Threads of Visual Culture: Métis Art and Identity in Ontario

by Gloria Jane Bell

School for Studies in Art and Culture

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fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts**

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Abstract

This is a study of how Métis identity is reflected through visual culture in the Ontario and Great Lakes region. It considers the historical development of mixed-heritage peoples in the nineteenth century and also examines present day concerns for the preservation of Métis heritage and cultural identity. The examples of visual culture I examine in the following chapters include historical paintings, objects in private collections and performances at a living history heritage park. I argue that visual culture has been and remains a key site for understanding the complex identity of Métis in Ontario and that because Ontario Métis have been largely ignored in scholarly research, visual culture is a particularly important source in understanding both the historical developments of Métis and the current renewal of Métis culture and identity.

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Preface

Numerous scholars have noted the presence of mixed-heritage families within the Great Lakes in the nineteenth century, but few have attempted to understand the development and persistence of visual culture for Métis in this region. With this study, I hope to raise awareness of the role played by material culture in identity formation through the study of several different forms of visual culture including paintings, private collections and a heritage site. Through this examination, this thesis also aims to highlight the various artistic, historical and social layers that inform the sense of Métis identity and pride today. This topic has been a challenging and rewarding area of study. Challenges included understanding the complex and shifting definitions of Métis identity provided by legislation, scholarly research and contemporary political and cultural associations. I have attempted to bring clarity to these definitions in this study and to argue that Métis and mixed-heritage identity should be examined on a family and community level in order to get away from broad generalizations about identity which tell little about individual experiences.

Another challenging aspect of my study was creating a balance between my role as researcher and my goal of fairly representing the voices of Métis. As a person with Métis heritage, I am still coming to grips with western academic traditions and the sometimes devastating effects they have had as tools of colonial expansion on Aboriginal communities. Yet I also recognize that research with and for Aboriginal peoples, if done sensitively, can be greatly rewarding for both the researcher and the communities involved.

I feel proud to be Métis, yet I am also saddened by the terrible discrimination and violence that Métis families have faced and continue to experience, because of their perceived difference. I do not claim to represent all Métis with this thesis, but rather, the small group who agreed to share their perspectives with me. I have aimed for a method and writing style that is conversational and personal and which honors both the participants and my own concerns as an ethical researcher. My writing style has been influenced by anthropologists such as Ruth Behar, whose book *The Vulnerable Observer*, (1996) is powerful in its ability to draw on personal memory and let this inform her work. She makes a strong case for the value of incorporating personal views and memories into one's work.¹ Furthermore, I sense that many of these questions on identity are open-ended and will have various interpretations, mine being one of many.

I found when conducting my interviews with Métis at the Annual General Assembly in Sudbury, August 2009 that a common thread was the pride that many people feel about their Métis heritage, whether they originate from western Canada or from the Great Lakes region, the area that is the focus of this study. One of the most rewarding times of my research was interviewing Métis, young and old, and hearing what being Métis means to them. I feel privileged to have listened to their stories and these voices will be presented in my study where appropriate. I hope that this study will create more interest in this topic and that people will continue to debate and research the visual culture of the Métis and mixed-heritage families within the Great Lakes area. This whole project may be thought of as a personal and collaborative contribution to the collective memory of Métis in Ontario, through the voices presented in conversation and through

¹ Ruth Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996).

art.

In this study I will predominantly use the terms Métis, Half-Breed and mixed-heritage rather than other terms which connote racial paradigms of previous centuries. I will address the issue of terminology in more detail in Chapter One.

Chapter One - Introduction

This is a study of how Métis identity is reflected through visual culture in the Ontario and Great Lakes region. It considers the historical development of mixed-heritage peoples in the nineteenth century and also examines present day concerns for the preservation of Métis heritage and cultural identity. The examples of visual culture I examine in the following chapters include historical paintings, objects in private collections and living history performances. I argue that visual culture has been and remains a key site for understanding the complex identity of Métis in Ontario and that because Ontario Métis have been largely ignored in scholarly research, visual culture is a particularly important source in understanding both the historical developments of Métis and the current resurgence of Métis culture and identity.

The rapidly growing number of people identifying as Métis today is based on a renewal of Métis pride paralleling other indigenous movements for recognition of rights and freedom of identity. These claims follow a century and more of oppression, denial and fear that Métis people have faced in Ontario and Canada. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many Métis were coerced into suppressing their identity for fear of public reprisal, in order to assimilate into settler society. Métis and mixed-heritage families who had Indian and European heritage threatened notions of racial purity held by their Euro-Canadian neighbours and, as a result, experienced racial hatred and prejudice. As Sylvia Van Kirk notes in her essay “The Cultural Ambivalence of the Alexander Ross Family,” (1985), “British-Indian children were taught to deny and increasingly felt the need to suppress the Indian part

of their heritage, but racist attitudes could nevertheless deny them the positions in white society to which they aspired.”² Although some Métis families hid their identities in an attempt to integrate into society, many continued to face discrimination despite their efforts to blend in.

In response to the suppression of Métis identity in previous decades, we are seeing today a reclaiming of Métis pride, and many people who were previously not identified as Métis now proudly proclaim they are Métis. For example, several of the participants whom I interviewed at the Métis Annual General Assembly (AGA) in 2009 in Sudbury, Ontario, said that they had discovered their Métis heritage within the last twenty years. Many of their families had experienced hatred and attempted to hide or disguise their identity to integrate within the broad Euro-centric and colonialist policies of Canadian society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The birth of the Métis Nation of Ontario, in 1994, which unites Métis from all over the province and recognizes Métis heritage based on historical records, introduces a new sense of nationalism that is different from the development of past Métis communities, but is no less proud and demanding of recognition in Canadian society.

Academic research on the Métis of Ontario and the Great Lakes is scarce. This can be explained by several factors. One is that academia has not yet caught up with the recent resurgences of people identifying as Métis. In the area of visual culture, the lack of material identified as Métis from the Great Lakes area in museum

² Sylvia Van Kirk, “What if Mama is an Indian?: The Cultural Ambivalence of the Alexander Ross Family” in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, ed. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. Brown, (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 208. Please note: I use the term “Indian” to focus my study on the Métis and Indian peoples of the Great Lakes, rather than Aboriginal which includes the Inuit. I realize that the term “Indian” is problematic as it does not convey the varied individual experiences of many indigenous peoples across Canada yet it is necessary because the term “Aboriginal” is too broad in the context I examine.

collections is a problem-- probably because material is mis-labelled, as a result of the reluctance of many people to identify themselves as Métis due to the racism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This lack of identification in museums could also be due to the tendency of Euro-Canadian anthropologists and other cultural workers to identify Aboriginal material in terms of categories which conveyed cultural 'purity', rather than the category of Métis, which conveys both Indian and European heritage.³ We can also speculate that many Métis did not keep their sashes and other material culture in an attempt not to be 'found out.' A member of one Métis family told me, for example, that they had burned their sashes and other items in the early twentieth century for fear of being discovered as Métis.⁴ Another factor which may have contributed to the lack of scholarship and attributed material in museum collections is the general misconception that Métis communities have existed and live only in western Canada. I argue that peoples' perception of the Métis as an essentially western Canadian *Rielity* needs to be changed.

The word Métis is contested and has been defined and interpreted in many different ways in relation to North America. Confusion over the term 'Métis' has been perpetuated by the shifting definitions of Métis identity over the past several centuries in law and in the scholarly literature in history, anthropology and art history. This confusion is reflected in the different concepts of Métis identity presented at heritage sites and by contemporary Métis associations.⁵ For the purposes of my study

³ Thanks to Dr. Ruth Phillips for bringing this to my attention.

⁴ Interview with Mandi Wikis, AGA, Sudbury, August 2009. To see the entire interview please see the appendix.

⁵ Gwen Reimer and Jean-Phillipe Chartrand make an excellent summary of all the different terms for Métis, and they also use Métis capitalized and with an accent, since the origin of the term was for people of French-Indian descent. They also point out that Métis is capitalized in section 35 of the

I will use the term Métis to describe the development of a distinct people throughout Canada who were influenced by both Aboriginal and European traditions and considered themselves Métis across multiple generations. This does not exclude, however, Métis who have self-identified recently. It will be useful to begin by examining in more detail the definitions that have been proposed by legislation, by the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) and by academics in order to understand the shifting conceptions of Métis identity in the Great Lakes area.

Federal Law

Within Ontario, the development of Métis identity has changed over time and within specific communities and families. This chapter focuses primarily on the current-day definitions of Métis as espoused by the government and academic community. Legal definitions also differ from those used by curators of collections which can vary from one institution to another.

In Canada today, Métis are recognized as Aboriginal people of Canada according to section 35 of the Constitution Act, (1982). It states, “the existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed. (2) In this Act, “aboriginal peoples of Canada” includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.”⁶ Although Métis are thus recognized on a federal level, they must apply through their provincial Métis body to become members of the Métis nation. The provincial organizations, which are affiliates of the Métis National Council, include the Métis Nation of British Columbia, the Métis Nation of Alberta,

charter, to recognize their distinct status. Gwen Reimer and Jean-Phillipe Chartrand, “Documenting Historic Métis in Ontario,” *Ethnohistory* 51 (2004): 598.

⁶ Department of Justice, “Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution Act 1982,” http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/const/annex_e.html#II.

the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, the Manitoba Métis Federation and the MNO.

There are other provincial bodies of Métis but they are not recognized by the Métis National Council.⁷

Métis Nation of Ontario

Métis individuals living in Ontario can apply for membership according to its prescribed procedure:

Métis living in Ontario can make a citizenship application to the Métis Nation of Ontario (“MNO”), which maintains the only recognized provincial Registry for Métis. An independent Registrar assesses and authorizes citizenship when applicants meet the criteria set out in the National Definition for Métis, adopted at the Métis National Council’s 18th General Assembly in 2002 and subsequently accepted by the MNO.⁸

These criteria include: self-identification as Métis, acceptance by the MNO, and ties to the Historic Métis Nation.⁹ Yet the criteria proposed by the Métis National Council do not necessarily reflect the ethnogenesis of the Métis, the birth and development of distinct identities for Métis across Canada since many Métis may not be able to prove their connection to a “historic homeland.” Further, there may be Métis that consider themselves as such but do not fit under these legal definitions. This is especially true in Ontario and the Great Lakes because, as stated previously, there is little scholarship on Métis communities in Ontario, the area that is the focus of this study. (In the USA, it should be noted there is no official recognition for Métis, and this is a cause for complaint among many people. This issue is, however, beyond the scope of this

⁷ Although there are Métis in other eastern provinces, they are not part of the Métis National Council. They are represented under the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP).

⁸ The Métis Nation of Ontario, “Registry,” <http://www.metisnation.org/consultations/citizen.html>.

⁹ “Governance Métis Registration and Identification,” National Definition of Métis in Annual Report, 2008-2009, Métis Nation of Ontario, 10.

thesis.¹⁰⁾

Theoretical Approaches

The theorization of hybridity, decolonization and material culture are all important to the focus of my study. Key texts that examine theories on hybrid identity and colonialism's impact on culture are Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994), and Robert Young's *Colonial Desire*, (1995). As Young writes, hybrid identity is defined both biologically and socially; in the term's origins in nineteenth century theory, it references Eugenicist thought. Miscegenation, although it was accepted by the monogenetic school of thought in the early nineteenth century, was replaced with polygenetic theory, which promoted the idea that Europeans were racially superior to all other peoples and that the union of Aboriginal or other races with whites would lead to degenerates. This polygenetic theory was carried on through Social Darwinism which posited that some races had developed and were 'civilized' and others would never 'advance' to the state of the white European. Bhabha reclaims this racist rhetoric as a form of resistance and argues that the hybrid subject poses a threat to colonial powers because of his or her ability to challenge the authority of established norms that constitute the daily practices and assumptions of the subject in society.¹¹ He argues: "hybridity is the name of this displacement of value from symbol to sign that causes the dominant discourse to split along the axis of its power to be representative, authoritative. Hybridity represents that ambivalent 'turn' of the discriminated subject into the terrifying, exorbitant object of paranoid

¹⁰ In the United States, people are recognized only as North American Indian. Furthermore, the blood quantum theory is used to determine status. Interview with Earl Scofield, AGA, Sudbury, August 2009.

¹¹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge, 1994), 111.

classification - a disturbing questioning of the images and presences of authority.”¹²

Bhabha views hybridity as a disconcerting and potentially revolutionary power for the “discriminated subject.” In Bhabha’s terms then, the identity of the Métis, inherently a hybrid culture, could be viewed by the colonizers as a challenge of white principles of superiority and civilization, and thus threatens the belief held by white settlers that they were superior to Aboriginals. These theories on hybrid identity help explain the ideologies behind historic perceptions of Métis, and illuminate past and present discourses that indigenous and non-indigenous people need to be aware of in order to analyze primary sources such as travel accounts, and images depicting Métis people.

While Bhabha’s use of the term “hybridity” explains how Euro-Canadian society may have understood Métis, it does not specifically address how Métis in various communities across Canada used art to express identity. As Serge Gruzinski argues in his book *The Mestizo Mind*, (2002), *mestizos* (mixed heritage) in South America refined indigenous and European ideas of art, music and literature. There were many overlaps between these styles and the arts had a significant role in creating and negotiating new identities. Gruzinski states:

One indigenous artist portrayed the investitures of a series of monarchs of the Mexica tribe in highly anachronistic settings: richly worked columns, thrones with complicated moldings, cartouches decorated with foliate motifs, the occasional presence of satyrs or modest caryatids. What is the explanation for these borrowings and appropriations? Since mannerist decoration was in the air and could accommodate novelty and strangeness, it facilitated the reading of Mexican imagery without totally excluding specifically indigenous traits such as pre-Conquest glyphs, architectural features, weapons and garments. The use of grotesque decoration made it possible to maintain a constant balance between the exotic and the familiar. It was also used to highlight a scene from the past by underscoring the majesty of the monarch and the lavishness of Amerindian palaces.¹³

¹² Bhabha, 162.

¹³ Serge Gruzinski, *The Mestizo Mind: The Intellectual Dynamics of Colonization and Globalization*,

Mestizo people adapted to a life style of hybridity, as Gruzinski argues, “It (the situation of the Conquest) stimulated a capacity for invention and improvisation necessary to survival in an extremely troubled, composite, and totally unprecedented context (Amer-Afro-European). This constraint forged a special receptiveness among survivors – flexibility in social practices, fluidness of eye and perception, and an aptitude for combining highly diverse fragments.”¹⁴ While the artistic identity of Métis and *mestizo* people developed differently, Gruzinski’s argument about *mestizo* processes is useful in considering the Métis in Ontario. How did Métis negotiate European and Indian traditions and express this in their material culture?

The work of indigenous scholars, who have critiqued the state of research within our ‘post-colonial’ society are important to the issues surrounding Métis identity. Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s *Decolonizing Methodologies*, (1999), is useful for positioning myself, as a Métis, who acknowledges both my European and Indian heritage. I would like to incorporate some questions that Smith, an indigenous scholar from New Zealand, raises in her call to researchers. She ‘sounds an alarm bell’ to scholars and activists urging them to critically examine the research, writing, and community involvement of non-indigenous academics and the role this research has played in the perpetuation of western knowledge and power systems. In the name of imperialism, non-Aboriginal researchers, consciously or not, have recorded and used indigenous knowledge to advance western discourses of art, science, and the humanities while leaving out indigenous people in the process. For Smith, there is a clear dividing line between the colonizer and the colonized. She is ultimately pushing

(New York: Routledge, 2002), 136.

for an indigenous overhaul of the western style and system of research and a 'rewriting' of indigenous histories. Smith clearly articulates the way that colonialism has divided the west from "the rest."¹⁵ She argues that the discourse of the 'post colonial' is problematic because it implies that colonialism is over. According to Smith, colonialism continues through western forms of research, dialogue, writing and other modes of knowledge. She notes,

The globalization of knowledge and Western culture constantly reaffirms the West's view of itself as the centre of legitimate knowledge, the arbiter of what counts as knowledge and the source of 'civilized' knowledge. This form of global knowledge is generally referred to as 'universal' knowledge, available to all and not really 'owned' by anyone, that is, until non-Western scholars make claims to it. When claims like that are made history is revised (again) so that the story of civilization remains the story of the West.¹⁶

The colonizers are still here, as Smith notes,

Even when they (colonizers) have left formally, the institutions and legacy of colonialism have remained. Decolonization, once viewed as the formal process of handing over the instruments of the government, is now recognized as a long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power.¹⁷

One could argue, however, that for indigenous researchers, western-style research is still valuable and useful, yet one needs to be aware of the history and perpetuation of power in institutions such as museums as well as the general ignorance that people have about colonization and its effects. At the G20 Summit in Pittsburgh, September 2009, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper stated: "We also have no history of

¹⁴ Gruzinski, 51.

¹⁵ For an in-depth discussion of how colonization is linked to theories of race, science, and sex, and how this continues to denigrate indigenous peoples see Robert Young's *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*.

¹⁶ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, (London: University of Otago Press, 1999), 63.

¹⁷ Smith, 98.

colonialism.”¹⁸ Although many people disagree with Harper, this statement represents a portion of people who need to be informed about colonization and its effects.

Smith’s model of critiquing the idea of ‘post-colonial’ will be useful in understanding Métis cultural concerns, since much of our material culture lies in western institutions which have for so long perpetuated notions of western progress and civilization to the detriment of indigenous peoples.

An examination of literature by curators and academics based on museum collections of Métis material culture is critical to understanding previous ideas about Métis cultural identity and development through art. Ted Brasser, Julia Harrison, Kate Duncan, Barbara Hail, and Sherry Farrell Racette have conducted important studies on the material culture of the Métis based on museum collections. The formal analysis of the aesthetic and stylistic qualities of Métis material culture developed by these curators and scholars is essential to the evaluation of whether there are specific Métis styles within the Great Lakes area. Racette’s stylistic analysis of collections of material culture identified as Métis and her theory of Métis identity as a fluid and shifting entity are especially influential on my work.¹⁹

Alfred Gell’s theory which identifies art objects as agents which have the ability to act on viewers is useful in analyzing the role of material culture in public museums and private collections in forming identity.²⁰ Through their ability to create

¹⁸ Canadian Business Online Markets, “Prime Minister Harper denies Colonialism in Canada at G20,” Canadian Business Online, http://www.canadianbusiness.com/markets/cnw/article.jsp?content=20090929_172501_0_cnw_cnw.

¹⁹ Sherry Farrell Racette, *Sewing Ourselves Together: Clothing, Decorative Arts and the Expression of Métis and Half Breed Identity*, Ph. D. Thesis, (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba, 2004), 185.

²⁰ Alfred Gell, “The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology,” in *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*, ed. Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 52.

objects that exhibit fine design and technical mastery, artists endow objects with the ability to fascinate and enchant viewers. Even when artists are no longer living, their power is presented through objects they have created. Therefore when ambiguities surround an object's provenance, this can affect its agency. I will test Gell's theory of agency in relation to art objects in three different sites: public museums, private collections and the MNO's Annual General Assembly (AGA), Sudbury in 2009.

Theories on reenactment are important to the understanding of living history interpretations. Reenactment as performance can disrupt linear ideas of history and challenge colonial conceptions which have 'white-washed' history and largely excluded or misrepresented Aboriginal peoples. As Gerald McMaster, an Aboriginal scholar and curator, notes in relation to the performance, *Artifact Piece* performed by James Luna in 1985, which critiqued how Native Americans were objectified in museums, "Was this a living history performance that we sometimes see actors perform in museums? This was neither a passion play nor fantasy role playing as most re-enactments are prone to be; rather it was a political /cultural work of a post-colonial kind in which Luna was reclaiming a voice for the marginal."²¹ I make a similar argument about historical interpretation as an important tool in educating and entertaining visitors that also may be used to present alternative narratives and challenge colonial misconceptions.

Historiography

Most curators and scholars argue that the development of the Métis nation occurred at the Red River Settlement and that Métis families dispersed from there to other regions. As will be discussed, both Brasser, a former curator at the Canadian

Museum of Civilization (CMC), and Racette, a Métis scholar and artist, acknowledge the presence of Métis in the Great Lakes area, but do not describe them as having a distinct nation similar to the Métis of the Red River Settlement.²² Historian Carolyn Podruchny has argued that within the Great Lakes region ties of kinship established through relationships with Indian women (female kinship ties) were essential to fur trade routes, expansion and trading itself, and she cites the community of St. Joseph, Michigan, as a prime example. However, she also notes that the Métis did not identify themselves as unique. She argues, “nor were the residents of eighteenth century St. Joseph a distinct Métis people. Identity was embedded in kin networks. People defined themselves by their relatives, while outsiders identified them as either French or Indian.”²³ Podruchny’s argument is useful for thinking about Métis families in the Great Lakes area, and her argument raises a question that is critical to my research. At what point in the mingling between First Nations and Europeans would a family identify as Métis? For example, if a Cree woman and a European man had a family, how would they identify their children? Would the children identify with the culture of the Cree mother or the European father, or was this co-mingling the first instance of Métis culture?

There is also disagreement among historians about the stability of Métis identity in the Great Lakes area in the nineteenth century. Scholar Jacqueline Peterson

²¹ Gerald McMaster, *The Double Entendre of Re-Enactment*, (V Tape: Toronto, 2007), 4.

²² Ted Brasser, “In Search of métis Art” in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America*, ed. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. Brown, (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba, 1985). Sherry Farrell Racette, *Sewing Ourselves Together: Clothing, Decorative Arts and the Expression of Metis and Half Breed Identity*, Ph. D. Thesis, (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba, 2004).

²³ Carolyn Podruchny, “Furs and Female Kin Networks” in *New Faces of the Fur Trade: Selected Papers of the Seventh North American Fur Trade Conference, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1995*, ed. Jo-Anne Fiske, Susan Sleeper-Smith, William Wicken, (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press,

argues that the Métis did exist within the Great Lakes region during the nineteenth century but that after that their identity faded out because of the intermixing with various peoples. She states,

The very diffuseness of fur trade communities whose members had married among and were related to more than a dozen tribes – Algonkian, Siouan, and Iroquoian speakers – made group solidarity and combined action difficult to sustain under pressure. In the end, the identity of the Great Lakes Métis, like the transitional economy, which gave it life, was to prove a fragile construction. Between 1815 and 1850, years which witnessed the sudden fluorescence of a distinctive Métis population and culture radiating outward from the junction of the Assinboine and Red Rivers, present-day Winnipeg, the old fur trade communities of the Great Lakes region collapsed, drowned in the flood of American settlement and capitalist expansion.²⁴

Peterson's argument is generally acknowledged as accurate, as evidenced by the many curators and scholars who have followed in her train of thought, acknowledging the presence of Métis culture in the Great Lakes region. Because she does not see them as developing a long-term identity, by implication, they would not have developed a distinctive artistic production comparable to that of the Métis in western Canada. Was the identity of the Métis in Ontario a "fragile construction" as Peterson argues?²⁵

One could argue that over time Métis identities were unstable, rather than fragile. Scholars such as Karen J. Travers argue that the Métis in the Great Lakes area developed along an alternate trajectory. She discusses the migration of Métis from Drummond Island to support her argument. Travers notes,

Great Lakes Métis are continually compared to Red River but they never quite measure up; they are the "beginning", the "prelude", the "genesis", and "in the

1998), 62.

²⁴ Jacqueline Peterson, "Many Roads to Red River: Métis Genesis in the Great Lake Region, 1680 – 1815," in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, ed. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. Brown, (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 64.

²⁵ Peterson, 64.

process of becoming” but they always fall short. As a result, histories tend to focus on the “real” Métis, where the identity was focused in the resistance led by Riel at Red River. Great Lakes Métis villages, of which Drummond Island is one of many, had an entirely different evolution and came before those settlements at Red River. They hunted, fished, gathered all kinds of vegetables, and other products. Both women and men intermarried with Anishinabe, Iroquoian, and Cree in a much earlier period. Thus, the history of the Great Lakes Métis cannot be told solely within this context.²⁶

Travers’ research shows that the Métis who are now based in Penetanguishine, Ontario originally migrated from Drummond Island. She makes her case based on a census from 1901 and discusses the population, religion, and living patterns of the community. Travers implies that perhaps Métis communities in Ontario should be considered more within their own historical context and not necessarily with the development of Métis nationalism in western Canada. Travers’s research is important in that she establishes that there were Métis communities in the Great Lakes region. Indeed, the Powley Case, a significant legal victory for the Métis of Ontario, was based on a similar argument that a distinct Métis community had existed in Sault Ste Marie. The case was won in 2003 and allows Métis in Ontario and other provinces their harvesting rights.²⁷ Therefore, it could be argued for the presence of distinct Métis communities within Ontario both historically and today as evidenced by communities such as Sault Ste. Marie and Penetanguishine and the rapidly growing number of people registering as Métis Citizens with the MNO.²⁸ More research needs to be done to investigate communities within Ontario although it presents many

²⁶ Karen J. Travers, “The Drummond Island Voyageurs and the Search for Great Lakes Métis Identity”, in *The Long Journey of a Forgotten People: Métis Identities and Family Histories*, (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2007), 221.

²⁷ Métis Nation of Ontario Harvesting, “The Powley Case,” Métis Nation of Ontario, http://www.metisnation.org/harvesting/Powley_Case/home.html.

²⁸ Based on the 2006 Census, 389, 780 Canadians self-identified as Métis. In Ontario, the highest growth was reported with 73, 605 identifying as Métis. Métis Nation of Ontario Annual Report

challenges, primarily in the identification of Métis in the historical record.

Julia Harrison, an anthropologist and former curator of Glenbow Museum's ethnology department, supports the view that the Métis are still a strong and distinct nation within Canada. Harrison's book *Métis: People Between Two Worlds*, (1985), was based on her exhibition of the same title which examined the Métis since their early inception to present day. However, Harrison focuses predominantly on the Métis in western Canada, at the Red River Settlement and in the Northwest Territories, thereby excluding consideration that there were communities of Métis in the Ontario region.

Harrison offers a crucial explanation of why Métis have struggled within western Canada, which could also apply to many other Métis in Canada. She explains the difficulties they have faced in integrating with society. She argues

Because scrip had denied the Métis any of their privileges of the ward status of the Treaty Indian population, they were often poverty stricken and unable to have access to schooling, health care, and, most critically, land. Some managed to become members of the community, but this was often at the price of denying their ancestry. At the same time, the differences in status between Indians and Métis drove a rift between them that still exists today.²⁹

Harrison also reported on a major 1956 study of Métis in Manitoba, directed by Jean Lagasse for the Social and Economic Research Office. Lagasse found that many people who technically qualified as Métis did not self-identify because they felt humiliated. Harrison states, "Many of those who qualified denied being Métis because they had been taught to be ashamed of their heritage, and as a result, identification was sometimes made by another individual."³⁰ According to Harrison,

2008/2009, "Métis Population," 8.

²⁹ Julia Harrison, *Metis: People Between Two Worlds*, (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1985), 79.

³⁰ Harrison, 123.

Métis suffered prejudice and were isolated and excluded from both the “white” way of life, and Aboriginal communities.³¹ Harrison’s proposal that we look at who the Métis are on an individual basis is very relevant, even though her argument is based predominantly on the Métis in western Canada. She argues,

Who the Métis were in a cultural sense could only be understood by looking at the individual lives of people in the general Métis population. Native heritage is only part of Métis identity. Legal status and social pressures, combined with independence and individuality, have defined the Métis as both Native and white.³²

While I agree with Harrison’s suggestion that we can understand Métis identity by contemplating family histories, we can also consider how material culture might have been used as a source of expression. In this context, I will discuss the prominent Schoolcraft family of Sault Ste. Marie, looking briefly at both their identity as a mixed-heritage family and the role the material and literary arts played in their development.

Kate Duncan and Barbara Hail contributed another important discussion of the identity of the Métis and their cultural production in their exhibition catalogue *Out of the North: the Sub-arctic Collection of the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology*, (1989). Their work was based on an examination of hundreds of beadwork samples from across the Sub-arctic. Although they focus on the presence of the Métis in the Northwest Territories from the nineteenth-century onwards, it is useful to understand how they identify the Métis. They note,

In the southern Sub-arctic, descendents of French-Canadian workers in the fur trade and their Cree or Ojibwa wives emerged in the early nineteenth century as a distinctive ethnic group at Red River and later on the Saskatchewan River, and were largely Roman Catholic and bilingual in French and Cree.

³¹ Harrison, 124.

³² Harrison, 135. (Harrison does not add the French accent to the word Métis).

