpassing them. The barn was a short distance away separated from the little house by a tiny garden of several rows of potatoes and a small field of grain. All was surrounded by a rough pole fence while beyond stretched the haylands.

Later, as game disappeared and the Metis were forced to depend less on hunting as a source of food, it became necessary to till the soil. As education took effect, the settlements of these children of the prairie developed rapidly to equal those of their white cousins. The homes became more spacious, containing several rooms: a kitchen, a small living room, bedrooms, stairs led to an attic that was fitted up; shingles replaced thatch, bark or clay; glass in windows took the place of scraped skin.

Little by little the best lands bordering the Red, Assiniboine and Seine Rivers were all taken by the Metis. New families had to settle farther away, founding such parishes as Ste. Anne des Chenes, Ste. Agathe, Ste. Laurent, Ste. Rose du Lac and others across the open prairies as far as the Saskatchewan River. In their new way of life, the Metis,

better adapted to the climate, often surpassed the other settlers in the management of their farms. They were noted for raising strong, fast horses, a reputation they still enjoy today."[18]

(e) The Metis People - Social Life:

Of the demeanor, social relationships, philosophy of life and spiritual life, Tremauden wrote as follows:

"So the Metis led a peaceful and happy life. Distress did not touch them except in cases of illness or idleness. The less fortunate could always count on help from their neighbors. Family life was respected, morals were of high standards, honesty and charity were a religion. The first Metis settlements were like a large family where peace, hospitality and comradships reigned. Nothing was neglected to maintain friendly relations with their Indian cousins; nothing was spared to live as good neighbors with the colonists of various nationalities who came to settle in their native land. Remember, as an example, their speedy help to Lord Selkirk's first settlers to assist them to procure the food they needed because of lack of foresight.

They esteemed peace but held justice still more dear. The abuse of power troubled them more deeply than insults, ingratitude or even ill-treatment. The Metis people idolized their rights and refused to recognize that famous principle so honored among civilized peoples, "Might is right". From the French came an implacable logic and from their Indian forefathers a sense of probity and respect for other people's possessions. The thief was considered a contemptible creature and in the rules of the hunt we find this clause: "Any man

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guilty of theft will be brought into the middle of camp and called "thief" three times by everyone." This veneration by the Metis for their personal rights and their scorn for theft, together with the teachings of the missionaries, explain their unyielding resistance to the Canadian authorities who seized their lands. When the Metis felt he had logic and right on his side, nothing could make him yield. Like his paternal ancestor, the Gaul, and his maternal ancestor, the Indian of the vast New World, with set face, decisive gestures and voice, he answered those who tried to coerce him: "I fear only one thing—that the sky fall on my head." But old-time Metis were also fond of fun and merriment. Joyful reunions, feasts, dances and weddings were popular. Strangers and travellers were invited to the table and the dance. The storytellers, musicians and singers took advantage of these evenings to spin their marvellous tales, tune up their fiddles, and break out into Scottish or French songs...

...to end this rapid description of Metis customs, it remains only to discuss their great love and deep respect for the Catholic religion and its priests, even before the coming of the missionaries. We have seen how hospitable they were, how they honored the precept "We cannot eat in front of anyone without sharing our food with him, be it only a mouthful." The religion of the Metis, transmitted to them by their paternal ancestors before the missionaries came, was not limited to the practice of the virtue of charity. Morality, for its own sake, was highly esteemed. Irregular situations between persons of the opposite sex which are the shame of our times were very rare. During the winter, a period of almost enforced leisure and numerous social gatherings, the young men were encouraged to woo the young girls and all took place under the eyes and with

the consent of the parents. Families, while not rich, were united, convinced that it is in respectful love that true happiness is found.

As with all primitive peoples, the Metis loved song and dance. For the pleasure of a dance they made long trips after dark in severe cold, even in dangerous blizzards. These very innocent dances assured even less moral risk because of many quadrille figures accompanied by almost deafening cries and whoops. It is true that some dancers, in order to limber up their legs, instead often rendered them totally powerless by caressing a little too tenderly the divine bottle, but it cannot be said that they overstepped bounds more than their neighbors, the whites. Among these latter could be found many distillers; among the Metis, here and there, a little light beer was made. And when the clergy of Red River began to a campaign against the evils of drink by introducing an era of relative temperance, they found among the Metis their most submissive followers."[19]

6 (F) The Metis and Their Priests:

"The Metis had a veneration for the missionaries that never wavered. In their eyes the priest was indeed God's representative on earth. His word was listened to as respectfully as that of Christ by the first christians. Did some missionary need to penetrate the prairie vastness west of the Red River? Immediately the best guide in the colony was placed at the service of God's minister. If we admire the man of God who, leaving a beloved family, sacrificing a peaceful future in his desire to win new souls for heaven, disappears into almost inaccessible solitudes, clears a path through virgin forests, climbs mountains, braves blood-thirsty insects in summer and the

terrible torments of winter, should we not also accord a part of his merit to the brave Metis? Without hesitation the Metis guide heads to caravan, traces the way, is first to overcome difficulties, endures more than others—intense summer heat or biting winter cold—carries the weight of the canoe and its contents in portages around obstacles and rapids, sees to the comfort of members of the expedition of which he is organizer, guide and interpreter, happy in spite of all to be the first to lead the priest towards the conquest of celestial riches as far as the foot of the western mountains. The reverence of the Metis for the priest was such that no one ever thought to challenge his advice even outside the spiritual domain. They went to him with all their little difficulties, even temporal. Indeed, everyone who spoke lightly of the priest in their presence was poorly thought of. They would have died rather than let anyone touch a hair of a missionary in their care. The Catholic Church in the Canadian west never had followers more deeply religious, more faithful and devoted than the Metis. Does this mean that the Metis had no faults? Far from us such a childish claim. Like any other people, they were not perfect, but also like other people their good qualities outdid their defects, which were more individual than collective. As elsewhere, the exceptions prove the rule. It is certainly not the reprehensible conduct of a few depraved or craven persons that should cause a people as a whole to be accused of being bandits and traitors. In such cases the Metis people are no exception; some of its members may have erred, but as a people they have nothing to be ashamed of. Instead, as forerunners of civilization in the Canadian west, they have the right to hold high their heads and proclaim loudly before the whole world that, always and everywhere, the Metis nation conscientiously did its duty and nobly accomplished this mission." [emphasis mine] .[20]

(g) The Metis and Government

In regard to their role in government and public administration, Tremauden comments as follows:

> "Evenutally, when instruction by the Missionaries became available, the Metis people developed among themselves an elite of men whose knowledge and wisdom increased their pride and improved their lot. The Hudson's Bay Company, whose authority in the country represented that of the Sovereign of the British Empire, readily chose councillors from among the Metis as it did from among representatives of other nationalities. One of these, Francois Bruno, a man honest and just to the highest degree, earned from Judge Black, temporary Governor of the famous company, this testimonial:
>
> > "He discharged his duties in an honorable and conscientious spirit; his judgement was above the average in keenness and soundness. In his public conduct he admitted no distinction of class or belief. All could count on his impartiality for Mr. Bruno was so constituted that he could temper justice with mercy."
>
> Similar praise could have been given to many others such as Pascal Breland, judge, member of the council of Public Works, councillor of Assiniboia and, after 1870, Deputy to the Local Legislature and member of the two Northwest Territorial Councils; Salomon Hamelin, member of the Assiniboia Council, member of the Legislative Committee, and later Deputy to the Legislature; Roger Goulet, surveyor, customs officer, councillor of Assiniboia and later in 1885 commissioner for the Regulation of Grievances of the Saskatchewan Metis. Others are William Dease, Urbain Delorme, Maximilien Genthon, Roger Marion, Narcisse Marion, Louis Bousquet,

> Michel Dumas, Baptiste Lepine, Joseph Charrette and many others whose names are known from one end of the Northwest to the other. By their wisdom and determination they helped in the good organization and sound administration of the Metis nation during its difficult debut."[21]

(H) Conflicting Views of the Metis People

Other writers such as Alexander Begg and George F. Stanley were inclined to take a less favourable and less sympathetic view of the Metis. For example, in an earlier quotation from Begg, we note he refers to the Metis as possessing the following negative characteristics:

> "...fickle dispositions...good eating and good drinking constitutes their chief good...extremely thoughtless... never think of providing for future wants...they are exceedingly deceitful... gross flatterers to the face of a person they will basely slander behind his back."[22]

Stanley viewed the Metis in a somewhat less negative light and quotes from W. B. Cheadle and Alexander Ross to justify his view:

> "W. B. Cheadle, on his journey across the North American continent in 1862, found them unequalled as guides and voyageurs:
>
> > "Of more powerful build, as a rule, than the pure Indian, they combine his endurance and readiness of resource with the greater muscular strength and perseverence of the white man. Day after day, with plenty of food, or none at all, whether pack on back, tramping in the woods, treading out a path with

> snowshoes in the deep snow for the sleighdogs or running after them at a racing pace from morning to night, when there is a well-beaten track, they will travel fifty or sixty miles a day for a week together without showing any signs of fatigue."

The Metis were a hospitable people; all comers and goers were welcome guests at their board. Theft seems to have been uncommon among them. Upon one occassion a gentleman travelling over the plains left at his camping place a box containing gold and notes to the value of £1030. The following evening a French half-breed camping at the same spot found the box and, in spite of his own poverty, followed the owner a day's journey to return it. Alexander Ross, who cannot be suspected of undue sympathy for the Metis, nevertheless recorded that "this fact might be taken as an index of the integrity of the whole body, generally speaking." They were, moreover, very religious and devoted to their clergy. The hunter always reserved the best cut of meat for the priest, while the trader kept aside his best piece of cloth for the Church.

At the same time the French half-breeds were indolent, thoughtless and improvident, unrestrained in their desires, restless, clannish and vain. Life held no thought of the morrow. To become the envied possessor of a new suit, rifle or horse, they would readily deprive themselves and their families of the necessities of life.

