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People from Everywhere: Metis Identity, Kinship and Mobility 1600s-1800s

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PEOPLE FROM EVERYWHERE: METIS IDENTITY, KINSHIP AND MOBILITY 1600s-1800s

by

Mark Langenfeld

A Dissertation Submitted In
Partial Fulfillment of the
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Doctor of Philosophy
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ABSTRACT

PEOPLE FROM EVERYWHERE: METIS IDENTITY, KINSHIP AND MOBILITY, 1600s-1800s

by

Mark Langenfeld

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2021
Under the Supervision of Professor Margaret Noodin

People from Everywhere: Metis Identity, Kinship and Mobility, 1600s-1800s, is a discussion of how the Metis people of the American southern Great Lakes region in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin made individual and familial choices about ethnic identification from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries that enabled them to survive colonization in their homeland. I argue that Metis people maintained, through kinship networks, a private identity as a collective, distinct group of indigenous people and a private sense of individual pride in their mixed ancestry, even as they performed acts of assimilation to white or Indian communities and moved through British, French, Anglo-American, Metis and Indian communities in the American southern Great Lakes regions. Their own self-identity was synonymous with kinship and a kinship system flexible enough to incorporate Indians and non-Indians of different backgrounds. They traversed communities of their Native relatives, Metis communities such as Chicago, Milwaukee, Mackinac, and Prairie du Chien, and the communities of the white British, French, or Americans who arrived and transformed the area by settlement. American Metis experienced different types of colonization differently while the United States was forming and the American government debated Metis status. Despite their political

marginalization and apparent outward assimilation, the American Metis maintained a continuous presence in the U.S.A. and are still present today. This longitudinal micro-history explores the identity choices of American Metis families, including their social and geographic mobility and shifting ties to kinship across time and space and what local, national and international forces guided and shaped their choices. This micro-history is based on various primary sources, including census records, church records, memoirs and correspondence of the Metis themselves, and official fur-trade documents, as well as various methodologies, including American Indian Studies theory, feminist theory, and historical memory theory.

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To my sister Katy Langenfeld

who always encourages me to look at history in new ways

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"I saw the marriage of the trapper in the open air in the far west

The bride was a red girl..."

Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself."¹

¹ Whitman, Walt. *Leaves of Grass*. Philadelphia: David McKay, 1900, p. 39.

Introduction

Situating the Metis in History

Johann Georg Kohl was confused by Metis identity and by the existence of a blended people and their culture when the German traveler visited Minnesota Territory in the 1840s. Kohl asked a passing man in French, “Where do you stay?” The man, a French-speaking voyageur, answered the question vaguely. He was perhaps indignantly reflecting a deliberate ambiguity, answering the question without answering it. The unnamed man replied, “Where do I stay? I cannot tell you. I am a Voyageur- I am a *Chicot*, monsieur. I stay everywhere. My grandfather was a voyageur: he died on a voyage. My father was a voyageur: he died on a voyage. I will also die on a voyage, and another *Chicot* will take my place. Such is our course of life.”¹

This introduction answers questions about the vagueness, multiplicity and silences of his answer by providing an analysis of relevant historical scholarship on Metis kinship, identity and mobility and a cross-cultural comparison of the Metis historical experience. This dissertation argues that the Metis of the American Great Lakes persisted in maintaining both an individually and collectively distinctive identity despite their performance of outward assimilation for survival. This identity was rooted in kinship structures and somewhat synonymous with kinship. This introduction summarizes the relevant scholarship on the Metis people of early America and Canada and poses new questions and suppositions about their identity. It maps and articulates a holistic idea of diasporic Metis peoplehood, mobility and kinship through the examples of individual stories and events. I hypothesize that despite settler-colonial attempts

¹ Kohl, Johann Georg. *Kitchi-Gami: Wanderings Round Lake Superior*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1860, p. 260.

to disenfranchise them from an individual and collective indigenous identity, Metis people of the American southern Great Lakes region retained both a collective and individual sense of their own indigeneity, their own kinship and their own peoplehood across the centuries and across different political regimes, even while performing other identities through acts of assimilation for the outside world. This sense of indigeneity survived multiple different experiences of colonization and was both individual and collective in nature. Colonial governments resisted this sense of private indigeneity, both collective and individual, because it contravened the goals of colonization. The Metis were also unique because, even after assimilation, they could celebrate a sense of indigeneity, even publicly, without losing access to an assimilated white status.

The first chapter examines the formation of a Metis population in seventeenth-century North America and its impact on culture, race, politics, economics and the fur trade. The second chapter, focusing on the eighteenth century, explores the rise of the Metis as a dominant ethnic group in the fur trade towns of the Great Lakes as the fur trade rose to its zenith. This will focus on the history of the Juneau and Beaubien families, in context with the different developments of colonial America. These developments affecting the racial politics of Metis identity include the rise of African slavery, the increasing codification of race after 1776, the American rejection of a Metis worldview, pan-Indian Christian revivalism, and increasingly rancorous debates about the status that Indians, blacks, and people of color could occupy in the new republic. The third chapter will discuss the transitions the Metis people made in the nineteenth century, as scientific racism and settler colonialism forced American Metis individuals and families to

publicly declare and choose a single racial identity. The conclusion and final chapter will discuss how the descendants of the Metis identified from the 20th century to the present time.

The man's response to Kohl's question about his identity was vague, revealing a deliberately fluid and ambiguous attachment to ideas like race and place. The traveler did not give his ethnicity, but he may have been Metis, a people of mixed European and Native ancestry, and he was certainly a French-speaking voyageur. The Metis people, an ethnic group of mixed European and Native American heritage, arose in various parts of North America because of the fur trade. The desire of the French and British for furs traded and trapped by Indians, and the desire of Indians for European cloth and manufactured goods, led to mutual economic cooperation between the two groups. Since the European and Euro-American traders were mostly men, backed by male and female rulers, Indian tribes cemented their ties to the traders in a permanent economic relationship by promoting the marriages of Indian women and European men, and the incorporation of European men into Native societies and families. Even trade officials eventually recognized the importance of women in the trade. Sylvia Van Kirk argued that the norm for sexual relationships in fur trade societies was not "casual, promiscuous encounters"²- fur-trade marriages most often resulted in long-term, stable marital unions and families.

Unlike other encounters between European men and native women in other colonial milieus, where sex and relationships were "illicit" in nature and "peripheral" to European trade and colonization, in Canada and the American Great Lakes, alliances with Indian women

² Van Kirk, Sylvia. *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983, p. 4.

became the “central social aspect”³ of the fur trade’s progress and development, because of native women’s important socioeconomic role as diplomats between tribes and traders, which carried an important ritual function of turning potentially hostile strangers into in-laws, kin, and political allies. There was little-to-no division between the public sphere of politics and economics and the “private” one of the home- in fact, the two were synonymous. A trader could not do business in Indian country without an Indian wife and family: in turn, the “many tender ties” of family stabilized the traders, rooted them in indigenous communities, and cheered their often monotonous work for the fur-trading companies. Marriage was also a way for Indian communities to exert social, political and moral control over the non-indigenous men, by making those men responsible to Indian families, in-laws, and communities. Anne F. Hyde has written that the fur trade functioned as a “highly personal and familial enterprise”⁴, an enterprise which, by its very existence, required interracial marriage to provide the social glue that held economic relationships together and generated wealth. Indigenous nations, in particular, attempted to regulate trade and the colonial intrusion of European men by merging economic and familial concerns. Indeed, Hyde remarked insightfully that, within the socioeconomic context of the fur-trade and Metis world, “family and marriage provided essential protections and entrée into crucial sets of information and skill...Trade itself depended on personal relationships.”⁵ The frequent turmoil of colonial America in the fur-trade era made personal relationships an even more essential ingredient in business and economic

³ Ibid.

⁴ Hyde, Anne F. *Empires, Nations and Families: A History of the American West, 1800-1860*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011, p. 96.

⁵ Ibid., 97.

transactions. Hyde concluded that it was almost universal for fur-trading families to rely on personal connections of this kind, because “the people in this world needed relationships- marriage, adoption, bondage, partnership, apprenticeship, and friendship- to make business and life possible in the face of imperial rivalry and warfare.”⁶

Much new evidence points to the fact that the American Midwest, and by extension, much of the United States, was a crossroads for racial, cultural and ethnic intermingling from its very earliest days- a “hearth of the crossed races,”⁷ to use Melinda Marie Jetté’s evocative phrase, paraphrasing Pierre Fournier de Saint Amant. Gary B. Nash has argued for historians to pursue the “hidden history” of a “mestizo America”: “The frontier, as it involved white settlers and native peoples, is indelibly etched in our national consciousness as a battleground, but it was also a cultural merging ground and a marrying ground. Nobody left the frontier cultural encounters unchanged.”⁸ Greg T. Carter likewise discussed an undercurrent of American intellectual thought that lauded racial mixing, underscoring it as ubiquitous and praising it as a quintessentially American act of reinvention. These oft-suppressed intellectuals argued that a true “American was new and mixed just as the society was new and mixed and the way of life was new and mixed.”⁹ This work will explore how the changed people of the marrying ground, and their children, navigated American society around them as it evolved.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Jetté, Melinda Marie. *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races: A French-Indian Community in Nineteenth-Century Oregon, 1812-1859*. Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2015, p. 1.

⁸ Nash, Gary B. "The Hidden History of Mestizo America." *The Journal of American History* 82, no. 3 (1995): p. 941-64.

⁹ Carter, Greg T. *The United States of the United Races: A Utopian History of Racial Mixing*. New York: NYU Press, 2013, p. 26.

This dissertation is a contemporary, post-colonial critique of the Metis role in American history. I use “post-colonial” only in the sense that it occurs after thorough examination of colonial processes and after the age of empires, coming at a time when colonial and even post-colonial analysis has been ceded to analysis of the settler state’s approach to migration, immigration, and colonial relocation, all of which have affected the Metis and other indigenous people. Colonial processes continue to govern the relationship between the United States and Indian nations, and colonization continues to determine many circumstances of contemporary indigenous people’s lives, so I am emphatically not using the adjective “post-colonial” to imply that this process is a thing of the past. The United States is still a settler-colonial nation, a nation ruled by Euro-American settlers and their descendants, who came to stay, and whose government, institutions and structures continually support new settlement and colonization of America’s lands by non-indigenous people.

The issue of Metis identity, and how Metis people adapted their identity to survive various regimes of colonization, is a phenomenon I explore in this dissertation. I address the dichotomy between their public and private identities and also examine how racial ideas and theories became societally implanted as mutually constitutive devices of oppression. The American and Canadian states legally implanted a unique racism against indigenous women in particular. Colonial states recognized that Indian women were the mothers of native children and the people traditionally responsible for perpetuation of ties to land, culture and tribal sovereignty. American and Canadian legal systems sought to undermine indigenous women by alienating their right to own land and challenging the right of their mixed offspring to be Native, which achieved colonial goals of reducing the total number of Indian people and obtaining

Indian land. These goals stereotyped Indian people as doomed to extinction and eventual absorption within the dominant society.

I examine the history of two prominent Metis families and the changing decisions about racial and ethnic identification they made individually and collectively to survive successive waves of French, British, and American colonization in the Great Lakes. The families I will cover in this study will be the Beaubien family of Chicago and the Juneau family of Milwaukee, from the 17th century until the Metis lost their status as a demographic majority in their Great Lakes communities, around the mid-19th century. The Beaubien and Juneau families were the most economically advantaged and well-known Metis in early Chicago and Milwaukee, but their experiences can also illustrate what happened to their less prominent Metis acquaintances, kin, and friends during the same era.

I use the changing history around ethnicity in these two families as a lens to examine larger issues of the social, political and legal debate around race in the Great Lakes and in America. My work bases its approach on French micro-history, as first envisioned by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Natalie Zemon Davis, Carlo Ginzburg and many others. Micro-history is what Edward Berenson refers to as “*histoire microscopique*, an approach to the past through one exemplary event or person,”¹⁰ offering us a glimpse into otherwise unseen elements of religious belief, family life, sexual practices and political power. “Between a *grand histoire* of important public events and a *petite histoire* of private and unimportant ones lies an *histoire microscopique* able, as here, to illuminate crucial links between gender relations and political

¹⁰ Berenson, Edward. *The Trial of Madame Caillaux*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993, p. 8.

conflict, between family drama and high politics, between personal honor and patriotic allegiance.”¹¹ As a student of the Ojibwe language who wants to give equal time to the French and Native elements within this work, I also want to mention that the *histoire microscopique* resembles the Ojibwe or Anishinaabé idea of *naagadawaabandan*, watching, examining, attending or observing something closely.

The Beaubien and Juneau families are certainly exemplary, both in their socially prominent role in the founding of Chicago and Milwaukee and the diverging actions they and their families took after they lost their social prominence, their power, and much of their wealth. Their fame and prominence make them good examples for a study of Metis identity. These links between gender and political conflict, between family drama and high politics, between honor and allegiance, are what I find most fascinating. For the American Metis of the Great Lakes, such interwoven strands of race, kinship, gender, and politics were a common part of everyday life and deeply personal- these personal choices often meant the difference between survival and death. I will show how personal decisions about collective and individual identity for Metis people became political decisions about where to live, how to live and what to become. My work will argue that Metis people retained both an individual and collective sense of being a unique indigenous group, even while publicly assimilating to a white or Indian identity.

Many scholars have argued over whether the primary cultural influence in Metis life was European or Native. Tanis C. Thorne de-emphasizes Native culture’s role in early St. Louis, noting that census-takers dropped the label “Métis” from Saint Louis censuses after the first

¹¹ Berenson, Edward. *The Trial of Madame Caillaux*, p. 8.

generation. Thorne observes that subsequent generations were considered merely French, and that the Metis of her study area had no nationalistic consciousness.¹² This dissertation examines how the Metis conceptualized their identity on their own terms, and how outsiders reacted to that identity. Martha Harroun Foster notes that for Montana Metis, most of whom had origins in the Great Lakes, their “private sense of self” lay within family and kinship ties, which perpetuated a “continuing recognition of difference” from both Indian and Euro-American groups.¹³

Many scholars of Metis history discuss their reasons for using particular terminology for the mixed-race peoples of the fur trade. To follow their lead, this work will also discuss that terminology and my reasons for using it. Like terminology for all indigenous peoples, terminology for the Metis is complex, historically variable, politicized and contested. I choose to use Metis as the most inclusive term, a French term derived from the Latin, meaning “mixed”. The Spanish word *mestizo* is a cognate of Metis, and in Latin America also denoted a blend of European and indigenous lineage. In this dissertation, I use both “metis”, with a lower-case “m”, and the capitalized term Metis somewhat interchangeably. Metis with a capitalized M

¹² Thorne, Tanis C. *The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri*. University of Missouri Press, 1996, p. 12, p. 82.

Metis as “children of the country”- Public Archives of Canada, Preconquest Papers, J3:39, Memoir of Gregoire Challe, 1716. Metis as “serviceable subjects”- Maillard, Antoine Simon. *An Account of the Customs and Manners of the Micmakis and Maricheets Savage Nations* (London: Hooper and Marley, 1758), p. 89-90. Children as the “wealth of the country”- no reference to race or Metis- Sieur de Dieréville, *Relation of the Voyage to Port Royal in Acadia or New France*. Ed. John C. Webster (Toronto: Champlain Society), 1933, p. 94.

¹³ Foster, Martha Harroun. *We Know Who We Are: Metis Identity in a Montana Community*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006, p. 222-223.

generally refers to a specific ethnic group of mixed European (usually, though not always British or French) and Indian ancestry, who claim a specific homeland in the Canadian province of Manitoba. I will discuss them tangentially, but that specific group is not my main topic here, though kin ties and migrations stretched in both directions.

Metis, reflecting that they were mixed, is the best term to use, for the purposes of this work, as a general term. In Canadian history and historiography, there is a tendency to refer to British-descended Metis as “half-breeds” and use “Metis” only to refer to the French-descended Metis. I will use the term Metis or metis to refer to all people participating in a blended Great Lakes fur-trading culture who were of mixed indigenous and non-indigenous ancestry, since many Great Lakes Metis had French, Scottish, English, Anglo-American and African-American paternal ancestry. All of the Metis participated in this mixed culture and in a shared identity as Indian people.

The distinctive occupational demands of the fur trade caused indigenous, European, Euro-American and African-American people to make work together interracially and closely in marriage, trade, religion and politics in ways that were broadly the same and operated in a cross-ethnic manner throughout the American and Canadian Great Lakes and produced the Metis world. In the Great Lakes, the Metis culture seems to have been predominantly an invention of the Anishinaabeg, so that we might regard the Great Lakes Metis as a subset of the Anishinaabeg indigenous peoples, based on their kinship structures, epistemologies, and cultural ideas. Priests listed a majority of the mothers of metis children in the baptismal records of Michilmackinac (present-day Mackinac, Michigan) as Ojibwe, Odawa, Potawatomi, Nippissing or Menominee, lending credence to this idea.

Peter Bakker has the most substantial discussion of such terms, noting that “Metis” is a comparatively recent term and that the preferred terms in the 19th century were *Metif*, *bois-brulé*, and half-breed¹⁴. Most terms for the Metis stress their mixed origin or some type of mixing. Terms in Indian languages such as Ojibwe, Dene, Cree and Odawa stress that the Metis are “half like us.”¹⁵

Another group of terms stresses that the Metis were free people, not bound to fur-trade companies, who often worked as their own bosses- *gens libres*, *hommes libres*- free people or freemen. Bakker speculates that “*bois-brulé*” or burnt-wood is a translation of an Ojibwe word referring to their mixture of races. *Chicot*, meaning “stump of a tree”, translates as “half-burnt stump” and, like *bois-brulé*, nineteenth-century settlers thought the term referenced the lighter skin color of the Metis compared to Indians. Bakker follows the suggestion of Peterson and others, who connect it to French-Canadian logging practices. Metis people in Green Bay, in Prairie du Chien, and in Michigan after the War of 1812 called themselves *Creole*, meaning “locally born”, a practice followed by Murphy, though she also uses the terms “Metis” and French-Indian.”¹⁶ Lucy Eldersveld Murphy believes that “Creole” is the most inclusive term for anyone who was a participant in the interracial Great Lakes fur-trade culture, regardless of their ethnicity. She defends its use by noting that it appears in works such as *The Wisconsin Creoles*,

¹⁴ Bakker, Peter. *A Language of Our Own: The Genesis of Michif, the Mixed Cree-French Language of the Canadian Métis*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 64.

¹⁵ Baraga, Frederic. *A theoretical and practical grammar of the Otchipwe language for the use of missionaries and other persons living among the Indians*. Montreal: Beauchemin and Valois, 1878, p. 124. on Ojibwe terms for the Metis- aayaabtaawizid, aapitawikosisan (half-son or half)

¹⁶ Murphy, Lucy Eldersveld. *Great Lakes Creoles: A French-Indian Community on the Northern Borderlands, Prairie du Chien, 1750-1860*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 17-21.

one of whose authors, Jeanne Rioux Rentmeester, was a Metis descendant.¹⁷ The Rentmeesters document the use of the word “Creole” to refer to Francophone persons of mixed ancestry in Wisconsin and the Great Lakes from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. The term Creole can mean a locally-born person of mixed ancestry, but in Louisiana it usually referred- and continues to refer- to a person of mixed African and European ancestry, whereas in Latin America a *criollo* usually means a person born in the New World of unmixed Spanish, Portuguese or other European ancestry. In light of these ambiguities, I will mainly not be using the term “Creole” to refer to the Metis, unless citing comparative sources. Bakker also adds that the Metis have a distinct culture and tradition, and “consider themselves to be a group distinct from Europeans and Indians.”¹⁸

Heather Devine, herself a Metis descendant, likewise affirms the importance of kinship ties to Metis people and recommends further historic explorations of Metis history through families. She concludes that Métis identities were formed as a result of kinship affiliation, residence with same-sex siblings, social class, occupation and choice of spouse. “In both the Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal communities, an individual’s responsibility to ensure the protection and well-being of his family was of primary importance. Kin obligations generally superseded other commitments, resulting in social, economic and political behaviors that, to the modern observer, may seem at times to be unfair, counterproductive and even illogical.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Rentmeester, Les and Jeanne. *The Wisconsin Creoles*. Melbourne, FL: L. and J. Rentmeester, 1987, p. 4. The Rentmeesters use Creole specifically to mean Metis.

¹⁸ Bakker, Peter. *A Language of Our Own: the Genesis of Michif, the Mixed Cree-French Language of the Canadian Metis*. Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 64-65.

¹⁹ Devine, Heather. *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004, p. 16-17.

Jennifer S.H. Brown discusses the varying outcomes and ethnic choices made by Metis people, suggesting that white fathers pulled their Metis sons closer to a European identity, while leaving daughters with their mothers, or siblings of one sex only (sisters or brothers), were left with one parental group, while fatherless children were commonly raised as Indians by their mothers. She suggests, “More detailed family histories with time depths of three, four, and five generations could bring out important and subtle comparisons and paths of change.”²⁰

These “important and subtle comparisons” are what this dissertation will discern, in order to continue the discussion of race, citizenship, land ownership, and belonging, the impact of racism and racial ideas on American Indian people, and the role such ideas have played in the course of American Indian history and policy. The Canadian Metis leader Louis Riel, who led the Metis rebellion of 1885, famously declared that, as “bastards” under English law, Metis in Canada were entitled both by that law and by Indian custom to inherit, from their Indian maternal ancestry, a distinctive status as a “new” Indian people in their own right.²¹ “It is true that our savage origin is humble, but it is meet that we honor our mothers as well as our fathers. Why should we concern ourselves about what degree of mixture we possess of European or Indian blood? If we have ever so little of either gratitude or filial love, should we not be proud to say, ‘We are Metis!’”²²

²⁰ Brown, Jennifer S.H. “Woman as Centre and Symbol in the Emergence of Métis Communities.” In *Native Women’s History in Eastern North America Before 1900: A Guide to Research and Writing*, edited by Kugel, Rebecca and Lucy Eldersveld Murphy. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007, p. 74.

²¹ Peterson, Jacqueline. “Prelude to Red River: A Social Portrait of the Great Lakes Metis.” *Ethnohistory* Vol. 25, No. 1 (Winter 1978), 46.

²² Riel, Louis. *Papers at Batoche*. Sessional Papers, no. 43h and 431. Ottawa, 1886.

Metis history pertains to both sides of the US-Canada border. Almost all Metis had relatives in both countries and traveled between them. Most modern works of Metis history generally partake in the “New History” approaches of the 1960s and 1970s, which place indigenous peoples at the center of historical narratives rather than the periphery. A preponderance of the scholarship on Metis people is either about Canadian Metis or is itself the work of Canadian scholars²³.

The Canadian focus in Metis scholarship is due to the larger and more distinctive political role that Canadian Metis played and continue to play in that country, and also to Canadian Metis’ successful fight to be considered legally as a collective indigenous nation. The Metis identity originated in the Great Lakes of the USA and Canada and steadily moved north and west. Canada is where the Metis came closest to having a nationality, in the nineteenth-century sense of that term- a specific ethnicity, laying claim to a specific, bounded homeland.

²³ See, for instance, Brenda MacDougall’s somewhat dismissive, yet accurate, commentary on American scholarship of the Metis in the United States. “Much of the new American scholarship is preoccupied with why there are no discernable Metis communities left in the United States. Canadian scholarship tends to focus on how to classify the Metis- were they more white or Indian, more French or British? In short, Canadian scholars, like their American colleagues, have been overly preoccupied with race at the expense of culture.” MacDougall, Brenda. *One of the Family: Metis culture in nineteenth-century northwestern Saskatchewan*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010, 14. Jennifer S.H. Brown and Sylvia Van Kirk, both Canadian feminist scholars, provided some of the first historical analyses of Metis history through the prism of women and family life. See Brown, Jennifer S.H. *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980, a study of the fur trade company attitudes toward Metis families in Canada, and Van Kirk, Sylvia. *Many Tender Ties: women in fur trade society 1670-1870*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983. Van Kirk focuses on the Metis of western Canada. See also Diane Payment’s early study of Saskatchewan Metis. Payment, Diane. *“The Free people- Otipemisiwak” : Batoche, Saskatchewan, 1870-1930*. Ottawa: National Historic Parks and Sites, Parks Service, 1990.

American Metis faced a unique set of circumstances, circumstances that are still not well-known or understood. Brenda MacDougall has argued that the Metis, including those in the United States, deserve to be discussed culturally rather than racially, urging that the Metis, like Native people, based their society on indigenous family structures, not colonial racial taxonomies. MacDougall urges future scholars of the Metis to focus on the “choice to be Metis” made by mixed-ancestry people, and “how the people conceived of themselves collectively.”²⁴ By discussing the American Metis, I will expand the larger conversation about what race meant, not only to the Metis people, but also to those Metis who took the chance to become legally white, to Indians, to settlers, and to the policy-makers of the Old Northwest.

The encounter between a Minnesota man and a German traveler that opened this dissertation is revealing for several reasons. What was Johann Kohl asking when he posed this question, “where do you stay”? Perhaps he hoped to assign his companion to a fixed place of residence, or to a fixed racial designation. The way the unknown man chose to answer the question is also very telling. Rather than giving the German any sort of predictable answers to that question, the unnamed man responded in a way that privileged occupational pride, family ties, historic continuity, and geographic mobility. Perhaps his ambiguous answer was also a form of resistance, a stubborn refusal to fit into any assigned colonial categories. Frantz Fanon observed, “The colonial world is a compartmentalized world.”²⁵ This was certainly true of European colonizers in the Great Lakes, whether travelers, trappers, traders, immigrants or settlers. They often used compartmentalizing logic to classify, divide, subjugate or ally with

²⁴ Macdougall, Brenda. “The Myth of Metis Cultural Ambivalence.” In *Contours of a People: Metis family, mobility and history*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012, p. 435-436.

²⁵ Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, 2007, p. 3.

Indian and Metis people. Walt Whitman's quote about the marriage of the trapper and the "red girl" is an example of this compartmentalization²⁶. Though he romanticized the trapper and a trapper's Indian bride, Whitman still saw them in a compartmentalized way.

The central theme of this work is in answering both sides of this question- why Kohl asked what he did, and why the man chose to answer Kohl in that way. How were the Metis of the American Great Lakes perceived by outsiders? How did they perceive themselves? What choices did they make about their ethnic identity and its public presentation, in order to survive the successive waves of colonization in their homeland? To that end, racism and denigration proved a useful tool for Europeans confronting Metis and Natives. Johann Kohl was by no means the only European to have a puzzled or contemptuous attitude to the local people when he encountered them- indeed, the other noteworthy thing about Kohl's encounter with this man is its very ordinary typicality.

All over the Great Lakes in the 1800s, freshly arrived Europeans and white Americans confronted the people they saw living on the land, whether Metis, French-Canadian, or Indian, and in most cases decided to dislike what they saw. Treaty commissioner Caleb Atwater wrote disparagingly of the Prairie du Chien Metis, comparing the people of this proud, centuries-old community to coyotes. "They are a mixed breed, and probably more mixed than any other human beings in the world; each one consisting of Negro, Indian, French, English, American, Scotch, Irish and Spanish blood! And I should rather suspect some of them, to be a little

²⁶ Whitman, Walt. *Leaves of Grass*. Philadelphia: David McKay, 1900, p. 39.

touched with the Prairie wolf.”²⁷ Dismissive, hostile and racist attitudes towards Indians and Metis are deeply engrained in Anglo-American culture, society and law.

Dr. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, a Crow Creek Sioux scholar, has linked these attitudes to a philosophical concept she called anti-Indianism. The Metis, just like other indigenous people in the United States, faced anti-Indianism in their struggles to survive colonization and remain in their homelands. Cook-Lynn argues that anti-Indian bias systematically permeates American culture and is foundational to American culture’s organization, similarly to how anti-Semitism pervades European Christian culture. Cook-Lynn links both anti-Semitism and anti-Indianism to Christianity and the “doctrine of discovery”, which held that European Christian discoverers had the right to own any land and possessions belonging to non-Christian people and also to hold non-Christian people as their slaves²⁸.

The corollary belief to this doctrine was that Europeans were racially and culturally superior, and were therefore absolved from any guilt involving their treatment of Indians because Indian demise was foreordained, inevitable and correct. I also argue that anti-Indianism was linked to political debates about the status, citizenship, and rights of Indians, free blacks and other people of color within American society. Indigenous peoples in North America were never intended to be part of the American republic, and for most of American history, Indians were not citizens of the United States. The U.S. government refused to grant Indians

²⁷ Atwater, Caleb. *Remarks Made on a Tour to Prairie du Chien in 1829*. Columbus, OH: Isaac Whiting, 1831), p. 180.

²⁸ Cook-Lynn, Elizabeth. *Anti-Indianism in Modern America: A Voice from Tatekaya’s Earth*. Champaign-Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2001, p. 3-5.

unilateral American citizenship until 1924, and prior to that year, the government only permitted them to become citizens, whether on an individual or collective basis, if they surrendered all previous cultural and tribal affiliations. Metis people had an identity based on and synonymous with kinship. American and Canadian lawmakers associated American or Canadian citizenship with whiteness and placed it in opposition to an inferior tribal nationhood. Such laws only permitted Metis to become legally white if they, like Indians, surrendered all connections and associations to tribal nationhood, citizenship or identity.

Federalist and Jeffersonian Republicans, including Jefferson himself, believed that Indians were the intellectual equals of whites, “red gentlemen” who could achieve success in the dominant Anglo-American settler society if their tribal citizenship and customs were abolished. Jefferson expressed this most blatantly when he desired that Indians and whites should become “one people” in America.²⁹ Indians, unlike enslaved or free blacks, were considered capable and worthy candidates for intermarriage and inclusion in settler society, but only if they performed acts of total and complete assimilation. I argue that this is because the American government recognized that Indians had a politically distinct form of tribal citizenship that they wanted to destroy, even if they defined tribal citizenship as inferior or dependent. I hypothesize that the U.S. government refused to include Indians as American citizens because doing so would have threatened the government’s claimed political authority over Indian people and the taking of Indian land.

²⁹ Nichols, David Andrew. *Red Gentlemen and White Savages: Indians, Federalists and the Search for Order on the American Frontier*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008, p. 197-198.

In the 19th century, Chief Justice John Marshall ruled that the Cherokee and other Indian tribes were “domestic dependent nations” and “distinct, independent political communities retaining their original natural rights.” Marshall’s ruling has been used as the basis of tribal sovereignty doctrine in American courts to this day, but his characterization of native nations’ sovereignty as “dependent” led to many more detrimental cases and failed to prevent the forced removals, massacres and other abuses that occurred for Indian people in the Jacksonian era.³⁰

In this work, I hypothesize that Indian people, for the majority of their history in North America, were not only considered non-citizens by policymakers, but represented a kind of anti-citizen: considered ineligible for citizenship and antithetical to the very existence of American republicanism. Indians, for the most part, did not want to assimilate into dominant Anglo-American society or citizenship and instead wanted to maintain their own culture, tribal citizenship, and ways of living. Indians were as proud of their culture as non-Indians were of theirs, if not more so. This refusal helped cement Indians in the popular white American mind as being distinct. It also inadvertently consigned Indians to a low status in colonial society because Indian refusal to commodify the environment led to Indians’ unwillingness to participate in capitalism, and made them outsiders in a capitalist democracy that commodified everything, including land, people, and labor. In Canada, the Metis defined themselves as a tribal nation, a definition the Canadian government sought to erase. The American government defined the Metis, unless they had specific tribal nationalities, as white Americans, hoping for

³⁰ Echo-Hawk, Walter. *In the Courts of the Conqueror; the 10 Worst Indian Law Cases Ever Decided*. Golden, Colorado. Fulcrum Publishing, 2012, p. 104.

their assimilation and eventual disappearance, which is the reason contemporary Metis identity in the United States is an ethnic identity, not also a political nationality, as in Canada.

Francis Jennings philosophizes, “In a sense, one can say that the Indians universally failed to acquire capital because they did not want it. Therefore, they sacrificed status as well as opulence and incapacitated themselves for assimilation to the dominant European society except as laborers, fighters, or small peddlers.”³¹

This stands in marked contrast to the Latin American experience, particularly in Mexico, where the Spanish and Mexican governments offered indigenous peoples a path to citizenship through acculturation and intermarriage with their colonizers, and were openly acknowledged as a fundamental part of Mexican identity. Of course, Indian participation in Mexican and Latin American society was still broadly colonial, with Indians reduced to broad subjection and manual labor, while Spanish culture and whiteness was the standard for Indians to aspire to. But why did Latin America accept indigenous peoples into their colonial project, while English North America did not, and why was the experience of Indians in the French-American Great Lakes more like their counterparts in Latin America?

Mexican-American historian Gregory Rodriguez suggests that the answer might lie in Catholicism itself. “In 1537, Pope Paul III issued a bull, *Sublimus Dei*, which declared that ‘Indians are truly men’ and capable of understanding the Catholic faith.’ Catholics had already borrowed and absorbed a huge number of rituals and symbols from the peoples they had

³¹ Jennings, Francis. *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975, p. 103.

converted...this willingness to accept blending in the theological realm presaged a relative tolerance of racial mixing.”³²

Catholic Indians could be intellectual partners and marriage partners for European Catholics.³³ According to Chantal Fiola, Metis Catholics who spoke Michif, the mixed French-Indian dialect, had the most favorable view of Native spiritualism, due to similarities between the Native beliefs of their maternal ancestors and the French-Canadian Catholicism of their paternal ancestors, including “frequent prayers, ceremonial liturgy, frequent religious feasts, one God (Kitche Manitou), angels and saints or spirits, evil spirits (Satan or Windigo)” and a life of charity based in communalism. Other shared aspects of the traditional Metis Catholic belief system were consensus, interconnectedness, sharing, and respect for elders.³⁴

Many racist, superior assumptions, to an astonishing degree, continue to inform contemporary American understandings of Indians, and are the reason for this work’s focus on the Metis, their history, and their culture. These false assumptions, promulgated by historians and civilians following the lead of Wisconsin frontier historian Frederick Jackson Turner, include the idea that Indian cultures and Euro-American cultures were fundamentally incompatible and destined to come into conflict, a conflict to be resolved only by war, destruction, and the removal of the indigenous people to reservations. The very existence of the Metis required accommodation, mutual understanding, and generations of intermarriage between Europeans

³² Rodriguez, Gregory. *Mongrels, Bastards, Orphans and Vagabonds: Mexican Immigration and the Future of Race in America*. Random House, 2008, p. 5.

³³ Pope Paul III. *Sublimus Dei: On the Enslavement and Evangelization of Indians*. May 29, 1537. <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/Paul03/p3subli.htm>

³⁴ Fiola, Chantal.. *Rekindling the Sacred Fire: Metis Ancestry and Anishinaabé Spirituality*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015, p. 15.

and indigenous people, fundamentally refuting the idea that conflict was the only outcome of contact.

The Metis culture provided a milieu in which Europeans, Africans, and indigenous peoples of various tribes lived side by side, intermarried, spoke French as a common language, practiced Roman Catholicism as a common religion, and participated in their own unique culture. This cultural energy has been aptly described by historian Richard White as the path of the “middle ground.” The Middle Ground was “the place in between”, where “diverse peoples adjust their differences through what amounts to a process of creative, and often expedient, misunderstandings...from these misunderstandings arise new meanings and through them new practices- the shared meanings and practices of the middle ground.”³⁵

Nonetheless, the fur trade and the Metis culture were still colonial, extractive of natural resources, and deeply shaped by war and conflict. War created the Middle Ground, and more war and conflict precipitated the end of Metis dominance in the Great Lakes. William Warren, describing the early, treacherous period of warfare and shifting alliances, observed that “The French always favored the Ojibwe and other Algonquian tribes, and for this they often suffered at the hands of the Iroquois. For providing the Ojibwes also with fire-arms, and through this causing them to become too powerful for their western enemies, the French incurred the dislike and hatred of the Dakota and Ojibwe tribes.”³⁶ Richard White has been criticized by newer historians, particularly Native and feminist historians, for depicting Great Lakes Algonquian

³⁵ White, Richard. *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p.. X-xi.

³⁶ Warren, William W. *History of the Ojibway Nation*. 2nd edition. St. Paul, MN. Minnesota Historical Society, 1885, p. 148.

tribes as shattered by Iroquois aggression and in desperate need of French aid. Susan Sleeper-Smith asserted that native societies already had long histories and traditions of interaction with outsiders, and that nineteenth-century Anglo-Americans were merely another phase in a continuous Native history, albeit a tense phase. Sleeper-Smith remarked, "Nineteenth century U.S. people were, for Indians, another stage in a continuous process of encounter with foreigners."³⁷

But for a time, a type of gentility, common courtesy and mutual respect persisted among the Metis and those who wished to join the Metis, as long as their very different understandings of race and their social views prevailed. The invading Anglo-American culture, by and large, did not choose Metis or Creole ways of accommodation, intermarriage, or any sort of cultural compromise with indigenous people, and did not seek to join Indian societies as co-equal members. Therefore, I view the Metis culture as an alternate path, a way American society might have gone, and could have gone. I concur with Rony Blum, who wrote that "metissage and multiculturalism were complementary, not opposing policies. French-Native North America had an alternate vision of what North America could become."³⁸

Yet this alternate vision was not to be and was swept along in the wake of the expanding American empire. Newly arriving Europeans and Euro-American settlers, who saw themselves as the racially superior vanguard of a triumphant nation, had little interest in joining indigenous societies and equally small desire to intermarry with Indian or Metis people. When

³⁷ Sleeper-Smith, Susan. *Indian Women and French Men*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001, p. 3.

³⁸ Blum, Rony. *Ghost Brothers: Adoption of a French Tribe by Bereaved Native America*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005, p. 47.

they encountered the Metis, white settlers tended to regard Metis people as an exotic anomaly, and felt assured that the Metis, like the Indians, were a curiosity fated to disappear. Actually, it was the Metis who were the majority population of the Great Lakes, into the mid-1830s, and the settlers who were an anomaly, but the settlers needed to convince themselves of the reverse to justify their colonization.

The renewed missionary efforts towards indigenous people in the mid-1800s presupposed that the conversion of indigenous people to the Protestant Christian religion, the English language, and agrarian capitalism was as inevitable as any other part of Manifest Destiny. It required rigid policing of gender. The power to control and define sexuality, in turn, reflected the power and the political aims of the state. The role of the state in defining the status of Indian and Metis people cannot be explored without discussing how the state impacted the lives of indigenous women.

After the mid-1700s suppression and expulsion of the Jesuit Order from France and its colonies, and before the mid-1800s arrival of priests and other clerics with settlers, marriages between white men and Indian or Metis women were concluded *au façon du pays*- “country fashion” or “country style”- that is, according to various tribal customs of the women and their societies. The expanding power of the settler state in America and Canada declared that such marriages, and the offspring who resulted from them, were illegitimate, and this had important, mainly negative, consequences for indigenous women as many of them entered into legally recognized Christian marriage. This legitimization weakened their property rights, their custody over their children, their social status, and even their right to pass on membership in a band or tribe, and therefore “Indian-ness”. Lucy Murphy also links the imposition of American

legal marriages onto Metis people as a threat to native women's autonomy and property. "Fornication indictments, by forcing marriage according to the laws of the territory, made Native and metis women subject to the laws of the United States, forced *coverture* on them, and gave their property to Euro-American and Metis men. It also gave the colonizers authority over their children."³⁹

Ann Laura Stoler has argued that the traditional binaries between colonizer and colonized are not complex enough to describe the actual reality of colonial interactions, which included convergences between gender and race, and between metropole and colony. Stoler's early work stressed the permeability of national-imperial space, like the Northwest Territory frontier, where different races interacted both with one another and with systems of domination. Stoler argued for the mutuality of race and gender as collateral systems of oppression shaped by the imperial encounter. She observed that, "as a critical interface of sexuality and the wider political order, the relationship between gender prescriptions and racial boundaries is a subject that remains unevenly explored. Recent work on the oral history of colonial women, for example, shows clearly that European women of different classes experienced the colonial venture differently from one another and from men, but we still know relatively little about the distinctive investments they had in a racism they shared."⁴⁰ Camiscioli observes how Stoler's work acknowledges the heterogeneity and hybridity of colonial society where "women are part of a larger script that conceives of imperial space as a 'contact zone', a

³⁹ Ibid., Murphy, *Great Lakes Creoles*, p. 119.

⁴⁰ Stoler, Ann Laura. "Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power" in *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era*, ed. Micaela di Leonardo (Berkeley and Oxford, 1991), p. 55.

network of negotiation and exchange.”⁴¹ Stoler’s research expands on Foucault’s concept of biopower, “a political technology that ‘brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge/ power an agent of transformation of human life.”⁴² Stoler notes that racism contains a “long genealogy of exclusions” and argues that “technologies of sex” in the colony and the metropole reflected each other, that sex defined the boundaries of race, and that gender and race both became “categories of rule”.

These categories of rule could, and often did, become genocidal and violent. Achille Mbembe discusses the colonial state’s use of racial categories as a signal for which populations are considered desirable and possess the right to live and reproduce. But to Mbembe, race is also used to consign entire populations to sociopolitical death and erasure, or actual, violent death through the medium of “necro-politics”. Mbembe argues that this idea operates outside of Foucault’s “right to kill” by assigning different quantities of societal value to different racial populations⁴³.

Stoler criticizes Foucault for what she sees as his inattention to race, arguing that Foucault’s genealogy of racism reflected how an “implicit racial grammar underwrote the sexual regimes of bourgeois culture in more ways than Foucault explored and at an earlier date.”⁴⁴ Stoler believes that racist ideologies created an imagined difference between colonized and colonizer by focusing on notions of racial “purity” and sexual virtue. But such gatekeeping

⁴¹ Camiscioli, Elisa. “Women, Gender, Intimacy and Empire.” *Journal of Women’s History*, Volume 25, Number 4 (Winter 2013), p. 138-148.

⁴³ Mbembe, Achille. “Necropolitics”. *Public Culture* 1 January 2003; 15 (1): 11–40.

⁴⁴ Stoler, Ann Laura. *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*. Duke University Press, 1996, p. 12.

roles often existed more as ideals than realities: ideals of purity concealed histories of mixing to maintain the façade of white imperial security and supremacy, and the imposition of patriarchal social systems and their consequent sexual mores upon indigenous and colonized people often reflected colonial anxieties and ambivalence about the danger posed to racial boundaries by such mixing. Tracey Rizzo expands on Scott's explorations of gender by noting that "revisions of patriarchy occur whenever social or political structures are reevaluated."⁴⁵

Rizzo argued that political instability and an emphasis on individual rights caused 18th-century French courts to view the legal status of women more favorably and led to a questioning, or revision, of patriarchal and paternal power. The imposition of American and Canadian power upon the Great Lakes was a certainly a radical change wrought to centuries-old sociopolitical structures, including the structures, customs and traditions that determined women's status. Cary Miller noted that Ojibwe women in the early Great Lakes held high status, related to their cultural role as the primary agriculturalists of their people. They not only grew the majority of food, and possessed inherited rights to agricultural land, they decided when to sell the surplus, and who to sell it to, possessing life-or-death power over outsiders. They also played a political role as clan leaders, warriors, diplomats and counselors, and had rights to harvest non-arable resources like wild berries, wild rice, game and minerals.⁴⁶

Lucy Eldersveld Murphy noted that Metis women's public hospitality was also a form of social monitoring, and that the colonization of the Midwest by white men attempted to actively

⁴⁵ Rizzo, Tracey. *A Certain Emancipation of Women: Gender, Citizenship and the Causes Célébrés of Eighteenth-century France*. Susquehanna University Press, 2004, p. 37.

⁴⁶ Miller, Cary. *Ojimaag: Anishinaabeg Leadership, 1760-1845*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010, p. 47-58.

displace indigenous women from their agricultural lands and mineral rights, with white men usurping indigenous women's roles and resources.⁴⁷ As a consequence of colonization, settler-colonial governments increasingly asked the Metis, a multicultural people, to choose but one allegiance- one racial, political, or cultural identity among the many. Would they be American or Canadian, Indian or white? Or would they claim rights as their own distinct group? The legalization of patriarchal systems in the former colony of New France was less a revision of patriarchy and more an expansion of it, viewed as a necessary development to a frontier that settlers viewed as racially and sexually disordered.

In the United States, the Ordinance of 1787, which made much of the present-day Midwest into the American "Northwest Territory", gave Metis men the option of being legally white, holding American citizenship, voting in elections, and holding title to land individually as white men. This was a high, even perhaps enviable status. Their legally white status, in particular the recognized and maintained land title it conveyed, kept them from being downgraded into a class of manual laborers who were economically subservient to whites, like Mexican-Americans and Hispanics in the Southwest, whose economic marginalization contributed to the assignment of a non-white status.

The political power of the American Metis and the ability of elite Metis men to participate in American courts and justice systems also kept them out of open political rebellion against the settler state, unlike Canadian Metis. Canada did not honor Metis land claims: the Canadian Metis rebellions against their subsequent landlessness and poverty crystallized them

⁴⁷ Murphy, Lucy Eldersveld. *A Gathering of Rivers: Indians, Métis, and Mining in the Western Great Lakes, 1737-1832*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000, p. 150, p. 164.

in the eyes of the Canadian government as nonwhite outsiders. American Metis were also never socially segregated from their white American neighbors, and their ability to find common cause with the USA enabled their persistence in their homeland and successful outward assimilation. Why was a legally white status granted to American Metis, when the option was never on the table for Hispanic Americans and Canadian Metis?

Murphy suggests that there were simply not enough white people in the territories to fulfill the American government's goals, which led to a racial and legal compromise with the American Metis, allowing the Metis to participate in bolstering American control over the region, which had been nominal until the War of 1812 and was tenuous after that⁴⁸. The Metis were needed as white citizens to enforce American rule and staff newly created American governmental institutions- therefore, they were declared white and treated as such, despite tacitly being acknowledged as mixed-race or Indian. "We had to imagine them to be a white people"⁴⁹, another American official admitted somewhat uneasily. The Canadian government explicitly denied white status to their Canadian Metis cousins.

According to Sylvia Van Kirk, by the 1820s and 1830s, the Canadian frontier, like its American counterpart, was a place "conspicuous for the rise of racial categorization and discrimination and for the economic and sexual marginality of native-born sons and daughters to the new order". White observers stigmatized Metis as having inherited the worst of both races. Unlike their American cousins, they had no option of becoming legally white, but like them, Canadian Metis women were "consigned... to virtual anonymity unless or until married

⁴⁸ Ibid., Murphy, Lucy. *Great Lakes Creoles*, 11.

⁴⁹ Ibid, Murphy, *Gathering of Rivers*, 74.

according to Christian rite.”⁵⁰ Canada refused to grant any group-wide status to the Metis and tried to force them into declaring themselves as ‘white’ or ‘Indian’⁵¹. Conversations about how to define the U.S.-Canadian border became conversations about race, citizenship, and national belonging or exclusion.

Hogue notes that the Minnesota territorial government allowed some Minnesota Metis to vote if they could prove they were American citizens. This work will examine the voting rights of Great Lakes Metis men more closely and compare them to the amount of voting rights Metis men possessed in other states and territories within the context of the larger sociopolitical link between race, enfranchisement and American citizenship. The Canadian authorities were emphatic that, since so many Metis were illegitimate, Metis men and children could not inherit the white racial status of their fathers according to prevailing British law.⁵² The Canadian government, more punitively, also sought to disenfranchise most of the Metis from their rights as Indians, without offering anything to the Metis in return. The American government did allow the Metis to choose Indian status. Chantal Fiola noted that in Canada, “Halfbreeds” could not be counted as Indian, nor could they participate with their Indian kin in treaty-making. The Canadian government required the Metis to take cash payments or receipts for future cash,

⁵⁰ Van Kirk, Sylvia. *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society 1670-1870*. Winnipeg, 1980, p. 205-206.

⁵¹ Hogue, Michel. *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People*. University of North Carolina Press, 2015, p. 7.

⁵² Brown, Jennifer S. H. *Strangers in the Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980, p. 216.

rather than receive land, and in effect became second-class citizens in their own communities.⁵³

The American and Canadian governmental attack on Metis rights began as an attack on the rights of Native women to transmit Indian status to their children. Canada's Indian Act of 1876 defined an Indian as "any male person of Indian blood reputed to belong to a particular band." But women who married non-Native men could not have themselves or their offspring counted as Indian, except for collecting cash annuities, and the annuities could be lost if the government decided she was "living immorally" with another man⁵⁴. Therefore, the colonial state attempted to disenfranchise Native women and divest them of their property according to patriarchal logic, by punishing women who married interracially or did not display "proper" sexual behavior in a legal marriage. This maintained colonial power by turning women's property over to the state and by decreasing the number of people deemed "Indian."

The Ordinance of 1787 also ended a communal system of agriculture by requiring that commonly held land be individually fenced, which had devastating consequences for the property rights of Indian and metis women in the territory⁵⁵. Ekberg argues convincingly that their communal style of farming, with common fields and pasture lands, produced a communal culture among French Creoles. But Ekberg refuses to really discuss the fur trade and also emphatically states that his work is not about Native American history, studies or people, nor

⁵³ Fiola, Chantal. *Rekindling the Sacred Fire: Metis Ancestry and Anishinaabé Spirituality*. University of Manitoba Press, 2015, p. 15, p. 45.

⁵⁴ Garcia, Veronica Vasquez. "Native Women and State Legislation in Mexico and Canada: The Agrarian Law and the Indian Act." In [Women and the colonial gaze / edited by Tamara L. Hunt and Micheline R. Lessard](#). New York University Press, 2002, p. 98.

⁵⁵ Ekberg, Carl J. *French Roots in the Illinois Country: The Mississippi Frontier in Colonial Times*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998, p. 121-123.

race relations, nor the Metis as an ethnic group, which is amusingly ironic, since he *does* acknowledge that the majority of French-Creoles were in fact Metis. “Open-field agriculture required tremendous social cohesion” and had “a ‘pervasive ethic of mutual aid... so deeply engrained that it assumed a quasi-religious role.’ Since their very subsistence depended on cooperating with their neighbors...habitants were little inclined to murder or maim each other, or even challenge one another to a duel.” Ekberg observes.⁵⁶

The communalism of this culture could have just as easily sprung from Indian cultural influences as well as French. To bolster his evidence for the non-violent nature of French-Creole society in the Midwest, Ekberg cites the verdict in the murder case of Henri Catin, who was killed at his home in Kaskaskia, Illinois in 1738, during a drunken brawl with Jean-Baptiste and Daniel Richard. The only punishment the Richard brothers faced for their role in the death of Henri Catin was a fine, since they were not convicted of the murder. They were each fined 100 sous, with the money going to sustain the poor people of their local Catholic parish in Kaskaskia⁵⁷. Might the officials have drawn inspiration from Indian jurisprudence in ruling on this manslaughter? It was a well-established practice in the Great Lakes country to “cover” a murder with gifts or money. It’s also well-documented that Great Lakes Indians also had a dislike of interpersonal violence, and also had communal farming and gathering systems, in their case usually controlled by women. But, as usual, Ekberg seems stalwartly determined to ignore any Indian cultural influence on the “Creoles” he imagines as pristinely French.

Female property rights took a further blow in the 1820s, when American officials fined

⁵⁶ Ekberg, *French Roots in the Illinois Country*, 263.

⁵⁷ Ekberg, Carl J. “Agriculture, Mentalités, and Violence on the Illinois Frontier.” *Illinois Historical Journal*, Vol. 88, No. 2 (Summer 1995), pp. 101-116.

and jailed Green Bay's leading white gentlemen in common-law partnerships with Native women. The judges and courts declared that white men cohabiting with Indian and Metis women were guilty of "lewd fornication", insisting that the men legally marry their companions. Saler argues that this verdict also served to punish the involved white men for a "cultural defection" that blurred racial lines and property lines between Indians and whites. The legally enforced marriages made Native women subject to the system of coverture, which made their property, including their lands, their husband's property, and gave the new government power over the custody of their children. This served dual colonial purposes of weakening Indian land tenure and ensuring that more Indian land passed into the control of white men.⁵⁸

In this context, the legal and judicial attempt to enforce American-style marriage on indigenous and Metis people in the nineteenth-century Great Lakes was equally as much about enforcing patriarchal social relations and a male-dominated, capitalist system of property ownership as it was about race. If the American government granted Metis men the status of white citizens in an American territory, the government expected them to behave as white men and participate in the emergent capitalist economy with a moneyed Euro-American lifestyle. Racialized ideas of citizenship were often promulgated by the erasure or marginalization of Native women.

I hypothesize that because the colonial societies of America and Canada, even in a derogatory manner, recognized that indigenous women were the traditional keepers of culture,

⁵⁸ Saler, Bethel. *The Settlers' Empire: Colonialism and State Formation in America's Old Northwest*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015, p. 217. See also Murphy, Lucy Eldersveld. *Great Lakes Creoles: A French-Indian Community on the Northern Borderlands, Prairie Du Chien, 1750-1860*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 118-119, 146, 154.

land, and tribal sovereignty, the ultimate source of the Native “race”, they therefore sought to oppress them as much as possible and maintain the indigenous woman in a low-class status to ensure the racial subordination of Indian people. Because Indian women were such important keepers of culture, I contend that the Indian women, those who mothered the Metis and married Europeans, made the later decisions about how best to identify themselves and their families racially to the authorities. They made the decision about whether to enroll with Indian kin on a tribal nation, continue to pursue their lives as Metis in Canada or more remote parts of the U.S.A., or whether to assimilate and pass for white.