Those living north and west of Fort Simpson in the Mackenzie District, the Yukon, and Alaska, generally known as northern Métis, are descendants of more recent unions (post 1850) and northern European (especially Scottish) paternal descent, and are generally Protestant in religion and bilingual in English and an Athabaskan language. The Métis played a major role in the development of the Sub-arctic fur trade, have served as cultural intermediaries, and have contributed significantly to Sub-arctic cultural life and arts.³³

Hail and Duncan, like Harrison and Brasser, attribute the development of Métis nationhood to the Métis at the Red River Settlement. Their use of terms like “Chippewa –Métis” and “Cree/Cree-Métis type” acknowledges the influences of both Indian and European heritage on people’s work. They caution against using the term Métis to address other groups who have mixed Indian and European heritage but do not necessarily come from the Red River.

I would argue that, for women in the Northwest Territories in the twentieth and twenty-first century, the specific terms used in the categorization of their work as Indian are not as important as the general impact of the beadwork and floral embroidery that they create. As Duncan and Hail note,

Present-day craftswomen maintain that both native and Métis women deserve credit for the floral embroidery arts of the Sub-arctic. As Maria Houle of Fort Chippewyan said, “It’s the same – Cree, Chip, half-breed – the same.” Agnes Mecredi Williams, Chipewyan-Métis, agreed: “Everybody did it. If there was a difference, perhaps the Métis took a little more pains, because they were usually living in more comfortable places, where they were warm.”³⁴

Furthermore, they note that there are many women who are of mixed blood in the Sub- arctic region: “They think of themselves as Indian and do not use the term Métis. Both elderly and younger Kutchin women insist that the beadwork by both

³³ Barbara A. Hail and Kate C. Duncan, *Out of the North: the Sub-arctic Collection of the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology* (Bristol, R.I: The Museum, 1989), 22.

³⁴ Duncan and Hail, 33.

full-and mixed-bloods shows no differences.”³⁵ This suggests that artwork should be considered within the artist’s community context and that categories imposed by governmental institutions may not accurately describe the identities held by Aboriginal peoples. A similar approach could be applied to understanding material culture collections from the Great Lakes; when possible, family histories should be used to understand artistic development and community influence.

Material culture and art

Scholarship on Métis art and identity has shifted over the past twenty-five years for a number of reasons. For the majority of the twentieth century, many anthropologists and curators espoused a predominantly ‘Indian evolutionism’ viewpoint towards Métis culture. This perspective posited that Aboriginal people were genetically inferior to the white race and would eventually die out. According to the “golden age” paradigm, the most prosperous time for Métis artistic development was from the 1820s to the 1870s. Ted Brasser, who wrote several articles on Métis art, published between 1985 and 1987, created this paradigm of a mythical golden era. However, Brasser also verified Métis art, beadwork and embroidery, as distinctive art forms and brought them into academic consciousness. Importantly, he identified the Métis as the “flower-beadwork people” and credited them with having influenced the entire artistic production of Northwestern Canada in the late nineteenth-century. Brasser’s identification of Métis material in several institutions is an important stepping point for scholars studying Métis material culture.

Brasser’s essay “In Search of métis Art,” (1985), discusses the development of Métis artistic style, starting with a history of the Métis in the Great Lakes, but he

³⁵ Duncan and Hail, 61.

credits the Métis of the Red River Settlement, Manitoba, as spreading the floral beadwork style throughout the Northwest Territories. While he mentions the early influences of Métis from central Canada, his focus on western Métis suggests that he believes Métis identity and cultural production was a significant occurrence in western Canada only. He states,

When, in the early nineteenth century, the métis concentrated on the Red River, they were what sociologists call marginal people, originating from earlier fur-trade frontiers primarily around and north of the Great Lakes where they were referred to as “French Indians” or “Homeguard Indians,” depending on their trade affiliations... We may assume that the arts and crafts of these métis were derived indeed from Swampy Cree and Ojibwa traditions, but were modified by a considerable influence from the French mission stations during the eighteenth century.³⁶

He also argues that, “the métis art style put its stamp on the art of practically every tribal group of the northern plains and the North West Territories. Indian statements from various parts of these regions confirm the effect upon tribal arts exercised by the ‘flower beadwork people,’ as the métis were referred to by the Sioux.”³⁷ Brasser understands identity as inherently linked to cultural production, and notes that the emergence of the floral beadwork style parallels the development of the Métis nation at the Red River Settlement.³⁸ Brasser also argues that the Roman Catholic missions were the crucial catalyst for introducing the floral beadwork style to the Métis. He notes, “small and stylized floral designs become noticeable on métis products by the 1830s, shortly after the establishment of Roman Catholic mission schools at Pembina, St Boniface, and Baie St. Paul in the Red River country.”³⁹ Brasser takes a crucial step in recognizing and promoting the work of the Métis, although he subscribes to a

³⁶ Brasser, 222.

³⁷ (Please note: Brasser does not capitalize Métis, but does add French accent). Brasser, 225.

³⁸ Brasser, 223.

paradigm of cultural evolution and decline, and to the idea that the Métis had a distinct ‘golden age’ and have now disappeared. He identifies Métis in the Great Lakes area, but does not credit them as having developed a nation and a cultural iconography similar to the Métis at the Red River Settlement.

While the level of organized political consciousness may not have been the same amongst people of mixed heritage in the Great Lakes region in the nineteenth century as in western Canada, there is, as Peterson notes, evidence of a general consciousness amongst Métis peoples of their distinctiveness. The pertinent questions are to what degree did this identity develop and how was it reflected through material culture? Although the term half-breed may have had derogatory implications when used in previous centuries, Racette has re-claimed it and proposes a re-integration to convey the vibrant identity of the Métis. In her seminal dissertation *Sewing Ourselves Together: Clothing, Decorative arts and the Expression of Métis and Half Breed Identity*, (2004), Racette focuses largely on the Métis and Half-Breeds in western Canada. She challenges the narrative forwarded by scholars such as Brasser, and argues that the ‘golden age’ thesis denies the existence of Métis today. While building on the important work that Brasser and Harrison have done in identifying Métis artistic style in western Canada, Racette proposes that Métis and Half-Breed identity is fluid and should be understood on a group and individual basis, within a community context and not in a linear fashion. She argues, “the notion of fluid cultural spaces which are simultaneously marginalized and dynamic has potential for a more accurate understanding of the evolution and persistence of Métis identity.”⁴⁰

³⁹ Brasser, 225.

⁴⁰ Racette, 185.

For Racette, identity is expressed through the construction and wearing of clothing, moccasins, bags, hair adornment and other objects. She notes,

Clothing can be instrumental in the active construction of group identity and not merely reflective of it, communicating underlying histories and current social realities. The clothing worn by Métis and Half Breed people reflects the historic events that have impacted them over time: the fur trade, changing economies, resistance and displacement.⁴¹

Material culture, according to Racette, is like a contact point; these objects reflect the intricate relationship of the wearer, the maker and their community.⁴² Racette states, “the development of Métis consciousness grew among the individuals, families and entire communities who moved from one location to another, from one métis space to another.”⁴³ Racette’s definition of Métis and Half-Breed is flexible and can be used to understand the community development and identity of Métis in the Great Lakes area. She notes regarding the use of the term “Half Breed”: “I also propose a respectful rehabilitation of the term ‘Half Breed’ which is not only found in historic documents, but was and continues to be a commonly employed term at the ‘grassroots’ of community and conversation. It is often a more accurate choice when describing communities that would not have identified themselves historically as either Métis or Mechif.”⁴⁴ For Racette, then, material culture has a serious and powerful role in the expression of Métis and Half Breed identity: “the consistency of the clothing choices made by Métis and Half Breed people throughout the nineteenth century, particularly between 1820 and 1870, indicates the widespread existence of a

⁴¹ Racette, 1.

⁴² Racette, 15.

⁴³ Racette, 62.

⁴⁴ Racette, 24.

stable and visually recognizable identity.”⁴⁵

According to Racette, Métis and Half-Breeds communicated identity on several levels: in the way they dressed; how they made their clothing; and the meanings this clothing conveyed to other people. She based her research on extensive visual examinations of Métis clothing in museum collections and other sources and traced the family histories of Métis makers and wearers through records held at various archives across Canada and the United States. Racette’s research uncovered many family histories and identified many items in museum collections across North America and Europe as being stylistically Métis. She argues against considering all Métis artistic production as part of an ideal past and reaffirms the strong presence of Métis artwork and production in western Canada, citing herself as a Métis artist working in traditional and contemporary media. Following Racette’s model, I will question the degree of stability that can be identified among the Métis and Half-Breeds in the Great Lakes region, through their uses of distinctive material culture.

Racette’s work builds on the feminist studies of Métis women’s relationships analyzed by several scholars. Sylvia Van Kirk’s *Many Tender Ties : Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870*, (1980), examines the roles of Aboriginal and mixed-heritage women and their vital position in the fur trade and is important in understanding Métis relationships and family dynamics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Her discussion focuses on western Canada. Using a feminist framework arguing that women are “active agents” rather than passive participants in history, Van Kirk traces the various roles that both Indian, mixed-blood and white women had in fur-trade society. Van Kirk, writing in the 1980s, provided a strong

⁴⁵ Racette, 123.

base for feminist writers such as Sharon Blady. Also presenting women as autonomous subjects, Blady's article "Les Metisses: Towards a Feminist History of Red River", (1997), parallels the agency of Métis women to the activism of the suffragettes because both played critical roles in shaping Canadian identity. She also however, adopts the 'golden age' paradigm, focusing on the artistic development of the 1820s - 1870s at the Red River Settlement and not affirming that Métis women are still producing artwork today.

Methodology

My methodology brings together a variety of approaches from art history, visual studies and anthropology to address the complexity of the subject and the inadequacies of previous publications. I combine an analysis of previous literature, art historical study of paintings and material culture in private collections, with fieldwork on living history and contemporary Métis gatherings. Sources such as travel accounts, interviews with community members and recent literature on Métis identity formed the basis of research for my project. My research on Métis objects from the private collection of Denis Tremblay, as well as my analysis of Métis identity depended largely on my own visual analysis and their verbal testimony. Also I made a survey of three public institutions to understand how they categorize Métis material culture. I have conducted critically important interviews with members of Métis communities, specifically at the 2009 Annual General Assembly (AGA) in Sudbury, a gathering of Métis from across Ontario, as well as with interpreters at the living history site, Fort William Historical Park, Thunder Bay in October 2009.

Another theoretical model I will draw on is the participatory action research

model, which recognizes the importance of returning research to communities and draws on values of reciprocity for the people who are the subject of research.⁴⁶ An important element that seems to be missing throughout research on Aboriginal communities in the past is the lack of sharing of information between the researcher and researched. As Racette notes, she attempts to bring back the information that she has found out to the communities she has studied.⁴⁷ This brings the researcher and participants into a more balanced relationship and sharing of knowledge and therefore power. In that spirit, I would also like to bring the knowledge that I have gained back to the Métis in Ontario by sharing my thesis once it is completed through articles and presentations. Too often, there is a link missing in the chain from the knowledge gained and the knowledge taken.

Contribution to the field

My research is intended to expand the understanding of the relationship between visual culture and identity of Métis in Ontario and more generally, knowledge about Ontario Métis histories and contemporary identity. Exploring notions of identity as a hybrid, resistant force, expressed and performed through visual culture, I will provide an alternative understanding to the notion that the Métis were recognized only at the Red River Settlement area in western Canada, which has been espoused by most scholars on Métis history and art. The visual culture approach, which examines multiple facets of visual culture including two-dimensional works, material culture and performance is new to this area of study as is the examination of contemporary Métis consciousness through interviews. Ideally, this research will add

⁴⁶ See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998).

to a much-needed understanding of who the Métis in Ontario are and how their identity is manifested through visual culture. Further, I will introduce new historical material to the examination by exploring Métis identity based on family ties, as suggested by scholars such as Racette and Harrison, through my research on the Schoolcraft family of Sault Ste Marie and the interviews conducted with Métis.

Chapter Outline

In Chapter Two, I will examine descriptions and images of Métis and Half-Breed people by nineteenth century European explorers and artists including Anna Jameson, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, Peter Rindisbacher, Paul Kane, George Winter and Frances Anne Hopkins to identify the dress and material culture of the Métis in the nineteenth century. It will also assess how people of mixed-heritage were understood by Euro-Canadians. Although many of these artists focused on the Métis from western Canada, their depictions are still valuable in understanding visual identity since many Métis, voyageurs, and people of European and Aboriginal unions travelled throughout Canada, not necessarily residing in one place.

In Chapter Three, I will discuss Métis material culture in two private collections with a brief discussion of a survey sent to the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the Royal Ontario Museum and the McCord Museum. Applying Alfred Gell's theory of agency, I will examine to what extent objects in private collections and those worn by Métis today at events such as the AGA, have agency.

Studying the re-presenting of the past seems to highlight both the important role that clothing played in identity making in the nineteenth century but also tells us more about current concerns for Métis identity and agency. In Chapter Four, I will

⁴⁷ Personal communication with Sherry Farrell Racette, Fall 2008.

explore how mixed-heritage identity is performed at Fort William Historical Park, in Thunder Bay, which interprets fur-trade society in 1815. How is clothing used as an expression of identity for the interpreters? What role does this site have in educating the public on Métis identity?

To conclude, I will compare the representations of Métis and Half-Breeds across these areas of visual culture: nineteenth century images, private and public collections and living history, and assess the contemporary state of discourse and representation around Métis arts and identity within Ontario. I will also discuss future directions for research.

Chapter Two - A Lenticular History: Descriptions and Images of Métis and Mixed-Heritage Peoples

People of Indian and European heritage, Métis, have existed in the Great Lakes region for several centuries. The record of their presence varies depending on who is telling the story or creating the image, whether it be a European male adventurer, a European elite woman or an Indian person. Nineteenth-century writers and artists including Frances Anne Hopkins, Anna Jameson, Paul Kane, William Keating, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, George Winter and others described and depicted mixed-heritage peoples in order to entertain European audiences and to create government reports, primarily for the benefit of non-Aboriginal audiences. Analyzing this written and visual documentation will shed light on how Métis (who were usually referred to as *bois brûlé*, metif, half-breed, half-caste and mixed-blood) were perceived by European and Euro-Canadians. Descriptions of how Métis dressed and lived will be useful in understanding what their clothing communicated to European audiences. These literary and visual depictions are mediated through lenses of European superiority, colonization, and racism, yet they provide insight into how Métis were understood in frontier society. In order to determine their accuracy, these descriptions must be contextualized in relation to racial attitudes of the period.

A brief study of the representations of the Métis in the Great Lakes area in the nineteenth century was undertaken by Sherry Farrell Racette in her thesis *Sewing Ourselves Together*. Racette contrasts the images of Métis by Paul Kane with depictions of the Potawatomi by artist George Winter and argues that there were similarities in dress among Métis at the Red River Settlement and the Great Lakes

area. She notes

Both the cut and colour of the knee-length, close-fitting coats worn in the Great Lakes and Red River regions were similar. The sash or *ceinture* was an important accessory, worn around the waist in the Red River, across the chest in the Great Lakes. Men in both areas wore full-length leggings. Indigo and red were the colours of choice in both regions. In addition to the general adoption of cloth, the most identifiable trend observed and represented in visual documents that linked people of mixed ancestry in the Great Lakes and Red River regions was the extensive use of decorative ribbon work. The Rindisbacher and Winter subjects, both male and female, adopted elements of European fashion and combined the innovative application of trade goods and the elaboration of indigenous garment forms to create visually distinctive dress.⁴⁸

Racette's observations on the material culture of the Métis as depicted by Kane and Winter are an important stepping stone for further study. She argues that material culture is a signpost of a shared identity throughout Canada, and states, "the consistency of the clothing choices made by Métis and Half Breed people throughout the nineteenth century, particularly between 1820 and 1870, indicates the widespread existence of a stable and visually recognizable identity."⁴⁹ Racette's analysis raises several questions that are relevant to this study. Were Métis people making conscious decisions to dress in a certain style to communicate their presence as mixed-heritage people? To what degree was their identity stable? Was there a recognizable Métis dress throughout the Great Lakes region which might indicate a shared identity? The descriptions and interactions with Métis people, as recorded predominantly by non-Métis, suggest that Métis clothing was not standardized across this region, and depended on personal choice, trade influences and other factors. The fashions that Métis and mixed-heritage people wore indicates that they did not necessarily have a

⁴⁸ Racette, 92.

⁴⁹ Racette, 123.

distinct or stable identity, since many Indian communities shared elements of style across these regions, for example, the use of trade silver. Analyzing the historical descriptions of Métis in the written and visual record will help unravel these issues.

Early Explorer and Travel Literature Descriptions

Among the earliest to describe Métis in the Great Lakes was Alexander Henry, a British explorer and fur trader of the late eighteenth century, (1760 - 1776). He dressed up as a “Canadian” in order to avoid discrimination from Native groups who had disagreements with the English. Henry wrote “I laid aside my English clothes, and covered myself only with a cloth, passed about the middle; a shirt, hanging loose; a molton, or blanket coat; and a large, red, milled worsted cap. The next thing was to smear my face and hands, with dirt and grease; and, this done, I took the place of one of my men.”⁵⁰ The darkening of his skin probably indicates that these “Canadians” were understood as people of mixed-heritage with a copper skin tone. He describes the clothing that became the outfit *de rigueur* for many Métis traders and French Canadian voyageurs during the nineteenth century. In addition Métis people often added to the outfit a sash and more decorative elements like beadwork, feathers, and tinsel cones.⁵¹ As Gwen Reimer and Jean-Phillipe Chartrand argue, Henry’s description may indicate the beginnings of a visually distinctive identity based on material culture. Although the terms used vary from “Canadian” to “half-breed”, to identify Métis in fur-trade records and traveler’s descriptions, the use of these terms indicates an attempt to verbalize a difference between Métis and

⁵⁰ Alexander Henry, *Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories Between the Years 1760 and 1776 in Two Parts*, (New York: I. Riley, 1809), 34
(<http://www.canadiana.org.proxy.library.carleton.ca/ECO/mtq?doc=35677>), (accessed March 6, 2010).

⁵¹ Reimer and Chartrand, 571.

Native groups that began in the late eighteenth century and continued through the nineteenth.⁵²

British officer Jasper Grant was stationed in Upper Canada from 1800 – 1809 and was able to observe mixed-heritage relationships in his daily interactions and amass a large collection of Native art and artefacts. He was employed at various posts including Fort George, but his last post, from 1806 – 1809, was Fort Malden at Amherstburg, near Detroit.⁵³ While at Amherstburg, he wrote a letter to his brother Alexander about the identities of the people who dined at his table. He notes, “no odium here is attached to Bastardism. I have often at my table several families born of the same fathers but of different mothers, some in wedlock, others not, some copper colored, others white. The same respect is equally shown to all, and illegitimacy given no shame.”⁵⁴ As Ruth Phillips notes, Grant and his family seemed to have adjusted to these Métis relationships as his wife formed a friendship with a Pawnee woman, Mrs. Madeline Askin Richardson, who was married to surgeon Robert Richardson at Amherstburg.⁵⁵ Grant’s observation of “copper colored” children indicates his awareness of Métis relationships. His European ethnocentricity should have condemned these unions, however his wife’s companionship with Mrs. Askin indicates their flexible attitude towards these relationships between Indian

⁵² As Reimer and Chartrand note, “the term Half-breed was first used by North West Company (NWC) Canadians, who apparently recognized mixed-bloods as members of a distinct social and racial category in the first decades of the 1800s.” The use of this term is very seldom. Further they note these terms can be jumbled “Victor Lytwyn’s analysis of HBC records at Fort William indicates that the distinction between freeman, Half-breed, Métis and Indian was often blurred; for example, Louis Ross was variously referred to as a half breed, as an Indian, and as belonging to a group of freemen.” Reimer and Chartrand, 572 - 575.

⁵³ Ruth Phillips, *Patterns of Power: The Jasper Grant Collection and Great Lakes Indian Art of the Early Nineteenth Century*, (Kleinburg: The McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1984), 14.

⁵⁴ Phillips, (1984), 16.

⁵⁵ Phillips, (1984), n. 10, 20.

women and European men.⁵⁶ As Phillips astutely points out, these close relationships with Métis families in the area were probably vital to the formation of Grant's Native art collection.

Thomas Nuttall, a botanist who travelled along the Arkansas River in 1819, made some observations on the appearance of metif families. For Nuttall, his term "metif" implied people of mixed heritage. His notes on Indian peoples' physical appearance suggest that distinct elements of clothing were worn by Native peoples, but that there were not necessarily distinctions between metif and other Indian groups. He notes the similarities in dress between the Native peoples in Arkansas and Canada, and described them as "blanket capeaus, moccasins, and overalls of the same materials, are here, as in Canada, the prevailing dress; and men and women commonly wear a handkerchief on the head in place of hats and bonnets."⁵⁷ Further he describes:

It is hardly necessary to detail the dress of the Arkansas, which scarcely, to my view, in any respect, differs from that of the Delawares, Shawnees, or Chipeways. Its component parts are, as usual, moccasins for the feet; leggings which cover the leg and thigh; a breech cloth; an overall or hunting shirt, seamed up, and slipped over the head; all of which articles are made of leather, softly dressed by means of fat and oily substances, and often rendered more durable by the smoke with which they are purposely imbued. The ears and nose are adorned with pendants, and the men, as among many other Indian tribes, and after the manner of the Chinese, carefully cut away the hair of the head, except a lock on the crown, which is plaited and ornamented with rings, wampum and feathers. Many of them, in imitation of the Canadian French, wear handkerchiefs around their heads, but in the manner of a turban. Some have also acquired the habit of wearing printed calicoe shirts next to the skin.⁵⁸

To Nuttall, a British scientist from England, the material culture of the metif, along

⁵⁶ Phillips, (1984), 16.

⁵⁷ Thomas Nuttall, *A Journal of Travels into the Arkansa Territory*, (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1966), 75.

with other Indian groups such as the Delaware or Lenape, differed little, suggesting that there were great similarities in dress amongst Native groups. It seems also there was a standard format for men to dress in which included moccasins, leggings, and a tunic and sometimes a handkerchief. Metif or Métis who worked as traders and interpreters along the Arkansas River, arguably would have worn similar clothing to the other Native groups with whom they associated. Another interesting observation about recycling and yarn, Nuttall notes: “They (The Osage women) as well as the Cherokees and others, frequently take the pains to unravel old blankets and cloths, and re-weave the yarn into belts and garters. This weaving is no modern invention of the Indians. Nearly all those whom DeSoto found inhabiting Florida and Louisiana, on either side of the Mississippi, and who were, in a great measure, an agricultural people, dressed themselves in woven garments made of the lint of the mulberry, the papaw, or the elm; and, in the colder seasons of the year, they wore coverings of the feathers, chiefly those of the turkey.”⁵⁹ Based on this statement it would be valuable to trace the usage of finger weaving amongst the Métis, Half-Breed and mixed-heritage peoples of the Great Lakes and compare it to other Indian groups to note similarities and differences. Nuttall made a note on a “metif” family: “Mr. Drope remained at the Bluff, trading the remainder of the day with the two or three metif families settled here, who are very little removed in their habits from the savages, with whose language and manners they are quite familiar.”⁶⁰ When Nuttall states habits, he is probably referring to dress.

William Keating, trained as a professor of Chemistry and Mineralogy at the

⁵⁸ Nuttall, 89.

⁵⁹ Nuttall, 193.

University of Pennsylvania, was part of Stephen Long's staff on the expedition to the Great Lakes region in 1823. Keating's account of his voyage was published in 1824 titled *A Journal of Travels into the Arkansa Territory*. Throughout his journal, he expresses fascination with Half-Breed women as objects of curiosity. He uses the terms *bois-brulé* and half-breed frequently and wrote a description of the Métis at the Red River Settlement,

Those that are partly of Indian extraction, are nick-named *Bois Brulé* (Burnt wood,) from their dark complexion. Their dress is singular, but not deficient in beauty; it is a mixture of the European and Indian habits. All of them have a blue capote with a hood, which they use only in bad weather; the capote is secured round their waist by a military sash; they wear a shirt of calico or painted muslin, moccasins and leather leggings fastened round the leg by garters ornamented with beads, &c. The *Bois Brulés* often dispense with a hat; when they have one, it is generally variegated in the Indian manner, with feathers, gilt lace and other tawdry ornaments.⁶¹

Keating's notes were based on the Métis in western Canada, but still are useful in understanding material culture trends, because these Métis travelled along the fur-trade routes into the Great Lakes, often employed as interpreters, traders and voyageurs.⁶² Nuttall and Keating both note the use of personal ornamentation to decorate the body, through either jewellery and or hats. Both describe the dress of Métis people as non-static, a "mixture of the European and Indian habits" influenced by trade, fashion and practical concerns such as warmth, and durability. Thus every Métis' outfit was not necessarily similar to the next, indicating that identity, at least as expressed through dress was not necessarily stable or distinct since there were

⁶⁰ Nuttall, 99.

⁶¹ William Keating, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Source of St. Peter's River, Lake Winnepeek, Lake of the Woods, &c : performed in the year 1823, by order of the Hon. J.C. Calhoun, secretary of war, under the command of Stephen H. Long, major U.S.T.E.* (Philadelphia: H.C. Carey & I. Lea, 1824), 41.

⁶² Reimer and Chartrand, 569.

many parallels to other Indian groups with whom they associated and many Métis were interrelated with other Native and non-Native communities.

To Keating and Nuttall, people of mixed heritage -- *bois brulé* and *metif* -- were interesting and exotic. They were discussed as objects of fascination yet one could argue their presence was also unsettling, because of their racial identity which was part white and Indian. In the nineteenth century, racial paradigms positioned the white European male as the most advanced culturally, physically and mentally, while people of mixed Indian and European heritage would have been seen as far below the white man's state of development. These racial theories escalated as the century progressed, resulting in the condemnation of and the passing of legislation against marriages between different races which lasted well into the twentieth century.⁶³

According to Catherine Parr Traill, a settler who lived in southern Ontario and wrote letters to her sisters and mother, Indian women largely emulated the fashions of European women. She notes in a letter written May 9th, 1833: "The women imitate the dresses of the whites, and are rather skilful in converting their purchases. Many of the young girls can sew very neatly. I often give them bits of silk and velvet, and braid, for which they appear thankful."⁶⁴ Further on in one of her letters she notes the desire that Indian women have to imitate European fashion.

These Indians appear less addicted to gay and tinselly adornments than formerly, and rather affect a European style in their dress; it is no unusual sight to see an Indian habited in a fine cloth coat and trousers, though I must say the blanket-coats provided for them by Government, and which form part of their annual presents, are far more suitable and becoming. The squaws, too, prefer cotton or stuff gowns, aprons and handkerchiefs, and such useful articles, to any sort of finery, though they like well enough to look at and

⁶³ Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), 148.

⁶⁴ Catharine Parr Traill, *The Backwoods of Canada*, (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1997), 122.

admire them; they delight nevertheless in decking out the little ones, embroidering their cradle wrappings with silk and beads, and tacking the wings of birds to their shoulders. I was a little amused by the appearance of one of these Indian Cupids, adorned with the wings of the rose-breasted grosbeak; a very beautiful creature, something like our British bullfinch.⁶⁵

As this description suggests, Indian and Métis women emulated European fashions but, made them their own by decoration with beadwork, embroidery, featherwork, quillwork and the artistic use of jewellery and ornaments. Throughout her journal, Parr Traill does not use the term half-breed or anything that suggests people with Indian and European heritage, perhaps this is because she was unaware of a unique identity for Métis in southern Ontario or did not want to consider that Métis and Half-Breeds lived in her community.

The Schoolcrafts - A Métis Family?

Although travel literature is valuable for understanding a general attitude towards people of mixed heritage, Métis identity is difficult to conceive of without looking at specific family instances. Historians such as Jennifer Brown have argued that Métis culture was based on kinship ties and connections in the fur-trade network. It seems that one can understand identity through tracing family links to both Indian and European heritage. One example of a Métis family from the nineteenth century in the Great Lakes region, specifically Sault Ste. Marie, is the Schoolcraft family. They illuminate the reality of Métis identity in this time period through the personal and public literature on the Native peoples in the area they produced.

Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, an explorer and government Indian agent, made notes on Indian peoples occupying the Great Lakes region, specifically Lake Superior, beginning with his participation in the Lewis Cass expedition of 1820 and

⁶⁵ Parr Traill, 209.

the book he published in 1821 titled *Travels Through the Northwestern Regions of the United States*. The Cass expedition was made to survey the land and peoples of Michigan. On the self-ornamentation of Native peoples he notes, “There are no bands of the northern Indians who go entirely without clothes, even in the hottest summer weather; and like all other savages they possess a great fondness for grotesque ornaments of feathers, skins, bones, and claws of animals. They have also an unconquerable passion for silver bands, beads, rings, and all light, showy, and fantastic articles of European manufacture. When silver cannot be procured they use copper.”⁶⁶ His use of the words “savage” and “grotesque” convey his Eurocentric position as a superior, ‘civilized’ male and does not differ much from other European writers at this time. This passage, however, is useful in establishing that the use of silver jewellery and decoration with natural bone, feathers and other animal parts was prevalent amongst the many Indians and most likely Métis in the Great Lakes area. Nuttall also noted that Indians along the Arkansas River used silver jewellery, suggesting that this trend for ornamentation ran along routes of trade, and was not a distinctive marker for Métis, but rather was used by many Indian communities to convey their wealth and style.