> "A half-breed able to exhibit a fine horse, and gay cariole," wrote Ross, "is in his glory, this achievement is at once the height of his ambition and his ruin, he is never at home, but driving and carioling in all places, and every opportunity; blustering and bantering every one he meets."

Another observer gave the following description of their care-free life of pleasure:

> "They are a merry, light-hearted, obliging race, recklessly generous, hospitable, and extravagant."

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

With few exceptions the French half-breeds were neither extensive nor successful farmers. Brought up in the open prairies they preferred the excitement of the chase to the monotony of cultivating the soil. They might have envied the lot of the more industrious and regretted their own poverty, but so strong was their attachment to the roving life of the hunter that the greater part of them depend entirely on the chase for a living, and even the few who attend to farming take a trip to the plain, to feast on buffalo humps and marrow fat.

These Metis were not a savage, vicious or immoral people, but honest, hospitable and religious, rather improvident and happy-go-lucky, without care and without restraint, true sons of the prairie, as free as the air that they breathed and by nature as independent as the land which gave them birth. As a rule the English-speaking half-breeds formed a contrast to the French. The greater number were of Scotch origin. Many of the officers

> of the Hudson's Bay Company came from Scotland and their half-breed children inherited the steadier disposition of their fathers, as the Metis inclined to the roving life of the coureurs des bois. They were, for the most part, economical, industrious and prosperous.
>
> Cheadle declared that the English and Scotch half-breeds "form a pleasing contrast to their French neighbors, being thrifty, industrious, and many of them wealthy, in their way..we met but few who equalled the French half-breeds in idleness and frivolity."[23]

Stanley also shows his clear bias for the Scots Metis. One would have to doubt that the differences in the characteristics of the two groups, if factual, had anything to do with heredity but was primarily a reflection of the cultural differences of their fathers. However, as Tremauden suggests, one could not always tell the culture of the people by their names, for many Metis with Scot and Irish names had been brought up in a French-Metis milieu. It is also likely that the biases are not based on any real differences between the two groups of Metis, for individual characteristics such as "irresponsibility and excessive drinking" or "thrift and industry" are not respecters of racial and ethnic lines.

G. 21 The Metis In 1869

After the Metis won the free trade battle, there was a period of relative prosperity and development from 1850 to 1869. More and more people were established on good stable farms, and the hunt, the fur trade and other endeavors were generally prospering. This fact is attested to by a

number of writers. Alexander Begg describes the Red River settlement in 1869 in the following observations:

> "The number of settlers along the Red and Assiniboine rivers, including the French and English half-breeds, was estimated to be from 12,000 to 13,000 souls. In the vicinity of Upper Fort Garry, the town of Winnipeg had grown to some dimensions, containing, as it did then, over thirty buildings. Of these, eight were stores doing business with the settlers and outfitting the half-breeds for the Indian trade, two saloons, two hotels, one mill, a church, and the balance chiefly residences. The town could boast of an engine-house, post office, and a small hall for entertainments, and at times especially when the fur traders and hunters arrived from the interior, the vicinity presented a very lively appearance indeed. Along the banks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers settlements had spread and everywhere could be seen signs of comfort and prosperity. The settlers, as a rule, were peaceful and law-abiding, and the disturbances, which we have noted from time to time, arose generally from the acts of a few men, and were not participated in by the community as a whole.
>
> The French half-breeds, who had on several occasions given the Hudson's Bay Company a great deal of trouble, were, at the time we are writing about, among the most peaceful and loyal of the settlers to the government of the day. The Scotch and English had always been law-abiding and, except in the case of a few won over by agitators, they had invariably supported the authorities. But the Company, knowing its weakness, unsupported by any force of soldiers or constabulary, was unable to give that protection, through its courts, which a

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well-ordered community has a right to expect, and for this reason there was an undefined lack of confidence among all classes in its administration of affairs. The Company's officers realized this and were looking forward eagerly for some change to relieve them of the responsibility. The Council, although appointed by the Hudson's Bay Company, was really composed of representative men of the settlement because before an appointment was made the views of the settlers on the subject were first ascertained, and if the councillors had been elected by popular vote the same men would probably have been chosen in most cases, and, what is more, the authority of the Hudson's Bay Company would have been maintained, as it was not only the chief source of revenue but also possessed of most power to do good to the settlement.

The courthouse was situated outside but close to the walls of Fort Garry, and although we need not repeat the particulars relating to the administration of the law, we may say that the process, though well-adapted for the purposes of fair arbitration in simple cases, was liable to abuse, owing to its summary character, and absence of preliminary and other necessary arrangements customary with regular courts of law. The agitation against the authorities and against the courts proceeded, as already shown, not so much so from natives of the colony as from newcomers, and a few others who had an object in wishing to upset the government of the day.

The cultivated portions of the farms along the rivers were small, but immediately back of them could be seen great herds of domestic cattle, feeding on the plains, unherded and left to roam at will, grazing freely on the rich grass of the prairie. Just before the harvest it was customary for the settlers to go "hay cutting" which they did by travelling over the prairie until they came to a desirable spot, when they would cut in a circle and all the grass

> thus enclosed belonged to the party hay making; no one, by the acknowledged law of the land, being allowed to disturb him within that charmed circle. Then a busy scene commenced, the mowers (for the settlers had learned already to make use of agricultural machinery) were kept busy, and men, women and children might be seen actively engaged in stacking the hay. During hay time the people lived in tents on the hay ground, and only returned to their houses when the work was finished. Almost immediately after haying, harvesting commenced and anyone to have looked at the splendid fields of wheat would have been impressed with the great fertility of the soil. At that time there was no settler away from the river, the line of settlement skirting the river with tidy farm houses, comfortable barns and well-fenced fields of waving golden grain, like a beautiful fringe to the great fertile prairies beyond.
>
> Socially there was much good feeling existing between all classes of the community and a more hospitable or happier people could hardly be found on the face of the earth than the settlers of the Red River in 1868-69. Such was the state of the settlement when arrangements for the transfer of the country to Canada was completed."[24]

This is certainly not the description of an under-developed community of itinerant "savages" unable to govern themselves or without social organization. Nor is there any evidence, other than the agitation of the likes of Charles Mair and Dr. Christian Schultz, that there was any real desire on the part of the populace to change the affairs of the country by having it become part of Canada.

There was no real anxiety in the settlement when the news of the proposed transfer was made known. This was probably because the idea had been discussed in the community as early as the 1840s. The land tenure question was, however, to become a key issue. This became the case when the surveyors arrived and began laying out survey lines, based on the use of a unit of measurement called "chains"[25] which in many instances cut up farms. Stanley describes the state of affairs regarding Metis lands in the Red River as follows:

> "When the settlement was first established land was sold at five shillings an acre. This price gradually increased until, in 1834, it reached twelve shillings and sixpence. The transfer of the territory from Lord Selkirk's heirs to the Hudson's Bay Company in 1836 was made without prejudice to those who held good title from the Earl. The price was reduced and the Company resumed the policy of selling land at five shillings or seven and six an acre, generally leasehold for 999 years. In return they demanded from the lessee that he should bring at least one-tenth of his land under cultivation within five years, refrain from trading or dealing with the Indians or trafficking in furs and peltries except under licence, obey the Company's laws, contribute to the public expenses, and neither dispose of nor assign the lease without the Company's assent. The Hudson's Bay Company, however, made few sales under these terms. In 1857 Sir George Simpson made the statement that not more than £2,000 to £3,000 had been received from the settlers in payment for their lands. This may be accounted for by the fact that the majority of the settlers were half-breed squatters, who maintained the view that the land was theirs by natural law, and that there was no need to bother about the Company's title. As the latter

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> never made any effort to disturb them in the peaceful enjoyment of their lands, this lack of title was not a great source of anxiety. [emphasis mine].
>
> The system of survey by which the settlement was divided was similar to that adopted in French Canada. The farms were long and narrow and at right angles to the general course of the river. They all had frontage on the water, after the fashion of farms in Quebec—a system which had grown up from the times when rivers were the principle routes of communication. At first the farms ran back ninety to one hundred chains, but subsequently they were extended to two miles. There was no uniformity of width and holdings were divided and subdivided at will. There was, in addition, a valuable privilege recognized by the Company and which, apparently, had always been exercised by the owners of these river farms—namely the exclusive right of cutting hay on the outer two miles immediately in the rear of the river lot. This outer portion came to be known as the "hay privilege" and was jealously guarded by local laws, infringements of which were visited with punishment."[26]

The events which followed the transfer of Rupertsland to Canada were to have a profound impact on the culture of the Metis and their lifestyle, both in the short and long term. The short term impact was mostly on the Metis of the Red River, who were the first to be faced with the loss of their land and to be overwhelmed by the new immigrants. There were, however, many Metis outside the Red River settlement scattered throughout Rupertsland. The majority of these lived to the North and West and were involved in the trading, freighting and the buffalo hunt. They were not affected in that their land holdings or lifestyle were not immediately threatened. Nevetheless, the deluge of petitions which the Metis sent off to Ottawa over the twelve years from 1872 to

1884 clearly demonstrates the concern of the Metis for their lifestyle and their lands. In the next section we examine the culture and lifestyle of these people, as well as the migration West and North, of the bulk of the Metis of the Red River.

The Metis In the Northwest During the Period up to 1885

The Red River settlement was only one of the many Metis settlements in the Northwest. Documents and correspondence indicate that these were numerous. Some of the better known Metis settlements were Manitoba Village, The Pas, Brochet, Cumberland House, Lebret, Cypress Hills, St. Albert, St. Paul, Prince Albert, St. Laurent, Duck Lake, North Battleford, Green Lake, Ile-a-la-Crosse, La Loche, etc. None of these settlements, however, had the concentration of population that existed in the Red River. Most were either closely tied to the buffalo hunt, the fur trade, or the freighting business.