Susan Sleeper-Smith has even gone so far as to celebrate passing for white in Metis families as a successful form of Indian resistance and survival. Although passing did enable persistence in their homelands for Metis people, it also entailed a painful confrontation with racism, a loss of history, and often forcible, conflicted acculturation. Melinda Marie Jetté, a descendant of a nineteenth-century Oregon metis community whose immediate ancestors decided to pass for white, summarized this ambivalence in her chronicles of their past. It took only four generations for her family of French-Indian fur traders and farmers to transition into monolingual Anglophones, urban business owners whose marriages were mostly to white Euro-Americans, “Irish and German Catholics” who shared their religion. She muses that the metis of Oregon’s French Prairie who took American citizenship “must have foreseen a future where their children and grandchildren would speak English”⁵⁹, and philosophically ponders what was cast off by her family in their quest for survival. “And so I am American, but I still feel a sense of

⁵⁹ Jetté, Melinda Marie. *Ordinary Lives: Three Generations of a French-Indian Family in Oregon, 1827-1931*. (MA Thesis: Université Laval, Quebec City, 1996), p. 128.

loss, a strange nostalgia for something I never knew.”⁶⁰ It is through the prism of indigenous and Metis survival in the midst of loss and nostalgia that I will examine the idea of race, the idea of America, and who the Metis decided to be.

⁶⁰ Jetté, Melinda Marie. *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races: A French-Indian Community in Nineteenth-Century Oregon, 1812-1859*, xvi.

Chapter 1: The 17th Century- Metis Beginnings

In this chapter I explore the political and social reasons for the rise of the Metis people and their culture, the way they formed their identity and kinship, and the mobility they enjoyed in the 17th century as dual subjects of France and of their own tribal nations. The French government encouraged its mainly male, sparsely settled colonists in North America to intermarry with indigenous women and produce a population of French subjects born in the country. This solved a number of the French government's problems: its unwillingness to send out large numbers of French colonists, the general unwillingness of most French Catholic people to migrate to North America, and the problem of peopling its colony to defend its territorial claims against rival European powers. The French government's unique approach to colonization naturalized the children of French men and indigenous women as French citizens.

I hypothesize that the attempt to claim the Metis as French citizens also constituted a failed colonial attempt to erase their indigenous identity and kinship ties. The French government's failure to eradicate indigenous culture, language and identity among the Metis and their parents led to racism against the Metis, the abandonment of intermarriage as a tool of official colonial policy, a decline in French cultural confidence, and an inadvertent recognition by the French that the Metis formed a distinct people of their own, a Native people, as early utopian hopes for the French colonists to assimilate Native peoples were dashed.

On both sides of the Atlantic, the seventeenth century was a time of war, disorder, and near-continuous upheaval, out of which the Metis people and their culture were born. Many historians have pondered the reasons for the distinctiveness of the French response to indigenous people, wherein the French preferred trade and intermarriage to open war. This

early period of war, shifting alliances, and mass migration may hold some answers. Richard White has described it as a “world made of fragments” and described French and Indian people as “co-creators of a world in the making.”¹ This chapter will examine that world, and will analyze the social, demographic, religious, and political factors in both European and indigenous populations in New France and the early American Midwest that led to the inception of widespread mixture between the two groups, and the formation of a Metis ethnicity. Interestingly, this formation of a Metis identity and ethnicity, a distinct Metis peoplehood, often occurred in a Native American context and in direct contravention or defiance of French colonial policies that sought to claim the Metis as exclusively French and project French power in the New World.

Susan Sleeper-Smith criticized Richard White’s analysis of Great Lakes Native societies as inaccurate, asserting that they were far more robust and far less in need of French aid than White claimed². But the concept of the “middle ground” is still a useful metaphor for a multicultural place at the nexus of three empires- the French, the British, and the American. The present-day American Great Lakes region was known as the *pays d’en haut*, the Upper Country or the High Country. By the seventeenth century, the *pays d’en haut* encompassed all the land around the Great Lakes (except southern Lake Ontario, which was Iroquois), and beyond the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River.

Fur-trading, a key part of this world, linked the labor of Indian people to global

¹ Ibid., White, Richard. *The Middle Ground*, p. 1.

² Ibid., Sleeper-Smith, Susan. *Indian Women and French Men*, p. 3. She makes a similar point in Sleeper-Smith, Susan. *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*. Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press Books, 2018, p. 10.

economies. Although fur-trading began on the coast of Maine as early as the 1520s, it increased after the middle 1500s when “demand for fancy furs”³ began to increase in Europe. These fancy furs were not exclusively beaver pelts, but contained a high proportion of beaver furs for the making of hats in France and elsewhere in Europe. The French government heavily taxed these furs, propelling some of the eastern tribes to trade with the British instead, This fueled war and pushed Great Lakes Anishinaabeg tribes into the French trade as allies and marriage partners, not Iroquois aggression per se. “French officials could not accept a *Pax Iroquoia*. Through skillful provocation and unacceptable demands, they drew the Iroquois into a conflict which exposed the ‘French Indians’ to the rising power of the Iroquois... the so called Iroquois wars would much more appropriately be called the ‘Early French Wars.’”⁴

The mutual need for trade between Indian tribes and the French established indigenous social protocols of intermarriage, alliance and kinship as a precursor to trade, which led to the rise of the Metis people. Many demographic factors led to Metis origin: a surplus of French men in the Great Lakes, a paucity of French-Canadian women both in Montreal and in the *pays d'en haut*, and the relative under-population of French North America as a whole all led to the close consideration of Native nations as political allies, marriage partners and societal equals. This French colonial policy of intermarriage was still a colonizing project in its overall aim, intended to make Natives into Frenchmen and Frenchwomen and assimilate them completely into French-Canadian culture, a “Frenchification” or *francisation* policy. Patrick Wolfe notes that

³ Howey, Meghan C.L. *Mound Builders and Monument Makers of the Northern Great Lakes, 1200-1600*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012, p. 42.

Schlesier, Karl H. “Epidemics and Indian Middlemen: Rethinking the Wars of the Iroquois.” *Ethnohistory* Vol. 23, No. 2 (Spring 1976), pp. 129-145.

one of the tactics of settler colonialism is “officially encouraged miscegenation.”⁵

In reality, this official encouragement, meant to create new French people, created the Metis identity and only accelerated the process of intermarriage and mutual transculturation that was already occurring. This produced ties of kinship between French and indigenous people and mobility between French and Indian identity, and French and Indian nationhood, for their Metis offspring. Men and women made decisions that affirmed they were living in an Indian world and frustrated the French government’s designs of extending French empire and French culture. Despite often “rancorous enmities and social fragmentation”⁶ between Indians and French, the process of *métissage* revealed their mutual need and interdependence upon one another. Blum also argues that the two peoples were interdependent because of the isolating effect of the long, cold winters and mutual reliance on riverine and water-based trade. “In the Great Lakes region...Native/French marriages, from the late 1600s, were the norm.”⁷ The descendants of French men and Indian women became the freemen, the essential fur-trade workforce, with extensive legal rights and official encouragement.⁸ The passage from the establishment of an early fur-trade charter reads, “*Ordonne sa Majesté, que les descendants des François qui s'habitueront au dit pays, ensemble les sauvages qui seront amenés... la connoissance de la foi et en feront profession, seront censés et réputés naturels françois, et comme tels pourront venir habiter en France quand bon leur semblera, et y acquérir, tester,*

⁵ Wolfe, Patrick. “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native.” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): p. 388. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240>.

⁶ Blum, Rony. *Ghost Brothers: Adoption of a French Tribe by Bereaved Native America*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s Press, 2005, p. 118.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., Blum. *Ghost Brothers*, p. 115.

succéder, et accepter donations et légats.”⁹ This contains the idea that Native people will be brought- aménes- into French culture, implying that they will be brought voluntarily. But in this hypothetically voluntary association between Indians and French, the French still had the power because the French were ‘bringing’ the Indians into French culture. The idea that the descendants of Frenchmen and Indians, once converted to Roman Catholicism, would be “*les naturels François*” also warrants closer examination. I surmise that this legal phrase attempts to erase the Indian ancestry and culture of the Metis in favor of their French heritage by claiming them as naturally born or naturalized French. Various older French dictionaries define ‘*naturels*’ as the natural subjects of a country, so that this word could imply the sense that the Metis are naturalized as French citizens, the natives of France.¹⁰ Carolyn J. Eichner observed that the word ‘naturel’ in contemporary French implies someone of illegitimate birth. If illegitimacy were implied in the Hundred Associates Charter, this would be a parallel and precursor of 19th-century British definitions of the Metis as a people of illegitimate birth, although the British used this idea of legal illegitimacy to deny the Metis full citizenship rights, not grant them¹¹. The word “*naturel*” could also imply stereotypical associations between the Indian heritage of the Metis and nature.

Champlain and the Jesuit missionaries believed that Indians had the capacity to become “civilized”, that is, to become French, and would readily abandon their own culture once

⁹ *Acte d’établissement des Cents-Associés*, article 17: ANC (Archives nationales du Canada), C11A, 2, I, 44655, 1627.

¹⁰ Boyer, Abel and John Mary Bruyset. *Dictionnaire Royal François et anglois-françois, tiré des meilleurs auteurs qui ont écrit dans ces deux langues*. London: 1768, p. 416.

¹¹ Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, p. 216.

exposed to a French education and lifestyle¹². Louis XIV and his minister, Colbert, encouraged intermarriage between French men and Indian women due to fears that wholesale emigration of French people to the Americas would “depopulate” France and that the colony should “encourage a hardy mixed-blood people”¹³ to form. France’s leaders wished to project political power, and were still recovering from, and remembering, French losses in the medieval and early modern epidemics and the Black Death, as well as her casualties in the Wars of Religion and other European wars. In her comments on the historical context of the Metis people’s formation, Olive Patricia Dickason observed that, “In the seventeenth century”, European rulers and lawmakers perceived a “direct relationship... between a nation-state’s power and the size of its population: France, aspiring to continental pre-eminence in Europe, needed its people at home.”¹⁴ The majority of French people in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries obliged, generally wanting to stay home in *douce France* and showing little inclination to move.

The French government allowed only “natural-born French Catholic”¹⁵ immigrants to immigrate to New France, by order of Cardinal Richelieu in 1627. The order thereby excluded all non-Catholics and naturalized foreigners from immigrating, though a trickle of Huguenots continued to surreptitiously arrive during the entire colonial period. The Jesuits were the

¹² Jaenen, Cornelius J. *The Role of the Church in New France*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976, p. 28.

¹³ *ANC, MGI, C11A, II, fol. 199-199v, 206v: 5/4/1666*. Colbert á intendant Talon.

¹⁴ Dickason, Olive Patricia. “From ‘One Nation’ in the Northeast to ‘New Nation’ in the Northwest: A look at the emergence of the métis.” In *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*. Edited by Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S.H. Brown. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985, 21-22.

¹⁵ Jaenen, *The Role of the Church in New France*, 1976, p. 29.

primary evangelizers of New France, which included “the Illinois country, the Great Lakes region and the northern forests”¹⁶ of the *pays d’en haut* as far as Lake Superior and Hudson’s Bay, because Richelieu assigned the Jesuits there in 1632. They were successful in first converting the Micmacs, Malecites and Abenakis to Catholicism. Cornelius Jaenen contends that mixed-race children of the first generation of trappers and traders in Acadia were generally raised as Indian by their Micmac mothers. Jaenen also notes that officially sanctioned intermarriages between French men and Indian women in Quebec before 1700 were rare, but the “first sacramental marriage” between a French man and an Indian woman in Quebec took place on November 3rd, 1644, between Martin Prévost and Marie Manitouabewich¹⁷.

The supposed rarity of intermarriages in Quebec, of course, does not account for their later ubiquity in the *pays d’en haut*, where marriages *au façon du pays* occurred without Catholic sanction: what may have met with disapproval in Montreal became the norm in what was almost entirely Indian country until the mid-1800s. The Catholic Church was the national church of France and its colonies, the dominant political force in New France in the seventeenth century, and seen as the “basis” of civil society. In the allegedly “heroic age” prior to the arrival of a bishop in 1659 and the advent of a royal government in 1663, the clergy were involved in colonization, local administration, and the fur trade. Indeed, the fur trade often went hand-in-hand with Catholic evangelization of Indians, to ensure political loyalty to France among the

¹⁶ Jaenen, *Role of the Church in New France*, 8.

¹⁷ Jesuit Relations, November 3rd, 1644, marriage of Martin Prevost and Marie Manitouabewich (Manitouwabish)- water spirit? Jesuit Relations, cited in Dickason, “From One Nation”. See also Larouche, Leónidas. (editor): *Le Second Registre de Tadoussac, 1668-1700*. (Montreal, 1972), p. 151-152.

tribes, as much as spiritual salvation. Cornelius Jaenen wryly observed the following synthesis of colonialism, capitalism and Christianity in early New France. “Wherever the missionary went in search of new tribes to evangelize, the fur-trade followed; conversely, when the *courerurs de bois* ventured among new tribes and regions in pursuit of beaver pelts, the missionary was soon asked to follow.”¹⁸

Seventeenth-century French Catholic revivalism permeated New France, mostly in the form of a “sanctimonious clique”¹⁹ of wealthy and influential devotees known as the Company of the Holy Sacrament, who provided metropolitan support for French settlements in Canada. They promoted and practiced a rigorous form of Catholicism which “stressed self-abnegation, severe penance, and... ecstatic or charismatic behavior.” They sent out the Ursulines, nursing and teaching nuns, as early as 1639. In the 1630s, the Ursuline convent at Tours received its first Canadian novices, two daughters of “Saint-Etienne de la Tour and his native wife.”²⁰ The Ursulines arrived to educate the colony’s girls, of all ages and all social ranks. Three Indian girls who were in training to be Ursuline nuns in Quebec died at the convent hospital in Sillery, Quebec, presumably of introduced disease. The financial help and political clout of the ultra-Catholic *dévots* helped to found a “Christian utopian” settlement, Ville-Marie or Mary’s City. Ville-Marie later became Montreal, a fur-trade hub, though even these devout pioneers were aware of the site’s commercial and agricultural potential.

Even during peak immigration years, few French Catholics made the trip across the Atlantic. A legal code called the *Coutume de Paris* (Custom of Paris) codified “equality among all

¹⁸ Ibid, Jaenen, *The Role of the Church in New France*, 1976, p. 74.

¹⁹ Jaenen, 7.

²⁰ Ibid., 8-9.

heirs regardless of sex”²¹ in the dispersal of inheritance, ensuring equity and also giving a significant boost to women’s property rights. The system contributed to high rates of celibacy and late marriage in France because it “delayed the final division of parents’ property”. These legal practices also may have been another reason why few French people left France during this era. “By giving all the children a share of the patrimony, it encouraged them to remain close to the paternal home.”²² Remaining close to the paternal home and receiving a fair share of inheritance from their parents may have also contributed to French people’s economic success in their home communities, rather than driving them abroad to make a living elsewhere. French peasants were not inflicted with the mass landlessness, starvation and eviction of English, Scottish and Irish peasants in the same era, nor were their younger sons and daughters disadvantaged due to primogeniture.

Therefore, to effectively rule New France, its rulers needed to work with the population they had available to them as subjects and create their own workforce. This remarkable religious and racial compromise, as Olive Patricia Dickason noted, proposed that intermarriage with Frenchmen, and above all, conversion to the Catholic faith, made their Indian spouses and children French as well, prioritizing “spiritual conformity”²³ rather than an absolutist notion of race. The policy of *francisation*, and Colbert’s hope that French settlers and native people

²¹ “French Women in Colonial Missouri, 1750-1805.” Boyle, Susan Calafate. In *Women in Missouri History: In Search of Power and Influence*. Ed. LeeAnn Whites, Mary C. Neth, Gary R. Kremer. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2014, p. 19.

²² Boyle, “French Women in Colonial Missouri”, 19.

²³ Dickason, Olive Patricia. “From ‘One Nation’ in the Northeast to ‘New Nation’ in the Northwest: A Look at the Emergence of the Metis” in Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S.H. Brown, eds. *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America* Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985, p. 22.

would become “one people and one blood”, indicated that the French in the seventeenth century were not thinking in explicitly racial terms when they conceptualized French identity or Indian identity: “people” and “blood” stood for the hope of common “kinship and lineage” rather than inherited characteristics. The early French settlers were possessed of a culturally paternalistic confidence, assured that their numerically small presence could convince the vast numbers of their native allies to join their culture and become *francisés*. Differences between the French and the Indians in the seventeenth century were perceived primarily as cultural, not racial or biological. Saliha Belmessous argues that the granting of French citizenship to Catholic Indians was an attempt to weaken Indian land title and strengthen French claims, since “their submission to Christian law was inseparable from their subjection to the colonizer’s law.”²⁴ And Christianized Indian *francisés*, now legally equal to other French citizens, could defend France’s claim to the land from any other colonial powers.²⁵

Belmessous has her own idea about why the Jesuits converted more Indian women than men. Women, according to Belmessous, were believed to set the “natural order” of a society: therefore, assimilation of Indians to French “civility” would be best accomplished through the conversion of women. The state paid out dowries to mixed-marriage couples in order to implement this policy. This, of course, did not mean that racism was absent among the 17th-century French, but that this racial consciousness did not acquire much of the pseudo-scientific implications that it would later signify. Belmessous also attempts to make the point that

²⁴ Belmessous, Saliha. “Assimilation and Racialism in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century French Colonial Policy.” *The American Historical Review*. Vol 110, No. 2 (April 2005), p. 331.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 330-331.

intermarriages between French men and Indian women were encouraged because in the seventeenth century, French intellectuals believed that heredity was passed solely through the father: therefore, a French father and a non-French mother could make a French child²⁶.

She also contends that this was an attempt to assimilate indigenous women into European-style patriarchy, since a marriage between a French man and an Indian woman upheld dominance of men over women and whites over Indians. This line of Belmessous's argument is more tenuous. French colonial policies may have intended to reinforce European patriarchy and the dominance of white men over non-white women by promoting racial intermarriage. But as Belmessous has acknowledged, along with Susan Sleeper-Smith, Sylvia Van Kirk, Jennifer S.H. Brown, and Jacqueline Peterson, Indian peoples and their cultures were overwhelmingly dominant in the atmosphere of the Great Lakes and Frenchmen actually assimilated to Native culture, not the other way around. Fur trade men functioned, in practice, as additions to Native societies and families and did not have enough power to coerce Native people. Because of this fact, I contend that intermarriages with white traders provided new political and economic opportunities for many native women and were not necessarily patriarchal by default, allowing native women to continue using their accustomed gender roles in new ways. In this work, I will further explore how the creation of a racially and culturally mixed fur-trade society offered an equal chance for European men and Native women to liberate themselves from pre-existing cultural beliefs and expectations, a new society they passed on to children termed the "free people."

Belmessous contends that later eighteenth-century French ideas about race were

²⁶ Ibid., 322-333.

inspired by the overwhelming failure of the *francisation* policy. The majority of Indians and Metis, although they readily accepted French material goods and aspects of French language and French Catholicism, did not consent to leave their cultures behind and become French. Many Frenchmen fled in the other direction, to join Indian culture. Belmessous contends that this failure led to French racialization of Indians- unable to accept the policy's failure, and unwilling to consider that their culture might not be superior, French policymakers of the eighteenth century proceeded to blame that failure on Indians' supposedly innate racial differences from French people. Jacqueline Peterson notes that the term *metissage*, referring to the racial mixture of European and Indian people, also referred to the "mixing of civilized people and heathen or primitive people" and was "pessimistic and derogatory", using terms for mixed-race persons which described them as mules or monsters²⁷.

There was also a general neglect of New France by French bishops. "The upper country of Canada" (Jaenen's literal translation for the *pays d'en haut* or future Midwest), "the Illinois-Mississippi region and Louisiana received no episcopal visit during the entire French regime."²⁸ I contend that this facilitated the syncretism of Roman Catholicism with Ojibwe and Cree spirituality in the Great Lakes, a spiritual blending as well as a cultural one.

In the pre-American period on the Great Lakes, ideas about whiteness or white identity often referred to culture and lifestyle more than heritage, since Metis heritage was so often

²⁷ Peterson, Jacqueline. "Red River Redux: Metis Ethnogenesis and the Great Lakes Region.", in *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History*. Nicole St. Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall (eds). Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012, p. 28.

²⁸ Jaenen, Cornelius J. *The Role of the Church in New France*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976, p. 63.

mixed and intermarriage a commonplace social reality. This shifted as race became increasingly codified by law, restricting the mobility and identity available to American Metis. Ariela Gross observes that the legal construction of whiteness in America was a socially performative identity, as much as a phenotypic one- based on how people acted and what they did. If a man exercised the rights and duties associated with white men, which included voting, he was white, and if a woman behaved with “moral goodness and sexual virtue”, she was white. Gross explains, “Law was involved not only in recognizing race, but in creating it: the state itself helped make people white. In allowing men of low social status to perform whiteness by voting, serving on juries, and mustering in the militia, the state welcomed every white man into symbolic equality...Thus, law helped to constitute white men as citizens, and citizens as white men.” Gross observed about the role legal definitions played in early American social constructions of race.²⁹

The seventeenth-century French in Canada and the *pays d'en haut* of the future American Midwest, despite their unique strategy of intermarriage with native people, also turned to a more brutal solution to solve their labor problems: the enslavement of both Indian and African people as workers. Slavery of both Indians and Africans persisted as a customary practice in French-Creole and Metis communities until the end of the French colonial period, and really until the Ordinance of 1787 made the Northwest Territory a free territory of the United States. It's clear that the children of French men and enslaved “Panis” Indian women (Pawnee, Comache or Wichita) in the Midwest were absorbed into the Metis or Creole milieu as

²⁹ Gross, Ariela. "'Of Portuguese Origin': Litigating Identity and Citizenship among the 'Little Races' in Nineteenth-Century America." *Law and History Review* 25, no. 3 (2007): 467-512.

free people. However, the practices of slavery and the cultural meanings of enslavement differed widely between American Indian, French and Anglo-American people. Slaves in Indian communities, in addition to being viewed as payment for trade goods, or trade goods themselves, also symbolized friendship and alliance between the parties exchanging them. Enslaved people in Indian communities were often freed and adopted, and were not dehumanized for their race.

The French participated in Indian slavery as early as 1670, when Father Jacques Marquette accepted the gift of an enslaved Illinois boy as a payment from the boy's owner, an Ottawa man who was Marquette's patient³⁰. In 1678, Ottawa traders gave Daniel Greysolon Dulhut (Duluth) a gift of three slaves, which he accepted.³¹ In 1684, when two Frenchmen were murdered at Lake Superior, Dulhut refused to accept slaves as gifts from the murderer's family to "cover" the dead, according to indigenous custom. Instead, he "seized a group of Indian suspects" and brought them to Michilimackinac for trial, demanding and carrying out the execution of two of them for the murder.³²

As tensions mounted between the Iroquois and the French, the French tricked fifty-one Iroquois men into a meeting at Fort Frontenac, capturing them and selling them in Marseille as

³⁰ *Jesuit Relations*, LIV, 177, 191, LIX, 127. See also Marquette, Jacques and Louis Joliet, *Voyage et découverte de quelque pays et nations de l'Amérique Septentrionale*(Paris, 1681), p. 21.

³¹ "Mémoire du sieur Greyselou Du Lhut adressé a Monsieur le Marquis de Seignelay" (1682) and "Lettre du sieur Du Lhut á M. le Comte de Frontenac," April 5, 1679, in Margry, Pierre. comp., *Découvertes et établissements des Français dans l'ouest et dans la sud de l'Amérique* (Paris, 1876-1886).

³² Rushforth, Brett. *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France*. University of North Carolina Press, 2013, p. 144.

galley slaves.³³ This ignited the fury of the Iroquois in renewed warfare, not only because their kinsmen had been enslaved, but because the French had enslaved them by tricking them, rather than capturing them honorably in the confrontation of an open battle. And rather than merely seeking captives to adopt or otherwise incorporate into their own households, as the Iroquois would have, the French had condemned the enslaved Haudenosaunee to “hard labor on distant seas.”³⁴ The enslaved Iroquois were treated brutally in the galleys, tied to posts and whipped so that they could not sleep, nor “guard off the flies” from their open and festering wounds.³⁵ The French government returned some of the Iroquois slaves in attempted peace negotiations with the Iroquois, but most were not, which continued the war, and the return of the captives damaged French prestige in the eyes of their Indian allies.

Consequently, French officialdom “shied away” from openly endorsing Indian slavery after the 1680s, though it persisted in an illicit, semi-legal fashion for centuries after. Throughout the 1690s, fur traders continued to buy Indian captives from the *pays d’en haut*, trading them illegally. “The colony’s Indian allies, especially the Ottawas, Ojibwas, and Illinois, enslaved their western enemies”³⁶ and then offered these slaves as gifts to French fur trade merchants. Who were these “western enemies”? Some historians believe that the vast majority of them were Pawnee, so that the French word “Panis” came to connote any enslaved Indian in

³³ Louis Henri, Chevalier de Baugy, *Journal d’une expedition contre les Iroquois en 1687, rédigé par Le Chevalier de Baugy, aide de camp de M. le marquis de Denonville*(Paris, 1883), 45; *Jesuit Relations* LXIII, 23, 267, 304, LXIV, 255-257. See also: *Table du register des ordres du roy et depeches concernant les galeres pendant l’année 1687*”, December 18, 1687, AN, *Fonds de la Marine*, B6, XIX, 249v-250. (transportation of Iroquois slaves to Marseilles).

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ De Lom d’Arce, Louis Armand, Baron de Lahontan, *New Voyages to North America*, (London, 1703), I, p. 71-72

³⁶ Ibid.

New France, regardless of tribe or nation, although Ekberg cautions that “Panis” was a catch-all term and that some of the enslaved were also Wichita and Comanches.³⁷ Brett Rushforth agrees with Ekberg and says that the term “Panis” may have come from the fact that the Pawnee were suppliers of Indian slaves to the French, since the Pawnee were French allies, and began trading their captives to the French as early as the 1680s³⁸. Indian middlemen often traded captives between several different tribes before arriving at French and Metis settlements, further obscuring the exact tribal identity of enslaved Indians.

He states that the term “Panis” referred to the enslaved people from various Missouri River tribes and Plains nations, and that Augustine Grignon, a slaveholder and Metis patriarch, wrote that the term was used for “convenience”.³⁹ Rushforth states that the people enslaved in French and Metis communities were actually from the Skiri Pawnees, South Band Pawnees, the Arikaras and the Wichitas, as well as possible Osages and Quapaws. Rushforth assigns a more sinister significance to the use of the term “Panis” as a generic word for any enslaved Indian, arguing that the word’s use rendered Indian slaves ethnically indistinct in French eyes, transforming them into people whom the French considered it morally and legally permissible to enslave.

Exchanges of slaves between the French and various warring tribes added to the volatility of New France throughout the 1600s. The French government legalized the

³⁷ Ekberg, Carl J. *Colonial Ste.-Genevieve: An Adventure on the Mississippi Frontier*. Carbondale, IL: SIU Press, 2014, p. 105.

³⁸ Rushforth, Brett. *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France*. University of North Carolina Press, 2013, p. 135-139, 173.

³⁹ Augustin Grignon on the term ‘Panis’ or Pawnee being used for “convenience” to refer to all enslaved Indians in the Midwest. Grignon, Augustin. “Seventy-two Years’ Recollections of Wisconsin”, *Wis. Hist. Coll.*, III, (1857:1904), p. 256.

importation of Africans to New France in 1688, after the fiasco with the enslaved Iroquois, but the presence of black slaves was negligible. According to Brett Rushforth, “Only eleven African slaves”⁴⁰ were imported between 1689 and 1709. Indian slavery, like African slavery, was really an eighteenth and nineteenth century phenomenon, despite its seventeenth-century origins. Ekberg posits that the slave code was rarely obeyed or acknowledged in the Illinois Country, because the scarcity of white women often led to white masters emancipating and marrying their enslaved black mistresses, who then had freeborn children. In addition to the shortage of white women and the widespread availability of black and Indian women, Ekberg suggests that a “general absence of racism”⁴¹ permitted interracial relationships and marriage to be commonplace in colonial Illinois.

This is an oversimplification- the presence of *metissage* instead indicates that racism was cultural, not merely pertaining to physical traits, and willing, on the frontier, to accept black and Indian women as French. Perhaps many white men in the French Midwest married black women because their friends, neighbors and family members had set a pattern and married Indian and Metis women, and because cultural commonalities and religious affinities mattered more strongly than race. Blacks, whites, Indians and Metis in the *pays d’en haut* were all equally likely to be French-speaking Catholics who shared the same milieu, worked in the same occupations, had the same experience of intermarriage, and shared the same lifestyles.

Indeed, many free black Metis families like the DuSable and Bonga clans traded in furs, were Francophones who spoke Indian languages, and were also a part of the complex

⁴⁰ Rushforth, Brett. *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013, p. 153.

⁴¹ Ibid., Ekberg, *Colonial Ste. Genevieve*, 224.

intermarriages and kin networks between French, British and Indian people. African-Americans lived with Great Lakes Indians as captives, spouses, fur traders, tribal members, family members, and slaves, where they became skilled linguists and interpreters. The reason seems clear. If Europeans and Euro-Americans felt the necessity of acculturation to the pan-Indian world of the Great Lakes fur trade, black people must have felt it even more intensely, anticipating DuBois on the spiritual liminality of black Americans between their blackness and their Americanness. Although whites and blacks were both non-Indian, they likely experienced the *pays d'en haut* in different ways. It seems that black people may have experienced a kind of triple liminality- American, but neither native nor white, and forced to consider multiple perspectives for survival.

Black people in the early Midwest, exiled from their own ancestral countries, even from their New World birthplaces, and marginalized by the racial system of the societies from which they had come, must have known that their skill at mastering the languages and cultures of the fur trade frontier was even more crucial to their survival than it would be for whites in the Great Lakes. In New France, a place of both black and Indian slaves, and white indentured servants, which was not a plantation society, slavery for individuals was rarely lifelong. And slavery was not exclusively associated with blackness, nor blackness with slavery.

Jean and Marie-Jeanne Bonga, an enslaved black couple from Montreal, were French-speaking Catholics like their former masters, before being sold to Captain Daniel Robertson, a Scotsman who had married into a prominent French-Canadian family, the Reaume family. Because enslaved blacks in Montreal lived in the central city, they had social contact with free blacks, access to an education, and most of the same legal rights as other Montrealers.

Robertson and the Bongas moved to Michilimackinac, Michigan, in 1782. After Robertson's departure in 1787, the Bongas obtained their emancipation and legally married, and prospered into owning the first tavern on Mackinac⁴². During this time, Indian customs and traditions around diplomacy, kinship and alliance still prevailed, and the Bongas were well-integrated into Indian, French and Catholic social networks in a manner more similar to their neighbors than different. Mattie Harper observed that the Bongas were an equal part of the fur-trade world and not assigned a lower status due to their African descent, commenting that "It appears that the Bongas were integrated into these kin networks in the same way that Indians were integrated."⁴³ Their children also undoubtedly learned English and various Native languages in addition to French. Slavery in the Midwestern Middle Ground, influenced by Indian traditions of captivity, alliance and kinship, was not race-based. The comparative "absence of a black-white binary" allowed blacks freedom, prosperity, promise, and acceptance into Catholic, French and Indian communities on similar terms as kin who were culturally similar, not racially strange.

The binary, rather than being between black and white, lay between Indians and non-Indians. Therefore, free black fur-trading people like the Bongas, who married Indians and had Metis children and grandchildren, often referred to themselves as 'white'⁴⁴ in an oblique (or

⁴² Migration of Bongas from Montreal to Mackinac, freedom and tavern-keeping: Schoolcraft, Henry Rowe. *Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years With the Indian Tribes on the American Frontiers* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1851), p. 321.

⁴³ Harper, Mattie Marie. "French Africans in Ojibwe Country: Negotiating Marriage, Identity and Race, 1780-1890." Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2012, p. 46.

⁴⁴ Black Bonga family humorously referring to themselves as 'white', or else in a metaphorical sense to mean 'non-Indian'- Flandrau, Charles E. "Reminiscences of Minnesota During the Territorial Period," *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society Collections* 9. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1901: p. 198-199. Also published in "Letters of George Bonga," *The Journal of Negro History* 12, no. 1 (January 1927): p. 53-54.

perhaps humorous) way of meaning ‘non-Indian’, due to the “region’s sheer diversity” and the ability of many people to claim multiple identities at once. Harper linked this to the fluidity of Native social formations like bands and clans⁴⁵. As opposed to southern ideas about race and slavery in a plantation economy, eighteenth-century Indians in *Anishinaabewaki* (the Ojibwe country) made a place for blacks in their territory as they did for other non-Indians willing to acculturate to their norms. Harper observed the social and racial flexibility of the Great Lakes fur-trade world when she observed that “regardless of their color, these various community members stood in similar relation to the prominent trader families, who showed no obvious discrimination based on race in extending Catholic kin ties.” Pierre Bonga, of “full African” ancestry, the son of Jeanne and Marie-Jeanne, was certainly fluent in Ojibwe, and would be highly regarded by his employers of the North West Company and Hudson’s Bay Company. He would become a fur trader, move to Minnesota, and marry a Leech Lake Ojibwe woman⁴⁶.

Their descendants would intermarry so extensively with other Leech Lake Ojibwes that Pierre’s grandchildren considered themselves primarily Indian, although they had to contend more forcefully with Anglo-American notions of anti-blackness than earlier generations of the family ever did. In the newly hardening racial systems of the South and the eastern seaboard, their black ancestry would have given them a legally black, subordinate status. But in the Midwest, the Bongas were, by the third generation, socialized as Ojibwes, Anishinaabémowin speakers and lifelong residents of Leech Lake since birth, with no extant ties to any black community, although they, like many Metis, remained French-speaking Catholics as well. I

⁴⁵ Ibid., Harper, Mattie Marie. “French Africans in Ojibwe Country”, 3-6.

⁴⁶ Harper, “French Africans”, 31-32.

contend that their identity was based on their manner of living, cultural practices, and kin relationships- essentialist notions of race were unknown. By Leech Lake standards, they were no different than any other tribal member, including the many who had non-Indian paternal ancestry.

Jean Baptiste Point DuSable, regarded as the founder of Chicago, was likewise a free, well-educated, French-speaking black Catholic, a fur trader who married a Potawatomi wife, Kittahawa or Catherine, in Cahokia, Illinois. They raised a family at his Chicago fur-trading outpost in the 1780s. They lived there with their children Suzanne and Jean. Suzanne married a fur-trader, Jean-Baptiste Pelletier, continuing Metis female traditions of marrying non-Indian fur trader men to expand kin networks.

Ann Keating speculates that Point DuSable and his mother may have been from Kaskaskia, Illinois, which was a Francophone community of whites, blacks and Indians both free and enslaved, as well as the Metis.⁴⁷ Catherine, Jean-Baptiste's mother, and Jean, were the slaves of Montreal-born Jean-Jacques Brunet and his wife Elisabeth Deshayes Brunet, and were emancipated after the death of the Brunets. Keating explains, "It is quite possible that Catherine's son was in fact Jean-Baptiste Point DuSable. He had the same first name, was the right age", and had many connections to Kaskaskia.⁴⁸ Local Indians themselves seem to have been proud of the racial equality and mobility they fostered in the early Midwest when they

⁴⁷ Link between DuSables and Kaskaskia- Kaskaskia Manuscript Collection, Document 46:10:8:1, Randolph County Archives, quoted and translated by Carl J. Ekberg, Grady Kilman and Pierre Lebeau, *Code Noir: the Colonial Slave Laws of French Mid-America* (Naperville, IL, n.d.), 62-63.

⁴⁸ Durkin Keating, Ann. *Rising up from Indian Country: The Battle of Fort Dearborn and the Birth of Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012, p. 30-31.

told visitors that the first “white” man in Chicago was a black man. The presence of African-Americans in the fur trade and the ubiquity of intermarriage between various African, Indian and European groups is one reason Lucy Murphy defends her use of the term “Creole” to describe mixed-race inhabitants of the French Midwest⁴⁹.

Ekberg, by contrast, is impatient with the presence of Metis and intermarried Indians in his study of colonial Ste. Genevieve, Missouri.⁵⁰ Although he acknowledges the commonplace nature of white-Indian marriages, and admits that the majority of Ste. Genevieve’s citizens were Metis, he insists that “Metis children raised in French Creole families carried little Indian culture with them... for all intents and purposes they were white children.”⁵¹ I respectfully disagree with Ekberg, who seems to have taken the position of the French and American authorities regarding Metis status: the reality was far more complex. This work argues that the Metis people knew exactly who they were, both individually and collectively, an indigenous people of mixed heritage who presented themselves as French in French colonial environments and as Metis among themselves. This mobility between identities proved useful in the war-torn Great Lakes region. When the Huron or Wendat were displaced by Iroquois/ Haudenosaunee warfare, and the guns of the British-allied Haudenosaunee, the French assumed the middleman role in the fur trade, a role requiring intermarriage, and all other trade that the Hurons had once possessed. Surviving Huron-Wendats became assimilated into Iroquois society. Jaenen suggests that the mass conversion of the Huron by the Jesuits led to political weaknesses and

⁴⁹ Ibid., Murphy, Lucy. *Great Lakes Creoles*, p. 17-20.

⁵⁰ Ekberg, Carl J. *Colonial Ste. Genevieve: An Adventure on the Mississippi Frontier*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2014, p. 114, 116.

⁵¹ Ibid., Ekberg, Carl J. *Colonial Ste. Genevieve*, p. 114.

tensions in the tribe, which facilitated their conquest and dispersal by the Iroquois.

In this turbulent milieu, the Metis people emerged as tangible proof of an Algonquian-French alliance. I contend that women took the lead as diplomats and political leaders, engaging in widespread intermarriage with the French to advance Algonquian political and economic goals in a multi-tribal region. In her study of the Ohio River Valley, Susan Sleeper-Smith argues that its ecologically rich and fertile landscape encouraged the formation of multiethnic, cooperative, largely peaceable villages. Instead of Richard White's "middle ground", Sleeper-Smith sees the early Midwest as a "native ground", an essentially Indian world dominated by powerful mercantile tribes like the Odawa and the Illinois confederacy.

This Indian world, "created in great part by Indian women." was materially prosperous due to its agricultural productivity and its role in the fur trade, and an increasingly pan-tribal political formation, whose alliances would hold off settler domination for a very long time. She argues that Europeans were mere adjuncts to this world, and lived in it according to Indian terms and Indian cultural practices. I concur with Susan Sleeper-Smith and Rony Blum that this multiethnic, demographically stable world of "well-fed", wealthy Great Lakes Indians and their non-Indian allies, spouses, adoptees and kin was a road not taken in American history, a path that might have led the nation in a more peaceful, racially harmonious direction if it had been followed. Susan Sleeper-Smith mused that "Indians were more than minor obstacles to western expansion. They constituted a viable alternative to it- an alternative lost for centuries under the ashes of burnt crops, charred villages, and the masculine monuments of a destiny

made manifest only by amnesia and self-interest.”⁵²

During this period, the Metis identity was able to form in an indigenous context because pre-existing indigenous social formations frequently incorporated outsiders of various kinds, and indigenous designations of identity were also fluid. Michael Witgen argues similarly that the Great Lakes and the early Midwest was an Indian world, dominated by the Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe) and Odawa, where indigenous people had most of the political control and a demographic majority until the mid-nineteenth century- a world where they responded to European contact with dynamically fluid cultural reinvention, not decline. Different people could, and often did, assume different identities in different spaces, spaces where the French and British often had little more than symbolic control, while Native people, as part of preexisting cosmopolitan trade and kin networks, set the terms of their relationships with outsiders and truly became the people from everywhere. This contributed to the fluidity and flexibility of the Metis identity. To the French in this era, they might proclaim themselves “French”, but might feel themselves to be Odawa or Ojibwe among Native kin. Witgen observed, “In the West they might become Cree or Gens des Terres, and whether or not they identified as *Sauteur* (Ojibwe), Ottawa or by band designations such as Awassé, Muskogee, and Monsoni, they were part of a vast, shifting, multiethnic exchange network”⁵³ existing primarily outside the French system and only participating in the French colonial world if they chose to do so.

⁵² Sleeper-Smith, Susan. *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest: Indian Women of the Ohio River Valley, 1690-1792*. UNC Press, 2018, p. 12.

⁵³ Witgen, Michael. *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011, p. 86.

The French, like many imperial governments and officials to come to *Anishinaabewaki*, often found the physical and social mobility of the Anishinaabeg bewildering, since the Anishinaabeg were “a people able to connect and disconnect from what seemed to the French to be a dizzying number of amorphous and mobile social bodies.”⁵⁴ The Anishinaabeg, precisely because of this mobility, were free to resist the fixed designations and economic demands of Europeans, to accept or reject trade relationships with the English or the French, or work these relationships to their own advantage. The ability to hold multiple identities at once would continue to be a source of power and resistance for the Anishinaabeg and for their Metis kin.

Contact and discovery, as I also argue, created changes and adaptations in every culture involved with encounter, another factor that led to the rise of the Metis people. The New World was a “place of mutual discovery”⁵⁵ where people had to reimagine themselves and their place in the world in order to survive.⁵⁶ They often made intertribal or interracial marriages as diplomatic strategies for survival. Algonquians and Dakotas clustered at the newly established string of French forts on the Great Lakes, mainly during the 1690s. The Foxes or Meskwaki (Red Earth People), a smaller tribe caught between larger groups and larger political forces, fought both the Ojibwe and the Dakota. The expansion of the Ojibwe had pushed the Meskwaki out of their traditional home in the lower peninsula of Michigan, into what became known as the Fox country of eastern Wisconsin. The Meskwaki also faced Iroquois aggression, although they later

⁵⁴ Witgen, Michael. “The Rituals of Possession: Native Identity and the Invention of Empire in Seventeenth-Century Western North America. *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 54 No. 4 (2007): p. 639-668.

⁵⁵ Witgen. *An Infinity of Nations*, p. 26.

⁵⁶ Witgen, Michael. *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011, p. 86-88.

sought refuge in alliances with the Iroquois and the Sacs⁵⁷.

Warfare between the Meskwaki, the Ojibwe, the Sioux (Dakota) the Iroquois, the Miami and the Mascouten was endemic across the Midwest. These wars and rivalries were alternately mediated or stirred up by the French, who varied their response according to the needs of French policy and trade. For instance, fearful of a Meskwaki-Iroquois alliance, the French did their best to stoke enmity and distance between the two peoples. Shifts in alliances worsened the bloodshed, but the French of this era were ultimately chess pieces in a larger game of Native politics, which they often found opaque, failed to understand, or manipulated in a way that caused unintended consequences.⁵⁸

The diaspora of Michigan Indians into Wisconsin, due to both Iroquois aggression and French pressure led to rapid cultural change, reimagining of identity, kinship and marriage, and conflict for the Menominee and Ho-Chunk tribes, including alliances with the French. Squeezed between the Dakota on one side and the Haudenosaunee on the other, Algonquian-speaking Odawa, Sauk, Fox, Potawatami, Mascouten, and Kickapoo, and Iroquian-speaking Huron, Petuns, and Neutrals poured into Wisconsin and joined the Ho-Chunk and Menominee tribes.. In particular, Ho-Chunk conflict with the Fox and the Sauks was especially deadly to the Ho-Chunk tribe, because epidemics followed all of these battles.

By the 1640s, the Ho-Chunks were suffering greatly from epidemic disease, which had spread westward from the Huron and Iroquois. One French observer, De La Potherie,

⁵⁷ Edmunds, Russell David. *The Fox Wars: The Mesquakie Challenge to New France*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993. p. 135-136.

⁵⁸ Edmunds, Russell David. *The Fox Wars: The Mesquakie Challenge to New France*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993, p. 77-78.

commented, “Maladies wrought among them more devastation than even war did, and exhalations from the rotting corpses caused great mortality.” He added, “They could not bury the dead and were soon reduced to 1,500 men”⁵⁹, i.e. fighting warriors. The Ho-Chunks by 1650 had moved to intermarry with the Algonquian-speaking refugees.⁶⁰ But, as Robert E. Bieder observes somewhat acidly, “The primary goal for the French was the control of the fur trade, which would establish their political claim to the Upper Mississippi Valley. Saving Indian souls was an important, but secondary, consideration.”⁶¹

The French assumption of a trade role for furs and other valuable Native goods meant that entering into family relationships and marrying a Native woman was a mandatory pretext for forming trade relationships with Native tribes- tribes refused to trade with anyone who was not an in-law, and once the trader became an in-law, he had continuing obligations to support his wife and her family. Heather Devine observes that the family, in a sense, may have compensated for the weakness or newness of other institutions in New France. She explains, “Because the most influential social institutions- the government and the church- were not yet fully rooted and operational in the country, the most important institution governing life in New France during its first century became, by default, the family unit.”⁶² Ojibwe, Dakota and other Great Lakes Indian people also structured much of their lives around ideas of kinship.

Brenda MacDougall believes that the Metis retained an essentially indigenous style of

⁵⁹ Le Roy de Bacqueville de la Potherie, Claude Charles. *Histoire de l’Amérique Septentrionale* (Paris, 1722), translated in *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, XVI, p. 3-5.

⁶⁰ Bieder, Robert E. *Native American Communities in Wisconsin, 1600-1960: A Study of Tradition and Change*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995, p. 48.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., Devine, Heather. *The People Who Own Themselves*, 197.

kinship, in which close friends other than relatives or in-laws were also counted as kin, and where genealogy related not only to the relationships between individuals, but defined collective responsibilities between members and collective relationships to a communal identity. This communal identity encompassed a relationship to a particular homeland and “solidarity against all outsiders.”⁶³ Metis identity, like Indian identity during this period, was collectively and individually distinctive, geographically mobile, and vibrant enough to incorporate and assimilate outsiders without strain.

Clans, inherited from the father’s line, were usually based on the principle of mutual descent from an ancestral, primeval animal with supernatural powers, or, in Bohaker’s somewhat prim rendering, an “other-than-human progenitor being.” The clan system structured patterns of marriage, alliance, and travel, as well as access to the “ownership or proprietorship” of resources. In addition to the clan system, Ojibwe people also had identities based on the spiritually significant geographies of their homelands, and upon their family groups. The ancientness, strength and flexibility of the system facilitated frequent long-distance migration, mobility, travel and trade, and allowed them to intermarry with Iroquoian-speaking groups like the Wendat and Petuns, as well as their other Algonquian neighbors, so that intermarriage, multiethnic communities, and inter-tribal alliances were commonplace well before the 1600s. Rather than being based on a “tight geographic space”, like European ideas of nationhood and peoplehood, Anishinaabeg people based Anishinaabeg nationhood on the clan system of kinship, spiritual practices, and origin stories. This lends weight to Bohaker’s

⁶³ MacDougall, Brenda. “Speaking of Metis: Reading Family Life into Colonial Records.” *Ethnohistory* Vol 61 Issue 1 (Winter 2014), p. 27-56.

contention that the seventeenth-century Anishinaabeg were not refugees, but were moving within a familiar, if far-flung milieu of friends and relatives, where they “survived, regrouped, and reestablished themselves”⁶⁴ upon their ancestral lands, responding to the new pressures by constructing new alliances within the existing *nindoodemag* system. Political alliances were typically sealed by the marriages of women, since women typically married men of another group or *nindoodem*.

In an example of how mutual transculturation shaped the Metis identity and culture, the French adopted some of these Anishinaabeg views on political alliances being connected to women’s marriages, once refusing to provide military assistance to an Anishinaabeg war party because that particular band had not married any of its women to the French. Not only did the French internalize Native political customs, they seem to have presented themselves to their Native diplomatic rivals as a fellow ‘tribe’ or nation, envisioning and emphasizing their own French nationality in tribal terms. The French commandant complained, “in the first place, you have not allied yourselves up to the present with our French people: your daughters have married with all the neighboring Nations, but not with ours. Your children live in the land of the Nipisiriniens (Nippising), of the Algonquins, of the Attikamegues, of the people of the Sagné, and in all the other Nations.”⁶⁵ Women’s marriages connected different communities in political and military alliance, and in-laws were required to support war chiefs in time of battle. The “plurality” of sociopolitical identities among the Anishinaabeg structured their relationships

⁶⁴ Bohaker, Heidi. ““Nindoodemag”: The Significance of Algonquian Kinship Networks in the Eastern Great Lakes Region, 1600-1701.” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 63, no. 1 (2006): 23-52.

⁶⁵ Thwaites, Reuben Gold. *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, vol. 5: 93, 115.

to the French- a group of local leaders did marry their daughters to Frenchmen, and these Frenchmen were required to operate according to Native views of kinship and Native diplomacy, testifying to the enduring strength of Anishinaabeg culture⁶⁶. Witgen strikingly observes that for the Ojibwe, their most important distinction was between who was kin and who was not kin. Ceremonies of marriage, gift exchange, and adoption could bring peace by transforming enemies or outsiders into kin. Witgen argues that this occurred in a Feast of the Dead ceremony hosted by the Anishinaabeg in 1660, which integrated the Anishinaabeg, Dakota and Muskogee peoples as kin, and strengthened the political and socioeconomic power of *Anishinaabewaki*, the Anishinaabe country. Such fluid social formations could, and did, accommodate relationships with outsiders, including Indians of different tribes and non-Indians who were willing to participate in existing customs and rules rather than overthrow or change the ways of the “original people”, as the Anishinaabeg called themselves. Witgen explains, “In the world of the Anishinaabeg there were two categories of people- *inawemaagen* (relative) and *meyaagizid* (foreigner).”⁶⁷

New people entered a world based on these categories- they could either become relatives of the Anishinaabeg and assume kin identities, taking on the responsibilities and privileges implied by that role in an Indian community, or they could remain outsiders and enemies, aloof of any kin-based connections to Indian people. Podruchny and St. Onge likewise observe that Metis kin networks that determined identity were based on “Scottish and French-

⁶⁶ Bohaker, Heidi. ““Nindoodemag”: The Significance of Algonquian Kinship Networks in the Eastern Great Lakes Region, 1600-1701.” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 63, no. 1 (2006): p. 23-52.

⁶⁷ Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 31.

Canadian familial and clan traditions”, and also incorporated “indigenous kin and clan networks to adapt and create a unique web well-suited to life in the Great Lakes, the Great Plains, and the northwestern boreal forests.”⁶⁸Such kin relationships were also crucial in maintaining socioeconomic connections across the highly mobile, far-flung fur trade network. Throughout the 1660s and 1670s, there was a 500% population increase in New France but soldiers and military men formed a majority, leading to a 2:1 male-female sex ratio. In the Great Lakes, French-Canadian men outnumbered women until the early 19th century.⁶⁹

Men and women in New France received incentives from the French government to marry; 20 livres for men if they married before age 20, the same for girls who married before age 16, and these happy couples got to live tax-free until age 25, with additional bonuses for children, the maximum amount being paid out for those with 10, 12, or 15 children if none of the children became celibate Catholic clerics⁷⁰. Because of the reliance on the fur trade, Frenchmen had to trade with Indians at their source and rely on Native knowledge. Those who stayed with the tribes at their wintering grounds were paid more and became known as North-Men or “winterers”, usually having longer contracts than the men who worked summers, despised as “pork-eaters” or *mangeurs du lard* in the fur-trade hierarchy.⁷¹ When peace was

⁶⁸ “Scuttling along a Spider’s Web: Mobility and Kinship in Metis Ethnogenesis.” St. Onge, Nicole and Carolyn Podruchny. In *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility and History*. Edited by Nicole St. Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012, p. 67.

⁶⁹ Peterson, Jacqueline. “The People in Between: Indian-White Marriage and the Genesis of Métis Society and Culture in the Great Lakes Region, 1702-1815”(PHD diss., University of Illinois, Chicago Circle, 1981, p. 26, 34,

⁷⁰ Peterson, “People in Between”, 28.

⁷¹ The nineteenth-century Metis memoirist Elizabeth T. Baird indicated that the term was “synonymous with a verdant or raw youth”, referring to “young and very green” French-

made with the Iroquois, “half or more of the men in the colony may have spent at least one season on the Upper Ottawa.”⁷² *Coueurs du bois*, literally “forest runners”, were illegal traders, who traded directly in furs with the tribes and bypassed the government’s authority, contributing even more to their acculturation towards Indian society and Indian families. This governmental rebellion, however inadvertently, began to create a new culture and a new people- the Metis. Jacqueline Peterson observes that “by 1670, the Ottawa traders were joined, a thousand miles inland, by a wild new breed of men, the Canadian voyageurs.”⁷³ When the trade began, colonists gave short shrift to intensive agriculture because they engaged in diverse economic activity- men traded and fished and showed little inclination, if any, to farm. By 1680, fully one-fifth of the French Canadian population had gone west to the Great Lakes to trade furs, at least seasonally. Since Native women were the primary farmers and housebuilders in the Great Lakes, French traders needed their knowledge to survive. Women also dried and smoked fish, prepared and preserved meats, made maple sugar, and collected and brewed medicines. The cultural pattern thus tended toward reliance and mutual accommodation. Despite very different ideas about gender, the role of women, and intimate relationships, the greater need of French men for Indian women, French economic reliance on Native tribes, and the vast outnumbering of French colonists by Native people meant that French men acculturated to Native gender norms in Indian country.⁷⁴ The French colonial state viewed these developments with dismay, because authorities naturally wanted the *habitants* to

Canadians new to the fur trade. Baird, Elizabeth T. *O-De-Jit-Wa-Win-Ning or Contes du Temps Passé*. Green Bay, WI: Heritage Hill Foundation, copyright renewed 1998, p. 41.