Schoolcraft’s interpretation of mixed-heritage relationships is illuminating in understanding the racial mores of the time, and foreshadows his marriage to a Métis woman. Schoolcraft notes regarding the Métis residents of Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, in 1820,

The early settlers, according to the principles adopted by the French colonists in the Canadas, intermarried with Indian women, and the present population is

⁶⁶ Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Travels Through the Northwestern Regions of the United States*, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1966), 228.

the result of this connexion. In it, we behold the only instance which our country presents, of the complete and permanent civilization of the aborigines; and it may be doubted, after all that has been said upon the subject, whether this race can ever be reclaimed from the savage state, by any other method. The result, in the present instance, is such as to equal the most sanguine expectations of the philanthropist, in regard to a mixed species. They are said to exhibit evidences of enterprise, industry, and a regard to order and the laws, at the same time, that we perceive the natural taciturnity of the savage, happily counterpoised by the vivacity and suavity of the French character, producing manners which are sprightly without frivolity, and serious without becoming morose.⁶⁷

Schoolcraft implies that only through the union of Indian and European peoples can the former become 'civilized,' indicating his acceptance of the Euro-centric values of the time that position European men as the most highly civilized and Aboriginal people as less physically, mentally and socially developed. Shortly after the Cass expedition, Schoolcraft moved to Sault Ste. Marie and served as the first Indian agent for the government of the United States. He met and married Jane Johnston, of Métis (Ojibwa / *Anishinaabe* / Irish and Scottish) descent. As a member of the prominent Johnston family, Jane Johnston's social position, education and wealth impressed Schoolcraft despite her Métis identity.⁶⁸ In light of the remarks just quoted he may have thought he was advancing civilization by marrying Johnston and also used this marriage to advance his career. Although Schoolcraft's marriage was acceptable at the time, soon after as racial dogma hardened, marriages between Métis and Europeans were denounced.⁶⁹

Schoolcraft's wife was proud of both her European and Indian heritage and

⁶⁷ Schoolcraft, 338.

⁶⁸ Jeremy Mumford, "Mixed-Race Identity in a Nineteenth-Century Family: The Schoolcrafts of Sault Ste. Marie, 1824-27," *The Michigan Historical Review*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Spring, 1999), 1-23.

⁶⁹ See Jennifer Brown's *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1980) for information on marriages in the custom of the country and changing policies of the fur-trade companies in relation to marriage to mixed-heritage

she expressed this through her poetry.⁷⁰ For example, she expressed the pride she felt for her grandfather in *Invocation to My Maternal Grandfather, Wabojee, on hearing his descent misrepresented*:

Rise bravest chief! of the mark of the noble deer,
 Resume thy lance, and again wield thy warlike spear!
 The foes of thy line, have dar'd to speak an untruth
 Their tongues with black envy, throw a stain on thy youth,
 They say, when a child, thou wert stol'n from the Sioux,
 And thy lineage they cowardly, basely abuse.
 For they know that our kinsmen, a distant land tread,
 And thy spirit has fled – to the hills of the dead!
 Can the sports of thy youth, and thy deeds ever fade,
 From the minds of those men, who had oft with thee stray'd,
 Who have fought by thy side, and remember thy pride
 When to battle you led, and the ground you have dy'd
 With the blood of thy foes, and ensured the repose

Of thy country long trembling with dread. Till you rose,
 Like a star in the west, when the sun's sunk to rest,
 You shone in bright splendor, to thy kindred oppress'd.
 The mem'ry of thy deeds can refute the false tale
 Which slander invented and base-born souls detail
 But, noblest chief! – thy child's, child thy praises shall sing
 The dark forests and plains with loud echo shall ring
 Tho' thy spirit has fled to the hills of the dead,
 Yet thy worth?, in remembrance long, long shall be led?⁷¹

As evidenced by this poem and several others, Jane Schoolcraft was an educated and literate woman and took great care to remember her family ties which were both Indian and European. This work was included in a magazine entitled *The Literary Voyager*, which was published by the couple and circulated widely amongst elite

women.

⁷⁰ They must have loved each other to get married, although his racial prejudice was probably a quality that stayed with him throughout his life, as evidenced by his second marriage to a believer in racial inequality and her book published to justify slavery. Mumford, 18-20.

⁷¹ Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky*, ed. Robert Dale Parker, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2007), 101.

friends such as Governor Lewis Cass and his wife in Detroit in 1829.⁷² It contained several poems and stories based on *Anishnaabe* culture written by Mrs. Schoolcraft under two pen names, “Rosa” and “Leelinau.” As Jeremy Mumford has persuasively argued, these represented two different aspects of her Native identity, as both a Native person aware of and respectful of her natural environment and knowledgeable of *Anishinaabe* folk tales.⁷³ Mrs. Schoolcraft was a Métis woman in a shifting century, which ultimately disapproved of people of mixed heritage. Mumford also argues that although Jane and Henry’s marriage commenced on an optimistic note, and they cared for each other deeply as evidenced by the love letters that they wrote to each other, several events tested their marriage, such as the death of their beloved son.⁷⁴ Ultimately, Henry’s attitude shifted from trust to disdain for Jane’s Indian heritage due to several factors. He converted to Presbyterianism and his wife who celebrated Native history and therefore ‘heathen’ principles, challenged some of his Christian beliefs. Also, as more whites arrived in Ontario, racial dogma continued to harden and Jane as a “half breed” was not welcome amongst white ‘civilized’ company. Henry did little to aid this situation.⁷⁵

Additional important documentation of Métis life in the Great Lakes region is provided by British writer Anna Brownell Jameson. She made a voyage by canoe from York (Toronto) up to Sault Ste. Marie in 1837 and wrote of her experiences with Indian peoples, including her interaction with the Schoolcraft family and other

⁷² Philip P. Mason, “Introduction” in *The Literary Voyager or Muzzeniegun*, (Detroit: Michigan State University Press, 1962), xv.

⁷³ Mumford, 9.

⁷⁴ The loss of their son at barely three years old must have been very trying for Mr. and Mrs. Schoolcraft. A whole issue of the *The Literary Voyager* is dedicated to their son Willie. See *The Literary Voyager* for more information.

Métis people. She praises the conversion of Indian peoples to Christianity and in general has a high regard for Native peoples. Her descriptions also express her fascination with their costume and beauty. She notes the clothing of two Indian boys whom she spotted along the river, past Chatham, southern Ontario, “they wore cotton shirts, with a crimson belt round the waist ornamented with beads, such as is commonly worn by the Canadian Indians; one had a gay handkerchief knotted round his head, from beneath which his long, black hair hung in matted elf locks on his shoulders.”⁷⁶ This suggests that the dress of the Native children and likely Métis, differed little if at all from the men at that time period, and is important since in other accounts by Nuttall and Keating, they did not include many descriptions of dress for women or children, arguably because they thought this was of little importance. Whereas Jameson, an early feminist, was interested in the rights and working conditions of women.⁷⁷

Jameson also observed women on the island of Mackinaw, and documented their dress. She notes, “the dress of the women was more uniform; a cotton shirt, cloth leggings and moccasins, and a dark blue blanket. Necklaces, silver armlets, silver ear-rings, and circular plates of silver fastened on the breast, were the usual ornaments of both sexes.”⁷⁸ Jameson’s observation was made when many women and men from different Indian communities including the Ottawas and Potawatomis (now generally referred to as *Anishinaabe*) were travelling to Manitoulin Island in order to

⁷⁵ Mumford, 20.

⁷⁶ Anna Brownell Jameson, *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada* (Toronto: Nelson, 1943), 137.

⁷⁷ Patricia Jasen, *Wild Things: Nature, Culture and Tourism in Ontario, 1790 - 1914*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 86.

⁷⁸ Jameson, 162.

collect their annual gifts from the British government for their support in the war of independence.⁷⁹ One could argue then that neighbouring Indian communities, through trade and annual gatherings, influenced the fashion, culture and lifestyle of Métis.

There are several references in Jameson's accounts to Métis or half-caste women, who were well established in their communities. For example, Jameson notes that on her visit to the island of Mackinaw, "We were then conducted to a little inn kept by a very fat half-caste Indian woman who spoke Indian, bad French, and worse English, and who was addressed as *Madame*."⁸⁰ This Métis woman did not move seasonally like the Ottawa or Potawatomis that Jameson mentioned, but rather had a job as an innkeeper and a permanent residence. Jameson also met Mrs. McMurray, a Métis woman whose physical appearance and demeanour impressed her greatly.

Jameson accounts,

I was introduced to Mrs. McMurray, otherwise O-ge-ne-bu-go-quay, (the wild rose). I must confess that the specimens of Indian squaws and half-caste women I had met with, had in no ways prepared me for what I found in Mrs. McMurray. The first glance, the first sound of her voice, struck me with a pleased surprise. Her figure is tall – at least it is rather above than below the middle size, with that indescribable grace and undulation of movement which speaks perfection of form. Her features are distinctly Indian, but softened and refined, and their expression at once bright and kindly.⁸¹

This positive observation was similar to other interactions Mrs. Jameson had with Métis peoples throughout her voyage. She seems to have made friends with several of the Métis she encountered indicating perhaps her open frame of mind. Throughout her account, she makes notes on the half-castes and half-breeds at missionary establishments and other venues.

⁷⁹ Jameson, 172.

⁸⁰ Jameson, 160.

⁸¹ According to Jameson's footnote, "Mrs. McMurray was Charlotte Johnston the daughter of Col.

Jameson developed a friendship with Mr. and Mrs. Schoolcraft and stayed several days with them at Sault Ste. Marie in the summer of 1837. She was aware of Mrs. Schoolcraft's Native heritage and noted that her mother was a fountain of knowledge about Indian peoples. She wrote, "Her own mother is also celebrated for her stock of traditional lore, and her poetical and inventive faculties, which she inherited from her father, Waub-Ojeeg, who was the greatest poet and story-teller, as well as the greatest warrior of his tribe."⁸²

Jameson's respect for the Schoolcrafts indicates, I would argue, her high opinion of their respective heritages and their relationship within the context of settler exploration. Jameson's writings are valuable because she is unique in that she not only observed Métis people but also interacted with them and had friends who were Métis. Thus she was not just an outsider observing from a distance with a 'scientific purpose' such as William Keating. Indeed her friendships were not casual. She was given an Ojibwa name to signify her bravery for going over a set of rapids on the suggestion of George Johnston, Mrs. Schoolcraft's brother.⁸³ Jameson notes, "I was declared duly initiated, and adopted into the family by the name of Wah, sah, ge, wah, no, qua. They had already called me among themselves, in reference to my complexion and my travelling propensities... but now, in compliment to my successful achievement, Mrs. Johnston bestowed this new appellation, which I much prefer. It signifies .. 'the woman of the bright foam'; and by this name I am henceforth to be known among the Chippewas."⁸⁴ Although there have been other

John Johnston of Michilmackinac." n 3, 60.

⁸² Jameson, 184.

⁸³ Jameson, 211.

⁸⁴ Jameson, 213.

writers who have claimed to have been inducted into certain Indian societies, Jameson's friendships with several Métis, her respect for their traditions, and their acceptance of her indicates that her claims were not just imaginations for the pure benefit of European audiences. Yet, her descriptions also strongly emphasize the benefits of Christianity for Indians, and the degree to which she appreciated Métis culture as its own entity is therefore debatable. Considering the pervasive and influential role that Christianity had in the life of Anna Jameson and other Europeans, it could be argued that her positive descriptions of mixed-heritage peoples were based on the belief that the more Christian values they were imbued with the better for their characters and for the triumph of the Christian church.

Throughout her account, Jameson frequently uses the words picturesque and grotesque which convey her attitude towards the dress of Native people, which was one that was shared by many Europeans at that time. Her description of a Potawatomi expresses her fascination with his visual appearance. She notes, "The Ottawa I soon distinguished by the decency of his dress, and the handkerchief knotted round the head - a custom borrowed from the Early French settlers, with whom they have much intercourse: The Potawatomi, by the more savage finery of his costume, his tall figure, and a sort of swagger in his gait. The dandyism of some of these Pottawatomi warriors is expressibly amusing and grotesque."⁸⁵ Jameson's lengthy description conveys her perception of this person as exotic yet the description is also valuable in that it illustrates the grand combination of European and Indian styles that would mesh to provide an outfit suitable for an Indian or Métis person. As Frances Connelly notes, terms like "picturesque" and "grotesque" were used by western artists and

explorers to categorize Aboriginal peoples and their artwork as existing at the opposite end of the European who was refined and knowledgeable of classical arts.⁸⁶ This, in turn, was used to justify colonial expansion. Jameson visited the Schoolcraft family and knew that they were literate and educated which surely went against many people's imaginings of Métis as illiterate and culturally undeveloped, yet she wrote of many of them with a fascination that suggests she viewed Métis as 'Other.'

Jameson's travel account was very popular amongst British readers and must have influenced many people to think of Métis and the landscape they lived in through a romantic doomed lens of the picturesque. Ultimately, Jameson and many other European writers believed that Aboriginal peoples (Métis included) were part of the natural landscape and it was a result of progress that their cultures would die out.⁸⁷

The Schoolcrafts were one of many mixed-heritage families living in the Great Lakes region in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, but it is debatable whether or not they would have self-identified as Métis. Mr. Schoolcraft was well aware of his wife's Indian heritage, and capitalized on her *Anishnaabe* legends by writing many books about them. He was also very active in fighting for land claims for Half-Breeds, specifically in the treaty of Fond du Lac. The Johnston family was set to receive a prime land grant on Sugar Island.⁸⁸ His son was a Half Breed, and he fought to ensure that he would receive land title also, although his son died at a young age, and the treaty fell through. Despite Schoolcraft not explicitly stating he had a Métis family, his actions indicate that he was well aware of the fact and tried to use

⁸⁵ Jameson, 169.

⁸⁶ Frances Connelly, *The Sleep of Reason: Primitivism in Modern European Art and Aesthetics, 1725 - 1907*, (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 19.

⁸⁷ Jasen, 86.

their Native heritage to the best advantage for his family's well being, although he continued to struggle with how to understand Jane's mixed-race status. In fact, in the Sault Ste Marie area, there were about 900 Métis people according to a census done in 1829, indicating a large Métis presence.⁸⁹ Although there were some positive opinions on Métis relationships, there was perhaps a greater amount of distrust and hate in the attitudes of settlers, officials and non-natives towards Métis. For example, the Métis people of Potawatomi origin who inhabited the southerly regions around Lake Michigan were denounced by the American settlers as devilish. There was much hostility towards the Métis people in the region, they were seen as unintelligent because they did not speak English, and they were despised because they adopted elements of Potawatomi / Miami spiritual beliefs into their customs and were not primarily agricultural.⁹⁰ Settlers felt threatened by these Métis who were seen as uncivilized because their modes of subsistence did not focus on farming, a key marker of civilization for the settlers. As scholar R. David Edmunds notes, "unquestionably, most Americans subscribed to the popular stereotype that 'half-breeds,' at best, were a shifty lot, a people caught between two cultures. According to Baptist missionary and Indian Agent Issac McCoy, the Potawatomi mixed-bloods near South Bend were lazy, possessed and exalted a 'mistaken sense of honor,' and

⁸⁸ Mumford, 14.

⁸⁹ "In 1828, Major Anderson, our Indian agent, computed the number of Canadians and mixed breeds married to Indian women, and residing on the north shores of Lake Huron, and in the neighbourhood of Michilimackinac, at nine hundred. This he called the lowest estimate." Jameson, 178.

⁹⁰ Lucy Eldersveld Murphy, "To Live Among Us: Accommodation, Gender, and Conflict in the Western Great Lakes Region, 1760-1832" in *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750 – 1830*, ed. Andrew R.L. Cayton and Fredrika J. Teute, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 281.

posed a ‘formidable obstacle’ to the ‘improvement’ of the other Indians.”⁹¹

Throughout the Great Lakes, then, Métis were perceived differently. Some, like the Schoolcrafts, held respected positions of authority while others were despised for their mixed heritage which threatened notions that civilization belonged solely to the white European male.

Nineteenth Century Images

Another way of understanding attitudes towards people of mixed heritage in this time and location is by analyzing visual images. Some artists, like Peter Rindisbacher, George Winter and Paul Kane included “half breed,” and other terms connoting mixed heritage in the titles of their works. In contrast, Frances Anne Hopkins however, did not identify the subjects in her paintings. She painted images of voyageurs, who were Métis and/or Mohawk from the Great Lakes area. Through an examination of these images I will attempt to identify the material culture of mixed-heritage peoples in the Great Lakes area and how that identity was understood by western artists. Like written descriptions these images both convey information about material culture, involve the viewer’s imagination, and were influenced by the colonial project of transforming Native and mixed-heritage people’s faith, culture and life through conversion to Euro-Canadian, Judeo-Christian values.

Peter Rindisbacher was a Swiss-born artist who moved to the Red River Settlement in the early nineteenth century depicted scenes and people from the area, including Métis. His images were based on first-hand observation, but he was also influenced by images made by early travellers and artists such as Jonathan Carver

⁹¹ R. David Edmunds, “George Winter: Mirror of Acculturation” in *Indians and a Changing Frontier: The Art of George Winter*, (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society), 26.

who illustrated his travel books with images based on Indian people in the Great Lakes region. Laura Peers made an interesting discovery that Peter Rindisbacher's image of an Indian family was an almost exact copy of an image created by Jonathan Carver who explored the Great Lakes region in the late 18th century. Her work explores the relations between Ojibwa and Métis and their cultural production and she notes that Rindisbacher used one object repeatedly in his depictions of various Aboriginal groups, which causes one to speculate as to how specific and accurate the images of different Aboriginal peoples are.⁹² Thus his work represented not only Indian material culture and trends from the Red River Settlement but also from the Great Lakes and therefore is an important source for early images of Métis in the Great Lakes region. Further, some of the images of people of the Red River Settlement could include Métis who had travelled there from the Great Lakes to trade. There was extensive travel, exchange of clothing, and other goods along the fur trade routes from the Great Lakes through to Western Canada. Images should be evaluated in the mobile, shifting context in which Métis worked and lived.

The image, *A Half-Caste with His Wife and Child*, of circa 1825, (figure 2.1), is a vividly coloured painting of a Métis family. The man stands smoking a short pipe while his wife sits on a rock, smoking a much longer pipe. The family is in the foreground of the image while a grassy landscape extends behind them, perhaps indicating the flatness of the prairies. The child appears to be wearing a miniature version of the military style, three-quarter length, dark, blue coat the father wears. The man has a red sash tightly knotted around his waist, and a top hat decorated with

⁹² Laura Peers, "On Missionaries, Artists, Bears, and 'Grandfathers': Peter Rindisbacher's Paintings, John White's Collection, and the Red River Ojibwa," in *Three Centuries of Woodlands Indian Art: A*

a feather. He appears also to be wearing a porcupine-quill embroidered pouch with geometric design over his chest, attached to which is a black horn pipe. His leggings are tan with a fringe on the sides and his moccasins have minimal decoration. His starched high collar is visible and he appears to be wearing a scarf over it, which puffs out slightly. He is a Métis dandy who confidently holds a hunting gun. The strap dress of his wife has a long, blue, floor-length skirt and her sleeves create a “cape-like” form around her body, edged with green ribbon.⁹³ She wears earrings and her hair neatly slicked back behind her head with one curl beside her ear. She also sports moccasins and holds a blanket over her knee. The expressions of the two adults seem blank, posed, and their eyes do not engage the viewer. These images are unlike portraiture by other artists from the period such as George Caitlin. This suggests the artist was more interested in the outfits of this family than their character.

Based on these written and visual descriptions, Métis men wore European-style shirts, jackets and hats with leggings. They used a great degree of European clothing and style to create their look, Métis women however, largely wore strap dresses, (of Indian design) leggings and a cape-like covering over their arms and shoulders. Métis women would decorate their families’ outfits with quillwork, ribbon decoration and other embellishment they received through trade relations. Another factor which may have influenced women’s dress was whether a Métis woman’s partner was Indian or European and their family’s location. For example, if a Métis

Collection of Art, ed. J.C.H. King and Christian F. Feest, (Altenstadt: ZKF Publishers, 2007), 110.

⁹³ As Frances Densmore notes in *Chippewa Customs*, “This garment (dress) was held in place by strips over the shoulders and confined at the waist by a belt or sash. Arm coverings were usually provided and could be worn or laid aside as desired. These consisted of two strips of cloth, each fastened at the wrist after the manner of a cuff, and the two attached at the back of the neck, forming a capelike protection to the shoulders. When calico was brought by the traders a loose calico sacque was frequently worn by the women over the above-described broadcloth dress without the arm coverings.”

woman married a European man and lived at a fort, she might be more inclined to wear a European dress instead of a strap dress because this material was available.

George Winter, an artist who travelled through the lands of the Potawatomi / Miami in the southerly regions of Lake Michigan in 1837, created many telling images of the fashions of people with mixed heritage. Métis in this region had Creole / Potawatomi / Miami heritage and generally absorbed different elements of Indian and Creole culture together to create a visual style that was elegant, dapper and expressed their wealth.

The drawing entitled *Noah-Quet, Known as Rice the Interpreter A Half Breed Indian Sketched* (1837) (figure 2.2) is an image of a young man wearing a European-style coat with a vest and probably a scarf on the neck. His gaze meets the viewer's eyes. Rice was an educated man and served as a liaison interpreting documents between Potawatomis and the court system of America.⁹⁴ Only Rice's upper body is shown in the sketch, this presents the man in European garb; there are no traces of Indian influence on his fashion. Another Métis interpreter who spoke English was depicted by Winter, he titled him *Bourassa, an Educated Half breed*, (1837), (figure 2.3). In a drawing of him, the viewer sees a three-quarter view of his face. His head is tilted upright giving him an air of intelligence perhaps hinting at his diplomatic abilities. He wears a European-lapelled jacket, ruffled shirt, and what appears to be a silk tie around his neck. His shirt has a high collar. His hair is cut short and close to his face. These images depict respected people of mixed-heritage who wore unique combinations of Indian and European fashions to convey their status as negotiators

Frances Densmore, *Chippewa Customs* (New York: Johnson, 1970), 32.

⁹⁴ Edmunds, 52.

between two worldviews; Potawatomi and white American.

Another image labelled as *Bouriette – Indian Interpreter* (1837), (figure 2.4), was also a subject who had mixed heritage. He wears an elegant, three-quarter length coat and leggings with wide-ribbon decoration that runs down the seam. He wears a vest over a long chemise and seems to be wearing a tie around his neck. His hair is wrapped in a turban and he has long, tinsel-cone earrings. He looks out at the viewer; his legs are slightly crossed in a manner perhaps indicating his comfortable stance. He also wears moccasins.

As R. David Edmunds notes, the clothing that mixed-heritage people wore in the states around southern Lake Michigan, indicates their considerable wealth and “acculturation.”⁹⁵ Indeed, these mixed-heritage peoples combined European and Indian traditions in clothing together to create their own unique designs and trends. Edmunds notes in Winter’s paintings that the majority of the men “are dressed in frock coats similar to those worn by prosperous white settlers on the Indiana frontier. The coats are well tailored, with wide, fashionable lapels and natural, unpadded shoulders. Most are sewn from wool or broadcloth and fashioned in black, gray or other conservative colours.”⁹⁶ The men wore their chemises un-tucked in their clothing, most wore the breechcloth as well. Extensive and elaborate ribbon work was used on the leggings, which the men all wore. Decorative turbans and jewellery reflected the broad influence of Indian groups on mixed-heritage peoples in the southern states. Edmund notes, “Many of the Potawatomis and Miamis wore brightly colored scarves wrapped around their heads to form turbans. Turbans were common

⁹⁵ Edmunds, 27.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

among the Ohio and Indiana tribes and were widely utilized by the Creeks, Cherokees, and some of the other southern Indians.”⁹⁷

Women's outfits were also showy and elaborate like the clothing of the men, reflecting their fortune and adoption of both European and Indian trends. The women wore modest clothing that almost fully covered the body. As Edmund notes, “Most of the Miami and Potawatomi painted by Winter wore dark, full, broadcloth skirts that fell almost to their ankles, loose-fitting, brightly colored blouses (often sewn of ‘the finest silk’), and an embroidered or highly decorated shawl which also could serve as a headscarf.”⁹⁸ The women also wore large amounts of silver jewellery in the form of earrings and brooches which they placed on their shawls or blankets. Indeed, a painting entitled *Daughter of Mas-saw, Maurie*, (1837?) (figure 2.5) depicts a well-dressed Métis woman who wears a long ribbon appliquéd skirt, moccasins, and a floral shawl over her shoulders, under which she has on a long strap dress, with sleeves. She also wears rings on her fingers, necklaces and silver earrings. She wears a cape over her shoulders like the women depicted in Kane’s images, yet with the addition of many silver brooches. Her gaze looks out to the side of the viewer. Her high stature is displayed through the elaborate combination of silks, ribbon work and jewellery.

The Métis people in the southern states were quite wealthy and displayed this through their sophisticated combination of native and imported materials including silk, ribbon work, silver on their clothing and in their jewellery.⁹⁹ Métis people

⁹⁷ Edmunds, 28.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Indeed, R. Edmunds notes that a Métis man was reputedly the wealthiest man in Indiana during the nineteenth century. Edmunds, 25.

worked as interpreters, and general labourers for the fur trade companies and thus would travel across borders and imported their style with them to the various forts and posts. The material culture of Métis was highly influenced by the Indian groups with which they were trading and in whose communities some of them were living. Around Lake Michigan, many of the Métis had intermarried within other communities and thus were integrated to some degree with the various peoples who lived there including Chippewas, Potawatomis and Miamis. More research needs to be done to determine if there were and still are distinct identities for the Métis in this area.

Paul Kane observed Métis and Half-Breed people around the Red River Settlement in 1846 on a trip that included a tour of the Great Lakes, the Red River Settlement and the Northwest Coast. Métis across the land incorporated Indian and European modes of dress. Kane created several images of mixed-heritage peoples. One image shows people hunting buffalo, the other shows them preparing camp. Together, they indicate the nomadic nature of Red River Métis in the mid-nineteenth century. *Half Breeds Running Buffalo* (1848 – 1856?) (figure 2.6) and *Métis Encampment* (1848 – 1856), (figure 2.7), are relevant to this discussion because the material culture of the Métis can be clearly viewed.

In the image *Half Breeds Running Buffalo* the figures are in the midst of a hunt. The artist has captured a dangerous and vital moment as indicated by the figure who lies in the middle foreground, face down, his body spread out. He wears a blue capote with a red sash, leggings and moccasins. Another Métis man astride a horse, looks down at his companion. He wears breeches and a white chemise, un-tucked.

The men in the distance also wear leggings, and white or blue capotes. They have shoulder length hair and tanned skin. The clothing in this scene adds exotic visual interest for the viewer because of the combination of European clothing, the capote, and Indian-style leggings. The vast, ominous dark landscape, the running buffalo and the dying Métis laid out in the foreground, most likely would have been seen by the viewer as a romantic image, of the 'dying Indian' bound to be stomped out by civilization. Many people believed that Indians, including the Métis, were dying out. The drama of the moment perhaps indicates Kane's attempt to create a picturesque scene, a moment of sublime terror which would have an emotional impact on the viewer.¹⁰⁰

Kane's *Métis Encampment* also captures the beauty of mixed-heritage peoples in the landscape. It is a romantic depiction of Métis relaxing at camp with their horses and cows. A woman in the right foreground stands beside a fire, with a pot boiling over it. She stands in what looks like a strap dress and moccasins. The colours are muted, perhaps indicating the end of the day, the sunset and the end of the nomadic lifestyle. In the middle ground, a group of people and a man on horseback are gathered around their tepee, perhaps discussing their plans for the next buffalo hunt.

Both images indicate the unsettled, roaming life of Métis. As Kane notes, "the half-breeds are a very hardy race of men, capable of enduring the greatest hardships and fatigues: but their Indian propensities predominate, and consequently they make poor farmers, neglecting their land for the more exciting pleasures of the chase."¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ For an Aboriginal present-day critique of images like these see the video *Group of Seven Inches*. DVD. Directed by Kent Monkman and Gisele Gordon. Toronto, Urban Nation, 2005.

¹⁰¹ Paul Kane, *Wanderings of An Artist Among the Indians of North America From Canada to Vancouver's Island and Oregon Through the Hudson's Bay Company's Territory and Back Again*,

Kane's perspective was shared by many people. Kane thought he was preserving a lost race, a lost civilization, and thus spectators could watch and experience joy or sadness at the spectacle of this "dying race." As Kane notes in his preface, "The face of the red man is no longer seen. All traces of his footsteps are fast being obliterated from his once favorite haunts, and those who would see the aborigines of this country in their original state, or seek to study their native manners and customs, must travel far through the pathless forest to find them."¹⁰² Many people believed Aboriginals could not withstand progress and modernity. Yet these images survive and attest rather ironically to the vibrant culture of the Métis who continue to thrive today.

