

FROM THE “OTHER NATIVES” TO THE “OTHER MÉTIS”¹

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Abstract / Résumé

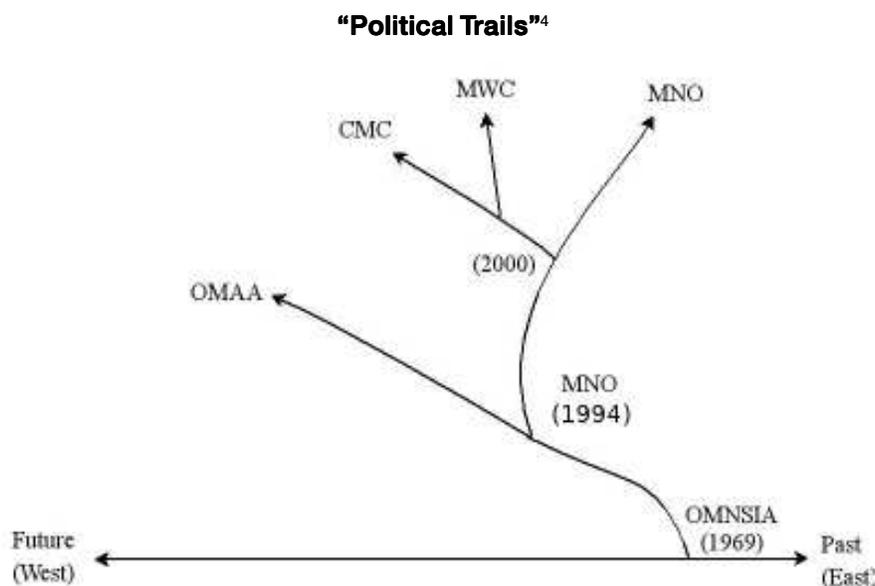
This paper examines the socio-political development of Ontario Métis by following and mapping their “political trails.” These trails outline the historical development of the four major political organizations currently representing Métis communities in Ontario; they also represent how these organizations were formed, how they are connected, and why they diverged. To demonstrate these relationships, I look at their membership criteria and constituencies, their mandates, the relevant literature, and one example of the prominent activities of each Métis-specific organization. I argue that the process of political diversification in Ontario represents important shifts in the process of self-definition for Métis people in general, and Ontario Métis in particular. These shifts include an emphasis on cultural criteria instead of legal issues, a move towards acknowledging the specific histories of Métis in this province, and a shift from the “politics of recognition” to the “politics of definition.”

L'article examine le développement sociopolitique des Métis ontariens en suivant et en cartographiant leurs « pistes politiques ». Ces pistes donnent un aperçu de l'évolution historique des quatre principaux organismes politiques qui représentent présentement les collectivités métisses en Ontario. Elles indiquent également comment les organismes ont été constitués, comment ils sont reliés et pourquoi ils ont divergé. Pour démontrer ces relations, on examine les critères d'adhésion et les bases politiques et économiques des organismes, leurs mandats, la documentation pertinente et un exemple des principales activités de chacun d'eux. L'article met de l'avant que le processus de diversification politique en Ontario correspond à des modifications importantes du processus de quête de soi des Métis en général et des Métis ontariens en particulier. Ces modifications comprennent un accent sur les critères culturels par rapport aux questions de droit, un mouvement vers la reconnaissance des histoires particulières des groupes de Métis de la province et le déplacement d'une « politique de reconnaissance » vers une « politique de définition ».

Introduction: “Political Trails”

The 1980s and '90s was a period of intense socio-political development for Canadian Métis, especially those in Ontario, much of which was sparked by important events surrounding the definition of Métis identities.² The rise of many new Métis political organizations such as the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO), the Canadian Métis Council (CMC), and the Métis Women’s Circle (MWC) marked the general *malaise* many Ontario Métis felt with existing definitions and political leadership. This increasing political diversification was often motivated by profound ideological differences among factions, and represented important shifts in the process of self-definition for Métis people in general, and Ontario Métis in particular.

In this paper, I follow “political trails,” which trace the historical development of each major Ontario Métis political organization (see below). These trails outline how these organizations were formed, how they are connected, and why they diverged. To demonstrate these relationships, I look at their membership criteria and constituencies, their mandates, the relevant literature, and one example of the prominent activities of each Métis-specific organization. In this political context, the association of certain cultural practices with stereotypical notions of Métis reveals many tensions, and differences, between Western and Eastern Métis, among Ontario Métis, and between Métis and Indians.³ Further-



more, these political trails also provide a useful way of understanding three major shifts that continue to impact the definition of contemporary Métis identities.

The first noticeable shift in Métis socio-political development is that new organizations focused on cultural, spiritual, and social factors as their ideological underpinnings instead of political agendas aimed at legal issues, such as Métis Aboriginal rights. A second noticeable ideological shift is in how new groups began to emphasize the Ontario Métis experience, and history of colonialism. Finally, the "battle for recognition" was transformed into the "battle of definition," shifting the discourse of Métis identities from the "Other Natives" to the "Other Métis." And, the new battleground is Ontario.