⁷² Ibid., Peterson, 34.

⁷³ Peterson, 34-35.

⁷⁴ Rony Blum, *Ghost Brothers*, 110.

remain on their agricultural lands as farmers.⁷⁵

Paul Sutter observes that colonialism is an environmental process undertaken for the purposes of political control. Sutter remarks insightfully that “the colonial state privileged sedentary agricultural production and imposed strict regulatory regimes on non-arable environments—with the goal of providing resources crucial to the colonial project, securing labor, and further securing sedentary settlement.”⁷⁶ If settler and Indian alike had to be forced into dependence on the colonial-capitalist state, the existence of non-arable resources was a threat to that state. The non-arable resources, as in the case of French Canada and its furs, enabled a lifestyle beyond the state that was largely free of state control and therefore a political liability.

Rony Blum observed commonalities between the culture and identity of the male immigrants from northwestern France and that of the Indians they encountered. Podruchny and St. Onge, paraphrasing Calloway, remark that the Metis came from “tribal peoples both on the European and the Indian side.”⁷⁷ A high percentage of the early French-Canadians hailed from Normandy and the Atlantic coast of France, where regionally unique Celtic and Germanic cultural elements remained a strong part of local heritage and often fomented resistance against the Crown, royal authority, and the “official French” culture of Parisian elites. These “rebellious and ambitious” men fled from a region beset by the “Little Ice Age”, failed crops,

⁷⁵ Peterson, “People in Between”, 28-30, 35-36.

⁷⁶ Sutter, Paul. “Reflections: What Can U.S. Environmental Historians Learn from Non-U.S. Environmental Historiography?,” *Environmental History*, 18, 1 (January 2003), p. 113.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, *Scuttling Along A Spider’s Web*, p. 69.

malnutrition, epidemics, religious wars, increased taxation and tax revolts, and the ever-present hunt for heretics and witches in a formerly Huguenot area⁷⁸.

The male-dominated immigration from France arrived in the Great Lakes at a time when Native men suffered higher death rates from the diseases and endemic warfare stirred up by colonization, leaving a vast surplus of Native women. Peterson notes that “an incomplete society full of surplus young males matched nicely with native societies suffering from a lack of males.”⁷⁹ Peterson records that this led to unusual marriage practices, like the levirate, remarriage of widows by their deceased’s husbands brothers, and polygyny, usually one man marrying two sisters, among Native women who preferred to marry Native men⁸⁰. The insistence of French priests upon monogamous marriages may have actually heightened the rate of Native women’s cohabitation with French men, European men and other outsiders for that reason, amid the widespread uncertainty in Native communities caused by epidemic disease. Hull observed that, as a reaction to the demographic changes of colonization, Californian Indians migrated to new places, intermarried with other tribes, or intermarried with non-Indians, all strategies followed by Native people in the Great Lakes as well. “Unlike colonists... Social reproduction via the maintenance of cultural traditions was as much, if not more, important than biological reproduction to indigenous people...at the same time, the willingness of both native men and women to enter into unions with outsiders may be especially enlightening in understanding the subsequent involvement of native women...in

⁷⁸ Blum, *Ghost Brothers*, 37-41.

⁷⁹ Ibid., Jacqueline Peterson, “People in Between.”

⁸⁰ Peterson, 73-74.

sexual relationships with non-native men in many regions of the Americas.”⁸¹ Frenchmen did bequeath their language and the Roman Catholic religion to their children, but, perhaps disaffected from French society, overwhelmingly preferred to live with Indian people and join Native societies rather than impose any other French cultural ways upon Indians., becoming culturally and geographically mobile.

This led the French government to turn against intermarriage as official state policy, and the always somewhat idealized idea that Frenchmen and Indians could form “one race” in the New World. As early as 1685, the French colonial government declared Frenchification of Indians was a failure because it had instead caused the reverse: the overwhelming preference of Frenchmen for an Indian manner of living.⁸² The Indian women who married Frenchmen and mothered the Metis did so because they were also disaffected and dissatisfied with the accustomed course of life in their own cultures, seeking material security, increased social status, and greater personal freedom.

Time in the Great Lakes led to an Indianization of Frenchmen, rather than making Indians French. Frenchmen’s growing Indianization was the result of the greater interpersonal freedom and cultural appeal of Indian communities, the low population of French Canada, and poor prospects for agriculture in lower Quebec.

⁸¹ Hull, Kathleen L. “Death and Sex: Procreation in the Wake of Fatal Epidemics Within Indigenous Communities.” In *The archaeology of colonialism : intimate encounters and sexual effects* / [edited by] Barbara Voss, Eleanor Conlin Casella. New York : Cambridge University Press ; 2012, p. 135.

⁸² “I cannot tell you Monseigneur, how attractive this Indian life is to all our youth.” Denonville to Minister, 13 November 1686 in Parkman, *The Old Regime*, pp. 375-76: Public Archives of Canada, Series C11A, Vol. II, pp. 45-46.

French government officials and French Jesuits in the 1600s alike complained about the Indian insistence on personal freedom, individual rights, intellectual independence, relative socioeconomic equality, and an absence of coercive authority. This work contends that the absence of coercive authority in the Great Lakes country led to the equally independent reputation of the Metis people and culture as free traders and hunters, their own bosses, who called themselves the freemen or free people⁸³ in French, English, Cree or Michif, the blended French, Cree and Ojibwe dialect of the fur trade. The Jesuit Father Louis Hennepin wrote in the 1690s that Indians believed “every one ought to be left to his own Opinion, without being thwarted”, and that they believed only “what they please and no more”⁸⁴, evidently not willing to accept or follow any doctrine or person they considered unworthy. A fellow Jesuit contemporary of Hennepin’s similarly whined that Indians were difficult to convert because of their refusal to submit to authority. “They are born, live and die in a liberty without restraint.”⁸⁵ These men were contemptuous of what they could not, or did not want, to understand about the values of Indian societies, assuming that Native culture was merely a disorderly inverse of European values.

Indians were similarly baffled by economic disparities among Europeans, and the

⁸³ Wolvengrey, Arok. *nēhiyawēwin: itwēwina / Cree: Words*. Volume 1: Cree-English and Volume 2: English-Cree. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2001. <https://dictionary.plainscree.atlas-ling.ca/#/help> Wolvengrey translates the Plains Cree word for Metis, kâ-tipêyimisocik, as “those who are free” and describes it as a Metis self-designation adopted by the Cree.

⁸⁴ Fr. Louis Hennepin on Indians being opinionated and believing only “what they please”: Hennepin, Fr. Louis. *A Continuation of the New Discovery of a Vast Country in America, Volume 2*. London: H. Bonwick, 1699, p. 64.

⁸⁵ Le Jeune, Father Paul, *Jesuit Relations*, Volume 12, 1637, In *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites, Burrows Bros. Company, Cleveland, 1898, p. 61.

deference shown to the rich. Baron Louis Armand de Lom d'Arce, Baron of Lahontan, who lived in French Canada between 1683 and 1694, wrote that the Hurons told him that one man was "as much as master as another, and since Men are all made of the same clay there should be no distinction or superiority among them."⁸⁶ Such strong beliefs in anti-authoritarianism did indeed prove attractive to many colonial Europeans in America, many of whom were subjected to some form of servitude by colonial governments. The authorities in New France frequently noticed that Indians given French education resumed their own cultural ways as soon as possible, while hundreds of Frenchmen a year continued to defect to Indian country. Jaenen concurs that the majority of Indians "steadfastly resisted assimilation", and that the French in the "interior", the early Midwest, lived "almost in tribute to the natives."

Intriguingly, Jaenen does indicate that unwed French-Canadian mothers in this period often gave their children away to Indian communities, and some of the first Catholic schools for children in the "upper country", run by the French Recollet order, were coeducational and biracial, with French and Indian children learning side by side. The pattern elsewhere, and certainly in the more populated parts of French Canada, was segregation by gender and race.⁸⁷

Frenchmen may have Indianized themselves as a response to the disruptions of warfare, and, of course, economic dependence on the fur trade. The *coureurs de bois* began making trading journeys into the Great Lakes from Montreal, traveling to the interior to trade with Indian people, and sometimes to live with them over the winter, a process called *courir en dérrouine* within the trade. *Courir en dérrouine* meant to trade with Indians in their camps as

⁸⁶ Baron de Lahontan: *New Voyages to North America*, Volume II. London: 1703, Edited and reprinted by Reuben Gold Thwaites. Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Co., 1905, p. 421.

⁸⁷ Ibid, Jaenen, *The Role of the Church in New France*, 1976, p. 102.

“commercial travelers” to drum up trade, to buy furs on credit or in exchange for other goods if the trader had nothing to sell. The expression literally translates as to “go drumming”, from “drumming up” business. Perhaps a drum also announced the arrival of traders to an Indian camp.⁸⁸ In the 1660s, the British government formed the Hudson’s Bay Company, with a royal charter proclaimed for “The Governor and Company of Adventurers Trading into Hudson’s Bay.” The HBC was the first English threat to French dominance of the trade, and held trading rights over all of the Hudson’s Bay and Rupert’s Land, a territory stretching into six modern Canadian provinces and four US states. In 1681 Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the French minister of marine, began a license, or *cong *, system, for merchants traveling and trading in the interior. Many *coureurs de bois* traded illegally in the interior, independent from any established companies and their rules, and basically ignored the restrictions of the *cong * system.⁸⁹

This led to an “identity confusion”⁹⁰ between Indian and French as the French adopted Indian building modes, canoes, moccasins and clothing. Sometimes, this confusion was so profound that it led to alienation for some participants, but their efforts caused a new culture to come into being. As the French voyageurs and traders headed south from Montreal into the *pays d’en haut*, they entered what was unambiguously Indian country, and adapted themselves to it. Traders tended to be more indigenized, even using tattoos, body paints, feathers and wampum on their bodies. They maintained Catholic belief and practice, but, true to their

⁸⁸ Henry, Alexander. *The Red River of the North*, Volume 1. New York, Francis P. Harper, 1897, p. 166. See also Masson, Louis-Rodrigue. *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest*, Qu bec, de l’Imprimerie G n rale A. Cot , 1889, p. 306.

⁸⁹ Podruchny, Carolyn. *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade*. U. of Nebraska Press, 2006, p. 22-23.

⁹⁰ Peterson, Jacqueline. “People in Between”, 41, 43-45.

Middle Ground milieu, respected and incorporated indigenous beliefs. They prayed both to Saint Anne, patroness of voyageurs, and to “The Old Woman of the Wind”, whom they propitiated with tobacco. She is clearly based on an Ojibwe manitou or water spirit⁹¹. French canoe songs were finished with a “piercing Indian shriek.” An exasperated Anglo-American commentator noted that the only topics of conversation among voyageurs seemed to be “Horses, Dogs, Canoes, and Women... and Strong Men Who Can Fight a Good Battle.”⁹²

Podruchny argues that voyageurs came to adopt Native values on property, wealth and independence as they encountered Native people and acculturated to Native norms and ideas. As they progressed deeper into Indian country, the French-Canadians performed “baptisms” situated on Native sacred sites, further syncretizing their religious practices while idealizing the freedom of a Native American lifestyle and often deserting the rigid hierarchy of the trade, joining their families to form Métis towns and communities, which were rapidly becoming ubiquitous across the Midwest.⁹³ Podruchny argues that an “ethic of non-accumulation” prevailed as a cultural value among early voyageurs, comparing it to Marcus Rediker’s study of seventeenth-century sailors. Amassing money for its own sake was not a goal for these men. “Voyageurs often demonstrated their wealth through their possessions, consumption, and generosity, and not through their savings.”⁹⁴

⁹¹ Nute, Grace Lee. *The Voyageur*. D. Appleton and Company, 1931. Reprinted 1955, Minnesota Historical Society, p. 155.

⁹² Harmon, Daniel Williams. *A Journal of Voyages and Travels in the interior of North America*. Edited by Daniel Haskel. Burlington, VT: 1820. New York: Reprinted by the Allerton Book Company, 1922, p. 61.

⁹³ Carolyn Podruchny. *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade*. University of Nebraska Press, 2006, p 47.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

Podruchny is otherwise quick to attribute other traits of voyageurs to Native cultural influences that these men adopted for their own. This work will contend that an ethic of non-accumulation is Native in origin, too, adopted by the voyageurs as they became integrated into Native communities. Cary Miller has noted that in the traditional worldview of the Ojibwe, or *Anishinaabeg*, and other Great Lakes Native people, gift-giving was a fundamental way of displaying spiritual, social, or political power, or of requesting such power from more powerful people, animals, or spirits. In the traditional Ojibwe worldview, individual human beings were recognized as weak, deeply in need of the social relationships established through gift exchange with humans and *manidoog*, non-human spirit beings and spiritual forces, in order to survive and achieve the Ojibwe moral ideal of *mino-bimaadiziwin*.

Miller defines *mino-bimaadiziwin* as “longevity, good health, and freedom from misfortune, as well as a balance that “established relationships of interdependency as widely as possible”, relationships that included extended family members and *manidoog*.⁹⁵ The *manidoog* could provide gifts of specific spiritual powers as well as “abilities to perform life’s jobs both great and small”, a form of spiritual giving. Miller explains, “Gifting was the cornerstone of kinship, and kinship organized society... gift exchange even served as a means to incorporate newcomers. If an individual, family or community could not establish some form of real or fictive kinship, then social interaction could not take place, much less trade.”⁹⁶ Marriages extended the web of kinship ties for trade and exchange, another reason Native communities and fur traders sought marital alliances with each other. Reciprocity, respect and

⁹⁵ Ibid., Miller, *Ogimaag*, 25.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 32-33.

obligation framed both sides of gift-giving, with both parties to the exchange having moral, ceremonial, or political responsibilities.

Importantly, this form of reciprocity stretched far beyond economics and money, though economics and money became a part of it. “The social obligation to assist and to accept such assistance was more important than equalizing or canceling out the obligation. In fact, a perception or acknowledgement of ‘debt’ is actually required to keep the system in operation.”⁹⁷ In particular, traditional Ojibwe leaders were required to give as much as they could to their people and to own as little as possible for themselves, with hoarding or saving any form of wealth being regarded as antisocial. Chantal Fiola quotes Elmer Ghostkeeper, who describes a similar worldview from Cree-Nehiyaw and Metis sources. Ghostkeeper described that the universe was alive and contained three worlds, the spirit world, the world humans live in, and the evil world, and that the challenge for humans was to keep “spirit, mind, emotion and body in harmony through gifts from all three worlds. One acquires these gifts through the activities of ceremony, ritual and sacrifice.”⁹⁸

Fiola quotes an Ojibwe prophecy of Seven Fires, or seven eras in time. She views the Metis as the “New People” foretold in the prophecy, who will help kindle an “Eighth Fire” of brotherhood and *mino-bimaadiziyan* for all humanity. Fiola argues that the Metis people of the American Great Lakes, because they had no distinctive settlement like Red River in Canada, did not have a focal point for developing a distinctive Metis identity. Therefore, she concludes that American Metis on Mackinac were not heavily pressured into accepting institutional

⁹⁷ Ibid, Miller, *Ogimaag*, 32-33.

⁹⁸ Ibid, Fiola, *Rekindling the Sacred Fire*, 1-5.

Catholicism until later than their Canadian cousins, and maintained their traditional ways of life longer, including relationships with Ojibwe kin. Fiola states that missionaries did not perceive Metis as being distinct from Indians: the stronger identification of some American Metis with aspects of an Indian identity was also undoubtedly due to their racialization as Indians in a U.S. context. However, this work disagrees with her interpretation of the relationship between Catholicism and the attempted Americanization of the Mackinac Metis documented by Keith Widder⁹⁹.

Fiola's conclusion about American Metis' closer relationship to Ojibwe spirituality is true in one sense. The French government's eighteenth-century expulsion of the Jesuits from France and its colonies, and the subsequent disbanding of the Jesuit Order, led to a prolonged absence of Catholic clergy in the American Great Lakes until the mid-1830s when Catholic white settlers arrived, making Ojibwe beliefs more present and available. But active Catholic practices were maintained in American Metis families up to the 1830s, although those practices were certainly syncretic. Contact with expanding American Catholic institutions in the 1800s led the U.S. Metis to assert themselves as Catholic in order to maintain their distinctiveness from Protestant settlers, but that same encounter with the American Catholic mainstream inevitably led Metis Catholicism to become another channel for Americanization of the Metis identity.

The highly male-dominated first settlement of French Canada included a plurality of clerics and soldiers. Heather Devine records that her earliest ancestor to arrive in Canada, Jean de Gerlaise, later Desjarlais, was not French, but, rather unusually for Canada, a French-

⁹⁹ Widder, Keith R. *Battle for the Soul: Métis Children Encounter Evangelical Protestants at Mackinaw Mission, 1823-1837*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1999, p. 30.

speaking Belgian, who served in the Canadian army. She also mentions that her ancestor and his wife, Jeanne Trudel, also a French-speaking Belgian of similar social station, lived in a settlement near Montreal called, variously, Rivière-du-Loup or the Seigneurie Beaubien, after Michel Trottier dit Beaubien (born 1672), an ancestor of the main Chicago Beaubien family whose history is the focus of this work. French “dit” surnames served a variety of purposes. They could originate from nicknames, maternal family names, or as *nommes de guerre* among soldiers, particularly common in Quebec.¹⁰⁰ The names could also describe people according to a physical attribute, profession, or place of origin.¹⁰¹ In at least one case, a Metis family memorialized an Indian female ancestor, Antaya, by calling themselves Pelletier, *dit* Antaya.¹⁰²

Like Jean de Gerlaise, the early Beaubien men in Canada spent their time as soldiers in the colonial army of New France. The first recorded Beaubien to immigrate to Canada from France was René Cullierier dit Beaubien, who came from the village of Clermont, near the city of La Flèche in the Loire. Rene Cuillerier Beaubien’s origins align him perfectly with the northwestern French and Norman-French origins of most early French-Canadian and Franco-American settlers. In 1665, René Cuillerier married Marie Lecault in Montreal. Jean Cuillerier, their son, born in 1670, married Catherine Trotier de Beaubien in 1696, the origin of the Beaubien name and also the origin of Beaubiens of Michigan.

¹⁰⁰ Bonvillain, Pauline R. (March–April 1997). "[Searching for Surnames in Louisiana](#)". *Ancestry*. Vol. 15 no. 2. Orem, Utah: Western Standard Publication Company. p. 41–43.

¹⁰¹ Ouimette, David (November–December 2002). "[Tracing Your French-Canadian Ancestry](#)". *Ancestry*. Vol. 20 no. 6. Provo, Utah: MyFamily.com. p. 35–41.

¹⁰² Racette, Sherry Farrell. “Sewing Ourselves Together: Clothing, Decorative Arts and the expression of Metis and half breed identity.” PhD dissertation, University of Manitoba, 2004, 31. <https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/xmlui/handle/1993/3304>

Besides noting their migration from France, to Montreal, to Detroit, some sources disagree about the precise origin of the Beaubien branch who migrated between Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin and other points in the “Indian Country.” Marie Watson-Hamlin, in her 19th-century “Legends of Le Detroit”, says that the precise Detroit line which led to our famous Chicago Metis family began with a certain Antoine Beaubien, who married Angelique de Lacelle in 1722. Antoine and Angelique’s son, also Antoine, married Catherine Barrois in 1784. Jean Baptiste Beaubien, born in 1789, who married a Metis woman and became one of Chicago’s founders, is thus listed in this source as the son of Antoine Beaubien and Catherine Barrois Beaubien.¹⁰³ Burton concurs that for the Cuillerier family “the name was changed to the female line” after Jean Cuillerier married Marie Catherine Trotier de Beaubien. Burton offers no explanation for why the name was changed. Because the Beaubien name was already well-known and associated with high rank, perhaps Marie-Catherine wanted her children to have her name to give them a better start in the world. After Jean Cuillerier dit Beaubien’s death, his widow Marie Catherine married Francois-Marie Pecoté de Balestre, the newly appointed French governor of Detroit, and she and her children arrived in Detroit with him around 1721, being called Beaubien since that time, even after her remarriage. Marie Watson Hamlin remarked, “In large families it was then often a custom to add the mother’s family name to distinguish the different branches.”¹⁰⁴ While tracing the origin of the Beaubien name to Marie-

¹⁰³ Watson-Hamlin, Marie Caroline, and James Valentine Campbell. *Legends of Le Detroit*. Detroit, MI: Thorndike Nourse, 1883, p. 289.

¹⁰⁴ Burton, Clarence Monroe, William Stocking, Gordon K. Miller. *The City of Detroit, Michigan 1701-1922*. Volume 4, Detroit: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1922, p. 40. Watson-Hamlin, 289.

Catherine Trotier de Beaubien, the *Illinois Catholic Historical Review*¹⁰⁵ quoting a Frank Beaubien of Chicago in 1919, mentions that Marie-Catherine and Michel were brother and sister and that the name came from his title as Sieur de Beaubien.

Frank Beaubien traces the origin of the Chicago line to a Jean-Baptiste Cuillier *dit* Beaubien, who died in Detroit in 1793 as a “citizen of considerable importance”, and who fathered fourteen children. His seventh child, Joseph Beaubien, was born in Detroit on March 30th, 1752, and married Josette Bondy on March 10, 1777. Josette, like the Beaubiens, had a French-Canadian military background, her father, Joseph Bondy, being a “captain in militia” at L’Assomption, near Montreal. This seems to be the Douiare de Bondy family listed in Watson-Hamlin. She remarks that they are “still to be found among the *haute noblesse* of France” and were “very influential” in Canada. The town of Bondy in France is near Paris, which would seem to substantiate Hamlin’s claim to the family being aristocratic, an atypical background for early French settlers. The earliest ancestor in Canada was the Parisian Thomas Douaire de Bondy, who arrived in 1650 as a highly placed advisor to King and Crown. Joseph Douaire de Bondy came to Detroit in 1730 and married Marie Anne Campeau in 1732. Their daughter, Josette Douaire de Bondy, is listed in Watson-Hamlin as having married Joseph Beaubien¹⁰⁶, so perhaps the sources don’t disagree- the entry on the Beaubien family is so long that it doesn’t seem to mention Joseph Beaubien at all. There are two more French-Canadian families I want to discuss here, since they, too, became important progenitors of the main Metis people I examine in this

¹⁰⁵ Beaubien, Frank G. “The Beaubiens of Chicago.” *Chicago: Illinois Catholic Historical Review*, July 1919, p. 348-364.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, Watson-Hamlin, Marie Caroline, and James Valentine Campbell. *Legends of Le Detroit*. Detroit, MI: T. Nourse, 1883, p. 297-298.

work- the LaFramboise family, ancestors of Josette LaFramboise Beaubien, Jean-Baptiste Beaubien's wife, and the Juneau family, crucially important in the founding of Milwaukee.

A family genealogy notes that the Juneau family name was originally spelled Jouineau, and that their earliest ancestor was born in France and came to Canada around 1653¹⁰⁷. A French-Canadian source mentions a Jean Jouineau on a list of colonists arriving in between 1641 and 1666, and mentions him as being from La Rochelle, France, from the parish of Notre-Dame de Cognes¹⁰⁸. Jean Jouineau, like Rene Cuillierier Beaubien and the majority of French people in early Canada and the American Midwest, hailed from the Atlantic coast of France. Greer notes that the typical French immigrant tended to be an impoverished single man from western France, "especially the Atlantic port of La Rochelle and its hinterland."¹⁰⁹

La Rochelle was a turbulent city, having been a famous Protestant stronghold in the wars of religion which gripped France, and consequently was where the Jesuit-led Counter-Reformation was conducted with the greatest, most meticulous zeal, and where a Jesuit college was established. La Rochelle was "close to the heart of Huguenot France in the sixteenth century.... It was on this religious frontier that Catholicism, triumphant but still insecure, burned with a particularly high degree of fervor."¹¹⁰

It became a focal point for emigration not only because of its sociopolitical unrest, but because of its commercial links with the New World. Allan Greer explains, "Since La Rochelle

¹⁰⁷ Connerton, Eugene J. and Léo-Paul Landry. *Genealogy of the Juneau family, 1600-1965*. L.P. Landry, Milwaukee, 1971, p. 14-15.

¹⁰⁸ Ferland, Jean Baptiste Antoine. *Cours d'histoire du Canada, Première Partie, 1534-1663*. Second edition: Quebec, Augustin Côté, 1861, 513.

¹⁰⁹ Greer, Allan. *The People of New France*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017, p. 27.

¹¹⁰ Greer, Allan. *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 64.

was one of France's premier Atlantic ports and the main depot for colonial shipping, it served as an important way station in the Jesuit global network, with missionaries preparing for embarkation or arriving from abroad and letters arriving from across the Atlantic."¹¹¹ Most of the impoverished single men who journeyed to New France in the seventeenth century were subject to indentured servitude, condemned to a life of hard labor, unable to marry or conduct business on their own account, and penalized with harsh punishment if they tried to escape, which must have made a fur-trade life in the distant interior of the *pays d'en haut* seem even more attractive to such men. Family names such as Josette, Joseph, Antoine, Marie, and Madelaine get frequently repeated and reused in both French-Canadian and French-Metis families.

Michael A. McDonnell notes that women were particularly central in the maintenance of relationships and communities across every racial and political border in the American Great Lakes. McDonnell observes, "Literally and metaphorically, women especially continued to cross borders- much as they had been doing... for generations- to create and sustain communities throughout the region."¹¹² McDonnell notes that the Ottawa became "an important link between the French to the east and the thousands of western Indians of all nations who made the journey to Michilimackinac each spring to trade furs" to renew alliances with each other and the French. The accepted marriage practice, particularly for Native women, was exogamy to a different community for socioeconomic purposes of alliance, making intermarriage with

¹¹¹ Greer, *Mohawk Saint*, p. 64.

¹¹² McDonnell, Michael A. "*Il a Epousé Une Sauvagesse: Indian and Metis Persistence Across Imperial and National Borders.*" In *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire*, edited by Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, University of Illinois Press, 2009, p. 151.

the French an extension of a preexisting political strategy.¹¹³ Lucy Murphy likewise claims that Native and Metis people in the Great Lakes actually preferred and valued exogamy, marriage outside one's group, especially if the outsider was well-connected, and these Native groups also approved of women's activism and participation in economic life, diplomacy, politics, and religious leadership. Murphy explains, "Unlike many ethnic groups, Indian peoples in the Midwest had approved of- and even encouraged- intermarriage."¹¹⁴ Native women were the principal mediators between cultures and the primary diplomats of the middle ground, playing important roles in the socioeconomics and politics of the region and its different ethnic groups. Native women, as the primary agriculturalists of their societies, who held usufruct ownership of fields, sugar groves, and ricing areas, wielded considerable economic power, and Midwestern Native societies valued communalism and consensus, which gave women an equal political role to men. The conversion of Indian communities to Catholicism, which was instrumental in creating the shared Metis culture, was also a woman-led project.

Susan Sleeper-Smith notes that seventeenth-century Jesuits won more converts among Native women than Native men. French Jesuit priests idealized Indian Catholic women, dismissing their fur-trader husbands as "licentious drunkards" and disapproving of their fathers, elders and headmen as morally suspect pagans. "It would have been foolhardy for these priests to foster female subjection to the authority of men whom the Jesuits frequently despised."¹¹⁵

¹¹³ McDonnell. "Il a Epousé Une Sauvagesse: Indian and Metis Persistence Across Imperial and National Borders." In *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire*, edited by Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, University of Illinois Press, 2009, p. 152-153.

¹¹⁴ Murphy, *Great Lakes Creoles*, p. 33, 182.

¹¹⁵ Sleeper-Smith, Susan. "Women, Kin and Catholicism: New Perspectives on the Fur Trade." In *Native Women's History in Eastern North America Before 1900: A Guide to Research and*

Peterson observes that, beginning in the seventeenth century, “most Algonquian-speaking Christians west of Montreal were women.”¹¹⁶ She suspects that it was because women’s more sedentary lifestyles made them easier for priests to missionize, and that reverence for the Virgin lent spiritual authority to influential women’s political and diplomatic power as links between two groups of people.

Sleeper-Smith agrees that conversion efforts “reinforced matrifocal households” among the Illini, “which linked women in communal living arrangements and encouraged female conversions.” Ekberg notes that seventeenth-century Illini and Kaskaskia women proved more ready to convert to Catholicism, perhaps as a way of challenging the authority of their fathers and brothers. Priests and missionaries realized that enlisting young women was the best way of converting the entire tribe to Catholicism, as evinced by the life of Marie Aramepinchieue Rouensa-Oucateoua Accault Phillippe, the daughter of a Kaskaskia chief. Marie Rouensa Accault Phillippe used Catholicism and marriage to a Frenchman to solidify her political influence, redefine her identity, and structure the identity and kinship of her children. She was born around 1679 or 1680 in a Kaskaskia village near Le Rocher (modern-day Starved Rock), across the river from a French fort, established by La Salle for the fur trade. Iroquois attacks destroyed the village, which pushed the survivors to migrate southward and led to the foundation of the town of Kaskaskia. Marie became a devout Catholic, converted by the Jesuit Father Jacques Gravier. Sleeper-Smith notes that Christian conversion enabled Marie to become a teacher and instructor, learning French and translating Father Gravier’s Christian

Writing. Ed. Kugel, Rebecca and Lucy Eldersveld Murphy. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007, p. 240.

¹¹⁶ Peterson, “People in Between”, 66-67.

sermons into the Kaskaskia language. The conversion of the Illinois people to Catholicism was a collaborative enterprise that required Native people to serve as translators and catechists, and also required the Jesuits to engage in cultural compromise with the Kaskaskia community. When they prayed the “Our Father” prayer, the Kaskaskias prayed to “Jesus Christ, our chief, who is made man by the good spirit of light.”¹¹⁷ Other women followed Marie Rouensa’s example, teaching and converting members of their community and ringing the chapel bells that summoned the people to mass. When Marie converted to Catholicism in 1694 at Pimiteoui (modern Peoria), her original intent was to remain single and “consecrate her virginity to God.” Illini women who remained single were eligible to join warrior societies, but the Jesuits offered Marie and other likeminded Illini women a Christian alternative to this. Ekberg does not say why some Illini women chose Christian conversion over the warrior societies. Perhaps women who were looking for a new source of spiritual power and a life of spiritual and physical rigor chose the new option of becoming devout Catholics, just as some of them would also choose the new, and perhaps somewhat fearful, option of marriage with Europeans.

Marie Rouensa married the French fur trader Michel Accault the same year she converted, only with great reluctance and for political and familial reasons. The Kaskaskia people needed an alliance with the French to provide protection against the Iroquois. But her marriage did not initially inspire her confidence, since the bearded, fifty-year-old Michel Accault was “famous in the Illinois country for all his debaucheries.”¹¹⁸ Accault was born in 1646 in

¹¹⁷ Leavelle, Tracy Neal. ‘Bad Things’ and ‘Good Hearts’: Mediation, Meaning, and the Language of Illinois Christianity.” *Church History* vol. 76 no. 2 (June 2007), p. 372.

¹¹⁸ Thwaites, *Jesuit Relations*, volume 64, page 213.

Poitiers, also in Atlantic France and a formerly Huguenot area, and was a resident of Canada by the 1660s, who migrated frequently to the Illinois Country when he became a trader. Marie agreed to marry him only if her parents also became Catholics. The conversion of her parents led to the conversion of three-fourths of the Kaskaskia people.¹¹⁹ Ekberg notes that in the original settlement at Kaskaskia, the French Canadians, Kaskaskia Indians, and Metis all lived together, but in 1719 a separate Indian village was established further up the river. Indian wives of Frenchmen remained in French Kaskaskia with their husbands, including the Francophile Catholic Marie.¹²⁰

Sleeper-Smith acknowledges that Marie used the social pressure of her priest, and her newly Catholic parents and community, to reform Accault's dissolute behavior, as Catholic marriages became "enforceable communal norms" among the Illini, ensuring a supply of furs for Accault, French trade goods for the Illini, and "prominence and power"¹²¹ for influential women like Marie Rouensa Accault and others like her. Marie Rouensa and Michel Accault had two children. Upon Michel Accault's early death, Marie Rouensa remarried to another Frenchman, Michel Phillippe, an "obscure canoeman"¹²² when he arrived in Illinois, and they had six more children. She died a rich woman with a valuable estate of agricultural land, two houses, two barns, oxen, cows, chickens and pigs, carts and plows, four African slaves (two

¹¹⁹ Ekberg, Carl J. with Anton J. Pregaldin. "Marie Rouensa and the Foundations of French Illinois." In *Native Women's History in Eastern North America Before 1900: A Guide to Research and Writing*. Rebecca Kugel and Lucy Eldersveld Murphy (eds). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007, 203-213. In orthography of the Illinois-Kaskaskia language, "8" is a shorthand for a sound like French 'ou', equivalent to a 'w' sound in English.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 212.

¹²¹ Ibid, Sleeper-Smith, "Women, Kin and Catholicism", 237.

¹²² Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*, 30.

married couples), and an Indian woman slave. Marie Rouensa Accault Phillippe divided her estate equally between her husband and eight children: presumably the “obscure canoeman” benefited from his wife’s connections and wealth.¹²³ Her will was notarized and written in French, and then translated into her native Illinois (Illiniwek) language, leading Ekberg to speculate that Marie Rouensa continued to speak Illiniwek as her primary language, despite her French husbands and Catholic religion. In her will, she disinherited one son, Michel Accault Jr., for choosing to “remain among the savage nations” in preference to life at Kaskaskia. Marie could not accept her son’s choice of a tribal life and in particular, his marriage to a Native woman who was not Christian. This is an interesting statement about Metis identity, since the choice of Metis people to live with Indian tribes as enrolled Indians, to be ‘white’ in white society, or to migrate to Metis communities in Kansas, Oklahoma, or Manitoba is a main theme of this work. Marie Rouensa evidently preferred her children to remain Catholics in close proximity to French culture, and disapproved of her son’s choice for himself and his children to be fully Indian in his identity, placing him outside the bonds of kinship and inheritance forged in his Metis family by his mother. Perhaps Michel Accault Jr.’s choice to remain among tribal Indian people and take a non-Christian Native woman for a wife reminded Marie Rouensa Accault Phillippe too uncomfortably much of her own early family life, a life she now proudly distanced herself from by her own decision to be the faithful Catholic bride of two French traders. Priests, following the instructions in her will, buried Marie Rouensa inside the church at

¹²³ Ekberg, Carl J. with Anton J. Pregaldin. “Marie Rouensa and the Foundations of French Illinois.”, 212. Indeed, Ekberg noted that Phillippe’s advantageous marriage to Marie Rouensa Accault bequeathed him her considerable property in land and enslaved people, both black and Indian, and made him a prosperous farmer and landowner in Kaskaskia.

Kaskaskia, a great honor given to very few people and even fewer women.¹²⁴

It seems likely that the *Coutume de Paris*, which divided property equally among all heirs, regardless of sex, seems to have added to Marie Rouensa's wealth, and the wealth of other indigenous women who married Frenchmen, by reinforcing indigenous Great Lakes norms of female property ownership. Under the *Coutume*, husbands and wives could be co-owners of property and a widow could inherit up to half of a husband's estate.¹²⁵ Ekberg acknowledges that Marie's conversion "set in motion a sequence of conversions" because of her influence within her family and tribe, and that these conversions laid the basis for the "founding of the Franco-Indian settlement of Kaskaskia", but rather pessimistically concludes that these conversions were a one-way street, an act of assimilation and betrayal that led to the "disintegration and destruction"¹²⁶ of the Kaskaskia and Peoria tribes.

This work contends that Marie's conversion was an act of adaptation, that led to her and her family's survival and to a larger narrative of Indian persistence. Agriculture "remained the province of women"¹²⁷ in early Kaskaskia, who maintained traditional Indian gender roles and resisted expectations of French domesticity by refusing to acquire any "looms, spinning wheels...or knitting needles."¹²⁸ I also suspect that home manufacture of cloth, while certainly

¹²⁴ Carl J. Ekberg with Anton J. Pregaldin. "Marie Rouensa and the Foundations of French Illinois", 214. Ekberg indicated that Marie Rouensa may have been the "only woman so honored" at that time.

¹²⁵ Ibid, Greer, *The People of New France*, 49.

¹²⁶ "Marie Rouensa and the Foundations of French Illinois." Carl J. Ekberg and Anton J. Pregaldin. *Illinois Historical Journal* Vol 84, No. 2 (Autumn 1991), pp. 146-160

¹²⁷ Susan Sleeper-Smith. "Women, Kin and Catholicism: New Perspectives on the Fur Trade." In *Native Women's History in Eastern North America Before 1900: A Guide to Research and Writing*. Edited by Rebecca Kugel and Lucy Eldersveld Murphy. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007, 244.

¹²⁸ Sleeper-Smith, "Women, Kin and Catholicism", 244.

alien to Indian women's experience, might have seemed superfluous when there was much finer cloth easily available to Indian women through trade. Indian women did cut, sew, and decorate trade cloth in distinctive styles, but they didn't have to weave that cloth themselves. Catholic kin networks, expanded by baptism, marriage and godparenting, became the bedrock of the emergent, and quite prosperous Metis society. Women married to traders and the descendants of such unions were godparents to one another's children, ensuring access both to furs and to a woman-produced agricultural supply for generations, the cornerstone of a prosperous and stable Indian world.

Sleeper-Smith is emphatic that "Catholicism did not entail the destruction of indigenous culture."¹²⁹ Indeed, women filled the void left by the expulsion of Jesuit priests and became "lay practitioners" of their faith, the primary teachers and proselytizers of Catholicism among the new blended communities of Metis people. The Indian mothers and French, British or Scottish fathers, rejected and isolated from both of the ancestral societies, would make a new place between them for the new people, the Metis. This place became a realm where their Metis offspring would be numerically and culturally dominant. They, their spouses, their children, and their kin would be the founders and architects of a fur trade society. The disorganization of the French government in America, and the failure of French colonization to supplant Native culture and make the Metis completely French, instead allowed the individual and collective identity of a new people to flourish in its own distinctive setting- the Great Lakes. The failure of French governmental policies created a group of people linked by kinship ties to indigenous and French people, the Metis, who moved seamlessly between borders, communities, and cultures.

¹²⁹ Sleeper-Smith, "Women, Kin and Catholicism", 245.

Chapter 2: The 18th Century- Conflict and Concord in Metis Identities

In the 18th century, Metis identity faced its first serious challenges as colonial governments sought to narrow, reject, and restrict Metis people's lives. In the 1700s, Indian tribes, white settlers, and colonial policymakers forced the Metis to contend with new definitions of race and legally embedded definitions of race. Metis people survived, but colonial governments began to manipulate and mistrust them. Pseudo-biological definitions of race, brand-new in the 1700s, defamed the Metis as ill-gotten and vice-ridden. Native American prophets of this era rejected the Metis, just as they rejected the blended nature of the entire fur-trade world. Indian ideological rejection of the Metis attempted to articulate a vision of Indian racial and spiritual purity and distinctiveness, in which the Metis could have no place. This chapter argues that the 18th century began an era for the Metis in which they could no longer occupy different identities in different spaces, as tribal nationhood weakened and indigenous peoples were cast outside the definition of American nationhood. Though they were not yet legally required to choose an ethnicity, the eighteenth century paved the way for this development with the rise of racially exclusionary thinking among all groups in American society. This chapter, as in the previous chapter, will show examples of how the Metis in this era conceptualized their identity, and how legal definitions of race and culture either facilitated or hindered their mobility.

This chapter will discuss the demographic rise of the Metis as a dominant ethnic group on the Great Lakes, the expansion of the fur trade, the role of the Metis in native spiritual movements, and the hardening of racial classifications after 1776, when increasingly rigid political and social realignments led to a wholesale rejection of a blended cultural world and

increased hardships for Metis people. The French were beginning to recognize that their goal of assimilating Indian people into French culture had failed. Racial difference was blamed as the reason for the failure of French imperial policy, as the French, very reluctantly, acknowledged that the Metis were a distinctive indigenous people. The arrival of the British after 1763 led to an economic boom in the fur trade, and the British and Scottish traders also tried unsuccessfully to convince their Metis offspring that their identity was British only. The Great Lakes in the 1700s continued to be a dynamic and ever-changing place for the American Metis. Most notably, the Metis of the 1700s saw the growth and expansion of the fur trade. This was the fur-trade's high point. In tandem with this expansion, the Metis or Creole people of the future American Midwest built and settled the area's first towns, where fur-trading was the primary economic activity; Metis people's families grew, and the Metis were culturally and numerically dominant in their communities. They had a pride in their sense of identity, a pride sometimes scorned by more militant Native leaders after 1776, who sometimes dismissed the Metis as complicit in the oppression of Indians, ironically acknowledging Metis distinctiveness even while claiming them as indigenous. After 1776, the ossification of racial categories and the dominance of the American government over Indian people made the more fluid identities of the fur-trade years difficult to maintain for the Metis.

During the 18th century, the policymakers of New France turned against intermarriage with Indians as an official policy and officially banned Indian slavery. But this official change did little to disrupt the pivotal and customary socioeconomic role that intermarriage played in the lives of Indian and French people throughout the century. Anglo-American thinkers began to formulate the first theories of race and govern their colonial populations accordingly. For the

first time, Indians became “red” and Europeans were “white”. Black slavery expanded. The U.S., French, Spanish and British governments attempted to formally outlaw Indian slavery, yet it persisted as a customary practice in the *pays d'en haut*, giving an uncertain status to enslaved Indian people. Armed conflicts between England, France and the nascent United States persisted, as did the conflicts between, and among, their various Indian allies.

During this era, the Jesuits were expelled from the Great Lakes country following the British conquest of Quebec, the loss of New France, the suppression of the Jesuits in France and its colonies by 1764, and the official papal disbandment of the Jesuit Order in 1773.¹³⁰ Native women took up their spiritual role as lay practitioners of Catholicism. Prominent Indian leaders led the first pan-tribal resistance movements to American settler colonialism during this time, usually with a heavy mixture of apocalyptic Christian spirituality, and sometimes led pan-tribal Christian Native settlements, confederations, and migrations that grew from these. By the late 18th century, the Great Lakes started its slow and turbulent process of Americanization when the American government took control and passed the Northwest Ordinance, claiming the “Northwest Territory” for the United States as the site of future free, non-slave states, offering American Metis the status of whiteness and giving American Metis men the rights of freeborn white male citizens.

Some American settlers began to arrive by the end of the eighteenth century, and their individualistic, quarrelsome tendencies were much remarked upon by the Metis, Indians, and

¹³⁰ Kennedy, J.H. *Jesuit and Savage in New France*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950, 49.

the old French settlers¹³¹, though in the eighteenth century, their numbers were a mere trickle, the small herald of an oncoming flood.

French authorities began to doubt the ability of Indians to become French, abandoning- at least as officially encouraged policy- the ideal of “one race” being created between Indians and French, an ideal largely promoted, if not created, by Jesuit priests¹³². French administrators both in France and the colonies used a relatively new, racialized language to denigrate Native people as being unworthy candidates to fulfill their idealized mission of pro-French procreation. Saliha Belmessous observes that the demographically tiny French population in North America was possessed of a quixotically audacious confidence that Natives who intermarried with them would adopt French culture and become French, despite the fact that Natives overwhelmingly outnumbered the French. Official promotion of intermarriage meant that the French originally lacked a biological concept of race, and had no fear, as the English later would, that they would be completely absorbed into Indian societies. But the failure of the policy of *francisation* was a “catalyst in the emergence of the idea of race”, as French policymakers looked for answers about their failure in ideas of absolutist ‘natural’ difference between Natives and Europeans, rather than cultural difference.¹³³ Phillippe de Rigaud de Vaudreuil, the Governor-General of New France, turned against intermarriage by the early 18th century, while Antoine Lamothe

¹³¹ Ekberg, Carl J. *French Roots in the Illinois Country*, 261. “Europeans and Creoles in the Mississippi Valley viewed Anglo-Americans as ruffians who were hot-headed, lawless, and addicted to strong drink; ‘Whiskey Boys’, one French observer called them.”

¹³² “*Ils ne fassent plus ainsy qu’un mesme peuple et un mesme sang.*” Colbert to Jean Talon, November 13, 1666, AN, C11A, vol. 2, fol. 332. It’s worth noting for the purposes of this work that *peuple* and *sang* did not have the racial connotations at this point that they would later.

¹³³ Belmessous, Saliha. “Assimilation and Racialism in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century French Colonial Policy.” *The American Historical Review* 110, no. 2 (2005): p. 325-326.

Cadillac, the founder of Detroit, promoted it, thus exemplifying the two great trends of their era.

Even as the French government viewed its policy of indigenous intermarriage with increasing skepticism in the halls of power and the settled areas of Quebec, it became a commonplace norm and a social reality of actual Great Lakes life, facilitated by the vast expansion in the fur-trade economy. Cadillac viewed intermarriages between French men and Indian women as crucial to his expectations for the settlement of Detroit due to the necessity of Indian alliances, the virtual absence of Frenchwomen, and the small French population overall¹³⁴. In 1709, Governor Vaudreuil complained bitterly to Secretary of State Jerome Pontchartrain about Cadillac's promotion of Indian intermarriage, stating that intermarriage, by integrating Frenchmen into an Indian world, made them members of tribal communities, heir to Indian political loyalties and rivalries, and thus potentially disloyal to France. He thought that they had become "dissolute" and "idle" men with "unbearable independence": he also claimed that the metis children of these unions were staunchly Indian in their political allegiance and identity and were actively opposed to the French. Vaudreuil complained about intermarriage in explicitly racial terms- "one should never mingle a bad blood with a good one!"¹³⁵ This language of "bad blood" explicitly referencing Indians by race was new, though it spread quickly.

Axtell likewise observes that the trappers and traders, and their children dressed and

¹³⁴ - "Mémoire de Lamothe Cadillac au comte de Maurepas", 1698, AN, C11E, vol. 14, fols. 35-36, 58.

¹³⁵ Pontchartrain to Governor Vaudreuil, July 6, 1709, in *Rapport de l'archiviste de la province de Québec pour 1942-3* (Québec, 1943), 406.

ate like Indians, spoke Native languages, and married Indians, even while the tendency of Frenchmen to Indianize worried those in high places. By the early eighteenth century, a balancing French sex ratio and the “tendency of the French spouses and offspring of mixed unions to adopt a native lifestyle prompted both church and civil leaders to bestow their blessing with caution.”¹³⁶ Yet marriage of Frenchmen to Indian women, according to Native custom or *à la façon du pays*, was so ubiquitous it was “almost the norm.” When the western posts of the Great Lakes country in the *pays d’en haut* reopened in the eighteenth century, and the fur trade grew in its scope and economic importance, “intermarriage exploded...between 1698 and 1765”- during that span of time, forty-eight percent of all recorded marriages at Michilimackinac (now Mackinac, Michigan) were between French men and Indian or Metis women.¹³⁷ The fur-trade society was forming, aided by the French presence at the Great Peace of Montreal in 1701, which ended fifty years of war with the Iroquois. But “bad blood” began to carry a racial and social stigma, amplified, or perhaps created, by French pessimism at the failure of *francisation* to achieve its assimilatory goals- the French recognized their “inability to supplant native culture” even as the demands of the fur trade drew them into further intermarriages. Indian women continued to keep their sexual freedom, divorce their husbands when they wanted to, and continued to observe their traditional cultural values- Indian women, in other words, remained Indian.

Ekberg also concedes that the idealized hope of incorporating Indians into the French

¹³⁶ Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, 304.

¹³⁷ Peterson, “Many Roads to Red River”, 42-45.

colonies was “proving to be largely fanciful”¹³⁸ by the early eighteenth century, but notes that Jesuit priests continued to perform marriages between French men and Indian women, promoting Church unions as a way of curbing the “libertinage” they saw in marriages *a façon du pays* and as a means of converting the Indian women and tribal communities to Catholicism. Priests were “generally more tolerant”¹³⁹ of racial mixing than French civil administrators.

Father René Tartarin of Kaskaskia sarcastically wrote to the French government in the mid-1700s regarding their complaints about intermarriages. Tartarin explained that French-Indian marriages were necessary to prevent the “disorders” in morality on the French frontier: in his view, the Metis who were the product of legitimate marriages were more likely to settle down and affiliate with French culture, while illegitimate “bastards” became embittered against the French and reverted to the allegedly “nomadic and savage” culture of their Native mothers-French “manners, morals, customs and religion”¹⁴⁰ were more important than skin color. Tartarin claimed that Metis born of legitimate marriages were made French through French education and the inheritance of property from French fathers. He noted approvingly that they behaved “like true French” and married into French families.

Meanwhile, Governor Vaudreuil and others in his position continued their role as the inadvertent originators of a centuries-long smear campaign against the Metis and their origins, continuing to rant as late as the 1750s that Metis were an “ill breed” produced by “shameful

¹³⁸ Ekberg, Carl J. *Stealing Indian Women: Native Slavery in the Illinois Country*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010, p. 25.

¹³⁹ Ekberg, *Stealing Indian Women*, 25-26.

¹⁴⁰ Memorandum of Father Tartarin, ANOM C13A 23:241, 243, year 1737-8.

and dangerous alliances.”¹⁴¹

The rank and file of New France and her Great Lakes territories, and the Native people they lived among, increased their practice of racial intermarriage for its considerable financial benefits to both parties. Ekberg concurs that ordinary French colonists with the most experience in Great Lakes life harbored the least racial prejudice and were the most likely to intermarry. “Precious few persons at Kaskaskia in 1735 were preoccupied with maintaining the purity of the noble French race.”¹⁴² Indian women, particularly widows previously married to French men and experienced in conducting the commercial business of the fur trade, were desirable and often wealthy marriage prospects who tended to remarry quickly, contributing to legendarily large Metis families.¹⁴³

Indian slavery persisted in the Midwest throughout the 18th century until the French Great Lakes became an American territory, and still was a customary practice even after that.

¹⁴¹ Vaudreuil to Macarty, August 8, 1751, VP LO 325. His phrase of *mauvaise race*- the Metis as a bad/ill race, was indeed new language in the 1750s. Sophie White argued that Vaudreuil was using phrases traditionally used to describe those of inferior social class, specifically the fear that marriage with social inferiors would dilute noble bloodlines, to articulate a newer language of racial inferiority. See White, Sophie. *Wild Frenchmen and Frenchified Indians: Material Culture and Race in Colonial Louisiana*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, p. 137.

¹⁴² Ekberg, *Stealing Indian Women*, 28.

¹⁴³ See, for instance, Peterson’s observation that Michilimackinac Metis families displayed a “remarkable fecundity” from 1698-1821, driven by the fur trade’s growth. In the years between 1721 and 1730, the average family size among Mackinac Metis was a whopping 7.5 children per family. It fluctuated throughout the decades but almost no Metis families at Mackinac, throughout 1698-1821, had fewer than three children altogether. The average number of children in families where the mother survived to age 40 was greater than that, at between eight and ten children! Jacqueline Peterson, “People in Between”, 121. Peterson’s estimate of Green Bay Metis fertility in 1830, consists of approximately six or seven children per family. She estimates the number may have been even higher, at between 7 or 8 children per family, since most families were Metis and the Americans counted by the census at Green Bay in 1830 were overwhelmingly single, childless men. Peterson, “People in Between”, 250.

French colonists throughout the Great Lakes continued to trade for slaves from tribes west of the Missouri. The Illini continued to enslave members of western tribes who were enemies and continued to trade them for French goods from the Odawa, and a widespread commerce in enslaved Indians was the result. The French government continued to waver on the issue, attempting to prohibit Indian slavery, but really only seeking to prevent the incitement of more war with French Indian allies for the purpose of procuring slaves.¹⁴⁴ No one really seems to have objected to the widespread enslavement of Indians and blacks alike. Ekberg suggests that Indian slavery, even in the Illinois Country and the Great Lakes, was a marginal phenomenon compared to the more widespread enslavement of black Africans.¹⁴⁵ But enslaved Indians of the *pays d'en haut* existed in a murky legal status between slavery and freedom throughout the eighteenth century, with newly founded St. Louis becoming the central mart of the Indian slave trade throughout all French territory in the Midwest, Louisiana and Canada. Tanis Thorne notes that in early St. Louis, the Metis, as elsewhere, relied on kinship to structure trade, ethnic identity and loyalty, political alliances, and formal adoptions between kin. Despite comprising 60 to 80 percent of the fur trade workforce in the St. Louis area, the metis were commonly stereotyped by outsiders as having inherited the “worst of both races”¹⁴⁶ - a pernicious

¹⁴⁴ Ban on Indian slave trade but not on Indian slavery itself- “All subjects of his Majesty and even all transients are expressly forbidden to acquire, purchase or take over any Indian slave.” O’Reilly decree, December 7, 1769, in Kinniard, Lawrence. *Spain in the Mississippi Valley*. volume 1, Washington D.C, Government Printing Office, 1946, p. 125-126.

¹⁴⁵ Ekberg, *French Roots in the Illinois Country*, p. 146. Ekberg surmised that from the 1700s onwards in the Illinois Country, there were “consistently fewer” Indian slaves than black slaves, and their numbers “declined continuously: there is no firm evidence that Indian slaves were used as agricultural laborers.”