Frances Anne Hopkins, a middle class British artist and wife to a Hudson Bay trader, sketched voyageurs in the 1860s as part of a pleasure trip through the Great Lakes to document colonial expansion and also to assert her own identity as a woman artist. She created a series of large oil paintings which illustrated her expedition by canoe in the Great Lakes area. The high degree of realism in the paintings in detailing clothing and activity, and the attempt to create picturesque scenes parallels the images created by Kane. Like Kane, Hopkins created images that depicted Métis and mixed-heritage peoples in nature. Did she, like Kane, want to capture an essentially Métis and Indian mode of labour, the fur trade, to 'preserve' these peoples before they disappeared? I will discuss three paintings by Hopkins, *Canoes in a Fog, Lake Superior*, (1869) (figure 2.8) *Canoe Manned by Voyageurs Passing a Waterfall*, (1869) (figure 2.9) and *Shooting the Rapids*, (1879) (figure 2.10).

Canoes in a Fog, Lake Superior, depicts voyageurs, paddling into the mist. In

(Rutland: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1967), 51.

¹⁰² Kane , lxii.

the left foreground, seven men paddle a canoe. One woman, presumably the artist herself, sits in the centre of the canoe. In the middle ground and far distance, two more canoes move into the mist. The stem of the canoe in the foreground is painted white with a floral shaped circle, perhaps a symbolic image of the artist as Kristina Huneault has suggested.¹⁰³ A man wearing a purple chemise and grey pants with a sash wrapped tightly around his waist guides the canoe. His hair is shoulder length and he wears a silver earring. The other men sitting in the canoe wear similar outfits of colored chemises, sashes, trousers and earrings. Two of the men wear small hats on their heads. The men have dark skin, probably indicating their mixed heritage or tan. There is some disagreement over who the men in the paintings are. According to Huneault's analysis they are probably Mohawks, but Robert Stacey has identified them as Métis and they could still be of mixed heritage as many men working in the fur-trade industry were.¹⁰⁴ The fact that Hopkins identifies them as voyageurs rather than Mohawk suggests that she wanted to leave the question open.¹⁰⁵

The canoe's passengers are reflected in the water indicating a calm and serene time. The grey mist seems to dissolve the men in the distance and the artist and the other men are heading into the fog, creating a picturesque moment for the viewer. One of the main aesthetic aims of the picturesque was for people to be transported into a liminal state by the beauty of nature; this scene seems to convey that beauty to the viewer. It also induces a sense of the vanishing nature of their labour practice and

¹⁰³ Kristen Huneault, "Placing Frances Anne Hopkins: A British-Born Artist in Colonial Canada," in *Local / Global: Women Artists in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Deborah Cherry and Janice Helland, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 187.

¹⁰⁴ Huneault, 192.

¹⁰⁵ Robert Stacey, "Frances Anne Hopkins and the Canoe-Eye-View," in *Frances Anne Hopkins 1838 – 1919*, (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Art Gallery, 1990), 63.

the voyageur lifestyle.

Unlike the previous image, in Hopkin's *Canoe Manned by Voyageurs Passing a Waterfall*, the canoe passes directly in front of the viewer, and the scene is lit up by bright light, revealing the figures clearly. The canoe passes by a large rock face against which the voyageur men's colorful chemises in yellow, white, red, pink grey and blue stand out. They wear grey trousers, sashes and some wear red scarves about their necks. The second man from the right wears a red toque and one can see the tin water cup attached onto his red, woven sash. The man at the bow wears a blue shirt and a white chemise underneath; he also wears a scarf around his neck and a grey hat with a red feather on it. The choices of hats and scarves vary considerably among the men, giving each a distinct personality. As curator Janet Clark notes, "Hopkins has also introduced the element of portraiture, providing each voyageur with a separate 'identity;' each is individualized with earrings, pipes, or hats, in addition to facial features and expressions, reminiscent of Krieghoff's characterizations."¹⁰⁶ This individualization of the voyageurs indicates perhaps an interest in representing their character, that contrasts with Rindisbacher's repeated use of the same face and body type in his work.

The artist has again positioned herself in the middle of the canoe and gazes at a water lily, a symbol of femininity. The voyageur second from the back of the canoe bends to pick up a water lily, perhaps for the woman in the middle. Is this a romantic gesture? Or was the artist just trying to add humour to the scene by having a burly man pick a flower for her? Perhaps viewers would have enjoyed the game of trying to

¹⁰⁶ Janet Clark, "Frances Anne Hopkins (1838-1919): Canadian Scenery," in *Frances Anne Hopkins 1838 – 1919* (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Art Gallery, 1990), 27.

figure out the meaning. Huneault argues that the water lily is a self-referential symbol, drawing attention to the female as a gendered artist and also perhaps to her role as wife to Edward Hopkins, a fur trader with the Hudson Bay Company.¹⁰⁷ At this point in time in the 1870s, the Hudson Bay Company was re-structuring its fur-trade posts to suit the needs of settlers and selling its land for development.¹⁰⁸ At the helm is the British flag, which drapes out the back and flutters in the breeze.¹⁰⁹ In this image, the party also appears to be moving over quieter water, their image is reflected in the calm ripples. The rocky shore in the background and the water lilies indicated they were travelling along a shoal.

In contrast to these two peaceful images of a voyage across the Great Lakes, the painting *Shooting the Rapids*, depicts a moment of great danger and excitement. As Jameson wrote in her *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada*, (1839) a ride through the rapids had the same effect as drinking a few glasses of champagne and Hopkins most likely read this account, since Jameson's work was widely read in Britain.¹¹⁰ In this image, the voyageurs are hard at work, the men's bodies are taut and their faces look serious as they guide the canoe past the rocks in the rapidly moving water. The men wear chemises in red, blue, grey, brown and pink with grey pantaloons. They also wear sashes like the red one at the bow. Most of the men also wear scarves at their neck and some form of head covering such as the bandanna worn by the man in front, the jaunty hat with feather worn by the man to the right, or the toque as worn by the men in the back of the canoe. The tanned skin of the men,

¹⁰⁷ Huneault, 186.

¹⁰⁸ Huneault, 189.

¹⁰⁹ Huneault, 192.

¹¹⁰ Jameson, 213.

their outfits and their employment are all indicators that these men have Aboriginal and or mixed heritage.

Again, the artist is seated in the middle, with two European men, her husband with the long beard and also the man with the hat and dark beard, Governor of Rupert's land, Alexander Grant Dallas.¹¹¹ They do not paddle, but rather stare out to the side while the voyageurs work. Hopkins has placed the viewer right at the heart of the action, at the moment that the canoe is going over the rapids, foam spraying up on the side perhaps to elicit a gasp from the audience.

In all three images, the artist positions herself in the centre of the canoe, as an adventurous female traveler and artist who recorded the ending of this labour that was essential to colonial expansion and also the life ways of many Métis. As Janet Clark notes, "the Hudson's Bay Company's role in Canada had diminished both economically and politically, especially after 1869, when Rupert's Land was transferred to the Dominion of Canada, so that Frances Anne Hopkins was documenting in the 1870s what was essentially the end of both the fur-trade era and its principal means of transportation, canoe."¹¹² Although Hopkins painted these images at the end of the fur trade, they are valuable as she dutifully records the material culture of these voyageurs. The material culture of these men is similar to descriptions of Métis men from earlier in the century, perhaps indicating that the outfit of the voyageur had altered little during the course of the nineteenth century.

Significantly, the MNO now uses Hopkin's *Shooting the Rapids* for various promotions of their organization. For example, it is featured at the Annual General

¹¹¹ Clark, 27.

¹¹² Clark, 27.

Assembly, on the website and together with other images and scenes in order to represent the Métis Nation of Ontario. The contemporary usage suggests that the MNO sees the image of the voyageur as representing a central component of Métis identity. Furthermore, the title of a bi-monthly publication, *Métis Voyageur*, highlights the important role that the ideology of the voyageur plays in identity making.

Together, the written descriptions and the images I have discussed present a consistent repertoire of material culture. Métis men wore frock coats, an un-tucked shirt, leggings, moccasins, usually a sash and sometimes a bandolier bag. On the head, men might wear a toque or kerchief in the French-Canadian style, a top hat or turban. These items were decorated with quills, beads and/or lace ribbon work. Women largely wore Indian modes of dress. They wore leggings, strap dress, moccasins, earrings, and sometimes a blanket or shawl. Both men and women wore silver trade jewellery. Children were dressed like their parents. The combination of European and Indian designs, had a dynamic quality. I would argue that rather than distinctive looks for different Métis communities, fashions varied according to the varied interpretations and combinations of European and Indian styles that individuals would wear. The Indian groups they traded with and their interaction at fur-trade posts with Europeans also influenced their choices.

Visual Culture as a Lens to View and Be Viewed

Were Métis individuals indicating a stable identity through their clothing choices as Racette argues? Racette's position suggests that Métis consciously used clothing and decoration to indicate their identity. However, this argument can be

challenged by the fact that Métis dressed themselves with reference to a wide variety of factors: family ties, community, access to trade goods, and personal preference all played a role in their material culture decisions both in western Canada and Ontario. In the Great Lakes region in the nineteenth century, Métis were dependent on kin ties and fur-trade links and thus did not necessarily want or need to portray a distinct identity that was different from their established family ties to both Indian and European communities. The Schoolcraft children and their parents, Jane Johnston Schoolcraft and Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, could be considered a Métis family. They were proud of their many heritages and did not necessarily seek to part from any of them. As scholar Harriet Gorham states:

Throughout the period of their dependence upon the fur trade, from approximately 1680 to 1830, individuals of mixed Indian and White ancestry in the Great Lakes region appear to have functioned more as a disparate collection of individuals rather than as a cohesive group. They lived in small widely-scattered settlements such as Sault Ste. Marie, St. Joseph, La Baie, Michilimackinac, and Prairie du Chien, or they maintained their own small trading establishments along the water routes between such centres.... As individuals, most mixed-bloods demonstrated a greater awareness of the uniqueness of their way of life as fur traders and their attachment to their homeland in the Great Lakes region, than to any clear sense of distinctiveness created by their mixed ancestry.¹¹³

Perhaps it is impossible to know whether identity was consciously constructed to reflect Métis heritage, especially since there were many variations of decoration amongst the people that lived in the Great Lakes area in the nineteenth century. One thing that Métis people had in common across this area, however, was that they dressed predominantly using a combination of European and Indian fashions. Personality, trade items and family ties dictated the details, whether one wore a toque

¹¹³ Harriet Gorham, "Families of Mixed Descent in the Western Great Lake Region," in *Native People, Native Lands: Canadian Indians, Inuit and Métis*, ed. Bruce Alden Cox, (Ottawa: Carleton

or turban, silver earrings, necklaces or silver plaits in the hair.

Although not discussed in this essay, another area to analyze in a larger study would be the *Habitant* images by Cornelius Krieghoff, because the material culture bears many similarities to the images of mixed-heritage peoples painted by Kane and Hopkins. Mixed emotions of curiosity, desire, envy and fascination along with colonial agendas inspired many Europeans and Euro-Canadians to document their encounters with Métis. They accomplished this through writing journals, creating images and collecting art and artefacts, which reminded them of the mixed-heritage peoples they encountered in the Great Lakes area.

As we have seen, European descriptions ranged from appreciation of mixed-heritage culture to distrust of their clothing and means of production. These create the historical record on mixed-heritage identity and material culture of the nineteenth century. Some Métis were wealthy and well established and one could also argue that some non-Natives envied their varied lifestyles. Métis and their clothing, and other items of bodily ornamentation challenged European ideals of civilization; Métis existed in the twilight zone across Canada. For Kane they would never be civilized because their main livelihood was not agricultural. Jameson, although she knew Métis that were literate, still wrote about Indian people as grotesque. The people these artists and writers met on their trips were like curiosities that they placed in a cabinet, except the cabinets were their memoirs and images, read and gazed at by a Euro-Canadian and European audience. In descriptions and images, Métis clothing, a mixture of European and Indian styles, unsettled European notions of civilized behaviour and rationality and also literally threatened settler expansion into Canada.

The act of wearing a 'hybrid' style although it may have been unintentional, can be understood today as an act of resistance to colonial domination, and can be traced to the contemporary wearing of the sash as a political and cultural act by members of the Métis Nation.

Chapter Three- The Power of Objects: Private Collections and Public Displays of Material Culture

This chapter discusses how material culture and clothing discussed in nineteenth-century sources exists today in public and private collections. Objects have a powerful presence. Through an object in a collection like a jacket, moccasins or beaded pouch, one can analyze the artistic choices of the maker, and learn more about stylistic trends. In their physicality, the ability of artefacts to affect the senses of sight, hearing, touch, and smell, they can act as triggers to kindle memories, desires, dreams, and wishes.¹¹⁴ Through their survival, these objects testify to the artistic skill of Métis artisans, and yet also can be seen as agents of indigenous resistance against the total assimilation of Métis culture. Applying Alfred Gell's theory that art objects can act as social agents through their ability to act on the viewer, this essay will examine how power is expressed through material culture in public and private collections and also at current Métis gatherings. Métis continue to use material culture to state their presence as a proud and vibrant nation. I will illustrate this power through two primary examples: the collecting of Métis material culture by contemporary Métis and the 2009 Annual General Assembly of Ontario where many Métis wore sashes, jackets, and other items of dress, and carried flags, which communicated their identity as Métis through personal stylistic choices. In both contexts, material culture remains a key site for the construction and growth of Métis pride and identity.

Art objects, in the complexity of their design and physical construction, are

¹¹⁴ Ruth Phillips, "Re-placing Objects: Historical Practices for the Second Museum Age," *Canadian Historical Review* 86 (2005): 83 - 110.

imbued with strength from their maker's skill and aesthetic choices. As Gell sets out in his essay, "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology," (1992), they can act on a viewer's physical and spiritual senses, making art a powerful tool as a social agent. Gell notes,

The power of art objects stems from the technical processes they objectively embody: the *technology of enchantment* is founded on the *enchantment of technology*. The enchantment of technology is the power that technical processes have of casting a spell over us so that we see the real world in an enchanted form. Art, as a separate kind of technical activity, only carries further, through a kind of involution, the enchantment which is immanent in all kinds of technical activity.¹¹⁵

When viewing a piece of art, viewers are wrapped up in the aesthetic qualities of an object: the design. The fascination with the object is carried further because viewers can appreciate the artistic skill of the artist yet fail to completely understand how they created it, thus they must acknowledge that the "technical processes" or aesthetic skill presented, exceeds their own. Gell argues, "the moral significance of the work of art arises from the mismatch between the spectator's internal awareness of his own powers as an agent and the conception he forms of the powers possessed by the artist. In reconstructing the processes which brought the work of art into existence, he is obliged to posit a creative agency which transcends his own and, hovering in the background, the power of the collectivity on whose behalf the artist exercised his technical mastery."¹¹⁶

The difficulty of understanding the processes by which these objects are made heightens the extent to which one desires and is captivated by the "magic" of the

¹¹⁵ Gell, 44.

¹¹⁶ Alfred Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology," in *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*, ed. Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 52.

object. Because the object has agency that is indirect, as it represents the skill and power of the artist, Gell refers to it as a “secondary agent” in its ability to exert force over the viewer. Yet it also acts independently: it has power that extends beyond the hands of its maker. “A person and a person’s mind are not confined to particular spatio-temporal coordinates,” states Gell, “but consist of a spread of biographical events and memories of events, and a dispersed category of material objects, traces, and leavings, which can be attributed to a person and which, in aggregate, testify to agency and patienthood during a biographical career which may, indeed, prolong itself long after biological death.”¹¹⁷ Agency, if thought of as a skin, seems to accumulate in layers on the object as it moves through different contexts and time periods, and the agency of an object continues after an artist’s death, making art objects autonomous actors in their own existence. I will return to Gell’s theory at the end of this chapter to test his notion of agency in relation to Métis art objects, after examining several contexts of material culture today: examples held in public collections, recently formed private collections belonging to Métis, and the continued use and production of Métis material culture today as documented at the Annual General Assembly in Sudbury, 2009.

Public Museums

The survey I sent the Canadian Museum of Civilization, (CMC), (Hull), the McCord Museum (Montreal), and the Royal Ontario Museum (Toronto), revealed classification systems that do not include a consideration of Métis in Ontario. Two of the main questions I asked were: how do you categorize Métis material? Do you

¹¹⁷ Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 223.

make a distinction between Métis material from Ontario and western Métis material?

All three museums use a number of criteria to identify material culture as Métis combining documentation, where it exists, with stylistic analysis.¹¹⁸ As outside researchers study the materials at these museums new information may be added to the catalog record. Regarding the stylistic attribution of objects in these collections, all three museums do not distinguish between Métis from the Great Lakes area and Western Métis. At the CMC, there is a “Red River style or type” and also a “Lake Winnipeg style or type.” Many objects at the CMC are classified as possibly Métis, for example, “Cree / Métis,” “Métis / Anishnaabe” because their provenance is not certain. Plains Curator Morgan Baillargeon of the CMC notes that there is no such thing as “pure Métis” meaning that it is difficult to attribute objects as solely made by Métis without further information, although this applies I would argue, not just to Métis material but to other Aboriginal material as well. The McCord and ROM do not differentiate between Métis in the Great Lakes and western Métis possibly due to a number of factors including: a conception that Métis exist solely in western Canada, available funding for research on material collections and perhaps curators bounded by these outdated classification systems which are necessary but do not reflect the current resurgence of Métis identity in Ontario.

Such classifications reflect mixed histories. For example, Métis girls who had a Cree or *Anishinaabe* (Ojibway) mother might learn a beadwork style or colour preference from their mother, and thus reproduce a Cree or *Anishinaabe* style in the objects they created. But is this material to be considered Métis, Cree, *Anishinaabe*, or all three? The situation becomes more complicated if one thinks of other factors

which could have affected their artistic production such as a request for a certain style of beadwork, the supply of materials, external influences such as pattern books, the influence of the Grey Nuns, who according to scholars such as Julia Harrison, were influential in teaching Métis girls how to embroider European floral designs for church decoration and other material at various communities across western Canada.¹¹⁹ Is the agency of an object lost because of such uncertainties in classification? Considering that the object, with or without historical documentation, still has the ability to fascinate the viewer, Gell might argue that the agency of an object is still present even if its classification is ambiguous. Although Gell does not consider these issues of ambiguity in his theory, they are important to understanding Métis artistic identity since there are many collections that require further historical research to uncover the identities of their makers and their community contexts. If the name and details of the artist who made the work are known does this add another layer of agency to the object?

Private Collections – The Material Culture Collection of Denis Tremblay, Sudbury, Ontario and the Fur-Trade Collection of Scott Carpenter, Midland, Ontario

Métis Denis Tremblay started collecting artefacts in his twenties after he discovered his heritage, although before that time, his family denied and hid their Indian ancestry from him.¹²⁰ He collects contemporary and historical material culture. For Tremblay, the objects form a collection of Indian material which is valuable both in their status as interesting, beautiful objects and historical artefacts and in their

¹¹⁸ I conducted a brief survey and received responses from the CMC, ROM and the McCord Museum.

¹¹⁹ Thanks to Morgan Baillargeon, who brought up the idea of requests for certain beaded objects. Personal Communication, CMC, January 26, 2010. For more information on the influence of the Grey Nuns, see Harrison's book, *Metis: People Between Two Worlds*.

ability to provide visual examples of Indian artistry for the education of the public.

The pieces come from around the Sudbury and Northern Ontario area which evidences the skill of Indian artisans.

Some objects were created for the tourist trade, some for personal and everyday use and some were gifts in the private collection of Tremblay, yet all of them can be perceived as having social agency. The artist would ascribe a meaning to it, then another layer of agency or meaning would be added by the person who used it or by the collector who bought the object.¹²¹ Now in the Tremblay collection, these objects have another layer of agency because they have been united as objects created by Indian makers, marking the pride and skill of Métis and Indian people within the Sudbury region. Although many of the objects in private collections were made by artists who have passed away, one could argue that objects also have agency in and of themselves in their ability to transfix the collector and the viewer through their physical presence.

The Métis collection of Denis Tremblay is a personal collection of artefacts and art which Tremblay has amassed over a period of forty years. Tremblay states the important role that his collection has in his life as a Métis person, “it (the collection) cements me to my heritage, it’s a direct connection with my past... When I pick up an artefact, it feels like a direct connection with my ancestors. I’m touching these items

¹²⁰ Interview with Denis Tremblay, February 8, 2010.

¹²¹ For example, see Judy Thompson’s report on the Frederick Bell collection and the Métis in the Northwest Territories. This collection was made by Frederick Bell as he travelled throughout the Northwest; the objects were functional but also were souvenirs of his trip. Judy Thompson, “Turn of the Century Métis Decorative Art from the Frederick Bell Collection,” *American Indian Art Magazine*, Autumn (1983): 37-45.

that they touched.”¹²² Tremblay has actively collected pieces and also received donations for the collection. It contains beaded moccasins, gloves, jackets, pouches, knives, guns, snowshoes, postcards, a fiddle, harmonica, a paddle collection, and various items of hunting and camping equipment. The objects at his home serve as a personal collection but also as a record of Indian heritage within the Sudbury area since the nineteenth century. Tremblay has displayed his collection at many Métis AGA gatherings and celebrations for the benefit of Métis and people interested in learning more about Métis and Indian heritage. In this way, his collection of material helps document the important role and presence of Métis in Northern Ontario.¹²³

In general, there is little documentation of the provenance of the objects, although for some objects, the artist’s identity is suggested by family history. Many of the objects were used, proved by evidence of wear and tear such as missing beads and dirtied leather. Many items have little information about family origin, but Tremblay asserts that they were most likely made within the greater Sudbury area due to the information provided to him from the people who donated objects and the dealers he has received material from. Stylistically, the Tremblay pieces appear to be Indian, but whether or not they should be identified as made by Métis artisans is hard to assert without knowing more about the specific histories of the makers.¹²⁴

A jacket, three pairs of moccasins, and a pair of mittens in Tremblay’s collection all come from the same family, and may thus have had the same maker, who was most likely the wife of Lloyd Stahle. Mrs. Stahle an Indian woman who came from the Cape Croker area of Georgian Bay. These items were passed down

¹²² Interview with Denis Tremblay, February 8, 2010.

¹²³ Ibid.

through three generations. They were most likely made around the 1900s as they were worn by Lloyd Stahle during his hunting and fishing trips. Also in Tremblay's collection is a photograph of Lloyd Stahle's son wearing the coat in 1948. John McGregor, the grandson, who sold the items to Tremblay in 2001, wrote on the back of the photograph,

Picture was taken in 1948 that is my father wearing the coat. The coat has been in the family for 3 generations. My Grandfather Lloyd Stahle use to hunt and fish in the Cape Crocker area of George Bay with Natives in the early 1900s. He became close friend to the native and was adopted in the community. And was made a set of clothes. A coat and moccasins. He married a member of the tribe the name I can not remember. The coat and moccasin are now in the possession of Denis Tremblay a Métis in the Sudbury area. I sold it to him as he knows what to do with the cloths (sic).¹²⁵

The items which are now in Tremblay's collection provide an interesting stylistic point of analysis.¹²⁶ After an initial visual analysis of the four items, it seems likely that due to the use of colour, the swirling bead patterns and the name marked "Stahle" on the set of moccasins, that there was one maker for the items. Regarding the style, the artist used spiral concentric patterns and five-petal flowers (figure 3.1). The colour palette was varied and included bright orange, blue, and red. A detailed analysis may be useful to discuss the exact stylistic trends and construction decisions made by the artist.

The Nehru-style, fringed jacket is made of elk hide, with beadwork on the front lapels, the back yoke and the cuffs (figure 3.2 and figure 3.2a). The yoke and front facing are lined with cotton, the rest of the jacket is not lined. The coat is well

¹²⁴ Tremblay favours the term Aboriginal rather than Métis. Ibid.

¹²⁵ Direct quotation of the letter written by John McGregor who sold the items to Denis Tremblay. Interview with Denis Tremblay, February 8, 2010.

¹²⁶ I will continue to seek out information about the Stahle family to find more information about the maker.

used, there are buttons missing on the front of the jacket. The photograph, which shows a man wearing the jacket, and the state of it indicate that it was used for everyday wear. There are three sets of moccasins, two pairs are wrap-around style, the other pair ends at the ankle. Moccasins A (figure 3.3) were made of elk hide, and there is beading done in a spiral pattern. The bead colours are similar amongst the set of objects and include: orange, rose, dark blue, teal, clear and green. Moccasins B (figure 3.4) are also made of elk hide; of interest is the use of either pony hair or perhaps fishing line that is wrapped to make a butterfly design on the vamp. In this pair, one of the moccasins is marked “Stahle” in red ink. Moccasins C (figure 3.5) are wrap-around style with leather strings. The artist seemed to have used braided, horse-hair wrapped in cotton thread and thicker beads for decoration. Like the other moccasins, six bead colours are used. The gauntlet-style gloves are smoked and tanned to match the surface texture of the jacket and moccasins (figure 3.6). The dark colour indicates that they were most likely brain tanned, dried and smoked in the sun.¹²⁷ It should be noted that the use of the orange beads on the objects seems to act as an accent and could be the ‘trademark’ of one talented female artist, displaying her personal preference for this colour (figure 3.7). Through their construction and stylistic similarities, the agency of the artist presents itself again. Although these items are now in a private collection, they still testify to the presence of Indian beadwork artists in northern Ontario and also help Tremblay and other Métis appreciate the skill of Indian material culture design and construction.

Scott Carpenter’s Collection

¹²⁷ Personal opinion of Denis Tremblay. Interview with Denis Tremblay, February 8, 2010.

Scott Carpenter works for the Métis Nation of Ontario as the Education Employment Coordinator and uses his collection of objects to educate the public about fur-trade and Métis identity largely within Ontario. Carpenter's exhibition display tells the story of the fur-trade and Métis, and he moves it from place to place depending on the venue. The items are used to educate students and the general public in the displays put on at assemblies, fairs and other functions. He started collecting in 2002 – 2003 to help tell the story of the origins of the Métis. When he first started asking people about what Métis identity was, they would tell him, "it's not First Nations." This collection reflects the efforts to have material which tells the Métis and fur-trade story in the Ontario region, although looms, books and videos were given by a Métis woman from Alberta.¹²⁸ The collection includes items of material culture: beads, buttons, jackets, sashes, vests, moccasins, canoes, cooking utensils, weapons: muskets, horns, musical instruments, games, tools for hunting such as tumplines, saws, and other objects that were used in the day-to-day activities of Métis.

Regarding the provenance of the collection, some objects are Métis, some First Nations, some are replicas of objects made and used by Indian peoples generally. For Carpenter, each item helps tell the story of Métis. He likes to demonstrate and interpret the process of telling history, and viewers are encouraged to touch the objects; it is a collection which is meant to appeal to all ages. Carpenter states: "our story is an oral story, it is important to have an interpretative story. We can't take the fur trade out of the Métis as it defined the Métis, it was the starting

¹²⁸ Interview with Scott Carpenter, AGA, August 2009. Part of the collection was donated by Jeannine Carrier, an 84 year old Métis woman in Alberta, who gave looms, books and videos.

point from where we evolved.”¹²⁹ Both the Tremblay and Carpenter collections ‘tell’ Métis stories in Ontario; the objects have agency in their ability to act as tactile instructional aids, and as evidence of Métis and Indian artistic and cultural presence in Ontario. Both Carpenter and Tremblay’s Métis heritage extends back to Métis communities in Ontario, and they attempt to collect Métis material from Ontario, yet they do not exclude consideration of material that could also be considered as symbolic of western Métis: such as sashes. This suggests that Métis in Ontario do not necessarily want to be seen as having cultural markers that are different from Métis in western Canada, but rather are on an alternate continuum of cultural development which is not identical but uses similar material culture in their identity statements.