Beginning in the 1980s, the Canadian Métis political landscape was redefined and reshaped, attempting to find clearer boundaries of Métis as the "Other Natives," distinct from Canada's other Aboriginal peoples, First Nations and Inuit. Some long-standing political alliances were severed, and new ones were formed. In the process, new boundaries emerged. As the idea of one Métis Nation was reincarnated from the ashes of the nineteenth century, the "Other Métis," the offspring of politicians and scholars, was born.

Politicians chose the path of diversification. By the year 2000, four distinct political organizations claiming to represent the Ontario Métis, each with very different mandates, agendas, and constituencies, were in existence. The Ontario Métis and Aboriginal Association (OMAA), The Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO), The Canadian Métis Council (CMC), and the Métis Women's Circle (MWC), were all simultaneously vying for the power of representing Ontario Métis.

Also during the 1980s, there was a noticeable shift in writing practices surrounding Métis. Many scholars began to take a Derridian (Derrida 1983: 108) approach, marking the *différance* of the "Other Métis" by using a capital "M" to indicate Métis belonging to the Métis Nation and a lower case "m" for all other Métis. Similarly, the term "historical Métis" was coined to refer to those belonging to the "imagined community" of The Métis Nation (Anderson 1994). Towards the end of the 1980s, the term "Real/Riel" Métis began to surface. By the late 1990s, the "Other Métis" was officially inscribed by politicians and scholars alike as a separate category altogether.⁵

The reductive associations mentioned above have raised many burning questions that fuel ongoing debates surrounding Métis identity. For example, should Métis identity be tied to historical longevity? If so, then where do we draw the boundary, the eighteenth, nineteenth, or twentieth century? Do people who trace their Native and European ancestries

to more recent generations have claims to being Métis? By the same token, should a singular Métis identity be limited to an Indian and European mix? Or, should it include other mixes, some of them also more recent?

Métis identity has been further reduced by tying it exclusively to the fur trade or buffalo hunting, ignoring many other occupations and lifestyles such as moose hunting, or fishing, or farming, and so on. Alternatively, the historical boundaries of Métis identity are drawn by the military conflicts of the nineteenth century, especially those involving Louis Riel. Even when Métis identity is recognized as distinct it is often reduced to specific regions, especially Western Canada. Furthermore, the Métis people as a distinct group is eclipsed by research that focuses on Indian, or French-Canadian, subjects. Finally, as we will see throughout this paper, the boundaries often applied to Métis are further reinforced by political boundaries and processes that exclude Eastern Métis from national politics.

The questions I raise above, and the boundaries they implicate, are the very questions and boundaries that Canadian Métis people are currently attempting to address and to define, and we are doing so in various ways. One of these ways is through political diversification, as the rise of many different political organizations demonstrates. "Political trails" and the political structures they represent reflect this process, and the major problems of identification currently facing Canada's Métis people.

The Past: The National Context

In 1969, the Honorable Jean Chrétien was the Minister responsible for the Department of Indian Affairs. That year, he tabled the now infamous *White Paper on Indian Policy*. As a benchmark of federal assimilative policies, the 1969 *White Paper* sought to repeal the *Indian Act*, and integrate Native peoples into Canadian society as Canadian citizens. The implications of Chrétien's *White Paper* led to the mobilization of numerous Native political organizations at the local, provincial, and national levels.⁶

Throughout the 1960s and '70s, the Métis and Non-Status Indians formed many common associations across the country to promote their interests and lobby for their rights as Aboriginal people. In 1971, the Native Council of Canada (NCC) was formed as an umbrella organization to connect these local and provincial bodies at the national level.⁷ In 1982, when the Canadian Constitution recognized the Métis as its third Aboriginal people, distinct from Indians and Inuit, it became increasingly urgent to identify and define this population, the Métis.

Official recognition of the Métis marked the beginning of dramatic changes in political alliances. Some Métis felt political alliances between Métis and Non-Status Indians were no longer a useful strategy. In fact, since official recognition emphasized that Métis are "distinct" from Canada's other Aboriginal peoples, many Métis people felt it was necessary to be viewed as separate from Indians. Political autonomy, especially when dealing with legal and political matters, became the focus of many political communities.

The severing of political alliances between the Métis and Non-Status Indians began on a national level, shortly after official recognition. Because the NCC also represented Non-Status Indians, a new Métis-specific organization, the Métis National Council (MNC) was formed in 1983, to represent strictly the interests of Métis in Western Canada. In their study *The 'Nations Within': Aboriginal-State Relations in Canada, United States and New Zealand*, Fleras and Elliott (1992: 106) comment on how official recognition marked the beginning of shifting political relationships and alliances, based on different ideologies.

The more nationalistic Métis left the Native Council to form the Métis National Council. Members of the latter acknowledge their roots in a western plains homeland, trace their ancestry to those who were dispossessed by Canadian government actions from 1870 on, and base their claims against the state on their status as a nation. The Métis who remain within the original council use the term "Métis" more inclusively and base their claims on Aboriginal rights, not national status.