¹⁴⁶ Thorne, Tanis C. *The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri*. University of Missouri Press, 1996, p. 5.

repetition of early French stereotypes about them. Thorne posits that “the central-Siouan mixed bloods and their French relations of the Midwest”¹⁴⁷ had no rallying point for Metis nationalism or ethnic consciousness without the existence of the fur-trade economy, a conclusion that I, like Lucy Murphy, find somewhat debatable. The precise status of enslaved Midwestern Indians, often partners or unwilling participants in Metis families, was “ambiguous... the line between free and slave (as well as between white and red) was frequently blurred, sometimes beyond recognition.”¹⁴⁸

Slavery in the Great Lakes, including some Metis slaveowners, was more broadly similar to the model of northern slavery, with the absence of large-scale monocrop commercial agriculture and people of all races living and working close together in small communities.¹⁴⁹ As usual, French served as the common language of the entire Midwest, regardless of a person’s particular ethnic origin. Several primary sources, including Johann Kohl’s *Kitchi-Gami*, seem to indicate that a type of blended dialect, called *Français sauvage*, which combined features of French and various Algonquian Indian languages, existed in the fur trade.¹⁵⁰ The distinctive fur trade dialect contributed to, and in some cases created, a sense of distinct Metis identity and ethnicity. This “*français sauvage*” is a probable ancestor or precursor of the Michif, a mixed language formerly spoken among some Canadian Metis which combines French and Plains Cree. The early twentieth century Manitoba Metis elder Guillaume Charette described the fur-

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., Thorne, *Many Hands of My Relations*, 247.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, Ekberg, *Stealing Indian Women*, 45.

¹⁴⁹ Kolchin, Peter. *American Slavery, 1619-1877*. New York: Hill & Wang, 2003, p. 27, 30, 78- on slavery in the Northern states.

¹⁵⁰ Kohl, *Kitchi-gami*, on *français sauvage* dialect— “One of them” (them meaning Indians) “spoke a little French, although not much more than the Upper Canadian ‘Français sauvage, as they often call it.” Kohl, *Kitchi-Gami*, 1860, p. 225.

trade dialect vividly as a mixture of Cree, Ojibwe, broken English and archaic French¹⁵¹- The traveling Metis bison-hunting brigades of the nineteenth-century American and Canadian Great Plains referred to their group travel interestingly as “*aller en neekinawhk*”, “going home or homeward”, with a French verb and a Cree noun for ‘home’.¹⁵² Charles Larpenteur referred to *aller en neekinawhk* as the group or community travel, in camps, of hunters and laborers at forts on the upper Missouri.¹⁵³ This phrase expressed the idea of identity as mobile- connecting “home” not to one fixed habitation, but to the custom of mobility and movement, organized by kinship. *Neekinawhk* is possibly related to the Plains Cree verbs *nahkwatisiw*, “to bring home meat from a kill/ haul meat from a kill”, or *nâcitâpêw*, “to drag something back, to drag something home, to fetch something by cart.”¹⁵⁴ The Metis bison-hunting brigades certainly brought home meat from their hunts in the famous Red River carts.

Both Native American languages and European languages like French and English contributed to Metis ideas about their kinship and identity. Native American languages of the Algonquian family, which encompasses most of the Great Lakes languages, tend to be gender-neutral. In Algonquian languages, the only distinction in pronouns is between animate and inanimate categories- humans, animals, spiritual or trees, plants and their products, natural

¹⁵¹ “*Mélange de cris, de saulteurs, d’anglais cassé, et de français archaïque.*” Guillaume Charette-Louis Goulet Manuscript, p. 1, MG9 A6, AM.

¹⁵² Racette, Sherry Farrell. “Sewing Ourselves Together: Clothing, Decorative Arts and the expression of Metis and half breed identity.” PhD dissertation, University of Manitoba, 2004, p. 51. <https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/xmlui/handle/1993/3304>

¹⁵³ Larpenteur, Charles. *Forty Years a Fur Trader on the Upper Missouri: the Personal Narrative of Charles Larpenteur, 1833-1872* (Minneapolis: Ross & Raines, 1962), p. 80.

¹⁵⁴ Wolvengrey, Arok. *nēhiyawēwin: itwēwina / Cree: Words*. Volume 1: Cree-English and Volume 2: English-Cree. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2001. <https://dictionary.plainscree.atlas-ling.ca/#/help>

objects, body parts, animal hides and clothing made from hides, tobacco and things related to it, and certain household objects all belong to the animate category.¹⁵⁵ The lack of formally articulated gender in Algonquian nouns and pronouns might contribute to or reflect the relatively co-equal roles of men and women in pre-contact Indian groups.

Michif, the Metis language, as a blended dialect, draws most of its nouns primarily from French and its verb system entirely from Cree, with some alternation between them and some overlap with Ojibwe, suggesting that speakers of Michif were actually sophisticated polyglots, fluent in the multiple languages from which Michif was formed. This echoes the observations of Margaret Noodin, who has commented that Ojibwe and other indigenous languages are heavily verb-based, reflecting an emphasis on acting and doing, while more noun-heavy European languages may reflect an emphasis on possession and property. In Canadian Michif, only a few nouns are Cree, such as kinship terms and the names of native plants like the chokecherry. Yet verb forms in Michif are a simplified form of “pure” Cree, with only two classes of animate-inanimate, not four, and its pronouns tend to shift between Cree and French.¹⁵⁶

The Metis importantly called themselves “free people”, “free men”, *gens libres* and “people who owned themselves” in English, French or Cree. This connoted people who were their own bosses. This work surmises that the presence of enslaved Indians and their children in Metis communities may have contributed even more to the near-mythic identity of Metis as

¹⁵⁵ “Repairing the Circle.” Highway, Tomson. In *Masculindians: Conversations About Indigenous Manhood*. Edited by Sam McKegney. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014, p. 24.

¹⁵⁶ Bakker, Peter. *A Language of Our Own: The Genesis of Michif, the Mixed Cree-French Language of the Canadian Métis*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 104. Bakker notes that most Michif nouns are French, while the majority of Algonquian nouns in Michif are Ojibwe, and only a few nouns in Michif are Cree. The majority of Michif verbs are Cree.

“free people” in business for themselves, free not only from the sometimes despotic regulations of fur-trade companies, but from all coercive constraint on their individual liberty. Indian slavery in this period was somewhat ancillary to the social process of metissage, as the majority of Indian slaves in the Great Lakes country and *pays d'en haut* were women and children, and Frenchmen and black men often emancipated and married these women, and certainly emancipated their own children by such women. Ekberg, quoting Trudel, observes that enslaved Indian women in Detroit bore 167 illegitimate mixed-race children to their French masters in the 18th century.¹⁵⁷ French priests deplored the fact that many French men used enslaved Indian women as concubines who became the mothers of bastard children: this was exactly the “moral disorder”¹⁵⁸ they hoped to prevent by promoting legitimate Church marriages between Indian women and French men.

According to Ekberg, when Metis children were born illegitimate in 18th-century French Illinois, their illegitimacy was usually because their mothers were slaves.¹⁵⁹ Marriages between Indians and whites were commonplace, but marriages between free people and slaves were not legal. If a free man married an enslaved woman, she was always freed at or before her marriage. Curiously enough, this does not seem to have provoked any abolitionist sentiment against slavery itself, either of Indians or blacks. The same Jesuit priests who assiduously promoted intermarriage between French men and free Indian women in the interests of moral and civic order were the colony’s largest slaveholders. This absolutist notion of race was also not practiced by British and American bureaucrats interested in annexing the Midwest, who

¹⁵⁷ Ekberg, *Stealing Indian Women*, 28, 63.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁵⁹ Ekberg, *Stealing Indian Women*, 65, 82.

needed the American Metis as political allies in enforcing the rule of various colonial governments and continued to offer them what Lucy Murphy refers to as a “back door” into whiteness.¹⁶⁰ Though white elites may have developed prejudicial attitudes towards Indians by the early eighteenth century, articulated a growing opposition to intermarriage, and sought to promulgate that opposition among ordinary people, ordinary people, both Indian and white, were equally as likely to reject dominant racial scripts and continue to accept each other as family members, trade allies, and marriage partners.

Ekberg comments that Marguerite Paniesikwe (Pawnee Woman), baptized at Kaskaskia on September 19, 1719, was well integrated into the racially mixed, “Franco-Indian” community of Kaskaskia, despite her enslaved status. Marguerite Paniesikwe stood as godmother to Symphorosa Tessier, daughter of Louis Tessier, the church warden, and his Indian wife, Catherine Wabanawikwe (Dawn Colored Woman or Eastern Woman). The godfather, Jacques Bourdon, was also married to an Indian woman. “Many, perhaps most” of Kaskaskia’s children by the 1720s were “mixed-bloods” with Indian mothers.¹⁶¹ The rise of the Metis culture was fueled by the demographic, cultural, and agricultural strategies for survival adopted in the seventeenth century because of the Iroquois wars.

Indian people in Wisconsin and Illinois, driven west of Lake Michigan to avoid Iroquois raiding, settled down in multi-ethnic villages with their neighbors. They sought rich, arable lands near the lake where the climate was moderate enough, and water abundant enough, to permit the growing of corn, and where they had easy access to trade routes. These same places

¹⁶⁰ Murphy, Lucy Eldersveld. *Great Lakes Creoles*, 90. As in Minnesota, in Wisconsin the state legislature politically needed to count Metis male votes as white male votes.

¹⁶¹ Ekberg, *Stealing Indian Women*, 64.

often became home to sizable Metis communities, and, because of their desirability, the future sites of cities. In the eighteenth-century, the Ho-Chunk, like many other tribes, pursued a strategy of intermarriage and accommodation with other Indian tribes in order to protect their lands, their culture, and their corn. Ho-Chunk homelands comprised a large swath of northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin, from modern Rock Island, Illinois, to Green Bay and Madison, including the lands around Lake Winnebago.

The Ho-Chunk continued a multiethnic, pan-tribal alliance strategy, even within their own communities. They lived in mixed villages with the Sauk, Kickapoo, and Fox, and intermarried readily with these Algonquian-speaking Indian neighbors. Like the foremothers of the Metis, the Ho-Chunks incorporated outsiders into their own kinship structures and identities through marriage. “Ho-Chunks...made kin of their former adversaries. When Ho-Chunks could no longer repel the Fox as invaders, they chose to intermarry and cohabitate with them.”¹⁶²

But unlike the Menominee, Potawatomi, Ojibwe and Dakota peoples of the region, who used this strategy to pursue large-scale alliances and intermarriages with Europeans and Euro-Americans, and had a substantial population of Metis kinsmen, the Ho-Chunk displayed a “standoffishness”¹⁶³ towards Europeans and Americans that increased their political difficulties in later years. General Ho-Chunk unwillingness to intermarry with Europeans bolstered colonial perceptions of them as proud, independent, bellicose, somewhat haughty people whose

¹⁶² Tronnes, Libby Rose. “Corn Moon Migrations: Ho-Chunk Belonging, Removal and Return in the Early Nineteenth Century Western Great Lakes.” Doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2017, p. 60.

¹⁶³ Tronnes. “Corn Moon Migrations”, 78.

alliances were, in European and Euro-American eyes, changeable and unreliable. Consequently, Ho-Chunks had relatively fewer Metis living among them, with some notable exceptions like the Paquettes and the famous Decorah family of chiefs, and intermarried less with Europeans than other tribes, leading to a “weak kinship network and inconsistent communication”¹⁶⁴ with the larger non-Indian and Metis communities. Because of this, John W. Hall explained that the Ho-Chunks had “relatively few” people who could intercede for them and “could not turn to influential metis relatives for advice.”¹⁶⁵

Hall notes that the relative lack of a Ho-Chunk metis population was also a problem for the U.S. Government, since they “habitually struggled to secure the services of qualified Ho-Chunk interpreters.”¹⁶⁶ The Ho-Chunks were an independent people, but isolation was the cost of their independence. Hall explains, “Considered ‘warlike’ by the Europeans, with whom the Ho-Chunks were reluctant to intermarry, these Indians were never fully incorporated by the French, British, or American regimes.”¹⁶⁷

Despite the protestations of the French elite, and more conservatively-minded tribes like the Ho-Chunks, even they could not fail to be affected by the cross-cultural dynamics created by the fur-trade world. Ekberg suggests that the parallel lives of the fur-trade elite in early eighteenth century Kaskaskia were more alike than different- interethnic marriage between Indians, French and Metis was so commonplace as to be the socially-approved glue of a syncretic society. In the American West from the mid-seventeenth century to the mid-

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., Tronnes, p. 78,

¹⁶⁵ Hall, John W., and Hall, John W., Jr.. *Uncommon Defense : Indian Allies in the Black Hawk War*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009, p. 121-2.

¹⁶⁶ Hall, *Uncommon Defense*, p. 299.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., Hall, *Uncommon Defense*, p. 248.

nineteenth, intimate relations- marriages, as well as more casual liaisons, greased the gears of the fur trade and stimulated the accumulation of commercial wealth.”¹⁶⁸ Much of this trade was illegal at first, only becoming legalized later on, but intermarriage was the rule for almost anyone engaged in it.

Indian women had their own reasons for marriage and cohabitation with French and Scottish men as part of the trade. Peterson believes that elite Native women used the marriages as vehicles for opportunity in politics and business, that there may have been a surplus of marriageable Native women in tribal societies and proportionally fewer men due to greater male mortality in hunting, war, and epidemics, and that other Native women may have sought material comfort, access to European trade goods, or may have preferred the more demonstrative emotional style of the French-Canadians¹⁶⁹, despite potential “exposure to European diseases and more frequent childbirth.”¹⁷⁰ According to tribal customs of the Algonquian-speaking Great Lakes Indians, sons-in-law were expected to pay a bride-price for a wife, as well as live with and provide for their wives’ families, making intermarriage with a prestigious trader perhaps seem even more appealing. Such women were essential to traders as well. Women ground corn, made moccasins and snowshoes, made and washed clothing, and chopped firewood for the cabins at the forts. They served as guides, interpreters and diplomatic agents on trade journeys. One remarkable indigenous woman, Thanadelthur, brokered peace

¹⁶⁸ Ekberg, *Stealing Indian Women*, 37.

¹⁶⁹ Peterson, *People in Between*, 58-64, 71. Peterson suggests that the prospect of marriage to a white male outsider was frightening to most tribal Indian women of their day, and so it appealed to only ambitious, brave, elite, or unusual women, who otherwise would have been female hunters, warriors, celibates or seers.

¹⁷⁰ Peterson, *People in Between*, 86, 88.

between her Dene tribe, their Cree enemies, and the English of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1716. Hudson's Bay Company Governor James Knight befriended Thanadelthur, though not to the point of marriage or other intimacy, and bitterly grieved her death in the following year, praising her courage and "very high spirit...of the firmest resolution."¹⁷¹

Women's making of footwear for winter journeys was particularly crucial. As Sylvia Van Kirk describes, "A man could not even venture outside the post to collect firewood or hunt small game in winter without snowshoes. To be without women to make them was to invite disaster...inland journeys which were not accompanied by Indian women seemed doomed to failure."¹⁷² Traders learned to cultivate women's taste and interest in the selection of goods they provided, such as "lace, ribbons, rings and vermilion"¹⁷³, and many indigenous women trapped rabbits and martens, whose skins became their "property for trade", as well as any dried provisions they processed.¹⁷⁴ For an Indian woman, "the household was in effect her property; the products of her labor were hers to dispose of as she wished"¹⁷⁵, enabling some women married to traders to gain considerable power and influence, not compatible with a European man's idea of a proper wife's behavior. Many Indian wives of traders were able to amass wealth, influence and their own part of the trading business by acting as diplomats and interpreters in remote areas where the fur trade companies' power was weak. Although Company officials and other higher-ups privately deplored the influence of the "petticoat

¹⁷¹ Journals of Governor James Knight, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, B 239 a 1-3.

¹⁷² Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 63.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁷⁴ "the snareing (sic) of hares, and trapping of Martens are the business of the Women and become their property for trade." Glover, Richard. *David Thompson's Narrative, 1784-1812*. Toronto: Champlain Society, XL, 1962, 67, 235.

¹⁷⁵ Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 83.

politicians”¹⁷⁶, they relied on the women so much that they had little choice but to publicly accept their demands.

By the 1700s, more French fur-trading towns were founded and became bastions of Metis population and large Metis families, stretching from Detroit in the east to Pembina, to the Red River of the North, in Manitoba, the eventual birthplace of the politicized Metis identity. In the 18th century, ethnic distinctions in identity and kinship were already apparent in Canada between the British and Scottish “Half Breeds”, descendants of Hudson’s Bay Company men, and the French-Canadian Metis of the North West Company, who conceptualized their identity in different ways. In the early part of the 1700s, fur traders expected their Metis offspring to return to tribal societies as Indians, but by the end of the century, fur-trade fathers in Canada became more concerned about acculturating their children to a European standard, and thus may have inadvertently contributed to the rise of the Metis as a new tribal “nation.” By the mid-eighteenth century, children of the large Metis families had grown up and were “very numerous”, with important differences between the Metis children of Hudson’s Bay Company men, who were British, Scottish and Irish, and the Metis generations of the North West Company, who had French Canadian paternal ancestry. In the early years of colonization, Hudson’s Bay Company officials made “virtually no distinction” between Indians and mixed-bloods born of British, Irish and Scottish fathers, and Metis women raised with their mother’s people were “virtually indistinguishable” from Indians.

But in the rival North West Company, the French-Native “freemen”, Metis or “bois

¹⁷⁶ Merk, Frederick, ed. *Fur Trade and Empire: George Simpson’s Journal, 1824-25*. Cambridge, MA, 1931, p. 99.

brules”, descended of French-Canadian fathers and Indian mothers, were recognized as a group of people distinct from Indians, at their inception. Many Hudson’s Bay Company Metis, by contrast, were brought up in the Home Guard bands of Indians who lived near the forts, with sons more often receiving a European-style education, and daughters being raised mainly by indigenous mothers, to marry incoming traders, soldiers and officers and assist them with their land-based skills. Brown explains that the “Home” or “Home Guard” Indians were the bands of local Indians who lived at or near the trading posts, helped to provision the posts, and, in their turn, relied on the food at the posts when game or other local resources were scarce. The post was a home base, where needy indigenous people could be fortified with food and drink when conditions were dire, and a safe haven to “leave the young, weak, sick or elderly”¹⁷⁷ members of indigenous communities while their families were hunting, traveling, migrating seasonally, or trading. For the traders as well as the Home Guard Indians, the post was home, a site of domestic and work life, and a resting place for those who died. This was typical of both British and Indian lifestyles at the time, where the family was the center of economic work and production, as well as a social life. By the 1700s, many of the Home Indians were the in-laws, families, or ethnically mixed descendants of Hudson’s Bay traders, who considered themselves Indian but still lived near the posts, had “strong attachments” to particular posts, and married traders. But still, in the early 1700s, an “eventual return to Indian life” was expected of most traders’ offspring, who thereafter became part of the Home Guard, and were “not subjected” to assimilatory pressures or expected to acquire European culture. At this time, biracial

¹⁷⁷ Brown, Jennifer S.H. *Strangers in Blood; Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1980, p. 19.

daughters “went by Indian names”, were close to Indian society, and learned the subsistence skills of Indian lives. Some married Company officers, while others married Indians, and their European fathers were absent, deceased, or not involved in their upbringing.

From the late 1700s onward, this custom began to change as company men in Canada married the mixed-blood daughters of other company men, a type of fur-trade endogamy. The daughters themselves married Company men and traders, or the mixed-race native-born sons and grandsons of older Company officers. And by the end of the eighteenth century, more Hudson’s Bay Company fathers began to take an interest in educating their daughters away from an indigenous lifestyle. British schools and the Red River colony were established, so that raising fur-trade children in tribal life was no longer seen as inevitable or desirable. Fathers fretted that their daughters would pick up indigenous languages and the sexual freedom associated with Indian women, and instead wanted them to learn English, Christianity, and the more constricted cultural expectations of European womanhood, to make them acceptable mates for officers and traders. If they were to be the wives of European men, they could not become accustomed to the mores of Indian society, where divorce was common and premarital chastity almost unknown. They had to be secluded, educated, and taught “ladylike” modesty. In the Hudson’s Bay Company, captains noted that the children of British or Scottish men generally received more European education than the children of the French-Canadian voyageurs from the rival North West Company, who were “left to grow up in ignorance”¹⁷⁸, i.e., allowed to be raised in Indian families.

In 1712, Michilimackinac (present day Mackinac, Michigan) contained one hundred or

¹⁷⁸ Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 106.

more *coureurs du bois* (illegal fur traders), their Indian wives, and their families, among them “men by the names of L’Esperance, DuRivage, Vieux, Menard and Villeneuve,” as well as the notable “Langlades, Bertrands, Desrivières, Amelins, Bourassas, Parents, Amiots, Chaboyers, Ainse, Blondeaus and Chevaliers.”¹⁷⁹ Other Metis surnames were Arteau, Barron, Bellegarde, Beauchemin (perhaps a French translation of the Ojibwe idea of the ‘good path’ through life-*minobimaadiziyan*), Bellehumeur, Bourdon, Caplette, Dumouchel, Gladue, Gardipee/Guardipee, Gonneville, Marchero, Taillefer, St. Michel, Rolet, Aubouchon, Belcour, Belcourt, Boyer, Chartrand, Delorme, Ducharme, Dumont, Desjarlais, Fleury, Flammand, Houle, Labombarde, Lacerte, Laderoute, LaFlesche, LaFontaine, LaFramboise, LaPointe, Lavallee/Vallee/Leveille, Lemire/ LaMere, Letreille, Malleterre, Ouelette, Parisien, Racette, Renville, Richard, Rivard, Sansregret, Trottier, Turcotte and Pelletier dit Antaya. All of these towns had a relative occupational homogeneity, were materially prosperous, had a “relative lack of material status distinctions”¹⁸⁰ among themselves on the Great Lakes, and the men considered it dishonorable to farm, perhaps socialized by their Native wives and Native female relatives to view farming as a woman’s domain. Native as well as Metis men throughout the early Midwest resisted agricultural labor for hundreds of years, and shared the attitude that farming was a female task.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ Peterson, *People in Between*, 116.

¹⁸⁰ Peterson, “People in Between”, 106, 120-121.

¹⁸¹ Thorne, Tanis C. *The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1996, p. 145. “The Protestant missionaries’ initial efforts to make farmers out of the Osage mixed-bloods proved futile. Mixed-blood men, like their full-blood counterparts, firmly held the idea that agriculture was the work of slaves and women.”

The greatest number of marriages in eighteenth-century Michilimackinac were between French-Canadian men of the fur trade and Indian or metis women. Importantly for those who consider endogamy an important hallmark of a self-sustaining, distinct ethnic group, endogamous marriages between two Metis spouses were “insignificant” in eighteenth-century Michilimackinac, comprising less than two percent of the total marriages. The Metis comprised the largest percentage of Michilimackinac births and baptisms throughout the eighteenth century¹⁸², and chose not to farm, preferring to trade for most of their vegetables from local tribes like the Odawa, and to subsist on fish and game for meat.¹⁸³ Even as late as 1818, the majority of registered marriages at Michilimackinac remained those between Euro-Americans and Indians or Metis¹⁸⁴.

The pattern was similar for other fur-trading towns like Green Bay, where 81.48 percent of households from 1740-1796 and 87 percent from 1796-1815 contained at least one native or Metis parent¹⁸⁵, and Prairie du Chien, which had its beginnings as a Metis town whose French traders were intermarried to “Fox, Sauk, and Dakota wives.”¹⁸⁶ Early Chicago and Milwaukee, in the “last decades” of the eighteenth century, began as “jack-knife” posts run by one trader, or “one or more trading families”¹⁸⁷, their Indian wives, their employees, whether voyageurs or

¹⁸² Peterson, “People in Between”, p. 121-123.

¹⁸³ Peterson, “People in Between”, p. 124.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., Peterson, “People in Between”, p. 127. The largest number of Michilimackinac marriages by ethnicity between 1765-1818 were between Euro-Americans and Metis (51.16 percent of marriages) or between Euro-Americans and Indians (13.95 percent of marriages). Not only was interracial metissage the marital norm at this time, it was commoner than endogamous same-race marriage.

¹⁸⁵ Peterson, “People in Between”, p. 136.

¹⁸⁶ Lucy Eldersveld Murphy, *Great Lakes Creoles*, p. 25, 37.

¹⁸⁷ Peterson, “People in Between”, p. 137.

engagés, and their Metis children, plus domestic servants and Indian and black slaves.

Most of these towns began in the French period, were located along “rivers, bays or lakeshores at important breaks in trade or portage points”, and were significant “sites of Indian agricultural activity and had often been the locations of early French forts and/or missions.”¹⁸⁸

Chicago had also been occupied as a “secondary” military fort by the French. The town sites were usually near a local Indian band’s wintering ground with whom the traders had marital alliances- their wives usually being the sisters, daughters, or nieces of tribal leaders. Peterson describes such towns as “patriarchal fiefdoms”¹⁸⁹ dominated by Metis families, including the La Framboise and Beaubien families of Chicago, the Chevaliers, Bertrands and Burnettes on the St. Joseph River in Michigan, the Godgroys and Richardvilles on the Wabash in Indiana, and the Ducharmes and Grignons at Kaukauna, and the Vieux and Juneau families of Milwaukee.

Peterson records that early households in Chicago and Milwaukee, protected by their family connections to local Indians, “sprawled along the river banks”¹⁹⁰ without need of defensive fortifications and that all such communities showed a marked disinclination to farm, preferring to trade in furs and to rely on the crops of Indian tribes for most of their daily food. Despite the colonizing intent of the French, W.J. Eccles observes that most Indian tribes “never considered themselves to be French subjects.”¹⁹¹ Although they were glad enough to have French trading

¹⁸⁸ Peterson, “People in Between”, p. 130.

¹⁸⁹ Peterson, “People in Between”, p. 140.

¹⁹⁰ Peterson, “People in Between”, p. 140.

¹⁹¹ “The Fur Trade and Eighteenth-Century Imperialism.” Eccles, W.J. In *Rethinking the Fur Trade, Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World*. Edited by Susan Sleeper-Smith. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009, p. 223. See also “Parole de tout la Nation Abenaquise et de toutes les autres nations sauvages ses alliés au gouverneur de Baston au sujet de la Terre des Abenaquise dont les Anglois s’Emparent depuis la Paix... fait á Kenask8K au bas de la Rivière de Kenibeki Le 28 Juillet 1721, F3 Moreau de St. Méry, Vol 3., fols. 413-416, Archs. Nationales.

posts on their lands, such posts were carefully situated “in an area that no Indian nation claimed as its own- Detroit, for example, or were established with the express permission of the dominant nation of the region...The land on which the trading posts stood they considered still to be theirs, the French occupants being mere tenants” on Indian country.¹⁹²

Lucy Murphy’s tale of Prairie Du Chien’s founding in Wisconsin reveals that this Metis settlement began in a similar way. In the presence of several French-Canadian fur traders and the British governor, the local Meskwaki (Red Earth or Fox) band who owned the land deeded the site of Prairie Du Chien to the newcomers after a formal ceremony at Michilimackinac, where the Meskwaki were feted with gifts and acknowledged as the “rightful owners of the soil.”¹⁹³ But these European men were also husbands of local Meskwaki and Dakota women who had always lived in the vicinity of Prairie Du Chien, and fathers of their children and grandchildren, who may have been considered white by French and American legal standards, but who remained the people they always had been. They were participants in a complex web of Great Lakes kin relationships that ensured the continued presence of the “rightful owners”¹⁹⁴, their people, and their descendants on the same piece of deeded land.

The Metis men, like their French fathers and Native uncles, generally showed scant interest in farming or becoming farmers, particularly in farming for commercial purposes. Most had purchased their land from Indian kin, but had little interest in building “land roads” or in demarcating the exact extent of their land claims in a Euro-American fashion. This lack of

¹⁹² Ibid., Eccles, 223-224.

¹⁹³ Ibid, Murphy, *Great Lakes Creoles*, 24-26.

¹⁹⁴ Draper, Lyman C. ed. “Traditions and Recollections of Prairie du Chien. Related by Hon. B.W. Brisbois.” Wisconsin Historical Collections, Vol. 9, 1882, 282-284.

interest in road-building, individualized claims to land, livestock raising and commercial farming, denigrated as laziness by contemporaneous outsiders, is hypothesized by Peterson to be a result of overwhelming occupational emphasis on the fur trade in Metis communities. While the fur trade was still extractive and colonial in nature, Murphy observes that it differed in its impact on land and relationships than other colonial endeavors begun by Europeans in the Great Lakes, like mining or more intensive forms of agriculture. As a business that required “cooperation between free peoples,”¹⁹⁵ the fur trade was not based on a land-hungry, predominantly agricultural settler-colonial project, in the way that the American Northwest Territory would later be. If Indians had chosen to participate in settler colonialism alongside Europeans, the fur trade consequently would have suffered, but I also believe that Indians and most Metis consciously chose not to participate.

The unwillingness of Indians and Metis to farm commercially, demarcate exact land claims, and raise livestock was not laziness. It reflected an Indian attitude towards land among eighteenth-century Midwestern Metis. Land was not subject to a commercial relationship, nor was it private property that could be owned- it was a communal resource to be fairly used and fairly shared. Like their Native relatives and neighbors, the eighteenth-century Great Lakes Metis considered farming female work, traded for agricultural products when they did not want to farm them, used the river for transportation, and procured firewood, game, and small garden patches from the land without viewing the land as something they individually owned or could own.

¹⁹⁵ Murphy, *Great Lakes Creoles*, 26.

As Brenda MacDougall warned¹⁹⁶, the Metis knew exactly who they were and only appeared ambiguous when it was in their advantage to do so, as individuals or as a community. It is true that they faced a greater array of choices in how to present themselves and their identity because of their multiracial heritage, and it is also true that the eventual choices they made on the matter for themselves and their families reveal much about their view of the world and their place in it- the very topic of this work! But to say they were caught between or uncertain is misleading at best, and no part of their allegiance was uncertain- they belonged to a defined community with proud traditions and a long, rich history.

Once Indians and Metis trapped and traded furs for companies like the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West company, they traded for the cloth, jewelry, and other European-made goods that they forged into a distinctive Great Lakes Native and Metis dress sensibility. Indians "engaged wholeheartedly in the consumer revolution", but wanted items that reflected their "aesthetic orientation" of color and style.¹⁹⁷ Miller and Hamell note that Indians were "demanding and sophisticated consumers"¹⁹⁸ in the fur trade who demanded high-quality goods like cloth and beads in their preferred colors and shapes, reflecting pre-existing symbolic

¹⁹⁶ MacDougall, Brenda. "The Myth of Metis Cultural Ambivalence." In *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility and History*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012, p. 436-439. MacDougall argues that the Metis should not be categorized racially, but in terms of identities that made sense to them, rooted in gender, kinship, age, fur-trade occupations and a clear geographic relationship to a homeland, particularly the maternal homeland, due to the matrilineal family organization of the Indian mothers of 1800s Saskatchewan Metis, whose Metis children displayed a distinct preference for living on the ancestral lands of their mothers.

¹⁹⁷ Sleeper-Smith, Susan (ed). *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009, p. 316.

¹⁹⁸ "A New Perspective on Indian-White Contact: Cultural Symbols and Colonial Trade." Miller, Christopher L. and George R. Hamell. *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 73, no. 2, September 1986, p. 313.

values in Great Lakes Native culture. Eighteenth-century traders dyed fabrics red, blue, or light orange, the preferred colors demanded by tribes in trade.¹⁹⁹ Indian demand not only dictated the immediate needs of the fur trade, but shaped an entire transatlantic economy. Martha Wilson Hamilton has documented that when Indians purchased silver jewelry from traders to use as a personal accessory or to decorate their clothing, they wanted jewelry and brooches made with genuine, pure sterling silver, rather than the inferior “German silver,”²⁰⁰ a silver alloy blended with nickel. Indians knew the value of their furs and the value of the goods they were sold. Native people believed that silver jewelry protected the joints²⁰¹, and European and Euro-American craftsmen worked the jewelry itself in designs that Native people preferred, by craftsmen all over Europe and various parts of America. These designs stayed relatively consistent for almost two hundred years of the trade- for instance, triangles represented thunderbirds²⁰² and turtles stood for longevity, while other patterns reflected the “tree of memory” and other mythic and cultural themes.²⁰³ Trade cloth was the greatest fur-trade export and the item in highest demand by tribes.

Susan Sleeper-Smith has written that Indian women’s labor in processing furs determined their success in securing European-style cloth, which they used to create “lavish clothing styles” incorporating beads, silver jewelry, bright colors, and silk ribbons that reflected the women clothes-makers’ ethnic identities, artistic skill, and material wealth. Sleeper-Smith

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., Miller and Hamell, 327.

²⁰⁰ Hamilton, Martha Wilson. *Silver in the Fur Trade, 1680-1820*. Chelmsford, Massachusetts. Martha Hamilton Publishing, 1995, p. 13, 15, 47.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 54.

²⁰² Hamilton, 99, 104.

²⁰³ Hamilton, Martha Wilson. *Silver in the Fur Trade, 1680-1820*. Chelmsford, MA: Martha Hamilton Publishing, 1995, 49-50, 65.

notes that, of all goods shipped into the western Great Lakes during the French regime, 60 percent were cloth and the ancillary products needed to transform them into wearable clothing, like scissors, needles, and thread. At the larger commercial posts like Detroit and Michilimackinac, the percentages of cloth traded were even higher, at almost three-fourths or more of all goods traded, the volume of cloth far outpacing sales of any other item, including firearms or alcohol. "We might well call the fur trade the cloth trade."²⁰⁴ Cloth was also offered by fur trade companies to their employees as part of their contracts, as an incentive, or as payment, and voyageurs sometimes offered clothes or cloth to water and wind spirits for a safe journey. Red, white, and blue cloth symbolized different things in the trade. According to Sleeper-Smith, "White and sky blue symbolized purity, peace, the powers of the intellect, and prophetic clarity. Red represented the animate and emotional aspects of life, the destructive nature of armed conflict, and simultaneously it promised its wearer spiritual benefit and protection."²⁰⁵

As clothing became increasingly elaborate during the fur trade's heyday, it also gained importance in ritual, ceremony, and asserting Indian and Metis distinctiveness from the mainstream Anglo-American culture, including the distinctiveness of the trading tribes' material wealth. Most settlers, impoverished farmers and immigrants hoping to improve their status on the frontier, could not afford to own many clothes, and wore "drab outfits of homespun cloth" that were "undecorated and rather plain."²⁰⁶ The Indians, many made quite wealthy by the fur

²⁰⁴ Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 170, 171-187.

²⁰⁵ Sleeper Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 173.

²⁰⁶ Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 178.

trade, wore “prized cottons and imported silks”²⁰⁷ every day, often ornamenting themselves further with “beads and trade silver”²⁰⁸, silver brooches among them, and “ribbon-work”²⁰⁹, long, woven bands of cut and sewn silk ribbon meant to emphasize the shape, color, and texture of a garment. Throughout the eighteenth century, this cloth trade became increasingly a luxury trade, wherein all the best cloth of Europe, including cottons, calicoes, linens, and silks, were increasingly available throughout Indian country in the eighteenth century and became widely diffused among different tribes, traded for and purchased at the behest of Indian women, who processed “prime coat beaver”²¹⁰ for sale. Indian people could afford to wear expensive, well-made, elaborately crafted clothing, with one outfit being sometimes “worth a pony”²¹¹ among the Arapaho or Mandan (Hidatsa) people.

Like the Metis people it produced, the fur trade system itself was a complex mixture of ideas and peoples, a true hybrid that “integrated gift and market-oriented trades” where Indians were “adaptable and shrewd clients who encouraged competitive fur buying.”²¹² Clothing reflected Metis and tribal identities.

Doing business in the fur trade often reinforced the matrifocal households and female-headed kin relationships of Great Lakes Native society. Fur traders devoted the majority of their time to trapping and trading, and were never very enthusiastic farmers- in fact, their bitter

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 181.

²¹⁰ Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 85, 104.

²¹¹ Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 187.

²¹² . Ray, Arthur J. *Indians In the Fur Trade: Their Role As Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen In the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870: with a New Introduction*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005, p. xviii.

memories of the miserable *habitant* farms of lower Quebec may have led them into the fur trade as a conscious rejection of farming, reinforced by Indian attitudes that gendered farm labor as female. Therefore, fur traders and other non-Indians were heavily dependent on indigenous agriculture to provide the majority of their food supply. Women's fields and female labor produced grain, including wheat, corn, fish, maple sugar and vegetables to feed the fur-trade workforce, as well as canoes, snowshoes and clothing for traders. Women's shrewdness in trade, and access to trade goods, "reinforced ritual giving" as a process of collective exchange, and enhanced the "power and prestige"²¹³ of women and their households.

Women gained status as Christian instructors among their people and used Catholicism's social aspects, particularly the custom of godparenting, to expand both "real and fictive" kin networks and further ensure their status in the trade. Sleeper-Smith notes, "Catholic kin networks were indispensable to the fur trade because they linked the larger fur-trade posts (the centers of exchange), like the important regional center of Michilimackinac (Mackinac, Michigan), "with the smaller fur-trade posts"²¹⁴ who supplied the furs.

Sleeper-Smith notes that Marie Madeleine Réaume of St. Joseph, Michigan, who was the daughter of Simphorose Ouaouagokoue, an Illini Indian (Simphorose Fox Woman/ White Fox Woman) and Jean Baptiste Réaume, a French interpreter, married Augustin L'archeveque, a licensed fur trader in the "Illinois Country." Her household supplied livestock, wheat, oats, corn, orchard fruit, snowshoes and canoes to the trade. After her first husband's death, she married her two daughters into prominent Michilimackinac fur trade families, a network that included

²¹³ Sleeper-Smith, *Women, Kin and Catholicism*, 240.

²¹⁴ Sleeper-Smith, "Women, Kin and Catholicism", in *Native Women's History in Eastern North America Before 1900*, 245-246.

the prominent Langlade and Bourassa families. Both of her daughters' husbands, after the marriages, returned to their mother-in-law's household in St. Joseph. The town was a regional center of the fur trade and an important home for many Metis families, due to its advantageous location as a "principal water route"²¹⁵ between the Great Lakes, the Illinois Country, the South Bend portage, and the Mississippi River.

Marie Madeleine Réaume L'Archeveque married her second and final husband, Louis Chevalier, a prominent Michilimackinac trader, and gave birth to her last child, a son, at the age of forty-one. The Chevaliers were associated with the Michigan fur trade as early as 1718²¹⁶. Upon her marriage to Louis, Marie-Madeleine Chevalier became the focal matriarch in a regional kin network and trading web that extended between present-day Missouri, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin, using Catholicism to hold it all together. By the mid-eighteenth century, Catholicism, a key ingredient in Metis identity and kinship, gained in importance as an "increased number of Potawatomis became Catholic converts"²¹⁷ and the religion became a "socially integrative tool"²¹⁸ that incorporated more and more Native people into the kin networks of the fur trade. This was politically important for French rule in the area, since French authority over the North American interior was heavily dependent on such kin networks. This was a world where, as in Native society, a person was "less an individual and

²¹⁵ Kasper, Shirley E. "The Emigrant Métis of Kansas: Rethinking the Pioneer Narrative." Doctoral dissertation, University of Colorado-Boulder, 2012, p. 104.

²¹⁶ Petition of Louis Chevallier," reprinted from the Haldimand Papers, Canadian Archives, Ottawa, *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society: Collections and Researches* (13 (1889): 61.

²¹⁷ Sleeper-Smith, "Women, Kin and Catholicism", p. 248.

²¹⁸ Sleeper-Smith, 248.

more a member of a larger kinship group.”²¹⁹ For the Metis, kinship ties linking their French and Native relatives both reflected and created their identity.

In the eighteenth century, the Metis, as well as Europeans, Africans, and Native people in America would all be affected by the crystallization of new racial ideas and the assignation of racial identities based on hypothetical skin color, as would the Metis. Several Metis would be accepted by Indian communities as important political leaders based on the strength of their maternal kin connections. Richard White discusses the interesting political career of the Ohio metis man, Peter Chartier, son of a French father and Shawnee mother. Originally a pro-British, pro-Haudenosaunee metis fur trader, Chartier, by the 1750s, consciously chose to reinvent himself as a Shawnee political leader dedicated to his tribe’s alliance with the French. But the French still considered him unreliable: even as a French ally, Chartier prevented an attempted relocation of the Shawnee tribe to Detroit.²²⁰ Other Metis would be rejected as a reminder of a history that even some Indians now preferred to ignore.

As early as the 1720s, in diplomatic dealings with Europeans, southeastern Indians also described themselves as ‘red’: Shoemaker speculates that the designation may have arisen among pre-contact southern Indians as an expression of the political distinction between the villages of war leaders, who painted themselves red, and the peacetime leaders, who used white paint.²²¹ But even these categories were somewhat fluid at first: Indians noticed that the British were blond, whereas Spaniards and Frenchmen more often had dark hair, while

²¹⁹ Ibid, Sleeper-Smith, “Women, Kin and Catholicism”, 461.

²²⁰ Canada, Sauvages, 1740, AN, C11A, v. 74, f. 236

²²¹ Shoemaker, Nancy. *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 47.

Europeans also described differences in Native complexions. By the 1760s, as land disputes between Native peoples and Europeans became tense amidst the Seven Years' War and a conflict between Britain, France, and their respective Indian allies for North America, Indians utilized the perception of Indian peoples' distinct skin color as a metaphor for a political agenda.

Indian diplomats in treaties "came to rely on skin color as a divine sign that the land belonged to them and that whites were intruders on it."²²² Shoemaker points out that "Indian prophecies telling of separate origins" began in the mid-eighteenth century.²²³ These prophecies and their prophets alike had specific political goals, among them pan-Indian unity across the boundaries of tribal nationhood, moral reform and spiritual regeneration of Indian communities, a determination to expel white settlers from their lands and to resist white-supremacist settler colonialism, and a return to the ways of the past, idealized or not, when Indians had controlled the continent. Some of the prophets advocated a complete rejection, not only of Europeans themselves but also of European manufactured goods and trade goods. They rejected any kind of assimilation, insisting that indigenous people were distinct and the Creator meant them to be so. Many Native prophetic leaders of the 18th century despised and rejected the Metis as evidence of a mixed, colonized society.

²²² Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness*, 136.

²²³ Catawbas entitled to land because God made them a distinct color- Council at Matthew Tool's House (1754), CRNC 5: 144a Shawnee Chief Kachhowatchiy to Count Zinzendorf in 1742, "he himself was an Indian of God's creation and had no wish to be European... he liked the Indian Way of life. God was better pleased with the Indians." Paul A.W. Wallace, *Conrad Weiser, 1696-1760, Friend of Colonist and Mohawk* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1945, p. 144.

Some of the prophecies were flavored by Christian concepts and ideas- some explicitly so, others less. Native American prophets found the imagery of Heaven and Hell, and in particular, the stories of the Apocalypse, to be particularly resonant to their experience of colonization and change. After all, they lived in an apocalyptic manner since the arrival of Europeans and the disruption of their customary Native ways of life, to paraphrase a comment of Dr. Theodore C. Van Alst Jr. The overall influence of Christianity on these pan-Indian revival movements is the subject of debate by historians. Some have over-emphasized Christianity's role in the movements. It seems most accurate to call them a mixture of Christian and indigenous beliefs. Richard White and others discuss the irony that movements calling for a return to pre-contact lifeways, including the rejection of Europeans and their trade goods, a rejection of the Middle Ground- borrowed Christian ideas and was were themselves a product of the Middle Ground. The Delaware Prophet, Neolin, preached a vision of an Indian-only heaven. To attain this heaven, the "Good Road", they had to reject all trade with white people and pray to the "Great Being." Neolin also invoked older native economies and condemned the fur trade further when he told his followers that the Creator had instructed him against buying and selling- "do not sell to your brothers what I have put on earth for food."²²⁴ Neolin was the first recorded prophet to emphasize a "separate Indian path." Chief Pontiac, at the siege of Detroit, used these ideas of Neolin's to build a movement of unity among the Algonquian-speaking Indians of the Midwest and to resist the presence, more specifically, of the British.

²²⁴ Delaware Prophet Neolin's vision of an Indian-only heaven- to regain it they had to learn to live without any "trade or connections with ye white people." Kenny, James, "Journal of James Kenny, 1761-1763", Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 3 (1913), 171-2.

The Anishinaabeg correctly blamed the British for the departure of their French allies by 1763. The English conquest of Canada and the *pays d'en haut* of the Midwest imposed a new hierarchy on the fur-trade. All of the higher-level positions in fur trade companies, such as clerks and *bourgeois*, were now occupied by English-speaking Britons and Scots, who also became the new masters of a largely French-speaking workforce of voyageurs, engagés, canoe men, and traders, who were French-Canadian, Metis, and Indian. This, of course, was a replication of a larger process occurring across Canada and the Midwest, where the English seizure of power presaged the cultural and economic dominance of Britons, Scots and Irish and reinforced the upwardly mobile prestige of the English language.

In response, Neolin and Pontiac advocated “temperance, monogamy, self-sufficiency and intertribal peace”²²⁵. Their adherents among the Michigan Potawatomi condemned medicine bags and bundles, polygamy, and guardian spirits, and many sought Christian baptism. As Richard White points out, “This was not the restoration of tradition, but rather, its invention.” Alfred A. Cave likewise made the provocative claim that “the Great Spirit spoken of by the prophets was born in the eighteenth century.”²²⁶

This particular indigenous dream of a spiritualized pan-Indian confederation never really died: it was long a slow-burning hope for Indian communities. Such prophets sought separation, distinction, and autonomy for indigenous people and a new order for Indian life. And they drew upon the newly created language of race to accomplish their political and spiritual goals of reinforcing this desired separation.

²²⁵ White, *The Middle Ground*, 284.

²²⁶ Cave, Alfred A. *Prophets of the Great Spirit: Native American Revitalization Movements in Eastern North America*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006, p. 3.

Of course, the final irony was that even as governments and lawmakers formulated such language of racial purity and separation, it always described more of an ideal than a reality. Indigenous communities had never practiced racial separation, and even in the 1760s, some communities and families were so thoroughly intermingled that their genealogy would have confounded anyone with purity or distinction as a goal. As relationships between Europeans and Indians deteriorated in the wake of an expanding colonialism, the idea of race as an indissoluble marker of physical, biological difference became a seductively easy shorthand, a justification, as ever, for who deserved resources, political power, and land, why they deserved them, and why someone else did not.

Metis played a sometimes conflicting role in these racial formations, native prophetic movements, and political agitations. Thorne records that Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa, whose political agenda drew inspiration from the earlier movements of Neolin and Pontiac, heartily disapproved of Indian-white intermarriage as a threat to pan-Indian loyalty and unity, despite the fact that Tecumseh's own sister was married to a French Canadian, François Maisonville, and lived with her husband and family at Cape Girardeau, Missouri.²²⁷ Ann Keating likewise observes that the demands of the Indian nativists for complete racial separation were simply "untenable"²²⁸ to the intermarried Native women of the fur trade, who had white husbands, Metis children and grandchildren, and in many cases, connections to the Middle Ground that stretched back for generations. It was clear even to prospective Wisconsin settlers in the Indian-removal era, like the mysterious Briton who traveled to the territory in the 1840s, that

²²⁷ Ibid, Thorne, *The Many Heads of My Relations*, 81.

²²⁸ Keating, *Rising Up from Indian Country*, 80.

settlers and even some traditionalist Indians resented the presence of the Metis in treaty negotiations and sought to racially exclude the Metis from an Indian identity. Morleigh recorded a local perception that to be a friend of the Indians was to be an “enemy of half-breeds and settlers”²²⁹. Wisconsin settlers at this time clearly identified the Metis with the settlers. In addition to receiving cash payments to extinguish their land rights, the Metis also received food like flour, grain, beef and pork as part of treaty payments.²³⁰ Different tribes apparently had different views of the Metis role in treaties, with the Potawatomi wanting all Metis excluded. A Menominee Indian named Couronne or the Crown spoke most vociferously against “half-breeds”, comparing them to mongrel dogs. Couronne said derisively, “We are beset with a mongrel yelping race: disowned by their white fathers, they follow their red mothers, they hang upon our robes, they fawn upon us, they bite their red brethren; every year we are obliged to provide for them. Last payment, we agreed to pay them off, and have done with them. Now behold them, as noisy as ever, barking in our very Council Lodge.” In an attempt at moderation, he grouched, “Well, pay the half-breeds this once- let this be their last interference in our affairs- let them go home to their white fathers- let us not see the color of their eyes any more.”²³¹ Couronne’s speech must be read in the context of the prevailing political and financial tensions for tribes in the removal period of the 1800s. His view may have been a minority view- nonetheless, for him to give this speech in the Menominee council house suggests that his views were somewhat prevalent, and these views would have been impossible

²²⁹ Morleigh. *A Merry Briton in Pioneer Wisconsin*. London: Saunders and Otley, 1842. Reprinted by Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI, 1950, p. 51.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 71.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

without the earlier use of racial language by the eighteenth-century Native separatists.

Followers of the nativist confederation movements also urged that Indian people avoid bread, alcohol, and the meat of domesticated livestock, in favor of corn, fish and game. Morleigh also noted that the Metis sold alcohol to Indians at the Menominee treaty whose negotiations he observed, and that a “half-breed lawyer” also attended the treaty.

In the face of the reality of French departure, and the superiority of British military power, everyone involved- British, French, Indian or Metis- had little choice but to accept the new reality of British domination in the Great Lakes of the 1760s. The British needed the cooperation of the French, Indian and Metis people in order to govern the territory, while the residents of Great Lakes towns needed British political support to continue the fur-trade’s economic activity, so most local residents reluctantly made the switch to a British allegiance. And the British, uncertain in their grasp on power and the nuances of local politics between the Indian nations, also had to accede to the reality of the middle ground and the force of Native traditions to dictate diplomatic protocols. The longtime fur-trade center, Michilimackinac in Michigan, also became a British military garrison town. The choice of the metis Peter Chartier to become a pro-French Shawnee politician and distance himself from the fur trade and any compromise with the British and Haudenosaunee was probably atypical.

Perhaps more common was the situation of Charles Michel Mouet de Langlade, a metis man by way of Michilimackinac and Green Bay, whose long association with that community has earned him the historical title of a “father” to the state of Wisconsin. Langlade was born at Michilimackinac in 1729 to a French-Canadian father, Augustin Langlade, from Trois Rivieres, Quebec, and an Odawa mother, Domitilde, who was the daughter of an Ottawa chief and the

sister of the Ottawa war leader Nissowaquet. Charles and Augustin had a trading post at Green Bay in 1745, and Charles grew up speaking Ojibwe and French. During the French and Indian Wars of the 1740s and 1750s, Charles was a staunch French ally, having aided the French in their successful defense of Fort Duquesne (present-day Pittsburgh), destroyed the British-allied Miami Indian village of Pickawillany, Ohio, and successfully fought British soldiers, including George Washington and General Benjamin Braddock.

But when the tides of war were turning, Langlade saw the sense in allying himself with the British, and may have been guided in his pro-British stance by his uncle Nissowaquet, as the two enjoyed a close relationship. In June 1763, Nissowaquet and his Ottawa band rescued the surviving British soldiers and traders from a besieged Michilimackinac and escorted them to Montreal, promising the British governor of Montreal an alliance. Langlade, like his uncle, appears to have adjusted to British rule with “little difficulty.”²³²

Despite some Indian leaders and communities who mourned the loss of the French and led armed resistance to the British, pragmatism seems to have been the order of the day in the acceptance by ordinary people of the new regime, whatever their private reluctance may have been. In 1764, Langlade moved back to Green Bay, where his father was still living, then called simply “*La Baye*” or “The Bay” in French, and only beginning to be called Green Bay by English speakers. The Langlades and other permanent settlers became the nucleus of the Green Bay metis community, joining the Grignons, Porliers, Lawes, Reaumes, and other prominent families of mixed ancestry.

²³² Carroll, Justin M. *The Merchant John Askin: Furs and Empire at British Michilimackinac*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2017, p. 26, 42, 102.

The same Metis and Indians who had formerly allied with the French and only reluctantly taken the British side in the 1760s would become staunch British allies against the Americans in the forthcoming American Revolution. It's worthwhile to examine what motivated Indian acceptance of British rule, and support of the British, after the departure of the French from the Great Lakes. This work contends, along with Justin M. Carroll, that survival, pragmatism and practicality were foremost in the minds of Indian people seeking British alliances.²³³ Carroll emphasizes that the Great Lakes remained very much an Indian world, dominated by the Potawatomi, Ojibwe and Odawa, and that British control over the Great Lakes was tenuous at best during the period between the departure of the French in 1763 and American victories during the Revolution and the War of 1812.

But this was an economic boom time for the fur trade, another factor that may have persuaded Indians to accept a British alliance in the 1760s. Throughout the 1740s and 50s, Detroit had grown in population, which added to its importance as a military and agricultural center. The diet of British soldiers at eighteenth-century trading posts like Mackinac was neither filling nor nutritious, its lack of vitamin C being particularly bad for soldiers' health²³⁴, and led many Europeans and Euro-Americans, including Askin himself, to try their hand at farming in order to supply provisions for the trade. Throughout the period though, the main sources of fruit, vegetables, fish and grains for fur trade workers and posts continued to be indigenous communities, and the largest part of that food supply, and any food security for the region's inhabitants, whether soldiers, traders, or canoe men, was corn (maize) grown,

²³³ Carroll, Justin M. *The Merchant John Askin: Furs and Empire at British Michilimackinac*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2017, p. 46, 47, 51.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 54.

processed and traded by indigenous women.