The development of these collections as tools of collective identity bears several parallels to movements in the United States by African American individuals to collect material culture, books, and music which reflected their collective historical development and growth. Like the Métis, African Americans struggle to have institutions and collections which reflect the vibrant nature of their cultures and have worked against the colonialist and racist policies of “historically white museums.”¹³⁰ They have also fought through centuries of oppression, ambivalence and against colonialist representations of them as “other.” Their new collections reflect these struggles of identity formation and the difficulty of collecting material in these contexts. Fath Davis Ruffins, in her essay, “Mythos, Memory and History: African American Preservation Efforts, 1820 - 1990,” (1992) explains the absence of material

Interview with Scott Carpenter.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Fath Davis Ruffins, “Mythos, Memory and History: African American Preservation Efforts, 1820-1990,” in *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*, eds. Ivan Karp, Christine Mullen

culture and art representative of African Americans,

In preserving little related to African Americans, major nineteenth-century American museums were echoing scholarly versions of American history and a popular sense of American culture in which African Americans were invisible. The African American materials that some of these institutions inadvertently acquired usually documented the history of interactions between Blacks and whites instead of the distinctive memories and traditions of African Americans. The structure of these collections communicated the sense that Africans and most other peoples of colour were absent from world culture except as the occasional subject of European artists. Hence such museums showcased American stereotypes about Africans and African Americans.¹³¹

Although not the exact same situations, since there have been attempts to collect Métis material in museum collections, Métis and African Americans continue to struggle to have art collections and exhibitions which reflect their culture rather than ambiguities and gaps. In the twentieth century, Ruffins notes, many African American individuals have built collections of art, material culture and literature and have recorded their traditions in order to build a cultural foundation that continues to develop today. Ruffin makes an excellent case for the continued collection and preservation of culture which I think would be useful in consideration of Métis identity concerns. In Ruffin's words,

While the history of African American preservation efforts is quite long, and while there are important collections of nineteenth-century origin in both large and small institutions, we have a strong mandate to preserve twentieth-century African American culture. As we prepare to move into the twenty-first century, now is the time to build the great collections of oral and musical culture, art, and artifacts that future generations of scholars will use to understand our own era. While we should save all that we can now identify as being from before 1900, we have a special responsibility to create collections about twentieth century African American life.¹³²

Collections of Métis historical art need to be developed and researched, but

Kreamer and Steven D. Levine, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 522.

¹³¹ Ruffins, 525.

institutions and Métis individuals should also focus on documenting, celebrating, and showcasing contemporary Métis arts. Although there have been divisions between museums and private collectors in the past, if both groups collaborate on how they identify Métis material in Ontario, this may lead to new understandings of distinct material culture for the Métis in the Great Lakes. This collaboration would allow for museums to update their antiquated classification systems to better reflect the current identity of Métis in Ontario and develop trust between Aboriginal communities and cultural institutions.

Métis Identity at the Annual General Assembly, Sudbury, 2009

The Annual General Assembly brings Métis from across Ontario together for a week long gathering which is a celebration of heritage and culture and also is an important time for issues of governance to be discussed and voted upon. In 2009, the opening celebration commenced with a canoe voyage of leading Métis members, including MNO president Gary Lipinski. This canoe voyage recalls the significance of the voyageur, a leading symbol for Métis in Ontario. This performance was like a reenactment of the voyageurs' activities in Frances Hopkin's image, *Shooting the Rapids*, (1879), the image the MNO uses actively on all its publication material and website. Many of the Métis in the canoes were wearing distinctive Métis dress such as sashes and beaded leather jackets. Although beyond the scope of this thesis, it would be interesting to trace how the MNO has used the symbol of the voyageur throughout its celebrations and also identity claims.

Material culture continues to play a vital role for the Métis of Ontario in the celebration of their heritage and in the development of identity. Objects such as

¹³² Ruffins, 592.

sashes, bags, jackets, flags, and hats communicate to the public the pride that Métis feel about their past and also of the present status of the Métis in Canada. These objects therefore have a great amount of agency which is bestowed upon them by the creators and wearers. A sash or beaded bag can communicate the pride that the wearer has in traditional Indian arts such as beading, weaving, or quillwork. They also act as signifiers for the Métis nation and unite people who wear them on occasions such as annual gatherings, National Aboriginal Day, Louis Riel Day, and other occasions. At the Annual General Assembly in Sudbury, 2009, I interviewed eight Métis from many different backgrounds, ages, and occupations and found that they all had varied experiences with material culture. Each person had a different interpretation of material culture and Métis identity and these responses evidence both the varied experiences of being Métis and the large role material culture continues to play.

Stephen Quesnelle is a senator for the Niagara / Welland Region of the MNO. He traces his Métis family heritage back to the migration of Métis from Drummond Island to the Penetanguishine area in the nineteenth century. According to Quesnelle, “my family tried to hide the fact (that they were Métis) not because they were ashamed, but in order to protect the family.”¹³³ Quesnelle thinks that material culture did have a large role in defining family identity but it was hidden to the everyday eye. Today, Quesnelle states, “every chance I get I put on Métis apparel to show people who we are.”¹³⁴ He states, “I have a Métis flag on the back of one of my jackets.”¹³⁵ Quesnelle’s future vision for Métis arts and culture: “My vision is that people will

¹³³ Interview with Stephen Quesnelle, AGA, August 2009.

¹³⁴ Interview with Stephen Quesnelle.

come out and say ‘I’m Métis’ and they are! I would also like for Métis to get back to the clothing, beadwork and see our numbers grow.”¹³⁶ He does not perceive his identity as different from other Métis groups. He states: “You are Métis, You are Métis. It doesn’t matter where you are from. That’s a problem I had because you are Métis in British Columbia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario and you are not a Métis in Quebec and other provinces... This boundary stuff is nonsense.”¹³⁷ Quesnelle states, “I’m very proud to be Métis, I wish I had known earlier... Métis culture... our children have a right to know about it.”¹³⁸

Earl Scofield is a senator for the Windsor Métis Council and also a veteran with the Canadian Forces who served in World War Two (figure 3.8). His family has many Métis heritage connections: his mother came from the Métis community of St. Laurent, Manitoba, and his maternal grandfather was a fur buyer. On the paternal side, his grandfather was Gaspar Chartrand and his wife was Marie Cecile Duchard, a Métis. Scofield notes that his Métis heritage was not admitted in some family circles because: “they didn’t want to admit they had Indian Blood.”¹³⁹ But some family members did accept it. Scofield has many fond memories of his childhood, growing up in Winnipeg and then Timmins. At fourteen in Timmins, Ontario, he drove a dog team to get wood and supplies to feed his family. He would go sometimes ten miles into the woods with his team of four dogs. His brother Gaspard, Scofield states, was “a real good Métis fiddle player.”¹⁴⁰ Scofield belongs to the National Métis Veterans

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Interview with Earl Scofield, AGA, August 2009.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Earl Scofield.

Association and attends all veteran functions and Métis gatherings, such as the commemoration at Batoche and the AGA in Ontario. Scofield wears an Assumption-style sash with a button designed by the Métis community in Sault Ste. Marie that has the infinity symbol containing an image of a moose and two voyageurs in a canoe. He wears his sash to meetings, Louis Riel Day and various veteran functions. Scofield also wears a necktie that he received as an honour at a memorial service for veterans held at Six Nations, Brantford, in 2007. Scofield says, “I took the salute as all the veterans marched by, which was a great honour.”¹⁴¹ The beaded necktie reads “Six Nations Veterans Association” and Scofield wears it with pride. The wearing of the sash, hat, and necktie demonstrates Scofield’s connections to the Métis community and also his pride at having served in the arm forces.

Amanda Pont-Shanks is a councilor for the Niagara region Métis council, and lives in Queensville. She traces her family history back to the Red River Settlement and her relatives participated in the Riel Resistance against the Canadian government. Regarding the importance of material culture, she notes, “I think it probably played a large role. For a long time my grandfathers never talked about it, it’s something you don’t talk about, Métis try to assimilate the best way they can... My grandfather had different things like tobacco pipes but didn’t say much about it... For a long time, people weren’t allowed to be proud of their heritage, it’s really sad, it’s pretty incredible to be in a situation like this (at the AGA), where we’re actually meeting people who are saying you know what, we’re proud of who we are, we’re proud of our traditions.”¹⁴² For Shanks, education and awareness about the Métis arts needs to

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Interview with Amanda Pont-Shanks, AGA, August 2009.

grow. “In Canadian History books, there is nothing about Métis, in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, Métis are included in the history, but not in Ontario.”¹⁴³ At the interview, Pont-Shanks wore a sash across her shoulder which she had received from her father. For Pont-Shanks, “Being Métis to me is about family history, family pride, you need to know who your family is before you can move forward, you are who you are because of your family.... I think its about time that people start celebrating their history, their past.”¹⁴⁴

Debra Snedden is a doll-maker who lives in the Ottawa region and who discovered her Métis family ties within the past five years. Her parents and grandparents have ties to the Six Nations community, Brantford, and the Métis community. She started making spirit dolls as a present for a Métis friend “each doll has its own personality”¹⁴⁵ and it has grown into a business. Snedden’s future vision for the Métis in Ontario: “In order to keep the Métis culture alive, I think we have to have the arts, it has to get bigger, more widespread, it has to really bring children in, really get them interested, loving to do it and proud of it, not artsy-craftsy, but art and craft because I think that is the whole culture. That’s what’s making me feel like I belong, that I share in the same beliefs about the culture, the art and the love of sharing it.”¹⁴⁶ For Snedden, being Métis is a journey of discovery and making dolls of all different Aboriginal backgrounds, including Métis, allows her to make spiritual and cultural gifts for friends and family.

Barbaranne Dominic Wright is the current women’s representative for the

¹⁴³ Interview with Amanda Pont-Shanks.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Debra Snedden, AGA, August 2009.

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Debra Snedden.

Métis Niagara Council and a past president of the council. Her Métis family history extends back to the marriage of Jacques Hartel, who was an Indian Interpreter for Samuel de Champlain, to an Indian woman (possibly Mohawk or Huron). The couple had two female children in the Schenectady area of New York State. One daughter married a Dutchman and settled in the Niagara region and Wright is a descendant of that union. In an attempt to fit in, her family did not discuss their Métis heritage. Her father was born in St. Boniface, Manitoba, and spoke Michif. Wright spoke about the role of material culture in previous generations: “I think in the past it wasn’t as prevalent because there was a stigma attached (to Métis identity), but as we move forward in a positive light you can see from what I’m wearing I’m very proud of the beading that transpired. The history of our people is through our flag, our beading, through our stories, through the elders, and I’m very proud of the art and the creativity of our Métis people.”¹⁴⁷

In Niagara, they have recently started a beading group for all members of the community, and Wright is currently working on a medicine pouch with beadwork flowers. She makes an analogy between Métis history and beadwork saying: “we must fill in what is missing.”¹⁴⁸ Wright has a collection of Métis material including moccasins and a beaded jacket which she purchased at an auction in British Columbia. She states that it is at least fifty years old and she has repaired the beading on it; it holds a special place in her house. She wears it at annual gatherings such as the AGA. She also wears a sash which is a gift from her mother, and she states: “I

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Barbara Dominic Wright, AGA, August 2009.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

wear a sash because its Métis, I'm proud."¹⁴⁹ (figure 3.9) The colours of the sash, according to Wright, all have significance: red symbolizing the blood shed of Métis people, green – prosperity, good health and growth, white – purity, yellow – bright future, black – dark days, and blue – water transport. Regarding the Métis flag, she says: “the Métis flag being the first national flag of Canada dating back to 1816... how fascinating is that to be able to look at our flag and say you know what, that's pretty awesome, that's a first, the infinity symbol... I fly them at home.”¹⁵⁰ Her future vision for Métis in Ontario includes the education of the public about Métis history and she states: “I think its important that we share with the public about our culture and history and the museums are there and willing to accommodate.”¹⁵¹ When asked what does being Métis mean to her, Wright answered: “Its my identity... it helps me understand who I am, where I come from and educating my children and the public.. these people are my family... Métis is about... being family, sharing, community, beading classes... its all about being family.”¹⁵² For Wright, material culture plays an important role in her life as a Métis person, in the celebration of the past and in the creation of the future.

Louise Vien is a finger-weaving artist and traditional art councilor who makes sashes, beaded bags and other traditional arts, and lives in the Ottawa area. Her Métis lineage derives from the St. Vitale community of the Red River, Manitoba. It should be noted that this interview was conducted while she was finger-weaving a sash. Her Métis identity was not talked about in her family. Material culture, the making and

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Barbara Dominic Wright.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

wearing of it is essential to Métis culture, Vien states: “the sash is the most prominent symbol, with the industrialization of the sash it depletes the culture.”¹⁵³ The art of sash weaving for Vien is a key cultural marker: “The sash itself tells you how the nation will go... weaving your ancestors with each thread. You appreciate it when you make it yourself.”¹⁵⁴ For Vien the importance of traditional arts can not be stressed enough for the preservation of Métis culture. Although no clothing or other material culture has been passed down in her family, her children are now getting their own sashes, doing beading and thus continuing on Métis arts in this and for the next generation. Material culture was and is a key site for the display of Métis heritage. Vien notes that “decoration was a showcase of pageantry.”¹⁵⁵ She believes that the tobacco pouch was a stylistic trend in use for western Métis, but that the Métis in the Great Lakes area used the octopus bag, one of which she is now making. Vien conducts workshops in the Ottawa area on traditional arts, such as beading, and sash making to spread the knowledge and keep an awareness that the arts live.

Considering images by Rindisbacher and Kane as discussed in Chapter Two, it is interesting to consider how both tobacco pouches and octopus bags were used by Métis in western Canada and likely the Great Lakes area. Therefore Métis in both areas could have interchanged their styles of bags. Also, Native communities such as the Cree and Saulteaux used tobacco pouches and octopus bags, suggesting that these bags were not relegated solely to the Métis as a cultural marker. This also applies to sashes, since many groups wore variations of the finger-woven sash, for example the French Canadians wore the sash, Seminoles, a Native group indigenous to Florida,

¹⁵³ Interview with Louise Vien, AGA, August 2009.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Louise Vien.

also had finger-woven sashes.

Mandi Wikis is a council member for the Métis community in Hamilton. Her Métis heritage extends to her paternal grandmother who was born in the St. Rose region of the Red River Settlement, Manitoba. The family moved from Manitoba to Kapuskasing, in the early twentieth century, and along the way, Wikis states: “they burned everything Métis to hide their Métis identity.”¹⁵⁶ Wikis has recently purchased sashes: “for the ones that were burnt.”¹⁵⁷ The sash she wore for the interview was given to her for the volunteer work she has done, presented by her “Métis mother” who has helped Wikis learn more about the Métis Nation of Ontario. The sash is a very important symbol for Wikis: “the sash represents the struggles my grandmother went through... its one of the ultimate representations of the Métis, I wear it proudly.”¹⁵⁸ Wikis wears the sash at all Métis events and festivals, on National Aboriginal Day and at the annual Métis festival in Toronto: “I wear it on the changing of the seasons and when I need that comfort, I have it by my bedside when I’m doing schoolwork.”¹⁵⁹ Wikis states that there are photographs of her relatives in Métis clothing, but that she has only viewed them briefly, and they are still researching their family history. As to the future for Métis, Wikis notes, “Its up to the youth to seek out the teachings (of the elders), not just about beadwork, baking, its about stories.”¹⁶⁰ For Wikis, it’s the wearing of the sash and the stories behind its significance that make Métis culture.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Mandi Wikis, AGA, August 2009.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Mandi Wikis.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

Through the testimony of these Métis of many different backgrounds, it is evident that material culture plays a significant role in the preservation and construction of identity. Material culture is collected, made, and worn by Métis people to express and celebrate their heritage. The agency of these objects occurs in different formats: Métis artists create sashes, dolls, beaded bags and other objects, collectors use objects to form a personal collection or educate a broad audience. Métis from both the Red River Settlement and Ontario wear sashes, vests, moccasins, and other items to visibly represent their unique position, suggesting that there are many visual markers that are shared by the Métis across Canada. The sash remains a vibrant symbol of Métis identity from its roots in the fur-trade to its present use at gatherings as a marker of Métis pride and heritage by both men and women. Other items such as flags, beaded jackets, and beaded pouches are also significant items for many Métis in their ability to represent past Métis struggles and current victories. Material culture is embedded with a great degree of agency by Métis artists, collectors and others who wear the objects and instill their own personal traditions and interpretations of the objects.

The Agency of Métis Material Culture

Returning to Gell's theory, I will discuss how his theory of agency illuminates the three different contexts examined. Métis consider material culture as an important part of their identity, yet more research needs to be done on how Métis view specific art objects, such as the sash. These objects have agency in a general sense, in their ability to represent Métis pride, and symbolize identity as used by Métis at cultural events. Studying how Métis conceptualize these objects would be important to

understand how these objects ‘act’ on individuals, yet this is beyond the scope of this study. However, Gell’s theory can be used to comprehend the complexities of attributing a specific style to material culture.

Applying Gell’s notions of agency to the dynamic and hybrid nature of Métis culture is useful, but also problematic, especially in his use of the term “style.” “Style, which is the harmonic principle which unites works of art into groups, into collectivities,” notes Gell, “corresponds to the anthropological theme of ‘culture.’ Culture is style.”¹⁶¹ He also states: “style is personhood in aesthetic form.”¹⁶² Gell’s essentialist “culture is style” seems too narrow to make room for ambiguities and exceptions to certain stylistic rules. Métis style, I would argue, should be thought of as a fluid, shifting element since each Métis artist’s work reflects different experiences.¹⁶³ These personal experiences may have been expressed in the personal fashion choices that they made, the objects they created and the traditions they passed on. Gell’s theory of agency is also useful in understanding how material culture functions in relation to museum classification systems. Does material culture lose its agency in a museum collection when its cultural and stylistic attributions are unclear and when the boundaries for classification are ambiguous - in other words when it could fit in a variety of categories?

What makes Métis art distinctive from other Indian styles in the Great Lakes area, such as Cree or *Anishinaabe*? I recognize that what makes something “Métis” in

¹⁶¹ Gell, (1998), 153.

¹⁶² Gell, (1998), 157.

¹⁶³ My argument is inspired by Sherry Farrell Racette’s proposal that Métis and Half-Breed identity should be thought of in terms of a fluid movement of Métis spaces. Racette notes, “it was in the experimental realm, the *métis* space of new possibilities, that items of dress were invented and transformed.” Racette, 107.

style is highly contested. As I argued in the previous chapter, in the Great Lakes, Métis style in material culture is a combination of both Indian and European clothing trends, and the notion of something as “purely Métis” is a myth. Because Métis were more mobile than their contemporaries, they were influenced by many different things, including the people in their community both Indian and European. As I have tried to establish, it is most useful to consider the family history of the individual who made the object, and to analyze what may have influenced an artist’s style. However, to identify something as Métis rather than belonging to another Indian group becomes very problematic considering that many Métis lived within Indian communities, their parents usually belonging to a certain Indian nation. For example, the Schoolcraft family could be considered a Métis family; Jane Johnston had Irish and *Anishinaabe* (Ojibwa) heritage and she and her daughters made quillwork.¹⁶⁴ Jane most likely learned the designs and techniques from her mother who was *Anishinaabe*. Should one call her work Métis or *Anishinaabe*? In a general survey of objects from museum collections, it is very difficult to distinguish the differences between some Ojibwa and Métis beadwork from the Red River region, based on a stylistic analysis, see Chapter One for more information. This can be explained by the many interactions Métis had

¹⁶⁴ Mrs. Schoolcraft and her daughters made quillwork, of which beautiful examples are held at the University of Pennsylvania Museum. While the provenance for these objects is not for certain, it is probable that Mrs. Schoolcraft taught her daughters to make arts such as beadwork, and quillwork in the *Anishinaabe* (Ojibwa) style of her mother. Regarding a quillwork bowl, Ruth Phillips writes, “Mrs. Istiancraft was the daughter of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft and his Ojibwa wife. She probably brought this bowl, filled with maple sugar, as a gift when her father brought her to school in Philadelphia in 1837.” Ruth Phillips, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700- 1900*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), 169. However, based on a re-examination of these photographs, the inscription on the bottom of one of the baskets could also be read as J. J. Schoolcraft, which would make these quill-work baskets the gifts of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft. This makes the most sense, considering that Jane’s daughter (Jane Susan Anne Schoolcraft) would have been too young to have the artist’s proficiency which these baskets demonstrate, since she was born in 1827 and would have only been ten years old at the time these baskets were presented. Mumford, 18.

with other Indian groups. Are the agencies of objects lost because their style is uncertain or because of the similarities between two Indian groups' stylistic traditions? These debates between what is Métis and what is not Métis make it difficult for museum curators and other researchers to create classification systems that reflect certainties rather than ambiguities.

Classification systems for Métis art, used by the CMC, McCord and ROM hinder the potential agency of objects, especially since there is haziness surrounding their making and there is little recognition that there were Métis artists in the Great Lakes area in previous centuries. This complicates the potential agency for Métis objects today because Métis researchers must decipher these complications in order to understand the objects and unravel the meaning behind them. To solve these problems of classification, there needs to be more work done on Métis artistic production in the Great Lakes and the objects in these classification systems need to be re-evaluated in light of Métis identity as understood through family ties, as suggested by Racette. While the CMC and other institutions currently use a stylistic analysis which generalizes and thereby possibly reduces agency of objects, considering material culture in relation to specific family histories reveals rather than conceals information. A possibility would be to use family history and then stylistic analysis to re-evaluate these categories which are arbitrary to gain a deeper understanding of Métis artists and their communities, as work by Duncan and Hail has revealed. Ruth Phillips also argues for the incorporation of a stylistic analysis alongside a consideration of the social and historical ideologies that inform the making of an object. I suggest we use a similar analysis for understanding material

culture.¹⁶⁵ A re-evaluation would be a step towards de-centering the colonial processes inherent in the museum classification system, which have blocked our understanding of Métis arts due to these ambiguities.

Likewise, the private collections of Tremblay and Carpenter also reflect uncertainties in classification, but the exact categorization of these objects seems less important than that they represent Indian culture on a community level. Both collectors use objects to narrate stories of Métis and mixed-heritage presence within this area to educate Métis and non-Métis. For Tremblay, the efficacy of the objects is presented in their material presence; they also serve to remind him of his Aboriginal spiritual and cultural heritage. Notions of authenticity are also important; there are no replicas in Tremblay's collection, whereas Carpenter's has a mix of contemporary replicas and historical pieces. The examples of material culture in both collections convey the skill of Indian artisans and thus represent the agency of Métis people within the Great Lakes area. While it is difficult to know the intentions behind an object's making without more information on the specific artist who made it, the intentions of Métis collectors are clear and in this way the agency of an object can be understood. Tremblay's focus on collecting material culture from Sudbury and Northern Ontario reflects a collecting practice that focuses on understanding the cultural development of family identities. For example, his collecting of objects made by the Stahle family. Further, his efforts to collect material that was locally made emphasizes the importance that he places on understanding the development of Métis in specific communities of Ontario. Tremblay's and Carpenter's collecting practices

¹⁶⁵ Ruth Phillips, "Re-placing Objects: Historical Practices for the Second Museum Age," *Canadian Historical Review* 86 (2005): 83-110.

showcase the agency of Métis and other Indian artists within the Great Lakes region and thus destabilize notions of “stylistic” attributions.

Gell’s theory of objects as social agents has led scholars to apply it to a wide variety of material culture, and others to critique his methods. Francesca Merlan, in her article entitled, “Aboriginal Cultural Production Into Art: The Complexity of Redress,” (2001) critiques Gell’s theory for its application of western academic standards to all forms of art, and his failure to account for the social and political contexts in which indigenous artists work. Merlan argues that the agency of objects needs to be considered within their current environment. She states,

In the complex interface between what emerge as ‘indigenous’ and ‘non-indigenous’ social spaces, the capacity of the objects is recast as part of a wider public reorientation toward their meaningfulness as largely indexical of the indigenous/non-indigenous relationship, rather than as discrete or autonomous... Thus, it seems to me that Gell’s notion of art objects as ‘agents’ requires particular treatment in colonial and post-colonial contexts, and the conditions of their indexicality need to be treated as equal in complexity to the social interface in which their significance is re-shaped.¹⁶⁶

I agree with Merlan that the social and cultural context of Métis art needs to be considered in order to understand its degree of agency or “lack of it.”

Merlan’s analysis is also very apt for understanding the effects that colonization has had on art systems for both indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. She notes,

Whereas the devaluation of subaltern peoples was experienced and rationalized as a necessary connection between them and their ‘culture’ (or lack of it), the revaluation of their cultural production as ‘art’ proposes that it may be seen in the terms of transcendent creationism... The worthiness of ‘Aboriginal art’ to belong within a wider art domain thus arises as something of a philosophical postulate of liberal humanism making itself of service to a

¹⁶⁶ Francesca Merlan, “Aboriginal Cultural Production Into Art: The Complexity of Redress,” in *Beyond Aesthetics: Art and the Technologies of Enchantment*, ed. Christopher Pinney and Nicholas Thomas, (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 202.

conservatively and culturally- rather than politically – conceived social project of revaluation.¹⁶⁷

I would agree with Merlan's argument that the redress of Aboriginal art comes from a cultural motivation of humanists, at least for the Métis and my specific project. Both the wearing and collecting of Métis dress are political and cultural acts and the question of what is stylistically Métis reflects on political concerns of power, land claims, and sovereignty. Through an evaluation of the status of Métis material culture in private and public collections, and also those items worn by Métis at the Annual General Assembly in 2009, I argue for an understanding of these objects as social agents, in their connection to Métis citizens, artisans, and collectors. Gell's argument that one understands objects as having agency solely through their stylistic designs, their "technology of enchantment" is inadequate in understanding the full potential of them. I argue that an object has power not only in its ability to enchant viewers but also through its relation to the artist and the community that it was made in. An object has agency in its ability to mediate various relationships, with the artist, community and wearer. In the words of Racette, "because visual art is communicative, engaging both artist and audience, shared aesthetic expressions serve to bind people in an emotional response to what is culturally defined or well made - the collective linking of eyes, hands and heart."¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Merlan, 224.

Chapter Four - Re-presenting the Past, Enacting the Future: Performing Métis and Mixed-Heritage Identity at Fort William Historical Park

Fort William was quiet as I walked through the cold dewy morning around the outside of the barricade. I could not help but have a sense of awe, imagining what this place must have looked like two hundred years ago, at the height of the fur trade. My guide and I walked into the forest and sat on some tree stumps, waiting for the rest of the tour group to arrive. She was wearing a striped wool jacket, moccasins, leggings and a kerchief in her hair. She seemed to be a woman from yesteryear, stepping out from Fort William's past. However, she then glanced at her watch, told me the tour would start soon, and I was brought back into the present. The illusion that may have lasted a few moments quickly dissipated with the dew as I began to ask more questions. That liminal moment of belief in her performance, and the convolution between the present and the past, seemed to frame my research here at Fort William and the experiences and aims of the interpreters, and raises interesting questions about the potentialities of reenactments like these to affect our understanding of history.

Studying the re-presentation of the past through reenactment seems to highlight the important role that clothing played in identity making in the nineteenth century, and also raises concerns about how Métis identities are presented today. In this chapter, I will explore how mixed-heritage identity is performed at Fort William Historical Park, in Thunder Bay, which interprets fur-trade society in 1815. How is clothing used as an expression of identity for the reenactors? What role does this site play in educating the public about Métis identity? Analyzing the reenactors'

¹⁶⁸ Racette, 2.

portrayals of Métis and Indian identities through clothing and their interview responses sheds light on the park's role as a place of education and the degree of authority given to Indian narratives.

In order to understand the type of performances that Fort William endeavors to create, and to determine to what extent the site and the interpreters succeed in realizing these goals, it is useful to briefly analyze the mandate of the institution (figure 4.1). The motto of Fort William reads “preserving the past while building the future” and its publicity encourages visitors to, as I did for that moment, “step into the past.” Fort William is sponsored by the Ontario Tourism Board and promotes itself as a key tourism site for visitors to Northern Ontario.¹⁶⁹ The fort has many roles, that of educator, entertainer, and promoter of jobs and tourism for Thunder Bay. Through the site and the stories told by the reenactors, it strives to create an “honest and authentic depiction of history based on sound research.” From a series of interviews with the reenactors I learned that most of the people who are reenacted are based on the fur-trade records kept at the fort.

The extent to which the park creates an “authentic depiction of history” and especially in relation to reenactment bears further analysis. There are many debates over this claim in relation to reenactment, which I can only summarize briefly here.¹⁷⁰

Fort William today attempts to recreate a bustling fur-trade post of 1815 and

¹⁶⁹ “Fort William Historical Park will continually strengthen its economic impact upon Northwestern Ontario through its role as a unique, leading multi-component destination tourist attraction that exceeds customer expectations by providing outstanding cultural, recreational, entertainment and educational experiences. As a major North American tourist attraction, Fort William Historical Park serves as a historical, educational, leisure, and entertainment resource for the residents of Northwestern Ontario and visitors to our region. “Fort William Historical Park Mandate”, Fort William Historical Park Website, <http://www.fwhp.ca>

¹⁷⁰ For more information, see Katherine Ann Jackson, “Reenacting the Past: Authenticity Claims and the Production of Collective Memory,” (Ph. D. diss., Northwestern University, 2001), 11.

