

METIS CULTURE

LESSON ONE:

ORIGINS

Metis Culture

Lesson 1: Origins

I AIM

The students will become aware of the origins of the Metis cultural heritage.

II OBJECTIVES

The students will be able to:

1. explain how Metis culture originated from European and Indian cultures.
2. explain the process of "Metissage".
3. explain the reasons for diversity within "Metis culture".
4. explain the meaning of the word "Metis" and its relationship to the terms Halfbreed, Doublebreed, Bois Brule, Country-born.

III TEACHING METHODS

1. Review the terms "identity", "culture", "cultural heritage".
2. Present a short lecture on the origins of Metis culture. Excerpts from several sources provide background information on this topic: teacher's Lecture Notes A: THE FRUIT OF INDIAN -EUROPEAN ALLIANCES, THE METIS pages III - I - 4,5.
3. Have the students read the handout: METIS CULTURE ORIGINS pages III - I - 8, - 11. and discuss as a whole class, or in small groups

reporting back to the class, the following:

- a) What kinds of things define Metis culture?
 - b) What are the origins of Metis Culture?
 - c) How were Metis people different culturally among themselves?
4. Have students research one or more of the following:
- a) find examples of the differences in culture among Metis people.
 - b) Find examples of how Metis people brought together different aspects of Indian and European cultures and how they changed them to fit their needs.
 - c) Describe the ~~three~~ major different types of Metis culture. (Indian, European, Metis)
5. Discuss as a whole class, or have students write, what they want to find out about Metis culture: Keep a record of this discussion for planning the direction of this topic. Ask students to think or write about a) how modern Metis culture is similar or different than the Metis cultural heritage of the past? b) How is modern Metis culture similar or different than the culture of modern mainstream Canadian culture? The following books are recommended for research purposes:

Adams, H.

1973 CANADIAN METIS COMMUNITIES. In handbook of North American Indians. Washington: Smithsonian Institution.

Brown, J. S.

1980 STRANGERS IN BLOOD. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press

Campbell, M.

1978 RIEL'S PEOPLE: How the Metis Lives.
Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre.

Sawchuck, J.

1978 THE METIS OF MANITOBA: Reformulation of
the Ethnic Ideality. Toronto: Peter Martin
Associates Ltd.

Sealey, D.B. and Lussier, A.S.

1975 THE METIS: CANADA'S FORGOTTEN PEOPLE.
Winnipeg. Manitoba Metis Federation.

Slobodin, R.

1966 THE METIS OF THE MACKENZIE DISTRICT Ottawa:
Canadian Research Centre for Anthropology.

Van Kirk, S.

1980 MANY TENDER TIES: Women in Fur Trade
Society in Western Canada, 1670 - 1870.
Winnipeg, Watson & Dwyer Publishing.

Teachers Lecture Notes: A

The Fruit Of Indian-European Alliances: The Metis

"the term "Metis" comes from the Spanish word "mestize", itself derived from the Latin "ixtus" which signified "mixture". The voyageurs of the Great Plains introduced the modification "Metis" during their exploration from Mexico to Canada.

The Metis nation emerged as a mixture of Indian and Non-Indian races. During the first period in which these alliances were being affected, that is to say, from 1650 to 1760 (when Canada was ceded to England), the Metis nation was evolving naturally, composed as it was of Canadian, French, Scottish and Irish sires and Indian mothers. At first, the descendants of these original ancestors did not constitute a distinct element in the life of the young people. But, during the following century, from 1769 to 1861, more especially in the first fifty years from about 1760 to 1810, when the numerous North-West traders and members of the Hudson's Bay Company arrived, the divers elements of the Metis nation became crystallized into one distinct unit.

Thanks to their geographical position that protected them from foreign invasion; thanks also to their nomadic way of life and to their racial and military organizations which provided defence against war-like tribes, the western Metis were able to conserve their national homogeneity while their Acadian and Quebec kin were submerged beneath the preponderant Canadian elements.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Metis nation, then in its first flowering, comprised two distinct groups - the French Metis (Bois Brule) whose paternal language was French, and English Metis whose paternal language was English. We must turn to them (the Bois Brule) to discover their ancestral traditions and most outstanding characteristics in order to get a picture of their mentality. It is fitting, too, to add that in many cases, the ancestors

of the English Metis left the country immediately a period of their services terminated, and abandoned their wives and their children. The latter, the French often adopted and "frenchified" them. This explains why so many French Metis families have Scottish and Irish names.

The maternal ancestor of the Metis, the Indian woman, although submissive to her husband as was customary among Indian tribes, was treated with a respect that made her more of a companion than a servant. She shared the work and responsibility of daily life.

The paternal ancestors of the Metis were the French who had come to Canada with Jacques Cartier in 1534 and with Champlain nearly a century later. Jean Nicollet, who landed in the country in 1618 with his large family, appears to have been the first to penetrate the country as far as the territory of the Crees and Assiniboines, and others followed his example until about 1656."

Source: August Henri Tremaudin

The History of the Metis Nation in Western Canada.
Chapter 2 and 3.

Teachers Lecture Notes: B
THE HISTORY OF THE METIS PEOPLE.

I Introduction

The Metis are an historic people with both Indian and white ancestry who were born in Western Canada, that area from the Great Lakes to the Rocky Mountains. Their paternal ancestors were French, Scottish, Irish or English with the mothers being Indian. The Metis Nation developed in the North-West during the fur trade era. At the beginning of the 19th century, two distinct linguistic groups of Metis developed: the French Metis or Bois Brules who spoke French and the English Metis whose language was English. (Most Metis were bilingual.) Many English abandoned their Indian wives and children and went back to England when their service with the Hudson's Bay Company terminated. These families were then adopted by the French Metis, giving an explanation of why so many French-speaking Metis have Scottish, Irish and English names.¹

Company policy →

II The Early Days

The Metis were nomadic. They would have to be on the hunt following the buffalo. The wives prepared the hides for the making of clothes and moccasins. They would also smoke the meat and fish. The Metis were good hunters and very often white travellers, missionaries and surveyors would seek their services as guides.²

Clothes styles of the Metis came from both the Indian and European cultures. Simple European clothing would often be decorated with fringes, tassels, dyed horsehair, coloured shells, etc., which were taken from the Indian culture.³

Family life was very well respected. The Metis lived as one family where peace, hospitality and friendship regulated their life. These people were religious and during this time the dominant religion was Catholic. There was great concern with justice because of the sensitivity to their rights.⁴

As nomadic people, the Metis enjoyed hunting the large herds of buffalo or bison. In hunting such large herds, they had

to organize their hunting parties. This meant that every detail had to be carefully planned. In order that this plan be carried out to its fullest, leaders had to be chosen and rules had to be established. This custom explains why the Metis are able to adapt to different situations. Each camp consisted of ten men, the captain and his soldiers, who shared the scouting duties.⁵

The Council, which was both the governing and court body, set up the rules of the hunt and saw that they were obeyed. These rules formed "The Law of the Prairie" and each captain received these laws. When an important matter arose, the captain's authority was limited for the whole camp's assent was needed.⁶ This patriarchal government operated only in time of the hunt or when there were difficulties and dangers.