Mistrust between British and French inhabitants of the Great Lakes persisted. The British wanted to oust the French from the profitable fur trade altogether, but recognized that they needed the skills, labor and kinship connections of the French to build their own empire in the region, though they still mistrusted the long-standing kinship and cooperation between the Indians and the French, and sought to “neutralize” the influence of these kin ties when they could. French traders were willing enough to trade British manufactured goods to Indians, but resisted the efforts of the British to actually conduct the trade directly with tribes. Yet as much as the new state of affairs was disliked, it had been accepted as the status quo, with the French and Indian inhabitants of Michilimackinac swearing an oath of allegiance to King George III. The French and British became mutually reliant on each other, in order to navigate the “relentless and volatile demands”²³⁵ of a Great Lakes Indian diplomacy necessary to protect the trade, maintain a balance of power between the traders and the various Indian nations, and preserve a hard-won peace. Carroll actually argues that the weakness of the British government in the Great Lakes region was inadvertently responsible for the economic boom of the late 1760s, as fur-trade companies competed with their rivals and each other for access to furs, trade routes, and Indian customers in a relatively unchecked and unfettered manner. British traders relied on French traders like Jean-Baptiste Cadot, who lived at Sault Ste. Marie with his Ojibwe wife, Athanaise, and their family. Toward the end of the decade, marriages between British merchants and Metis women- glossed by Carroll as the “multiethnic” daughters of previous

²³⁵ Carroll, *The Merchant John Askin*, 41.

French traders- became “common and transformative.”²³⁶ From the traders’ perspective, this helped smooth some of the hostility between the French and British in the Great Lakes and laid the foundation for the future prosperity of the Hudson’s Bay Company and the North West Company. For the Metis women who acted as interpreters, clerks, and traders themselves in the fur trade business, this was merely an expansion of their customary socioeconomic role- incorporating European outsider men into their communities through marriage. Many fur-trade scholars note that Metis, like Indians and traders, lived a mobile existence traveling between trading posts and fur-trade centers, like Mackinac or Detroit. They were not bounded or settled in one place- their traveling lifestyle and far-flung family connections anchored them in familiarity throughout the Great Lakes and facilitated the needs of the trade.

The British-dominated New York fur trade fractured along regional lines during the Revolution. In 1774, the passage of the Quebec Act further enraged Anglo-Americans. The new law ceded the Great Lakes and the Ohio Valley to British-controlled Quebec, restored French civil law in some jurisdictions, permitted free practice of the Roman Catholic faith, and restored the Catholic Church’s right to collect tithes. Americans of English Protestant stock protested that the Quebec Act violated their political freedom by stripping them of their right to legislative assemblies. They also viewed the act as disrespectful of American colonial land claims in the Great Lakes, and worried that the tolerance for Catholicism extended to the Great Lakes French presaged an eventual establishment of Catholicism as a state church in the region, Quebec-style. Many of them had fought against the French in the conflicts of 1763, so that the land, religious freedom and political power given to a people they saw as former enemies

²³⁶ Carroll, *The Merchant John Askin*, p. 85-86.

rankled, as insulting evidence, to them, of the British imperial government's tone-deafness and perfidy.

As a result of the Quebec Act, British merchants like John Askin leaned even more heavily on Metis or Metis-adjacent traders who were sympathetic to British interests, like Charles de Langlade and Louis Chevalier, and their relationships to the Potawatomi and Odawa²³⁷. Despite scarcity, embargoes, and disruptions in supply lines, the Great Lakes was relatively isolated from much of the Revolutionary turmoil in the early stages of the conflict, until some Indians also felt disaffected by what they perceived as British high-handedness and disregard for their family connections to the French. By the 1780s, the Americans held the Illinois country and Great Britain's hold on the Great Lakes Indian peoples was more tenuous than ever, soon to be exiled altogether by the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1781. Despite the fact that the Northwest Territory was now an American possession, the British continued to maintain forts there. The Northwest Indian War broke out when British-allied Indians fought the nascent United States for control of the Great Lakes, and was not concluded until 1794, having a chilling effect on the trade and causing financial ruin to British traders like Askin.

Calloway describes the immediate post-Revolution years as largely a catastrophe for tribes²³⁸, the ultimate demise of what some call a Middle Ground and others an Indian Ground; in effect, a socioeconomic world organized around Indian commerce, trade and diplomacy where Indians held the power and set the rules of political discourse. Indians in the

²³⁷ Carroll, *The Merchant John Askin: Furs and Empire at British Michilimackinac*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2017, p. 99-100.

²³⁸ Calloway, Colin Gordon. *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 291.

Revolutionary War faced the reality of a new republic that sought to exclude and marginalize them, despite taking political and military positions as varied as their tribal nationalities. The Mohawks were pro-British and eventually migrated to Canada²³⁹, and the Chickamauga, Mingo and Shawnee peoples fought the Americans,²⁴⁰ while most New England Indians fought for the Revolution and identified themselves with its cause.²⁴¹ The Delawares allied with the Americans against the Iroquois²⁴². The Chickasaw²⁴³, Seminoles²⁴⁴ and Abenaki²⁴⁵ stayed neutral in the conflict, while the Cherokee were divided into opposing factions²⁴⁶. Regardless of their individual and collective political differences, the balance of power tipped aggressively towards the United States and away from Indian nations, a situation rendered explosive by a flood of white settlement in the Indian country after hostilities concluded.

Like Calloway and Shoemaker, David J. Silverman links an increasing race-consciousness and the spread of racial ideas among Indians and Euro-Americans as a reaction in the mid-eighteenth century to the spread of African slavery and post-Revolution political change²⁴⁷. The freshly-inaugurated American government defined race in specific ways that connoted access

²³⁹ Calloway, 136.

²⁴⁰ Calloway. 44. 50.

²⁴¹ Calloway, 286. He notes that despite their loyalty to the U.S. cause, pro-Revolutionary tribes like the Oneida fared no better than other Indians during the U.S. government's post-Revolutionary Indian land grab.

²⁴² Calloway, 37-39.

²⁴³ Calloway, 213-214.

²⁴⁴ Calloway, 267.

²⁴⁵ Calloway 65-69, 81.

²⁴⁶ Calloway, 50.

²⁴⁷ Silverman, David J. *Red Brethren: The Brothertown and Stockbridge Indians and the Problem of Race in Early America*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016, p. 16, 35, 61, 159. See also 25, 103 for Indians' reaction to African-Americans at the time, whether contentious or kind, and legal responses to this in New England.

to citizenship and political power, with well-to-do white males at the very top of the sociopolitical order. The ideal imagined citizen of the early colonies and republic was always a free-born white male of property. Maier observes that, when sending delegates to the constitutional convention, those who were eligible had to be freeholders- “adult white men who owned twenty-five acres of land with a house or fifty unimproved acres.”²⁴⁸

The third paragraph in article 1, section 2 of the constitution stated that representation and direct taxes would be apportioned according to the number of free persons, excluding “Indians not taxed” but including ‘three fifths of all other persons’- i.e., slaves.²⁴⁹ Why were Indians not taxed? This work contends that the reasons for the non-taxation of Indian populations expose the racial component to American citizenship. Indians were not citizens and were not considered as such, and could thus not be taxed as citizens²⁵⁰. Congress also retained

²⁴⁸ Maier, Pauline. *Ratification: the People Debate the Constitution, 1787-1788*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010, p. 175.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, Maier.

²⁵⁰ See, for instance, Walter Echo-Hawk’s analysis of Chief Justice John Marshall’s 1830s legal decisions in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* and *Worcester v. Georgia*. Marshall acknowledged that Indian tribes were distinct, separate political entities, capable of self-government, and equivalent to a state. But Marshall also remarked that the tribes were “in a state of pupilage” and termed them “domestic dependent nations.” Echo-Hawk remarks that this is a “distinctly second-class” political status for Indian tribes, since it still legally renders Indian nationhood as “subjugated by and subsumed into” the United States, not equivalent to the diplomatic status of a foreign nation in U.S. courts. Echo-Hawk, Walter R. *In the Courts of the Conqueror: the Ten Worst Indian Law Cases Ever Decided*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2012, p. 103-104. This clearly constructs tribal citizenship as distinct from, yet inferior to and somewhat opposed to, American citizenship. See also the careful language deciding which Metis men were eligible for voting in Michigan Territory- then including Wisconsin. The legislature considered a Metis man an eligible legally white voter only if he was “born and educated in a condition of estrangement from all nations and tribes of Indians...if he were not party, as of Indian descent, to any treaty, nor in any wise recognized as a constituent member of the tribe”. Lucy Eldersveld Murphy, *Great Lakes Creoles*, 90. This language clearly codes American citizenship as ‘white’ and tribal citizenship as distinct from, yet inferior, to American citizenship.

the sole power to enact treaties and regulate commerce with the tribes. I contend that the special constitutional status of Indians was a recognition by the American government that Indians possessed a politically distinctive tribal citizenship separate from, and in many ways opposed to, American citizenship, though American legal formulations always reckoned tribal citizenship as somewhat inferior and dependent.

Calloway concurs that post-Revolutionary politicians, by opposing the equal citizenship of blacks and Indians, and by restricting women to “republican motherhood” as the virtuous teachers and exemplars to the sons who would be future citizens, made “conservative choices” that avoided the full scope of the original revolutionary radicalism²⁵¹. According to Calloway, the post-Revolutionary era saw a “dramatic expansion”²⁵² in black slavery on newly acquired Indian lands in the Southeast, while free blacks in the North survived but had constricted opportunities. Since Indian land was, and remained (and remains still to this day) the basis of America’s wealth as a country, Indians were never offered inclusion or equal citizenship in the new republic, as the Revolution solidified the narrative of supposedly-inevitable Indian extinction and removal.

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 admitted the Great Lakes region, a possession acquired from the British (but still an Indian country), into the Union as the Northwest Territory. This newly American territory became the future states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and a portion of Minnesota. The ordinance declared that the states of the Northwest Territory would be admitted as free states not subject to slavery, declared that land

²⁵¹ Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country*, 299.

²⁵² Calloway, 300.

could be held in fee simple, and that political representation in the new territory would be tied to its number of free male inhabitants. Metis men were needed as free men- that is, white men- to help the fledgling U.S. government rule the territory. In return for their service, Metis men would receive individual parcels of land, have the ability to vote, and hold the right to serve on courts and juries in the territory. This compromise benefited Metis men and their families by offering whiteness and confirming some of their title to their lands. But, as previously noted, the requirements for the legally white status of Metis men devastated communal indigenous systems of property ownership in which women owned and farmed the land. These requirements also placed indigenous women and their children under the American legal principle of coverture, divesting women of their land, depriving them of their children's custody and in some cases denying women their right to pass a tribal membership to their children. The U.S. government's offer of whiteness to Metis men constituted an attempt to strip them of their indigeneity and connections to indigenous people. The offer still represented the U.S. government's ideological determination to place indigenous people outside the body politic by describing indigenous people, particularly indigenous women, as anti-citizens ineligible for citizenship and inclusion.

Many Native Christian leaders in the 1700s responded to these pressures by emphasizing Indian racial distinctiveness in a Christian context, much as the pan-tribal reformers had. Although the Native Christian leaders of the eighteenth century had a similar theology to war leaders like Neolin and Pontiac, these Christian preachers, like Samson Occom and Joseph Johnston, argued for equal Indian rights and a peaceful separation from colonizers rather than armed resistance. They argued that, because Indians were racially distinct, they

were entitled to their separate lands, lifestyles, and cultures. Occom even argued that Indians were spiritually distinct, and wrote hymns exalting the “ruddy, rosy face” of God- imagining God himself as an Indian.²⁵³

Silverman links Indian racial consciousness to a distinctive set of circumstances for Indian people- Christian missions, growing English-language fluency, and the common experiences of colonialism.²⁵⁴ The Brothertown and Stockbridge Christian Indians, multi-tribal in origin, asserted their civility and took American citizenship. They were granted the right to vote, and termed the act of taking citizenship “becoming white,”²⁵⁵ not only because they associated citizenship with whiteness, but because they linked it to assimilation and a concurrent loss of racial and cultural distinctiveness, and the loss of their tribal citizenship as a separate political status, the very goal desired even by purportedly progressive advocates of Indians in the post-Revolutionary political climate.

American politicians who hoped for Indian assimilation to Anglo-American culture were nonetheless disappointed, and could not conceive of a future where Indians remained culturally

²⁵³ Joshua Smith and Samson Ockum (ibid.), *Divine Hymns Or Spiritual Songs for the Use of Religious Assemblies and Private Christians*. 11th edition. New York: Union Theological Seminary, 1803, 54. “Lord when shall we mount up to thee/ Upon the wings of grace/ and see thy bright and lilly white/ and ruddy, rosy face”. See also Joanna Brooks. *American Lazarus: Religion and the Rise of African American and Native American Literatures*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, 83. Brooks contends that the hymn describes a God who is “neither white nor red”, but it could describe a God who is both red and white, or a God who, like his followers in the hymn, is an Indian in a white society.

²⁵⁴ Silverman, David J. *Red Brethren: The Brothertown and Stockbridge Indians and the Problem of Race in Early America*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016, 4.

²⁵⁵ “Sketch of the Brothertown Indians.” Thomas Commuck, Manchester, WI- August 22, 1855, In *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, vol. 4. Madison, WI: James Ross, 1859, 297. Commuck describes the Brothertowns as “perfectly assimilated to their white brethren” and therefore fit for American citizenship.

distinct as Indians.. The new American government needed to sell Indian land to satisfy its soldiers, settle its war debts, and pay its bills, and justified massive Indian dispossession by falsely claiming that all Indians had been British allies. And despite frontier resentment of the national government and its control, the government did not restrain the violent actions of poor frontier whites against Indians, because these actions ultimately benefited them. Settlers often acted in contravention of treaties to make money, claim land, govern themselves rather than submit to federal authority, and to kill Indian people.

This work contends that the growth of the Great Lakes Indian population in the 1700s was also due to the capacity of Great Lakes Indian communities to absorb these refugees, the result of long patterns of migration, the durability of clan systems, intermarriage with non-Indians, and the consolidation of Algonquian-speakers against the Iroquois threat in the previous century. Colin G. Calloway noted that in the post-Revolutionary period, “increasingly... Americans viewed the future as one without Indians.”²⁵⁶ But this statement is somewhat misleading, and fails to contextualize the scope, long-standing nature, and intensity of Anglo-American anti-Indianism and anti-Indian feeling, documented by native and non-native historians alike. Such anti-Indianism and a desire to destroy, marginalize or exclude Indians from an idealized American future was not the sole property of post-Revolutionary American whites. Anti-Indianism persisted as a thread in American self-imagining ever since the early days of the first English colonies. Despite their changing political fortunes in the new republic, Calloway observed that “in some areas of the Great Lakes, Indian populations were actually on

²⁵⁶ Calloway, Colin G. *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities*. New York, Cambridge University Press, 1995, xv.

the rise in the eighteenth century, in part because they absorbed refugees from other areas.”²⁵⁷ White American frontiersmen, criticized by a Spanish official as “nomadic like Arabs,”²⁵⁸ voluntarily or involuntarily displaced from their own homelands in Europe or the eastern states, who needed to move continually to make their lifestyles possible, whereas indigenous people, despite migratory lifestyles, had deeper relationships to specific geographies of place.

By the late 1700s, Jean-Baptiste Point DuSable, future father of a Chicago black Metis family, was trading as an independent trader near present-day Michigan City, Indiana, near *Riviere du Chemin* (Trail Creek). A contemporary of men like Charles de Langlade and Louis Chevalier, he also had their connections to the trade at Michilimackinac. But unlike them, DuSable was an early supporter of the American cause. British authorities at Michilimackinac arrested and jailed DuSable in 1779 for the crime of being an American sympathizer. Sources differ on where Point DuSable lived after his imprisonment. The Anglo-Dutch commandant at Michilimackinac, Arent Schuyler de Peyster, described DuSable as a “handsome negro... well-educated (and settled at Eschecagou) but much in the French interest.”²⁵⁹ Ann Keating contend that after his imprisonment, the British government sent DuSable, perhaps forced or ordered him, to manage a tract of pine woods north of Detroit at a British military post on the St. Clair River, near the present-day town of St. Clair in the eastern “thumb” of Michigan, and that he did not come to Chicago until the late 1780s. In any case, I find de Peyster’s remark on Du

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 5.

²⁵⁸ Weber, David J. *The Spanish Frontier in North America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992, 272. “nomadic like Arabs and distinguished from savages only in their color, language, and the superiority of their depraved cunning and untrustworthiness.” Vincent Manuel de Zéspedes, governor of East Florida from 1784-1790.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., Harper, *French Africans*, 21.

Sable's political loyalties far more interesting. If DuSable's arrest by the British as an American supporter was "much in the French interest", did DuSable himself conflate support of the American cause and his past loyalty to the French, since the French now supported the Americans against the British in the Revolution? By 1788, Jean-Baptiste and Catherine du Sable lived at a somewhat grand French-style house on the north bank of the Chicago River, with "four glass doors, eleven copper kettles, and a French walnut cabinet", all imported to Chicago at great difficulty. At the house's location on the river, sand blew "here, there and everywhere"²⁶⁰, deflected from the family by their prized glass doors- an ironic confirmation of the family's surname, which translates as "sandy point" in English. Near their house, the DuSable family built a substantial farm, which included a bakery, a smokehouse, a smithy, and several warehouses for furs, trade goods and farm equipment. By the 1790s, their neighbors included Antoine and Archange Ouilmette, who would eventually found the future town of Wilmette. The other neighbors of the DuSables in early Chicago were François and Marie Therese Le Mai, and Louis and Angelique Pettell. Marie Therese was a Potawatomi metis whose maiden name was Roy, and could very well have been a relative of Milwaukee's Angelique Roy.

Antoine Ouilmette, born near Montreal like so many French-Canadian men in the fur trade, came to Chicago in 1790 as a voyageur and porter, when, he noted, "old Mr. Vieux"- Jacques Vieau- was trading with the Ho-Chunks at Chicago. His wife, Archange Marie Chevalier, was linked to the powerful Metis fur-trading Chevaliers, of French and Potawatomi descent. Archange was born a daughter of Francois and Marianne Chevalier, related to the powerful

²⁶⁰ Henry H. Sibley, 1830, quoted in James R. Grossman, Ann Durkin Keating, and Janice Reiff, *Encyclopedia of Chicago* (Chicago, 2004,) 317.

Chevalier clan who traded all over the Great Lakes, and possibly related on her mother's side to "chief Neebosh", a Catholic Potawatomi from Indiana.²⁶¹ Archange was a sister of Catherine Robinson and Sheshi Buisson, who both also married Euro-American traders, and all three women were maternal granddaughters of the Potawatomi warrior Naunongee, from the Calumet region of Illinois, near Chicago, who opposed American expansionism. Sheshi Chevalier Buisson and her husband Louis Buisson had "strong interests" at Peoria and Chicago but lived "to the north" of the Chicago River, near Lake Michigan. Archange and Antoine would have eight children. Another neighbor was Jean Lalime, married to another Potawatomi woman, Nokenoqua, who operated the US trading post at Fort Dearborn.

Also during the decade of the 1780s, the fur-trading communities of Milwaukee and Green Bay took shape almost in tandem. The mantle of "first settler" in a town or city, as demarcated in early histories, is always a tenuous title, usually, though not always appended to a Euro-American male. Solomon Juneau, whose family history and genealogy is discussed later in this work, arrived in Milwaukee in 1818 and is often reckoned as its first settler, who did make many contributions to the building of Milwaukee into a city. But men from two other important French Canadian families preceded Juneau's arrival to Milwaukee, Jacques Vieau and the brothers Francois, Alexander and Alexis LaFramboise. The Vieau and LaFramboise women would form the heart of many important fur-trading Metis families, including the Juneau and Beaubien clans.

The LaFramboise brothers began trading with Indians at the future city of Milwaukee in about 1784-1785. Jean-Baptiste Fafard *dit* LaFramboise, the father of Joseph and Alexis

²⁶¹ Kasper, "Emigrant Metis of Kansas", p. 174.

LaFramboise, was in the fur trade by the early 1700s. Alexis Fafard dit LaFramboise was evidently the first of the brothers to come into the Northwest from French Canada, with Milwaukee serving as his “wintering place”²⁶². He sent his brother Francois to take charge of his goods: Francois married among the Potawatomi, and some of his children would emphasize their Potawatomi identity. The subsequent Metis branches of the family also had Menominee, Odawa and Ojibwe heritage. Francois evidently was a poor businessman as a fur-trader, who died “improvident” and ran up debts before being murdered by the Ho-Chunks. Just as the Beaubien family was originally called Cuillierier, the LaFramboise family’s original surname was Fafard.

Marguerite Fafard LaFramboise, a daughter of Jean-Baptiste Fafard Laframboise and most probably a sister of Alexis, married the Scottish-born William Grant, a prosperous fur-trade merchant in Trois-Riverieres. They too became the paternal ancestors of a prominent Metis proto-generation in both America and Canada.²⁶³ Francois LaFramboise, the brother of Alexis, also traded at Milwaukee, and Francois LaFramboise was the father of Josette LaFramboise Beaubien. The note in the record states that Francois “left a considerable family by

²⁶² “Alexis LaFramboise was a native of Canada, where the family name was Fafard... he is supposed to have traded at Milwaukee about 1784-85. Milwaukee was his wintering place for several years.” Brother Francois improvident, “left a considerable family” by a Potawotami wife, killed by Ho-Chunks- Beaubiens and LaFramboises descendants of Francois- *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, Vol. XIX, “Mackinac Register of Baptisms and Internments-1695-1821”, edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1910, p. 158.

²⁶³ “Scuttling Along a Spider’s Web: Mobility and Kinship in Metis Ethnogenesis.” Nicole St. Onge and Carolyn Podruchny. In *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility and History*. Edited by Nicole St. Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012, p. 114.

a Potawatami wife.”²⁶⁴ Ann Keating says his wife’s name was Shaw-we-no-qua (possibly *Zhaawanoikwe*, Southern Woman) and that they raised five children, Claude, Joseph, Alexis, LaFortune and Josette LaFramboise²⁶⁵ Andreas remembers Shawenoqua’s name as Madeleine, and notes that she ran her husband’s trading business successfully after his death.²⁶⁶ The Chicago LaFramboises lived near Jean-Baptiste Beaubien in the neighborhood of Hardscrabble, modern-day Bridgeport on Chicago’s South Side.

Jacques Vieau, another important early Milwaukee trader, was born at Cour-des-Neiges near Montreal, according to his son Andrew J. Vieau. Perhaps this is Andrew’s error for the town of Cotes-des-Neiges. Jacques Vieau married Angelique or Angeline Roy/ LeRoy (Le Roi?) at Green Bay in 1786, according to their son Andrew²⁶⁷. What is interesting about that date is that the “official” baptism and Catholic marriage of Angelique Le Roi to “Jacques Jauvan” (Jauvan being another name for the Vieau family) is not recorded until July 1804 at Mackinac²⁶⁸. Andrew could be, amusingly enough, recording their earlier marriage according to Indian

²⁶⁴ *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, Volume 19, “Mackinac Baptisms.” (1910), p. 158.

²⁶⁵ Durkin Keating, Ann. *Rising Up from Indian Country: The Battle of Fort Dearborn and the Birth of Chicago*. University of Chicago Press, 2012, 67.

²⁶⁶ Andreas, A.T. *History of Chicago* (Chicago, 1884), vol. 1, 84-85.

²⁶⁷ Interview with Andrew J. Vieau- “Narrative of Andrew J. Vieau, Sr. in an interview with the editor.” Andrew Jacques Vieau, Reuben Gold Thwaites, 1837, in *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, vol. 11. Madison, WI: 1888, p. 218-237. Josette Vieau Juneau’s mother *not* Angelique Roy- “daughter by another consort, but reared in the family on an equal footing”.

²⁶⁸ *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, Vol. XIX, “Mackinac Register of Baptisms and Internments- 1695-1821”, edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1910, 126. *Folle avoine*, literally ‘wild oats’, is the French name for the Menominee tribe, the ‘wild rice people’, manoomin in Ojibwe, hence Menominee, which is different from what the Menominee call themselves in their own language.

custom, *au façon du pays*, as their official marriage. Many fur traders, in an era of few priests, conducted Catholic marriage ceremonies later for the sake of legitimizing their children and solemnizing their union, after the fact of an Indian-style marriage. Angelique was baptized in Michilimackinac, the daughter of Joseph Le Roi, also a fur trader at Green Bay or “The Bay”/ La Baye. Several of her children were baptized and she was married to Jacques by the same priest who baptized them all, Father J. Dilhet. Her Mackinac baptism record lists her mother as “Marguerite, *une folle avoine*” (Marguerite, a Menominee)²⁶⁹. A biography of Solomon Juneau written by one of Juneau’s granddaughters alleges that Joseph Le Roy was himself Metis, but hers is the only one that does so²⁷⁰. Through her indigenous mother, Angelique Le Roy was related to high-ranking families of the Menominee and Potawatomi tribes, including the Menominee leaders Standing Earth and Ashwaubomay, and the Potawatomi chief Anaugesa, whose village of Menominee and Potawatomi people was at Milwaukee. Jacques and Angelique Vieau raised twelve children, Madeleine, Josette, Paul, Jacques Jr., Louis, Joseph, Amable, Charles, Andrew, Nicholas, Peter, and Mary. Andrew J. Vieau noted amusingly that the family’s original surname was De Veau, meaning ‘calf’ or ‘veal’, and that they changed it to Vieau (old) in self-defense²⁷¹. Apparently it was more dignified to call the family ‘old’ than to compare themselves to cows! Andrew J. Vieau recalled dimly that his great-grandfather, a French immigrant to Canada, was “mixed up” with the Huguenot Protestants in some way, and may

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Fox, Isabella. *Solomon Juneau: A Biography, With Sketches of the Juneau Family*. Milwaukee: Evening Wisconsin Printing Company, 1916, p. 193. “Joseph LeRoi, an Indian trader, the grandfather of Mrs. Solomon Juneau, was of French and Indian extraction.” Other sources claim Joseph LeRoi as a full French-Canadian.

²⁷¹ Ibid., “Interview with Andrew J. Vieau”, Vieau and Thwaites.

have fled France for Canada due to religious turmoil.

But Andrew J. Vieau, a devout Catholic, emphasized that the French great-grandfather of the Canadian Vieau family was not himself a Huguenot, although Andrew, at that distance of time, could not himself say for certain whether the ancestor was Huguenot or Catholic. If the ancestor were a Huguenot, he would have had to be a clandestine one and keep up a public façade of Catholicism. This desire to conceal humble, and perhaps Huguenot, origins in French Canada seems to be a commonality among the later descendants of French fur traders, as a desire to either conceal or romanticize Indian ancestry would later be. But Vieau's testimony about his ancestor would put the family on an equal footing with almost every French-Canadian and French-American- humble agricultural origins, a desire to flee the socioeconomic unrest in France caused by the religious wars of the 1600s, and an ultimate origin on the Atlantic coast of western France.

Andrew Vieau told Reuben G. Thwaites that his sister Josette Vieau, the future Mrs. Solomon Juneau, was not the daughter of Angélique Le Roy, but was instead Jacques Vieau Sr.'s daughter by another native woman, raised in the family on an equal footing²⁷². Given that Jacques Vieau also founded the Sheboygan trading post, and Angélique Le Roy's mother was also a Menominee, Jacques Vieau could have had two wives, who were relatives, even sisters, in the same clan, who agreed to let Jacques and Angélique bring up the child. Andrew Vieau recalled that his father traveled from Montreal to Mackinac into the "upper country" in 1793, as an employee of the North West Company, when he was 42 years old, venturing to La Pointe

²⁷² *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, Vol XI. Ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1888, p. 219.

as well, with Angelique Le Roy Vieau and their first three children in tow. Peter Vieau disagrees, saying that his father and uncle, Jacques and Nicolas Vieau, journeyed out to Mackinac from Montreal in the 1770s as young men and that they became voyageurs and clerks for a John Ulrich²⁷³. This would more reliably account for Jacques, and for the date of his country-style marriage to Angelique, if it was earlier than the Catholic ceremony recorded at Mackinac.

His older age, his marriage to Angelique and the fur-trade connections it entailed, and his rapid promotion to the status of a clerk mean that Jacques Vieau most likely had a good education. In 1794, Jacob Franks opened a trading post for a Montreal-based fur-trading concern in Green Bay, and Jacques Vieau clerked for him. By 1795, when Vieau made his expedition to the “west shore of Lake Michigan”, he was a company agent. He established trading posts at the future sites of Kewaunee, Sheboygan, and Manitowoc, before arriving in Milwaukee in August of that year, encountering Potawatomi, Sauk, Ho-Chunk and Fox people. Angelique probably served as translator and provided provisions and tools for the journey. Andrew Vieau is mostly silent on his mother’s role in the journey to Milwaukee, except to note that she was there. He mentions that his father’s clerk on the journey through Wisconsin was a man named Mike Le Pettéel- Mike could have been related to the Louis and Angelique Pettell who were neighbors to the de Sable family in Chicago. When Andrew Vieau was about 20, he was working in Chicago as Madore Beaubien’s clerk, and therefore was certainly acquainted with the Chicago Beaubiens and LaFramboises.

Andrew Vieau notes that his father built two log buildings in Milwaukee, the first

²⁷³ Interview with Peter Vieau- “Narrative of Peter J. Vieau, in an interview with the editor.” Peter J. Vieau, Reuben Gold Thwaites. In *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*. Vol. 15: Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1900, 458-469.

permanent buildings, on the present South Side near the Menomonee River (modern-day Mitchell Park). Jacques Vieau Sr. remained at his wintering post for several winters after that, and six of his sons were born in Milwaukee. Every spring, having taken maple sugar and “winter peltries” from local Indians in trade, Jacques Vieau Sr. would return to Mackinac after leaving a clerk at the post, to buy deerskins from Indians for “summer furs” and to supervise the planting of corn and potatoes. Indian women who lived near the trading post probably did the actual planting, and these women might have been kinswomen of Angelique Le Roy Vieau.

Another early French Canadian settler whom Andrew J. Vieau was reticent to remember was Jean Baptiste Mirandeu. The purportedly disreputable Mirandeu came to Milwaukee from Green Bay in the company of Jacques Vieau and “Mike Le Petteel”. One source suggests that “Mike Le Petteel” was actually James-Michel Lepallieur, possibly a cousin of Vieau, who clerked for him and later instructed the Vieau children in French²⁷⁴. Mirandeu was a gunsmith or blacksmith, with “very light hair” and a “blonde complexion.” Mirandeu married a Native woman. Andrew Vieau recollects that Mrs. Mirandeu was a Potawatomi woman,. Ann Keating claims that Mrs. Mirandeu was Odawa. Mrs. Mirandeu’s daughter, Victoire Mirandeu Porthier, remembered her mother as Odawa. Of course, Mrs. Mirandeu, like many individuals, could have had ties to metis communities and both the Potawatomi and Odawa tribes. Victoire Mirandeu Porthier and her sister Madaline worked for the Kinzies and Ouilmettes at Chicago.

Victoire remembered her father, perhaps idealistically, as a well-educated, cultured man, handsome, tall, and well-educated, with “crisp curly hair” and a large library, a “French gentleman” who had abandoned studies for the priesthood to enter into the fur trade with

²⁷⁴ Ibid., *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Andrew J. Vieau interview.

Vieau. This is a portrait of Mirandeu somewhat at odds with Vieau's recollection of him as a drunk. Despite knowing English, French, and "several Indian dialects", and having a sharp memory acknowledged by her community, Victoire Porthier herself had no formal education and could not read or write.²⁷⁵

Andrew Vieau insisted, on the contrary, that Mirandeu did not arrive at Milwaukee with Jacques Vieau Sr. in 1795, but possibly arrived shortly afterward, was not associated with his father or his father's company, or any kind of business partner with Vieau, but only a blacksmith who did occasional work for Jacques Vieau Sr. when called upon to do it. Mirandeu had "one bad fault"- he was an alcoholic, and died an early death of alcoholism. Andrew Vieau records that Mrs. Mirandeu, whom he claims as Potawatomi, returned to her tribe with her children after her husband's death, raising them among the Indians, despite their mixed heritage. Vieau, perhaps primly, did not want to associate his father with a somewhat disreputable person like Mirandeu. Vieau observes interestingly that Victoire or Victoria Mirandeu, was raised in Chicago by the Kinzie family, married a French-Canadian named Joseph Porthier, and returned to Milwaukee, where she lived all her life. Andrew notes that "nearly all" of Mirandeu's children, except Victoria Mirandeu Porthier, married Indians and went west to Kansas in the 1830s with the Potawatomi. Three of Andrew Vieau's own eleven siblings, Louis, Paul and Jacques Jr. made the same choices, either taking up important political roles in the Potawatomi tribe or migrating with their Native kin to Kansas. Louis, the only one of his siblings to wed an Indian woman, married Shano-te, a "full-blood" Potawatomi/Menominee, when he and Jacques Jr. operated a trading post in Skunk Grove, in modern Racine

²⁷⁵ Andreas, *History of Chicago, Vol 1*. 1884: 104-106.

County, Wisconsin. The first three children of Louis and Shano-te Vieux, Madeleine, Sophie, and Jacob- were born in Wisconsin, while the next group, Ellen, Archange and Rachel, were born in Iowa, and their last child, Louis Jr., in Kansas, reflecting the family's westward journey. Metis families who moved to Kansas found themselves compelled to cope with the massive overland migration of Euro-American settlers. Some of them, including Louis Vieux, fell back on their traditional intermediary role between white settler communities and Indian tribes. Louis Vieux owned and operated a toll bridge for the use of white overland pioneers heading to Oregon, California, Colorado and Utah, and sold them hay, grain, and horses. Others worked as interpreters and teachers, opening stores and trading posts where they sold food, clothing and shoes to migrating settlers, operating mills, taverns, and inns, and managing toll bridges and ferries, as did the Wisconsin Vieaus, Illinois Metis Ogees and Beaubiens. Shirley Kasper argues that the Metis and Indians removed to Kansas, Iowa and Missouri, mostly from the Great Lakes region, became "Indian pioneers" in their own right, the true first settlers of all three states, and that Metis and Indian business acumen and money from treaty annuities was essential to the local economy and the presence of the Catholic Church where they settled.²⁷⁶

Most likely, losing their father at young ages and being raised as Potawatomi, in tribal society with their Potawatomi mother, caused Mirandeu's children to identify primarily as Indians. The influence of Mrs. Mirandeu was strong. Raised in the fur-trade milieu of Milwaukee by a French-Canadian father and a mother who had been born into the fur trade, the Vieau children may have had a longer and more concentrated exposure to French culture,

²⁷⁶ Kasper, Shirley. "The emigrant Metis of Kansas: Rethinking the Pioneer Narrative." Doctoral dissertation, University of Colorado-Boulder, 2012, p. 15.

as evinced by their more varied life-paths, yet three of them did follow the example of the Mirandea family to choose Indian lives. Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the Metis continued to play important roles in the Great Lakes both politically and economically, during the fur trade's economic boom time. But Native pan-tribal leaders and white settlers, particularly after 1776, the consolidation of American power, and the shifting political balance that disadvantaged tribes, more and more compelled the Metis to choose one identity, particularly Native and Metis women.

Chapter 3: The 19th Century- Metis in Settler Territories and States

The previous chapters have shown that despite French attempts to claim them as French, the Metis retained a collective and individual identity as indigenous people situated in a predominantly Indian world. With the onset of British and American colonialism in the Great Lakes of the 1700s, the Metis had to navigate new racial and political realities, but could still pick and choose which aspects of European culture to use in order to aid their survival. In the nineteenth century, as the fur trade ended, Metis in Canada were ostracized because they could not belong to whiteness and were not allowed to legally be Indians in Canada. This chapter will show why the American government offered Metis men in the Great Lakes region, particularly Wisconsin and Minnesota, the legal identity and status of white men. The federal government needed them to be white to accomplish American goals of settlement and colonization. During the nineteenth century, the Metis were asked to make one choice about their identity. Many Metis chose to assimilate to either a 'white' or 'Indian' status publicly, but retained a private sense of who they were, sought to retain Metis cultural traits, and even occasionally expressed pride in Native ancestry publicly, without losing status as publicly declared whites. The Metis continued to root their identity in kinship, but experienced a loss of social, cultural and economic mobility as legal categories ground into place disenfranchising them and their Metis mothers from a tribal Indian identity and assigning them to whiteness. The U.S. Government assigned Metis a white status only if they did not have the distinct

citizenship of a tribal nation. Since many Metis were not tribal members, they became white American citizens by default.

The nineteenth century would be a transformational era for the Metis people of the American Great Lakes. They had survived French, British and American colonization with their trademark adaptability, and had continued to prosper in the fur trade and occupy their accustomed social niche as intermediaries between various European and Indian groups. Against the wishes of British and French regimes alike, they developed a coherent individual and group identity as an independent and indigenous people- part of the fur trade but not beholden to it, the “free people”. They survived the shifting political status of the settler-colonial nations who occupied their territory and the shifting political allegiances of the colonists within them. The nineteenth century was an era when the Metis people of Canada saw their hopes dashed by the failure of two rebellions, an attempt to preserve their land, culture and language. Although increasingly pressured to adopt either a white or Indian identity, Metis people in the United States retained a pride in their identity and an awareness of their own uniqueness, even as most of them assimilated to become outwardly ‘white’, defined legally as such by the United States government.

The culture of the Metis was born in New France, a region that encompassed much of present-day North America and Canada. The Great Lakes territories south of the forty-ninth parallel became a British colony in 1763, and then part of the United States after 1776, though American presence in the Great Lakes was not a true reality until after the War of 1812. The cultural climate of the United States in the later nineteenth century, particularly in the Jacksonian era of Indian removal, compelled the Metis towards a type of cultural conformity

and erasure that required them to choose one racial and cultural identity, to the exclusion of all others, and made the more cosmopolitan and variable choices of earlier eras difficult or impossible to pursue. United States government policies allowed the Metis to serve as interpreters and advisors in Indian treaties, and gave them land or money in treaties if they chose to identify with their Indian relatives. The Great Lakes also offered American Metis the option of becoming white American citizens. But if they chose whiteness, the Metis people were often forced to reinvent themselves as white pioneers, becoming complicit in the erasure of their own links to indigenous communities.

An interesting comparison is Melinda M. Jette's work on the French-Indian communities of Oregon- she avoids the use of the term Metis to avoid its political associations.²⁷⁷ Midwestern Metis in Wisconsin, Indiana and Michigan also gained American citizenship, recourse to the courts, legal title to their land, and a "group solidarity" based on Catholicism. In fact, the legal rights of Midwestern metis may have been more extensive than those of their Oregon cousins. Oregon metis were not allowed to vote, nor could they testify in courts against whites.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ Jetté, Melinda Marie. *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races: A French-Indian Community in Nineteenth-Century Oregon, 1812-1859*. Oregon State University Press, Corvallis, Oregon, 2015, p. 9.

²⁷⁸ The Oregon Donation Land Act allowed wives to own 320 acres of land in their own name, regardless of race, and allowed "American half breed Indians" eligible land claims, but excluded blacks, Hawaiians, and all other Indians from owning land. The act granted land ownership to single white men, white couples, or couples where the husband was white, if they took up residency on the land before Dec. 1, 1850, resided on the land and cultivated it for four years, and made a declaration of intent to become American citizens on or before Dec. 1st, 1851. Matthew P. Deady, comp. *The Organic and Other General Laws of Oregon, 1845-1864* (Portland, OR: Henry Pittock, State Printer, 1866), p. 84-90. The act did not recognize prior Indian claims or treaties, so it facilitated Anglo settlement in Oregon, and in the act, voting rights were limited to white men.

Perhaps the welcoming of French educators and missionaries by French Prairie Metis in Oregon was not only borne of a desire to reassert their connections to French language and religion, but out of a desire to portray themselves as “civilized” and protect their land and resources, like the Great Lakes Indians and Metis who publicly displayed their Catholicism and French language. An 1855 law of the Oregon territorial legislature prevented mixed race men from becoming citizens, voting, or using the court system or participating in territorial politics. Legislators voted down a proposal to grant citizenship to English-speaking “half-breeds”, and reserved citizenship and suffrage to white men. Oregon Indians and Metis could not testify in court against whites. French Prairie settlers were allowed to keep title to their land, as were Indian women married to white men, who could have property in their own names. The Oregon legislature restricted voting rights to native-born white men and white males of foreign birth who had resided in the United States for one year and publicly declared their intent to become American citizens. “Half-breed Indians”²⁷⁹ could not become citizens or vote.²⁸⁰

In the Midwest, communal lands and usufruct rights, or any women’s property rights, were not recognized at all. All land had to be registered under men’s names. The Great Lakes Metis had their land title, became American citizens, and unlike in Oregon, could vote.

The political history and identity of the Metis in nineteenth-century Canada is more complicated, reflecting a politicized sense of the Metis as a distinct nation that endures to this

²⁷⁹ Carey, Charles Henry. *The Oregon Constitution and Proceedings of the Debates of the Constitutional Convention of 1857*. Portland, Oregon Historical Society Press, 1984, p. 334.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Carey, *The Oregon Constitution and Proceedings of the Debates of the Constitutional Convention of 1857*. Portland, Oregon Historical Society Press, 1984, 362, 481. See also: Bill to Allow Half-Breeds to Become Citizens, 1856, H.B. 28, Oregon Territorial Legislative Assembly Records, OSA. Petition to allow Half-Breed Indian Voting, 1859, Legislative Petitions, Oregon Territorial Records, OSA.

day. Canada began as New France, became a British territory in 1763, and persisted as a British territory. In the territories of the present-day United States, French governmental policies created a French population diffused over a large area and never very demographically numerous. Canada retained a large French population concentrated in Quebec, and does to this day. Although French-Canadians became socially, politically, and economically subordinate to English-speaking Canadians, Scots, Britons and Irish after the British conquest, their cultural influence within Canada remained strong, and compelled many Canadians to adapt to the presence of a multicultural society, albeit not always with comfort or ease. The identification of Canadian Metis with the Canadian Francophone population and distinctive Francophone political interests, and the earlier, more complex reckoning with issues of cultural identity in Canada, may have enabled the distinctively multicultural Metis identity to persist.

Or perhaps the uniquely virulent racism of the Canadian settler state against Metis people, and its persistent unwillingness to recognize them as either white or Indian, ironically helped the Metis people preserve a distinct and coherent culture that was lost in the United States. The Metis became a distinct tribal nation, and a “nation” in a nineteenth-century European sense of a nation-state, a unified ethnic group occupying the boundaries of a distinct piece of land, within the context of nineteenth-century western Canada. Because of this unique development of a new nation, a development largely not shared by their American cousins, the Metis have become practically synonymous with Canada in the popular imagination and in much present-day historical discourse, because their political fight for a nation was so prominent that they exist in that nationhood to the present day. Much scholarly ink has been spilled on why the American Metis failed to develop the nationalistic ethnic consciousness of

their cousins at Red River (modern-day Winnipeg, Manitoba). But I also want to touch on a few of the reasons why this political development did happen in Red River, rather than elsewhere.

The Red River colony began as a colony for displaced Scots- as I previously stated, many Scots exiled from their ancestral homes by British colonial policy wound up in Canada by accident or by design. Between 1811 and 1816, a Scottish lord and the HBC had envisioned western Canada as a refuge, a “northern Garden of Eden”²⁸¹, for impoverished, displaced Scots and Scots-Irish, many of whom also tried their hand at the fur trade. Still, settlement by Scots or by anyone *except* mixed-race Metis fur-trade workers and their families was markedly slow- perhaps western Canada was a bit too chilly for such promotional hyperbole. Red River was also promoted as a place for established fur-trade employees to retire, most with their Indian or Metis wives and Metis families, particularly after the merger of the Hudson’s Bay Company with the North West Company in 1821. Many native women at Red River took the lead in their relationships with European men, often to the men’s surprise and consternation. Alexander Henry the Younger, in the Lower Red River district in 1801, found himself confronted by an Ojibwe woman, “Liard’s daughter”, who moved into his room, and evidently seduced him. Henry commented that even “the devil” could not have gotten her out of his quarters. Despite attempting to persuade her to return to her father, Henry was unsuccessful in the face of her evident determination to be with him, and “Liard’s daughter” became his wife and the mother of his three children.²⁸²

²⁸¹ *Annual Report*, Canadian Department of the Interior, 1902, 102.

²⁸² Coues, Elliot, ed. *New Light on the History of the Greater Northwest: The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and of David Thompson, 1799-1814*. Minneapolis, MN, 1965 reprint, p. 71-73, 163, 169, 274.

The Metis were a strong presence from early on in Red River: they had earlier formed a majority in the Great Lakes, when they had a unique sense of themselves both individually and collectively as a people, and tried their best to protect their interests. But in the Great Lakes, they were forced to contend with the tide of white settlement much earlier than at Red River, and were forced into minority status much sooner. At Red River the Metis not only formed a demographic majority, but their ranks were increased all the time by Wisconsin and Minnesota Metis who migrated there in response to the increasing white settlement of their homelands.²⁸³

Not only were the Metis the largest group at Red River, with time for their political feelings to mature, many of them were affluent and occupied important positions in the Red River colony, as their ancestors had on the American side of the border. Fur-trade fortunes and considerable properties in land at Red River, bequeathed in large part by Indian mothers, made the Metis or mixed-bloods the “native aristocracy”, with many of them occupying respectable professions such as sheriffs, medical officers, postmasters, teachers, magistrates and newspapermen.

Yet there were important differences in the experiences of different Metis populations. The French-Metis children of the North Westers might varyingly become fur-trade clerks, be self-employed guides, interpreters or freemen, or remain with Indian relatives as Indians. They could marry other Metis, Indians, or other traders, but could not expect education or wealth from their fathers, and the chance to join or move upward in white settler

²⁸³ Sprague, D.N. *Canada and the Metis, 1869-1885*. Waterloo, Ontario. Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1988, p. 21.

society was largely denied them.

By the early 1800s, the Hudson's Bay metis were treated as a separate class, neither Home Indians nor Englishmen, but "natives of Hudson's Bay", and were more frequently employed by the company and given the rudiments of education, though not enough to compete with their British-born peers for employment and advancement. These "natives of Hudson's Bay" were employed only in positions of lower rank, with little opportunity for advancement because they were considered too Indian, and too uninterested in making profit. In particular, families whose fathers were not high-ranking, or had suffered misfortune, or were absent, were certainly more likely to resume the lifestyles and influences of their Indian maternal relatives. Because families were so large, sometimes parents could afford to educate only a few of them, and left the rest without any European education at all. North Westers often educated and baptized their children in Montreal, but recognized them as a distinct group of "half-breeds", Metis, brulé, or "freemen" by the 1800s or late 1780s, particularly at Red River where they asserted a distinct sociopolitical identity derived from both sides of their heritage, and the right to claim both. They served as clerks, linguists of Native languages, and diplomats in the company's service.

The Hudson's Bay Metis, despite efforts by the Company, initially lacked this type of Metis group identity as found among the sons of North West French-Canadian men, or close associations with Indian groups, because of the differing nature of the Hudson's Bay system. By the mid-1830s, some white fathers fretted about their Metis children being too closely associated with tribal groups, and the impact it could have on their ability for success in an

increasingly racist and classist white Canadian society. One father fretted that a “half-breed”²⁸⁴ would not become a parson, lawyer or doctor without the right upbringing. Because Metis families were so large, not all Metis children could be absorbed by Indian groups or employed by the company. This negative economic marginalization ironically facilitated the recognition of them as a distinct group, as increasing racism and nepotism deprived them of their former secure place in fur-trade society, or “stamped the Cain mark”²⁸⁵ upon them in the words of one distraught North West Company father. This no doubt fanned the political discontents of the Red River Metis, who were beginning to make their voices heard, attaining important positions at Red River, the future city of Winnipeg, even as the company increasingly rejected them. Summers at Red River were spent trapping and hunting, winters spent dancing, racing, and gossiping, with economies revolving around the fur trade, the bison, Company jobs, and riverine agriculture. Red River metis farmers, like the Indians, began their agricultural year in March with the making of maple sugar, and began sowing and plowing crops in April or May. According to William Lewis Morton, they planted a mixture of European and Native American crops, including wheat, barley, oats, potatoes, flowers, Indian corn, pumpkins, melons and vegetables. Morton noted that the Red River Metis obtained their seed wheat from Prairie du

²⁸⁴ MacDonald, Ranald. *The Narrative of his Early Life on the Columbia Under the Hudson's Bay Company's Regime, of His Experiences in the Pacific Whale Fishery; And of his Great Adventure to Japan; with a Sketch of His Later Life on the Western Frontier, 1824-1894*. Spokane, Washington: Eastern Washington State Historical Society/ Inland American Printing Company, 1923, p. 27. “All the wealth of Rupert's land will not make a *half-breed* either a good parson, a shining lawyer or an able physician, if left to his own discretion while young.”

²⁸⁵ Bryce, George. *The Remarkable History of the Hudson's Bay Company*. London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, 1900, p. 175. “It appears the present concern has stamped the Cain mark upon all born in this country. Neither education nor abilities serve them. The Honourable Company are unwilling to take natives, even as apprenticed clerks, and the favored few they do take can never aspire to a higher status, be their education and capacity what they may.”

Chien, Wisconsin, which is interesting for two reasons- Wisconsin was a world leader in wheat production for most of the 1800s, and Prairie du Chien during that time was also a Metis-majority, fur-trading community. Relatives and friends, as ever, traveled between Red River and Prairie Du Chien for social visits and trade, and may have carried the wheat with them. Morton also observed that farming was “bound to the river’s edge”²⁸⁶, with farmsteads and fields fronting on the river. He speculates that this method of farming was used because farming near a river gave access to water, shelter, ease of travel, and drainage. This settlement pattern may have promoted good compact neighborhoods. Ekberg, Murphy and others have also speculated that the essentially narrow, riverine fields of the Metis settlements are a replication of French-Canadian farming techniques, which of course replicate those of France itself, and that these long, narrow, riverine fields, called long lots or “ribbon lots” are a general agricultural feature of French North America. This farming system can still be seen in “parts of Normandy”, which makes sense, since the French-Canadians and their progeny were mainly Norman-French by heritage, and spread their farming system along the St. Lawrence in Quebec, around the Great Lakes, in the Red River of the North at Manitoba, through the “Illinois Country” of Illinois, Missouri, and parts of Indiana, and in Louisiana.²⁸⁷ In the fall, farmers harvested wild hay from the prairies for their livestock, as well as potatoes and grain from their fields, stabled their livestock, cut firewood, and caught whitefish from the lakes. Pemmican and barley soup were evidently staples relished by all. Manitoba’s economic dependence on the fur trade allowed

²⁸⁶ Morton, William Lewis, *Manitoba: A History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961. p. 57, 86- on Manitoba seed wheat coming from Prairie du Chien, 105, on the riverine nature of Metis farming.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., Murphy, *Great Lakes Creoles*, 51. See also Ekberg, *French Roots in the Illinois Country*, 11,

these cultural traits to persist, but the burgeoning population often had to look elsewhere for employment. According to Morton, A “new order”²⁸⁸ was needed at Red River, and some Metis would seek that new order through open, armed political rebellion against the relatively new government of Canada, attempting to proclaim a new Metis nationhood and identity. In the mid-1800s the Red River Metis began hunting and processing the bison, which caused them to encroach on the territories of the Lakota and Dakota Sioux. They turned the bison meat into pemmican, a dried, pounded mixture of meat, berries and fat that was an important fur trade ration. The Hudson’s Bay Company tried to monopolize Metis people’s labor and the pemmican they produced, for the exclusive use of the Hudson’s Bay Company. Red River Metis people ignored the company’s strictures and regularly traded pemmican, furs, and other goods over the border to present-day Pembina, North Dakota, and St. Paul, Minnesota. They had engaged in this trade for many years at new winter Metis settlements, or *hivernements*, devoted to the full-time pursuit of bison, and became the predominant provisioners of the northern fur trade. Epidemic disease, fur-trade competition, and the pursuit of the bison herds had encouraged the intermarriage and migration west of the Ojibwe, Cree and Assiniboine peoples into Lakota and Dakota territories. These migrations and economic competition precipitated conflict between the Ojibwe and Dakota over lands in Minnesota: the Ojibwe eventually occupied Minnesota and intermarried with the remaining Dakota. This interethnic milieu was crucial to Metis interests.²⁸⁹ The Company could not countenance the private, “almost open”, trade in furs conducted by the Metis, or the independent cross-border trade in furs and pemmican with

²⁸⁸ Morton, *Manitoba: A History*, 111-112.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, Hogue, Michel. *Metis and the Medicine Line*, 66-67.