“authenticity” would thus seem to stem from the research and the ‘absorption’ of the characters’ roles in the past, as known from the documents held at the fort. Each reenactor is encouraged to do continual research about his or her historical character as well as general research about the nineteenth century. However, these records are scanty and there is even less available information for the presence of Indian peoples. Indian interpreters have therefore largely created their characters based on secondary research, consultations with Indian community members, and their imaginations.¹⁷¹ These sources and the need to entertain visitors make reenactment like Métis identity itself, layered and complex.

The terms used at Fort William to describe historical representation are indicative of the tensions between academic and popular notions of reenactment. “Interpreter” and “living history” rather than “reenactment” are preferred, although the interviewees used all these terms. For the purposes of clarity, I will use the term reenactment to describe the performances at Fort William. Reenactors perform a set of activities that are scripted, and are largely concerned with creating, wearing and portraying an “authentic” description of history. As scholar Vanessa Agnew notes, “as a form of affective history - i.e. historical representation that both takes affect as its object and attempts to elicit affect - reenactment is less concerned with events, processes or structures than with the individual’s physical and psychological experience. Further, testimony about daily life and social interaction in the present is often equated with, and becomes evidentiary for, a generalized notion of historical experience.”¹⁷² At Fort William, this “affective history” is presented through the

¹⁷¹ Interview with interpreter, September 30, 2009.

¹⁷² Vanessa Agnew, *History’s Affective Turn: Historical Reenactment and Its Work in the Present*,

everyday actions and narratives presented by the reenactors and their attempts to include visitors in them. Although, there is a tension between the fort's attempt to create an "authentic" presentation of history and reenactment's association with emotion. As scholar Anne Jackson notes in her discussion of reenactment of the civil war, "Because all history is constructed, fact-based authenticity claims, too, rely on definitions of what counts as authentic that are grounded in aesthetic, emotional, ideological, or other types of preferences. However, because of the desire to appear objective, in most instances the fact-based component of claims is highlighted and the affective component is not only devalued and labelled 'politics' rather than 'history'," but also submerged."¹⁷³ Jackson and Agnew call for a recognition of affect as an essential part of reenactment, which also plays, I would argue, a large part in performances by reenactors at Fort William to engage visitors.

How do characters engage visitors through their performances? The material items - costumes, clothing, bags, moccasins, and sashes that the reenactors wear - play a large role in the characters' authority. The material culture draws visitors towards them and gives agency to their presented narratives. Through enchanting the viewer with the magic of the costumes and performances, they seek to have the viewers feel they are immersed in history.

The outfits that interpreters wear are created by referencing a variety of sources, including period costumes from 1803 - 1821, European artists' depictions of Indian people, and personal additions such as bead work on bags or repairs using

Rethinking History 11 (2007): 301.

¹⁷³ Jackson, 278.

hand-stitching made by the interpreters to their costumes.¹⁷⁴ As the costume specialist Susan Pearson notes, “every interpreter has to look like they stepped out of time.”¹⁷⁵ The original costumes at Fort William are based on designs from Borman’s and Nathan’s “world famous” costume company based in London, England, and they have been used since the fort’s opening in 1973. Since then, the original costumes have been used to make patterns for new ones. Edna Loiselle, who was the first costume specialist at Fort William, created the *Anishinaabe* (Ojibwa) strap dress worn by the interpreters who portray mixed-heritage women. Her ideas were based on her research of Indian clothing at a Duluth museum, most likely the Tweed Museum of Art, Duluth.¹⁷⁶ At present, there are over 5000 pieces in the costume inventory.

Other factors such as comfort and modesty are also taken into consideration in the creation of the costume for a reenactor. Fabrics that were in use in the early nineteenth century are used to create the outfits. There are many different characters portrayed at the fort, and each category of character wears similar outfits so that visitors can distinguish a clerk from a partner, voyageur or Indian person. The costume specialist also uses paintings of Indian and non-Indian peoples by European artists such as Paul Kane, and Peter Rindisbacher as sources. Thus, the accuracy of the costumes depends on acceptance of the validity of the images of Indian peoples created by nineteenth-century European artists.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Thanks to Susan Pearson for providing the history of the Fort William Costume collection. Interview with Susan Pearson, Sept 29, 2009.

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Susan Pearson.

¹⁷⁶ This information was based on a conversation with Susan Pearson and thus the precise museum name is not available because Pearson was not sure of the exact location. However, it seems most likely that her research was carried out at the Tweed Museum of Art where there is the Richard E. and Dorothy Rawlings Nelson collection of American Indian Art which focuses on *Anishinaabe* material culture.

¹⁷⁷ These images, however, should be considered within their historical context, specifically the

How are Indian people reenacted at the fort? The portrayal of Indian peoples at Fort William represents Métis identity in its infancy. According to the reenactors I interviewed, they do not portray “Métis” characters with a large “M”, but rather a small “m”, indicating that there were many people of Indian and European origin. These Métis did not identify themselves collectively as a nation, as did Métis later on in the nineteenth century. According to the reenactors, all the women at Fort William in 1815 were of mixed-heritage and there were no white women at the fort. The male reenactors play many different roles, from company clerk to partner to courier de bois, trappers and others. Many of the reenactors I interviewed had Métis or other Indian heritage themselves and could thus identify on a personal level with their characters.¹⁷⁸ Although the park does not state that they are educating people about Métis identity, it could be argued that many people take away an understanding of what life was like for people of mixed heritage in the nineteenth century. In this way, they do perform a broad educative function and give agency to the Métis story.

Before turning to the specific experiences of the reenactors, the types of narratives that are presented at the fort need to be considered to understand the degree of agency given to Indian voices and the role that these reenactments possibly play in the general public’s understanding of fur-trade history. As previously stated, the fort wants visitors to relive the past, yet the past that is presented to them is an idealized, non-problematic past that neglects realities of colonial impacts of settlement on Indian communities. In my interview with the curator and occasional reenactor Shawn Patterson, he discussed the fort’s objective of wanting to present history that was

Eurocentric focus of many of these European artists. For more information see Chapter Two.

¹⁷⁸ It is also interesting to note that the AGA of 2010 for the Métis Nation of Ontario will be held at

‘visitor-friendly’ and educational, and the difficulties in thus presenting alternative histories. Patterson explained that the park ‘walks a fine line’ on ‘sensitive issues’ and did not want to ‘abuse’ tourists. He noted that issues surrounding alcoholism and the slave trade are difficult stories to tell visitors, but if someone asked, they might be presented. Further, objects are displayed to provoke visitors to ask questions. Another challenge he noted was portraying “Indianness”, or conveying that all the women at the fort are of mixed heritage. These concerns for a ‘visitor friendly’ site complicate the ability for *alternative* performances to be presented at Fort William, and furthermore make assumptions about the visitor’s level of comfort with challenging or different narratives. Based on Patterson’s statement, it is difficult to create a balance between presenting critical histories and creating a program that tourists feel comfortable with.

Reenactment has the potential to perform cultural and political work. As Agnew notes in “Epilogue: Genealogies of Space in Colonial and Postcolonial Reenactment,” “reenactment tries to manage the past by telling neglected stories, by showing history from below rather than from above, and by emphasizing conjectural interpretations of the past. This subjunctive quality suggests how the past might have unfolded differently - how economic and gender inequities, territorial dispossession, racial persecution, and genocidal violence could have been avoided - and it thereby allows the future to be imagined anew. At the same time, there exists the possibility that reenactment will lull us into believing that its ethical project is a *fait accompli*.”¹⁷⁹ However, based on the narratives presented to me during my tour and

Fort William Historical Park.

¹⁷⁹ Agnew, (2009), 299.

through interviews, it is unlikely that Fort William participates in the full potentialities of reenactment to address issues of critical importance. Interviews with reenactors further unravel this issue.

Crystal Legros is an interpreter who portrays a half Swiss / half Cree woman named Marguerite McLoughlin who is married to a doctor at the fort. Her costume consists of an old chemise, *Anishinaabe* (Ojibwa) style strap dress, leggings, and moccasins (figure 4.2). Sometimes she wears a wrap skirt or European empire-style dress. In winter months, she wears a wool coat as well. When I asked her about specific styles of clothing, she explained that many of the items we might today attribute to Métis are not presented that way at the fort. She says:

In the time period we play, we don't attribute the sash to Métis but rather to the French-Canadian tradition, for us the way we approach Métis culture, is that it's in its infancy, we are responsible for reenacting the birth of the culture, talking about the fur trade and what role we play in the cultural evolution. We don't talk about the flag, clothing, sash, a lot of the stuff you would identify in 2009 as Métis we attribute it to French-Canadian or Ojibwa, my perspective in 1815, things are just starting out. I don't know if they identified that way as (Métis).¹⁸⁰

The costumes that the interpreters wear help communicate their status as women of mixed-heritage to the visitors to the fort. Legros notes the influential role that she has in communicating important issues that Métis and mixed-heritage people experienced in the nineteenth century: "I think we have an important role, we talk to 400 people every day in July and August, talk to a lot of families, visitors from the States, who may not know a lot about it, I feel like we are giving them a lot of information about how it started ... the role that Métis people played, the marriages in the custom of the

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Crystal LeGros, September 30, 2009.

country.”¹⁸¹

I went on a tour with Marguerite (LeGros) at the fort, the first tour of the morning. We started outside the Ojibwa Encampment and several other visitors from the USA joined us. LeGros introduced herself as Marguerite McLoughlin, the wife of the doctor at the fort and told the group that it was 1815. First we visited the Ojibwa encampment and, after greeting the Indian interpreters there, we went into their wigwam. LeGros explained about the construction of the tent and the harvesting of food, and the visitors interacted with the Indian reenactors at the site, asking many questions to which LeGros responded. She then led us into the fort’s encampment and to her home where she opened the door and led us in. She described her house and a pair of beaded leggings and a dress. There was other evidence of her life and activities such as wool and needles, and plates were laid out on the table. While at her house, she stated that she was a mixed-blood woman. While she initially addressed us in first-person narrative, LeGros was flexible and also spoke in third person about the general activities that happened at the fort, and about the moment in history and the different understandings of the term “Ojibwa” and “Chippewa.” (Chippewa and Ojibwa (*Anishinaabe*) refer to the same group of people, however in the United States they term Chippewa is used).

As LeGros noted in her explanation of her character, there is a fair amount of room for the imagination in her interpretation of Marguerite. In her words, she “tries to think like how her character would have thought. Although there is a degree of impossibility, our aim is to promote living history and immerse the visitors. We make

¹⁸¹ Interview with Crystal LeGros.

anecdotes using plausible history and a fair amount of creativity to make these things seem real: the visitor is interacting with a real person.”¹⁸² LeGros knows that they can not replicate history but can only try and reproduce and recreate it. “The primary difficulty,” LeGros explains, “is that we don’t know what they were thinking. We don’t know if Métis self-identified.”¹⁸³ LeGros notes that the recreation of characters is problematic because there are a lot of groups not represented in the fur-trade records. “We are torn between wanting to interpret history and facing that they were real people.”¹⁸⁴ Do these performances give agency to the characters that lived two hundred years ago or do they tell us more about how history can be used to understand current concerns with identity? LeGros’ reflexive approach to understanding history suggests that interpreters take a critical stance towards interpreting the past, and are also concerned with creating an affective response in viewers in order to draw them in to create a ‘magic moment’ in which they imagine they are in the past. Scholars have studied this affective response in other cultural arenas. For example, in Jackson’s work on civil war reenactment she argues that affective responses to understanding history can play a valuable role in understanding the “multiple authenticities” of history making.¹⁸⁵

Carla Gibson is an interpreter and also an education team leader who develops creative yet educational programs for the many groups of students and adults that come to Fort William. She creates workshops for everything from porcupine quillwork, leatherwork, gauntlet mitts, and beadwork to traditional *Anishinaabe*

¹⁸² Interview with LeGros.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Jackson, 35.

games such as lacrosse, dice and bone games, and leather balls. Gibson's historical character is a Métis woman named Bankshenung or Falling Star. Gibson says that she "portrays not only my self but also a character that lives in 1815."¹⁸⁶ She wears a leather dress for fall with moccasins and sleeves. In the summer, the dress she wears is made of cotton linen. According to Gibson, the style of clothing she wears is *Anishnaabe* (Ojibwa) based, reflective of Indian culture and practicality. Gibson states that quillwork and other forms of decoration on the clothing were passed down from generation to generation. She actively decorates her clothing with beadwork, quillwork and tinsel cones and is careful to use only material that would have been found in the nineteenth century. For example, Gibson noted that in her traditional women's sewing kit, there are bone awls to puncture holes and pieces of sinew to use as sewing thread.¹⁸⁷ These traditional methods of sewing and decorating take a lot of time. She passes on this appreciation for traditional arts through her workshops for people of all ages.

Gibson tries to make a personal connection to each child in her role as interpreter and she finds that the public often expresses admiration for the activities and clothing she wears. She likes to get people involved with stories about her clothing and she often makes it possible to heighten their experience by trying on clothing.¹⁸⁸ This type of affective interpretation has evoked both criticism and admiration from critics, yet for the interpreters at Fort William it is a central component of their performance. Provoking an emotional response in viewers with first-person narrative draws them in to participate in the activities and ask questions.

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Carla Gibson, September 30, 2009.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

As an interpreter, she also has a chance to confront some misconceptions about Indian people and help visitors learn to be inclusive of diverse cultures.

Bridging two time periods and living in the twenty-first century while interpreting the nineteenth is challenging. Gibson notes: “it is difficult to put yourself in a certain moment, but through body language, and imagination you can use these tools to identify with the past.”¹⁸⁹ For Gibson, interpretation also has a strong personal element of identification with her Métis heritage. She notes, “being Métis is learning about heritage, I make my own personal connection between myself and my heritage. It is important for me to pass my skills and knowledge of traditional arts, storytelling and songs, medicine on to the next generation.”¹⁹⁰

Serena Ireland plays Marie Dauphin, a married mixed-heritage woman who performs at the working farm with livestock. Her outfit consists of a strap dress, leggings, moccasins, a shawl and jacket and heavier articles for cooler weather. Like the other female characters, she has created a composite from the fur-trade records and secondary sources to create her identity. She describes her position as “flexible role play”, meaning that she can switch from first-person narrative to third-person to meet the needs of the visitors. One struggle she identified is that life is sometimes difficult to portray in 1815 without certain tools. Regarding the public’s interest in her clothing, she receives the odd question about its function, whether or not she made it, but the majority of questions she receives are based around the social lifestyle of farming.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Interview with Serena Ireland, September 30, 2009.

Another concern for interpreters is to convey ‘authenticity’, by eliminating modern items which might spoil the illusion of 1815. Arla Singleton portrays an independent Métis woman named Madame Desmarais who supports herself by doing odd jobs at the fort. She commented that the public are interested in the clothing,

From all my years of experience, they really like to see pure. They really are looking to see that there is no modern part showing, or make-believe, they don’t want to see a wristwatch. They don’t want to be disappointed ... its sort of like wanting to believe something and then if somebody changes that perspective then they are thrown off the whole visit.. That’s why we do a lot of training, a high priority - looking for any slight hint of modernism, it’s a big site, and if they get disappointed at the beginning of the visit...you are trying to minimize that. I think they come here wanting to believe something, and then they do. They know we are role playing but then they don’t know that we are role playing. Some people actually think we live here... I won’t change their perspective if its harmless, we are talking in first person, so they start to think the past is now.. we are in the past ... it becomes unusual, very strange...¹⁹²

This “patrol for modernism” is carried out as a sort of visual surveillance by all the staff at the park and helps maintain an aura of authenticity, and helps create the illusion of 1815. For the most part, Singleton notes, the public believes that they are in the past. Singleton explains that it becomes a microcosm of the world, since up to 80 people can be working as interpreters in the summer season. Singleton notes, “you are all creating your own world which merges with this time period.... You have to have a way of acting normal because you do it everyday, your imagination is tested through interacting with other characters... you can drop into other people’s storylines.”¹⁹³ Thus imagination, and a strict policy of no modern items and costumes plays an important part in reenactors telling the story of Indian and European fur-trade relations at Fort William.

¹⁹² Interview with Arla Singleton, September 30, 2009.

¹⁹³ Interview with Arla Singleton.

Jeanine Landry works in the Native encampment during the summer season, and portrays a mixed-heritage woman named Colored Eyes. She wears predominantly buckskin dresses and sometimes a cotton *Anishinaabe* (Ojibwa) strap dress (figure 4.3). Her dress is decorated with ribbon and beadwork and shows the influence of European trade goods at this time. Landry notes that visitors are very interested in the Indian styles of clothing and that the clothing plays an important visual role in a viewer's experience, "They love it - the first thing they really see is the clothing - they are always asking about my dress - they are very interested... They ask how did you make that? They're astonished when I tell them that all our Indian people's clothing was made with sinew -- they are like 'oh my god I can't believe you made a dress like that with sinew and buckskin.'"¹⁹⁴ Clothing thus provides an outlet for Indian perspectives to be stated and to impact people's perceptions. As Landry states, "I try to teach them about our culture and what our life was like - I think people really need to know more about our culture, what our life was like, what our people dealt with over the years. I hope my visitations with people impact them .. I think people really need to understand our culture a little bit better- we all live in this country - you have to understand the other person to live well together."¹⁹⁵ Landry's statement implies that her portrayal of a Métis woman impacts people's perceptions of Indian people today and that visitors can learn about Indian culture and also tolerance from their visits to the fort. Yet, if more challenging narratives were presented this would also provide another outlet for visitors to understand "what our people dealt with," or the challenges and difficulties presented by Euro-Canadian settlement on Indian

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Janine Landry, October 1, 2009.

¹⁹⁵ Interview with Janine Landry.

lands.

It is difficult to generalize about the impact of performances on visitors because some have lengthy discussions with interpreters, while others listen to the narratives and watch the actions but do not ask many questions. Furthermore, of course visitors bring different perspectives and past experiences of Métis and Indian people. To fully answer the question of visitor impact is important but requires a detailed study that is beyond the scope of this thesis.

The interpreters' understandings of their impact on audiences is, however, possible to discuss on the basis of my interviews. As we have seen, Landry's and other interpreters' performances are based in part on their own personal experiences. As interpreter, furthermore, she reacts in the first person to express her emotions and how she is feeling. She says,

I'm teaching people Aboriginal life, what it was like ... I think a lot of people don't have the right idea about what Aboriginals were like. They have an idea of savages... So for me my job is very important because its teaching people we were civilized people, we had a structure, staple goods, established people. Depending on the group I'm speaking to I will connect present day life with what happened in the past. All of us are playing a huge role in educating people on our Canadian history - educating our Canadian people on what our Aboriginal people are like.

In this way, she believes her reenactment can provide education for viewers and perhaps even have viewers reexamine their thoughts and perspectives on interactions between indigenous and European peoples. The narratives presented give agency to Métis stories, and provide an occasion for people to rethink and reflect on their experiences. This may cause them to reconsider biases leading to social revisionism. Furthermore, the Métis and Indian stories experienced by the visitor through verbal, visual and other senses may move toward a collective memory of experiences created

by the interpreters and the visitors that functions to intercept and influence understandings of the past and the present.¹⁹⁶ It is also possible that the affective component of interpretation is just fun and entertainment.

Reenactments of historical Métis characters do not necessarily give agency to their lives. In the context of work by scholars like Alexander Cook, the narratives of the fur trade presented at Fort William may tell us more about the present-day interest in the origins of Canada, than about what early nineteenth-century people thought. As we have seen, Métis identity, like other Aboriginal or Canadian identities reflects many influences, and Métis and mixed-heritage people similarly display a great deal of overlap of clothing styles. A French Canadian voyageur might wear leggings and a long tunic with embroidered moccasins and a sash. A Métis might wear the same, and other men employed in the fur trade might wear similar styles, although with their own personal preferences. At Fort William, characters with mixed-heritage wear, for the most part, *Anishinaabe* (Ojibwa) design. In reality, they may have also worn a lot of European- influenced clothing. Differences are highlighted and coded by dress so the viewer can easily read the scene, and decipher who is in what position. Yet, because so many visitors rely exclusively on visual information, the presentation of history would be more historically ‘accurate’ if interpreters wore clothing styles that had more overlap between Indian and European styles.

While Fort William encourages viewers to step back in time, it does not necessarily encourage a great deal of reflection on the part of the visitor. The visitors, like researchers, are encouraged to read the fort and its narratives as “living history.”

¹⁹⁶ Jackson, 125.

¹⁹⁷ Interpreters try to engage visitors by making them believe, through the “authenticity” of the costumes, the buildings, and the first person narratives they are told. Perhaps an attitude that encouraged visitors to reexamine their own conceptions and biases about Métis and fur-trade history would be viable through an approach that focused not so much on the “authenticity” presented but rather on how history is constructed.

A scholar like Alexander Cook would challenge Fort William’s attempt to have visitors connect with an “authentic” past and the immediacy that interpreters strive to create between themselves and the viewers. Cook sees as dangerous the direct connection to the past visitors may feel through these representations. He notes,

Investigative re-enactment should deal explicitly with the nature of re-enactment itself, and with the cultural and sociological significance of the enterprise in question. In practice, this means acknowledging that projects involving re-enactment are not in any direct sense “about” the period or the events being re-enacted. Rather, they are about a modern set of activities that are inspired by an interest in the past. They are about placing modern individuals in dialogue with a historical imaginary.¹⁹⁸

I would argue that despite the “dangers” of reenactment, viewers can still learn about the experiences of Métis and mixed-heritage peoples. Although Cook would be wary of the emotions that visitors feel towards these re-presentations of the past, who is to say that affect and the ability of a viewer to feel a connection to the past, is not a valid experience? Although viewers may have a certain emotional attachment they can also reflect on their experiences. Perhaps the ability of interpreters to create affect amongst their visitors would be a way of having them empathetically reflect on the

¹⁹⁷ Dean MacCannell, “Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings.” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 79, no. 3, (1973): 589-603.

¹⁹⁸ Alexander Cook, “The Use and Abuse of Historical Reenacting: Thoughts on Recent Trends in Public History.” *Criticisms*, 46, 3 (2004): 495.

experiences of Aboriginal peoples in history. As Jackson notes, “bringing personal, embodied experience and historical imagination explicitly into a reading of history simply acknowledges and exposes the role that the present plays in constructing interpretations of history.”¹⁹⁹ These performances remind us that the historical past is not over, and is continually re-shaping itself. Within this process, clothing and costumes continue to play an essential role by creating visual interest and functionality, and by validating the performances and their character’s lives in the nineteenth century.

Furthermore, if more narratives were presented that illustrated such issues as the tensions inherent in Métis marriages and between fur traders and Indians, or the effects of white settlement on Native land and the problems surrounding the use and abuse of alcohol, or Indian spirituality and the effects of Christianity, then the fort’s program might have a greater ability to impact viewers’ emotions and thoughts. The stories presented would have a stronger emotional impact without compromising the fort’s attempts to present history. Beyond the important role that clothing plays, the reenactments might fulfill the capabilities of being an agent of social change, as suggested by scholars such as Agnew. If these changes were made in the “conjunctive space” of Fort William reenactment could become a cultural and political service that addresses vitally important issues to the understanding of Métis, Aboriginal and Canadian identity in the twenty-first century.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Jackson, 125.

²⁰⁰ Vanessa Agnew, “Epilogue: Genealogies of Space in Colonial and Postcolonial Reenactment,” in *Settler and Creole Reenactment*, ed. Vanessa Agnew, Jonathan Lamb with Daniel Spoth, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 300.

Conclusion

“The sash will tell you how the nation will go” - Louise Vieu, Métis artist

In this thesis I have attempted to weave together different ‘textures’ of visual culture including paintings, material culture, and performances of living history to show how material culture conveys Métis and mixed-heritage identity. I argue that visual culture has been and remains a key site of identity construction and significance for Métis people today as evidenced by the contemporary formation of private collections of material culture by Métis individuals and by the pride with which Métis wear their sashes, jackets, buttons, pins and other visual signifiers to various celebrations and events of significance. While identity was not always stable for Métis and mixed-heritage peoples in the Great Lakes region, material culture continued to visually and affectively represent the voices of Métis in paintings, private and public collections. The written and visual descriptions of Métis made by Europeans in the nineteenth century document the presence of Métis families in the Great Lakes area, even if their identity was not homogenous. Métis lives and experiences were diverse and unique. For example, Mrs. Schoolcraft used literature as a creative outlet to express her Indian heritage, yet she also married a man with very Eurocentric views. However, together they had a Métis family and navigated the troubled racial waters of the nineteenth century. Mrs. Jameson, who went and visited the Schoolcraft family, had a positive impression of the Indian people she encountered and wrote of their activities in this light. However, there were also many negative views of Métis people representing them as half-breed, devilish, and far

below the white European man on the scale of evolutionary development. Métis had to navigate racial hatred and discrimination, yet while they did this, the presence of their material culture and art in private and public collections continued to testify silently to their vitality.

With the exception of Mrs. Schoolcraft, I recognize that the historical voices of Indian people are missing in my discussion of the nineteenth century in Chapter Two, although they come into prominence in the rest of my discussion. These voices reverse the power dynamic and inspire me to think critically about the potential of collective memory for Métis. In Chapter Three, I discussed the personal collections of Métis people who use historical Métis objects to produce an affective understanding of the past and a connection to ancestors as well as to explain Métis identity to a broader public. Their statements demonstrate that objects play a very important role in solidifying people's connection to the past. They serve as physical connections to a historical reality and an imagined past. Many Métis proudly wear sashes, coats and other examples of material culture both to convey their status as Métis people, and, at the same time, to affirm their connection to current struggles for the recognition of their identity.

Throughout the Great Lakes, Métis identity was in flux and this affected the stylistic production of material culture. While scholars such as Brasser and Racette recognize Métis stylistic developments in western Canada, this is an attempt to present alternative notions through the various narratives presented by the material culture in the Tremblay collection and the voices of Métis who currently use material culture to express their identity. Stylistic developments of Métis art and dress in

Ontario were influenced by many factors: cultural, political and personal choices affected the specific details. Based on the material in the private collections and the material culture worn by Métis today, floral patterns are the predominant trend. However Métis artists were and are influenced by a broad range of influences that may not adhere to traditionally held notions of Métis work. I suggest that stylistic analysis must be balanced with tracing family histories and understanding artistic development within a cultural context.

At Fort William Historical Park, the important role of material culture in the creation of Métis identities is confirmed. The concerns for authenticity voiced by interpreters also show us how much of history is a current construction, and reveals the need to think critically about the different notions of “authenticity” that are used to present Métis and Indian narratives. Affect plays an important role in narratives presented by the reenactors and also in the use of material culture by Métis. By investigating Métis voices through both material culture and interviews, I hope to contribute to a collective memory of Métis presence in the Great Lakes region. The interviews help to solidify each individual’s Métis story while also contributing to a larger whole of the Métis experience in the Great Lakes region, and providing evidence that Métis were not only a Western *Rielity*.

One aim of this study is thus to open up further ways to think about material culture and visual culture as sources for understanding Métis identities. It suggests many other areas for exploration. The Métis in the United States, although not recognized federally, have many different communities. Perhaps Métis communities that existed in the nineteenth century at Prairie du Chien and other communities

around the southern Great Lakes, that were explored by the artist George Winter, would make an interesting case study. It would be fruitful to compare Métis concerns for identity in the United States with the case for Métis in Canada.

Throughout this study, I have used the term “identity” in discussing Great Lakes Métis. However, another interesting area to explore would be that of Métis nationalism. Do Métis experiences differ across Canada and North America? Are there similarities among all these experiences or does each community, like each family, have different concerns? How has material culture been used in these constructions of Métis nationalism? How is Métis nationalism understood and presented in the capital of Canada?

The field of reenactment has many potential avenues for understanding how Métis identities are presented. With the many living history parks throughout Canada, one could survey and analyze how Métis and Indian narratives are presented in different sites, and why and how experiences at these sites might contribute to the public’s notion of Métis identity in the twenty-first century.

While Métis identity may have been unstable in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is now experiencing a revival as evidenced by the voices presented through the various elements of visual culture. The past will continue to influence our understanding of the present and visual culture remains an important channel in this dialogue. As Louise Vien, a traditional sash weaver says, “the sash will tell you how the nation will go,”²⁰¹ indeed, the various threads of visual culture will continue to weave together to create new technologies of enchantment.

²⁰¹ Interview with Louise Vien.

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Illustrations

A Half-Caste with his Wife and Child.

P. Rindisbacher.

Figure 2.1, Peter Rindisbacher, *A Half-Caste with His Wife and Child*, circa 1825, watercolour, ink on paper.

http://www.allaboutshoes.ca/images/common/paths_across/flower_beadwork/large/metis_family.jpg

Figure 2.2, George Winter, *Noah-Quet, Known as Rice the Interpreter A Half Breed Indian Sketched* (1837), pencil on paper, illustration from Christian F. Feest and R. David Edmunds in *Indians and a Changing Frontier: The Art of George Winter*, (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1993).

Figure 2.3, George Winter, *Bourassa, an Educated Half breed*, (1837), Pencil on paper, illustration from Christian F. Feest and R. David Edmunds, *Indians and a Changing Frontier: The Art of George Winter*, (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1993).