For the first 100 years, from 1670 - 1770, the Hudson's Bay Company remained strong in its area north of the Saskatchewan River, but after 1770, there was competition with the North-West Company. By 1804, Simon McTavish, the Scottish founder of the North-West Company, had established trading posts from the Missouri to the Peace River and Hudson Bay. This new company hired French-Canadians and Metis guides and workers who also acted as interpreters. Metis men and women alike guided people like Alexander McKenzie past natural and human dangers in order that they could accomplish in the eyes of the Europeans, remarkable deeds, (for example, they had finally reached a great western river, only to have McKenzie name it after himself).⁷

The French-Canadians and the Metis co-operated with both companies. The Scots relied on these people who knew the country so well. French people mixed and lived as aboriginal people, whereas, the English were harsh to them. A lot of Scottish people learned to speak French and this is why there are so many French place names.⁸

Source: AMNSIS discussion paper, 1979.

References for discussion paper: August-Henry Tremaudin

THE HISTORY OF THE METIS NATION IN WESTERN CANADA

Student handout: Metis Culture: Origins

If one were to ask "when did Metis people originate"? The answer could be. "Nine months after the first white man set foot in Canada"! However, if we keep in mind our earlier discussion about identity, we might say that Metis culture originated when the Metis first saw themselves as a group.

The first Europeans to arrive in North America were seamen; French fisherman, and even earlier, Vikings; who did not stay around long enough to have an effect on how these children were raised. Therefore these children remained Indians, (culturally speaking.) A separate Metis culture did not develop until years after the Europeans had firmly established themselves in North America. (Biological parentage does not determine culture. The Beothuks of New Foundland may have had blue eyes - inherited from their viking ancestors - but their culture was little affected by Norse (Viking) exploration in North America)

How did the Metis originate?

We find the answer in the records of early historians, explorers, missionaries and anthropologists: Europeans came to this continent to make a profit either by fishing or furtrading; or even by finding gold or a shorter way to the riches of Asia. Because they did not come to settle here originally, they did not bring European women along with them. The new comers were greeted with friendliness by the Native peoples and needed the help of Indians to survive in North America. Often they wintered close to an Indian camp.

Indian women were important to the Europeans as translators, guides, tailors, as providers and as cooks. From the Indian point of view, it was good to establish connections with the Europeans through marriage because the trader could then treat his new relatives more favourably than others in the trade. In some cases marriages were quickly arranged and both sides were

happy. In other cases, women were bought and even kidnapped. In general, however, these relationships between European men and Indian women followed the Native style of marriages which were often made to help connect two different groups. Such marriages could begin and end as quickly as the partners wished.

In Eastern Canada, during the early part of Indian/European contact, the children of these marriages were raised as Indians. Later, when many children of these mixed marriages grew up around the French settlements and began to work as voyageurs in the fur trade, they saw themselves as French or "Canadiens". Therefore, in eastern Canada most "mixed bloods" "identified" as either Indian or French.

In the West, the Europeans' fur trading posts attracted Indian groups to settle around them. More and more mixed marriages came about, resulting in more and more mixed offspring in "Metis". Metis girls were desired as wives by the furtraders because of their special skills. They had learned to clean and tan hides, to prepare meat for winter storage, to make snowshoes, baskets and warm winter clothing. They were described as gentle wives and good mothers. The furtrader also appreciated the connection with the Metis girls family. Through kinship he had connections with other Indian tribes or influential European traders.

The children of these marriages learned parts of two cultures; the hunting and gathering culture of their Indian relatives and the European culture of their fathers. This is the key to Metis culture - the blending, mixing of two different ethnic languages, customs, traditions and lifestyles.

Language is a good example. Cree or Saulteaux words were mixed with French words and a new type of language which was neither Cree, Saulteaux or French developed among the Metis groups. One phrase of this language might be:

"The canoe went apeechequanee and he went chimmuck".
("Apeechequanne" means head over heels and "chimmuck" means splash.)

As time passed those people who were combining Indian and European cultures began to recognize their uniqueness and began to have their own settlements.

One such group centred around the descendants of Scottish H.B.C. employee George Sutherland in the Duck Lake area. They developed into the Willow or Parkland People and, although they speak Cree, consider themselves as Metis. This process of Metis people jointing together with their own kind is called "Metissage" - becoming Metis.

It is important to remember, however, that there were more than just one group of Metis people; there were many different groups. Some had French and Saulteaux, or Cree, or Sioux ancestors. Some had Scottish and Cree. One can imagine all the different combinations that could happen. This resulted in Metis groups speaking several different languages. Although many could speak two or even three or more languages, there were Metis who spoke only Cree, or Saulteaux, or English. In this way different names for Metis people developed. The French-speaking were called Metis or sometime "Bois Brule". Bois Brule' is a French translation of the Ojibwa term for the Metis, "Wassakodewinmi", meaning "half-burnt wood men" (a description compared to Indians). The term "Halfbreed" or "Scotch Half-breed" was often used to describe the English-speaking group since most of their European ancestors were Scots (Orkneymen) working for the H.B.C.

For some, the word Halfbreed has taken on a negative meaning, "Doublebreed" or "Country Born" are terms that have sometimes been used to replace it.

Other kinds of differences among the Metis depended on the type of lifestyle they followed. Some were working for the H.B.C. and, when not travelling on the fur brigades, lived permanently around the trading posts. Many of these people eventually became free traders in competition with the H.B.C. Some had small farms which they worked for part of the year and went buffalo hunting at other times. A third group ^{was} were closest to the traditional Indian culture and made their

living as trappers and buffalo hunters. There were even differences among Metis groups who lived in the Red River area and those who lived in other parts of the West as well as differences between Protestant and Catholic.

As you can see, therefore, the Metis people were not all the same. However, they did come to see themselves as a group because of their new culture which was not Indian or European, but a combination of both. There were also some important historical events (we will look at them in detail later) which drew the Metis together as a group. They began to see that they all had similar problems and interests, and this resulted in a bond among the different Metis groups.

In summary, we can say that Metis culture originated from a combination of Indian and European cultures. The Metis developed an entirely new way of life to meet the changing conditions in the Canadian West in the 1880s.

METIS CULTURE

Lesson 2: MAKING A LIVING

Metis Culture

Lesson 2: MAKING A LIVING

I AIM

The students will understand how Metis people made a living in the past.

II OBJECTIVES

The students will:

1. Describe three major ways to make a living among the Metis in the 1800's,
2. compare/contrast the culturally different lifestyles,
3. explain the organization of the buffalo hunt and the reasons for this tight organization.

III TEACHING METHODS

1. Have students read handout A: METIS LIFESTYLES in 1800's
 2. Discuss the core concepts of SUBSISTANCE FARMING as outlined in TEACHERS FAMILIARIZATION MATERIAL
 3. Distribute handout B:
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BUFFALO Pages III - II - 8,9.
Distribute handout D: THE MAKING OF Pemmican
pages III - II - 15
Distribute handout E: THE RED RIVER CARTS
pages III - II - 16
Distribute handout F: THE RED RIVER JIG pages III - II - 18.
- Ask students to form groups and prepare class reports on these aspects of Metis lifestyles.

Encourage further research on the subject listed, including visual and auditory aids for demonstration to fellow students.