The largest of these communities, Cypress Hills, may have consisted of as many as 1,000 persons at the height of its development. However, most communities were probably not more than several hundred and many may have consisted of as few as a dozen or less families.[27]

As a result, none of these communities had the institutions or amenities that existed in the Red River. Some, by 1885, had churches, and schools, and a trading post or store. Some, like Duck Lake, had a post office, some government offices, and other basic services of the time. Many of

the people in these settlements were related to residents of the Red River. They depended on the Red River for their supplies and for certain cultural amenities. People travelled back and forth to the Red River to visit, to attend schools, for medical care and other similar purposes. In some of the larger communities a social life similar to that in the Red River was in evidence, particularly in the communities of St. Laurent, on the South Saskatchewan River, near Prince Albert, and at St. Albert nearthe North Saskatchewan River close to Edmonton. Both communities had well-organized social and political systems. Both communities had their own laws known as "the Laws of St. Laurent" and "the Laws of St. Albert."

There is no definite indication as to how many people lived in these communities. Some government officials had estimated the Metis numbers outside Manitoba at approximately 10,000. Certainly if the Metis in those portions of Rupertsland which made up Northwestern Ontario and Quebec are included, it is likely that the population of the Northwest equalled or exceeded that of the Red River. The Scrip distributions after 1885 seem to indicate that the population at that time in that portion of Rupertsland outside old Manitoba, and including Saskatchewan and Alberta, may have been as high as fifteen to eighteen thousand.[28]

Published books and documents tend to deal extensively with the political events in the Northwest leading up to 1885, but have little to say about the people. However, we know from church and government correspondence[24] and from the reports of the Treaty Commissioners, that the Metis

carried on some subsistence agriculture wherever this was possible. Farms existed along the Qu'Appelle, on the South and North Saskatchewan Rivers, at Fort McLeod, and St. Albert. This is evident from the petitions received by the federal government during the period 1873 to 1884, where land grants and titles to land occupied was a major concern of almost all Metis people.[30] At a later time it was even common for people at places such as Ile-a-la-Crosse to keep several cows, a few pigs and chickens and to grow a small garden.

After 1870, people began to migrate West, first in small numbers, but by the early 1880s there was a wholesale exodus of people from the Red River to the West and North. Tremauden comments on these developments in the Northwest in the following excerpts from the Metis history:

> "1. The 1885 Insurrection - Its Cause:
>
> Confronted with the violence of Dr. Schultz's disciples and friends, many Red River Metis, deaf to Riel's advice, packed their humble belongings on their little carts and headed West. They sought happiness in the vast prairie spaces that stretched as far as the eye could see, like an ocean, right up to the Rocky Mountains. They were headed for boundless land where they thought neither hatred nor injustice could reach them. From time to time, they came across already important Metis settlements like those around Portage la Prairie, on the Souris River at Moose Mountain and near the lakes of Qu'Appelle. There they were received with open arms. Their arrival was a sign for feasts and dances. Relatives found relatives, friends found friends, budding romances at times bloomed into happy marriages.
>
> Then, spurred on by a desire to get as far away as possible from the place where they

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> had suffered, the victims of the new system of Manitoba Government set out once more. It seemed to them that far away on the horizon, where the emerald of the plain emerged with the rosy hues of twilight, they would find the cure for their ills and the fulfillment of their hopes. Desiring, above all, a return to the simple and peaceful life they had once known, they knew that an already important settlement of their people, where the land was divided as it was along the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, in long strips ending at the water's edge. There they hoped to take up once more their frugal but independent way of life.
>
> They longed now to be at Batoche or St. Laurent or St. Louis de Langevin. Some even proposed going as far as Prince Albert, while others, smaller in number, but wiser as the future would soon show, said that they would carry on to Edmonton or even to Great Slave Lake. All along their way they found Metis settlements that had been founded in the second half of the 18th Century.
>
> Then, surrounded by the simple dwellings of two hundred families settled there since 1868, there rose sharply against the horizon the silhouette of the modest Batoche Church. The leader of these families was Gabriel Dumont, "a good-natured man, dedicated, hospitable, loyal and honest, a fine man to have as a friend; an able voyageur, a hunter renowned throughout the Northwest but also a warrior terrible to meet."[21]

Tremauden goes on to outline the eventual results as white settlement began to move West and once more threatened the Metis in their new homeland:

> "The newcomers to the Saskatchewan soon realized that sooner or later they would have to undergo the same trials that had led their predecessors to desert Manitoba. This started when Canada signed a treaty with the Indians at Qu'Appelle in 1872.

The Metis of the Northwest realized that the government did not feel it should grant them the same terms as their Manitoba kin. "Nevertheless", as Riel was to write, "these lands belonged to them once by title, twice for defending them at the cost of their blood, and thrice for having cultivated, fenced and lived on them." [emphasis mine].

Now the happenings at Red River were being repeated in Saskatchewan. Surveyors arrived and shamelessly marked off the squares, never bothering to see if their chains and their stakes encroached on land already occupied by the Metis. Under these circumstances and in keeping with their custom, the Metis consulted the Missionary Fathers who ministered in their humble parishes. With their support they began, during the winter of 1877-78, to send petitions to Ottawa to try to obtain just compensation for the land being taken from them. These petitions remained unanswered. Other petitions followed, adding new claims and dealing only with land rights.

On February 13, 1878, through the mediation of Lieutenant-Governor Laird, they asked for seed grain and farm implements. On September 4, 1882, Gabriel Dumont and forty-five others sent a protest expressing their surprise at being asked to pay two dollars an acre for the land they were living on, if, after the surveys, these were found to be among the odd-numbered sections. The petition ended with these splendid words, written long ago but which we cannot read today without emotion:

> "Having been considered for so long as masters of this land, having defended it against

> Indians at the cost of our blood, we do not think we ask too much when we beg the government to let us occupy our land in peace, and to make an exception to the rule by giving the Metis of the Northwest free grants of land." (Gallant people willing to use the term "free" to acknowledge what belonged to them in all sovereignty, by rights most sacred!)."

But the Canadian administration, as if set on discouraging these petitioners whose persistence was beginning to irritate, devised a law that authorized the granting of letters patent, or land titles, only to those who had completely fulfilled their duties as settlers, and only after the date of registration. So the petitions multiplied; protests against this measure totally unjust towards the Metis; petitions asking that, according to Metis custom, their particular lots be surveyed on long river lots and not in squares, following the new system imported from the United States; a petition (signed by 278 people) asking for a "special reserve of land, perpetual and inalienable, on which they (the Metis) would have the right to settle permanently with their families, as well as government employees, in proportion to their needs and population, with the exception of whites, who should be totally excluded." (Worthy people, once more, themselves asking to be penned in!) This reserve would cover an area of 150 miles by 50 miles, and they suggested that it be located west of the Pembina River on the United States boundary.

It goes without saying that all these requests and how many more (there were eighty-four between 1878 and 1884) met the same fate as those we mentioned in the first place. A delegation (for whom the

> Metis raised seven hundred dollars) made up of Father Leduc and Mr. Mahoney, was no more successful. Not only did the Canadian government find it perfectly in order to treat the Metis claims with contempt but it granted a large part of the country to a powerful Prince Albert colonization company, and even gave them the Metis lands of the parish of St. Louis de Langevin! (To excuse the government later it was pointed out that the company grantee never availed itself of the rights granted to it in that parish)."[32]

A letter dated January 5, 1872, from one A. Blaineau to the editor of the Manitoban also verifies that the Batoche community consisted of approximately 200 families in 1872. This would have included settlement along both sides of the South Saskatchewan River covering communities such as Fish Creek, Batoche, St. Laurent, and Halcro. In this letter he describes the lifestyle of the Metis people and also mentions the migration from Manitoba. Attached to his letter are minutes of a meeting in the community at which Lawrence Clarke, an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company, urges the Metis to give up the hunt and to settle down to full-time agriculture.[33] As well, minutes of Public assemblies held during the winter of 1872 to 1879, where the laws of St. Laurent were developed, honed and amended, attest to the extensive social and cultural life of the community and the political organizations which controlled many aspects of life, generally covered today by Civil Law, including male-female relationships and marriages.[34] These proceedings attest to the degree of civilization and the agricultural development of the area and, as well, give us glimpses of the social life, morays and morality of the Metis people at the time. This was clearly not a community

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of wandering, itinerant savages but a community of civilized men probably as advanced or more advanced in its thinking, development and social organization than any similar frontier community anywhere else in North America.

The presence of the Metis settlements and some indication of the people, their organizations and their concerns for their land is also evident in the following excerpts from George F. Stanley regarding the land issues:

> "The delay in the settlement of this question occasioned much dissatisfaction among the half-breeds. White immigration had rushed into Manitoba after the Red River Rebellion, and the Metis soon found that a new order had descended upon them, sweeping aside their old methods of life and leaving them helpless. Their usual occupations, hunting, freighting, in a small way were no longer profitable or even possible. Trading was out of the question for those who had neither the goods to sell nor the credit to obtain them. Despairing of ever receiving their land patents, many disposed of their rights for a mere song. Some gladly sold their Scrip for trifling sums to smooth-tongued speculators, packed up their few possessions and treked across the plains to the Saskatchewan to live again the old life of freedom. Others, who had been absent hunting during both enumerations, remained upon the plains, receiving neither the Scrip nor the land to which they were entitled.
>
> Although the claim to share in the extinction of the Indian title was recognized in 1870 in Manitoba, no such claim upon the part of the half-breeds beyond the boundaries of that province was recognized until 1885. The half-breeds of the Northwest

were ignored. As early as 1873, however, the Northwest Metis petitioned for a recognition of their land claims. In that year John Fisher and ten others of Fort Qu'Appelle petitioned through Lieutenant-Governor Morris for "lands in compensation of our rights to the lands of the country as Metis". Other petitions followed from different quarters. In 1874, John Mackay informed the Northwest Council of the anxiety of the English and Scotch half-breeds of Prince Albert and the Metis of St. Laurent to have the land question settled; and in the same year Father Decorby wrote to the Minister of the Interior on behalf of the Metis of Lac Qu'Appelle.