The Métis National Council makes exclusive claims to the status of a "nation" based on their historical experience, the military conflicts of the 19th century, and the provisional government established by Louis Riel as a result of these conflicts. Their exclusive claims are manifested in their membership criteria: self-identification; proof of Aboriginal ancestry; community acceptance; and Red River ancestry.⁸ The MNC makes further claims that the term "Métis" applies specifically, and exclusively, to them. As noted in the *RCAP Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996 V. 4: 205):

The Métis Nation believe they have exclusive rights to its use because of historical usage. Others say there are early references of its use in other areas and the Constitution is intended to apply to all Métis people. The controversy has legal, social, cultural and political dimensions.

The "legal, social, cultural and political dimensions" of this controversy have led to a great deal of confusion surrounding Métis identities,

and debates about exactly who constitutes “The Métis Nation.” Is it the imagined political community represented by the MNC? If so, this community is perhaps better defined as a constituency, bound by membership in this organization. Or, is the Métis Nation constituted by the historical people the MNC claims to represent, and who are found in most writings on the Métis? If that is the case, then there are problems with this position too.

Even some Métis from Western Canada reject the “Red River” criterion and label, and the exclusive policies of the Métis National Council. For example, the following comment is drawn from the transcripts of the Royal Commission (Canada, 1997)⁹:

I, for one, have always stated that that’s not who we are saying we are, the Red River Métis. We are saying the Métis of Western Canada. I come from Northern Saskatchewan, I’m not part of the Red River, and I don’t subscribe to the label of the Red River. I think that’s something that hasn’t been I guess picked up fully by the Royal Commission because they hear everybody else coming and saying “the Red River, the Red River this, the MNO’s, the Red River that,” so they are adopting that, I guess, by having heard it so often.

The Royal Commission has “no opinion on nationhood of other communities.” In its *Report* (1996 V. 4: 207) it states:

In terms of Métis collectivities emerging as nations, the only relevant question is whether the negotiating organization has a mandate to negotiate on behalf of those it purports to represent. It is not a question of governmental capacity as much as a political mandate from the people.

There is no clear distinction yet between nation-as-state and nation-as-people, with regards to using the term nation when referring to the Métis. Politicians seem to equate the term nation with political communities, as defined by their respective constituencies. Scholars, on the other hand, tend to write about The Métis Nation as a historical people. Furthermore, many Métis people avoid the term and the concept if not reject it altogether.

Most Métis groups who use the term “Métis Nation” are actually political organizations, usually representing Métis on a provincial level. Almost every province in Canada has one organization who calls itself a Métis Nation, for example, the Métis Nation of Ontario, Manitoba, Quebec, and so on. In fact, some groups in the United States have begun adopting this term too.¹⁰

Official recognition in 1982 has given rise to not only many Métis Nations, but many Métis nationalism(s), caught in between this particu-

lar word's "two distinct but often confused meanings: people and state," as noted by Grenier and Guilbault (1994: 204) who ask:

Could it be that locating the object of study is more difficult not because of the new social and demographic conditions as such, but because the premises upon which the search was based are no longer adequate or even relevant? If this were the case, the key problem would not be locating Others but rather defining 'Them', and hence, 'Us'.¹¹

Given the emergence of many Métis Nations in the last twenty years, the idea of the Métis as one nation is obviously no longer adequate, and perhaps not even relevant in the case of Métis people who reject the term and the concept altogether.

The Ontario Métis and Aboriginal Association (OMAA)

The Ontario Métis and Non-Status Indian Association (OMNSIA) was formed in 1969, as part of the political reaction to Chrétien's proposed policy. Originally, the Association was created to represent Métis and Non-Status Indians, marking their long-standing relationships and alliances.¹² OMNSIA was later renamed the Ontario Métis and Aboriginal Association (OMAA).¹³ It was then affiliated with the NCC at the national level, and continues to represent Métis and Non-Status Indians as well as Status Indians.¹⁴

OMAA defines Métis "as someone who: a) self-identifies as Métis; b) is distinct from Indian or Inuit; and c) is accepted by the Métis community."¹⁵ As a service organization, they are devoted to providing their constituents with access to various social programs and improvements such as housing, education, child welfare, and so on. As a political organization, they also address issues such as land claims, Aboriginal rights such as hunting and fishing rights, and Aboriginal self-government.

Notably, the relatively sparse existing scholarly research dealing specifically with Ontario Métis identities was commissioned, sponsored, and/or published by OMNSIA in the 1980s and early 1990s. These works were intended as a direct challenge to the MNC's exclusive position; they also reflect OMNSIA's long-standing relationships between the Métis and Non-Status Indians. Only two major works dealing specifically with Ontario Métis identities were produced by OMNSIA as background research for the First Minister's Conferences on Aboriginal Matters which were held in the 1980s.

The first work produced by OMNSIA provided an overview of various definitions put forth by Métis political organizations and Métis writers (Driben 1987). In 1985, OMNSIA challenged the MNC's definition of Métis by commissioning a survey of the Ontario population. In the sur-

vey—this survey was not only commissioned but also administered by OMNSIA—the question “Who are the Métis” was approached by comparing Métis and Non-Status Indian responses.¹⁶

The issue of Métis versus Non-Status Indian was further complicated by Bill C-31, passed in 1985, which enabled some Non-Status Indians to regain their Indian status.¹⁷ But, as noted in *The Ontario Métis*, “while early expectations were that this legislation would dissolve much of the Non-Status Indian classification, a substantial population remains unable to have its status restored for a variety of reasons” (Peters, Rosenberg and Halseth 1991: 49). Ongoing inequities in this policy led to the following question: “Given the definition of Aboriginal peoples in the *Constitution Act*, it is an interesting question whether these Non-Status Indians will eventually call themselves ‘Métis’” (Ibid.).