4. Read: THE METIS AS FARMERS, by Don McLean and lecture to students about Hudson's Bay Company policy of not allowing Metis to become full time farmers because it would have restricted their ability to hunt and cut down company profits. Explain the strip farming method brought to the Red River area by Metis born and raised in New France. Point out the advantages of locating near a river for purposes of transportation and crop and livestock raising and the custom of sharing "hay priviledges".
5. If time permits view the film THE VOYAGEURS (Source in the Materials Section) and discuss,
 - how was the lifestyle of the voyageurs similar to different than that of the Metis?
 - how would the way to make a living, (the economy,) affect the culture of the group?
6. Use Historical Photographs from the Gabriel Dumont picture file to illustrate "Red River Carts" and "Buffalo Hunt" presentations. Sources are listed under the Materials section with this lesson.

VI PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

1. Have students describe the major ways in which Metis made a living in the 1800's by preparing a short written report (paragraph length) one reporting orally.

2. Have volunteers outline the culturally different lifestyles by contrasting or comparing them.
3. Let students prepare seminar style reports on the organization of the buffalo hunt and explain the reasons for the strict observation of rules and regulations before, during and after the hunt.

V MATERIALS

1. METIS LIFESTYLES IN THE 1800's, pages III - II - 4,5,6.
2. Core Concept SUBSISTANCE QUEST teachers familiarization material page III - II - 36
3. Student handouts:
 - a) CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BUFFALO, pages III - II - 8
 - b) THE RED RIVER BUFFALO HUNT, pages III - II - 10
 - c) THE MAKING OF PEMMICAN page III - II - 15
 - d) THE RED RIVER CARTS, pages III - II - 16,17
 - e) THE RED RIVER JIG, pages III - II - 18,19
4. THE METIS AS FARMERS, Teachers Lecture notes pages III - II - 20 - 30
5. Film: THE VOYAGEURS (20 min.) N.F.B. 106 C 0164 032) the film portrays the lifestyles of the voyageurs.
6. Historical photographs (Photo-File, Gabriel Dumont Institute, Regina:
 - a) Red River Carts: PH-0001--21, 179, 192, 196, 203, 204, 208, 218.
 - b) Buffalo Hunt: PH-0140, 148, 149, 189.

Student handout A: METIS LIFESTYLES IN THE 1800's

Very often when we think about the Metis economy, only the buffalo hunt comes to mind. However, as the 1880's progressed, and especially when the buffalo began to disappear in the 1870's, the Metis began to place more and more emphasis on farming as a way of making a living.

The Metis set up their farms on the same pattern as those in Quebec (the "seigneurial system"). These farms were long and narrow, stretching back from the river banks. This allowed the farmers to build their houses and barns close to a source of water, food, wood and transportation. The owner of this strip farm had the right to the "hay privilege" which stretched two miles back from the river onto the open prairie. These "hay privileges" were not fenced and often used in common with neighbours; but there was no question about the right to two miles of land behind the river lot farm.

The ribbon-like pattern of land ownership was best for self-sufficient farms with a livestock base and a little cultivation. This suited the needs of the Metis as well as the conditions in the West at the time. We must remember that often many of the Metis were away on the hunt. Small garden plots could be tended by the elderly and the livestock could get along by themselves on the hay privilege. The Metis did not get heavily involved in agriculture for a number of reasons. First, the type of technology available at the time made full-scale crop production impossible. There were as yet no steel ploughs in the Red River area. This meant that only spades, hoes and inefficient wooden ploughs were available to work the land. Seeding, reaping and threshing were all carried out by hand. Seed was spread by hand, sickles and cradel scythes were used for reaping and threshing was done by hand flails and the tramping of animals. Mechanical help did not become available in Red River until 1850's, and, even then, only two reapers and

eight threshers were in use. Even after this time, many Metis did not have enough cash to be able to afford any type of machinery. In addition, the varieties of crops available were really not suited to the climatic conditions in the West. Red Fife, the newly developed hardy spring wheat, was not introduced until 1867.

Secondly, there were no real markets for large amounts of farm produce. Even if the Metis had grown more crops than they could use to feed themselves, there would be no place to sell the surplus.

Thirdly, drought and plagues of grasshoppers, combined with crop diseases, hail and frosts, caused many crop failures (at least 30 in the 68 years between 1812 and 1870). It was simply impractical for many of the Metis to live by farming alone.

(+ Company policy?)

However, some Metis, especially the English-speaking Half-breeds (or "Country Born") of Red River were successfully making their living farming full-time by 1850. That same year, under William Ross, they formed the "Agricultural Improvement Society", indicating that they were quite serious about making a living from farming.

Travellers in the west often noted the hard work and ingenuity of the Metis farmers. For example, a Catholic priest, Father Doerfler (1957:17) wrote the following about an English Half-breed farming settlement at Bresaylor:

"(They) seemed to be of an intelligent and thrifty class. They had used the latest and newest improved appliances for haymaking. Here I saw for the first time a characteristic halfbreed method for saving oats employed. It might appropriately be termed rotation of horses. A large herd of horses was grazing in the vicinity of the camp. After dinner several of the men brought the herd and then those animals which were to be hitched up in the afternoon were secured, whilst all the the others were again turned out to graze. During

the working season no animal is used more than half a day for work, after which it is allowed to rest for two half days. Thus they keep up strength and flesh without being fed grain. As nearly all halfbreeds own large numbers of horses, this method is universally employed by them". Although this observation was recorded in 1902, the method of rotating horses was a traditional way of managing Metis draft animals."

In summary, then, we can say that farming (for everyone in the West, not just the Metis) could not often be a full-time occupation or paying business until after the 1870's. As a result of the many practical factors mentioned above, the Metis became "subsistence farmers". That is to say that they grew enough crops and raised enough livestock to feed themselves, but there was little left over to sell since there really was no one to buy the surplus. Despite all the problems and lack of mechanical help, many Metis were among the most successful farmers in the Red River area.

REFERENCES:

Doerfler, Father Bruno

1957 "Father Bruno's Narrative 'Across the Boundary' Part III".
Saskatchewan History 10:11-26.

Howard, J.

1952 Strange Empire: Louis Riel and the Metis People. Toronto:
James Lewis and Samuel.

McLean, D.

1981 Pride and Poverty: The Rise and Fall of the Metis in
Western Canada: Regina: Dumont Institute.

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1975 The Metis: Canada's Forgotten People. Winnipeg: Manitoba
Metis Federation Press.

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1978 "The Metis Nation: Buffalo Hunting versus Agriculture
in the Red River Settlement, 1810-1870". In the Other Natives:
The--Les Metis. Lussier, A. and Sealey, D.B. ed. Winnipeg:
Manitoba Metis Federation Press.

Chapter VII
The Metis as Farmers

It has been established through Hudsons Bay Company correspondence that the Company was consciously blocking agriculture in the colony by restricting the market to that of its own use. No surplus beyond its own requirements was allowed. Therefore farming, as we now know it, (the commodity production of grains and livestock for sale on an "open" market) was impossible. The Company's policy is best summarized by Mr. Edward Ellice in a letter to the Right Honourable H. Labouchere, 14 October 1856:

There is no cultivable land in the country within the present reach of markets, and none beyond them, that I am aware of, except in the Settlement of the Red River, where climate and soil held out the least hope to the agriculturist. The Hudsons Bay Company will agree cordially with you in your opinion that they would do much better to confine their operations to their trade. They are neither Colonists in an agricultural sense, beyond such cultivation as is necessary in the immediate vicinity of their posts for the maintenance of their people, or as speculators in the traffic of land, or as founders or Governors of agricultural Settlements, by their own will or desire, but because they are bound to undertake the administration of the affairs of the country by the Governments and for the protection of their trade.¹

W.A. MacKintosh wrote, "The Hudsons Bay Company was directly opposed to agricultural settlement and to the education of the Indian population".² But even if farming as commodity production had been allowed by the Company, it may have been impossible at the time, given the lack of markets within reach of the colony, and the lack of technology adapted to local conditions such as early frost, drought, etc.