Figure 2.4, George Winter, *Bouriette – Indian Interpreter* (1837), pencil on paper, illustration from Christian F. Feest and R. David Edmunds, *Indians and a Changing Frontier: The Art of George Winter*, (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1993).

Figure 2.5, George Winter, *Daughter of Mas-saw, Maurie*, (1837), watercolour, illustration from Christian F. Feest and R. David Edmunds, *Indians and a Changing Frontier: The Art of George Winter*, (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1993).

Figure 2.6, Paul Kane, *Half Breeds Running Buffalo* (1848 – 1856), oil on panel,
[http://images.rom.on.ca/public/index.php?function=image&action=detail&sid=&ccid=.](http://images.rom.on.ca/public/index.php?function=image&action=detail&sid=&ccid=)

Figure 2.7, Paul Kane, *Métis Encampment* (1848 – 1856), oil on panel,
<http://images.rom.on.ca/public/index.php?function=image&action=detail&sid=&ccid=>.

Figure 2.8, Frances Anne Hopkins, *Canoes in a Fog, Lake Superior*, (1869), oil on canvas, illustration from Janet E. Clark, *Frances Anne Hopkins 1838 - 1919*, (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Art Gallery, 1990).

Figure 2.9, Frances Anne Hopkins, *Canoe Manned by Voyageurs Passing a Waterfall*, (1869), oil on canvas, illustration from Janet E. Clark, *Frances Anne Hopkins 1838 - 1919*, (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Art Gallery, 1990).

Figure 2.10, Frances Anne Hopkins, *Shooting the Rapids*, (1879), oil on canvas, illustration from Janet E. Clark, *Frances Anne Hopkins 1838 - 1919*, (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Art Gallery, 1990).

Figure 3.1, image of swirl pattern and floral motifs, photographs by author, 2009.

Figure 3.2, Nehru style coat, photograph by author, 2009.

Figure 3.2a, coat details, photographs by author, 2009.

Figure 3.3, Moccasins A, photographs by author, 2009.

Figure 3.4, Moccasins B, photographs by author, 2009.

Figure 3.5, Moccasins C, photograph by author, 2009.

Figure 3.6, Hide Gloves, photographs by author, 2009.

Figure 3.7, detail of beadwork on coat, photograph by author, 2009.

Figure 3.8, Earl Scofield, newspaper clipping from *Métis Voyageur*, Annual General Assembly, October 2009, pg 13.

Figure 3.9, Photograph of Barbaranne Dominic Wright wearing her sash and author. Annual General Assembly August 2009.

Figure 4.1, Fort William Historical Park Website. "About Us."
http://www.fwhp.ca/index.php?option=com_expose&Itemid=161 (accessed January 30, 2010).

Figure 4.2, image of *Anishinaabe* (Ojibwa) strap dress used in summer months, Fort William Historical Park Photo Gallery.

http://www.fwhp.ca/index.php?option=com_expose&Itemid=161 (accessed January 30, 2010).

Figure 4.3, image of hide dress, Fort William Historical Park Photo Gallery.
http://www.fwhp.ca/index.php?option=com_expose&Itemid=161 (accessed January 30, 2010).

**Transcripts of Interviews from the Annual General Assembly, Sudbury, August
2009, MNO (listed alphabetically)**

Interview with Scott Carpenter, Education Employment Coordinator, Midland

1. What is your family history as Métis?

My Métis history is through my dad's side. My grandfather ignored it.

2. How many generations of Métis people exist in your family?

There are seven generations, my heritage extends back to the Drummond Island migration.

3. Do you participate in Métis community activities?

I am the Education Employment Coordinator for the MNO in Midland.

4. In the past, what role do you think clothing, sashes played in your family's life and how has this changed today?

My dad's grandmother used to make winter coats for the family, and made many hand-made items.

5. Do you participate in any traditional arts like beading, basket weaving?

I try. I have attempted moose hair tufting, it is difficult, interesting and I appreciate the skill. I like to demonstrate these techniques in my collection.

6. Do you have any Métis clothing or art in your family? What is it?

In my collection some items are Métis - yet how do you verify it is Métis?

7. Are members of your family photographed in Métis clothing?

No. But my family now wear Métis clothing. My nieces do beadwork and finger weaving.

8. What is your future vision for the Métis in Ontario?

I am optimistic about Métis cultural history, it is a clear palette for artists to start painting.

9. As a member of the Métis nation of Ontario, do you see your identity different from other Métis nations such as Métis Nation of Manitoba?

Yes. There are regional differences. Fishing is much more important here than in western Canada. As Métis in Penetang evolved, fishing and harvesting were done. These were also affected by the influences of settlement.

10. What does being Métis mean to you? Anything else you would like to add?

You can't take the fur trade out of the Métis. The fur trade defined the Métis, the starting point from which we evolved. We were from two different worlds but it is a culture onto itself. We were the first multicultural piece of Canada, there is more to us than Louis Riel being a trader.

11. What role do you see museums / archives have?

Some museums reject people's collections if they have tourist items. Yet I am also thankful for the collections. Parks Canada has given the MNO Hudson Bay blankets, traps, trade wool. Hopefully people can give over objects to the Métis Nation. Part of the problem is labelling material.

Please note: the following questions were in addition and not the questions asked of other participants.

Can you tell me about your artifact collection?

I started collecting in 2002-2003 in an attempt to understand Métis material culture, acquiring things to help tell the Métis story. When I asked people 'what's Métis?' they would say 'not First Nations.' I have collected items for historical reinterpretation, and I do presentations for the education of the general public at historical sites and schools. Ruth Quesnelle makes the clothing and moccasins. Some are artifacts and some reproductions. I like to show tools, pre-contact for students. In educational programs, the focus is almost all First Nations cultural stuff. The problem is that there is little research clearly defining Métis clothing in Ontario.

In 2000 I found out about my Métis ancestry. Métis clothing includes the Ojibwa strap dress. First Nations clothing was not form fitting. Métis brought tailoring. In the Midland area, Huron dispersed in 1650s, Iroquois replaced them and Huron reformed in Quebec. The Jesuit Relations papers speak to Sault Ste. Marie. The community was not First Nations, not European. Métis were called Pork Eaters and Home Guard Indians. The historic Métis communities were based on water transportation.

I collect at various places including antique shops, estate sales, online auctions and across Ontario. People have also given me material, ice harvesting saws, tongs. Part of the collection was given to me by a lady named Jeannine Carrier, 84 years old, Métis, from Alberta. She gave me a loom, books and videos.

In my collection there are:

- 1 - tents 'wedge' style
- 2 - maple syrup - moulds for syrup, bowls, containers
- 3 - tea - house ware spouts, copper and brass pots used by voyageurs
- 4 - material culture- bags, jackets, sashes, beads, buttons.
- 5 - doll collection - jigging
- 6 - musical instruments - drum, fiddle, jaw harp, wooden spoons, penny whistle and tin whistle
- 7 - hide tanning process, scraper
- 8 - medicines
- 9 - pipes - clay
- 10 - food - corn, maple sugar
- 11 - muskets and horns, saws, tumplines
- 12 - games - Cree and Ojibwa

In my displays I have several areas: a First Nations area, contact and fur-trade material,

harvesting and fishing materials, looms for sash making. Each item helps tell the story of Métis identity and the fur trade. I want to tell these stories orally rather than having the viewers rely on paper cards. I want to show the evolution of the collection, people can touch the objects and it is meant to appeal to all ages. People can also tell me about pieces in the collection, which is rewarding.

Interview with Stephen Quesnelle, Senator with Niagara Region Métis Council, Welland

1. What is your family history as Métis?

I don't know if they were in the fur-trade, but I do know they migrated from Drummond Island in the War of 1812, they left and went to Georgian Bay Area, Penetanguishine. My grandfather was a blacksmith who worked in the navy in Penetanguishine at the shipyard.

2. How many generations of Métis people exist in your family?

I couldn't tell you... I can tell you in 1990 I knew there was something so I started researching, that's when I found out I was Métis. 1999 I got my Métis card. I was asked to sit at the Welland Council as senator and I accepted and I have been there ever since.

3. Do you participate in Métis community activities?

Well I would like to say this: I don't believe in saying Métis organizations – we are a nation, we are a people. I participate in as many things as I can to educate people who the Métis are. I participate in the Niagara council, anything that I am asked to participate in.

4. In the past, what role do you think clothing, and sashes played in your family's life and how has this changed today?

In my family life, it didn't mean much, to be honest, now, it means the world. Every chance I get I put on Métis apparel to show people who we are. I think it's great that people see us in that light, for example that's the way it was and this is the way it is now.

5. Do you participate in any traditional arts like beading, basket weaving?

No, but I would love to learn, I don't think we are ever too old to learn these things. I think it's something we got to get back into. Our people have made some beautiful beaded work.

6. Do you have any Métis clothing or art in your family? What is it?

I have my own. My parents and grandparents hid the fact that they were Métis, Métis is a word that came up in the last little while, and they were called half-breeds. My mother was a squaw and my dad was a half-breed. They tried to hide that fact, not because they were ashamed but because they didn't want their kids to go through what they went through, so it was to protect the family. Today, I have clothing that I have made, I have a jacket with some work on it, badges, saying where I'm from, with a Métis flag on the back.

7. Are members of your family photographed in Métis clothing?

I believe they were, but personal photographs. It's the clothing from magazines and

stories I'm researching on Métis peoples, in the early 1900s.

What type of clothing were they wearing?

I don't know how to explain that. Knowing my background now, I can see it, but if you were to see it and not know your culture, you wouldn't know the difference. I'm not saying way back when we hunted with the Indians, I'm talking about the early middle 1900s, the clothing Métis wore then, one with my grandparents sitting in front of their log cabin, you don't doubt.

8. What is your future vision for the Métis in Ontario?

My vision is that the people are going to come out and say, and a lot of them are right now, I'm Métis, help me get my card. Our council is doing that, helping people. People changing cards. I would like to see the MNO get back to the clothing, the beadwork, there's no one that does it like the Métis people. I would like to see our numbers grow, and it will happen. In 2006, our census said are you First Nations, Métis or Inuit? Over 2000 people in Niagara region said they were Métis. There may be 2-3-4000 that aren't aware of it yet. We do a lot of things so people know we are there and who we are. Parades, the Rose parade in Welland. Flag raising on Louis Riel Day that's something to see - the Métis people there raising their flag. What a proud moment. People driving by seeing that want to know. We are getting more news coverage, which we need. I can see the Métis nation growing.

9. As a member of the Métis nation of Ontario, do you see your identity different from other Métis nations such as Métis Nation of Manitoba?

You are Métis, you are Métis. It doesn't matter where you are from. That's a problem I had because you are Métis in British Columbia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario and you're not a Métis in Quebec and the other provinces. It doesn't matter where you are, you are Métis. You have that privilege and that right to say you are Métis. This boundary stuff is nonsense.

10. What does being Métis mean to you? Anything else you would like to add?

I'm very proud to be Métis, I wish I had known years ago, to tell more people about the Métis. I don't feel I'm doing enough. I want to do more to tell people, the lifestyle and the culture. I know we don't live that culture now, but it's a culture our children and grandchildren have a right to now about it and be proud. Our people helped make this country, and that's lost today, they don't want to teach it in schools, we got to educate our youth, elders and people on the street. I asked someone what does Aboriginal mean to you? They said that's Australian isn't it? Well they are right it is Australian.

There are three distinct societies in the Aboriginal community, First Nations, Métis and Inuit. People don't know that, we got to show them what it's about. I'm just so proud to be Métis.

11. What role do you see museums / archives have?

They have a big role, because its history. I mean they have RCMP outfits, why not Métis? We were one of the first peoples here; museums should have them in there. The thing is a lot of museums don't know about the Métis yet. We are a big nation in Ontario

with a lot of communities. If everyone worked together, we would be so strong. The AGA is only once a year. We got to be more in contact.

Interview with Amanda Marie Pont-Shanks, Niagara Region Métis council, councillor

1. What is your family history as Métis?

Well we didn't know our family history until after my grandfather passed away. We don't know why he didn't tell us, maybe he was ashamed. After he passed away, my father looked into our lineage to find out who we were. Through our cousin, he found family history records which trace back to the Red River Settlement. My great great great uncle married Louis Riel's sister; they were also part of the Red River, when they were fighting, part of the people revolting against Ottawa. They actually created the province of Manitoba. My dad would know more about their actual names. I don't know if Ponts would be their name back then. It's pretty interesting to learn that our family can be learned that far back.

My great great grandfather was a rum runner during prohibition in the States, Adam Pont? Or Han? He would do the rum running to Chicago. The family legend is that he owed money to Al Capone, there isn't really anything to confirm this, and I believe he was Métis. He was from the Winnipeg area.

2. How many generations of Métis people exist in your family?

At least 6. It got kind of muddy back then with the family history, we can confirm Red River, but before that it's hard to find paper work. When people got married back then they didn't have records like now.

3. Do you participate in Métis community activities?

I sit on the Niagara Region Métis council – I just joined 4 months ago. In the fall, I'm going to be the provisional chair in Education; we sit with Niagara Council School board along with Six Nations. We have meetings on how we can identify Aboriginal youth at risk, create job placements for Aboriginal students, post-secondary and I'm going to be sitting in on the meetings to make sure our voice is heard.

We have a beading circle, just started last month, considering we are a new council. We are growing really fast. It's exciting to see all the changes on the ground floor.

4. In the past, what role do you think clothing, sashes played in your family's life and how has this changed today?

I think going back to Red River Settlement, it played a large part. They didn't necessarily act as fur-traders or trappers, a lot of them were guides for Europeans. So they would be the ones who showed them the land, live off the land. Sacagawea, the guide who helped with Lewis and Clark expeditions, her husband was Métis and he assisted her. Their clothing, bags, canoes; Red River carts would have a large impact on who they are, multi-functional. Just look for this scarf and we can help you out.

Today – I know my grandfather's generation didn't talk about it. Métis never really fit in. You weren't white, you weren't Aboriginal. They would try to assimilate the best way they can. He had Aboriginal stuff in his house. He had tobacco pipes, nothing really

Métis. Our family, it's starting to be incorporated more. I have a two year old and I want to educate him. On my mom's side we can trace our family. For a long time, people weren't proud of their heritage. It's pretty incredible, to be in a situation like this where people are saying, you know what, we are proud of who we are. The bigger the MNO gets, the more people can celebrate their history.

5. Do you participate in any traditional arts like beading, basket weaving?

I just started beading, its fun. My great grandmother, she went blind. My dad said she used to do rug braiding and sew them all together. I think she was Métis and Ojibwa. Grandmother on my father's side, from the Winnipeg area. My grandfather's homestead is an hour north of Winnipeg.

6. Do you have any Métis clothing or art in your family? What is it?

No – we have stuff that has been passed down, we could assume its Métis. Stuff from my grandma: a rug, old furs from my grandpa, bags but nothing that we can exactly trace.

7. Are members of your family photographed in Métis clothing?

N/A

8. What is your future vision for the Métis in Ontario?

For arts and culture, I would really love to see a resurgence, because people our age don't know what else we use to do. I know our cultural website, when I went on it, there isn't anything on it. A large part of our heritage is the folk-art, music, sashes. There isn't a lot that's there right now. If there are people passionate about it, they could bring it forward to the MNO. Our culture we need to work on, we have healthcare.

9. As a member of the Métis nation of Ontario, do you see your identity different from other Métis nations such as Métis Nation of Manitoba?

I think history wise we are a little bit different than Manitoba, they were everywhere in different spots. They have more education and knowledge of it than Ontario. In time, we will be equals, now they are a bit ahead of us.

10. What does being Métis mean to you? Anything else you would like to add?

Being Métis to me is more about family pride, understanding my family history. I believe it was Albert Einstein who said if you don't learn the past you are doomed to repeat it. You need to know your family history to move forward. A huge part of who anyone is, is their history. You are who you are because of your family. Being Métis, what I've found with the people here, they are all proud to be who they are. We have no excuses, this is our culture. To me, it's incredible, so many other cultures are like I'm British, I'm German, they don't really celebrate it. I think its about time that people celebrate their past. The sash I'm wearing I got it from my Dad, he got it from our office. They come in red and blue, (blue – fur trade), red (British fur trade), depends on the fur trading.

In the future, the MNO should have incentives for people in the arts. Its an extremely competitive industry. It doesn't matter if you're a painter, web designer etc. They should be encouraging artists to get involved, helping them with school, jobs. I make cakes, I

made a cake with Métis beading on it, piped each little dot.

11. What role do you see Museums / archives have?

Presently, I don't think there's much. I know there is a few local galleries in my area, but nothing of Métis. They have First Nations and Inuit. I think it has a large part due to not being acknowledged in the past. Our council was asked by Welland Historical Museum to put on a display, maybe other councils can approach museums. More people need to speak up, make phone calls. Many people have no clue, what we did in the past, if it wasn't for us there wouldn't be Saskatchewan and Manitoba. In Canadian history books, I didn't know about the Métis. In Saskatchewan and Manitoba they teach it but not in Ontario.

Interview with Senator Ralph Earl Scofield, Windsor

(Please note: I did not use the standard format for this interview, however some questions from this list were asked)

1. What is your family history as Métis?

Born in Saskatchewan, went to school in Timmins, Winnipeg and The Pas, Manitoba. I joined the army when I was 16 and I was in the Algonquin Reserve and as soon as I turned 18 I volunteered for active duty in the air force. I wanted to be a spit-fire pilot but was placed as the tail gunner. I made 17 missions over in Germany so I'm lucky to be here.

My nickname: In 1945 we were taking off with a full load of bombs and 2200 gallons of high-octane fuel for aviation fuel in a 4 engine Halifax bomber, we were going down the runway, picking up speed going about 125 mph and all of a sudden we left the runway, I don't know what happened, we started going across the field across the rough ground, I thought we are going to crash.. I reached behind me for the two little doors in the turret (in the tail) to jump out, by that time, going that fast, we hit the trees at the far end of the field, the tail whiplashed, and threw me right out, I went flying out of there. When I got up, I started running and looked at my feet and I had no boots on, it blew me right out of my boots, so after that the guys called me boots.

On my mother's side, they came from St. Laurent, Manitoba. My grandfather was a fur buyer *Riviere en Frere* (fur company) he bought furs from the Natives and trappers. He helped two families who had lost their parents, he was a good man. He took my sister and I in. My grandfather's name was Gaspard Chartrand, his wife was Marie Cecil Duchard, she was Métis and mixed too, she was Cree and Saulteaux. On my father's side, my grandmother's name was Matilda Rabidoux, sounds French. They traced her to a reservation in the Dakotas, a Sioux reservation. When I talked to the Scofields, and I said, we have Indian Blood, they said "oh no" and didn't want to admit they had Indian blood. But, some of the relatives I wrote in New York admitted it and said "Yes we have Indian Blood." There was no denying there was Indian blood on both sides of the family.

Earl's wife: I think in the United States, either you are full-blood or you are not. The American government does not acknowledge Métis people. They would never do that. They only recognize North American Indians. When I cross the border I don't say I'm an upper Mohawk I say North American Indian.

Earl: I tried to cross the border with my Métis card and they wouldn't recognize it.

When I was a young guy, fourteen in Timmins Ontario, I had four dogs and I would hook them up to the sleigh. I used to have a dog team and we would go into the woods, cut all the dry trees that I could find, cut them down, load them on the sleigh, and then haul them home. I cut the wood with a sawhorse and an old buck saw. I would go into the woods ten miles and look for dry wood. My dogs were all mongrels. My lead dog was Rover, the one at the back was called Pete. Some looked like collies. I didn't have any huskies. I used to go to the abbatoire and get bones and guts and whatever I could collect and make a fire and get some cornmeal and throw it in the pot to feed the family.

I had four sisters, Laurentia, Claire, Mabel and about the same number of brothers, Henry, Arthur, Jules, Vernon, Cecil, but they are all gone. My brother Gaspard, named after my Grandpa, was a fiddle player, a real good Métis fiddle player. I have one of his tapes – im going to give it to someone to process it. When Henry died, he had a Métis funeral. My cousins the Chartrands, Alphonse and Louis, who were all veterans in the second World War, were in the Manitoba Dragoons. Whenever they slaughtered a pig, they put something underneath to catch the blood. They cooked the blood and made blood sausage or blood pudding. Hey listen, this is the depression time, it was hard to get anything to eat. You had to scrounge for food. The blood sausage was wonderful. My aunt Helen use to cook that. Kids are always hungry.

I grew up in The Pas, I went to school with the nuns, went to the Catholic School and then moved to Winnipeg, went to public school there. Then we moved to Timmins, I was twelve-thirteen. When the War broke out I was only fourteen, in 1939. I never thought I would go into the war. When I was sixteen I joined the Algonquin Reserve Regiment, I trained at Niagara on the Lake, the big military camp, on the S. S. Cayuga, which burnt. We trained in the armouries in Timmins also. Then soon as I turned eighteen I went out to Edmonton, after they give you all the needles, cut your hair. Every morning we had to run five miles, before breakfast. It was quite the experience. I trained in Beau Jolie, Quebec as a gunner. We crossed the ocean, 15 000 men on the ship. Every day an airplane would come across and check we were still there. All we had was one gun on the ship. This would be in the 1942 – 43.

Once overseas, we landed in Glasgow, Scotland. British battleships all lined up behind one another. The Red Cross gave us all tea, scones, cookies, so that was our introduction to the Scottish people. When the invasion started, I was in London, on D-Day. All these air craft were passing over, air craft gliders loaded with troops. The air was vibrating, there was some many air craft in the sky. You could feel the vibration in the air. Before we got on the squadron, we were assigned to an operational training unit. Previously, I had only flown in a single motor heavy aircraft, (35 foot wing). Then we started flying in the Wellington bomber, two engine, at the operational training unit. There were 7 of us in the bomber. Occasionally we had two gunners, a belly gunner. I made one trip as a belly gunner, because the Germans would come and shoot us from underneath. Once they put me in there, I had to stay there. Sometimes, I would have to sit there for 7 -8 hours.

We flew at night, the Americans flew in the day time. If you get behind another airplane, you hit the turbulence of another airplane. You had to be careful or you could collide

with another air craft. Germans used search lights. We had to dive the lights. There was danger all the time.

Today reminds me of the depression, 1939. The government had no money. All the men were riding the box cars. When the war started, Canada declared \$25 million dollars for war. We had money for war but not for peace.

2. How many generations of Métis people exist in your family?

N/A

3. Do you participate in Métis community activities?

I belong to the National Métis Veterans Association, out west. I attend all veterans functions, attend many things for the Métis Veterans.

How did the Métis organization start?

We got a notice that Mr. Belcourt was coming to town (1990s). There was an add in the Windsor Star, the paper, that Mr. Belcourt was coming to town to meet the Métis people. He appointed me as senator for the Métis Council in Windsor. Once you are a senator you are always a senator.

6. Do you have any Métis clothing or art in your family? What is it?

My cap, from my son Eric, with a Halifax bomber on the front, wing when I graduated says AG, (about eighteen) when I got my wing. I also have a little white feather on there. The boys keep me outfitted in caps.

The Ontario government just put on a memorial service for the veterans, going to the different cities in Ontario. They gave us a cap saying Veterans Appreciation. I went in the Grand Entry twice, from the Six Nations Veterans Association, I wear it with pride because it was quite an honour to receive it. They put me on the reviewing stand, and I took the salute as the bands and the veterans marched past in 2007 at Brantford, Six Nations. Then afterwards we were invited for our meal at the president's home for a meal, all kinds of stuff to eat, a wonderful meal. The veterans came from the state of New York and Toronto where Harvey Horlock and Norman Horlock are from. The Mohawk veterans came from the State of New York. We had corn soup, bannock.

This sash originated in Assumption Quebec. The sash was worn by *coureur de bois*, they used it as a towel in the bush, they used it to darn their socks. They would cut some of this stuff off the end, they used it and wrapped it around their head like a tumpline. The button that I wear on my sash is from Sault Ste Marie, the Métis symbol they came up with in Sault Ste Marie. There is a moose, and two men in the canoe, with a loon in the middle, with a Christmas tree in the top. Brenda Powley designed it.

Do you wear different sashes at different occasions?

The western people wear a blue sash, even today here I saw different colored sashed. Now some of the women are making their own sash.

When do you wear your sash?

I wear it at meetings, when I'm on parade, Louis Riel Day, I've attended the raising of the flag at Parliament in Toronto and I spoke there. Today I did the opening prayer for the Veterans. As far as Métis experience, I've been out west to Batoche a couple of times,

that was an honour to be there at Batoche. The National President of the Métis introduced me there to the crowd. I was asking people “are there any Chartrands here?” One man came to me and said – “you see that table over there” – I said “yes” – he said – “he’s a Chartrand.” I went over and tapped him on the shoulder, and said “Are you a Chartrand?” and he said “yes” and his name was Kenneth Chartrand – he was my first cousin. I met a lot of people there I’m related to. I enjoyed Batoche, very traditional, a lot of jigging and dancing. That’s where they had the Battle of Batoche, that’s where our people fought against the Canadian army.

At Parliament Building in Toronto, we raise our flag there.

When my legs were good, I use to go to the pow wows in Sault Ste Marie, Garden River. They are Ojibwa, there are some Cree there, they call them Oji-Cree. They call themselves *Aninishinaabek*. Some of the signs at the sky dome, it says *Anishnaabe mowin* – it means speak your language.

Advice for Métis Youth?

War is not glorious and no body wins the war. We are all losers. Freedom is not free. The freedom we have in this country was won by blood, sweat and tears by our Canadian forces. Our soldiers are as good as Americans, Japanese, our soldiers have won some famous battles.

Interview with Debra Snedden, Ottawa

1. What is your family history as Métis?

On my father’s side, my grandmother was Métis and my grandfather was from Six Nations. On my mother’s side my grandmother was Mi’kmaq. I am just finding out about my Métis family within the last 5 years.

2. How many generations of Métis people exist in your family?

Four generations.

3. Do you participate in Métis community activities?

I’m just recently participating in Métis community activities like harvesting sweet grass and making dolls.

5. Do you participate in any traditional arts like beading ?

I make spirit dolls. It started out as a present for my daughter’s Métis friend, it’s a nice spiritual, cultural gift. Each doll has its own personality. I do research online for historical accuracy and I make dolls of all different Aboriginal nations including Métis and First Nations.

6. Do you have any Métis clothing or art in your family? What is it?

No.

7. Are members of your family photographed in Métis clothing?

No.

8. What is your future vision for the Métis in Ontario?

In order to keep the Métis culture alive, I think we have to have the arts, it has to get bigger, more widespread, it has to really bring children in, really get them interested, loving to do it and proud of it, not artsy-craftsy, but art and craft because I think that is the whole culture. That's what's making me feel like I belong, that I share in the same beliefs about the culture, the art and the love of sharing it.

9. As a member of the Métis nation of Ontario, do you see your identity different from other Métis nations such as Métis Nation of Manitoba?

No. Métis is Métis.

10. What does being Métis mean to you? Anything else you would like to add?

This is a hard question. It's something we're exploring, learning together. The sense of belonging to something bigger than ourselves, our history.

11. What role do you see museums / archives have?

We have to have them to be aware, yet I'm more a hands-on person. I think objects behind glass are not as affective as having objects you can interact with.

Interview with Denis Tremblay, Sudbury

1. What role does your collection play in your life as a Métis person?

It cements me to my heritage, a direct connection with my past. When I pick up an artifact it feels like a direct connection with my ancestors. I'm touching these items that they touched. The connection - the everyday use. I use some of the antique guns for hunting, I use to use hatchets and competed with them in tomahawk throwing.

2. Are there certain objects which you focus on collecting more than others?

Not really. Because most of my relatives were trappers and hunters, I stay with in that scope. Anything else that complements my collection or has anything to do with the fur-trade, I also collect.

3. How would you like to expand your collection?

I would love to expand it, yet it's a matter of funding.

4. Have other Métis or Aboriginal people approached you regarding research on your collection? Has your collection been used by the MNO or the local Métis community?

No, other people have not approached me. I have done displays at various events before for the Métis and for various historical societies in my region, for example, at the AGA in Sudbury, New Liskard, Harvest Celebrations, and Annual meetings. In the future I hope to do more community talks. People can ask me questions about the collection. There are no reproductions in my collection.

5. How long have you been collecting? Why did you start collecting?

I have been collecting close to forty years. I read lots of books and there was something burning inside me. My grandmother was Abenaki (close to Mi'kmaq) part of the

Algonquian nation. On my paternal side, my relatives are from Rocky Mountain House in Alberta.

6. What is in your collection?

My collection contains moccasins, gloves, jackets, pouches, knives, guns, snowshoes, postcards, musical instruments, animal skins, camping and hunting equipment.