Although the full implications of these policies are not clear yet, responses to the OMNSIA survey did point to some significant differences between the Métis and Non-Status Indian experiences of colonialism. For example, as stated in the final report based on their survey (Peters et. al.: 59):

Responses about questions on the loss of Indian status, however, suggest that the particular events leading to respondents’ exclusion from the *Indian Act* are more recent and immediate for the Non-Status Indians than for the Métis. Very few of the individuals identifying as Métis had themselves lost their Indian status, or could identify a relative through whom status was lost.

This result seems logical because the development of early Métis communities in Ontario predates the *Indian Act* by a considerable amount of time.¹⁸ Having said that, the lack of historical research on the development of early Métis communities especially in Eastern Canada contributes substantially to current confusion and ongoing misconceptions about the Métis.

One common misconception is that Métis in Eastern provinces did not develop a separate group consciousness, and were simply assimilated into White or Native societies. There is substantial evidence to suggest that Ontario Métis did express their political consciousness in other ways. For example, written requests to be considered separately in treaty negotiations go back as far as 1850. The most-often quoted example is the Métis of Sault Ste Marie who wanted a separate agreement in the Robinson-Huron treaties.¹⁹

Some preliminary research conducted in the 1980s also suggests that distinct Métis group identities in Ontario did exist in the 19th century, but these are extremely narrow in scope, dealing almost exclu-

sively with the Métis in northern areas of the province, and with legal issues.²⁰ By the same token, very little research has actually been conducted on the cultural and social aspects of Métis identities in Ontario.²¹

Detailed historical research on Métis group identities outside of Western Canada is almost non-existent. As noted by Métis historian Olive Dickason (1985: 20) "The invisibility of the Eastern Métis has been abetted by historians who write as though they have never existed." The invisibility of Eastern Métis has historically been interpreted as their disappearance, or assimilation, into White or Native societies. But, as we will see in the next section of this paper, invisibility does not necessarily constitute disappearance.

Other scholarly research comes in the form of government publications, numerous surveys on particular communities dealing with social issues such as health, housing, and employment. However, the information provided by these sources is difficult to assess. For example, statistics on the Métis population in Ontario are compromised by the fact that they are often the result of polling members from only one Métis political organization, whichever one is most powerful at the time, and whichever organization controls funding.²² Furthermore, there is no official registry for Métis people, and no official definition to begin the process of enumeration. Yet, most current research is being conducted exclusively in the context of Métis political organizations. For any research, including government studies, to be effective and representative, all organizations would need to be acknowledged and included, as well as the Métis people who do not subscribe to these organizations.

In 1987, OMAA expanded its mandate to include all off-reserve Native people, whether Métis, Status Indian, or Non-Status Indian. Contrary to the Métis National Council, OMAA not only maintained its longstanding political alliance with Non-Status Indians, but further extended its relationship with Indians. Their position was instrumental in sparking the Métis-specific movement of political diversification in Ontario. It was because of these policies and ideologies that new organizations dealing with Métis issues exclusively emerged in the 1990s.

The Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO)

During the 1980s, the emphasis on Métis political organization seemed clearly devoted to defining Métis as separate from other Natives, "distinct from Indians and Inuit." Changing political relationships between Métis and Non-Status Indians were clear indicators of this move towards autonomy in self-definition, at least in socio-political terms. Political diversification of the Ontario Métis began in 1994, when the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) was created.²³ The founders of the MNO

felt that OMAA did not adequately represent the interests of Métis, since OMAA represents all off-reserve Indians, including Status, Non-Status, and Métis.

Notably, MNO uses membership criteria similar to OMAA: 1) proof of Aboriginal ancestry; 2) self-identification as Métis; and 3) community acceptance. Equally notable is the fact that, despite its affiliation with the MNC, MNO does not impose the Red River ancestry criterion for membership. Acceptance of the MNO as a provincial affiliate of the Métis National Council represented a major shift in political relationships, this time between Métis in Ontario and the Métis Nation. According to its Statement of Prime Purpose:

The MNO, is founded on a “rights-based” agenda, is specific to Métis people only and is based on a long-term vision expressed in its Statement of Prime Purpose. Its codes, structure and operations are consistent with the goal of the Métis Nation to establish self-government.

In keeping with its mandate, the MNO funded the “Powley case,” the first case in Canadian history to be brought before the Supreme Court of Canada on the issue of Métis Aboriginal rights. It involves the Aboriginal right to hunt moose.