The Metis system of farming, with property running back from the river frontage, thus ensuring a lay lot for every farmer, was the only one that could work at the time. When Governor Macdougall tried to impose the American system of survey on the Metis, he met resistance not on the basis of blind tradition, or superstition, as has been suggested in the history books, but for very practical reasons

of survival in a subsistence agricultural economy that was of secondary importance to the hunt, and the fur trade.

The system which had been in use on the Red River was French, adapted from that of Quebec. It provided each settler with a small river frontage and appurtenant water rights, and with a "hay privilege" extending back from the river two miles on the open prairie. This "hay privilege", though uncultivated, was an integral part of each farm, used for the grazing of cattle or sheep or horses on the nutritious native grass. The river lot itself was only a small part of the settler's property. The "hay privileges" were unfenced and generally were used in common by neighboring landlords, but there was no question about each man's legal right to two miles of land behind his own farm.

This ribbon like land pattern was designed for small, self-sufficient farmsteads with a livestock base, requiring little cultivation. It was thus ideally suited to the needs of the Metis, who were long absent on the hunt; the domesticated herds could fend for themselves while the elders of the community tended the gardens and small fields of grain. And it had not been in the Company's best interest to establish farms so large that they would divert the natives' energies from the hunt for furs and robes.

But the American system which McDougall sought to impose was designed for large-scale grain production on plowed soil. Without access to the river one could not raise cattle or garden crops; this would be satisfactory to "the most desirable emigrants", who would be farmers; but it was anything but satisfactory to the Metis, the nomadic herdsmen, the hunters and adventurers. McDougall might not have been daunted even if he had known what he was doing, but undoubtedly he did not realize that he was attempting to alter, arbitrarily, the whole way of life of thousands of people.³

As will be shown later, the system of surveying land into sections was part of the Conservative Government's policy for Western Canadian development, and it was a policy that had no place for Metis farmers.

Then there were the recurring natural disasters such as floods, drought, locust plagues, and early frosts that wiped out the dreams of the Selkirk settlers, year after year. Clearly, technology was insufficient for large scale commodity production of grain. The 1860's may have been as dry as the "dirty 30's" in the west. George Stanley wrote:

The 1860's were not only years of political agitation, they were also years of drought, distress and sometimes of famine. "Dry, Dry", wrote Samuel Taylor in 1863, "the Weather was never seen, people say, so long without rain, it Thunders often and yet no rain...it gets very rain like sometimes but it clears off and there is no rain." With the drought came declining crop yields, the closing of the grist mills, the virtual cessation of water transport, a slowing down of the economic tempo of the Settlement. All this was bad enough; but there were the grasshoppers as well...

In the autumn of 1867, Father Lestanc in St. Boniface remarked on the "devastation caused by the grasshoppers" and "the consternation in the hearts of our poor Metis". Never had anybody ever seen so many of the "voracious insects" within the limits of Red River. The grasshoppers: "were as snow in the air and as flakes of snow upon the ground. They penetrated into the parlours and kitchens, bed chambers and bedding, pots, pans, kettles, ovens, boots and coat pockets. One scarcely dared to open one's mouth. On the rivers they floated like scum, or were piled two feet deep on the banks where they rotted and stunk like carrion. In the spring conditions were even worse. What made the situation particularly bad was the fact that the buffalo hunters "instead of furnishing their large share of provisions, arrived starving from the usual hunting grounds". The buffalo had apparently disappeared from the plains that were within reach of the Red River hunters.⁴

The grasshopper plague of 1867, and the drought were not isolated events. Following is a list of crop failure in the Red River Settlement:

Between 1812 and 1870, there were at least 30 reports of partial or complete crop failures (see Table 1). These crop failures, and the food shortages which inevitably followed, were largely determined by the combined effects of an inhospitable environment and an unsophisticated agricultural technology. Over the long run, the agriculturalists in the Settlement were, for the reasons outlined above, incapable of providing the colonists and the personnel of the Hudsons Bay Company with an adequate and reliable source of food.⁵

TABLE I
A LIST OF PARTIAL AND COMPLETE CROP FAILURES
IN THE RED RIVER SETTLEMENT

Year of Failure	Frost	Locusts	Drought	Other or Unspecified	Source
1813			X	X	W. L. Morton, 1949: 307 fn6
1817	X			X	Selkirk Papers in A. S. Morton, 1938:20
1818		X			Stanley, 1908:11
1819		X			Nute, 1942:246
1820		X			West, 1966:22-23 Rich, 1967:256
1821		X			Nute, 1942:326 West, 1966:62-70
1822				X	Rich, 1959: v.2, 507
1823				X	Rich, 1959: v.2, 507
1825				X	MacLellan, 1952-20 Giraud, 1945:837
1826	X				Giraud, 1945:640 fn6 Nute, 1942:445
1832				X	Hargrave, 1938:102
1836	X				Ross, 1957:187-188
1837	X		X		Giraud, 1945:778 Gluck, 1965:20
1840			X		Bayley, 1969:72
1844				X	Giraud, 1945:836
1846				X	W. L. Morton, 1967: 513, note 73 Bayley, 1969:79
1847	X				W. L. Morton, 1956: xxviii Giraud, 1945:836
1848		X	X		Giraud, 1945:779 W. L. Morton, 1956: xxgiii
1850				X	Giraud, 1945:837
1855	X				Giraud, 1945:779
1856	X				Giraud, 1945:779
1857	X	X			Giraud, 1945:777-9
1861				X	A. S. Morton, 1938: 37-38
1862				X	A. S. Morton, 1938:38
1863			X		A. S. Morton, 1938:38
1864		X	X		A. S. Morton, 1938:38
1865		X			A. S. Morton, 1938:38
1866	X	X		X	A. S. Morton, 1938:38
1867		X			A. S. Morton, 1938:38
1968		X			A. S. Morton, 1938:38
X — Cause of crop failure					"

5. G. Herman Sprenger, article, *The Metis Nation: Buffalo Hunting versus agriculture in the Red River Settlement, 1810 - 1870*, From *The Other Natives, The Metis*, edited by Antoine S. Lussier and D. Bruce Sealey, Manitoba Metis Federation Press, Winnipeg 1978, p. 24, 25.

It was not until 1870 that a relatively early ripening variety of wheat was introduced to the western plains. The following article spells out the dates etc., when a sufficient technology was developed to turn the prairies into an agricultural area. This occurred as a part of Macdonald's Canadian policy, and did not occur until long after the Metis people had lost their land to speculators.

Early Canadian farmers freely exchanged wheat samples and many varieties were brought over from the "Old Country". One of these imported varieties was Red Fife which, at the time, was far superior to any other variety in yield and quantity. Red Fife was introduced into Canada by David Fife who farmed near Peterborough, Ont. In 1842, he asked his friend in Glasgow for some good seed wheat preferably Russian for hardness. Fortunately, a cargo ship had just arrived from Danzig and from it, a few seeds were sent to Mr. Fife. Since these seeds arrived in Ontario early in the spring, they were planted immediately. But only one plant matured as the seeds were from an unknown winter wheat variety. However, the grain was carefully harvested and replanted the following spring. From this small beginning, the amount of seed steadily increased and soon Mr. Fife had enough to sell to his friends and neighbors. The new wheat variety became known as Red Fife. It soon became popular in southern Ontario and northern United States because of its high yields and excellent bread-making qualities. By 1870, Red Fife was well established on the Canadian Prairies and during the next 30 years or more, it was regarded as the best variety of spring wheat.