The question, however, did not become urgent until the late 'seventies. There were few surveys and little settlement in the Territories. But, as white immigration increased, a new order of things pressed itself upon the attention of the native races. With the influx of settlers from Eastern Canada, the Metis became more insistent upon their aboriginal rights. At the same time the numbers of the mixed-bloods were increased by the arrival of the discontents from Manitoba, and a formal agitation began to take shape. 1878 saw petitions from all parts of the Territories. On the last of February, Gabriel Dumont, the leader of the St. Laurent Metis, sent a petition to Lieutenant-Governor Laird asking:

> "That there be granted to each half-breed head of family and to their children, who have not participated in the distribution of Scrip and lands in the Province of Manitoba, a like amount of Scrip and like land grants as in Manitoba".

Dumont's petition was circulted among the other Metis settlements, and petitions from St. Albert, the largest of the Metis colonies, and from the Cypress Hills, reinforced the demand for the recognition of the half-breed Indian title. The French half-breeds were not alone in making these demands. Their English and Scottish kindred of Prince Albert also forwarded to the Governor-General a petition which contained, among others, this paragraph:

> "Lastly, your petitioners would humbly represent that whereas a census of the half-breeds and old settlers was taken in the Province of Manitoba shortly after the organization of that Province, with a view to the distribution of Scrip, etc., said Scrip having since (been) issued to the parties interested, and whereas, at the time this census was taken, many half-breeds, both minors and heads of families, resided in the Territories and were not included in the said census. Your petitioners would humbly represent that their rights to a participation in the issue of the half-breed or old settlers' Scrip are as valid and binding as those of the half-breeds and old settlers of Manitoba, and are expected by them to be regarded by the Canadian government as scrupulously as in that Province. And with a view to the adjustment of the same, your petitioners would humbly request that a census of said half-breeds and old settlers be taken, at as early a date a may conveniently be determined upon, with a view to apportioning to those of them who have not already been included in the census of Manitoba their just allotments of land and Scrip..."

The agitation continued unabated. In the spring of 1880 the Scotch half-breeds of Manitoba village forwarded a petition with the usual demand for Scrip. At the same time, the French Metis forwarded an identical petition from Edmonton— a fact which showed the existence of an effective collaboration among all the mixed-blood population from one end of the Territories to the other, and one which, owing to the lack of educated leaders among them, can only be explained by the supposition of ecclesiastical support. The government acknowledged both of these petitions promising "due consideration" to each. But, unfortunately, they were under "consideration" until 1885. More petitions followed in 1881. On June 6th and 7th, the District of Lorne, having secured representation in the Northwest Council, placed the half-breed case before the Council through their representative, Chief factor Lawrence Clarke. Clarke's memorial was forwarded to Ottawa by the Lieutenant-Governor who urged that it should be brought to the notice of the Governor-General in Council "at an early day". In reply the Deputy Minister prepared a file of correspondence on the Northwest question, and submitted it to the Honorable David MacPherson, Acting Minister of the Interior during Macdonald's absence. Unfortunately, the evidence available gives no clue as to the opinion of the government on this matter, but, in any event, no action was taken...

Petitions continued throughout 1882, 1883 and 1884, demanding land grants and Scrip as granted in Manitoba in commutation of the half-breed Indian title. In the Spring of the last named year, John Turnor and other English half-breeds complained that they had forwarded five petitions to the federal government, but their efforts had been without result. In autumn the Northwest

> Council, in a memorial to the Governor-General, referred to the half-breed demand for Scrip and stated, "this Council cannot strongly impress upon Your Excellency's government the urgent necessity of an immediate settlement of the question." Nothing, however, developed from these demands. The only official reference to any Government action during this period is contained in the annual report of the Minister of the Interior presented on February 15, 1882...
>
> The justice of the Metis case cannot but be admitted. They were the first settlers in the Northwest Territories. Some had abandoned their nomadic life even before 1872 and squatted upon small plots of land. Others settled at a later date. In these instances the Metis considered it a grievance to be obliged to enter their holdings as homesteads and wait until the expiration of three years for their patents. Moreover, those who remained on the prairie until forced to settle down by the economic transformation of the country, regarded the Northwest as their patrimony. They resented the terms of the Dominion Lands Act, and refused to pay for lands taken up subsequent to the survey upon odd-numbered sections, Hudson's Bay Company or school lands. The Government Land Regulations were regarded as a legitimate grievance, but the real force underlying this grievance was the feeling of insecurity."[35]

Stanley indicates that petitions in the form of resolutions such as the following indicated the concern of the Metis settlers:

> "Whereas many persons have been settled on land in this district for three years and more, and have performed the homestead duties required by law; and many persons have bought land from such settlers, depending on the good faith of the government for security in their holding such land—Resolved, that the Right Honorable, the Minister of the Interior, be requested to grant patents to such persons with as little delay as possible... Having so long held this country as its master and so often defended it against the Indians at the price of our blood, we consider it not too much to request that the government allow us to occupy our lands in peace, and that exception be made to its regulations, by making to the half-breeds of the Northwest free grants of land."[36]

Stanley also points out that as in Manitoba the land survey system raised serious concern among the Metis:

> "Another cause of insecurity among the mixed-blood population was to be found in the system of survey imposed upon the Metis settlements. In the Northwest the Metis, as at Red River, took up their land in long narrow strips running back a mile or two from the river. In this way they were able to preserve the community life upon which their society was based. The attempt to impose an unfamiliar and, to the Metis, unsatisfactory system of survey, and thus deprive them of their river frontages and destroy their village community life, invited armed resistance. The fear of losing their lands had been one of the principle causes of the Metis disturbances at Red River in 1869-70. The cause of the rising on the Saskatchewan was similar.

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> In both instances the township survey proved to be a direct cause of that general feeling of insecurity, which, directed by Louis Riel, broke out into open rebellion."[37]

In conclusion it is clear that as early as 1870 there was already a substantial population of Metis people settled in communities scattered throughout the Northwest. Although they did not all enjoy the amenities of the Red River Metis, they did follow a similar traditional lifestyle of farming, hunting, trapping, freighting and trading. Their dress, customs, dwellings and social events, etc., co-incided with those of the people of the Red River. The period to 1885 was also a transition period where traditional dependence on the hunt gave way to greater dependence on agriculture. The strong links with their priests were also evident as the people built churches, schools, and began other social institutions and practices. It was to these communities that many of the Red River settlers were to migrate for land and for opportunities to continue their traditional way of life.[38]

Here they were again to be overtaken by the new immigrants and settlers and the concerns and conflicts over rights and land, which had taken place in Manitoba, were to repeat themselves and culminate in the disasterous Northwest Rebellion. However, this time there was no new frontier which welcomed the people or held out the dream of the continuation of their traditional lifestyle. The impact of the rebellion, of immigration and of the changing economic establishment, were to have far-reaching and devastating effects, which we shall examine in the final section of this Chapter.

E. e) The Metis People After the Northwest Insurrection:

1. The immediate effect of the Uprising:

It is noteworthy that most authors who write about the Metis as a distinct people don't go beyond 1885. There is a good deal of documentation regarding the "half-breeds and Scrip" following 1885, but little about their culture, lifestyle, social organization or political activities. It is as if most historians considered the culture and history of the Metis to have ended on the gallows with the hanging of Riel. There is one recent book by Murray Dobbin, but it only deals with the period from the 1930s to the present and primarily as that period is expressed in the life of Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris.[39]

As a result, it is necessary to depend solely on source documents to the extent that these are available. The most fertile sources of reference to the Metis are the N.W.M.P. records, along with church records. It is also possible to glean information from a few other government documents and official reports.

Although the lifestyle of the Metis outside Manitoba had not been materially effected by events in the Red River in 1870, the results which followed the Northwest Rebellion were almost immediate and devastating. The soldiers created widespread destruction in the Metis communities along the Saskatchewan River. This destruction is vividly portrayed in a letter by Royale to Tache in 1885, written while he was touring the area on horseback, immediately after the Rebellion:

"Alas, Mgr., if you could see your poor

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> colony! How sad it is!...all along the right bank of the south branch, there are only ruins. The most beautiful houses are destroyed...You will meet only sometimes a poor hut which is most often devoid of its inhabitants. All the fields which were so beautiful at this time last year are a wasteland, the enclosures in disorder, often burned. You no longer see the herds which were the wealth of the country. The poor people who have not taken flight are shamed, humiliated... Many have only the clothes on their backs."[40]

An earlier letter from the priest, Vegyeville, to Tache, outlines the same destruction in the communities along the Saskatchewan River:

> "All the houses have been pillaged and many burned on the right bank of the south branch. After the soldiers passed many Metis instructed in the religion of Riel have taken and ransacked what the troops had spared."[41]

The one writer who did deal with the Metis life during the period following 1885 was a Parisiene, Marcel Giraurd, in a book entitled "Les Metis Canadien". Although some parts of this book have been translated from the original French, unfortunately, the total text is not yet available in English. On the period immediately following the insurrection, Giraurd comments as follows:

> "On the morrow of the Insurrection of 1885, the Metis had but a very poor future in prospect. The certainty of being miserable in a country whose economic transformations were making it foreign to them, and the discouragement which was brought about in them by the occupation of a territory over which they had for so long believed themselves

masters, were accompanied by an apprehension of new reprisals. Many fled to American territory, persuaded that they would soon be the object of persecutions as violent as in Manitoba. Some went to the State of Montana, and others to the southern edges of Turtle Mountain (in Dakota territory). That area was familiar to them for they had hunted buffalo herds there not very long before, and a certain number of their brothers had already established themselves there. From that time on the two groups were indistinguishable. Prodded by certain irreconcilable men like Gabriel Dumont, the newcomers were at first strongly hostile toward the Canadian government, which had been responsible for their deception and their exile. In Montana, meetings were held at which the possibility of an attack against the Northwest Territories was considered. A cold reception was accorded to Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney's encouragements to re-enter Canadian territory, sent to them through emissaries. The Metis asked that complete amnesty be granted them, complaining that such a promise by no means figured in the guarantees of safe conduct, which were being offered. While some of them, who had been won over by the good counsels of the emissaries, finally abandoned their place of exile, many other families renounced all idea of returning. The latter established themselves in the Milk River Valley and in the region of Turtle Mountain where they can still be found today. Some of them have been assimilated into the society of the small settlements along the railways of North Dakota and Montana, while others, driven back to the periphery of those settlements, live miserably on the waste lands around them like so many nomadic groups without

> any definite occupation, and in poor looking huts which are often hidden amid rolling land. Still others have been converted to the idea of agriculture and are found living on the small fields they cultivate. Certain of the Metis on their arrival on American territory had the limited ambition of doing odd jobs with mediocre renumeration, such as wood-cutting for the white settlers and ranchmen...Others, like their brothers of the Red River, lost no time in contracting debts in order to meet the taxes which encumbered their land plots or to meet the operating costs of an enterprise which they simply could not manage. In the Qu'Appelle River Valley, the Metis of St. Lazare, who had come originally from St. Francois Xavier area in hope of occupying new lands, were thus dispossessed by the very mortgage companies which had been set up to ward off their short-sightedness. After that, they were obliged to retreat to new locations, where today they live apart from the whites who became the masters of their holdings."[42]

Obviously, not only the Metis of the Saskatchewan suffered as a result of the economic changes which took place in the Northwest after 1885. In addition, the government carried out official harrassment of the Metis people in the Batoche area when they set up a Royal Commission in 1886 to investigate the causes of the uprising. The Commission visited the Prince Albert area and subpeonaed a large number of persons to give public evidence on their role in the uprising. Witness after witness downplayed his role in the uprising, making it appear that he had either been coerced or was defending his home.[43] It is not surprising that they were intimidated by this action since a number of Metis and

Indians, as well as some whites who had played a key role in the uprising, were being tried in a Regina court at the same time, and Riel had already been hanged on November 16, 1885.

2. The Widespread Poverty:

The descent into poverty of the Metis was widespread as indicated by the Northwest Mounted Police records. The following are a few of the letters in which the police refer to the conditions of the Metis:

- April 20, 1888--half-breeds of Besaylor area destitute.
- May 16, 1888--Metis in North Battleford area starving.
- May 7, 1889--relief provisions are provided to half-breeds at St. Laurent.
- October 8, 1889--N.W.M.P. are ordered by Sir John A. Macdonald to cease giving relief to destitute Metis.
- November 31, 1889--Metis of St. Laurent area are destitute.
- December 24, 1889--half-breeds in North Battleford area destitute.
- January 4, 1891--half-breeds at Fort-a-la-Corne are destitute.
- March 24, 1891--relief supplies given to half-breeds at Pincher Creek.
- June 29, 1892--destitute half-breeds from Cumberland House arrive in Prince Albert, etc.
- July, 1892--half-breeds at Lac-la-Biche destitute.
- April, 1894--half-breeds at Willowbunch destitute.

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- November 27, 1900--half-breeds in Athabasca region of Alberta destitute.[44]

There are literally hundreds of references in police correspondence and reports on the destitution of the Metis. Other references to the destitution of the Metis are to be found in the Oblate records. In the Chronicles of St. Laurent, for example, Father Andre in 1886 reported as follows:

> "The principle questions which were posed at the beginning of the year were these: How to remove the misery and famine which threaten us? How to procure seed?...in the month of January the poorest of the families were visited by the Indian agent of Prince Albert...McKenna was sent by the government with the mission of aiding all those in misery. Following this visit supplies were distributed...if not to stop the misery, at least to demonstrate the good will of the government and its agents."[45]

Other references in the Chronicles are as follows:

- 1888--relief supplies are distributed to the needy.
- 1889--crops are poor.[46]

The destitution of the Metis was also raised from time to time in House of Commons Debates, with specific reference to the "Breslayor Half-breeds".[47]

3. The Government Response to the Problem:

The Metis did not passively accept their lot and began to petition for help both in the form of immediate

supplies and in the form of help to become established in farming. The police, who were generally the closest officials to where the Metis people lived, often played the role of relief agents, giving such relief from their own stores and then requisitioning supplies from the Indian Department to replace these. Since the territory at the time was under federal control, the Ottawa government had overall responsibility for all people in the territory. The government affairs, other than Indian Affairs, were the responsibility of the Department of the Interior, but aid was often channelled through Indian Affairs. In addition, administration at the field level was not clear cut. For example, Dewdney was Lieutenant-Governor responsible to the Department of the Interior. However, he also had a second role, that of Commissioner of Indian Affairs. In this capacity, he reported to the Indian Department.

The government, on several occasions, responded to the relief efforts of the police by chastising their superiors and by issuing orders to cease issuing relief. Examples of such orders are those issued on October 8, 1889, to cease issuing relief to "half-breeds". In November, 1891, the Minister again issued a directive that the police were not to issue relief to "half-breeds" unless ordered to do so by the Minister.[48]

The police records also indicate that the Metis pressed the government to grant them seed, plows, and oxen, so that they could establish themselves on a sound basis as farmers. At first, government aid was denied. Macdonald, in House of Commons Debates, argued that the Metis, who were in the Northwest, already had a natural advantage over the new settlers.[49] However, the petitions for help continued as indicated in the following police correspondence:

- March 6, 1888--Metis petition for supplies.
- March 26, 1888--recommend Metis be given oxen, plows, harrows, etc.
- May 6, 1888--Metis petition for seed grain.
- 1890--again petition for seed.[50]

Police correspondence further indicates that the Minister finally agreed to provide seed on condition that it was replaced after the harvest. This is referred to in the following correspondence:

- March 20, 1888--Minister agrees to provide seed.
- March 28, 1888--outlines how grain is to be returned.
- May 29, 1888--requests for animals and implements denied.[50a]

The Chronicles of St. Laurent also make reference to the request for seed in 1886 and in 1890. There was apparently a crop failure in 1889. Other solutions to the Metis problems which were proposed to the federal government by Father Andre, and others included the setting up of industrial schools and the establishment of Metis colonies where the Metis could exercise civil rights and administer their own affairs.[51]

The requests for assistance in farming, of course, only applied to those Metis who had land. This included many of the Metis around Prince Albert and some from the Qu'Appelle Valley. Most other Metis were landless and found themselves in a more destitute position if they lived in the prairies of the South. According to Father Andre, some worked in freighting and on construction projects but generally the jobs

were too few and the pay too low to alleviate their misery.[52]

The Metis of the lake regions and the woodlands fared somewhat better since they could continue to subsist on hunting, fishing and trapping and by carrying on some simple agriculture. In some areas they even prospered.

4. Metis Political Activities and Organizations to World War II:

Some of the Metis fled to American territory, as indicated previously. There they attempted to organize to fight the Canadian government. This effort was, however, eventually given up, and some Metis settled permanently in Montana and others gradually returned to the Northwest, having been encouraged to do so by Dewdney.[53]

Those groups in the U.S.A. had been kept under close surveillance by spies sent by the N.W.M.P. The police also kept a close watch on events in the Northwest.[54] The following organizing and political activities are referred to by the police from time to time in their correspondence:

- October 18, 1887--meeting at Batoche to petition Ottawa regarding the rejection of their claims for property damage as a result of the Northwest Rebellion.
- November 1, 1887--Metis at Batoche have organized society, St. Joseph, named after one of their patron saints. Its objects are similar to the St. John Baptiste Society in Quebec.
- January 17, 1888--a committee is set up to press claims.
- March 2, 1888--Metis petition Ottawa re: land office locations and operations, judgeships, post offices, etc.

- May 18, 1888--Metis at St. Albert are petitioning government for land.

- April 6, 1889--Dumont present for a meeting of the committee.

- February 9, 1891-"half-breeds"meeting at Batoche and Duck Lake.

- July 7, 1893-"half-breeds"at St. Albert meet to push their claims.

- January 26, 1896--a mob of"half-breeds"in Calgary are threatening to destroy settlers property.[55]

Reports of this nature continued until about 1905. After that date police responsibility was transferred to the provinces and records of Metis affairs no longer were kept in Ottawa.

The Oblate papers also give some indication of the ongoing Metis political activities, such activities are referred to in clerical reports from time to time. In particular, the following references are to be found in the Chronicles of St. Laurent:

- 1888--the"half-breed"Fisher wins a seat on the N.W.T. Council over Hilliard Mitchel. The government declares the results invalid because of technicalities and declare Mitchel elected. The Metis hold a large meeting to protest and threaten action if Fisher is not re-instated.