In 1993, Steve Powley and his son Roddy shot and killed a moose near Sault Ste Marie, their hometown. They were both charged under *The Game and Fish Act* for illegally hunting without a license, and unlawful possession of a moose. Five years later, in 1998, these charges were dismissed at trial.²⁴ When the provincial government appealed the decision, a Superior Court judge upheld the trial judge’s decision in early 2000.²⁵ This first appeal was heard by the Honorable Mr. Justice J. Stephen O’Neill mentioned earlier. Notably, in this decision O’Neill suggested that proof of Aboriginal ancestry should not be a necessary criterion in the determination of who is Métis because the community acceptance criterion should be sufficient to determine membership in the communities in question.²⁶

The provincial government further appealed to a higher court. The Ontario Court of Appeal heard this appeal from January 10-12, 2001 and delivered its decision on February 23, 2001 in favor of the Powleys. The appellate court ruled that Métis have a constitutional right to hunt for food, like Canada’s other Aboriginal peoples. After a one-year stay on this ruling, the provincial government made its final appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada, who supported the Ontario court decision.

Two important shifts can be noted in the decision of the Ontario court with respect to Métis identity and rights. First, the need for a definition of “historic community” to determine Métis Aboriginal rights shifted

the emphasis in legal definition from the criteria surrounding individual membership to what constitutes a Métis community. With respect to the nature of Aboriginal rights Judge Sharpe's (Sharpe 2001: 90) decision specifies, "Aboriginal rights do not belong to individuals but are community based and accordingly can only be exercised by those individuals of the rights bearing community."²⁷ Therefore, the communal nature of Aboriginal rights *demands* some definition of the community in question, hence the shift to an urgent need for a definition of what constitutes a Métis community, in this case the community in Sault Ste Marie, Ontario.

Second, one of the most significant findings of the Powley decision is acknowledgment of a historical Métis community outside of Manitoba, one that is not defined by political affiliation but rather by cultural practices, as an integral and defining feature of a Métis community, in this case moose hunting. In the Powley case, it was determined that membership in a Métis provincial political organization such as OMAA or MNO did not necessarily prove membership in a specific Aboriginal community for the purposes of establishing an Aboriginal right, nor fulfill the community acceptance criteria. To that effect, Judge Sharpe (2001: 145) commented:

It would be wrong to expect the same type of evidence one might expect in a case asserting the rights of an established Indian band. Métis communities do not have a formal legal structure or organization. They are not recognized under the *Indian Act* and they have no bodies analogous to band councils that are recognized or funded by the government. They are communities based on history, kinship, and shared practices.

This interpretation of community is clearly based on cultural rather than political or racial considerations. Furthermore, this process of definition is considerably different from that of the western Métis who achieved recognition during military conflicts, and established their distinct identity using socio-political structures associated with the buffalo hunt.

Although the Powley decision deals with the nature and scope of Aboriginal rights for Métis people, the underlying issue remains one of definition, identity, and jurisdiction. The debate remains focused on who is Métis and whether the Métis are a federal or provincial responsibility. Nevertheless, the Powley decision has done much to acknowledge and validate the existence of other Métis.

One of the most significant points made in the Powley case is that definition of a historical community is not necessarily limited to geography, or political affiliation, or even genealogy, although it is connected to

historical links and practices. Even though the Métis presence was not really visible in the town of Sault Ste Marie by 1900, Judge Sharpe made two critical findings with respect to whether or not the move to nearby reserves and the surrounding area constituted dispersal of the historic community.²⁸

First, Sharpe stipulated the inquiry should not be limited to the town, and second, he cited social and political factors that discouraged a visible Métis presence and impeded the development of an independent, distinctive Métis community. Even though the appellant argued this constituted a dispersal and a fatal “rupture with the past,” Judge Sharpe disagreed. Second, he further noted that not all Métis moved to reserves, and even those who did were still regarded as Métis by both Ojibway band members and the government.

With respect to community acceptance, Judge Sharpe (2001: 144) determined that “neither OMAA nor MNO constitute the sort of discrete, historic and site-specific community contemplated by *Van der Peet* capable of holding a constitutionally protected right.” He insisted the criteria of proving genealogical ties to the historic Métis community was filled by family testimony, thereby not calling into question the need for proof of Aboriginal ancestry. There is no accepted definition of who is Métis, no test case to determine Métis status for the purposes of constitutional rights, and Powley adequately demonstrated his links to the historic community of Sault Ste Marie. Based on these facts, Judge Sharpe decided that *R. v. Powley* was not the appropriate case to determine whether proof of Aboriginal ancestry is a necessary criterion for Métis status.

What emerges from the findings in the Powley case is the acknowledgment of a historical Métis community that is defined and characterized by a historical practice rather than political organization and affiliation. The criteria Judge Sharpe applied for proof of a historical community are the customs, ways, and practices of the community in question, the need for continuity, and family connections instead of political affiliations. He also noted that this particular practice changed over time and continuity of the practice from the historical community to the contemporary community was not affected by these adaptations. It was also determined that the practice was “integral” to Métis culture rather than peripheral. And finally, Sharpe (2001: 145) noted that “the relative invisibility of the Métis did not constitute their disappearance.”

The discourse surrounding the Métis in general and Métis nationalism in particular, as produced by the specific experiences of the Ontario Métis, challenges the predominant Métis metanarrative in important ways. First, Sharpe’s legal interpretation of a historical Métis community

has incontrovertibly recognized and included Métis populations east of Manitoba, opening the door for many "Others." Second, the Powley case shifted the emphasis from racially-based criteria such as proof of Aboriginal ancestry to the definition of a Métis community based on shared customs and practices. Finally, this decision shifts the emphasis and the discourse from political structures to cultural practices as the most important criteria in defining a historical Métis community.