Occasionally, an early fall frost destroyed large areas sown to Red Fife. Because it was too slow in maturing in northern areas, western farmers and plant breeders sought an earlier maturing variety. The search was accelerated after the disastrous crop failure of 1888, when an early frost caught most of the prairie wheat in blossom stage. In the next few years, thousands of wheat varieties were tested for earliness, yield and quality but all had one or more failings.

In 1904, Dr. Charles Saunders, working for the Canada Department of Agriculture in Ottawa, after years of study, selected a wheat variety that matured about a week earlier than Red Fife. It was a cross between Red Fife and Hard Red Calcutta - a cross made by his brother, Dr. A. P. Saunders in 1892. Mr. Charles Saunders repeatedly sowed and selected various strains of this cross until he had a wheat variety that appeared to have the good qualities of both parents. When the baking test confirmed the excellent quality of this new wheat, he sent small sample to western experimental farms for yield trials and seed increase. In 1908 this new wheat variety was named Marquis and, in 1911, it was released for Canadian farmers. Marquis was an immediate success and became world famous for its quality. For many years, Marquis was the principal wheat grown by grain farmers in Canada and northern United States.⁶

As can be seen, a good commercial variety of wheat with an early ripening characteristic, combined with "hardiness" was not developed until 1911. The Red Fife brand could be grown on the prairies but this was not made available until 1870, after the Hudsons Bay Company had sold Ruperts Land to Canada.

Despite all, the Metis had proven to be very successful subsistence farmers. Their river lot system had been practical and equitable. Acting as a supplement to the "plains provisions" of buffalo, the small Metis farms complimented their own political economy, and made life easier. Old hunters could retire to a quiet sedentary life-style when the hunt became too onerous.

In line with Hudsons Bay Company requests the surplus population of Metis, left over after amalgamation, were convinced by the clergy that they should settle down on small plots, and farm the land. Tremaudin wrote:

Monseigneur Provencher benefited by encouraging his parishioners to settle on farms on both sides of the confluence of the Red and Assinboine Rivers. He had no trouble making them understand the advantages of staying in groups. It was earlier, too, for their children to attend school. In this way, by degrees, religion influenced the Metis to renounce their nomadic way of life - perhaps not without regret.⁷

Just as the French speaking Metis were convinced that they should "settle down" by their priests, (though with little real effect, until the buffalo disappeared), so were the English speaking half-breeds settled in as farmers at White Horse Plains. Springer wrote:

Quite clearly, then, the founding of the Red River Settlement was basic to the expansionist plans of the Hudsons Bay Company. From the above letter, it is obvious that the demands placed on the colonists were considerable. They had to produce provisions not only for themselves, but also for the personnel of the Hudsons Bay Company. In their efforts to meet these demands the colonists often fell short of their goal. The harsh environment coupled with a relatively simple technological inventory placed severe limitations on agricultural productivity.⁸

In addition to the setbacks brought about by unfavourable environmental conditions, the productive capacity of the colonists was also handicapped by their unsophisticated, or simple, agricultural technology. Operations such as seeding, reaping, and threshing, were carried out by archaic and time-consuming methods. Sees was broadcast by hand; sickles and cradle scythes were used for reaping; threshing was done by hand flails and the trampling of animals. Before 1824, no ploughs were in the Settlement, and only spades and hoes were used to prepare the fields. After this date, wooden ploughs with iron points and wooden mould boards, and some with iron mould boards, were introduced. These, however, were not very efficient in the thick and heavy soils of Red River (Murray, 1967:38-40; w.L. Morton, 1949:319; MacEwan, 1952:204-206).

Throughout most of the history of the Red River Settlement (1812-1870), the benefits of mechanized agricultural machinery, which was to revolutionize farming in the west, were not available to the colonists. Mechanical reapers and threshers reached Red River in the 1850's, but these were few in number (two reapers, eight threshers). Steel ploughs with polished steel mould boards were not introduced until 1867, and mechanical seeders arrived later still. In 1856, there was only one steam-powered flour mill. There were also eighteen wind mills and nine water mills. These, however, were subject to the vagaries of nature:

for example, the latter had to be shut down during the prolonged drought in the 1860's (Murray, 1967:38-40; W.L. Morton, 1949:319; MacEwan, 1952:204-206).

Productivity was further offset by the lack of adequate facilities for preparation and storage. This contributed to significant losses, and affected meat and dairy products as well as cereal crops.⁹

Several varieties of soft wheat, such as White Russian and Club, were grown in the Settlement. Unfortunately, none of these grains was particularly well suited to the climate of Red River. The colonists were continually importing new strains (MacEwan, 1969:33; W.L. Morton, 1949:311-312). The flour which was produced from these wheats was also of dubious quality. Lewis Henry Morgan was only one of the man travellers who complained about Red River bread (1959:127):

"The wheat may be good, and they say it is, but we saw no good bread. The flour is dark and the bread heavy. They use a good deal of unleavened bread, but it is very hard."

When Red Fife wheat was introduced to the Settlement, it quickly replaced the older varieties. It was a hard spring wheat... "which yielded well, usually matured before the fall frosts struck in the Manitoba lowlands, and gave a white smooth flour of exceptional baking strength." (W.L. Morton, 1967:182)

Red Fife, however, only reached the Settlement in 1876 (MacEwan, 1969:32-33).¹⁰

Nor did the farm technology of Red River enable the agriculturists to provide sufficient hay for stacking during the years of drought. So that:

By 1849, although the absolute numbers of sheep and cattle stood at 3,096 and 6,014 respectively, they did not constitute a secure economic base, since the population of the Settlement itself was by that time over 5,000. Indeed, cattle were still being imported in an effort to improve quality as well as quantity, and the numbers of sheep actually declined in subsequent years.¹¹

Nevertheless, the Metis, under Cuthbert Grant did establish a successful colony at White Horse Plains (between the Red River Colony and the hostile Sioux Nation to the south). This colony was a successful agricultural colony because it used agriculture as a supplement to plains provisions.

Yet the same Cuthbert Grant was the founder of Grantown, which became the mission and parish of Saint-Francois-Xavier on the Assiniboine. That settlement of his folk, the Metis buffalo hunters of the plains, some of whom had been the warriors of Seven Oaks, became the bulwark of the settlement against the Sioux. Its presence for almost fifty years gave the colonists of St. James, St. Johns, Kildonan and St. Andrews an ever present sense of security. They slept more quietly in their beds knowing that to westward lay those hunter-warriors and their chief who were the terror of the Sioux. And well they might, for Grant not only made his own people friends of the Red River Settlement, but his influence with his Indian kin, the Assiniboines and Crees of the plains, helped to keep those tribes at peace with the white men; he was a warrior feared and respected by the untamable Sioux.