- 1890--Metis at a public meeting in Prince Albert reject the proposal for Metis colonies.[56]

In the late 1890s and early 1900s, there were various

references to the Metis organizing to protest the new federal government fishing regulations. In some area such as Slave Lake, they were openly hostile to the police. They had been fishing as in the past to provide food and a cash income. These activities were now illegal and in some instances the government was prosecuting persons caught fishing out of season.[57]

Because of the serious concern over the depleting fish stock, the unfairness of these regulations to the Metis and the economic impact of the new fisheries regulations, the federal government set up a Royal Commission on Fisheries, known as the Prince Commission, named after its chairman, Professor Edward E. Prince. The Commission report has a section dealing with the Special Considerations, which should be given to Indians and "half-breeds" for special fishing rights. In this section the Commission defines "half-breeds" as Indians and recommends that they be given the same fishing considerations as Indians. This was a major concession to the Metis leaders.[58]

Tremauden's book, Hold High Your Heads, resulted out of further political activities of the Metis. The Metis in the early 1900s believed their history was being systematically distorted and their role in the development of the Canadian West downplayed. As a result, a group of prominent Metis met in 1909 to discuss the situation. The meeting took place at Joseph Riel's home in St. Vital, Manitoba, and included a number of Louis Riel's former colleagues, including Ambrose Lepine, Nault, Lajimodiere and others. They decided to establish an organization known as "L'union Metisse Saint Joseph de Manitoba", to undertake research and to direct the gathering of material for a book. They eventually selected Tremauden

to do the writing. The result was that in 1929 the French version of the book was published and copyrighted by the organization. That organization was to incorporate and change its name to "La Societe Historique Inc."[59] in 1932. It continues to function to this day.

Following the Prince Commission's report of 1911, it would appear that the Metis political activities were interrupted by the First World War when some Metis leaders joined the Canadian Army. During the period, 1918 to 1930, there is limited reference in the literature to the Metis and to Metis organizations.

The political situation for the Metis after 1905 had become somewhat more complicated with the establishment of the two new provinces, Alberta and Saskatchewan, and the considerable expansion of Manitoba. The Metis, not being considered Indians by the federal government, became a provincial responsibility in regards to health, education and social services. However, economically, they continued to be quite dependent upon the federal government because that government controlled all of the resources including land. The whole situation changed further in 1930, when the three prairie provinces won control over their natural resources. This change, coupled with population pressures and the impact of the great depression, left the Metis in a desparate situation.

In Alberta, where Metis organizations had not been too active, new leaders were beginning to emerge as early as 1910. It took some time for their leadership and the Metis followers to take action to establish Metis organizations. However, as has been traced in detail by Murray Dobbin in his

book, The One and A Half Men, this happened in the early 1930s. The Metis dependence on hunting, trapping and fishing, along with subsistence agriculture was coming to an end. Many of the people were squatting on Crown land and, as the homesteads were taken up, many Metis were forced onto road allowances with no place to carry on their farming activities. The Metis began as early as 1930 to meet to consider their plight. Under the direction of leaders such as Malcolm Norris, Jim Brady, Joe Dion, and Peter Tomkins, nationalism crystalized in the formation of "L'association des Metis de L'Alberta" in December, 1932.[60]

The political pressures exerted by the Alberta Metis resulted in the establishment of the Ewing Commission by the provincial government. Although the Metis leaders pushed the twin ideas of Metis nationalism and aboriginal rights in their submissions to the Commission, they did not push the idea of federal government responsibility for the Metis. The Metis were interested in obtaining a land base on which they could exercise a degree of self-determination, pursue agricultural development and other forms of economic independence. What was being requested was not a reserve system such as the Indian reserve system, but the setting aside of land which the Metis would own and control, in essence—a Metis homeland. These land areas were referred to as Metis colonies.[61] The Ewing Commission refused to deal with either the "Indian title" or "nationalism" issues in its report. It claimed that these issues were beyond its mandate. It treated the problems of the Metis as welfare problems. It recommended the establishment of Metis colonies, and the passage of a Metis Betterment Act to be administered by the Welfare Department. The Commission set out some guidelines for the colonies, which dealt with

issues such as the following:

- who could apply to live in a colony (definition of a Metis);
- modes of ownership in colonies of individual tracts of land;
- governing organizations for colonies;
- number and size of colonies, etc.[62]

The idea of Metis colonies was not new. It had originally been proposed by Father La Combe in the 1890s. Saskatchewan Metis had rejected the idea but an experimental colony was established in Alberta in 1895 at St. Paul. The grandfather of Jim Brady had at one time lived in that colony. According to Dobbin and other writers, the colony was a success and a number of Metis farmed well and prospered on their farms. The Church, itself, however, did not consider the colony a success, and on April 10, 1909, officially disbanded the colony and began replacing Metis settlers with French settlers from Quebec. Dobbin claims this was due to the fact that the colony had become a hotbed of Metis nationalists. The Church claimed it was because the Metis were poor farmers and the colony had not been successful in establishing the Metis as farmers. This is contradicted by accounts in Brady's papers, which detailed the numbers of cattle, horses and other assets possessed by a number of Metis farmers who lived in the colony.[63]

There had been an assumption among the Church hierarchy and government officials dating back to the time of Henry Hind in the 1860s, that the Metis were nomads who disliked farming, and when they did farm, farmed poorly. Hind

first proposed this idea in the journal records of his famous prairie mapping and geological expedition during the 1860s. This theme is repeated frequently in government letters and documents and in church records. It is also picked up by writers such as Tremauden and Stanley. The facts seem to contradict these views. Not only were the Metis good farmers when left to their own devises, but they carried on some agricultural activities even in the far north, where the primary mode of economic activity was hunting, fishing and trapping.

The expression of Metis nationalism in Saskatchewan took a somewhat different direction than in Alberta. As already mentioned, the idea of Metis colonies was rejected by the Metis of the Saskatchewan River and Qu'Appelle Lakes regions. In both areas members of the communities had a land base. There were also a few other areas where they had some land such as at Battleford and Breslayor. As well, in some areas the Metis squatted on Crown lands not yet claimed by settlers of the day. These were primarily lands such as those described by Tremauden in the following passage:

> "The Metis preference for cattle raising led them to districts where the terrain is uneven and dotted with clusters of trees and little ponds, where cattle and other domestic animals can pasture more easily."[64]

The Metis were to be found in locations such as the Touchwood Hills, Willowbunch, Crescent Lake, Lac Vert, Jedburgh, Archerwill, Erinferry, plus other similar areas. As well, they migrated north to settle in the forest and lake country where they took their domestic animals with them. In the southern agricultural areas most of the best lands had been

occupied by the late 1920s, and as the farm population continued to increase and reached a maximum in 1937, pressure increased to remove the Metis from the Crown lands where they squatted. In particular, after the transfer of the natural resources in 1930 and with the advent of the depression, the federal government could no longer be counted on to protect the Metis interests.

Many Metis were forced from their land and became the "road allowance people". They squatted on road allowances and depended on casual and seasonal employment and on relief rations consisting of beans, bacon, flour, and salt. Since most farmers also found themselves short of cash and, in many cases, dependent on relief, they were generally not able to pay the Metis for their labour, except in products such as grain, meat, eggs or milk. This created serious problems for municipalities who were responsible for welfare. They were already inundated with requests for aid from small town families and farmers and now they also had to deal with the added needs of their Metis residents.[65]

With the fall of the Saskatchewan Conservative Government in 1934, and the election of the Liberal Government, the response to the plight of the Metis became somewhat more positive. A number of schemes developed to move some of the Metis to other areas. For example, Metis from Willowbunch and Jedburgh were relocated on homestead lands in areas around Prince Albert, Debden and Meadow Lake, where some still farm today.[66]

The most significant development was the organization by a number of prominent Liberals and some Metis leaders, including Klein, Pritchard, La Roque and others, of an organization known as the "Saskatchewan Historical Society". This

organization was funded with an annual grant from the Province. Prominent Liberals who were involved included J. A. Gregory, an M.L.A. from the Battlefords, who was the President of the organization and spokesman for the Metis in the legislature and government. Others included Zack Hamilton, who was the Executive Secretary of the organization and who seems to have been the only staff member, and J. P. Turnor, who was the Recording Secretary. Both these men were married to Metis women and had a special interest in the Metis cause and problems. Through the efforts of the Metis leaders mentioned above, the Metis began to organize branches, and by 1938 a provincial organization known as the "Saskatchewan Metis Society(SMS)" had been incorporated. At an annual meeting held on the 16th to the 18th of May, 1939, the Metis passed a number of resolutions regarding their "Indian title", which were directed to the federal government. They were requesting land and other "adequate assistance" to establish themselves in agriculture. This was to be in exchange for the extinguishment of their aboriginal title.[67]

They also passed a resolution to petition the province to assist them to research their case and present it to the government in Ottawa. They met with the Premier, William Paterson, on June 15, 1939, at which time they presented their petition and asked for the establishment of a commission to investigate the conditions of the Metis and to make recommendations on their claims to the Government of Canada. After further negotiations the Paterson government agreed to provide a grant of $10,000 to allow the SMS to undertake a research study. Of the total, $8,000 was to be used to pay the legal fees of the law firm of Noonan and Hodges, who were retained to do the study. The remaining $2,000 was held back to be granted at a future date to cover the cost of carrying on negotiations with Ottawa.

The Saskatchewan Historical Society administered the grant. For a period of approximately three years, Zack Hamilton spent a major portion of his time gathering together a variety of source documents. As well as the personal accounts of elderly Metis and elderly white settlers, including a Mrs. Kavanaugh and an elderly Indian, Buffalo Bull, who were both present when Treaty #4 was signed.[68]

Noonan and Hodges, during the period 1939 to 1944, carried on legal and historical research on the issue of "Indian Title." They gathered together information from readily accessible sources such as law libraries, public archives and government libraries. They presented the results of their research in early 1944 under the title: "Saskatchewan Metis: Brief On Investigation Into the Legal, Equitable and Moral Claims of the Metis People of Saskatchewan in Relation to the Extinguishment of the"Indian Title". They conluded in their report that there was no such thing as "Indian title", since it was a fiction created by the Dutch. They quote Stanley, who quotes MacLeod, as theirauthority for this statement. Our analysis of MacLeod, whom Stanley quotes, does not support this conclusion.[69]

The conclusions of this report can be briefly summarized as follows:

1. There is no legal basis in International or Canadian Law for the idea of "Indian title". The government's decision to recognize such a title through Treaties, the Manitoba Act, and the Dominion Lands Act, were political decisions carried out for purposes of expediency and not because of any legal obligation.