The Canadian Métis Council (CMC)

The creation of the Canadian Métis Council was also due to ideological differences in terms of Métis identities. This time, differences were initiated surrounding the issue of appropriate site-selection for an MNO Annual Assembly. Until the late 1990s, Annual Assemblies were the only occasions large groups of Métis from throughout Ontario would gather. These gatherings became an increasingly important site of both diversification and collective self-definition for Ontario Métis throughout the 1990s.

MNO's rights-based agenda, which focused on the negotiation of Métis Aboriginal rights such as hunting and fishing, self-government and so on, predominated at their Annual Assemblies.²⁹ These yearly meetings were initially held for the specific purpose of bringing constituents together to vote on important issues. For example, a typical agenda would include changes in by-laws or regional elections, community charter agreements and updates on current negotiations with the government. Furthermore, various meetings were scheduled throughout the weekend for regional representatives, the Provisional Council, and Community Councils to meet.³⁰

Given their agenda, and the great distance between the communities of voting members, the location and site of the yearly assembly was often strategic. In 1996, the assembly was held in Stanley, Ontario, near Thunder Bay. This was an unpopular choice because it was so far north, which prevented many voting members from more southern locations from attending because of travel costs. On another level, location of the assemblies was highly-politicized by the fact that local councils deemed it a privilege and an honor to host these events. On a still deeper level, the site of the Annual Assembly itself represented a space where existing tensions and ideological differences would be expressed.

The first split in the MNO was prompted by disagreement over the site of the 1997 Annual Assembly. This disagreement was not so much about the location or the facilities as what the site represented ideologically. This particular assembly was to be hosted by the Southwest Regional Council, then a community council within the MNO. They planned

the event at a campground on the Chippewa Reserve, approximately 25 kilometers southwest of London, Ontario.³¹ MNO leaders felt this was inappropriate given their attempts to separate Métis from Indian interests. The MNO Provisional Council voted to move the assembly to a commercial site near North Bay instead. The Southwest Regional Council decided to hold the assembly at the original site despite the wishes of the Provisional Council. The disagreement prompted the Southwest Regional Métis Council (SWRMC) to secede from the MNO.³²

Within months SWRMC claimed to represent three thousand Métis in the southwestern corner of Ontario. To accommodate this growth and the demands of Métis in other parts of the province, the SWRMC expanded to a provincial organization and changed its name to the Ontario Métis Council (OMC). Many requests for membership from outside the province encouraged OMC to expand its mandate to a national level, and the name was changed again to the Canadian Métis Council (CMC).

In the last few years, the CMC expanded its reach over the US border, negotiating various alliances in the Northeastern United States. As a relatively new national and international organization its development has been hindered substantially by lack of funding. Ideologically, the CMC is dedicated to the preservation and promotion of Métis culture.³³ The CMC uses the same criteria as most other Métis political organizations—proof of Aboriginal ancestry, self-identification, and community acceptance—to determine membership.

Ideological differences between CMC and MNO were immediately apparent in the nature of the first CMC Assembly in 1997. As previously mentioned, at the time, MNO annual assemblies were essentially political meetings dealing with issues such as by-laws, ongoing negotiations, government policies, and services provided to the membership. Attendance was limited mostly to voting members and social activities consisted of private parties held after the day's meetings.

By contrast, the first CMC Annual Assembly encouraged families to attend, and limited meetings to the Friday evening. The rest of the weekend was devoted to cultural activities such as storytelling, craft workshops including drum and moccasin making, musical performances, archery, traditional teachings, and canoe races. Furthermore, these events were open to the general public.

The CMC strongly believes Métis people are more interested in knowing about their cultural heritage and traditional teachings than about political negotiations and Aboriginal rights. With these beliefs in mind, the CMC Annual Assembly adopted an important political strategy to attract new members, and create higher visibility. By the year 2000, these beliefs and ideologies prompted the CMC to sponsor the Britt and Dis-

trict Métis Cultural Festival, the first-ever provincial event in Ontario completely divorced from a political meeting and agenda.

The shifts and tensions mentioned above were particularly evident in the newly-created space of a cultural festival, where Métis identities could be negotiated and enacted. The many connections and differences between the construction of the Métis Nation and the Other Métis were clearly evidenced at the Britt and District Métis Cultural Festival.³⁴ The festival constituted a highly-politicized space where multiple, multi-layered Métis identities and diverse interests were manifested in various ways: through visual symbols, cultural activities, lectures and demonstrations, ceremonies and music.

Visual representations of tensions and differences between Western and Ontario Métis came in the form of politically-loaded symbols of their diverging experiences. For example, objects usually associated with the Western Métis and Métis nationalism were juxtaposed with objects representing local and regional Métis history, emphasizing diversity between these two groups. As shown in the photo below, a reproduction of the well-known Red River cart was displayed at the entrance beside a log symbolizing the socio-economic experience of Ontario Métis.³⁵



“Red River Cart and Log” (Photo by Annette Chrétien)

As previously mentioned, throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, logging and mining replaced trapping as the mainstay of Métis existence in Northern Ontario.³⁶ The Red River cart was never used in this area. Yet, it still remains a powerful symbol of Métis identity and nationalism despite the fact it was a Western Canadian mode of transportation, and is more often associated with the Red River Métis.