It is this contrast between the surviving memory of Cuthbert Grant and the history of the greater part of his life which prompts this book on the man's life and the settlement he founded. That his name should be cleared, if cleared it can be, of the opprobrium of the massacre, is only right. The work he did in founding the second colony in Red River and bringing the nomad hunters of the plains to settle and take up the tasks of agriculture ought to be set beside the brief tale of violence which was his youthful career. These things must be done if justice is to be done Grant. He merits justice, nor only as all men do, but because historically he was one of the founders and leaders of the Red River Settlement.¹²

It is evident that the settlement of Scotch and French Metis in Grantown served a multiple purpose for the Hudson's Bay Company. It provided military protection, a labour force for securing plains provisions, and it became a successful agricultural settlement. Clearly, the Metis were most capable at every task that was given them by the Company. Just as they became expert hunters, voyageurs, labourers and cartmen, so they became expert farmers within the given technology of the time. Indeed, their methods had proven superior to those initially installed against their will. The river-lot system was the only viable system of the age. In order to farm commercially, land, labour, and capital must be available. We shall see how the Metis were deprived of capital by Canadian government policy, so that commercial farming became impossible for the Metis people despite their superior record in subsistence farming prior to Canada's take-over of Ruperts Land. Clearly, commercial agriculture was not possible until Sir. John MacDonal'd's National Policy; coupled with improved types of grains designed for prairie use, made successful agricultural pursuits possible after the land had been alienated from the Metis of Red River.

METIS CULTURE

LESSON FOUR

TECHNOLOGY

LESSON FOUR: Technology

GOAL: The students will become aware of the inventiveness and skills of Metis artisans.

OBJECTIVES: The students will be able to:

1) describe the origins and use of the following:

- a) the Red River cart,
- b) the York boat,
- c) ceinture flechee,
- d) beadwork and silk embroidery, and
- e) other arts, crafts and household furnishings.

CONTENT:

- 1) Handouts on the Red River Cart and ceinture flechee provided.
- 2) For historical photographs see Dumont Photo Files:
 - a) Red River carts PH-0001--21, 179, 192, 193, 196, 200, 203, 204, 208.
 - b) York Boats PH-0181, 184, 194, 195, 197, 198, 202, 212, 217, 255.
 - c) Housing PH-0141--43.

METHODS:

- 1) Review the concept of technology with the class.
- 2) Have the class read the handouts on the Red River cart and the ceinture flechee as an introduction to the kinds of material available. Discuss the following:
 - a) Why was the Red River cart an important part of the history of the Canadian West and why was it so well suited to the conditions?
 - b) What does the Cree name and sign for the Metis tell us (Anderson n.d.:22)?
- 3) Have the students choose one of the following to research, outline and bring back a report to the class:
 - a) Red River Cart,
 - b) Ceinture Flechee,
 - c) York Boat
 - d) Beadwork
 - e) Silk Embroidery
 - f) or any other arts, crafts or home furnishing.
- 4) After student reports, discuss with the class whether these skills are still held by Metis people as important and if not, why not?
- 5) Supplementary/Enrichment Activities:
 - a) Have the class visit various crafts people at work.
 - b) Visit museums and historical sites displaying Metis artifacts.

Metis Culture

Lesson 4: CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

I AIM

The students will understand the nature of some Metis customs and tradition and recognize their dual origins.

The students will become aware of the organization of early Metis communities.

II OBJECTIVES

The students will:

1. define the terms "custom", "tradition" and "organization",
2. describe various Metis customs and identify the origin of these customs,
3. describe a) one tradition of Indian descent
b) one tradition of European descent
which was used or adapted by the Metis.
4. explain the value of a) education
b) law and order in the
lives of Metis settlers.

III TEACHING METHODS

1. Distribute student handout A: Definitions and discuss these definitions with the class. Have students cite examples of customs and traditions with which they are familiar. Have them describe what they understand by "organization: Positive - the united effort to improve the efficiency of a project. Negative - the tendency to become

rigid or bureaucratic and to perhaps lose the perspective of original purpose.

2. Study the teachers Familiarization Material provided with this lesson,
 - A. INTRODUCTION, page III - IV - 5
 - B. THE ORGANIZATION OF ST. LAURENT, page III - IV - 6
 - C. THE EDUCATION OF THE METIS PEOPLE, page III - IV - 10and present a lecture on these aspects of Metis community life, during the 18th and 19th centuries and (see No. 5) which should be included here
3. Distribute student handouts,
 - A. DEFINITIONS, page III - IV - 13
 - B. Clothing, page III - IV - 14
 - C. The Voyageur Belt (or Sash) page III - IV - 16
 - D. Living off the Land, Page III - IV - 17
 - E. A Metis Hand game page III - IV - 18
 - F. The Metis Home III - IV - 19
 - G. The Metis social III - IV - 21and let students select for themselves as individuals or as a group a report on customs and traditions of Metis life.
4. Either:

Ask if any of the student possess articles which have been family "heirlooms" or keepsakes passed on to them from their elders and organize a display if possible. Arrange to have someone take care of the display and tell about the usefulness of each article.

Or:

Ask students to make charts illustrating and naming the custom and traditions of the Metis... Display these in an open area over a period of time.

5. Discuss the necessity of rules for group living, and how these rules might be obtained. Discuss the different forms of education from which Metis children benefitted:
 - formal education:
 - through books, lectures (specific time period)
 - informal education
 - through observation, asking questions (ongoing process)

Ask students if they can identify these methods of learning in their own lives and from which, they feel, they gained most. By what methods are most practical skills acquired? By what method did they learn to read or write? Can both methods be combined?

V PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

Have students

1. explain what they understand by the terms
 - custom
 - tradition, and
 - organization
2. describe a Metis tradition or custom and identify origin.
3. explain the value of education and law and order in the lives of Metis settlers.

VI MATERIALS

1. Teachers familiarization material prepared by Gabriel Dumont staff, in Regina.
 - A: INTRODUCTION page III - IV - 5
 - B: THE ORGANIZATION OF ST. LAURENT, pages III - IV - 6

- . C: THE EDUCATION OF THE METIS PEOPLE, page III - IV - 10
2. Student handouts:
- A: DEFINITIONS BY CLARINDEN PRESS page III - IV - 13
- B: METIS CLOTHING, pages III - IV - 14
Illustration, by Peter Rindisbachen from
the book: Many tender ties by S. Van Kirk
Watson and Dwyer Publications, Ltd., 1980
Essay by Don McLean,
Gabriel Dumont Institute
- C: THE VOYAGEUR BELT, page
- D: LIVING OFF THE LAND, page III - IV - 17
Excerpt from: FIFTY DOLLAR BRIDE (ch. 3, p. 29)
by Jack Carpenter
Gray's Publishing Ltd.
Sidney, B.C.
- E: A METIS HANDGAME, page III - IV - 17
Excerpt from: FIFTY DOLLAR BRIDE (Ch. 3, p. 31)
- F: THE METIS HOME, page III - IV - 19
by Don McLean, Gabriel Dumont Institute, Regina.
- G: THE METIS SOCIAL, page III - IV - 21
by Don McLean, Gabriel Dumont Institute, Regina

TEACHERS FAMILIARIZATION MATERIAL

A: INTRODUCTION

When we examine the customs and traditions of the Metis it is necessary to move beyond descriptions of the lives of people around the trading posts of the North West. It is far better to look at reports of settlements like the Red River Colony (Manitoba) and St. Laurent (Saskatchewan) to get a glimpse of the lifestyles of mixed blood peoples. There, removed from the influence and (direct) jurisdiction of colonial authorities, they created a unique way of life from a combination of both. Indian and European cultures. There they developed laws to improve the efficiency and safety of the community, implemented their own education facilities and organized social events to enhance their sometimes harsh lives or to cement friendship and kinship ties.