Pembina and St. Paul. But the actions of influential Metis forced the Company to change its position in 1849, including a certain French-Dene Metis, the influential Louis Riel Sr., father of the future Metis leader Louis Riel Jr. The debacle over free trade galvanized the Metis political and ethnic consciousness of themselves as indigenous people, since they argued in a petition to the HBC that, as “natives of the country and as half-breeds”, they had a right to hunt where they wished and sell furs and hides to the highest bidder, without regard to tariffs, monopolies or borders. This quote pointed to the nascent development, at Red River, of a group identity for the Metis that was communal, nationalistic and indigenous.²⁹⁰ This identity was even recognized by high officials in the Hudson’s Bay Company and North West Company as something distinct from either white or Indian communities. William MacGillivray, the head of the North West Company in 1818, recognized that the Red River Metis were part European and part of the Company, but that the Metis formed a unique nationality of their own. “They one and all look upon themselves as members of an independent tribe of natives, entitled to a property in the soil, to a flag of their own, and to protection from the British Government.” he wrote. McGillivray stated Metis should be legally Indians under British law because they could not be British subjects through their fathers. He regarded “bois brulés and metifs” as a “separate and distinct tribe of Indians for a considerable time back.”²⁹¹

²⁹⁰ Sinclair- as “natives of the country and as half-breeds”, the Metis maintained rights as indigenous people to “hunt furs in the Hudson’s Bay Company’s Territories whenever we think proper, and again, sell those furs to the highest bidder- likewise having a doubt, that, Natives of this country can be prevented from trading and trafficking with one another.” J. Sinclair et al to A. Christie, 19 August 1845. Library and Archives Canada, Hudson’s Bay Company Archives, D5/15, folio 139a.

²⁹¹ “W. McGillivray to W.B. Coltman, 14 March 1818,” In *Papers Relating to the Red River Settlement: viz Return to an Address from the Honourable House of Commons to His Royal Highness The Prince Regent, dated 24th June 1819*. British Parliamentary Papers, 1819, p. 318.

At the same time the Red River Metis were asserting a unique indigenous identity, the government of Canada attempted to dismantle that identity, in an attack on the rights of Indian women and Metis people, by defining a legal “Indian” as someone who lived with a tribe and was accepted by them as a tribal member, or someone who inherited Indian blood from the father’s side only or was otherwise of “pure” Indian blood. Much like the United States government’s declaration that the Metis were white American citizens unless they lived as tribal Indians and were enrolled as such, the Canadian government positioned whiteness and its own citizenship as superior to tribal citizenship and Native identity. “Half-breeds” were not to be counted as Indians in treaty payments unless they “lived as Indians” among a formally adopted tribe. The law further specified that no Indian woman who lived with or married a white man could receive treaty goods or payments.²⁹² Another law decreed that if an Indian woman married a white man, or any other non-Indian man, she would lose her tribal membership and could not pass that tribal membership on to her children. The children of the mixed marriage with a non-Indian man could not be tribal members, nor receive any tribal lands or money from their mother’s people.²⁹³ This is clear evidence that the Canadian

²⁹² “Report on the Affairs of the Indians of Canada,” Journals of the Legislative Assembly, 8. Vic. 1844-45, Appendix EEE; “Report on the Affairs of the Indians in Canada; submitted to the Honorable the Legislative Assembly, for their information.” Province of Canada. Journals of the Legislative Assembly, 11 Victoria A.1847, Sessional Papers, Appendix T. See also: “An Act for the protection of the Indians in Upper Canada from imposition, and the property occupied or enjoyed by them from trespass and injury.” Statutes of the Province of Canada, 13 & 14 Vict. Chap 74: “An Act for the Better Protection of the Lands and Property of the Indians in Lower Canada.,” Statutes of the Province of Canada, 13 & 14 Vict. Chap 42.

²⁹³ “An Indian woman marrying a white loses her rights as a member of the tribe and her children have no claim on the lands or moneys belonging to their mother’s nation.” “Report of the Special Commissioners appointed to investigate Indian Affairs in Canada (Messrs. Pennefather, Talfourd, and Worthington) to Sir Edmund Head, April 1858, Province of Canada,” *Journals of the Legislative Assembly, Sessional Papers* 1858, Appendix 21. See also: “any Indian

government was rejecting fur-trade customs and practices, while ironically recognizing the traditional role of Indian women in tribal societies as keepers of land and culture. The Canadian government, like the U.S. government, pursued settler-colonial goals of denigrating Indian women by placing them in a subordinate status to Indian or white men and reducing the number of people legally considered Indian. The large families of Metis people contradicted official ideologies that Indians were a vanishing race. The refusal of U.S. and Canadian governments to count the Metis as Indian also reinforced patriarchy, racism, and white supremacy, and anticipated future policies of 'blood quantum' determining tribal membership. But in the United States, Metis were considered legally white and were offered a pathway into whiteness. The Canadian Metis were ambiguous under the law of their country, neither legally Indian nor legally white, a factor that may have provoked their rebellion and crystallized their sense of being in a distinctive group. Riel Sr. or père ordered the freedom of Guillaume Sayer, a trader jailed by the HBC for trading with Americans, and the metis chanted, "*Le commerce est libre!*"²⁹⁴ The actions of the Metis and the resultant legal case forced the Company to stop trying to enforce its monopoly, and individual free traders, as well as a booming cross-border traffic, proliferated. The Metis celebrated a political identity, linked to the bison hunt, as "free

woman marrying any other than an Indian shall cease to be an Indian within the meaning of this Act, nor shall the children issue of such marriage be considered as Indians within the meaning of this Act." - Statutes of Canada 1869, c. 6 (32-33 Vict.)

²⁹⁴ "*Le commerce est libre! Le commerce est libre! Vive la liberte.*" Notes also that the free-trade debacle united the French and English half-breeds in common political cause. Primary source is Bryce, George. "Worthies of Old Red River", *Transactions- Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba*, issue 48. Winnipeg: The Manitoba Free Press Company, 1897, 8. Hogue alleges the Metis claimed rights *both* as Indigenous *and* as British subjects to trade- Michel Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line*, 45.

men of the plains”, who chose their chief and were “no man’s slaves.”²⁹⁵

Louis Riel Jr., a celebrated Metis leader, born in St. Boniface, Red River, Manitoba (present day Winnipeg) to Louis Riel Sr. and Julie Lagimodière, grew up in an atmosphere of intense Catholic religiosity, charitable giving and devotion to family members. His political, military and legal actions would define Metis identity in Canada. Louis Jr was inspired to lead his people, the Red River Metis, in two armed rebellions against the government of Canada, in 1869 and 1885. These were the Red River Rebellion and the North West Rebellion. Louis Riel Jr. and his compatriot in the rebellions, Gabriel Dumont, are perhaps the best-known Metis leaders even today. For his role in the first rebellion, the Canadian government forcibly exiled Louis Riel from Manitoba. He fled to the United States and became an American citizen, but after the failure of the second rebellion, the Canadian government tried Riel and executed him in 1885.

The lionization or demonization of Louis Riel in contemporary Canada and its imagination tend to follow some fairly predictable fault lines in Canadian culture. English-Canadians, and to some extent, the government of Canada, view Louis Riel Jr. as a dangerous, deluded lunatic who threatened the Confederation of Canada into a new country. In particular, many English-language histories insist that the government of Canada intended to act in good faith towards the Metis, and that if the Metis had not resorted to armed violence, the government would have met their demands and done as they asked. French Canadians view the Francophone and staunchly Catholic Riel and his Metis followers as persecuted heroes who

²⁹⁵ Pierre Falcon, “The Buffalo Hunt.” In MacLeod, Margaret Arnett. *Songs of Old Manitoba; With Airs, French and English Words, and Introductions*. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1960, p. 20.

dared to stand up to Canada's oppressive English government. The Metis themselves see him as one of their own, a person who stood up for their rights as indigenous people, including their nationhood and political independence. Louis Riel was all of these and more, a complex, contradictory figure. The government of Canada, in fact, never intended to honor the promises it made to the Metis. Canadian officials had specific settler-colonial goals for the western prairies of Manitoba and Saskatchewan that, in fact, required the dispossession of the Metis from their lands. These goals were to expand the territory of Canada with new farmland for the younger sons of Ontario farm families, particularly in the late 1860s after all farmland in Ontario had been settled, to alleviate economic depression in Canada, to fill the allegedly "empty" land with farmers of British stock, build the Pacific Railway, and contribute to Canada's industrialization²⁹⁶.

The distinctive political consciousness, mobile way of life, and nationalized identity of the Red River Metis developed from their adoption of the bison hunt, their need to organize and regulate people's behavior on the hunt through a code of conduct, and of course the need for defense against the Dakota on bison-hunting expeditions²⁹⁷. This was a quasi-military organization of the hunts, ironically borrowed from the culture of the Plains people themselves, but described with French terms. Dakota attacks on Metis and Ojibwe bison-hunting brigades were frequent and bloody, as were Metis counterattacks. The long bison-hunting expeditions in enemy territory necessitated this form of political organization. Men would prepare for the spring hunt and the winter hunts of bison with guns, ammunition, a hunting horse, a pony, and

²⁹⁶ D.N Sprague. *Canada and the Metis*. 146, 151. See also Morton, *Manitoba: A History*, 78-80.

²⁹⁷ D.N. Sprague, *Canada and the Metis*, 39.

a. Red River cart. Made of wood and bison leather, local materials that could easily be repaired and replaced on long hunting journeys, the carts were essential to the freighting of bison meat and pemmican across long distances. Oxen, ponies or horses hauling materials on the carts could pull as much as 800 pounds of weight. Women accompanied the men to process the meat into pemmican, gather fuel and food such as berries, wild vegetables, and eggs, and hunt game birds for sustenance, leaving elders to tend the crops and cabins. Farming was always uncertain at Red River, where farmers faced drought, flood, early frosts, bitter winters and grasshopper infestations, and Metis men could find little, if any, economic mobility afforded to them by low-ranking HBC wage jobs, so the hunt provided a crucial economic bulwark against poor wages and poor crops. As elsewhere in the fur trade, female-headed kin networks, anchored by Catholic godparenting traditions, provided the social glue for the economic enterprises of men in the bison-hunting brigades, which linked together members of an individual brigade and also linked them to other Plains brigades, who conducted their own hunts independently of Red River. For instance, Charles Trottier's brigade was based on relationships and family pairings from the marriages of three sisters, Ursule, Philomene, and Angélique LaFramboise. Hogue even links the development of Michif, the mixed Metis dialect of Cree, French and Ojibwe, to the sense of community formed in Plains Metis hunting culture²⁹⁸. Cross-border migration between Pembina and Red River in response to bison hunts also seems to have promoted Metis in-group endogamous marriage, a feature almost absent in American Great Lakes Metis communities.

The people first elected a president or "chief" of the hunt, followed by twelve

²⁹⁸ Michel Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line*, 41.

councilors, a public crier, and guides, as well as “captains” of tens elected by ten hunters, who viewed themselves as “soldiers” of a particular leader. Enforced rules generally prohibited bison-hunting on Sundays and sought to prevent anyone from hunting ahead of the larger group. A priest always accompanied the Metis bison hunts, conducted Mass on Sundays, and no doubt baptized any children born or solemnized marriages on the journey. Foster described one such priest, a French priest who preached and taught to the Metis in French and to the Plains Indians in Cree, and lived and traveled with his parishioners, following the bison herds and making an impromptu altar from the “tail end of a Red River cart.”²⁹⁹ Morton alleged that a white flag with three crosses was flown on the hunt³⁰⁰.

The erudite Louis Riel Jr. had dropped out of college in Montreal without completing his bachelor’s degree because of his shock after his father’s premature death. Riel had fallen madly in love with a woman whose parents disapproved of him, and broke off their relationship. He had lived something of a peripatetic existence, alternating work as a law clerk in Montreal with other odd jobs in St. Paul and Chicago, before returning home to Red River in 1868 to care for his widowed mother and his siblings. Riel Jr. was something of a rebel in search of a cause, perhaps angry and adrift after the loss of his father. Flanagan even goes so far as to connect Louis Riel’s ambitious political designs as an adult to his youthful disappointment, guilt and desire for greatness after his failure to finish college, become a priest, and support his parents’ large family.³⁰¹ And so, it was a youthful Louis Riel Jr., a young man of twenty-five, who met the

²⁹⁹ Harroun Foster, Martha. *We Know Who We Are: Metis Identity in a Montana Community*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016, p. 117.

³⁰⁰ Morton, W.L. *Manitoba: A History*, p. 79-80.

³⁰¹ Flanagan, Thomas. *Louis Riel*. Ottawa, Canada: The Canadian Historical Association, Historical Booklet #50, 1992, p. 6.

first parties of Canadian government land surveyors when they came to his homeland in 1869. Although a dropout, Riel was nonetheless well-educated in Catholic schools, a speaker of fluent English and French, as well as Cree, Ojibwe and Michif, and a good orator. Perhaps inspired by his father's successful example of resistance, he told them crisply in English that they were trespassing on privately owned (but commonly used) haying and woodcutting land, and that they could not proceed any farther.

Riel helped the Red River Metis form a provisional government to defend themselves against the surveyors and settlers, and articulate a list of demands to the government of Canada, including financial support for Catholic, Francophone schools for Metis children, recognition of the Metis' land claims by the Canadian government, equal political representation and the chance to govern their province as officials, and admission of Manitoba into the Canadian Confederation as an independent province with the right to manage its own affairs. None of this was honored. English Protestant settlers from Ontario and the British Isles had already begun trickling into Manitoba, full of hostility for the claims of the "half-breeds", whom they considered racially inferior.

Religious conflicts between English Protestant Ontarians, and the Metis, who were French-speaking and Catholic, fanned the tensions over politics and land between the two groups. This was not helped by dissension among the Metis themselves, some of whom wanted their province to join the government of Canada, mostly the descendants of English and Scottish Hudson's Bay Company men and native women, who considered themselves the "native English", distinct from both the French Metis and the Selkirk colony of Scots in Manitoba. Riel and his Metis partisans imprisoned Thomas Scott, a Scots-Irish road and land

surveyor in the “Canadian Party”, favoring the immediate annexation of Manitoba by Canada, along with other members of the “Canadian Party”, in Upper Fort Garry. Scott, a radical Orange Order Protestant, scorned Riel and the Metis government openly. Riel ordered Scott’s execution by firing squad at Fort Garry in 1870.³⁰² After Thomas Scott’s death, Ontarians elevated Scott to the status of a martyr, a British man who had died for Queen and Country, and used his death as an excuse to send soldiers to Red River and marginalize the Metis and their concerns. After all, Ontarians reasoned, the government of Canada could hardly negotiate with murderers who had declared themselves the government’s enemies. Most likely, Riel and the Red River Metis knew that the Metis in America had gotten the right to be legally considered white, to vote, to serve in government, and to keep title to their lands. The Red River Metis could have heard about these rights from their American relatives in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Minnesota Metis received the right to vote in 1851, for many of the same reasons that their relatives in Wisconsin received it. The Minnesota legislature needed to count Metis men as white men so that Minnesota could advance to the status of a territory, and later a state. The Metis were “grouped with whites” in Minnesota censuses until 1860, when they were counted as “mixed” instead of white.³⁰³ Minnesota Metis also enjoyed considerable demographic heft: Mary Lethert Wingerd estimates that the Metis represented probably a third of total Minnesota population in 1851. Metis voters at Pembina, Mendota and other trading

³⁰² Ibid., Sprague, *Canada and the Metis*, 50-51.

³⁰³ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical View of the United States*. Washington D.C., 1854, 332-3. Organization of Dakota Territory in 1861, with Metis as the single largest ethnic group in the new territory- *Congressional Globe*, 36th Congress, 1st Session, 11 May 1860, Vol. 29, 2070-1. Dakota territory Metis now counted as ‘mixed’, instead of white- US. Census, Dakota Territory, Pembina District, 1860.

outposts outnumbered whites³⁰⁴. The Pembina Metis formed about nineteen percent of Minnesota's population in 1849 and Pembina was second only to St. Paul in population at that time.³⁰⁵

Whites balked at the idea of the Minnesota Metis being allowed to vote, and protested in the streets, but the provision passed anyway. Many 19th-century whites disapproved of the Great Lakes Metis as flashy, showy, ostentatious, frivolous or too Indian. Others were more understanding. When the artist George Winter visited the Indiana Metis in the 1830s, he was among their admirers, both of their clothing and the pace of their lifestyle. He observed their love of fiddling, music and dancing with fonder eyes, calling them a "lively and cheerful people" who lived life with zest, adding that he himself had joined the jigs with "right good heart."³⁰⁶ The "Moccasin Democrats" in Minnesota, white fur-trade fathers of Metis families, organized their own state political party. Wingerd observed that, in pre-territorial Minnesota, most talk of race referenced the "difference between white and Indian."³⁰⁷ But centuries of customary intermarriage as the foundation of Minnesota fur-trade society had blurred that difference and created "complicated genealogies." People determined their race individually and collectively through more abstract criteria, based on "behavior, self-representation...culture, and custom"³⁰⁸ rather than pseudo-scientific or biological notions. Wingerd's observation about

³⁰⁴ Lethert Wingerd, Mary. *North Country: The Making of Minnesota*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010, 129, 151.

³⁰⁵ Appendix C, "Order to Take the Census", *Journal of the House of Representatives*, p. 195; Appendix D, "Census of Minnesota Territory", 11 June 1849, *Journal of the House of Representatives*, p. 196-214.

³⁰⁶ Cooke, Sarah E. and Rachel B. Ramadhyani. *Indians and a Changing Frontier: The Art of George Winter*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1993, p. 53.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 231.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

pre-territorial Minnesota could also apply to early Wisconsin, Illinois, and anywhere in the American Great Lakes during fur trade times. Prosperous Metis men who lived a Euro-American lifestyle could be considered white, and could therefore be and become legally white American citizens. The “fur power” secured mixed-bloods the vote, with the following legislation, “Nothing in the foregoing act shall be construed as to prevent the voting of all half-breeds, unless they are mixed with African blood.”³⁰⁹ The large population of the Metis undoubtedly was a consideration for the Minnesota legislature in passing the law. Captain James Starkey observed that “such was the mixed character of the population at the time, that a large number of the citizens were either by ties of consanguinity or trading interest allied to the Indians...these were known and designated as the Moccasin Democracy or Indian Dynasty.”³¹⁰ Minnesota Governor Ramsey supported the Metis as “fellow citizens of mixed blood” and “Minnesotians”, praising them as a “bold, honest and hardy race”³¹¹ who would protect Minnesota from a potential invasion by Canada or an attack of hostile Indians. Governor Ramsey’s attempt to claim the Metis voters as Minnesotans and “fellow citizens” was clearly meant to position them towards consideration as white men worthy of the franchise, an attitude bolstered in subsequent legislation. The legislation recognized that race in Minnesota, as elsewhere on the Great Lakes frontier, was at least partially a matter of social and cultural

³⁰⁹ Wingerd, *North Country*, 387.

³¹⁰ Captain James Starkey, In *Glimpses of the Nation’s Struggle. Third Series. Papers Read Before the Minnesota Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, 1889-1892*. Edward D. Neill (ed.) New York/St. Paul/Minneapolis: D.D. Merrill Company, 1893, 277.

³¹¹ “Memorial from the Half-Breeds of Pembina, in Minnesota, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Minnesota* St. Paul, MN: James M. Goodhue, 1850, p. 68-70, 233-5.

perception. The statutes proclaimed, “All persons” (i.e. men, since women were not yet eligible to vote) “of a mixture of white and Indian blood who have adopted the customs and habits of civilization” gained the right to vote in Minnesota.³¹² But the status of the Minnesota Metis as white citizens and voters was not relished by some of them, who still wanted to participate in treaties as Indians with their Native kin³¹³. Families traveled back and forth between the United States and Canada, and the Metis, including Riel himself, were geographically and culturally mobile people, who could have learned of these voting rights and legal rights from American friends and relatives.

After the failure of the Red River Rebellion in 1869, Riel fled to the United States, bribed by Sir John A. Macdonald to leave the country. In October 1873, he secured a House of Commons seat, as a member of Parliament for Provencher. The people of Provencher reelected him twice in 1874, but Riel could never actually occupy his position because of the outstanding warrant for his arrest, and traveled widely in Quebec and the northeastern US, hoping to get political support. Riel had a secret interview with President Grant and wrote Grant a letter, asking for permission and money to launch an invasion of Manitoba with American troops, so that he could reestablish a Metis government and make the province an exclusive settlement of Metis, French-Canadians and Irish Catholics. Grant either rejected these proposals or never responded. Just what Riel’s spiritual beliefs were at this time is an open question. Flanagan states that Riel was influenced by the Quebec Ultramontanes, strictly devout and

³¹² *U.S. Statutes at Large* 9 (1862): 405; *Revised Statutes of the Territory of Minnesota* (St. Paul, MN: James Goodhue, 1851): Chap. 5, Sec. 1.

³¹³ Some of the Pembina Metis sought treaty money at the negotiations in 1851. Hogue, Michel. *Metis and the Medicine Line*, 113.

archconservative Catholics, royalists who rejected liberal modernism, opposed the separation of church and state, believed in “absolute loyalty” to the infallible Pope, and, most crucially, cherished the idea of a “special mission of the French-Canadian people to evangelize North America”³¹⁴ to the Catholic faith. This was a nationalistic, mystical belief that the Roman Catholic faith and the French language would be the tools of a conquering, civilizing mission ordained by God. The “civilizing mission” envisioned by later French imperialists was derived from this, though it was less explicitly religious in its intent.³¹⁵

This strong, politically conservative Roman Catholic faith was also combined with a concern for the ethnic survival of the French-Canadian people, to remain agrarian, French and Catholic and resist assimilation to English-Canadian culture, and to continue in a political struggle against the Anglo-dominated Canadian state. It is no accident that Ultramontane clergy first led the political movement for Quebec separatism. This belief in the uniqueness of French ethnic Catholicism, though modified for its North American imperial concerns, can be traced all the way back to the First Crusade, when French Crusaders had believed that God had chosen the French nation and people uniquely above all others to spread and defend Catholicism.³¹⁶

On December 8th, 1875, the feast day of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, a popular Ultramontane feast day, Louis Riel underwent a powerful mystical experience while attending

³¹⁴ Ibid, Flanagan, *Louis Riel*. (pamphlet).

³¹⁵ Saada, Emmanuele. *Empire's Children: Race, Filiation and Citizenship in the French Colonies*, University of Chicago Press, 2012, 6.

³¹⁶ Bréhier, Louis. “Gesta Dei Per Francos.” In *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 6. New York, New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909.

Mass in Washington D.C, wherein he believed he was the prophet appointed by God to reform Catholicism in North America and lead the Metis into their birthright of political greatness. His friends, believing him crazy, “passed him around from place to place” in New England, and then smuggled him illegally across the border to his aunt and uncle in Montreal, who promptly committed Riel to an insane asylum against his will, under a diagnosis of delusions of grandeur. Flanagan notes that Riel’s friends at the time linked Riel’s increasingly extreme religious beliefs, and possible mental instability, grandiosity and self-abasement to Riel’s disappointment over this failure to secure political support for the Metis cause from conventional channels, and feelings of guilt.³¹⁷ Indeed, Riel’s doctor at the two asylums where he was committed, a Dr. Lachapelle, sympathetically wrote that Riel’s beliefs were the result of “frustrated ambition”, *ambition déçue*.³¹⁸ Riel insisted that he alone was the ‘Prophet of the New World’, a divinely chosen prophet and spiritual leader of the Metis. In Riel’s new religion, the Metis were a holy people, because they had inherited the messianic nationalism of the French-Canadians to evangelize North America for Catholicism, but were also descended from the Indians, America’s original people, descendants of lost Hebrew tribes, and should therefore blend their Catholicism with parts of Jewish Mosaic Law. Riel would found a new church, the Church of the Shining Mountains, with its Holy See at Montreal and St. Vital, his birthplace. He believed that he, like Jesus, would be resurrected to live again on earth after his death.

In this era, the Metis were threatened by the loss of their traditional economy and way of life, and the possible loss of their culture amidst a tide of white settlement. By proclaiming

³¹⁷ Flanagan, Thomas. *Louis ‘David’ Riel: Prophet of the New World*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1979, p. 53.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

the Metis a Chosen People, Riel ennobled them and uplifted their cause, defying those who proclaimed the Indian a dying race, those who sneered at the derisively named “half-breed.” In that sense, Riel’s seemingly eccentric theological beliefs can be read as part of a North American tradition of Native separatist prophecy, from Neolin in the 1700s to Wovoka in the 1880s- a visionary leader determined to lead his people through a challenging present by reinventing the past and promising a glorious future if his people would adhere to a mixture of Christian and traditional beliefs.³¹⁹

Discharged from the suburban Montreal asylum on January 23rd, 1878, more because he had learned to keep his prophetic views private than anything else, Riel ventured to Keeseville, New York with a French Canadian priest who was his friend, Father Fabien Barnabé. Unable to find a job there, and reeling from another failed romance with Evelina Barnabé, the priest’s sister, he ventured west to Pembina, North Dakota and then to St. Peter, in the Sun River district of Montana. While in Montana, he tried to create an alliance of local Indians and Metis to lead an uprising, in order to invade Manitoba and lead a government there. Riel believed that the Metis, multilingual, well-traveled people who were in contact with local tribes and had relatives in many tribes, could potentially be the natural leaders of a pan-Indian uprising against settler-colonial governments. He received support for his cause from Red Stone, the chief of the Assiniboine, but failed to secure support from the Blackfoot, Sioux, or Cree. Riel was unknown to these chiefs- Flanagan also surmises that the chiefs resented the potential of being used as ‘human raw material’³²⁰ for Riel’s Metis political designs.

³¹⁹ Ibid, Flanagan, *Louis Riel*, 13-14.

³²⁰ Thomas Flanagan. *Louis ‘David’ Riel: Prophet of the New World*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996, 134.

Riel also envisioned a potential alliance between French-Canadians, Irish Americans, and Metis that could drive the British-Canadian government out of Manitoba, but this too came to naught. Riel dreamed of a Catholic, democratic nation in Manitoba for all the Catholic Metis from the United States and Canada to settle in, where his messianic Catholicism would be the state religion and he would be president and spiritual leader. European Catholics of many nations would be allowed to immigrate there, and encouraged to intermarry with the Indians, so that this process would create a nation of 'metis of different fatherlands'³²¹, because the Metis were a distinct nationality, the "offspring of New France"³²², equal to the French-Canadians. Riel also attempted to establish a reservation in Montana for the Montana Metis, so they could have land and a place to settle. U.S. Indian agents took a dim view of this, associating the Metis with whisky trading and saying that, as Canadians, Metis were British subjects and therefore foreigners. In Montana, he had a bit of happiness because he met his wife, Marguerite Monet *dit* Bellehumeur, the Metis daughter of a Montana buffalo hunter.

Marguerite Monet *dit* Bellehumeur, in marked contrast to her husband, was strongly culturally Native, or "Indian-like in her ways"³²³, had no western education and could not read or write, perhaps more typical of the ordinary Montana Metis. She spoke only Cree and Michif, no French or English, and was much darker in complexion than her husband. Whites were quick to gossip about the differences of class, education and color between the newlywed Riels, who married "prairie style", without benefit of a priest, in Montana in 1881, a Montana version of marriage *au façon du pays*. Like many couples in marriages *au façon du pays*, Louis and

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 128.

³²² *Ibid.*, 141.

³²³ Harroun Foster, *We Know Who We Are: Métis Identity in a Montana Community*, p. 119.

Marguerite Riel had their union solemnized by a priest later, after the Native-style ceremony³²⁴.

Marguerite had deep kinship ties to the Montana and Pembina Metis, which probably facilitated Louis Riel's settlement among the Montana Metis community at St. Peter. He unsuccessfully tried to get the US government to grant the Metis a reservation in Montana, and equally unsuccessfully tried to convince the Metis and the local Plains Indians to ally and invade western Canada. After the last bison herds gave out, Riel and his family settled down at St. Peter, where he became a schoolteacher to support his family, which eventually included two children, Jean and Marie-Angelique. He also became an American citizen at this time. Teaching Indian children to read and write in a Catholic school was little salve to his poverty, indebtedness, and hoped-for political goals³²⁵.

Gossipy non-Indians commenting on the Riels' marriage did not know that was a quite usual practice, as it had been for centuries, for traders to marry into hunting families with whom they traded. Also, Riel's brother and three of his sisters had already married into the Poitra family, who were the grandchildren of Marguerite Grant and Michel Monet dit Bellehumeur. Marguerite Grant and Michel Monet dit Bellehumeur were probably also the grandparents of Riel's wife, Marguerite Monet dit Bellehumeur, which would mean she was related to the Riels, Poitras, St. Denis and Laverdure clans and many other central Montana Metis and Indian bands, as well as the Manitoba Metis. Riel's marriage reaffirmed the relationship between the two families, as well as more complex geographic and social relationships between all the Metis, despite the differences between husband and wife.³²⁶

³²⁴ Flanagan, *Louis 'David' Riel*, 122.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 139.

³²⁶ Foster, p. 119, 120-121.

“Perhaps already related to the Montana Metis through three of his sisters, who were married to a Parisien (Zastre), a Gladu, and a Lavallée, Riel solidified his bonds to the central Montana families through his own marriage.”³²⁷ Lavallée is also a famous Prairie du Chien Metis name.

Riel got involved in Montana politics, too, where he fought against the sale of liquor to Metis. Metis, considered non-Indian by U.S. law, could legally buy liquor and it could legally be sold to them, unlike other Indians. Riel’s temperance beliefs aligned him with the Montana Republicans, who were the “dry” party, and cost Riel and the Metis the support of Irish-American Democratic voters in Montana, who might have been natural allies due to their shared Catholicism and hatred of the British³²⁸. Riel wanted to organize the Montana Metis into a powerful political bloc, particularly in the areas of Montana where they comprised a majority, and therefore opposed their enrollment as tribal Indians on the Turtle Mountain Reservation, which would deprive them of voting rights and U.S. citizenship.

Most of the Montana Metis differed with Riel on how to organize their community, and wanted to maintain their ties to the Ojibwe communities from North Dakota who lived at Turtle Mountain. Riel’s opposition to Metis enrollment at Turtle Mountain led Foster to dismiss Riel as upper-class and culturally distant from the ordinary buffalo-hunting Metis people, like his wife’s family, who had more direct attachments to an Indian identity³²⁹. Ironically, Riel’s campaigning in Montana reinforced negative perceptions of Metis among Montana’s white settlers, who believed that the Metis were potentially dangerous, dishonest, treacherous, noncitizen

³²⁷ Ibid, Martha Harroun Foster, *We Know Who We Are: Metis Identity in a Montana Community*, 121.

³²⁸ Flanagan, 139.

³²⁹ Foster, *We Know Who We Are*, 169-170.

foreigners associated with the whisky trade, at a time when many Canadian Metis were taking refuge in Montana. Perceptions of Metis foreignness in the United States were rooted in binary views of race and a reluctance to recognize Metis corporate rights. Both the American and Canadian governments were unwilling to admit what the Metis themselves claimed- that the Metis had corporate cross-border hunting rights, economic privileges and land rights as indigenous people because of their indigenous ancestry. Calling the Metis “foreign” on either side of the line served settler-colonial purposes of weakening indigenous land title, securing contested land for settlement, and reinforcing the separation of national borders.

This oversimplified and obscured a far more complex reality- that the Metis and their communities had existed for generations on both sides of a well-traveled, contiguous territory that predated the creation of the U.S.-Canada border, with multiethnic ties to the Cree, Assiniboine, Dakota and Ojibwe tribes. Metis political claims, economies, cultures and societies were “wound around the border”³³⁰, invested in both. U.S. officials mistrusted the Metis because they were convinced that the Metis’ cross-border economy fueled Dakota and Lakota resistance to American expansionism on the Plains. Yet the officials of both countries were still reliant on Metis peoples’ services as diplomats between governments and Indian tribes, and were even reliant on Metis guides in the actual work of mapping, surveying, and separating the U.S.-Canada border.

The U.S. and Canadian governments’ growing racialization of Indian people in the nineteenth century and the rise of “blood quantum” logic, which held that Indian women and their children could be excluded from Indian land and communities if they married non-Indians,

³³⁰ Michel Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line*, 11, 41.

also led to mistrust of the Metis among settlers and lawmakers. Conversations about the race of the Metis, or about their nationality, British, Canadian or American- became conversations about belonging, as Michel Hogue perceptively noted, since perceived national and racial belonging had the power to determine both individual and community rights to own land, to vote, to migrate across borders, and to reconstruct an accustomed communal life³³¹. These political tensions restricted Metis mobility and spilled over into conversations about identity. Lucy Murphy has discussed the racialization and restriction of the Great Lakes Metis identity by U.S. federal censuses of the mid-nineteenth century, wherein anyone not considered “black or mulatto” was simply white by default³³². She also speculates that the enforcement of American marriage law on Indian women and Metis children and the assignation of a white identity to the Metis by the American authorities was a potential attempt to “disengage them legally” from tribes and from being counted as tribal members, and to force land legally out of their hands.³³³ Elizabeth Baird, a nineteenth-century Mackinac Metis woman living in Green Bay, recalled the racial and social tension caused by the Protestant missionaries among the Mackinac Metis of the 1820s and 1830s when Sophia Biddle, a girl from a high-ranking Metis family, attempted to

³³¹ Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line*, 207, 222.

³³² The 1860 census had three categories, white, black or mulatto- Population Schedules of the Eighth Census, 1860 manuscript, Crawford County, WI, microfilm M653, Reel 1402. Metis of mixed indigenous and white ancestry were grouped in with whites, because the politics of the territory needed them as white. See also: “we (I use this word meaning the americans here) had to immagin them to be a white people, their manners were very much in favor under this impression,” John W. Johnson to George C. Sibley, April 28, 1817, Prairie du Chien, Sibley Papers, Missouri Historical Society Collections, St. Louis.

³³³ Murphy, Lucy Eldersveld. “Women, Networks and Colonization in Nineteenth-Century Wisconsin”, in *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility and History*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012, 233.

pass for white. Baird's memoir itself is a fascinating chronicle recording her Metis family's journey toward assimilation, while celebrating its Native heritage and ongoing traditions. Indigenous people and their "sacred traditions" still remained in the Great Lakes and would continue to live and persist, including her own family, as the Ojibwe title of the work makes clear. Baird titled her memoir in Ojibwe as "*O-De-Jit-Wa-Win-Ning*", which Margaret Noodin interpreted to mean "There in the Place of Sacred Tradition", extrapolating it from an Odawa Catholic catechism which reads, using a near-identical phrase, "*Gishpin sa weweni babaamitawang aking odizhitzwaawining, gaagini gaye da-bimaadiziwag gijiibaaminaaning.*" (If we are careful to obey on earth according to sacred tradition, our souls will live forever.)³³⁴

Agatha LaVigne Bailly Biddle's family raised her as a Michigan Odawa like her foremothers. Agatha Biddle's daughter Sophia Biddle, of Mackinac, would be caught up in the turmoil caused by the Protestant mission at Mackinac during the 1820s and 1830s. Baird described it as almost a "religious war"³³⁵ between the Protestants and Catholics, that also had racial undertones, as

³³⁴ Purists will note that I have used a modernized spelling of the Ojibwe. The original nineteenth-century Odawa spelling of the catechism matches exactly the phrase used by Baird—"*kishpin sa weweni babamitawang aking od ijtawawining, kagini gaie ta bimadisiwag ki tchibaminanig.*" From Sifferath, Nicholas Louis., and Frederic Baraga. *A short compendium of the catechism for the Indians : with the approbation of the Rt. Rev. Frederic Baraga, bishop of Saut Sainte Marie, 1864.* Buffalo, N.Y: C. Wieckmann (Aurora Printing House), 1869, page 9, line 2. *Sabin Americana: History of the Americas, 1500-1926* (accessed October 14, 2020). <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CY0102507814/SABN?u=milwaukee&sid=SABN&xid=bf7036ea>.

³³⁵ Baird, Elizabeth T., and State Historical Society of Wisconsin. *Reminiscences of Early Days on Mackinac Island.* Madison: Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Volume 14, 1898, 20. See also Baird, Elizabeth T. *O-De-Jit-Wa-Win-Ning, or Contes du Temps Passe: The Memoirs of Elizabeth T. Baird.* Dennis Fredrick, ed. Green Bay, WI: Heritage Hill Foundation, 1998, 23-25.

the Metis and Indians were Catholics, while incoming white American settlers, including the leaders of the mission, were Protestant. Perhaps the missionaries did not associate their religion explicitly with their whiteness, but some among their students evidently did. Sophia Biddle was, according to Baird, a rich and beautiful girl with many suitors and “fine manners”, and educated in Philadelphia among her father’s relatives, returning to Mackinac sometime in the mid-1840s³³⁶.

Sending fur-trade children to Montreal, the eastern U.S.A., or even to Europe to finish their educations was a long-established custom among the Mackinac Metis of this era. Metis parents did not desire or expect complete assimilation to Anglo-America from their children’s education. They expected their children to learn English and American customs and use them as tools in a multicultural fashion to navigate well in different situations with different people, in an intermediary role, as they themselves had used French customs and language situationally in an earlier time. But for Sophia Biddle, that process was dangerous, ambiguous, and strongly condemned by her friends and family, who did not accept the potential loss her attempt at assimilation represented.

To the sorrow of both her parents, and in the strong opinion of Elizabeth Baird, Sophia Biddle’s education had “proved harmful”: Sophia Biddle, lately of Philadelphia, was now “ashamed of her blood” and did not want strangers to know that her mother, Agatha, was an Indian. Margaret Noodin observed that the dismay Sophia Biddle’s relatives and friends felt at Sophia’s denial of an Odawa identity can be seen as evidence that they were not fully Catholic or assimilated to American capitalism, and that they may have feared for her spiritual welfare in

³³⁶ Ibid, Baird, *O-De-Jit-Wa-Win-Ning*, 23-25.

both a Catholic and Anishinaabeg sense.

Baird is dismissive of Sophia's attempt to pass, calling her a "foolish girl", but then makes the following comment, which I find interesting and revealing. "At this time the Presbyterians felt that Miss Biddle would identify herself with them, as everyone saw she would not walk to church with her mother, and felt confident she would go away entirely from her."³³⁷

To be Metis or Indian in nineteenth-century Mackinac was clearly to be a Roman Catholic, and to be Catholic was to be Indian or Metis. Sophia Biddle's friends, family and neighbors on Mackinac clearly conflated Sophia Biddle's attempt to become Protestant with an attempt to pass for white, and condemned it, and associated her rejection of Catholicism with her attempted rejection of her Indian mother. In any event, Sophia Biddle's attempted racial and religious defection was not tolerated and did not last long. The Catholic faction brought "the best among the priests" to re-convert Sophia Biddle, and "powerful friends"³³⁸, including the famed Madame Marguerite-Magdelaine (other sources say Madeleine) LaFramboise, an independent fur trader and educator, convinced her successfully to reconcile to the Catholic faith, her Metis family, and her accustomed social place on the island. "Madame LaFramboise was one of them who worked hard to win her back."³³⁹ Baird remarked. Baird claimed that Madame LaFramboise sponsored the education of both Sophia Biddle and her mother Agatha.

Madame Madeleine LaFramboise ran her fur-trading business independently after the early death of her husband Joseph LaFramboise, of the famed LaFramboise fur trade family. After her husband Joseph was murdered by Ho-Chunks in a trade dispute, Madeleine acquired

³³⁷ Baird, *O-De-Jit-Wa-Win-Ning*, 24.

³³⁸ Baird, *O-de-jit-wa-win-ning*, 24.

³³⁹ Baird, *O-de-jit-wa-win-ning*, 24-25.

her own trading license and a trading post near present-day Grand Rapids, Michigan, as well as a residence in Mackinac. She became financially successful and accepted the offer of the American Fur Company (AFC) to work for them. Like other fur traders, she extended liquor and credit to her Odawa kin and accepted payment in furs. She accepted treaty and annuity money in payment from Indians, but also received treaty money on her own behalf in the 1833 treaty with the Chippewa³⁴⁰. She drove hard bargains in business but also fed the hungry and gave and received gifts and hospitality, according to Indian custom. Perhaps there's more to the story of Sophia Biddle than Elizabeth Baird has written. After all, Madame Magdelaine/Madeleine Marcot LaFramboise was a close personal friend of Sophia Biddle's grandparents, Joseph and Marie Bailly, and Madame LaFramboise had even adopted Sophia Biddle's aunt, Sophia Bailly³⁴¹, who was most likely Sophia Biddle's namesake. Sophia Bailly was the daughter of Joseph Bailly from his first marriage to Angelique McGulpin (Bead-Way-Way or Mecopemequa/ Bear Woman?), a Scottish-Odawa Metis woman, who divorced him. Alexis Bailly, another child of this marriage, attended boarding school in Montreal and followed in his father's footsteps as a fur trader in Minnesota. Francis, the eldest son of Joseph and Angelique, remained with his mother Angelique and her people after her divorce, and later became a medicine man among the Grand River Odawa.

³⁴⁰ Charles J. Kappler, ed., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, vol. 2. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904, 406. "Schedule 'A' lists Madeleine LaFramboise and her son, Agatha Biddle and her children, and Therese Schlinder, the mother of Elizabeth Baird, all Metis who had been granted cash awards rather than the requested reservation land. This may be somewhat analogous to the Canadian government's process of granting its Metis population 'scrip'- receipts for cash payments in lieu of land.

³⁴¹ Joseph Bailly, Trader of Lake Michigan; Chris Light; Fifth Annual George Rogers Clark Trans Appalachian Frontier History Conference; October 3, 1987, Vincennes University, Vincennes, Indiana, 20-25.

Brenda J. Child has written that traditional Ojibwe culture had high expectations for young girls, particularly at the time of first menses, when they would be secluded and expected to fast for a vision and a spiritual name, usually a traditional Ojibwe name, fed strawberries after their fast, and mentored by their older kinswomen about their duties to the community as adults. How the Biddle family interpreted these customs in the context of their Catholicism is, of course, unknown to the historical record. But Child also explains the significance of the namesake, or *wiiyawen'enyān*, in Ojibwe culture- the namesake created a reciprocal relationship and “spiritual bond” between individuals that was different from family ties to parents, yet somewhat equivalent to them³⁴². The Ojibwe People’s Dictionary defines *wiiyawen'enyān* similarly as a reciprocal relationship between a name-giving sponsor and a child.³⁴³

The Biddle family may have given Sophia Bailly some kind of Catholic godparenting role to Sophia Biddle, to substitute or stand equivalent to the traditional role of *wiiyawen'enyān*. Perhaps Sophia Biddle’s closeness to her namesake aunt and “sponsor”, Sophia Bailly, led her to regard Madeleine LaFramboise even more closely as an adoptive grandmother. Or perhaps her extensive American-style education and upbringing in her father’s family left Sophia Biddle far more westernized than even her own mother, Agatha, and without access to the Ojibwe rituals and ceremonies that would have marked her status as an adult Anishinaabeg woman, leaving Sophia Biddle particularly vulnerable to the confusion inflicted by her education in a different

³⁴² Child, Brenda J. *Holding Our World Together: Ojibwe Women and the Survival of Community*. New York: Penguin Group Publishing, 2012, p. 23-24.

³⁴³ Nichols, John D. (ed). *The Ojibwe People’s Dictionary*. *niiyawen'enh*. <https://ojibwe.lib.umn.edu/main-entry/niiyawen-enh-nad>. University of Minnesota American Indian Studies Department, University of Minnesota Libraries.

atmosphere. Ojibwe kinship networks and communal obligations were at work here, and Magdelaine LaFramboise would have had the authority and status of a grandmother to Sophia Biddle, though Baird does not mention LaFramboise's connection to the family as anything more than an influential friend. As a staunch Catholic educator and catechist, Madame LaFramboise most likely felt a kinship duty to Sophia Biddle to keep her on a Catholic path and mindful of her Indian connections on Mackinac.

In her recounting of the life of Madeleine Bourassa Bertrand, another elite Metis woman of nineteenth-century Michigan, Susan Sleeper-Smith links Mrs. Bertrand's Catholic institution building and philanthropy to Potawatomi political agendas. For the Michigan Potawatomi of the 1800s, like their Odawa and Metis neighbors, Catholicism became linked to persistence and resistance in their traditional homelands against the U.S. government's goals of removal. Well-educated Catholic priests sided with the communities of Potawatomi parishioners against the U.S. government's Indian removal policies, and were successful in securing exemption from removal orders for some Catholic Indians, particularly in the Chicago Treaty of 1832-3. Father Benjamin Marie Petit, a native of Rennes, France, who worked in the Indiana-Michigan border country and arrived there in 1837, was a close associate of the Bertrand family, and preferred the company of his Metis and Indian parishioners, who were fellow Francophones and Catholics, to the society of American settlers, whose morals he condemned. He found Americans to be a materialistic, greedy, racist, acquisitive people with "hearts dry as cork"³⁴⁴, whom he considered less civilized than the Indians. Madeleine Bertrand supplied him with books. He accompanied the Potawatomi who could not avoid removal on

³⁴⁴ Kasper, "Emigrant Metis of Kansas", 204.

their “Trail of Death” when they were rounded up by soldiers and forced out of their homes in Michigan and Indiana to go to Kansas. Father Petit conducted Masses and funerals along the way and attended to those who died in the journey, particularly old people and children.

Therefore, with the aid and sympathy of priests like Petit and community leaders like Madeleine Bertrand, the Potawatomi adapted and many became Catholic converts, in what outsiders perceived as a Catholic revival. In response to their needs, Madeleine Bertrand built St. Mary’s Church in Bertrand, Michigan, just across the river from the newly established University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. She also donated land and a house for a convent and a girl’s school, St. Mary’s Academy, to educate Indian and Metis Catholic women, and recruited the Holy Cross Sisters from Notre Dame to work in Bertrand.

Catholics were already regarded as potentially dangerous, foreign, threatening outsiders by the propagandistic beliefs of 1800s America, but the decision of Catholic clergy to convert, befriend, and advocate for Indians infuriated many white Protestant settlers, who coveted their lands. These angry settlers reacted with a potent mixture of anti-Catholicism and anti-Indianism, which in their minds became conflated, and “angry protests from an assembled mob”³⁴⁵ throughout the 1840s and 1850s forced the relocation of St. Mary’s College to its present South Bend location. Sleeper-Smith argues that Mrs. Bertrand’s actions sprang from indigenous motivations of kinship, gift-giving to establish and maintain social bonds, and communal social obligations, not from any excessive individual piety on Madeleine Bertrand’s part. The evidence suggests that Mrs. Bertrand’s frontier attitude to Catholicism was not excessively strict. “Like many Catholic Potawatomi, she was not a devout Catholic” but donated

³⁴⁵ Susan Sleeper Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*, 110.

land and money to construct Catholic institutions for the use of the Michigan Potawatomi and other Native people. Madeleine Bertrand felt the need to “thwart forced removal” and “preserve Indian culture”, rather than radically transform that culture.³⁴⁶ The Bertrand family eventually went with the other Potawatomi to Kansas, too.

Sophia Biddle fell sick shortly after her reconciliation to Catholicism, dying on July 9th, 1848 at the age of 28 on Mackinac after a two-year struggle with consumption³⁴⁷. Her parents and both her siblings outlived her. But her kinship ties had reaffirmed Sophia Biddle as a daughter of the country in the Mackinac fur trade. Anishinaabe and Metis individuals had the capacity, not only to blend cultures and kinship systems, but to utilize both patrilineal and matrilineal kinship systems at the same time. The Potawatomi, for instance, had a patrilineal clan system, in which children belonged to their father’s clans, but each child was also a member of the maternal grandfather’s line.³⁴⁸ This rootedness in kinship, somewhat paradoxically, meant that the Metis could use kinship to orient themselves in lifestyles that were geographically mobile and socioeconomically mobile, with the inherent capability to pursue various means of livelihood, as well as “mobility and alliances in family connections.”³⁴⁹ Brown speculates that this fluidity of social organization among the Anishinaabeg kinship systems was related to their need to form connections across geographic distance in a migratory, mobile lifestyle and the seasonal round of hunting, fishing, berrying, wild-rice

³⁴⁶ Ibid, Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*, 108-109.

³⁴⁷ Baird, *O-de-Jit-Wa-Win-Ning*, 25.

³⁴⁸ Kasper, *The Emigrant Metis of Kansas*, 42, quoting Clifton.

³⁴⁹ Ibid, St. Onge and Podruchny, “Scuttling Along a Spider’s Web: Mobility and Kinship in Metis Ethnogenesis.” In *Contours of a People*.

harvesting and sugar-bushing, the making of maple syrup and maple sugar..³⁵⁰ The fluidity of kinship systems also meant that outsiders could be incorporated relatively easily, and a distinctive Metis identity could emerge without necessarily subtracting its relationship to Anishinaabeg clans, bands, and families. Some British authorities raised the legal argument that the Canadian Metis of Manitoba inherited legal rights as Indians to land and tribal membership from their Indian mothers, since as illegitimates by British law they mostly could not inherit the status of their European fathers³⁵¹.

The Manitoba Metis felt similar tensions to their Michigan cousins as they coped with land loss, racism, and the failure of their political aspirations. Many followed Riel's example and headed elsewhere, some also going to Montana or North Dakota and others venturing into Saskatchewan. They were squeezed by an increasing pressure of white settlement and pressured to give up their lands for "scrip", or certificates promising one-time cash payment, and many were defrauded by land speculators. The Canadian government did not recognize Metis land use as "settlement" due to the fact that, like the American Metis, very few of them engaged in European-style commercial farming. The migration of Manitoba Metis to Saskatchewan accelerated in the 1880s after the extinction of the bison, the decline of the fur trade, and the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway altered traditional lifestyles and led to the community's growing impoverishment and land loss. They were urged by the Canadian

³⁵⁰ Ens, Gerhard J. "The Battle of Seven Oaks and the Articulation of a Metis National Tradition, 1811-1849", 102. In *Contours of a People*.

³⁵¹ Brown, Jennifer S.H. "Women as Centre and Symbol in the Emergence of Métis Communities." 65-76. In *Native Women's History in Eastern North America before 1900: A Guide to Research and Writing*. Edited by Rebecca Kugel and Lucy Eldersveld Murphy. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007

government to pursue an agricultural lifestyle, but had no lands to use for agriculture and little success in establishing land claims³⁵². Indians, after the demise of the buffalo, were also unprepared to farm and were reduced to the despair of poverty and government rations. Liberal whites, particularly farmers who suffered from poor harvests and low grain prices, and who resented the Canadian Pacific Railway and the high-handed inattentiveness of the Canadian government to their own concerns, saw themselves as allies of Riel and the Metis.

Therefore, the Red River and Saskatchewan Metis went to St. Peter, in the Sun River district of Montana, and fetched back Louis Riel, still a wanted man in Manitoba. Among the men were Gabriel Dumont, the leader of the Saskatchewan Metis, Moise Ouelette, Michel Dumas and James Isbister. Riel wanted a “second provisional government”³⁵³ led by the Metis, with himself and Gabriel Dumont at the head, and threatened to block the railway’s construction unless Metis demands were met. These demands encompassed land rights, including a two-million-acre land trust, territorial self-government, political representation for the Metis and preferential consideration for Metis in seeking Canadian government jobs.

Riel wanted the Red River Metis to have land title, home rule, and financial compensation for the failure of the earlier Manitoba Act to accommodate the political requests of the Metis. The government of Canada had no intention of meeting these demands and deliberately stalled them. Sprague claims that the Canadian government held the question of Metis land title in “administrative limbo”³⁵⁴ while its desirable British settlers rushed into Manitoba. Part of this was also related to Canada’s racism about Metis status. If the Canadian

³⁵² D.N. Sprague, *Canada and the Metis*, 138-140.

³⁵³ Sprague, 163.

³⁵⁴ Sprague. *Canada and the Metis*, 182.

government deemed the Metis legally Indian, the Metis had some kind of right to Indian or aboriginal land title, and if the government deemed them legally *not* Indian, then they were settlers and could claim title to their land as settlers, though even then, whites were clearly the preferred settlers and no substantial effort was ever made by the Canadian government to recognize Metis land title of any kind in Saskatchewan. Interestingly, even their detractors observed that the Metis had a political temperament “like Indians”³⁵⁵ because the Metis worked better collectively than individually. Still, Riel’s fervently Catholic movement failed to gain any widespread support from the Plains Indians, from the hoped-for American government, or even from other Metis communities, particularly the English half-breeds. Many of the Catholic Metis also balked at the messianic, millenarian revisionism of Riel’s new religion and insisted that the rebellion was only for their political and economic rights. Canada sent troops in 1885 to crush the Metis rebellion, using the newly expanding rail to transport them. Riel led his men in Catholic prayers and the saying of the rosary, and encouraged them to carry banners of Christ and Our Lady of Lourdes into battle. The Canadian government lost six men at the final battle of Batoche: Riel’s men lost twelve Metis soldiers and an undetermined number of Indians. Facing the death penalty, Riel publicly recanted his theological views to receive the Catholic sacraments. The Canadian Pacific railway was completed soon after Riel’s death. “Few people... knew how closely the Metis loss had been joined to the railway’s gain.” Sprague observed poignantly³⁵⁶. The Canadian government simply could not accept any form of Metis political control or land title in Manitoba, nor elsewhere in Canada. After 1885, Metis people

³⁵⁵ Sprague, 172.