Other nationalist symbols that were evident at the festival included

the Métis flag and the Métis sash. These too were re-interpreted; the flag featured various colors instead of the usual white infinity sign on a blue backdrop and the sash was worn in various ways by both men and women.³⁷ Juxtaposition of these symbols emphasized how the experiences of the Western Métis continue to influence contemporary Métis identities elsewhere.

Similarly, association of the sash with Quebecois identity is conveniently erased when it is used as a nationalistic symbol of Métis identity. For example, the "Order of the Sash" was created by the Métis National Council to honor Métis accomplishments. The connection of the "assumption sash," a symbol of Quebecois identity is also symbolic of tensions between French-speaking and English-speaking Métis, which cannot be dissociated from the political tensions between Quebec and anglophone Canada. For example, a few years ago a bill was passed in the House of Commons to exonerate Louis Riel, and to repeal his conviction as a traitor. Significantly, this bill was presented to the House of Commons by the Bloc Quebecois, which is the provincial party devoted to Quebec separatism.

Many Métis from western Canada have ancestral roots in Quebec, a fact that is often mentioned in Métis histories. However, tensions arise from the political boundaries that have only recently been imposed by organizations such as the Métis National Council who insist only Red River Métis are entitled to Métis status. Even more questions and contradictions arise from the reinterpretation and use of these symbols by Ontario Métis. Finally, many Métis people are not even aware such meanings and conventions exist, but wear the sash and use Métis flags nevertheless.

Similar tensions were evidenced in the festival's activities, which were even more diversified. For example, the log sawing contest, and canoe races and excursions represented local and regional socio-economic development. Other activities like storytelling and jig dancing are more typically associated with western Métis culture. Some activities were in the form of workshops teaching people skills usually associated with Indians, such as making moccasins, hand drums, and dream catchers, and demonstrations of "tomahawk throwing." One lecture on Métis history focused on the historical relationship and differences between the American and Canadian Métis. The Britt and District Métis Cultural Festival presented and highlighted the diversity of Métis culture through many different symbols, activities and cultural practices. More importantly, local practices and histories began to emerge. Whether this attention to specificity was politically strategic or not, it shows an increasing desire by Ontario Métis to investigate and celebrate their specific

experience. Having said that, connections to Western Métis were still important.

These events have given rise to increasing disagreement about which culture should be represented in public spaces. Some believe Western Métis history should not overshadow the Ontario Métis. This is especially relevant given that many of the political leaders currently involved in Ontario Métis politics come from western Canada. Many believe they can no longer represent the interests of the Ontario Métis without acknowledging and understanding the specificity of the Ontario Métis experience and history of colonialism, and the resulting cultural diversity.

The Métis Women’s Circle (MWC)

Despite the CMC’s more inclusive approach, and although its policies shifted the emphasis from a rights-based agenda to a culture-based agenda, some Métis still felt they were not being heard, and represented. Another split would soon follow, as another group of Métis people felt marginalized and alienated, this time because of gender.

The Métis Women’s Circle (MWC) was spawned from the CMC. They left the CMC in 1999, and were incorporated as a separate entity in the year 2000.³⁸ The first few events hosted by the MWC were as an affiliate of the CMC. But, as financial problems began to plague the CMC, less money was allotted to women’s activities, and some Métis women felt they were not being included in ongoing negotiations. This feeling of marginalization eventually led a few women, strong leaders in the community, to incorporate as a separate entity. This would allow the MWC to function as an independent political organization, capable of accessing government funds directly for activities they felt were more appropriate in meeting the needs of Métis women.

The Métis Women’s Circle is a provincial organization representing Métis women in Ontario, mostly in southwestern regions. The membership criteria established by the Métis Women’s Circle are more inclusive than other organizations. They offer three levels of membership, Métis women, non-Métis women, and an Associate Membership. However, only Métis women can be elected to the Mukwa Counsel [sic], the executive council for the Circle. Individual membership criteria for Métis, however, remain the same as for most other organizations: self-identification, community acceptance, and documented evidence of Native heritage.

The MWC is women-specific rather than Métis-specific, meaning that non-Métis women—including other Native women and even non-Native women are allowed membership—which raises many questions surrounding the issue of gender. Why do Métis women feel the need to

organize separately? Is their experience different from that of Métis men? Or, for that matter, from that of Indian women, or from non-Native women? And, if the Métis women's experience is different, then how, and why?

The experiences and needs of Native women in general, and Métis women in particular, clearly serve as the focus for the MWC. The organization seeks to meet a very real social need for more information, especially about government programs, services, and legislation that directly affect their lives, their children's lives, and their sense of Native identities. The need for more information about how legislation affects the lives of Native women has already been documented. For example, as noted in a study conducted by the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA 1980: 8),

Of the 1,101 respondents to the ONWA survey, only 187 respondents or 17% had a copy of the [Indian] Act. Fifty-one percent thought they had heard of it. Thirty-two percent had never heard of the Indian Act. In other words, 83% of the native women surveyed had little or no knowledge of legislation that directly or indirectly affects their lives and families.