The food eaten, the clothes worn and the recreational past times reflected the Metis resourcefulness and their innovative spirit. They were deeply religious people, by and large (mainly) Roman Catholic but wise in the belief system of their Indian ancestors. Myths and legends were retold with facets of christian religion and they availed themselves of both, Native medicines and European medical science. The following two essays, by Gabriel Dumont staff, explain Metis organization in the community of St. Laurent modeled on similar organizations in the Red River and the formal and informal education of mixed-blood children.

THE ORGANIZATION OF ST. LAURENT

Even though Canada took control of what is today Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta in 1870, there was no real form of government or control in the area until the Metis began to organize their own communities. It was the ordinary people of small Metis communities such as St. Laurent, led by those such as Gabriel Dumont and Father Andre, who saw the need for self government, not only to regulate the buffalo hunt, but also to keep the community in a state of peace and harmony.

The Metis already had excellent organization for military purposes. In a report to the British War Office, in 1870, Colonel Crafton complimented the "splendid organization" of the Metis and wrote "there exists in the halfbreeds the most eligible material in any country (for cavalry purposes) and I have seen the cavalry of India and the Arabs." Because of this organization, the Metis are a 'formidable enemy' indeed."¹

In order to organize a government for St. Laurent, Gabriel Dumont called together a general assembly of the people on December 10, 1873. This meeting was called to set up a constitution (or basic set of rules) for their community. This was not a rebellious act, but one which first recognized the authority of Canada, and which also recognized the lack of government provided beforehand. The assembly made this clear in their statement:

"... In making their laws, they regard themselves as loyal and faithful subjects of Canada, and are prepared to abandon their own organization and to submit to the laws of the Dominion as soon as Canada establishes regular magistrates with a force sufficient to maintain in the territory the authority of the law."²

For example, the people of the St. Laurent were organizing before the Northwest Mounted Police had arrived in the area (1875).

Gabriel Dumont was elected as President by acclamation and eight others were elected to serve as his council:

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| - Alexander Hamelin | - Isidore Dumont Jr. |
| - Baptiste Garrieprey | - Jean Dumont Jr. |
| - Pierre Garriepry | - Moise Ouelette |
| - Abraham Montour | - Baptiste Hamelin |

These men swore an oath on the Bible before Father Andre to uphold the laws and justly punish those who might break them.

All of the people at the assembly passed twenty-eight basic laws which were to govern the community of St. Laurent. These laws dealt with organizing the powers of president and council, and of the captains and soldiers who were to police the community. The council was set up as the court of the community to hear disputes and to work out solutions. Laws about contracts and the need for witnesses, observance of Sundays, as well as taxes and labour for community improvements were passed. The laws dealt with crimes that would cause the most problems among the Metis of St. Laurent (e.g., horse theft, dishonouring girls, lighting fires on the prairie, nuisance dogs, character assassination, etc.). There were also laws passed concerning labour relations. It became illegal to quit a job before the contract was completed, Sunday work (other than that absolutely necessary) was outlawed, and ferries were to provide free rides on Sundays for those who were attending church.

Punishments set out for disobeying these laws were money or property fines. However, the importance of horses and other animals for continuing the buffalo hunt was recognized in that a married man with three or less animals could not have them taken away in payment of such fines.

After agreeing on all these laws, the assembly gave the president and council the power to make laws that they saw necessary on their own.

One of the first things after the December 10th assembly that Dumont and his councillors saw needed attention was for laws concerning land ownership. The Metis were more and more becoming

settled on plots of land. This was seen as so important that Dumont felt his council could not take full responsibility for making laws on this subject and he called another general assembly on February 10, 1874. The purpose of this meeting was to decide on regulations governing the possession of land.

The meeting decided to use the landholding system that had been used in Quebec and Red River--the strip farm system. Each head of a family (and each of his sons over twenty) was to have the right to a strip of land one quarter mile wide along the river and extending two miles back from the banks. The owner also had grazing, hay and wood cutting rights beyond this tow mile strip. The assembly also made rules concerning "conservation" of their resources. "Useless destruction of trees" was outlawed and any trees felled but not used were free for the taking. A three-man commission was also set up to solve any arguments.

Historians have concluded that this system of laws worked very well for the Metis living in St. Laurent. Gabriel Dumont encouraged other Metis settlements to do the same and even discussed with John McKay, an English halfbreed from Prince Albert, the possibility of joining all the Metis settlements together in a "federation".

The people of St. Laurent were so satisfied with their government that, at the next annual assembly on December 10, 1874, they approved all of the actions of Dumont and his council and re-elected them for another term in office.

Another important area of concern for Dumont and his council was education. On January 27, 1875, the council passed a unanimous resolution to raise money to build a school. Of course, providing education for the young is an important responsibility of governments among modernizing peoples.

Later, in June of 1875, the council passed new laws tightening up the old ones concerning the buffalo hunt which had served for over fifty years. The buffalo were becoming so scarce that Dumont recognized the need to cut out wastefulness.

In summary, we can say that the people of St. Laurent, under the leadership of Gabriel Dumont, saw the need to organize their own government in order to make a better life for themselves. They successfully developed their own "constitution" which ideally suited the needs of their community and showed great practical wisdom.

REFERENCES:

¹Stanley, G. F. G.

1961 The Birth of Western Canada

Toronto: University of Toronto Press

²Woodcock, G.

1975 Gabriel Dumont: The Metis Chief and His Lost World

Edmonton: Hurtig

THE EDUCATION OF MÉTIS PEOPLE

As in many other aspects of culture, the Metis were able to draw on elements from both Native and European means of education. Many children born of Indian mothers and European traders were raised and educated as Indians, while eventually it was common for fur trade families to send at least one of their children to be educated in Canada or Europe.

Those Halfbreed children who were educated as Indians learned the traditional knowledge, skills and beliefs in the traditional way. Responsibility for survival was taught early. For example, crying babies were ignored to teach them patience and the value of silence. Small children played with toys designed to teach lessons from the environment, and games were usually imitations of adult activities. "Playing camp" and such games as the "Windigo Game" allowed the children to learn the knowledge, skills and beliefs they would use as adults. More formal training was given by grandparents and shamans in such things as the number system (base five), myths, family histories, and totems. The education of boys and girls differed as they got older. Boys learned from their fathers, and girls from their mothers, the tasks they would need to carry out in their daily lives in order to survive. Hunting, gathering, skin preparation and clothing production were among the "subjects" learned.

As more Europeans arrived, and as more traders began to take an interest in their Mixed-blood children, a new type of education began. Of course, many things were learned indirectly from the newcomers: new knowledge, skills and beliefs were adopted through observation. On the other hand, formal schooling at trading posts under the direction of European teachers and missionaries became common. Beginning in the late 1700s officers sent their sons to England, while the sons of the Northwest Company bourgeois were often sent to Canada for their higher education.

One such boy, Cuthbert, son of Northwest Company employee Cuthbert Grant Sr. and a Cree woman, went to Scotland for his education and, as we shall see later in this course, he returned to Rupertsland to become a leader of the Metis. Those Company men who could not afford this expense depended on clerks or literate women to teach the ABCs and arithmetic to their Halfbreed children.