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2. Although the Metis cannot claim a legal right, they do have a strong claim based on equity and moral grounds. The Scrip allocations did not provide the Metis with an equitable opportunity to establish themselves in agriculture and to pursue a new lifestyle. Also, they were so blatantly cheated by speculators that on moral grounds they have a claim. This was particularly so, since the federal government was aware of the activities of the speculators and aided them in a number of ways.

3. They recommended that the provincial government assist the Metis to present their claim to the federal government and assist them to negotiate a settlement. The settlement should provide land and assistance to get established in farming in the form of domestic livestock, seed and machinery. (They make no comments on the issue of self-government nor did they deal with the issue in their research.)[70]

F. Metis Economic Activities to World War I

As we have seen prior to 1870, most of the Metis were gainfully occupied as freighters, farmers, hunters, trappers, traders, and in a variety of other trades and they were prosperous and looked forward to the future with hope. Their economic position had begun to deteriorate by the early 1880s. By 1886, with the completion of the railway, a considerable portion of the freight business was lost to them. Farming was still a subsistance proposition, since there were few markets for produce, particularly grain grown at great distances from the railway. In addition, most Metis, except those in specific areas who were already engaged in farming, lacked a land base. Almost all Metis lacked capital to acquire the machinery needed to get into economically viable grain production or to obtain the necessary

feed and livestock. Many of their buildings in the Prince Albert area were destroyed by the soldiers during the Rebellion and livestock and grain was used either by the Metis themselves or the soldiers for food.

Few other opportunities were available in the way of employment. The references in the N.W.M.P. reports indicate some of the limited employment opportunities available and the resulting debts:

- March 5, 1888--twelve Metis families in Prince Albert area have their chattels seized by the Sheriff for non-payment of debts.
- June 29, 1888--some work on railway construction.
- June 30, 1888--"Breslayor half-breeds" are working as freighters and at seasonal jobs and are also farming.
- February 10, 1890--report indicates that some work is being provided for Metis around police barracks, on railway construction, and a few work on cutting ties. Most contractors hire immigrants rather than Metis.
- November 14, 1891-- Metis in Calgary area lose their jobs when railway construction shut down.
- October 17, 1891--Metis employed on railway work.
- October 7, 1893--crops in Breslayor area have failed three years in a row.
- 1893 and 1894--some people in areas like Jackfish Lake, Slave Lake, etc., are given fishing licenses.[71]

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There are a number of other reports in the police records regarding Metis economic activities during the period to World War I. In the southern areas of the prairies the Metis either farmed or worked as casual or seasonal labourers. They supplemented this income with some hunting and trapping. On the open prairies they worked on farms picking stones (which some still do today), gathered the buffalo bones for shipment to fertilizer factories, built fences, cut brush, and did other similar menial tasks. In the northern areas they continued their traditional lifestyle of hunting, fishing, trapping and freighting. Those Metis who were indigenous to the north or who had moved there to escape immigration were able to continue a traditional lifestyle for almost another fifty years. Their economic situation fluctuated with the price of furs and fish, as well as with the harvest of these products.

The Metis in the south saw their situation change rapidly, depending on the crops and markets. Relief was obviously a fact of life for many for at least part, if not all, of the year. Some drifted to the city slums or to the fringes of towns and villages. Most of these people continued as marginal labourers.

Since the establishment of the provinces of Saskatcewan and Alberta, official federal government records are difficult to obtain, other than those dealing with Scrip issues. These provinces kept few records or delegated services to the municipalities whose records are difficult to obtain. The federal government ceased to take responsibility for the Metis and, therefore, there are few references in their records to the condition of the Metis. of records for the period 1910 to

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1930 is related to this shift in responsibility and the focus on other developments in what was still a frontier society.

The Metis continued during this period in marginal economic roles. However, the period 1918 to 1929 was one of high economic activity in the western provinces, and therefore it is possible that casual and seasonal jobs on construction and farms, on railways, on roads and on other building projects provided employment opportunities for the Metis. This may explain why there were no serious protests or Metis organizing activities during this period. The Metis only came to public attention again when the Depression was in full swing and when starvation and increased relief demands created a crisis situation. This brought the Metis together for economic survival and rekindled the flames of Metis nationalism and political activism.

The records of the churches confirm what we find in the N.W.M.P. records. There are references to the "half-breeds" working as freighters, on railways, carrying on their farming, cutting posts, fishing, trapping, and hunting.[72] Much of this activity took place in isolated rural areas where the Metis did not have access to good education and job opportunities, and where they increasingly sank into abject poverty with all the symptoms of poverty culture, namely alcoholism, poor physical and mental health, dependency on relief, etc.[73]

The other evidence of the continuation of Metis nationalism is to be found in the annual celebrations held in the St. Laurent-Batoche area. Although many view these celebrations as a recent development, in fact the Batoche observances began shortly after the Northwest Uprising and

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have continued on a fairly regular basis. Some references to these celebrations are found in old newspaper clippings and histories of communities in the general area. These celebrations commonly attracted several thousand Metis and Indian people.[74]

The advent of the Second World War relieved the situation again as many Metis joined the army and others entered the work force when serious labour shortages developed. Also, farming revived as an occupation providing improved opportunities for those few who had not left or lost their farms due to tax or mortgage foreclosures.

~~G.~~ 9) Metis Organizations After World War I

~~a)~~ 1. Introduction:

The details of the development of Metis nationalism since World War I , in the form of provincial organizations in each of the three prairie provinces are not all known. However, it is known that such organizations emerged in each of the provinces during the Depression years in response to the new political realities of provinces with fixed boundaries and the unfavourable economic circumstances of the time. In each of the province these organizations developed with a somewhat unique character with goals related to the needs of the time as perceived by the Metis people. For example:

1. In Manitoba, the emphasis was, and continues to be, on the full implementation of the benefits and rights provided under the Manitoba Act, and, where these provisions can no longer be implemented, some alternate form of compensation is being sought. The Manitoba Metis Federation is also seeking a land base outside of old Manitoba, and is seeking more self-determination for all Metis people.

2. In Saskatchewan, there was a recognition that Scrip was not an equitable settlement and did not deal with the issue of Metis self-determination. The emphasis today is on attempting to achieve a settlement of Metis rights based on the provision of some form of collective land base, and a greater degree of self-determination in the form of appropriate self-governing structures. Other forms of compensation are also being sought.

3. In Alberta, the emphasis was on acquiring a land base, not as the recognition of an aboriginal claim, but to provide a place where Metis people could pursue their own development and set up local government structures comparable to Municipal government. The goal was to free Metis from the debilitating poverty and welfare structures, which had become their economic mainstay. The emphasis today is on expanding this land base and the role and authority of these local governments.[75]

In spite of these variations, there are some rights which the Metis in each province seek through the process of constitutional reform. These include:

1. a Metis land base;

2. self-governing structures;

3. economic rights;

4. certain cultural rights;

5. the right to operate some of their own services, including: a) cultural support, b) education and training, c) social services, d) health services, e) recreation and leisure time services, where these are necessary for Metis development and survival.

b) The War Years ~~and the Post-War Developments:~~

As indicated earlier, the war years brought about new social and economic conditions which interrupted the further development of Metis nationalism and which resulted in most organizations becoming dormant. These organizations, and the movements they represented, were also affected by new political developments in Canada. In 1944, a new political movement, the C.C.F., became the government in Saskatchewan. They did not pursue the efforts begun by the previous government to have the federal government recognize the Metis claim and seek a suitable settlement of their claim.

Socialist egalitarianism could not encompass the concept of aboriginal rights. The new government's efforts were directed to specific Metis groups and to specific projects, such as the establishment of more Metis farms, and in providing some Metis lands in specific areas. The latter never proceeded beyond vague promises. The former emphasis resulted in the province taking over existing Metis training farms at places such as Willowbunch and Lebret, and the establishment of new training farms at Mortlach, Lestock and Green Lake. Also, a vocational training and education program to assist young Metis to get high school education was established. These programs were, in most cases, set up within the Department of Public Welfare and Rehabilitation. The belief was that with proper training the Metis could become good farmers and could, as well, assimilate into other mainstream occupations. The Saskatchewan Historical Society, which had acted as a support system to the developing Metis organizations, was no longer funded. Also, certain non-Metis persons, sympathetic to the government, gained positions of prominence within the Saskatchewan Metis Society and the organization as a provincial force had become completely inactive by the late 1940s.

3 e) Post-War Development

Following the War and the re-adjustment period of the late forties and early 1950s, a number of local branches of the SMS again began to organize in centers such as Regina, Prince Albert and North Battleford. Also, the C.C.F. employed two former Metis organizers from Alberta—Jim Norris and Malcolm Brady—who were given jobs where they could spend much of their time organizing the Metis. Whether Norris and Brady were socialists or nationalists, or some of both, is still debated today. However, they were quite active in kindling the embers of Metis nationalism and in bringing about a new political awareness among the Metis people.

Murray Dobbin's interpretation of their ideas and goals suggest that they were working towards the Metis becoming integrated into the mainstream social and economic life of the province.[76] The fact that Metis organizations developed in more nationalistic ways, with their emphasis on Metis nationalism, is not necessarily an indication that Norris and Brady failed in their efforts, but that they may not have fully comprehended the strong feelings of nationalism that had continued to be nurtured in the lifestyle, philosophy, and political ideas of Metis families and communities.

Having assisted the people to organize structures, which became a vehicle for this expression, it was natural that the nationalism of the past should re-emerge and flower. It had, in fact, never been dead as it continued to exist in the minds and in the experience of Metis people. It was something the people knew and understood, and something with which they felt comfortable. The egalitarian ideas of the socialists were not only unfamiliar, but were a contradiction, and a threat to the

individualism and nationalism for which the Metis had long struggled and fought. As the 1950s progressed, more local branches of the SMS were organized. However, it was not until 1964 that a new organization, the Metis Association of Saskatchewan, was formed. In 1965, the old Saskatchewan Metis Society was reformed. In 1967, the two organizations became one under the Metis Society of Saskatchewan.