³⁵⁶ Sprague, *Canada and the Metis*, 177.

themselves stopped wearing the traditionally lavish Metis fashions of brightly colored trade cloth and silver jewelry. Instead, they donned unadorned clothing of more somber brown, black and gray hues. This fashion shift was no doubt connected to their growing poverty from land loss and the pushing-aside of their traditional economic activities and roles. But Racette also suggested perceptively that the shift to unadorned brown or black clothing after 1885 represented that the Metis were in a kind of collective mourning for the loss of Riel and the destruction of the political hope he had represented³⁵⁷. Perhaps it was also physically dangerous to wear brightly beaded, multicolored, flashy clothing that publicly identified the wearer as a proud Metis after the execution of Riel.

At the beginning of the century in the United States, however, these developments were unforeseen. Their cultural and demographic dominance was unchallenged, and the force of their centuries-old customs had the power to set the cultural terms for outsiders who wished to participate in their society. Jacqueline Peterson has made the valid observation that the fur-trade economy was still extractive colonialism, and transitory by its very nature, never intended to last. She also believes that the traditional Metis and fur-trade preference for exogamy to other Europeans or Indians actually weakened any sense of ethnic solidarity among the Great Lakes Metis, such as would develop among their cousins in Manitoba³⁵⁸. The fur-trade was an outgrowth of colonialism and a blatantly extractive one, whose economic homogeneity proved its undoing, and the people involved in it inevitably saw their political and social fortunes decline as their economic ones did. But the fur trade fostered unique and mostly harmonious

³⁵⁷ Ibid., Farrell Racette, Sherry. "Sewing Ourselves Together", 119-120.

³⁵⁸ Ibid, Peterson, Jacqueline. "Red River Redux", in *Contours of a People*, 25-26.

relationships between people of different races

In the 1700s and in the 1800s prior to the War of 1812, despite a growing American military presence on the Great Lakes, the Metis could still wield power and make a living in the ways they always had, and were relatively untroubled by American government and American racism. Secure in their cultural identity, they also did not feel, as yet, any pressing need to learn the English language, nor to become and declare themselves American citizens. That would all change radically. After the War of 1812, the Metis of the American Great Lakes would be confronted by a flood of European and Euro-American settlement that made them minorities in their homelands, federal Indian removal policies that relocated their Indian family members, and an Anglo-American racism that regarded interracial marriage as bizarre, considered mixed-race people degenerate, and relegated people of color, Indians and Metis people to an inferior, subordinate status. Jacksonian democracy sought civic equality and land ownership for white men, but increasingly marginalized or truncated the economic and civic rights of all non-white people and excluded Indians. The newly powerful American and Canadian settler states were increasingly intolerant of Metis people's multiple identities, and demanded that they choose only one type of allegiance. Would their citizenship be declared as American or Canadian? Would they be Indian and migrate west with their Indian kin, would they go into Canada or deeper into the American West to maintain Metis identity within communities of their own people, or would they choose to be legally 'white' and assimilate to the dominant society? The impact of these wrenching social, political and demographic changes was only compounded by the Metis community's economic woes in the wake of the fur trade's decline. Yet all was not lost, despite these trying circumstances.

The American government, triumphantly powerful after the War of 1812, but still insecure in its hold on the Northwest, needed Metis people on its side to help govern and rule the relatively new territories, hence offering Metis men and their families the status of legally white citizens, including rights to vote, serve on juries, and hold title to their land. This offer and status, according to available evidence, were unique to Great Lakes Metis. The Canadian government extended no such offer to its Metis population, the cousins and relatives of American Metis families, and politicized Canadian Metis people into two armed rebellions and a recognition of their own distinct status. Oregon refused to allow its “French-Indian” people or “half-breed” Indians the right to vote. South Dakota officials briefly entertained the idea of extending the voting franchise to “half-breeds” who were English speaking and literate, but quickly vetoed the idea, because they realized that if they did so, the “half-breeds” would outvote everyone else in the state due to sheer numbers.³⁵⁹

Many American Metis survived through assimilation, hiding in plain sight, and simply being discreet about their indigenous heritage. White pioneers and their descendants contributed to indigenous and Metis historical erasure by creating and popularizing a white frontier narrative that ignored Great Lakes history of racial mixture and peaceful coexistence with Indians. They were unwittingly helped in this endeavor by some descendants of Metis and Indians themselves, who, perhaps tragically, sought to protect their own status and pass for white by rewriting their history and heritage and embracing the white pioneer image.

³⁵⁹ “The bill provided that all mixed bloods who could read, write or speak the English language should be entitled to the right of citizenship. Under this act the half-breeds would have outvoted all the rest of the territory.” Armstrong, Moses Kimball. *The Early Empire Builders of the Great West*. Saint Paul, MN: E.W. Porter, 1901, 74.

In 1800, no such stratagem of dissembling, assimilation or hiding was necessary for the Metis yet, because Milwaukee was still a small trading post in Indian country, dominated by the Vieau and LaFramboise families, a French-speaking place numerically and culturally controlled by Metis and Indians. Fur-trading was still the primary economic activity and the few European, Euro-American and African-American men were Francophone fur traders married to Indian women and raising large metis families. In 1800, Chicago was likewise a small community of Francophone metis and fur traders, although Chicago would come under American political and military control far sooner than Milwaukee and its environs. Chicago became an American possession under the terms of the 1795 Greenville Treaty, and a potentially volatile place.

The provisions of the 1794 Jay Treaty also required Great Lakes residents to declare themselves as British or American subjects. Those who publicly declared continued loyalty to Britain would retain British citizenship, and most who took that step chose to relocate to Canada. Those who did not publicly declare themselves British, including Scottish-Canadian fur trader John Kinzie, were simply assigned American citizenship after one year. John Kinzie, who had previously traded at Detroit, in other parts of Michigan, and at the Miami village of Kekionga in Indiana, moved west to Chicago by the early 1800s to serve the interests of his employer. William Burnett, Kinzie's employer, was a successful trader who lived at St. Joseph, Michigan, with his wife Kakima (possibly related to *gimikan*, to sneak up on people, more poetically translated as 'she steals away', and could also be related to *gaagaagi*, raven,³⁶⁰ a St. Joseph Potawatomi woman. Kakima Burnett, the daughter of the formerly pro-French (later pro-British) chief Nanaquiba, was a baptized Catholic, whose baptismal name was Angelique.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., Ojibwe People's Dictionary.

William Burnett, a New-Jersey-born Yankee of Scottish ancestry, replaced fur trader Louis Chevalier at St. Joseph following the British political ascendancy of the region. Called 'White Swan' by the Potawatomi, Burnett was one of only seven British-surnamed fur traders when he arrived in the region. Burnett, a wealthy man, traded furs and agricultural products produced, secured or processed by Kakima. Women like Kakima often navigated tense and divided loyalties, not just between opposing political factions, but between family members. Her husband, William Burnett, and her brother Topenabe were pro-American in the War of 1812, while another of her brothers, Chebass or Chebanse, was militantly pro-British, and her other brother, Pokagon, stayed neutral in the conflict.³⁶¹ Kakima and William Burnett's son, Abraham or Abram Burnett Sr., adopted an orphaned Potawatomi boy whose grandfather was Kakima's brother Chebanse- the boy was christened Abram Burnett Jr. in honor of his great-uncle and foster-father. Kakima, by continuing to supply trade goods to all of her brothers and their villages, regardless of their political affiliations, contributed to Potawatomi economic stability and helped her people avoid the potential pitfalls of being too closely associated with either the Americans or the British in the conflict.³⁶² Kakima Burnett managed her husband's trading business while he was away traveling, farmed corn, wheat, and stone fruit orchards to supply food for the trade, and made and sold maple sugar³⁶³. Jean Baptiste Point DuSable, John Kinzie, and a French-Canadian named Jean La Lime were all employees of William Burnett in Chicago, and regular visitors to his house in St. Joseph. All, except Kinzie, were married to Potawatomi women. Jean La Lime and his wife, Nokenoqua, began trading for Kinzie in the mid-

³⁶¹ Kasper, *Emigrant Metis of Kansas*, 131.

³⁶² Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*, 90.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, Keating, *Rising Up from Indian Country*, 28.

1780s, about the same time as De Sable, and was literate and fluent in English, French, and several Algonquian languages.

Keating links Jean Baptiste Point DuSable's departure from Chicago in 1800 to his discomfort with the political volatility stirred up by increased American presence in the area, and contention between the English, Spanish, Americans and various tribes, as well as the death of DuSable's wife and daughter prior to 1800. In addition to the grief de Sable undoubtedly felt, it was economically "difficult, if not impossible" to run a fur trade post without the presence of his wife and daughter, whose labor and whose kin connections to local tribes had been essential. When Point DuSable sold all his property at Chicago, his employer William Burnett funded the sale, though the formal purchaser of the property was listed as Jean La Lime.³⁶⁴

Kinzie served as a witness to the sale of the property. One more link connects Kinzie and La Lime: Kinzie would later kill La Lime in a heated dispute under mysterious circumstances, and make him the first murder victim in Chicago's history. Jean La Lime's murder is an event discussed later in this chapter, within the contexts of the rising tensions between the staunchly pro-British Kinzie and staunchly pro-American Burnett. DuSable moved to St. Charles, Missouri, to be near his remaining family members, where he died in relative obscurity some years later. DuSable's departure from Chicago was the end of an era. Whether he was called pioneer, settler, founder or trader, DuSable began the community of Chicago, and for me, his decision to leave Chicago marked the end of an era, and the first step in Chicago's transformation from a Metis fur-trade village into an American city.

³⁶⁴ Ibid, Keating, 47.

Many metis families with roots in Milwaukee traveled and migrated frequently between Chicago and Milwaukee, including the daughters of Jean-Baptiste Mirandeu and his Indian wife, variously remembered as Odawa, Potawatomi, or as an Ojibwe Metis- the Mirandeu daughters served as house servants for the Kinzies and Ouilmettes in Chicago, and would witness the murder of Jean La Lime. Rosholt suggests that the Juneau family and other Milwaukee Catholic families would frequently travel “by lake boat” to have their children baptized or to consecrate marriages in Chicago.³⁶⁵ The first Catholic priest to be permanently appointed to serve in Chicago, and to reside in Chicago, was a young Frenchman, Father John Mary Irenaeus St. Cyr. And indeed, Father St. Cyr wrote of giving communion to “Mrs. Juneau Solomon”³⁶⁶ upon arriving in Chicago.

Father St. Cyr, called up to Chicago in 1833 from St. Louis by order of his bishop, was a new immigrant to the United States, born in the village of Quincié, France, near Lyons, now called Quincié-en-Beaujolais to distinguish it from similarly named villages. He had arrived in St. Louis from his native country in 1831, finished his seminary training in Missouri, and was newly ordained to the priesthood in April of 1833 when he was sent to his assignment in Chicago twelve days later. The fact that Father St. Cyr was summoned to Chicago at all seems to have been the doing of prominent Chicago Metis families, particularly the Beaubien family. In the 1833 petition of Chicago Catholics to St. Louis Bishop Joseph Rosati, written in French, in which they described themselves, truthfully but somewhat obliquely, as “families of French descent”,

³⁶⁵ Rosholt, Malcolm and Monsignor John Britten Gehl. *Florimond J. Bonduel: Missionary to Wisconsin Territory*. Amherst, Wisconsin: Palmer Publications, Inc., 1976, p. 37.

³⁶⁶ Letters of Father John Mary Irenaeus St. Cyr, Chancery Office, Archdiocese of St. Louis.

many Metis family names were listed as signatories. Among them were Jean-Baptiste Beaubien, his brother Mark Beaubien, Billy Caldwell, Joseph, Alexis and Claude LaFramboise, Pierre Leclerc, Antoine Ouilmette, married to Archange Chevalier Ouilmette, Jean Porthier, Leon Bourassa, “Louis Chevalier and family”³⁶⁷, which surely included Archange, and several other French and Metis names. Jean Baptiste Beaubien contributed land for the site of a church, and the families took up a collection to raise funds for a church to be built.

The 1833 Treaty of Chicago acknowledged that Joseph LaFramboise and Billy Caldwell were “principal men” among the Potawatomi.³⁶⁸ Thus, we can truthfully say that Catholicism in Chicago, as elsewhere in the Great Lakes and Midwest, had a Metis foundation. On the day of the treaty, Father St. Cyr conducted Mass for the Indians and Metis of Chicago, as well as those of Mackinac, St. Joseph and Green Bay, who also attended. Although the congregation mainly sang French hymns, Father St. Cyr observed that “the Indians sang the Credo in their own language.”³⁶⁹

Father St. Cyr, who generally preached sermons both in French and English, noted that his new Chicago parishioners attended Mass regularly and were quick to assist him in his duties, and was impressed by the fervent piety and prayers of Potawatomi and Metis Catholics he met, but complained that they seemed “entirely without knowledge of the duties of religion.” Father St. Cyr was often unable to conduct daily Mass and the “duties of religion” himself, because of the lack of supplies such as wine, candles and devotional books. Father St. Cyr also complained

³⁶⁷ “Early Catholicity in Chicago, 1673-1843.” Rev. Garraghan, Gilbert J. *Illinois Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 1, Number 2. Chicago: Illinois Catholic Historical Society, 1918, 147-149.

³⁶⁸ Chicago Treaty of 1833- http://www.kansasheritage.org/PBP/books/treaties/t_1833.html

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, Garraghan, “Early Catholicity in Chicago.” 147-150.

of the general lack of money at his new posting, although he borrowed some from “Mr. Beaubien, who shows me every kindness imaginable.” George Beaubien, son of Mark and Monique Beaubien, and Robert Jerome Beaubien, son of Jean-Baptiste Beaubien and Joseph LaFramboise Beaubien, would be among the first babies baptized in the new church, and the priest stayed at Mark Beaubien’s hotel while the church was being built. The new church, St. Mary’s, was built on Beaubien land in October 1833 on Lake Street, west of State Street, by Augustine Deodat Taylor, a Connecticut Yankee from Hartford who came west and was an adult convert to Catholicism. His brother, Francis H. Taylor, also a Catholic convert, carried the Chicago Catholic petition for a priest to St. Louis and brought Father St. Cyr to Chicago from that city. The Taylor family, likewise newly arrived in 1833 Chicago, were among the few American Catholics in the town at that time who were not French, Indian or Metis.

“Indian women” swept and cleaned the new church for its first service, attended by Catholic Indians from South Bend who had come to Chicago to collect annuity payments.³⁷⁰ Perhaps Father St. Cyr was simply fussy and stringent in his observation of the Metis and Indian families’ Catholicity. Perhaps he was reacting negatively to the “frontier”, indigenized aspects of their faith. Or perhaps the Indian and Metis Catholics’ request for a priest was also linked to their political desire to appear “civilized” and avoid removal from their lands, forcible conversion to Protestantism, and forced Americanization and cultural loss..

The LaFramboise family also was variously based in both cities. Francois and Alexis LaFramboise were trading in Milwaukee as early as the 1790s. Keating and Andreas speculate

³⁷⁰ Garraghan, Father Gilbert Joseph. *The Catholic Church in Chicago, 1673-1871: An Historical Sketch*. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1921, p. 58.

on the precise parentage and genealogy of Josette LaFramboise Beaubien, whose parents were Francois LaFramboise and Shawenoqua LaFramboise. Shawenoqua was a female relative, either a daughter or sister, of the Odawa leader Shabbona, whose wife was Potawatomi and whose village was south of present-day Chicago. Josette LaFramboise's father may have been the original Francois LaFramboise who, with his brother Alexis, began trading at Milwaukee as early as the 1790s, or more likely may have been a namesake son of that original Francois LaFramboise, the ill-fated husband of Madame Madeleine Marcot LaFramboise. Madeleine LaFramboise is also remembered as Shawenoqua (Southern Woman) so perhaps more Ojibwe namesake and kin practices were in play.

The Chicago LaFramboises were from Milwaukee, and traveled and lived between Milwaukee and Chicago. They lived at Hardscrabble, modern Bridgeport, near the Chicago River, and joined a growing metis community anchored by the presence of the newly constructed Fort Dearborn, built in 1803, and a federal Indian agency. In an article on the Beaubien family, the Citizen Potawatomi band states that Joseph and Francois LaFramboise were some of the first voters in Chicago³⁷¹. Kasper specifies that three-fourths of the votes in Chicago's first election were cast by Indians or Metis, including the LaFramboises, Bourassas, Ouilmettes, Beaubiens, Caldwells and Robinsons.³⁷² Joseph's daughter, Theresa LaFramboise, first married Allen Hardin, and divorced him. Her second marriage was to Thomas Watkins, Chicago's first postmaster, in a famous and lavish wedding where "everyone who was anyone" in Chicago attended. Jacqueline Peterson vividly described this wide-open wedding as an event

³⁷¹ "Beaubien Family History." Citizen Potawatomi Band. October 8, 2020.

<https://www.potawatomi.org/beaubien-family-history/>

³⁷² Kasper, "Emigrant Metis of Kansas", 169.

where the new Eastern settlers were painted, dressed, and dancing like Indians, and Metis women in “black stroud and beaded leggings”³⁷³ jigged with Irish laborers. The wedding was the last such event of its kind, as racial and social divisions in Chicago hardened. Theresa would later divorce Watkins, and would go on to marry her metis cousin, Madore Beaubien, becoming the second LaFramboise woman to wed a Beaubien man. Her children were Mary, Therese and Peter Hardin, Madaline, Joseph and Louisa Watkins, and Phillip, John Baptiste, Julia, Rose, George, Peter, and Rose Ann Beaubien.³⁷⁴

But Josette LaFramboise, Francois’s daughter, was not Jean-Baptiste Beaubien’s first wife, either. Jean-Baptiste Beaubien was born in Detroit as a member of the prominent Beaubien family of French Canadian fur traders. His father Joseph Beaubien, a trader, moved from Detroit to “Frenchtown” on the River Raisin (present-day Monroe, Michigan) where the Beaubiens married into the Metis families of “Trembley, Nadeau, LaFramboise and Navarre.”³⁷⁵ Jean-Baptiste Beaubien served as an apprentice in the fur trade in the household of Joseph Bailly at Bailly’s trading post in Grand River, Michigan. There, he also acquired the rudiments of an education, learned Odawa and Potawatomi, and learned to read and write. Andreas reports that Jean-Baptiste Beaubien had a trading house at Milwaukee as early as 1800³⁷⁶, alongside other early traders there like the Laframboise family and Antoine LeClair, and expanded to Mackinac and Chicago soon after.

³⁷³ Peterson, Jacqueline. “Goodbye, Madore Beaubien: The Americanization of Early Chicago Society.” *Chicago History: The Magazine of the Chicago Historical Society*. Summer 1980, Volume IX, Number 2, 110.

³⁷⁴ “Beaubien Family History.” Citizen Potawatomi Nation. Citizen Potawatomi Nation Public Information Office. October 8, 2020.

³⁷⁵ Kasper, “Emigrant Metis of Kansas”, p. 164.

³⁷⁶ Andreas, *History of Chicago*, Volume 1, p. 84.

Alexander Robinson, Bailly's other fur trade apprentice, was born in Mackinac of a Scottish fur-trader father and an Odawa-Metis mother, kin to Potawatomi chiefs. Unlike Beaubien, Robinson never learned to read and write, but was a skilled polyglot fluent in English, French, Odawa, Ojibwe, and Potawatomi³⁷⁷. Jean-Baptiste Beaubien came to Chicago, probably to represent the "staunchly pro-British"³⁷⁸ Bailly's interests, and married his first wife there in 1804. His brother, Mark Beaubien, arrived with his sister-in-law, Monica Nadeau Beaubien (of the French-Potawatomi Nadeaus) and founded a famous hotel and tavern, the Sauganash, where he often played his violin to entertain customers and where whisky brought his diverse customers together in fellowship³⁷⁹.

Jean-Baptiste Beaubien's first wife was most likely a Grand River Odawa woman and died in 1806 after giving birth to a daughter, Marie Beaubien³⁸⁰. In 1807 he married his second wife, Mah-naw-bun-no-quah, who was Odawa and Potawatomi³⁸¹. Her name could either translate as "Beautiful Dawn Woman", "Good Woman of the East", or "Woman Who Sees Well." Their first son, Charles Henry Beaubien, was born in Chicago in 1807, while their second son, Medard Benjamin Beaubien, was born at the Grand River trading post but lived most of his life in Chicago, where he was nicknamed and known as "Madore", meaning "Adore me!"³⁸² and widely reputed to be Chicago's handsomest man, a devilish charmer who looked dashing in any garb, whether it was a black tie or feathered and beaded fur-trade clothing.

³⁷⁷ Keating, *Rising Up from Indian Country*, 68.

³⁷⁸ Keating, 67.

³⁷⁹ Jacqueline Peterson. "Goodbye, Madore Beaubien: the Americanization of Early Chicago Society." 100-101.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Peterson, "Goodbye, Madore Beaubien", 107.

Josette LaFramboise and Jean-Baptiste Beaubien wed at Mackinac in 1812 and returned to Chicago, where both were living. Together they had 11 children, George, Susan, Monique, Julie, Alexander, Ellen, Phillip, Henry, Marie, Margaret, Caroline and William. Alexander Robinson married Catherine Chevalier, the sister of Archange Chevalier Ouilmette and Sheshi Chevalier Buisson, joining a local trade network on the south side of Chicago anchored by the three Potawatomi metis Chevalier women³⁸³.

The tensions of the War of 1812 compelled Josette LaFramboise Beaubien, Jean-Baptiste Beaubien, and the Mirandea family to return to Milwaukee to avoid unrest in Chicago, which culminated in the Fort Dearborn Massacre of 1812, when pro-British Potawatomi and their Indian allies stormed the fort, killed its inhabitants and left much of early Chicago in ruins. No one except Alexander Robinson and the Ouilmette family stayed in Chicago, to greet the soldiers and settlers when they returned in 1816. Kasper speculates that the Robinsons and Ouilmettes likely were saved from being killed or harmed in the massacre by their family connections to the local Odawa and Potawatomi people³⁸⁴.

Jean La Lime and John Kinzie came to blows, and Kinzie stabbed or shot La Lime. Nokenoqua La Lime was a witness to her husband's murder, screaming aloud in horror at the wounds Kinzie inflicted on her husband's body. She was left to raise their young son, but later remarried to a member of the Burnett family, her husband's former employers, which means that Nokenoqua La Lime may also have been a relative of Burnett's Potawatomi wife, Kakima Burnett. The motives for Kinzie's murder of La Lime remained obscure: Keating speculates that

³⁸³ Keating, 205.

³⁸⁴ Kasper, "Emigrant Metis of Kansas", 173.

it was related to tensions between the pro-American La Lime, who worked for the U.S. government at Fort Dearborn and the federal Indian agency of Chicago as an interpreter and trader, and Kinzie, who had ties to Canada and Britain³⁸⁵. Their enmity might have been related to the economic competition between the two men, to long-simmering personality conflicts between them, or simply to the fact that Kinzie was a violent and volatile man.

Like the other families who fled to Milwaukee for safety in 1812, Kinzie fled there as a fugitive, finding refuge among pro-British Potawatomi³⁸⁶. Hoping to avoid conflict, he, Antoine LeClair, William Forsyth (Kinzie's brother and fellow trader) and Billy Caldwell presented themselves as British sympathizers, gathered information on British and Indian activities, and then reported their information to the American government, acting as double agent spies in hope of minimizing war and violence. Billy Caldwell was a half-Mohawk, half-English fur trader married to a Potawatomi wife, La Nanette, who was related to the leaders of Potawatomi bands on the Illinois River. The Potawatomi called Billy Caldwell Sauganash, meaning "Englishman" or Canadian, and valued his input as a leader. The four traders, in becoming double or triple agents and passing intelligence on the British and Indians to American authorities, may have allied themselves with Potawatomi who were moderate and wanted to remain neutral in the conflict between the Americans, the British, and the local tribes.

In 1817, after the rebuilding of Fort Dearborn, Jean Baptiste Beaubien returned to Chicago from Milwaukee with Josette and his family, and bought a house in Chicago. In the fall of 1818, The American Fur Company appointed Jean-Baptiste Beaubien its agent in Chicago. He

³⁸⁵ Keating 116, 118-119.

³⁸⁶ Keating 126-127.

built a small trading house near his residence, at the corner of modern Wacker Drive and Michigan Avenue.³⁸⁷ He also kept a trading-house in Milwaukee until 1818,³⁸⁸ and in his travels would surely have known not only his LaFramboise in-laws, but other Milwaukee metis traders like the Vieau, Juneau and Le Clair families. John Kinzie died in the home of Jean-Baptiste and Josette Beaubien in Chicago- his rival in life was now a companion to him in his final moments.

Madore Beaubien, the half-Odawa son of Jean Baptiste, received a college education in upstate New York, while his brother Charles graduated from Princeton, although Jacqueline Peterson suggests that the paternalistic attitude evinced toward Madore and Charles in the eastern schools may have actually solidified their personal self-identity as Indians³⁸⁹. The wealthy Beaubiens gave and attended dances, built a store in Chicago, invested in Chicago real estate, organized, funded, and donated land for Chicago's first Catholic church, and sat on the town's board of trustees³⁹⁰.

The Beaubien family, like many Metis, also played politically important roles in Indian tribal councils as the Indian removal era of the 1830s heated up. Many important Metis families received land and money as a result of their arbitration of various treaties, including the 1833 Treaty of Chicago, which contained exemptions to removal and individual land parcels or cash annuities for Catholic Metis and Indians. Charles and Madore Beaubien, Pierre Le Clerc, the Madeleine and Joseph Bertrand family, Joseph, Jacques, Louis and Josette Vieux, Joseph, Mark, Jude, Therese, and Daniel Bourassa, Joseph and Alexis LaFramboise and their families, the

³⁸⁷ Andreas, *History of Chicago*, 85.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 84.

³⁸⁹ Peterson, "Goodbye Madore Beaubien", 108.

³⁹⁰ Peterson, 109.

Bourbonnais, Wilmette, Chevalier, Rice and Burnett families all received money, land, or both under the treaty terms.³⁹¹

The role of the Metis in treaty talks has given them something of an ambivalent historical image among historians aligned with traditionalist Indians, like Clifton. These scholars view the Metis as turncoats or sellouts, promoters of tribal political factionalism, the architects of shady dealings for their own personal enrichment, or otherwise the representatives of colonialism. Clifton harshly viewed them as a “marginal” race of “parasites” and “interlopers”³⁹² who selfishly promoted their own interest at the expense of traditionalist Potawatomi. Vine Deloria Jr. and Kasper, while not denying the sometimes underhanded behavior of the Metis, view Clifton’s bias as rooted in his dislike of Metis engagement with European and Euro-American cultures and peoples, and his investment in a romanticized, essentialist view of Potawatomi traditionalism that vituperates the Metis for their attempt to survive and prosper in colonial society. Kasper sees them as an “adaptable”³⁹³ people who used the business skills they had honed in the fur trade to survive, people who were tribal members just as subject to Anglo-American racism and Indian removal policies as their full-blood Indian family members.

Madore Beaubien was also weighing his options as the removal era gained momentum. By the mid-1830s, Madore Beaubien was deeply in debt. His first marriage, to a white woman, Mary Boyer, had ended in divorce, with Mary keeping George, Emma and Susan, their children. Madore, like many of Chicago’s French-Indian families, was watching his Potawatomi kin be

³⁹¹ Kasper, *The Emigrant Metis of Kansas*, 125-6.

³⁹² Ibid, 27-28, citing Clifton, *The Prairie People*.

³⁹³ Kasper, “Emigrant Metis of Kansas”, 402, 437.

forced west by federal Indian removal policies, and considered his options. By 1840, he had chosen to go west with the Potawatomi to Council Bluffs, Iowa, finding work as an interpreter, and then to Silver Lake, Kansas on the Potawatomi reserve there, where he married his cousin Theresa LaFramboise. This westward migration to Kansas was a trek followed by many of the Great Lakes metis families, including the Bourassas, Bertrands, Vieaus, LaFramboises, Ogees and Bourbonnais.³⁹⁴

The deep political split between traditionalist Potawatomi of the Prairie Band, and the Christian Potawatomi of the Mission and Citizen Bands, has been blamed by Clifton on the Metis, but according to Kasper was a function of geography. Michigan and Indiana Potawatomi were exposed to the influence of settlers earlier than were the Wisconsin-Illinois Potawatomi. Potawatomi stories hold that Silver Lake was named after a dog called Silver, owned by Joseph LaFramboise. In 1854, Madore built a house and store there, where the Butterfield stagecoach route stopped, and was the original owner of the land on which Silver Lake was eventually built in the 1860s, and he named the streets Madore, Beaubien, Theresa and Potawatomie.³⁹⁵ Madore's descendants also accompanied the Potawatomi on their journey even further westward to Oklahoma, as members of the Citizen Band. Kasper and Young describe Metis families as so instrumental to the founding of the Citizen Band of Potawatomi that the Citizen Band itself was essentially Metis in character, a place where Metis kinship persisted and most were French-speaking Catholics.³⁹⁶ Like the other Citizen Band Metis, however, Madore and his family determinedly chose life as Indians, a choice roundly condemned by Clifton. The culture

³⁹⁴ Peterson, Jacqueline. "Goodbye Madore Beaubien", 111.

³⁹⁵ Kasper, "Emigrant Metis of Kansas", 253.

³⁹⁶ Kasper, *The Emigrant Metis of Kansas*, 10.

which had given the handsome Madore wealth and power no longer existed. Many Metis of the American Great Lakes would choose to marry and live in ways that cast their lot with the dominant Euro-American society and culture: many others were equally determined to go in the opposite direction, as can be seen from the memoirs and recollections of other Chicago Beaubiens and the Juneau family of Milwaukee.

Solomon Juneau, the future mayor, postmaster, and civic father of Milwaukee, was born at Repentigny, Quebec, a suburb of Montreal, to Francois Juneau *dit* LaTulippe and Marie-Theresa Galearneau Juneau, *dit* LaTulippe, and went west to Michilimackinac in the early 1800s, in either his teens or twenties. Peter J. Vieau recounted the amusing story that Solomon Juneau had come west to Mackinac as a young teenager to work for “Louis Eaume”³⁹⁷, most likely Louis Reaume, after running away from a Catholic seminary in L’Assumption with another boy, who also joined the fur trade, but does not give the other boy’s name. Juneau may have been in his 20s, not his teens, and Peter Vieau may be exaggerating Juneau’s youth in his recollection, to emphasize his father’s patronage of Juneau, whom Peter J. Vieau refers to a bit condescendingly as “the boy”. Peter J. Vieau adds interestingly, “Father had known the Juneau family at Montreal, for many years, and when he met Solomon at Mackinac, found the boy badly in need of a friend.”³⁹⁸ Peter J. Vieau stated that his father Jacques Vieau Sr. hired Solomon Juneau as a voyageur and clerk for the North West Company and the American Fur

³⁹⁷ Narrative of Peter J. Vieau, in an interview with the editor”. Thwaites, Reuben Gold. *Wisconsin Historical Collections*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Vol. 15 (1900), 459.

³⁹⁸ “Narrative of Peter J. Vieau, in an interview with the editor”. Thwaites, Reuben Gold. *Wisconsin Historical Collections*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Vol. 15 (1900), 459.

Company in Milwaukee, well before 1818, when Solomon Juneau permanently settled there, and that Josette Vieau, the half-sister of Peter Vieau, married Solomon Juneau “as early as 1814 or 1815.”³⁹⁹ With his advantageous and somewhat mysteriously described family connection to the Vieau family of Quebec, Solomon Juneau married his boss’s daughter and became the heir and successor to Jacques Vieau’s business interests at Milwaukee, Green Bay and elsewhere in Wisconsin by 1818-1819. Folded into an established trading family, Juneau had only a friendly rivalry with his father-in-law, and no doubt benefitted from his wife’s family relationships among the Menominee and Potawatomi of the Milwaukee and Green Bay area, who became his principal trading clients.

Genevieve McBride, observing that Juneau was frequently away on trading trips and was something of an absentee husband and father, like many French-Canadian fur traders who were migrants themselves, suggests that rather than regarding Juneau as a founding father, historians ought to regard Josette Vieau Juneau, a locally born matriarch and mother of fourteen, as a founding mother.⁴⁰⁰ Josette did indeed become a founding mother to Milwaukee, the town she and her husband platted, even as they maintained a base for many years in her hometown of Green Bay. Josette’s family connections to local tribes- and her personal political advocacy for the settlement when tribes became hostile- protected the settlement at Milwaukee from Indian attacks.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ McBride, Genevieve G. (ed.), *Women’s Wisconsin: From Native Matriarchies to the New Millennium*. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society, 2014, xx, 6-7.

⁴⁰¹ McBride, Genevieve G. “Josette Vieau Juneau.” *Encyclopedia of Milwaukee*. <https://emke.uwm.edu/entry/josette-vieau-juneau/> Supposedly, Josette Juneau saved Milwaukee by “mediating peace with aggrieved Potawatomi”, though McBride contended that this was “possibly an apocryphal account.” Buck’s *Pioneer History of Milwaukee* mentions that

Her granddaughter, Isabella Fox, repeated the story of Josette Juneau defending Milwaukee, and noted in a family biography that Mrs. Josette Vieau Juneau “dressed in Indian costume” and spoke “several Indian dialects”⁴⁰² - unnamed as to which specific languages or dialects. Isabella Fox also observed that her grandmother Josette Juneau spoke very little English and that “French was the language of the home circle”⁴⁰³, as undoubtedly Menominee was too. Clearly, the Milwaukee Metis associated French with their Metis identity, including a self-professed “civility” and proximity to whiteness- a civility and proximity they vigorously defended when white American settlers viewed their Indian connections with suspicion. Josette Vieau Juneau’s own “civility” was vigorously defended after her death in a “pioneer history” of Milwaukee, by none other than the brothers Peter and Andrew Vieau. The Vieau brothers angrily refuted the claim that Solomon and Josette Juneau “dressed and ate like Indians, and generally in their domestic conversation, spoke the Indian tongue.”⁴⁰⁴ The Vieau brothers, coming to the aid of their sister, said that Mr. and Mrs. Juneau “uniformly” conversed in French or English, that they were educated people who “wore the dress of well-to-do, civilized persons”⁴⁰⁵, and that they kept a neat house. This printed defense of their late sister Josette

the incident occurred in 1835, which would seem to indicate a specific incident. Buck also defended Josette Juneau’s civility by claiming that she had a “clear” complexion, “showing the Indian blood very little.” Buck, James Smith. *Pioneer History of Milwaukee from the First American Settlement in 1833 to 1841, with a Topographical Description, As It Appeared In a State of Nature, Illustrated with a Map*. Milwaukee, WI: Swain & Tate, 1890, p. 212.

⁴⁰² Fox, Isabella. *Solomon Juneau: A Biography, With Sketches of the Juneau Family*. Milwaukee, WI: Evening Wisconsin Printing Company, 1916, 54.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Buck, James Smith. *Pioneer History of Milwaukee Under the Charter, From 1847 to 1853, inclusive*. Volume III. Milwaukee, WI: Symes, Swain and Co., Printers, 1884, 468.

⁴⁰⁵ Buck, James Smith. *Pioneer History of Milwaukee Under the Charter, From 1847 to 1853, Inclusive*. Volume III. Milwaukee: Symes, Swain and Co., Printers, 1884, 473-475

Vieau Juneau had larger implications, of course. It was a public defense of the identity and kinship of all Milwaukee Metis and their reputation, people who did not want to be branded by white Americans as “uncivilized” or Indian.

Josette Juneau was renowned as a midwife and nurse to many early Milwaukeeans, attending them at their births, deaths and funerals, and, like other elite Metis women of her day, was lauded for her charity work to the city’s sick, poor and “afflicted.” Her charges included “many a poor girl who had started life wrong”⁴⁰⁶, perhaps a genteel euphemism for prostitutes, who she boarded in her home, taught useful skills and procured legitimate jobs for. Her “benevolent acts, kindness and bounty”⁴⁰⁷ were celebrated in Milwaukee, where settlers praised her goodness, loyalty and bravery, although they lamented that she lacked the education a white woman would have been afforded.⁴⁰⁸ Also, like other socially prominent Metis women before and after her, Josette Juneau promoted Catholicism among indigenous people. Her granddaughter’s biography links Josette Juneau’s charity to her devout Catholicism. It’s likely that indigenous as well as Catholic models of womanhood can be imputed to Josette’s actions, although her Native and non-Native friends and neighbors would have certainly interpreted those actions differently. Josette’s midwifery, nursing, and generosity to the poor, like similar behavior of other wealthy and socially prominent Metis women, was expected from her by Native kinship obligations and Native ideals of generosity, communalism, and leadership from those of high status. And Metis women in particular were uniquely suited, through their

⁴⁰⁶ Isabella Fox. *Solomon Juneau: A Biography, with Sketches of the Juneau Family*. Milwaukee: Evening Wisconsin Printing Company, 1916, 57.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, Fox, 64.

⁴⁰⁸ Isabella Fox. *Solomon Juneau: A Biography, with Sketches of the Juneau Family*. Milwaukee: Evening Wisconsin Printing Company, 1916, 67.

multiracial heritage and crucial fur trade role, to be diplomats between different cultures, promote harmony, and exert social control over newcomers and outsiders.

Though McBride notes correctly that Josette Juneau was the third generation of women in her family to take a French-Canadian husband, and that Josette herself had a French father and grandfather, a portrait of Josette in her 60s shows that she clearly looked Indian, with Native features and dark skin that her granddaughter Isabella Fox politely described as “clear olive”⁴⁰⁹ in the social climate of 1916, when the biography appeared, and which her modern descendant, my friend Esther Schwarzbauer, told me more bluntly was too dark to appear white. The somewhat thorny question of Josette Vieau Juneau’s parentage- whether or not she was the daughter of Angeliqye Roy/Roi/Le Roi or some other Menominee woman who was Angeliqye’s relative- is germane to a discussion of the Juneau family’s identity.

According to the 1848 Treaty of Lake Poygan, the Menominee were supposed to cede their lands in Wisconsin and move to Crow Wing, Minnesota. Although the Menominee did cede their lands, their relocation to Minnesota thankfully never actually happened. Like the Michigan Potawatomi who noticed that Kansas did not have enough sugar maple trees or birch trees for their liking, Wisconsin Menominee leaders like Chief Oshkosh noticed and complained that the lands at Crow Wing, near present-day Brainerd, Minnesota, had no wild rice and very little game, that Minnesota winters were too harsh for their people, and that the proposed Minnesota lands were too close to the border between the warring Ojibwe and Dakota tribes. Chief Oshkosh was able to avert the tribe’s relocation to Minnesota by gaining the sympathy of President Millard Fillmore. The Menominee were politically supported by Catholic clergy in

⁴⁰⁹ Fox, 53.

their fight to avoid removal, including their priest Father Florimond J. Bonduel, a French-speaking Belgian and a close confidant of the Juneau family, who would name one of their sons Bonduel after him, and Bishop John Henni of Milwaukee.⁴¹⁰

The Menominee also drew up a list or “roll” of mixed-blood Menominees, on which the Juneau family, the Yott family, the Ducharme family, Vieau family, the Grignon family, and the Lawe family were all listed, to receive cash payments according to the treaty’s terms. The Lawes were Menominee thanks to their matriarch, Therese Rankin Lawe, and the Juneaus received money and were listed on the roll as half-blood Menominees. Solomon Juneau drew money for his wife Josette, and Narcisse, Paul, Theresa, Harriet, Francis and Charlotte drew money in their own names- the “minor children” of Josette, 3 boys and 3 girls, were also listed, as were her daughter-in law and grandchildren, Madeline, the wife of Narcisse, and their three children, plus Anna Josette Juneau, the daughter of Paul, and Solomon Juneau White, the son of Theresa Juneau. Alfred Cope ventures a guess into the complicated genealogy of Josette Vieau Juneau. He notes that, despite also having some Potawatomi antecedents through Angelique Roy/LeRoi, whose mother he says was a Menominee woman named Madeleine (the Mackinac baptism records say Angelique Roy’s mother was a Menominee named Marguerite, although the names Marguerite and Madeleine were often conjoined⁴¹¹), Josette Vieau Juneau and her children must have been principally recognized as Menominee tribal members by the tribe, in

⁴¹⁰ ALLEN, ANNE BEISER. "The Disillusionment "of Father Bonduel"." *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 100, no. 1 (2016): 44-53. Accessed November 27, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26389343>.

⁴¹¹ Ibid, Thwaites, *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, Volume 19, “Mackinac Baptisms”, Wisconsin Historical Society, 1910, 127.

order to have the tribe's consent and the consent of Menominee leaders to receive the treaty money.

If Josette Vieau were illegitimate, and not Angelique Roy's daughter, Cope surmises interestingly that "both her natural mother and her step-mother must have been of Menominee blood."⁴¹² Since Jacques Vieau founded the trading post at Sheboygan, he could very well have done so by making an alliance with a relative of Angelique Roy. Since Josette Vieau Juneau was Menominee on her mother's side, whoever her mother was, the acceptance of her and her children as Menominee tribal members makes sense. My friend Esther Schwarzbauer, a descendant of the Juneau family, told me that the Menominee language, out of all the indigenous languages the family may have known, was spoken in the family the longest. Esther is a few years older than me. She told me her great-grandfather, his siblings, and his cousins were the last generation to speak Menominee in the family, in what must have been the late 1930s to early 1940s, and that they decided not to teach the Menominee language to their children, her grandparents.

Their decision to not teach Menominee to their own children, and only speak English in the family, is tragic, but must be contextualized within the American politics and culture of the era. That was an era when all foreign languages were regarded with suspicion, as the United States confronted mass European immigration. Indian people faced a disastrous era of socially repressive reservation life, boarding schools, poverty, and brutally forced assimilation policies, an era whose pressures also produced the first pan-Indian intellectuals. Esther is aware that, due to decisions made by her family, she would not qualify as a Menominee tribal member

under today's blood-quantum-based rules for tribal membership. Blood quantum is a relatively recent invention, so that Esther would still be considered Menominee by Menominee tradition and custom, an observation she appreciated.

The Quaker missionaries who came to Green Bay to assist in the payment of treaty money to the Menominee Metis were surprised at what they found when they got there, similar to many white Americans' reaction to the distinctive and unusual Metis culture. They had a low opinion of the Green Bay French-Canadians, who of course included some Metis, by noting that the bulk of the population spoke no English and was illiterate in the reading or writing of French, considering them to be a people devoid of "information, energy or good management", although they noted that apple orchards and fruit trees (time-consuming French-Canadian favorite crops) had been destroyed during the course of the War of 1812. They also acknowledged that the voyageur ancestors of the Green Bay French were certainly energetic by any standard.⁴¹³ They encountered the French-Menominee Pierre Bernard Grignon, approving of his position as county sheriff, his devout Catholicism, and his fluent English, and saw the non-Indian appearance and "attractive" house of Eleazar Williams, and heard a speech made by La Motte, a "large man with a composed countenance." The interpreter at the treaty, Antoine Gautier St. Germain, was also, of course, a Metis. A French-Menominee relative of the more famous Langlades and a fur trader among the Ho-Chunk, the timorous Quakers described Antoine Gautier St. Germain as a "tall gaunt figure with long black

⁴¹³ Cope, Alfred. "A Mission to the Menominee: Alfred Cope's Green Bay Diary (Part I)." *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 49, no. 4 (1966), 310. Accessed November 24, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4634175>.

shaggy locks and the face of a bandit.”⁴¹⁴ Contrary to their somewhat racist expectations that the Metis would be “savage” simpletons, they recorded that the Metis they met understood the value of gold and money, and were “well to do” persons of “good education... very little like Indians,”⁴¹⁵ and that the “attractive, accomplished” Metis women were cultured, popular, socially prominent people who “moved in the first society”⁴¹⁶ of Green Bay, because they were descendants of prominent white men in Wisconsin like Solomon Juneau and Judge Lawe- and also importantly, perhaps unexplained or unimportant to the prim Quaker missionaries, the Metis were related to present and past tribal leaders and well-known Indian women. They observed that the great majority of the “mixed Menominees” had French names, and very few had Indian names, although some used a French first name and an indigenous last name, a combination the missionaries found odd, such as Domitille Bah-me-kee-zhe-ko-kew (*Bamegiizhigikwe- baabaagizhigikwe*- Late Day Woman or Waiting Sun Woman), Susan Bazanokokieu (possibly *Bizaanakikwe*, Quiet Earth Woman)⁴¹⁷, and Marie Nahcumekushcum, possibly related to *Nakom*, “to agree, answer, reply.”

Everywhere in the United States, the pressure of land cessions in treaties and the

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ 1849 Menominee Mixed-Blood Roll. Menominee Treaty of October 18, 1848. transcribed by Larry M. Wyckoff, 2016, 10. “The Commissioner found the Mixed Menominees quite a different description of people from what he had anticipated. But few of them can with propriety be at all considered as Indians. They are citizens, and do not differ in dress, manner of living & appearance, from other citizens, with the exception of a darker shade of complexion & a slight prominence of the cheek bone, in some instances. Many of them are persons of good education, property, & influence in society”, p. 10.

⁴¹⁶ Alfred Cope. "A Mission to the Menominee: Alfred Cope's Green Bay Diary (Part II)." *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 50, no. 1 (1966): 36-7.

⁴¹⁷ Ojibwe People’s Dictionary.

federal government's formal policies of Indian removal during the 1830s and 40s prompted agonizing questions and choices for Metis people, choices that in some cases meant life or death. Through the "removal era", the Wisconsin Metis continued to struggle with their rights to land, farm fields and agricultural crops, which had traditionally been owned and managed by women, as were rights to wild berries, fruits, and maple sugar, and the lead mined on women's land.

Women produced food, clothing, moccasins, mats, corn, beans, wild rice, pumpkins, melons, maple sugar, feathers, beeswax and even floor mats to sell and trade. Men often traveled as traders, warriors, guides and diplomats, reinforcing women's relative independence. Their debates with settlers over land rights and politics often became expressed through struggles over gender. Although intermarried European men learned to leave farming to the women or to share farm labor, farming both European and Native crops, other aspects of their lives were more fraught. Native and Metis women, in particular, resisted the domestic chores expected of them by their European husbands, including bread-baking and dairying. Although Indians and Metis loved wheaten bread, most likely baked in the French style of crusty loaves, Native and Metis women purchased bread from bakeries in Prairie du Chien and Mackinac. Native women did not make wheaten bread at home. It was not a skill they possessed or inherited and was often a challenge. When Elizabeth Baird, a Metis, moved from Mackinac to Green Bay in the 1820s as the teenaged bride of Henry Baird, a Scots-Irish lawyer, she was only a young girl of fourteen, and her husband's former pupil. As an only child who had not learned much about cooking or baking, she struggled with the making of wheaten bread

until a neighbor, “good old Mrs. Irwin”⁴¹⁸, gave her a cup of sourdough starter and explained her recipe. Dairying- everything from the care of cows to the production of milk, cream, cheese and butter- was foreign to Elizabeth Baird and other Native and Metis women in the region, who resisted it more strongly. Native women had no dairying traditions. They disliked the repetitive work of the dairy, whose constant demands interfered with their traditional seasonal tasks like visiting relatives, maple sugaring, wild ricing, and the gathering of wild fruit, and many Native and Metis women also disliked dairy products⁴¹⁹. European and Euro-American men of the 1800s, by contrast, expected women, particularly their wives, to milk cows and make cheese and butter.

This put Native and Metis women like Elizabeth Baird into potentially conflict-laden situations with family members, including her Irish-born husband and (rather prissy) mother-in-law. “All who know of my great dislike of milk, especially cream, may imagine what I suffered in taking care of milk and making butter.” Elizabeth wrote. Therefore, the question of who would milk the cows became contested territory, falling into a chasm of vastly differing ideas about gender, race, and class amid the heavily male-skewed demographics of pioneer Wisconsin. A French-Canadian “man servant” milked the Baird cows for a while, but considered it “almost a disgrace.”⁴²⁰ Henry Baird likewise would not and could not milk cows: in Elizabeth’s account of the reason why, we hear the tone of a young bride meekly submitting to her pretentious

⁴¹⁸ Elizabeth T. Baird, *O-de-Jit-Wa-Win-Ning*, 38.

⁴¹⁹ Murphy, Lucy Eldersveld. “To Live Among Us: Accommodation, Gender and Conflict in the Western Great Lakes Region, 1760-1832.” In Rebecca Kugel and Lucy Eldersveld Murphy. *Native Women’s History in Eastern North America Before 1900: A Guide to Research and Writing*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007, 378-379.

⁴²⁰ Elizabeth Baird, *O-de-jit-wa-win-ning, or Contes du temps passé*. Heritage Hill Foundation, Green Bay, WI, copyright renewed 1998, 41.

mother-in-law. "My husband was an Irishman and of course never milked a cow. His mother in after years used to say 'a gentleman from Dublin never did.'"⁴²¹ Elizabeth finally, in desperation, attempted to milk the cows herself. Henry's mother considered this equally déclassé. Elizabeth, despite her best effort, was kicked and injured by a recalcitrant cow; her husband relented and "declared that I never should milk again, and I never did."⁴²² Murphy suggests that Elizabeth Baird's resistance to dairying was typical for women of her ethnic background, pointing out that butter continued to be imported into the region through the decade of the 1820s, no doubt at great expense, an ironic twist for a region now heavily associated with dairy.⁴²³ Elizabeth Baird wrote that she "learned" to eat butter, and had no objections to cheese, but persisted in a dislike of milk and cream all her life. Elizabeth Baird was proud of her Native ancestry, writing that "all Indians called me sister"⁴²⁴ and noting that, on a trip to buy Indian goods to sell, she was the "only one who could speak Indian"⁴²⁵ on the trip and was the principal buyer and haggler. She also had a clear sense of herself as Indian or Metis. She wrote amusingly that she felt no fear of two Indians who murdered a white man in 1824 Green Bay. She hosted the two Indians in her kitchen when they were on recess from their trial at the courthouse. Although they were "large men and were painted black, which gave them a most hideous appearance", Elizabeth herself was at ease among fellow Native people. She commented revealingly, "Yet, I think I should have been afraid of *white* murderers."⁴²⁶ Elizabeth knew she was not white and

⁴²¹ Baird, 80.

⁴²² Elizabeth Baird, *O-de-jit-wa-win-ning, or Contes du temps passé*. Heritage Hill Foundation, Green Bay, WI, copyright renewed 1998, 81.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, Murphy, *A Gathering of Rivers*, 62.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, Baird, *O-de-jit-wa-win-ning*, 53.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, Baird, *O-De-Jit-Wa-Win-Ning*, 39.

that she felt more sympathy for the two Indians. Elizabeth Baird and Henry had four daughters. Elizabeth's family gave her daughters Ojibwe names. Eliza Ann Baird's Ojibwe name was Wabunoqua, "Dawn Woman", which Elizabeth Baird translated as 'Early Morn' or 'Aurora'. Her younger daughter, Louise Sophie, was given the name Megisin⁴²⁷ or Wampum. This could be related to the Ojibwe word *mazinigwaazh*, beads or embroidery.⁴²⁸ Elizabeth Baird raised her children bilingually in English and French. "Our children spoke both French and English, always speaking French to each other, and of course to me." But under pressure from her mother-in-law, the children's "Grandmother Baird", Elizabeth's daughters gradually switched to speaking English as their primary and only language. This fact was mourned by Elizabeth, when she left them with her grandmother, their great-grandmother, who only spoke French and presumably Odawa or Ojibwe. "My grandmother was much delighted at the prospect of having the children with her, but feared they would be lonely as she did not speak English at all, and only Eliza could speak French. Emilie, to please her grandmother Baird, had given up speaking French, and Louise, for the same reason, never spoke it."⁴²⁹ Elizabeth's mournful comment about language is really a comment about her children's Americanization or assimilation into whiteness. Due to the influence of her mother-in-law, Elizabeth's children no longer spoke French. Obviously they could not speak "Indian"- Ojibwe or Odawa- either, because if they had been able to converse in Ojibwe, Elizabeth would not have fretted about a language barrier. Elizabeth Baird's daughters, unlike Elizabeth and her ancestors, were committed, perhaps inadvertently, to an Anglophone identity that emphasized their status as white Americans. This status was perhaps

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 49, 84.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., Ojibwe People's Dictionary.

⁴²⁹ Baird, *O-De-Jit-Wa-Win-Ning*, 96-97.

an enviable one for their prospects in white society, but it poignantly left Elizabeth Baird's daughters unable to communicate with their own great-grandmother.

Lucy Murphy concludes that Indians, whites and Metis were able to successfully live together with each other in fur-trade settlements like Green Bay because they were linked by ties of blood and marriage, they were not economic competitors with one another, and indeed, fulfilled complementary economic roles to one another in the mutual enterprise of the fur trade, and that "patterns of negotiation"⁴³⁰ allowed for cultural compromise and fusion. The fact that lead miners among Native people were principally women inevitably brought them into conflict with white American settlers, who coveted the lead mines and fertile fields owned by Native women. Indian tribes near Dubuque and Prairie du Chien became lead producers and sellers, and women the "best and shrewdest"⁴³¹ miners, but they needed American men to sell the lead because of government regulations. The lead rush of the 1820s and 30s led to an influx of white men and eventually provoked the Black Hawk War, the last major act of Indian resistance in the removal era. Crucially, Murphy notes that the sociocultural idea of settling in one, year-round, relatively fixed location to farm, a notion brought by white settlers, would have itself seemed strange, unusual, and a departure from the region's customary practices for earlier residents of any color. The Metis and their neighbors lived migratory, mobile, seasonal lifestyles where a great deal of travel was the expected norm. Indians traveled to the sugar-bush in spring, traveled to their planting villages in the summer and fall, traveled in late summer and autumn to hunt, mine, or gather, and to the winter hunting grounds in wintertime.