As early as 1680 the Hudson's Bay Company ordered that religious services be held to help educate the people and, by 1798, the Hudson's Bay Company records show that the children at Moose Factory were "at their Books". The Hudson's Bay Company was interested in educating the many children living around the trading posts to read and write so that they could be employed as clerks. By 1800 boys were also being apprenticed as clerks, shipwrights, carpenters and coopers. In that same year, George, son of Malchcolm Ross, and John, son of George Sutherland, were apprenticed at York Factory; and at Albany Factory three Halfbreed boys "now past 14 Years of Age" (one the son of chief trader John Hodgson) were also working as apprentices. A small number of these boys, for example Charles Isham and Moses Norton, later gained high positions with the Company.

The education desired by the Hudson's Bay Company for the Halfbreed children was heavily influenced by religious and moral ideas. The Company hoped to use religion and education as a means of controlling the growing population of Metis.

Girls too had the benefit of this education. In 1783 Daniel Harman remarks the following about John Sutherland's Halfbreed wife:

...she can both read and write it (English) which she learned to do at Hudson's Bay, where the Company has a school.

By 1807 Hudson's Bay Company records show that schoolbooks were being sent to all the posts and that the surgeons of the different posts were to use their spare time for teaching. Later, teachers (of good and bad quality) were sent to all the major posts to teach the servants' children as well as those of the "Chiefs of trading tribes friendly to the Company" if so desired. As an example, from 1808 to 1811 Orkney school master James Clouston used books such as the scriptures, Mrs. Trimmer's Sacred History and Moral Sketches for Young Minds for his classes at Eastmain Factory.

In 1820 the Hudson's Bay Company appointed Reverend John West as Company chaplain and he established a boarding school for Indian and Metis children. Several of the Metis educated in Rupertsland became teachers themselves. Students such as James and John Hope and Henry Budd became teachers and missionaries as adults and made an important impression in several Native communities. In 1829 two Metis women, the Nolin sisters, were hired by Bishop Provencher to teach girls at a Catholic school in Red River. During this time the Metis of Red River were among the most educated groups in the West.

Despite all of these good intentions, education of Metis children had difficulties because time, energy and money were not often easily spared at Hudson Bay Company posts, as well as the fact that teachers were not always the best quality. "Graduates" of the Bay system of education found it hard to compete with their counterparts who had been educated in Britain. This is one reason why so few Metis and Halfbreeds were successful in stepping up the career ladders within the fur trading companies.

In summary we can say that in the late 1700s and 1800's Metis people often had a broader education than any other group. They were educated in two systems -- Native and European.

Student Handout: A

DEFINITIONS

To Organize: - to give a definite and orderly structure,
- to arrange something involving united action.

Organization: - the action of organizing
- systematic arrangement for the definite purpose.

Custom: - a habit or usual practice.
- a common way of acting,
- usage, fashion, habit.

Tradition: - The act of transmitting from one to another
or from one generation to another beliefs,
rules, customs, by word of mouth or by practice
without writing.

Source: The shorter Oxford Dictionary Vol I II
Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1973

Student handout: F

The Metis Home

by Don McLean

Gabriel Dumont Institute, Regina, 1981

Their dwellings bordered the rivers and lakes under the shelter of woods. The thatched cottages in which the Metis spent their winters were built of squared tree trunks pegged one between the other at the corners. The only tool used for this work was the axe. Clay was daubed between the interstices of the logs. Both the interior and exterior walls were limewashed, and the triangular roofs were thatched with bark or clay. A single door occupied the space between two square parchment windows; these allowed light to penetrate into this unique dwelling which was often destitute of anything but earthen floor. Until stoves made their appearances, a huge clay hearth occupied the larger part of the rear wall. A big curtained bed for the parents and cots for the children were ranged around the other walls. Two wooden benches flanked a large wooden table in the centre. Other furniture comprised a broken-down armchair, a rocking chair for the old, primitive cooking utensils, a small mirror, several chests and buffalo robes. On the walls hung a flintlock gun, a powder horn, a bag full of shot, some string, an axe, an apparatus for lighting the fire, a crucifix or statue for a saint, a few pious pictures and portraits. These were, generally speaking, the entire furnishings.

The kitchen cupboard where food was kept was simple and sparsely stocked. At this time, flour was too rare to permit the Metis to make bread and pancakes. To make up for this they ate meat - either dried or cooked in the hearth fire - smoked or cooked fish, tea, sometimes sugar, confections or jellies made from wild fruits - strawberries, raspberries, saskatoons, peminas, gooseberries and cranberries, and other desserts - dried apples, prunes, grapes, etc., sold at the various trading posts. As to cleanliness and order in their homes and farm buildings, the Metis considered it a

a point of honour to equal that of their neighbour if not surpass it.

A few rows of potatoes and a small patch of grain separated the cottage from the barn a short distance away. A primitive fence enclosed all the grass extended into the surrounding area.

Later, partly because he could no longer depend solely on the hunt for a living, partly because the game had disappeared, and partly because the effects of agricultural instruction were making themselves felt, the Metis turned their attention to the products of the soil. This was when the settlements of these prairie children swung from the primitive to a civilization comparable to that of their cousins, the Whites. Their houses became more spacious and contained more rooms - kitchen, livingroom and more than one bedroom. Staircases led to the attic that was also well arranged. Shingles replaced the stubble thatch or bark or clay on the roofs and glass replaced the parchment in the windows.

Student handout: G
THE METIS "SOCIAL"

Old-time Metis were fond of fun and merriment. Joyful reunions balls, feasts and weddings were fashionable. Strangers and voyagers were always invited to the table at dances. During these evening, story-tellers, musicians and singers told their wonderful tales or struck up Scottish and Quebecois refrains on their violins.

Dancing was a favorite form of recreation. The Metis learned from their mothers the dances of the Plains Indians and the reels of Scotland from their fathers. They combined the intricate footwork of the Indians and the Scottish forms. The fiddle, a favorite of the Scots, became the beloved instrument of the Metis. Lacking the finances to buy imported European fiddles, they quickly learned to make their own from maple wood and birchbark. Some travellers sarcastically noted that lacking other instruments with which to tune the fiddles, the Metis used the cry of the loon and the bellow of a rutting moose. To the wild squeals of the homemade fiddles they developed a unique dance of their own - the Red River jig - which was a combination of Scottish jigs and Indian dance steps. It was one of the favorite dances and often a jig would start in early evening and, through the slow elimination of challengers, might not end until dawn. The jig steps were so incorporated into the square dances and even the French and English languages were intermixed in the directions shouted by a caller to the dancers. A la main gauche became a la main left and at dances all over Western and Northern Canada to this day, it can be heard in the distorted form of allemande left.

..."Like all Native people, the Metis adored singing and dancing. For the pleasure of the dance, they made long trips after nightfall in severely cold weather, ignoring snowstorms and other dangers. But these simple dances did so little harm that everyone took part in the numerous figures of the quadrilles fraught with deafening shouts and calls. True, occasionally,

a dancer or two might caress a bottle too tenderly - their objective being to shake a lighter and more fantastic toe. Contrariwise, the contents of the bottle knocked them out. In this indulgence, they were no worse than their neighbours, the whites, who had many distilleries in their settlements. All the Metis had, here and there, was apparently for making light beer. And when the Red River clergy undertook to fight the spread of drunkenness, they found the Metis most submissive.