In Alberta, the provincial organization established in 1932 re-emerged and became known as the Metis Association of Alberta. As well, a separate organization emerged to represent those interests unique to the colonies known as the Alberta Federation of Metis Settlements Association. In Manitoba, a new provincial organization emerged in the 1960s, known as the Manitoba Metis Federation. The strong-holds of its membership were located in the mainly predominant Metis communities in central and northern Manitoba. It was to these areas that some of the Metis had fled when they left the Red River in the 1870s and 80s. Here they joined those Metis who were indigenous to those areas, to form strong Metis communities and to keep alive the nationalism of the Manitoba Metis.

4. ~~d~~) The Modern Era:

With the emergence of one strong provincial organization, the Metis of Saskatchewan became very active in organizing new local branches. By the early 1970s the organization claimed over 100 local branches.

Similar organizational activities were taking place in Alberta and Manitoba, where new provincial organizations and groups had emerged. Other aboriginal organizations such

as Native Communications Societies, Native Alcohol Councils, Native Women's groups, and Native Housing groups were also beginning to emerge. All of these groups began putting increasing pressures on governments for funding. The federal government, in particular, was interested in this development of indigenous voluntary organizations among the poor and in aboriginal communities. This fitted with the community development concepts which were being nurtured by the Company of Young Canadians and a number of the DREE Special ARDA agreements. These pressures led to the formation of the Native Citizen's Development Program in the Department of the Secretary of State, which officially began funding aboriginal organizations in the 1971-72 fiscal year. Some provinces were already providing some funds to aboriginal organizations. The federal government's example provided incentivesfor some provinces to expand their funding.

Governments began to make available an array of program funding either to aboriginal political organizations or to other aboriginal groups. These included funds for Housing, Communications, Alcoholism programming and Job Creation projects. Other programs such as Native Recreation Development, Employment Outreach, and Court Worker Services were also funded.

The result was, and continues to be, that many aboriginal organizations are torn between their mandate to be the political voice of their people while at the same time attempting to deliver programs and services to their people. Both the political role and the service role have brought organizations into frequent conflict with governments. This has been particularly so at the provincial level where governments

have been much less able to tolerate the nationalism and political activism of Metis organizations. The political and government structures have responded by either attempting to co-opt the organizations, or by supporting actions of competing Metis organizations designed to weaken and, if possible, destroy the existing political organizations.

In the past 20 years, all three major political parties have formed governments in Saskatchewan. Each has had its conflicts with the aboriginal peoples. Each has attempted to follow an integrationist policy which, from an aboriginal point of view, leads to assimilation.

H. Conclusion

A review of the history of the Metis people indicates quite clearly that in Western Canada they emerged as a distinct cultural and political group by the late 1700s. Their culture and their political nationalism was, in part, an outgrowth of the culture and political activism of their Indian and white heritage. In addition, the nature of the fur trade economy and their role in this economy helped to shape Metis nationalism. It may be that the encouragement of the idea by the Northwest Company, that the Metis people were a "new nation", contributed in a significant way to this development. However, regardless of the forces which shaped and developed this nationalism, the important fact to consider is that this nationalism has persisted for two hundred years. At times it has exhibited itself strongly in the political and economic events of history. At other time the movement appears to have been somewhat dormant.

Metis nationalism has always been a difficult reality for governing authorities to deal with and it has led to frequent conflicts with those who established themselves as having authority. We see this most clearly in events such as the following:

- the conflict with the Selkirk Settlers at the beginning of the 19th Century;
- the labour disputes of the 1830s and 40s with the Hudson's Bay Company;
- the free trade movement between 1839 and 1850;
- the Red River Resistance of 1870;
- the petitions and agitation of the Metis in the Northwest between 1873 and 1885;
- the Northwest Uprising of 1885;
- the Scrip agitations between 1885 and 1905;
- the pressure for land and other concessions during the 1930s;
- the conflict with the provincial Liberal Government over programming and, in particular, education and economic development in the 1960s;
- the N.D.P./Metis conflicts of the 1970s over similar issues;
- Conservative Government/Metis disagreements of 1983 over education, training, employment services and economic development.

Is there any hope that this history of conflict can be resolved so as to benefit both Metis people and the Canadian public? The process of constitutional reform holds out some promise for a beginning in resolving the issues and recognizing Metis nationalism as a legitimate political reality which must

have a place within the structure of the Canadian body politic. Furthermore, this place must allow the Metis people to control their own institutions and lives, and to develop as a unique people as part of the larger Canadian society.

FOOTNOTES - 1 -

[1]Alexander Begg, Supra, pp. 295-296.

[2]Ibid. pp. 296-298.

[3]Ibid. pp. 298-99.

[4]Auguste Tremauden, Supra, pp. 13-14.

[5]Ibid. pp. 14-15.

[6]Alexander Begg, Supra, pp. 299-301.

[7]Ibid. pp. 301-304.

[8]Auguste Tremauden, Supra, pp. 15-16.

[9]Ibid. p. 16.

[10]Alexander Begg, Supra, pp. 303-304.

[11]Ibid. Chapter XVI, pp. 252-273. (See also discussion in Chapter VI).

[12]MacLeod and Morton, Cuthbert Grant of Grantown; Warden of the Plains, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1974, pp. 141-142.

[13]Auguste Tremauden, Supra, pp. 9-10.

[14]W. C. MacLeod, Supra, Chapter XXXI.

[15]Auguste Tremauden, Supra, pp. 9-10.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid. pp. 10-11.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid. pp. 11-12.

[21]Ibid. pp. 12-13.

[22]Alexander Begg, See footnote[1].

[23]George F. Stanley, Supra, pp. 7-11.

[24]Alexander Begg, Supra, pp. 367-369.

[25]One chain equals 66 ft.

[26]George F. Stanley, Supra, pp. 14-15.

[27]August Tremauden, Supra, Part III.

[28]Scrip Files, Supra, Volume 75-78, Gabriel Dumont Institute Library.

[29]Taché Papers, Volume 55, Gabriel Dumont Institute Library.

[30]Sessional Papers, 1885, Paper No. 116, Public Archives of Canada. See also Alexander Morris, Supra, on Indian Treaties.

[31]Auguste Tremauden, Supra, pp. 112-113.

[32]Ibid. pp. 115-116.

[33]A. Blaineau to Editor, Manitoban, January 21, 1972, A H2640 F31, Glenbow Archives, Calgary.

[34]Laws of St. Laurent and Minutes of Proceedings of Public Assemblies, English Translation, R.C.M.P. Records, File No. 333-75, Public Archives, Saskatchewan.

[35]George F. Stanley, Supra, pp. 247-253.

[36] Ibid. p. 254.

[37] Ibid. p. 255.

[38] Chronicles of St. Laurent, 1870-1884, Oblate Archives, University of Albert, Edmonton.

[39] Murray Dobbin, The One and A Half Men, New Star Books, Vancouver, 1982.

[40] Royale to Tache, July 14, 1885, St. Boniface Archives, Manitoba.

[41] Vegreville to Tache, May 23, 1885, St. Boniface Archives, Manitoba.

[42] The Western Metis After the Insurrection, Marcel Giraurd from Les Metis Canadien, Saskatchewan History, Volume IX, Winter, 1956.

[43] Extracts from a Royal Commission on the Northwest Rebellion, May, 1886, Glenbow Archives, Calgary, Alberta.

[44] Northwest Mounted Police Records, from R.G. 18, Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

[45] Supra, Chronicles of St. Laurent.

[46] Ibid.

[47] House of Commons Debates, see 1888, pp. 1514-1522, and 1890, pp. 1358-1402.

[48] Supra, extracts from R.G. 18, Letters of October 8, 1891, and November, 1891, Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

[49] House of Commons Debates, 1886, p. 824, April 20.

[50] Supra, N.W.M.P. Records, R.G. 18, Public Archives, Ottawa

[50a] Ibid.

[51]Supra, Chronicles of St. Laurent.

[52]Ibid.

[53]Marcel Giraurd, Supra, pp. 1-2.

[54]N.W.M.P. Letters, R.G. 18 Series, Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

[55]Ibid.

[56]Supra, Chronicles of St. Laurent, 1888.

[57]Sessional Papers, 1895, Paper No. 11A and 1899, Paper 11A; Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

[58]Alberta-Saskatchewan Fisheries Commission, 1911, found in the Saskatchewan Archives, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon.

[59]Auguste Tremauden, Supra, Forward, pp. XII-XIII.

[60]Murray Dobbin, Supra, Chapter 3.

[61]Ibid. Part II, Chapter 4-8.

[62]Ewing Commission Report, Glenbow Foundation, Calgary, Alberta.

[63]Murray Dobbin, Supra, Chapter 3.

[64]Auguste Tremauden, Supra, p. 164.

[65]Supporting documents and letters in File 7A, Gabriel Dumont Institute Library. These are letters gathered by the Saskatchewan Historical Society as part of the Noonan and Hodges study.

[66]Ibid.

[67]Ibid.

[68]Noonan and Hodges, Supra, p. 13.

[69]Ibid. p. 14; See also W.C. MacLeod, Supra, p. 195.

[70]Noonan and Hodges, Supra, pp. 43 & 107.

[71]N.W.M.P. Records, Supra, R.G. 18.

[72]Supra, Chronicles of St. Laurent.

[73]Oblate Collection, Box 88, D-IV-127, Public Archives, Edmonton.

[74]Newspaper Clippings from Regina Leader, Volume 24, Gabriel Dumont Institute Library.

[75]Murray Dobbin, Supra, Part II, p. 18 and following.

[76]Ibid. Dobbin, Supra.