⁴³⁰ Lucy Eldersveld Murphy. *A Gathering of Rivers: Indians, Métis and Mining in the Western Great Lakes, 1737-1832*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004, 8.

⁴³¹ Murphy, 104.

French-Canadians and the Metis both traveled around to various trading posts in order to trade and barter with Indians, and French-Canadians and Metis adopted the tradition of sugar-bushing. Lead miners migrated seasonally to pursue lead diggings from place to place: even judges and lawyers in the territorial days traveled frequently to hear cases. In this context, the Euro-American idea of fixed and settled farming was as foreign as the new settlers themselves. “Their version of farming- that a family should stay in the same place year round- was an alien notion to the earlier residents. Many, if not most, of these settlers did not even realize how unusual the idea of ‘settling’ was in the region.”⁴³²

In any case, Metis and Indians, despite their mobile or migratory lifestyles, were the people with a true geographic and spiritual rootedness in their original homelands. Non-Indian immigrants, settlers and travelers were the true nomads, a point I have made elsewhere in this work. But D.N. Sprague, in his study of Canadian Metis, notices the same fact to be true for them- that they tended to stay in one place, while others of their era did not, and indeed had far less attachment to place than the Metis did. He describes the Red River Metis as one of the “most persistent” populations of nineteenth-century North America, persistent in this context meaning that they persisted or stayed at Red River longer than most nineteenth-century people stayed anyplace. By comparing census data for the first Canadian census of Red River, Manitoba, with the earlier census data of the 1840s collected by the Hudson’s Bay Company, Sprague found that most of the families noted by the HBC still appeared in the 1870 census as Red River residents. This was a persistence rate of over twenty years in one location for these families, whereas Sprague observed that “the typical rate of persistence elsewhere in North

⁴³² Ibid., Murphy, *A Gathering of Rivers*, 154-55.

America in the mid-nineteenth century was around thirty percent for ten-year intervals.”⁴³³

Thus the Metis residents of Red River persisted at Red River at a much higher rate and for a much longer time than others did.

Lucy Eldersveld Murphy has documented that the Prairie du Chien Metis, whom she terms “Creoles”, were offered the status of white citizens because the US government needed them as white to help run and rule Wisconsin’s territory. They kept individual title to communal lands, voted in elections, paid taxes and served as justices. Their presence as “free white men”, although many were Metis and had Indian wives and slaves, also served to advance population counts to grant Wisconsin the status of a territory, and then a state, generally serving the interests of the region’s colonization. American soldiers who had arrived in the Prairie du Chien region after 1812 generally treated the Metis in a high-handed manner as a “conquered people”, which led the Metis to pass an 1820s law against “white persons skulking” after 10 PM⁴³⁴, and to set up patrols protecting the community’s local women from the threat of intoxicated white soldiers. This suggests to Murphy that the Prairie du Chien Metis initially had a clear sense of themselves as not being white, a perception that whites, particularly the American white soldiers at nearby Fort Crawford, were dangerously disruptive outsiders, and an ambivalence about being assigned a racial category of whiteness for themselves.

The Metis ultimately were successful in using whiteness to avoid racialization to a subordinate status in the newly American territory. Metis jurors in Prairie du Chien also

⁴³³ Sprague, *Canada and the Metis*, ix.

⁴³⁴ “All white persons seen skulking or sneaking about after 10 o'clock at night within the enclosing of any lot in this village without the permission of the owner...shall pay a fine.” “By-Laws enacted and passed by the...Borough of Prairie des Chiens. March 20, 1822, Section 15. See also Murphy, *Great Lakes Creoles*, 72-74.

attempted to legalize their marriages, dispense charity to the needy, and regularize taverns and alcohol sales, in ways that often clashed with the culture of Anglo newcomers. Demographic changes in the mid-1830s following the Black Hawk War, from an influx of white Europeans and white Americans and an outmigration of Prairie du Chien Metis, led to the marginalization of the Metis as a political force in the settler society. English-only juries, mandated by the Wisconsin statutes of 1839, further excluded Francophone and Ojibwe-speaking Metis and forced them to contend with new meanings of race.⁴³⁵ Murphy links it to an influx of English-speaking settlers into Wisconsin Territory after the mid-1830s, and the subsequent political and demographic marginalization of the Metis. Following the 1839 law, all interpreters were dismissed from the official government's payroll, forcing non-Anglophones to find their own translators or abstain from legal action altogether.⁴³⁶ Forcing Metis women, in particular, to submit to American marriage laws devastated Native traditions of communal, female-headed land ownership, the right of women to contract independent businesses, and even the legal and political rights of their children to tribal membership, bolstered by French laws like the *coutume de Paris*, which granted widows and women considerable economic clout. Instead, individualized property ownership, legal subordination of wives, and principles of *coverture* left Metis women vulnerable to property loss and impoverishment, and increasingly excluded from their former ability to run businesses, provide religious and political leadership, and serve as diplomats between cultures through their marriages. In severe times of Indian removal and the fur trade's decline, traditional expectations that elite Metis would provide for Native kinfolk

⁴³⁵ *Statutes of the Territory of Wisconsin*, 1839, 200. "all writs, process, proceedings and records in any court shall be in the English language."

⁴³⁶ Murphy, *Great Lakes Creoles*, 142-147.

stretched their resources to the breaking point. Many adapted and became small farmers, livestock keepers, and butter makers, though they maintained Native and French Creole traditions of communalism, sharing, gregarious sociability, and generosity and continued to hunt and trap for game and harvest maple sugar, wild rice and berries.

By participating in local politics, being considered legally white, and crucially, maintaining economic independence and the ownership of their land, the Prairie du Chien “Creoles” or Metis maintained their status as another ‘white’ in-group. Although they continued to reside in distinct ethnic neighborhoods, live in matrifocal kin groups, practice Catholicism, and speak French or indigenous languages, they consciously avoided using any group terms to talk about their ethnicity, gradually assimilated to English, and seem to have reinvented themselves as more culturally French than Indian, at least for the public eye. The Prairie du Chien Metis may have been performing what Susan Sleeper-Smith describes as ‘hiding in plain sight’. They feasted on ‘pea soup’ and cornbread or johnnycake, which Murphy alleges might have been a Frenchified version of the ‘Three Sisters’ crops. They clustered in a Metis neighborhood called ‘Frenchtown’ and changed the name of its main road, Indian Trail, to Frenchtown Road. Although some claimed Native ancestry, they did so generally as part of a larger ‘French’, white American identity and did not consider themselves to be Native Americans or tribal members any longer. By the mid-1800s, the Metis Bailly family of Indiana faced similar difficult choices as its members grappled with racial and economic discrimination. The daughters and granddaughters of Joseph and Marie Bailly, linked by blood and marriage to the Grand River Odawas with whom their family had traded, took different social paths as antebellum racial categories hardened in Indiana.

Rose and Eleanor Bailly, the daughters of Joseph and Marie Bailly, like their kinswomen and ancestors before them, were familiar with the fur trade, grew up at various trading posts, knew women who dressed in “Indian fashion” and spoke Odawa as a main language, with only a smattering of French and no English, and conducted independent Catholic services in the Odawa language at their home. But unlike their mother and grandmothers, Rose and Eleanor were schooled at Detroit, Montreal, and local Euro-American schools. In Sleeper-Smith’s rueful words, they dressed and talked like Americans, but “still looked like Indians.”⁴³⁷ Rose Bailly Howe moved to Chicago, married a white American man of impeccable New-England WASP heritage, Francis Howe, and did everything she could to pass for white herself, leading a secluded life to conceal her Indian ancestry while raising her daughter, Frances. After Marie Bailly’s death, Rose Bailly Howe and her daughter Frances Howe toured Catholic shrines in France and returned to the old Indiana homestead. Frances Howe later published a memoir, *Story of a French Homestead in the Old Northwest*, in which she reinvented and fictionalized her family’s ancestry as mostly French, denying any Native ties.⁴³⁸ The book is an interesting tissue of falsehoods and half-truths. Howe defended common-law marriages as the foundation of devoutly Catholic families in earlier times- perhaps obliquely alluding to marriages au façon du pays. She acknowledged some “mingled French and Indian descent” in her family but denigrated Indians as people of “barbarous instinct and savage customs.”⁴³⁹ Howe presented her family almost as French refugees living among their distant relatives, the Indians. She also

⁴³⁷ Sleeper-Smith. *Indian Women and French Men*, 158.

⁴³⁸ Howe, Frances R. *The Story of a French Homestead in the Old Northwest*. Columbus, OH: Press of Nitschke Bros., 1907.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, Howe, *Story of a French Homestead*, 7-12.

destroyed the trading-post buildings at her family's homestead and even modified the family cemetery to hide evidence of her Odawa family's burials. The memoir and the renovations proved unsuccessful in convincing Frances Howe's white neighbors to accept her, and she soured into a bitter, eccentric, defensive spinster, secluded at home, in the way Rose had been. Despite Frances' best efforts to pass for white, her dark skin marked her as visibly Native American and local town gossip about the homestead being an "Injun Cemetery" persisted. Susan Sleeper Smith sympathizes with Frances, calling her a victim of her circumstances and antebellum Indiana race prejudice. Frances had no fur trade social niche to inhabit, the way her mother, grandmother and aunts did, a world that had sanctioned independent political, religious, and economic activity for mixed-ancestry women. Nor could she fully assimilate into the dominant Anglo-American society, despite her strenuous attempts to deny her Native ancestry, and to rewrite and demolish her family's Indian past.⁴⁴⁰

Eleanor Bailly, the sister of Rose Bailly Howe and the aunt of Frances Howe, chose a very different life from her sister and niece. She chose the vocation of a nun, and was accepted as a postulant at the convent of the Sisters of Providence, St. Mary of the Woods in Terre Haute, Indiana. The Mother Superior, Saint Mother Theodore Guerin, described the new Sister, Sister Mary Cecilia, as "only...half civilized"⁴⁴¹ and attributed Sister Mary Cecilia's vocation to the mysterious workings of the Holy Spirit. The former Eleanor Bailly, now Sister Mary Cecilia, embraced her Native heritage, sitting for portraits at the convent and signing her letters, "J'ai femme Odawa" - "I, an Odawa woman." Sister Mary Cecilia became a close friend and

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*, 157-158.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid, 159.

confidant of Mother Theodore, accompanying her on a trip back to France to visit the motherhouse of the Sisters of Providence. Even in France, Mother Theodore and the French nuns remarked upon her presence as unusual. Mother Theodore introduced Sister Mary Cecilia as “*la demi-Indienne*” (the half-Indian girl). Her fellow nuns, perhaps unaware of France’s long history in the New World, were surprised and no doubt pleased to find that the “*demi-Indienne*”, contrary to their more exotic expectations of Native people, spoke fluent French and had elegant, gracious manners.⁴⁴²

Sister Mary Cecilia became Mother Mary Cecilia, and succeeded Mother Theodore as the Mother Superior of the convent and the head of her order. She was also an educator of girls and a foundress of Catholic schools all over Indiana, and guided her sisters to near-heroic service as hospital nurses to Indiana soldiers during the Civil War.⁴⁴³ Although her choice was markedly different than even the members of her own family, her decision to become a nun was one that allowed her to maintain the spiritually, socially and politically active life of her ancestors and maintain pride in her Indian roots, despite the tangible loss of the old fur-trade order. Others, like her sister and niece, would not be so lucky in navigating an American society that was often crass, racist and cruel to Metis people and their families.

⁴⁴² Ris, Sister Diane, and Sister Joseph Eleanor Ryan. *Saint Mother Theodore Guérin: Woman of Providence*. Bloomington, Indiana: AuthorHouse, 2011, 227.

⁴⁴³ Mug, Sister Mary Theodosia, SP. *Lest We Forget: The Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in Civil War Service*. St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana. Providence Press, 1931, 21.

Chapter 4: Still Here- Metis in the 20th Century and Beyond

The preceding work leads to an understanding of Metis peoplehood as constructed by the Metis, whose individual identities created a shared identity and a consciousness of themselves as indigenous people, even when some Metis individually rejected or did not define it as nationalistic. Throughout the history of the Great Lakes Metis, successive French, British and American governments treated them as a problem to be solved. This reflects the treatment of other indigenous people, but the situation of the Metis was in some respects unique. Settler governments were very resistant to recognize that Metis people had an indigenous identity, whether collectively or as individuals, preferring to claim them instead for the interests of the colonizing power or forcing them to choose one racial identity. They were, and are, collectively resistant to the idea of Metis peoplehood and land claims. I argue that Metis people, both individually and collectively, maintained a distinctive sense of their indigenous peoplehood and a private, sometimes public, pride in indigenous ancestry, despite public acts of assimilation into whiteness or into an Indian tribal identity.

The idea of Metis peoplehood, like the peoplehood of other indigenous tribes and bands, is based on a shared historic relationship to various languages (Ojibwe, Cree, Michif and French), a place/ territory, the Great Lakes and the pays d'en haut, although this is complicated by Metis peoples' migratory lifestyles and transnational movements, which were feared and mistrusted by colonial governments, ceremonial cycles of attachment to kinship, and a spiritual tradition both Catholic and indigenous in nature. The Metis also share a particular experience of diaspora, land loss, and exile. This diaspora might also be conceptualized as indigenous, as many Indian people also experienced exile, land loss, and forced assimilation.

The Metis were despised by many whites for being part Indian, but also paradoxically despised by some whites (and even some Indians) for being mixed, partly European or partly African. I conclude that individuals maintained a proud awareness of indigenous ancestry, of Metis peoplehood, and of themselves as Metis, even as they took on outwardly 'white' or 'Indian' identities. Resistance to Metis peoplehood stemmed from the genocidal goals of policymakers to reduce the number of Indian people, impose white supremacy, and colonize the Great Lakes in their image. The power of a micro-history, *histoire microscopique*, or *naagadawaabandan* can help us conceptualize individual and familial responses to the larger forces of Metis, indigenous, and American history.

Hatred of indigenous people in the United States, then and now, currently and historically sprang from two different principal sources. One was religious- the argument that, as non-Christian people, Indians were subhuman and undeserving of their own lands and cultures, destined to yield before European Christians, who were entitled to become the land's rightful owners and displace indigenous cultures with their own. The other source of anti-Indian hatred was racial. Eighteenth-century racial hierarchies reinforced white supremacy by placing whites at the top, all other non-white people below whites, and indigenous peoples at the bottom of American society. Indians were non-Europeans whose dark skin and unfamiliar cultures consigned them to a low status in the emergent American society as racially subordinate to white Europeans and white Americans.

Indians also had a distinct form of tribal citizenship that existed in a unique political relationship with the United States government, which remained distinct even when cast as legally inferior to American citizenship. Indians were not eligible for American citizenship

throughout the majority of their history because of their distinctive tribal citizenship, but also because they were not included in the body politic on equal terms. They were construed as a kind of anti-citizen, because to admit indigenous people into equal citizenship in the United States would have challenged the taking of Indian land, the weakening of Indian political sovereignty, and the ideological basis for American colonization itself. The Metis people in Canada sought their own tribal citizenship because they were prevented by their government from obtaining a legally white or Indian status. Metis nationhood in the United States never coalesced because the American government claimed the Metis as white, unless particular Metis individuals had ties to specific tribal nations, with tribal citizenship recognized as distinct from and inferior to the citizenship of white Americans. As Indian people of various tribes also became U.S. citizens in the early 20th century, their tribal status was lost to them as well, unless recognized by the federal government, which began a period of forcible assimilation. This forcible assimilation and U.S. citizenship caused the American Metis identity to shift from a political identity to an ethnic one, and caused it to become an ethnic identity largely hidden from public view.

The Great Lakes Metis people and their culture were the result of compromises between indigenous nations, Indian women, and colonizer men from the British and French empires, who created a co-equal and racially tolerant socioeconomic milieu. A good deal of the Great Lakes Metis' multiethnic tolerance was founded on Native beliefs about personal relationships. Native peoples of the Americas, unlike the incoming Europeans, did not have fixed, rigid notions of value that they assigned to different peoples based on abstract notions of skin color, blood, or race. They engaged with people of different ethnic backgrounds based on

kinship, tribal membership, political relationships and cultural affiliation. Race, color and “blood” did not matter, in that sense. Non-Indians and Indians of different background could enter into Native communities through marriage, by marrying a high-ranking member of a community, or by being adopted into a tribal community. Non-Indian or pan-tribal adoptees usually also became in-laws and married into the particular community where they resided.

The French language, Roman Catholicism, and the common economic occupational pursuits of the fur trade united a broad swath of people from differing European, Native American, and African-American backgrounds in a common culture where harmony prevailed locally, despite larger tensions and conflicts, for hundreds of years prior to the arrival of white American settlers. The Metis were the first indigenous people to engage directly with non-indigenous people, religion, cultures and languages in their own way and on their own terms, with their own indigenous communities setting the terms of their engagement in a non-coercive manner that created a new culture, combining Native and European elements the way it combined European and indigenous lineage. This cultural adaptability and ability to negotiate between different cultures made the Metis a natural bridge group and powerful allies of their fellow indigenous people in the fight against colonialism.

Yet, perhaps because of their mistrust of the Metis’ natural abilities as a people in between, various colonial regimes sought to alienate and divide the Metis from other indigenous people, almost from the inception of the Metis as a people, despite the fact that the Metis were regarded as indigenous people by other Indians and established a culture rooted in identifiable homelands. Gabrielle Legault, quoting Fiola, correctly observes that the racial ambiguity of “half-breeds” or Metis was an obstacle to securing white supremacy and that

colonial regimes sought to separate Indians from mixed-race people because “protecting the boundaries”⁴⁴⁴ between Indians and Metis was essential to asserting the superiority of whiteness.

This divide-and-conquer strategy can be seen in later twentieth century Indian policies such as blood quantum, in which a certain amount of “blood” determines legal Indian status or tribal membership, the exclusion of the Metis from treaty-making processes, the Indian Act that disqualified children of Indian women and non-Indian men from being indigenous or tribal members, forcible federal policies of removing Indian children from their parents to attend boarding schools, and governmental racial classification of light-skinned children as ‘mixed bloods’ and darker-skinned children as ‘full-bloods’, despite being children of the same parents. Legault argues that the racialization of Indian and Metis identity disenfranchises Indian and Metis individuals from larger, more inclusive concepts of indigenous and Metis peoplehood⁴⁴⁵. This denial of Metis peoplehood also ignores complex historical realities, such as Metis dispossession and diaspora from previous ancestral territories, historic Metis lifestyle patterns of mobility and sharing land with various Indian groups, and simply ignores the reality wherein Indian and Metis people survived by adapting to colonialism and assimilation, and in the process, inevitably lost the pristine image of timeless indigeneity demanded by the Canadian and American legal process of recognition.

In Canada, the Powley Decision of 2003, building on a 1982 amendment to the Canadian

⁴⁴⁴ Legault, Gabrielle Monique. “Stories of Contemporary Metis Identity in British Columbia: ‘Troubling’ Discourses of Race, Culture and Nationhood.” Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia (Okanagan), 2016, p. 75-76.

⁴⁴⁵ Legault, 255.

constitution that included the Metis as one of the Native peoples of Canada, legally defined the Metis as having indigenous rights to hunt and fish if they self-identify as Metis, are accepted by a Metis community as Metis, and have an ancestral connection to a historical Metis community. The Daniels Decision of 2016 asked the Supreme Court of Canada to declare that the Metis and other non-status Indians are legally Indians according to the Constitution Act of 1867, that the Queen owes a fiduciary duty to them as Indians, and that they have the right to collective consultation as a group by the federal Canadian government.⁴⁴⁶ The courts agreed to the first premise, but rejected the other two. Metis scholars have argued that the impact of the Daniels case has been to reanimate racial logic that the Powley decision rejected, and to trivialize the claims of the Manitoba Metis to nationhood. The Powley and Daniels cases, although helpful to many communities of Metis people in Canada, marginalize others and are critiqued by Legault as denying certain aspects of Metis history and assigning fixed criteria to variable identities.⁴⁴⁷

Many Canadian Metis faced poverty, landlessness, exile and despair after the failure of Metis political and military aspirations in 1885, scratching out a meager existence as squatters on public lands near roads, where they became called road allowance people. They also faced increasing racism from white society and lacked the political and legal rights of “status” Indians, which for many, compelled their choice to assimilate into whiteness for survival and protection. But many maintained a private awareness of indigenous and Metis roots. Many Metis rooted

⁴⁴⁶ Andersen, Chris. “Settling for Community? Juridical Visions of Historical Metis Collectivity in and After *R. v. Powley*.” In *Contours of a People: Metis family, mobility, and history*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012, 392-421.

⁴⁴⁷ Legault, Gabrielle Monique. “Stories of Contemporary Metis Identity in British Columbia: ‘Troubling’ Discourses of Race, Culture and Nationhood.” Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia (Okanagan), 2016, 94-99, 100.

their identities in family and kinship relations rather than one geographic place. “The emphasis on family relations and notions of Metisness were often interchangeable.”⁴⁴⁸ Many Metis expressed views similar to Brenda MacDougall’s concept of *wahkootowin*- embeddedness in responsibility, reciprocity, and services owed to an interrelated community of one’s relatives, ancestors, the Metis community, and the land, bolstered by a combination of indigenous and Catholic spirituality.⁴⁴⁹ Crucially, Macdougall notes that a critical part of the ethos of *wahkootowin* was to “expand the boundaries of family by bringing additional people into the group.”⁴⁵⁰ Based on these values, Legault suggests a more inclusive “civic” model of Metis peoplehood, in which Metis people of all persuasions and even non-Metis could belong to a Metis community based on their service, giving back, and duties to that community, reminiscent of historic Metis communities and earlier indigenous community-building, rather than a Eurocentric model of nationhood.

Contemporary Metis who want to claim Native or indigenous ancestry and identity, conversely face difficulties for not looking phenotypically Indian, and must continually “declare themselves as Native”, which is difficult, especially if they have been brought up to consider themselves white, either because of an extremely white-looking appearance, or because of a legacy of assimilation, denial, and “silence around Indianness” in their family. Fair-skinned indigenous people and Metis experience racism, scorn, identity policing, and disbelief from both Indian, Metis, and non-Indian peers about their identity, which leads them to anxiety and

⁴⁴⁸ Legault, 214.

⁴⁴⁹ MacDougall, Brenda. *One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northern Saskatchewan*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010, p. 81.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

doubts about that identity. Chantal Fiola urges the reclamation of indigenous identity by Metis people and an identity for them as a 'new' people or new expression of indigeneity⁴⁵¹.

Warring French and British empires sought to claim the Metis as either French or British, encouraging them to identify with their paternal heritage and lose their Indian identity. The American and Canadian governments continued this practice, either by excluding the Metis from Indian identity, treaties, and tribal membership, making special monetary provisions for Metis people in treaties that did not include land, or forcing the Metis to choose between Indian and white lifestyles and forms of citizenship. Debates over Metis racial and cultural allegiance, in many ways, prefigured the blood-quantum debates of the twentieth century, including the more forcible assimilation to the English language, Christian religion, non-Indian spouses and American lifestyles promoted by Indian boarding schools. Blood quantum, like other assimilatory programs, served the goal of decreasing the number of Indian people, eliminating tribes as legal-political entities, reducing and eliminating federal trust responsibility to tribes, including treaty rights and reservations, and freeing up indigenous land for settler-colonial purposes as Native peoples assimilated and became nondescript American citizens.

Native Americans were "least often included" in American laws prohibiting interracial marriage, and no law existed to exclusively prevent intermarriages between whites and Indians, except in "comparatively few"⁴⁵² states. Indeed, the U.S. government promoted intermarriage to non-Indians among boarding-school alumni as a positive proof of assimilation to Euro-

⁴⁵¹ Fiola. *Rekindling the Sacred Fire: Metis Ancestry and Anishinaabe Spirituality*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015, p. 1-4.

⁴⁵² Ellinghaus, Katherine. *Taking Assimilation to Heart: Marriages of White Women and Indigenous Men in the United States and Australia, 1887-1937*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006, p. xxiv.

American society, with white-Indian pairings considered the “most acceptable”⁴⁵³ of interracial marriages. Such marriages would also produce “ultimate, uncontested possession” of indigenous land.⁴⁵⁴

When Native people did encounter European and Euro-American concepts of race for the first time in the 1700s, they tended to narrate race in a way that stressed indigenous people’s racial and spiritual distinctiveness, to resist demands for forcible cultural assimilation and assert their claims to land. Most Native leaders continued to insist that the Metis were family members, and continued to advocate for their inclusion in treaties as tribal members. But ultimately, the American Metis people were forced to choose between a white or Indian identity. Their choice was highly individualized and dependent on a great many circumstances in their personal and family histories. A distinct American Metis identity persisted only in places like North Dakota and Montana.

Those who passed for white enjoyed white privilege, protection from being ‘removed’ to unfamiliar territory or to a harsh reservation life as Indians were, and economic and political benefits of the vote and land title. But even they experienced a kind of mourning and ambivalence at severing their ties to indigenous communities, languages, and cultures. Those Metis who did remove to the reservation as Indians often tried to preserve and perpetuate features of Metis cultural distinctiveness, such as Metis dress, the French or Michif language, and Roman Catholic religion. Some of those who chose to pass as whites maintained a guarded

⁴⁵³ Ibid., 215.

⁴⁵⁴ Ellinghaus, Katherine. *Taking Assimilation to Heart: Marriages of White Women and Indigenous Men in the United States and Australia, 1887-1937*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006, p. xxii, 217.

pride in indigenous ancestry, even as they continued to identify as white Americans- a duality impossible for mixed-race Americans with any African ancestry. A distinct Metis identity survived- and survives to this day- most strongly in Canada.

In her study of clothing, moccasins and bags made by women of the Sinclair/Christie/McTavish family at Red River, of Scottish, English, Ojibwe and Cree descent, Angela Fey also discusses how the women chose to ethnically identify throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. Some of them applied for scrip (cash payments or land claims designed to exclude the Metis from land title and treaty rights), and referred to themselves as Metis or “English Half Breeds.”⁴⁵⁵ Their choice whether to identify as “First Nations Cree/ Anishinaabe”, Metis or Half-breed, or “white British-Canadian” was a choice influenced by social class, occupation and marriage.⁴⁵⁶ Interestingly, they proudly remembered the name of their first indigenous ancestor, a Cree woman from northern Manitoba, Nahoway Sinclair.⁴⁵⁷ Publicly emphasizing their white British heritage and suppressing any discussion of their indigenous heritage outside of the Sinclair family became a survival strategy for the Sinclair women, but their collection of metis art, moccasins, and needlework, like their heritage, was a private source of pride and strength and a reminder of their Native ancestors. Fey even wonders if the transmission and maintenance of the collection was an act of “feminine resistance” to settler-colonial assimilationist objectives⁴⁵⁸.

⁴⁵⁵ Fey, Angela. “From Women’s Hands: An Object Biography of the McTavish Collection.” Master’s thesis, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada, 2017, p. 51, 67-68, 75, 79.

⁴⁵⁶ Fey, “From Women’s Hands”, 72.

⁴⁵⁷ Fey, 2.

⁴⁵⁸ Angela Fey. “From Women’s Hands: An Object Biography of the McTavish Collection.” Master’s thesis, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada, 2017, 100.

Chantal Fiola argued that even in Canada, political identification of the Metis with Francophone and French Canadian interests has subjected the Canadian Metis to a degree of whitewashing that emphasizes their French Catholic connections and downplays their link to an Indian identity.⁴⁵⁹ Half of the contemporary Canadian Metis interviewed by Fiola recounted family histories of attempting to deny their indigenous ancestry, avoid being identified with any ethnicity, and pass for white, due to shame, prejudice and internalized oppression, as well as fear of governmental authority and governmental persecution.⁴⁶⁰ Many Metis in British Columbia interviewed by Legault reported similar family experiences of denying indigenous and Metis ancestry and passing for white, performing white French identity or Indian identity in different contexts, or discovering/ exploring Metis ancestry later in life. This was due to family habits and histories of hiding or silencing indigenous roots, despite dark-skinned relatives or older relatives who spoke indigenous languages like Cree and received “half breed scrip”⁴⁶¹. One of Legault’s interviewees, similarly to the Prairie du Chien Metis, evocatively stated that “being Metis was hidden by being French.”⁴⁶² Even relatives’ knowledge of Cree or Michif languages was inaccurately termed “French.”⁴⁶³

This is, of course, complicated by the natural phenotypic variations in skin color and

⁴⁵⁹ Fiola, *Rekindling the Sacred Fire*, 8. She recounts her family history- how her father was “raised French Catholic”, as was she, unable to speak Ojibwe, Michif or Cree. Most of the people in her home community (Ste. Anne, Manitoba) were heavily assimilated as well, identifying solely as French Canadians. Fiola learned, to her shock, that her community was actually a historic Metis settlement, its Metis history silenced by the townspeople in an act of self-preservation.

⁴⁶⁰ Fiola, 29, 31-32, 148-149.

⁴⁶¹ Legault, 159.

⁴⁶² Legault, 190.

⁴⁶³ Legault 190, 203.

facial features among Metis people. One woman reported that she and her siblings strongly identified as Metis, Ojibwe, or Indian, while another brother, extremely blue-eyed, fair-skinned and blonde, jokingly referred to himself as “Casper the Indian ghost.”⁴⁶⁴ Fiola points out, correctly, that the word Metis is colonial in origin, and urges the Metis to reclaim their collective Indian identity as Anishinaabeg and their place in Anishinaabeg spiritual practices, an Indian identity from which they have been divided, alienated and displaced. The attempts by non-Indian charlatans to claim indigenous identities, and the internalization of blood quantum logic to determine tribal membership criteria in many contemporary Indian tribes, complicates the reclamation of Indianness by the American or Canadian Metis even farther. The legacy of blood quantum also sets up a bizarre obsession in some tribal communities, a morbid fascination with the elitist idea of a unicorn-like racial and cultural purity that never existed in the past and does not exist today. But everyone insists that it does exist, and that they alone know how to define it, while others do not. This is merely a dangerous dichotomy that reenacts the trope of the ‘vanishing Indian’, this time from within, and marginalizes multiracial indigenous people as somehow inauthentic, insisting that the present and future of indigenous peoples and their culture in America can never be better than the past. Ever since indigenous people tragically lost their demographic majority of the population in the Americas, and were no longer the Western Hemisphere’s only people, they have mingled with those of other races in the aftermath of colonization.

Russell Thornton fretted that growing trends of urbanization and intermarriage with non-Indians for modern American Indian populations would lessen Native cultural and racial

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., Fiola, *Rekindling the Sacred Fire*, 142.

uniqueness, creating a future wherein “to be Native American is to be ancestrally tribal”⁴⁶⁵, in the way that other assimilated Americans only distantly or rarely acknowledge ties to Old World heritage. Thornton also views growing intermarriage among contemporary indigenous populations as a tangible threat to blood-quantum-based standards of tribal membership, since such trends mean an inevitable decline in blood quantum for the intermarried and their descendants. I’m well aware that as a non-Native historian, it is not my place to tell tribes, nor anyone else, how to determine membership standards. I merely offer the humble suggestion that tribes and the US government alike should reject blood quantum as the divisive colonial artifact it is and return to older standards of tribal membership that don’t rely on the racialization of indigenous people and tribal membership, such as documented ancestry, kinship, adoption, marriage, political ties and community relationships. We, the American people, indigenous and non-Indian alike, can confront an increasingly multiracial future by looking into a cosmopolitan, harmonious past too often obscured by false, triumphalist narratives.

Metis relationships to assimilation and the dominant American narrative come from the late-nineteenth century and early 20th century legacy of often-agonizing choices made about identity, kinship and land, as can be seen in examining the lives of the Juneau family’s descendants. In the 1850s, the Juneau family of Milwaukee moved on to Theresa, Dodge County, Wisconsin, a village they founded and named after Solomon Juneau’s mother, Marie-Therese Juneau. Solomon and Josette Juneau’s eldest son, Narcisse Mathias Juneau, went with

⁴⁶⁵ Thornton, Russell. “The Demography of Colonialism and ‘Old’ and ‘New’ Native Americans.” In *Studying Native America: Problems and Prospects*. Edited by Russell Thornton. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998, 31.

them to Theresa in 1852. He was already married at this time to Madeline Yott of Green Bay⁴⁶⁶. What Isabella Fox's somewhat prim biography fails to mention is that Madeline Yott was Narcisse Juneau's first cousin, and fellow Metis. Madeline Yott Juneau was the daughter of Madeline Vieux Yott, Josette Vieux Juneau's sister⁴⁶⁷. Narcisse Juneau was elected Register of Deeds and an assemblyman of Dodge County.

In 1864, like the Beaubiens and other fur-trading Metis from the Great Lakes, Narcisse Juneau, Madeline Yott Juneau and family became members of the Citizen Band of Potawatomi and relocated to Kansas in 1869. Isabella Fox recorded that Narcisse worked as an interpreter, speaking Potawatomi, Menominee, Iroquois, Oneida, Ojibwe, Stockbridge and Kickapoo. He and his family settled with other Metis outside of Topeka, Kansas. Future generations of his family are strongly associated with Topeka, particularly the Church of the Assumption, the first Catholic church in Topeka. The Church of the Assumption was an outgrowth of the Catholic mission to the Potawatomi, so Catholicism in Topeka can be said to have a Metis foundation, although the church grew to serve European Catholics and their descendants as well. The family maintained their associations to Topeka's first Catholic church, to Mount Calvary cemetery in that city, and to the Citizen Potawatomi Band.

Catherine Juneau, the daughter of Narcisse and Madeline Yott Juneau, also married a Metis, Bernard Bonduel Bertrand, at the Potawatomi mission at St. Mary's, Kansas. Their children married Irish, European or white American Catholics in Topeka and maintained

⁴⁶⁶ Isabella Fox. *Solomon Juneau: A Biography*, 71-72.

⁴⁶⁷ Juneau Genealogy. Citizen Potawatomi Nation Archives, 2005.
<https://cpnresearch.potawatomi.org/objects/585/juneau-genealogy;jsessionid=F5CC4AE9DABD484EDEB76F356F1FABA7>

associations with Catholicism and the Church of the Assumption. Narcisse's son Charles Juneau, remembered for being a well-known fiddler, married Mary Kinette, an "Indiana Hoosier"⁴⁶⁸, at the Church of the Assumption. Charles and Mary Juneau's daughter, Josette Juneau, married Edward David Schwartz, the son of Catholic parents from Germany. "Grannie Schwartz" was evidently proud of her Potawatomi heritage and maintained herself and her children on the Citizen Potawatomi rolls. Her daughter, Gertrude Schwartz, married James Edward Talty, Sr., a Topeka mortician born in Ireland. Gertrude Schwartz Talty became a "lady mortician" herself- she and her husband attended the death of her grandfather, Charles Juneau, and handled the funerary arrangements.⁴⁶⁹

Paul Juneau, brother of Narcisse, also served in important political positions in the town of Theresa, Wisconsin, before dying relatively young. He was married to Olive Buttles,⁴⁷⁰ a woman of New-England Yankee ancestry from Pennsylvania, evidently a Catholic because she attended Catholic schools in Maryland. Their children also married into Irish and German Catholic families, and into well-known "Yankee-Yorker" families in Milwaukee and elsewhere, indicating that they were still considered socially acceptable, indeed of a high status, to marry. Bertha Juneau, Paul's second daughter, married Robert Strong Dousman, of the famous Mackinac fur-trading Dousmans, who had traded with the Juneau family in Mackinac and Milwaukee. Theresa Juneau and her descendants married into Irish Catholic families.

⁴⁶⁸ Hrenchir, Joan Marie. *Eight Generations in Kansas: The Relatives and Descendants of Narcisse and Madeline Juneau*. Berryton, Kansas, 1994, p. 66.

⁴⁶⁹ Hrenchir. *Eight Generations in Kansas: The Relatives and Descendants of Narcisse and Madeline Juneau*. Berryton, Kansas, 1994, 103.

⁴⁷⁰ Isabella Fox. *Solomon Juneau*, 75.

Frank or Francis Dodge Juneau was born in Milwaukee, “learned the tinner’s trade⁴⁷¹”, and moved a band of Menominee to St. Mary’s, Kansas, in the 1850s, where he worked as an interpreter. Unlike his siblings who settled in Kansas with their families, Frank Dodge Juneau returned to Wisconsin, settling in Theresa, where he married Leocadie Beaudoin, a French Canadian woman. He was treasurer of the Town of Theresa and continued in the hardware business whose fundamentals he had learned in Milwaukee. His children married into German, Czech and Anglo-American families.

Harriet Juneau “spoke French, Indian and German”⁴⁷² fluently, presumably in addition to English. Isabella Fox noted Harriet Juneau as being a fine singer at St. John’s Cathedral in Milwaukee, where Solomon and Josette Juneau had a pew and had paid for the cathedral’s construction. She played the piano, guitar and harp. She married Frank Fox, a “native of Ireland”⁴⁷³. Six of their nine children died in infancy. Marie Josette Fox, the eldest surviving daughter, married C.E. Hartley, an Iowa Quaker, and went west with him and their family to Colorado and New Mexico. Frances Fox married Frederick Pond (Will Wildwood), a famous sports writer, and had no children. Isabella Fox, the author of the memoir I am citing, was an unmarried resident of Kaukauna, Wisconsin, who apparently ran an “Indian Women’s Relief Corps”⁴⁷⁴ on the Menominee reservation at Keshena. This suggests that her Menominee heritage was important to Isabella Fox.

Isabella Fox posed for her book in self-described “Indian costume”⁴⁷⁵, the wedding dress

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 85.

⁴⁷² Isabella Fox, *Solomon Juneau*, 89.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 90.

⁴⁷⁵ Isabella Fox, 129-130.

of her ancestral relative, Theresa Rankin Lawe. She noted interestingly that the dress had been borrowed from J.D. Lawe of Kaukauna and that Theresa Lawe and Josette Vieau Juneau were cousins on the maternal side⁴⁷⁶. Sophia Theresa Rankin Grignon Lawe, known as Nekikoqua or Otter Woman in Ojibwe, bore two daughters to Louis Grignon, the Metis grandson of Charles de Langlade, before separating from him, to marry English trader John Lawe in 1802. The wedding dress is a distinctively Metis creation, a short gown of patterned wool, and a woolen skirt, shawl and leggings, all decorated with silk ribbon applique work. This was a symbol of ethnic heritage that Isabella Fox clearly wanted to preserve, even in the social world of 1916, when Native people faced a grueling round of land loss from federal allotment policies, forcible assimilation in boarding schools, and near-Orwellian control on reservations at the hands of Indian agents.

Sophia Theresa Rankin Grignon Lawe's exact connection to Josette Vieau Juneau is a bit mysterious. The Rentmeesters in *The Wisconsin Creoles* claim she was a niece of Marguerite Roy, Angelique Roy's mother⁴⁷⁷, making her a very distant maternal cousin to Josette Vieau Juneau and to Isabella Juneau Fox. Her familial connections to the Roys probably explain her family's presence at Menominee mixed-blood payments and treaty negotiations. Andrew J. Vieau, the brother of Josette Vieau Juneau, married Rebecca Lawe, a daughter of John and Theresa Lawe and therefore his own distant cousin- perhaps another instance of prominent women building kinship networks behind the scenes.

Charlotte Juneau, like the other Juneau children, attended schools in Milwaukee and

⁴⁷⁶ Isabella Fox, 130.

⁴⁷⁷ Rentmeester, Les and Jeanne. *The Wisconsin Creoles*. 1987, 192.

Detroit to complete her education. She was a trained schoolteacher in Theresa, who spoke “French, German and Indian”⁴⁷⁸ fluently. She married Charles J. Walther in 1860, a German-born Civil War soldier, and had one son, Louis Juneau Walthers. She died in 1869 in Theresa and is buried there in the Catholic cemetery. After the death of his mother, his father sent Louis Juneau Walthers to school in Germany, where he evidently became “quite a linguist”⁴⁷⁹. He returned to America in 1878, settling in Milwaukee. Louis Walthers married Helen Druschke, a German-born woman. Their daughter Elfrida married a Milwaukee German, Victor Ehrman. Hertha Walther married the Montreal-born Hillel Bernstein, settling with him in Chicago, where they raised a family. their daughters Muriel Helene Bernstein and Jane Juneau Bernstein.

Margaret Juneau, noted as “vivacious and bright”⁴⁸⁰, married George Walther in Theresa, a German-born Civil War soldier (possibly a relative of Charles Walther). He was county surveyor for Dodge County, a revenue inspector, a member of the Wisconsin State Legislature, and a justice of the peace in various parts of Milwaukee. They had three children. Their son Ottomar died at the age of two and a half: Margaret died in 1861 giving birth to her baby daughter, Alexia, who died shortly after her mother.

Eugene Juneau, born in Milwaukee, removed to Theresa where he was a Register of Deeds and an Indian interpreter. He married Delia Crotteau of Theresa- I couldn't find any information about Delia⁴⁸¹. They moved to Rudolph, Wood County, Wisconsin, where Eugene served as town clerk, and raised a large family, who all married Anglo-Americans and resided

⁴⁷⁸ Isabella Fox, *Solomon Juneau*, 95.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., 99.

⁴⁸¹ Isabella Fox, 104-105.

across Illinois and Wisconsin.

Mathilde Juneau died at the age of twenty-seven in Milwaukee after an unspecified “lingering illness”⁴⁸², and is buried in the Juneau family plot, Calvary cemetery, Milwaukee.

Ellen Frances Juneau, an “accomplished singer”⁴⁸³, turned down the chance of a New York City career in music to care for her aging parents in Theresa, where she became a music teacher and married the German-born Charles F. Wolters. They bore a large family centered on the Beloit area, where they resided, and were buried in the Catholic cemetery there.

Marie Juneau, born in Milwaukee, noted as a fluent speaker of English, French and German, became a schoolteacher in Theresa, Wisconsin, where she married Jean-Pierre Husting, a native of Luxembourg who had settled in Theresa with his family. Jean-Pierre Husting became a jeweler in Fond du Lac, spoke English, French, German and Luxembourgish fluently, and was also a secretary of a German-English Academy at Fond du Lac, and a postmaster and school treasurer at Mayville, Wisconsin.⁴⁸⁴

Several of Marie and Jean-Pierre’s sons went on to become lawyers and to be heavily involved in Wisconsin politics, most famously Wisconsin State Senator Paul O. Husting, a progressive-era Democrat whose early, fervent support of Woodrow Wilson and the Allied cause in World War I cost him the votes of German voters in Wisconsin. He died tragically in a hunting accident. One of his eulogies noted that he was on the Committee of Indian Affairs, perhaps one of the first Native persons to be on the committee. He held “very decided views” that Wisconsin’s natural resources, particularly those on Indian lands, should be conserved and

⁴⁸² Fox, 108-109.

⁴⁸³ Ibid., 113.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid, Fox, Isabella. *Solomon Juneau, A Biography, With Sketches of the Juneau Family.*

used for the benefit of Indians, and “sharply criticized” the mismanagement of Indian Affairs.⁴⁸⁵ Their family became concentrated in Kaukauna, Fond du Lac and Mayville, as well as Fargo, North Dakota, where they married prominent people.

Bonduel Fleurimont Juneau, named for the missionary priest who was his parents’ friend, was the second-youngest son of Solomon and Josette Juneau. Bonduel married Adelaide Dougherty, of Shannon, Illinois, and had five children, who settled all over the country. In 1873 Bonduel moved west to Kansas, near Topeka, possibly joining his other siblings and other Metis people who lived there. He was active in the Topeka police force for many years. Louis Juneau, the youngest son, was a printer in Milwaukee until the 1870s, when he moved south to Holly Springs, MS, where he married and had a large family⁴⁸⁶.

The members of the Juneau family lived interesting lives. Many of them out-married to European Catholics, but, as Lucy Murphy and others point out, this was the long-accepted custom of the fur trade and of their own families. They led lives in politics, law, teaching and charity work, and made marriages which indicated that they were among the elites of their day, but many of them migrated in family groups, maintained their Indian associations to the Citizen Band of Potawatomi, passed down a knowledge of Native languages, or advocated for Native rights and causes, whether on the Menominee reservation or in Washington. Like many people of mixed descent, the Juneau, Beaubien and LaFramboise families of Milwaukee and Chicago appear to have made their choices in life based on a multiplicity of factors.

⁴⁸⁵ “Paul O. Husting (Late a Senator from Wisconsin) Memorial Addresses Delivered in the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States.” U.S. Sixty-Fifth Congress, 3rd session, 1918-1919. Proceedings in the Senate March 2, 1919. Proceedings in the House, February 23, 1919.” Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1919, p. 31.

⁴⁸⁶ Fox, *Solomon Juneau*, 126-127.

While writing this work, I made the serendipitous discovery that my friend Esther Schwarzbauer, from Madison, Wisconsin, is a descendant of the Juneau family and of Francis Dodge Juneau. It seems only appropriate and fitting to conclude this dissertation with her story, the story of a modern descendant of the most famous Milwaukee Metis. Esther is proudly aware of her Native American ancestry, including her descent from Menominee leaders like Standing Earth. She is also aware that her family's history of intermarriage with European people, and her own majority-European ancestry, disqualify her from being a Menominee tribal member according to present day blood-quantum standards. She told me that her great-grandparents spoke Menominee, the indigenous language that survived in the family the longest, but that they decided not to teach Menominee to their children, her grandparents. Esther is proud of her Native heritage, a pride she learned from her family, but she admitted to me that she struggles with her identity. She has participated in a Ho-Chunk sweat ceremony. She attends powwows, but does not participate in the dances. She is "in love" with regalia, but hesitant to wear it herself, since she doesn't want to seem like she is "co-opting" her own culture. Much like the Metis people interviewed by Fiola and Legault, Esther is still dealing with a legacy of assimilation that leaves her hesitant to claim a place in a Native community. Nonetheless, she is aware that she is Native, proud to be Native, and will teach her children to be so, too. I pointed out to Esther that Native communities, particularly in the Great Lakes, based their membership on kinship, marriage, and other forms of affiliation, not blood quantum. I am drawn to the fur-trade era myself, including its customs, clothing, and languages, despite being a white American man, precisely because it is so very different from the master narrative of American history. I can't idealize the Metis as though they belonged

only to the past. Contemporary Metis and Native people, including my friend Esther, are very much “still here”, as the saying goes. The Metis culture was, however, distinctive, for preferring interracial marriage, harmony, and cooperation between free people over settler colonization and domination. To me, the Metis prove that culture, race, and identity cannot be narrowly, pseudo-biologically defined, that indigenous people have always adapted to change and will continue to do so, and that Indians are not, contrary to popular American belief and legal policies, slated for impending extinction. It is my admittedly optimistic and perhaps utopian hope that our shared Great Lakes past can be a guide towards a better future. This past lives on in families and their memories- a time when mutual outsiders decided to build a common society, to put aside enmity, share cultures, and become kin, lovers, spouses and friends. The central argument of my dissertation is that the Metis people of the American Great Lakes region retained a distinctive sense of kinship, identity and mobility in both an individual and collective sense as a people of their own, even when performing acts of outward assimilation to a ‘white’ or Indian identity as they survived colonization.

During the initial period of French colonization in the American Great Lakes in the 1600s, the French government and people refused to settle North America in large numbers. The people who came to Canada and the Great Lakes were mostly French men who vastly outnumbered French women in the Americas, men who did not want to settle down and farm, and who were economically and physically reliant on Indians for survival due to the economic orientation of the fur trade and the French colony’s under-population. Therefore, the French government promoted a strategy of intermarriage with Native women and male colonists, claiming the Metis offspring of these unions as legally French. Social conditions on the Great

Lakes actually created an environment where French men assimilated to Native culture and practices.

Meanwhile, the Indian communities of the Great Lakes faced a distinctive set of circumstances that caused them to welcome the presence of French men. The Anishinaabeg decided to become pro-French because they were driven west of Lake Michigan by the pro-British Haudenosaunee or Iroquois during fur-trade war and competition. Native men died at higher rates from war and introduced disease than Native women. Many Native women embraced Catholicism and married French or British men because they sought the chance to make political alliances between their tribes and the newcomers, gain economic access to trade goods, and assume individual roles as political and religious leaders in their communities. In the absence or rarity of priests, churches, or “institutional” Catholicism, Native women like Marie Rouensa Accault Phillippe became the primary religious authorities in their communities. Common-law marriages were concluded according to the customs of the indigenous women. Indigenous women grew, processed and traded the agricultural products and food for their communities, and were the principal customers for items like European trade cloth.

Great Lakes Native societies encouraged the incorporation of outsiders and potential enemies as relatives through adoption and intermarriage, and did not have fixed concepts of race. They did this because of an identity synonymous with kinship and clan totems, an identity rooted in large geographic homelands rather than one fixed space. Through adoption and intermarriage they were able to incorporate European people, African people, and Indians of different nationalities into their own tribes and communities, because of the distinctive status of tribes as political entities, and the distinctively civic and political, non-racial nature of tribal

citizenship. The French government tried to naturalize the Metis as French citizen-subjects, and in so doing tried to erase their indigenous identity, but failed. From the 1600s to the late 1700s, I argue that the Metis were able to inhabit multiple identities- to be French for the French and Native among Natives, but always with a consciousness of who they were as a distinctive group.

During and after the American Revolution in the 1770s and 1780s, and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which marked the American Great Lakes Metis as legally white, new concepts of race increasingly challenged the status of the Metis. A separate Metis identity began to form among the French Metis of the North West Company and the English/Scottish Half Breeds of the Hudson's Bay Company. European fathers began to exert a greater cultural influence on their Metis children toward the end of the eighteenth century, pulling some of them towards a culturally European way of living. Some Christian pan-Indian prophets saw the distinctive skin color of Indians as a metaphor for a political agenda that excluded non-Indians and marginalized the Metis. Pontiac, Neolin, and others promised a return to pre-contact ways of living and believed that Indian people, and no one else, were racially destined to inhabit America. Yet despite increasing pressure on them, the Metis occupied their customary role as , cultural brokers, fur-trade workers, interpreters and people of considerable wealth, still able to navigate between Native and non-Native identities in a predominantly Native space during a fur-trade economic boom, as the Metis maintained migratory lifestyles over large home territories. By the late eighteenth century, however, the Metis faced more pressure from colonial governments and white paternal relatives to Europeanize than they had in previous times.

The nineteenth century brought challenges and changes as the period of treaty-making

and Indian removal began. The Metis served as interpreters and signatories in treaties, and became the recipients of cash payments and on rare occasions, “half-breed tracts” of land. Governments attempted to diminish the number of Indians, diminish the political power of tribes, and use a “divide and conquer” method of separating indigenous people from each other. Some Indians wanted Metis counted in the treaties as Indians themselves: others vilified their Metis kin as turncoats in this tense era. The US government also recognized the distinctive, political nature of tribal citizenship by claiming that only the federal government had power to trade with Indians, and by declaring that Indians could not be taxed or subjected to state law. Nineteenth-century American legal formulations recognized the distinctiveness of tribal citizenship by excluding tribal Indians from American citizenship, categorizing tribal citizenship as legally distinctive, although inferior and dependent, and associating American citizenship with the category of whiteness. The Northwest Territories needed Metis men politically as white voters, and deemed them legally white American citizens, but only if they were *not* tribal citizens/ members, showing the clear racial component to American citizenship. I theorize that indigenous people represented *anti* citizens in early colonial America: a group of non-citizens who were not only ineligible for citizenship until 1924, but people whose very presence was antithetical to a settler-colonial democracy. Most of the American Metis in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Indiana and Illinois publicly assimilated to whiteness and reinvented themselves as “French Creoles”, but some continued to reside together, married one another, and maintained a sense of their distinctive identity and culture, including a cautious, ambivalent pride in Native ancestry and connections. Nineteenth century Metis memoirists such as Elizabeth Baird, Andrew Vieau, Frances Howe, and others walked a fine line between

being proud of their indigenous heritage and presenting themselves as “civilized” people adjacent to whiteness, Catholicism, and the French language.

19th-century legislation in Canada punished Indian women and their property rights by excluding all Indian women who married non-Native men, and their children, from tribal membership or an identity as Indians- a specific blow against the Metis. Unlike the United States, Canada also did not allow the Metis to be white. Unable to be Indian or white by government standards, Canadian Metis developed a distinctive political identity that did not form in the United States and fought two armed rebellions against the Canadian government led by Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont.

When those rebellions failed, Canadian Metis faced the same choices as their American cousins- whether to remain in their own distinctive communities, cross the border, enroll in tribes as Indians, or assimilate into whiteness. Because of the politicization of Canadian Metis identity, most scholarship on the Metis pertains to Canada, although many Canadian Metis acknowledge that they too faced forcible assimilation into a French or white identity.

In both Canada and the USA, the late nineteenth and early 20th centuries were periods of forcible assimilation of indigenous people and attempts to extinguish the political nationhood of indigenous tribes and the Metis, which is why the Metis identity in America became primarily an ethnic identity, not a political one as in Canada. I argue that the debate over the racial and political status of the Metis was a precursor to 20th-century Indian policies such as assigning “blood quantum” for tribal membership, residential schools for Indian children, and individual allotment of tribally and communally owned lands.

Even after generations of assimilation and “official” choices to become white or Indian,

many American Metis still know exactly who they are, and retain knowledge and pride of their indigenous ancestry, connections to Native communities, and historic fur-trade ties, despite wrestling with painful legacies of silence and oppression.

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