Interview with Louise Vien, Ottawa

1. What is your family history as Métis?

My heritage is from Red River, I was born in Timmins, Ontario. My father was born in British Columbia. My initial family is from Red River. My dad's dad Leon was born in Manitoba. His father Elzeard Vien was born at Red River and married a Desjardins. They were from the St. Vitale family. Leon went to British Columbia, Paddock Wood in the 1930s.

2. How many generations of Métis people exist in your family?

I am a fifth generation Métis. My children are first generation Métis from South America. Their grandmother is Quecha (from South America). I am a bi-racial person.

3. Do you participate in Métis community activities?

My grandfather Leon played the fiddle, the *musique a bouche* (mouth organ). My grandfather always had a fiddle on the wall. One day the fiddle broke because a ball hit it. He never played it again.

I am a traditional art councillor, I made this position myself.

4. In the past, what role do you think clothing, and sashes played in your family's life and how has this changed today?

My Métis identity was not talked about in my family. The sash is the most permanent symbol. With the industrialization of the sash, it depletes culture. The woven sash of today is machine made. The sash weaving is a dying art, like language, the whole culture is based on language, stories, music and history. It's your culture that defines you. The sash itself tells you how the nation will go, weaving your ancestors with each thread. You appreciate it when you make it yourself. The sash is the biggest link to our history. We are losing our history in our schools - Métis children should learn their history and share it.

5. Do you participate in any traditional arts like beading, basket weaving?

I do all traditional arts, I have a preference for finger weaving, I love beading, and history. I stay humble and believe in partial truths. Why are people victims? People want to feel victimized and not get over the past, you need to acknowledge you are not a victim.

6. Do you have any Métis clothing or art in your family? What is it?

We have not passed down clothing but my children and myself make moccasins and mittens. My children are getting their sash, at home they learn beading. I have been asked

to give demonstrations at the Canadian Museum of Civilization. In November 2008, I gave a demonstration to 75 children, we did a bookmark workshop.

7. Are members of your family photographed in Métis clothing?

No.

8. What is your future vision for the Métis in Ontario?

Métis need to learn history and involve Métis from across Canada. All Métis are different, its acculturation not assimilation.

9. As a member of the Métis nation of Ontario, do you see your identity different from other Métis nations such as Métis Nation of Manitoba?

Yes and No. Métis can't use the definition of the past. It took two hundred years for Métis from the Great Lakes to become who they are. People had to adapt, we need to understand the evolution of our culture.

Some people say "that's not Métis", according to who? A person without blood can become Métis at heart. There are problems with Métis definition - mainly segregation. The Canadian government bases it on a blood argument. Its based on race - legal racism. Many people do not fit under the term provided by the government. There are two types of Métis: the Métis of Red River and pan Métis (all other). I want there to be full acceptance of all Métis.

10. What does being Métis mean to you? Anything else you would like to add?

Being Métis is like being a bridge between two worlds, some may walk over you. You have to tolerate everyone. We need to acknowledge both sides of our heritage. There is legal racism, with the Indian Act for example where you had to sign away your identity.

11. What role do you see museums / archives have?

For First Nations, ceremonial objects are lost, not repatriated. If you are still using ceremonial objects, they do not belong in a museum. A museum has a purpose, we do need them. If we don't see it, we don't believe it, virtual history. Wooden ladles, sashes, these decorations were a showcase of pageantry. The tobacco pouch was used more by the western Métis. I am currently making an octopus bag with beading. My next project is to make a cariole, an old form of a toboggan sleigh. Live the past today.

Interview with Mandi Wikis, MNO council member for region 9, Hamilton and greater area

1. What is your family history as Métis?

My Métis heritage comes from my maternal grandmother. She was born in Red River, Manitoba, in Saint Rose, which is basically where Métis come from, the battle of Louis Riel and everything. Luce Legere was her name. She was born there, has two brothers and a sister. They left Manitoba when she was young, they were escaping the residential school system imposed by the Canadian government. Along the way, they burned all their Métis sashes, dolls, anything that was related to Native history and culture, they burned it so they wouldn't be discovered. They burned items to hide their Métis identity

so their kids would not be taken and put into residential schools. This was in the early 1920s. They came to Kapuskasing.

2. How many generations of Métis people in your family?

My Métis ancestry goes back to the early 1800s, currently there are three generations of Métis in my family. When I have children, we will be the fourth generation.

3. Do you participate in any Métis community activities?

I belong to the MNO and the Métis women's circle in Hamilton. It's a wonderful group, one of the elder's holds it at her home. We do community events, counselling, guide people about how to research their genealogy. I also belong to branches of Native development which includes First Nations, Inuit, Métis people in Hamilton area.

4. In the past, what role do you think clothing, sashes, flags played in defining Métis identity? How has that changed for Métis today?

For example today, I just purchased sashes for all the people in my family who just received their citizenship. In retrospect, considering my grandmother, I repurchased a sash for her for the one that was burned. Unfortunately there is a stigma in Southern Ontario regarding the Métis flag, people don't differentiate between First Nations and Métis.

There is discrimination out there, it's a matter of safety. I had a relative who hung a Métis flag in her home and in a few weeks her front window was broken. People are uneducated. Its not to be shameful, its to be safe. She now hangs that flag in her bedroom. If asked she will self-identify.

5. Do you participate in any traditional arts like beading?

I'm actually just learning. Through the different councils I am on, I have received some teachings. I do archery, my husband is also Métis and he participates in the hunts. I think if we can just bring it into our own families to start and then when we have gatherings like this we can learn more.

6. Do you have any Métis clothing or art in your family? What is it?

Like I said, they were destroyed. Presently, we are just starting out.

Can you tell us about that sash?

This sash was given to me by my "Métis mother" she is a mentor, with the MNO education and training, Judy Trott. She took me under her wing and taught me everything I need to know about the MNO. I have set up a bursary in her name at my school. She presented this to me for my volunteer work. It has a lot of significance to me. First related to my grandmother and the stories she told us, the struggles it represents. The female sashes used to be a lot wider, carrying babies fruit etc. Men would put bannock. For me this is one of the ultimate representations of Métis. I don't want it to get ruined, I love it. It's a wonderful Native symbol. I wear the sash at all Métis events, National Aboriginal Day, numerous festivals, the Métis festival in Toronto, I wear it there. I also wear it during the change of the seasons and just when I need that comfort. I think when you are around the Métis community, you feel it. When I'm doing schoolwork, it represents why I'm doing it.

7. Are members of your family photographed in Métis clothing?

They are. We have so many relatives, throughout Western Canada. I don't currently have them in my possession, only seen them briefly. They were very hard times for our ancestors.

8. What is your future vision for the Métis in Ontario?

Unfortunately, I see it dwindling. Its up to youth to seek out their teachings. Its not just about beadwork, baking, its about the stories. Tell me your stories. Let me know why we did this. I think if the youth don't ask questions... I think its having that respect to let the elders tell the stories in their own time. That's what's going to die out first, our culture. We need to keep it going.

9. As a member of the Métis nation of Ontario, do you see your identity different from other Métis nations such as Métis Nation of Manitoba?

No. There is a stigma between Manitoba and Ontario, which I don't agree with discrimination in any culture. If you are Métis, you are Métis.

10. What does being Métis mean to you? Anything else you would like to add?

Having a Métis family, it is just that. It's a family, you come to a Métis function and you feel welcome and honoured. It makes me very proud of my background, to know that my ancestors had a part in creating this country, to what it is today. It's the same for a First Nations person, they have great pride and so they should. To self identify as Métis, I do traditional baking and cooking. My husband is Métis, our children will be Métis. Its to know you're never alone, you have backing - everyone is just so welcoming. I think that's the way to live - to be welcoming and non-judgemental. For myself, I wish I would have been more involved in things like this at a younger age, I think a lot of people don't have that because they were taught to hide it for some many years. I think people are emerging, I get anywhere up to seventy emails per day from people in my area wanting to know their culture.

11. What role do you see museums / archives have?

I have personally yet to come across any museum that houses Métis specific archives / clothing. I think they should, to teach people, but I know a few elders that have artifacts who do teachings at festivals, workshops, but they are theirs. They do teaching with younger people, the objects are personal, private and sentimental. I think Métis have a hard time giving up these artifacts because they are so personal.

Interview with Barbara Anne Dominic Wright, St. Catherines

1. What is your family history as Métis?

My family history extends back to the marriage of Jacques Hartel, who was an Indian interpreter for Samuel Champlain, with an Aboriginal woman (possibly Mohawk or Huron). The couple had two female children in the Schenectady area of New York State. One of the women was an interpreter and she had a trading post, she met and married a Dutch man. They settled in Niagara and I am a descendant of them.

2. How many generations of Métis people exist in your family?

Eight.

3. Do you participate in Métis community activities?

I am the current woman's representative for the Métis Niagara Council, and the past president of the council. I help people with genealogy at the office.

4. In the past, what role do you think clothing, sashes, and flags played in defining Métis identity? How has that changed for Métis today?

I think in the past it wasn't as prevalent because there was a stigma attached. But as we move forward in a positive light, you can see from what I'm wearing I'm very proud of the beading that transpired. The history of our people is through our flag, our beading, through our stories, through the elders, and I'm very proud of the art and the creativity of our Métis people.

5. Do you participate in any traditional arts like beading?

I'm currently working on a medicine pouch with beadwork, we have to fill in what's missing in our history, just like the beadwork.

6. Do you have any Métis clothing or art in your family? What is it?

I have moccasins, an early beaded jacket which is about fifty years old. I wear it at the assemblies. I am wearing a sash (which is a gift from my mom). Every sash is different. I wear a sash because it's Métis. I'm proud.

The colours of the sash, all have significance: red symbolizing the blood shed of Métis people, green – prosperity, good health and growth, white – purity, yellow – bright future, black – dark days, and blue – water transport.

The Métis flag being the first national flag of Canada dating back to 1816... how fascinating is that to be able to look at our flag and say you know what, that's pretty awesome, that's a first, the infinity symbol. I fly them at home.

7. Are members of your family photographed in Métis clothing?

No.

8. What is your future vision for the Métis in Ontario?

I think we all need to share our culture.

9. As a member of the Métis nation of Ontario, do you see your identity different from other Métis nations such as Métis Nation of Manitoba?

No.

10. What does being Métis mean to you? Anything else you would like to add?

It's my identity, it helps me understand who I am, where I come from and educating my children and the public... these people are my family... Métis is about... being family, sharing, community, beading classes, ... it's all about being family.

11. What role do you see museums / archives have?

I think its important that we share with the public about our culture and history and the museums are there and willing to accommodate.

Transcripts of Interviews from Fort William Historical Park, Thunder Bay,
October 2009

Interviews (listed alphabetically)

Interview with Carla Gibson, reenactor and Education Team Leader

1. What is your role as a Métis reenactor? What do you wear for your role ?

Education Team Leader- work with children and seniors

I do workshops for the general public - porcupine quillwork, leatherwork, gauntlet mitts, beadwork, traditional games like dice games, bone games, ball and hoop, learning lacrosse sticks, leather balls. I also do general tours.

What craft programs do you have ?

Porcupine quillwork – leather, birch bark, beaded earrings, porcupine and quills and beads,

Moccasins, mukluks, workshops for times of year.

Children's programs include dream catchers, medicine bags, voyageur, fire lighting bags, loom beading, two needle beading, hair barrettes.

For my costume of *Bankshenung*, Falling Star, a Métis and mixed-blood, I portray not only my self but also a character who lives in 1815. I wear a leather dress for fall with moccasins, sleeves, in summer it's the same dress with cotton linen. Style of clothing you wear is Ojibwa based – reflective of Native culture and practicality. Pattern of clothing defines who you are and your role. The way its decorated ex: porcupine quillwork, was passed down traditionally. Pre-European contact, certain items would be decorated. Clothing is a big open book.

2. Do you have Métis heritage?

Yes.

4. What role do you have in educating the public on Métis identity?

We have partnerships with Métis at the three days of Fall Harvest we have a huge set up of how people did the Harvest, Native and Métis culture, with medicine, teas, fish, smoked meats. All the kids in the Public and Catholic school board came – six thousand kids. We had traditional storytelling and drumming and traditional lunches – bannock, moose soup. Many of the children that were of mixed blood relate to these traditions and it opened their eyes to culture. Our role as interpreters is to make a personal connection to each child.

5. How does the public react to your clothing and activities?

The public love the activates and clothing, I like to get people involved through stories, get the public engaged, sometimes there are extra clothes for visitors. Its scary the misconceptions that people have about Native people. Most of the time it is positive, I try to relate to the kids, relate every day skills and teach Native traditions.

6. Do people express interest in the clothing you wear? How do you respond if and when such questions are asked?

Some tourists have a creepy fascination with undergarments.

7. What evidence is used for your reenactment?

Research in clothing, games is documented and authentic to the time period. Research goes into every aspect – ex: traditional women’s sewing kit – bone awls, puncturing hole, pieces of sinew for sewing thread, to demonstrate traditional sewing methods.

8. What role does imagination have in your reenactment?

It has a large role. You link imagination with creativity. When working with kids, you have a childlike train of thought. Because of the lack of documentation on women of fur-trade we make composite characters – fill in the gaps of your character with imagination and creativity. We are not playing only here and now, we are thinking of the historical implications, putting yourself in the character’s shoes.

10. Do you think your role as reenactor impacts people’s perceptions of Métis today?

Definitely. People come from all over the world. They watch Hollywood movies, books and people get different ideas. Its an opportunity to confront indigenous misconceptions.

11. What are the difficulties of reenacting a specific moment in time?

It is difficult to put your self in a certain moment. Yet with body language and imagination you can identify with the past. What you put into it, you get out of it. Its like a second home and second family here.

12. What does being Métis mean to you?

Being Métis is learning about my heritage, making my own personal connections between self and heritage. It is important for me to pass on my skills and knowledge. I am very interested in medicines – harvesting times, preservation, elders and healers.

Interview with Serena Ireland, reenactor

1. What is your role as a Métis reenactor? What do you wear for your role?

I work on the farm as a Métis with the livestock. I wear European black leather boots, cotton strap dress.

I portray Marie Dauphin, a married woman.

4. What role do you have in educating the public on Métis identity?

I get the odd question about clothing. In my area the visitors ask questions about the farm and social life.

7. What evidence is used for your reenactment?

Research and journals are used.

11. What are the difficulties of reenacting a specific moment in time?

Wacky things come up. You can't make life easier with certain tools, you have to be true to 1815. We do flexible role play, go back and forth. We are flexible to visitors needs and questions.

Interview with Janine Landry, reenactor

1. What is your role as a Métis reenactor? What do you wear for your role ?

My role is to inform people about history, for me what Aboriginal life was like in 1800s. My character is a mixed-blood woman and I live in the Native encampment in a wigwam. My name is Coloured Eyes and my story is that when I was born, I wasn't born with traditional brown eyes.

My outfits are: buckskin dresses, also cotton dresses, strap dresses, cotton was expensive. I try to properly re-enact. Many of our women would have been wearing buckskin dresses, my dress has a lot of blue and white beads, ribbon. A lot are plain as well. The costuming department does the decoration of costumes. I am capable of doing beadwork.

Harvesting - Wild rice grows in river systems. People went to Rainy River area, grows like tall wheat in river, basically women would go out in canoes, tie bunches together, men would go with women in canoes, men would steer. Women would have two sticks, long sticks, bring stalk into canoe- brush off grains – grains fall into bottom of canoe, must keep wild rice thru winter, rice sun-dried, goes into pod – rice roasted (dark color) from roasting over fire, after that, people will dig pits in ground, close to tree, build pit with canvas in bottom, rice in pit, men will twist feet and that breaks rice husk open, very small, lots from one bushel, put into shallow basket, women will winnow it, all husks get picked up by wind. For our Ojibwa people, it was one of our staples, some people still harvest today. Yet its very difficult and a long task. In the Ojibwa culture, we have thirteen moons, one of the moons is the wild rice moon – which is when you do your harvesting. Ojibwa was a term given to us by another people, it meant “puckered people” one interpretation is that French people noticed that our moccasins are puckered up the middle. We refer to ourselves as *Anishinaabe*. I made a pair of moccasins for rice harvesting. We do harvesting of blueberries and raspberries and hazelnuts at Fort William.

2. Do you have Métis heritage?

Yes, I am a Métis citizen, my grandfather is First Nations, Algonquian. My family is originally from Golden Lake, Algonquian people and *Anishnaabe* people are very similar, not a lot of Algonquian people in this area, I usually refer to myself as Ojibwa. Now grandfather lives on a reserve outside Nipigon, I grew up in Nipigon.

3. In the past, what role do you think clothing, sashes and flags played in defining and representing Métis identity?

Hard to say because material for clothing was very expensive. Sashes were important but for clothing, you took what you could get. Métis voyageurs were wearing pants, women were wearing strap dresses, in representing Métis people, sash and flag are representative. Not as much the clothing.

4. What role do you have in educating the public on Métis identity?

I have a huge role in educating the public on Aboriginal identity. When I interpret to people its nice because I'm teaching people about Aboriginal life and what it was like, a lot of people do not have the right idea, a negative view, savage like type view. My job is very very important, its teaching people we were a civilized people, we had a structure, staple goods, very established people. Depending on the group I'm speaking to, I will connect present day life with past events. All of us are playing a huge role in educating people on history, teaching Canadians and other visitors on what our Aboriginal people were like.

5. How does the public react to your clothing and activities?

The public loves the clothing and activities. People ask about my dress, they react well to the clothing, very interested, people are curious as to where they can buy our clothing. We try to really engage people in activities, ex: singing and hand drumming in camp. We have people engage in the daily activities: helping cook. This plays a big part in their visit to fort.

6. Do people express interest in the clothing you wear? How do you respond if and when such questions are asked?

They do express interest in clothing, always ask questions about its construction. They are astonished when I tell public that Aboriginal people's clothing was made with sinew and buckskin.

7. What evidence is used for your reenactment?

Lots of evidence and research that goes into the job. We do a research project every summer, researching what life was like. Also information gets passed down from interpreter to interpreter, some of knowledge is passed on from people working here in the 1970s. *Anishinaabe* people there wasn't written documentation, unless you had a contract with the company, little was written down. My character I was able to make up on my own, with my own personal attributes. I made a story with her name, how I'm feeling, my character's attributes are my own, whereas some of people in fort have more documentation, accounts of people being tempered people. I play my own person.

8. What role does imagination have in your reenactment?

It has a huge role for first -person interpreters. Even with my name we make up stories not when it comes to real facts, but when I'm talking about my friends or myself. It takes a lot of imagination to connect characters, yet we stick to facts as well.

10. Do you think your role as reenactor impacts people's perceptions of Métis today?

I think so, when people come to visit, I teach them about our culture and what our life is like. I hope that it impacts them because people need to know more about our culture, what our people have dealt with over the years. My visitations with people at the fort impacts them, people need to understand our culture better, we all live in this country, we need to be able to understand each other to live well together. I hope I make a good impression of what Aboriginal people are like.

11. What are the difficulties of reenacting a specific moment in time?

Not so much reenacting a specific moment, for me its reenacting as a mixed-blood person in the encampment that is sometimes difficult. They can't really tell right away that I am *Anishnaabe*. I had a few incidents where people have challenged me on my culture, not understanding me that I am a mixed-blood person. People challenging me on staying in character and challenging me on Aboriginal culture, people assume that I am a non-Aboriginal. People have challenged me on my knowledge of the culture. I try and explain to people to rectify those difficulties. People also challenge you to stay in character. People will say "where's your TV?" We use acting to interact with kids. In Canadian history, you learn about wars, not Aboriginal history. For educating the group, you have to read them, some people are really interested in everything.

Interview with Crystal LeGros, co-ordinator and interpreter

1. What is your role as a Metis reenactor? What do you wear for your role ?

I work in the history department, our work is centred around bourgeois and voyageur themes. My character is Marguerite McLoughlin, who was married to a doctor, employed at the fort. I play a mixed – blood woman, half Swiss/half Cree. I help build the characters of the summer students as well. In the wintertime, I do educational programs. My outfit consists of an old chemise, Ojibwa strap dress, leggings, moccasins, sometimes wear wrap skirt, chemise, moccasins, sometimes wear empire style dress. Yet staff has to explain the reason why they are wearing European dress (at the fort there were no white women in 1815), thus only senior staff wear the empire dress.

2. Do you have Métis heritage?

Yes.

3. In the past, what role do you think clothing, sashes and flags played in defining and representing Métis identity?

1815 – 1816 we don't attribute the sash to Métis we focus on French-Canadian origins of it.

At the fort, the approach to Métis culture is that it is in its infancy, we're responsible for reenacting the birth of the culture and cultural education. In 1815 things are just starting out for the Métis people.

4. What role do you have in educating the public on Métis identity?

I have an important role as an interpreter. In July / August, we talk to 300 – 400 people per day, talk to families from around the world. The interpreter gives them information on how the Métis started, where it came from. The primary message they stress at the fort is: a) the role the Métis people played, b) marriages in the custom of the country, and that there weren't European settlements like people think.

5. How does the public react to your clothing and activities?

Public usually reacts well to costumes and activities, although it is hard to tell. There are two types of visitors, visitors who ask questions, and ones who are just visual. Only a certain amount of people wear European-style dresses. Clothing is fairly standardized to

have visual cues for interpreters and tourists.

6. Do people express interest in the clothing you wear? How do you respond if and when such questions are asked?

People express interest in clothing worn. Interpreters know about the origins, material of their clothing, also interpreters do their own decorating with beadwork, ribbons, quillwork, they can take ownership of clothing. The public is interested in costumes.

7. What evidence is used for your reenactment?

Pictorial evidence, journals (primary sources). The evidence is through bourgeois mens' eyes. We double and triple source information and secondary research. Characters are created based on biased material, through the eyes of white men. Characters are built on plausibility, composite, interpreters attempt to stay as true to the characters as possible and their lives. Sometimes all you have to work with is one journal entry.

8. What role does imagination have in your reenactment?

You put yourself in the position, have plausible imagination, you try and think like how your character would have thought. To see the world the way they did there is a degree of impossibility. We promote living history and immerse visitors, interpreters do their own beadwork. There is some leeway in interpretation.

Anecdotes are made using creativity, they seem real, you are interacting with a real person.

10. Do you think your role as reenactor impacts people's perceptions of Métis today?

Some people come with little idea of what Métis are. We start them off on a discovery. Our focus does not encompass the political reality of Métis today, we teach people where the Métis culture is coming from, give them more information. Some people who are Métis, can see where it began because we represent Ojibwa and French-Canadian, the visitor can see influences on cultures and the way it developed into a culture.

11. What are the difficulties of reenacting a specific moment in time?

You can't replicate history, but you can try and reproduce and recreate it. We don't know exactly what people were thinking. The primary difficulty is we don't know if Métis "in our time" self identified. A lot of groups, indigenous people and women were not really mentioned in men's journals, adventure diaries were written for excitement. The interpreter is torn between wanting to interpret history, considering they are real people, we rely on primary and secondary sources. For Métis women at the fort, we talk about the Métis in family context, most of men are Scottish bourgeois and French Canadian voyageurs. 1806 a policy came into affect in which the North West company encouraged men to marry mixed-blood women since it was cheaper for company since the mixed-blood woman's family was already within the fur-trade and did not need money. There are not a lot of records of Métis men working at Fort William. Children of country marriages, some of sons of mixed-blood unions, start as clerks. Majority of women are Métis women, because Fort William is a rendezvous place, many women are in the fort in summer only.

Also "Free Canadian Settlement" was a location where men who were no longer

engaged with the company lived. They were mostly voyageurs who were retired with families, these men would do occasional jobs for the North West Company, work for a day harvesting, and they would receive blankets, food stuffs.

Interview with Shawn Patterson, co-ordinator, curator

1. Does Fort William consult any Métis or other Aboriginal groups for info on how they convey Aboriginal people?

1973 of July the fort opened. We do consultation through academic sources. The story is both accurate in telling, accurate portrayal yet respectful of culture that still exists. There are sensitive issues we are not abusing tourists: alcoholism, slave trade. These are difficult to tell stories to visitors but if someone asked, they might be presented. Objects are set to provoke visitors. A lot of people have misconceptions on alcohol.

2. How does the park balance making Fort William a tourist destination but also making it educational / informative for the public?

Our mandate is we work for the ministry of tourism. The two things are not exclusive (entertainment / education). Some of the best museums are wonderful tourism attractions, and museums at the same time.

Resources, we have very defined limits, for research. We try to balance research with development of programs. There is immense overlap between the two categories, visitors want to be entertained, older visitors want real meaningful information, a good interpreter is a fountain of information and entertaining.

3. How big of an impact do you think “living history” and interpreters have on the public’s perception of the past?

Public asks lots of questions, interpreters come away with information on the public’s perceptions. Their impact is huge. For the public here, one of the issues with TV, internet and access to information, folks accessing information through those sources, when they come here, they are shocked at how interesting the story is. In USA, the story has been well-scripted through film, in contrast in Canada few movies tell the story of the North American fur trade. People are gob smacked by the size of the place. People are engaged at the fort, part of our story as Canadians. People learn a lot. Canadians don’t know their history very well.

One of the reasons to come to the fort, you can ask questions that are not usually addressed in the text book. Its an opportunity to have provocative conversations that aren’t in the history text book, not necessarily factual, more interpretational.

4. Challenges?

Some challenges are character portrayal: explanation of situation, voids of information. At our Native encampment, hiring First Nations People for it can be difficult. First Nations attributes of physical actors, visitors can be confused, “no white women at the fort.” Characters portray mixed-blood or First Nations people. Because of the lack of written historical records, its difficult with First Nations themes. Portraying “Indianness” is difficult. Personal lives intersect with historical roles. We encourage understanding of

the past. There are opportunities to highlight women's roles, women's contributions, yet history is biased towards men.

5. To what extent are you concerned with historical accuracy?

It is the beginning and the end and its always evolving. It's the cornerstone of our activity. We feel a massive responsibility with physical representation and stories. Modesty, historically speaking, the strap dresses had a low bodice, would have been risqué. There are also health and safety issues as well as fiscal restraints, cost saving measures.

6. Has the mandate of Fort William changed since its inception as a tourist / living history museum?

How we tell the story is always changing, we make sure the stories are researched.

Summary of talk with Susan Pearson, costume specialist

Costumes are based on designs from "world famous" costumers based in London, United Kingdom, called "Bormans and Nathan's costume company" According to Pearson, the fort has made a policy change in the last short while to be more inclusive of Métis designs. She stated that "all women at the fort at 1815 were Métis." They were all 'mixed blood': Chippewa / Saulteaux / Ojibwa/ British.

The costumes are based on historical documentation including images by Peter Rindisbacher, Paul Kane and other European artists.

Interview with Arla Singleton, reenactor and Educator

1. What is your role as a Métis reenactor? What do you wear for your role?

As a mixed-blood person at Fort William, I interpret the past. I am a Native person or mixed-blood woman. The majority of female staff on-site are responsible for interpreting mixed-blood women. If mixed blood married bourgeois their status changed. I play a person who is married to a white fur-trader, who didn't come back. I am an independent woman, living outside the fort, and I do odd jobs to survive. I'm known as Madame Desmarais.

2. Do you have Métis heritage?

Yes I do have Métis heritage, although I'm not pursuing it. My relatives came from France in 1804, my grandfather worked in the fur trade at Sault Ste Marie.

3. In the past, what role do you think clothing, sashes and flags played in defining and representing Métis identity?

Métis items are more naturalistic like scrolls, flowers and vines, more progressive in design.

Michif, French/Indian, concepts changed through language, design, separate society, not under label Aboriginal or Native. They are a very proud people. Métis have always stood their ground against both groups, no indication of them merging, my parent's heritage was taboo.

4. What role do you have in educating the public on Métis identity?

In any interpretation, its mixed blood. I develop programs for all levels: elementary, college. I am giving a perspective from the nineteenth century and how things evolve.

5. How does the public react to your clothing and activities?

I do a food and forest program for kids. I have to make adjustments to program for each culture, depends on who your audience is.

6. Do people express interest in the clothing you wear? How do you respond if and when such questions are asked?

The public is interested in clothing, they really like to see “pure” looking items, to see no modern part showing. You don’t want to be disappointed. Lots of training to ensure a high focus. A patrol for modernism. They know you are role playing but yet they start to believe it. We are reenacting the past as if its now. It becomes an unusual strange experience.

7. What evidence is used for your reenactment?

Documents, resource library are used. The information is inferred, we don’t have an actual Native woman’s diary, its all men’s perspectives. If you have to create yourself out of gleaned history, you know them personally by the character they develop. Eighty people work at the fort in the summer, it becomes a whole world. Your imagination is tested through acting with other interpreters, you can drop into other people’s storylines. The public is looking for basic, everyday facts as opposed to bigger messages, looking for little details and we communicate to adults through children. A good interpreter is honest.

9. What are the difficulties of reenacting a specific moment in time?

We do not deceive people, but rather invite them into our world.