These numbers are somewhat disturbing especially with regards to Métis people. The effects of government policies on Métis have yet to be studied in great detail, but have had serious implications on the legal status of Métis women and their children, and the early development of Métis communities. The question of whether Métis people should continue to be seen as the "rejects of the *Indian Act*," the pariah of the Canadian Aboriginal community at large, or as a people who developed prior to, and outside of, this legislation remains.

The approach adopted by the MWC to meet the needs of Métis women raises other issues surrounding gender. For example, this is how the Métis Women's Circle describes its own mandate in its publication *The Métis Medicine Garden* (1999):

We will research our grandmothers' lives and, with the help of medicine plants, we will reconstruct female knowledge around Aboriginal birth culture. These seeds of knowing will encourage our women to recover the personal and social realities of their histories, strengthen cultural identity, and teach through example.

The MWC uses a combined approach to address the main issues facing Métis women. Note the terminology used in their mandate quoted above. The juxtaposition of "research" with "the help of medicinal plants" implies a combined approach to ways of knowing; humans do research, but plants can teach us too. The phrase, "reconstruct female knowl-

edge around Aboriginal birth culture" also implies a combined approach to knowledge; the ways of our "grandmothers" and "plants" are rediscovered through the methods and theories usually associated with more scholarly procedures such as "research and reconstruction."

In fact, the MWC challenges many assumptions about Métis culture, especially surrounding oral and written traditions. On one hand, their activities are focused on female traditional knowledge and skills such as healing practices, midwifery, and herbal medicines.³⁹ On the other, they use methods and techniques more often associated with current feminist practices, such as consciousness-raising and journaling.

MWC activities take the form of conferences and workshops, rather than assemblies and festivals. Notably, both the presenters and the participants of the events tend to be highly-educated, calling into question assumptions about Métis literacy, education, oral traditions, and the Métis experience of colonialism. For example, there is substantial evidence, historical and more recent, to support the claim that Métis were far more likely to be somewhat educated, at least literate, than their Native counterparts because of their European ancestors. As noted by Sylvia Van Kirk (1993: 97) in her study of women in fur trade society:

A number of bourgeois in the North West Company showed considerable concern to provide their children with a Christian education and, for this reason, sent sons and to a lesser extent daughters to school in Upper and Lower Canada.

Van Kirk reports that in the early nineteenth century, the North West Company even established its own schools for its employees in the west. Aside from this, the historical role Métis played as guides, interpreters, and negotiators in the treaty process further encouraged literacy and education.⁴⁰

Even Louis Riel himself was a highly educated man, a lawyer by profession, trained in Québec and a published poet. This is not to say that most Métis are highly-educated, but I have often heard many Métis people refer to themselves as "semi-educated" meaning they had some form of rudimentary schooling—usually at least grade school, and in some cases even high school.⁴¹ All these sources outline a different experience of colonialism for Métis from that of Indians. For Indians, access to education was somewhat more limited, and imposed through the residential school system somewhat later at the end of the nineteenth century, and throughout much of the twentieth century.

There is also evidence that Métis women's experience of colonization was somewhat different than that of Métis men in that period. Economically-speaking, colonialism was deeply invested in gendering access to education to ensure that two types of knowledge were main-

tained in Métis populations.⁴² Whereas the “value” of Métis women in the nineteenth century was rooted in their “traditional” knowledge, learning and maintaining the ways of their Native ancestors was not only encouraged, but deemed necessary. One could also argue that the assimilationist policies of the late nineteenth century, especially in the form of the *Indian Act*, pushed Métis women toward a non-native identity, given they lost their Native status if they married non-native men, which was often the case.⁴³

In current discourses about Métis people, there are many assumptions about what Métis women might have to contribute to contemporary discourses of Métis identities, although there are many contested generalizations about matriarchy. For example as Barkwell et. al. have written (1999: 5), “In the past, most Métis societies were matrilineal and matriarchal. Métis women’s roles in the family and community were valued and fundamental to the preservation of Métis culture.” This comment ignores the complex debates surrounding the kinship and gender systems of early communities. For example, as noted by Driben (1987:9) in *Aboriginal Cultures of Ontario*:

In Southern Ontario, among matrilineal tribes such as the Iroquois, the offspring of British and French fur traders and Indian women likely were incorporated directly into Native society since membership was determined by descent through the female line, and their mothers were Indian. However, in the north, among Algonquin people, who traced their descent through the male line, the offspring of European fathers and Indian mothers likely could not be incorporated directly into the Indians’ society on account of their fathers. Nor were they usually incorporated into European society. Instead they formed their own society based primarily but not exclusively on the fur trade, in which Métis found employment as guides, translators, and intermediaries between Indians and Europeans.

The comments above also reflect the common association of women with all things to do with family, culture, and the home and community. Most important is the tendency to approach the study of Métis culture as the practices of the past, and to “freeze it in a timeless mould” (Leacock and Lee 1982: 167) without acknowledging change over the last few centuries.

In the context of the Métis Women’s Circle conferences, other issues surrounding gender are raised by notions of what constitutes “Métis” traditional knowledge. For example, at one such conference called “A Place of Heart,” presenters who were considered Elders or

keepers of traditional knowledge were either male, or Ojibway.⁴⁴ This prompted the question: "why is the only female Elder Indian, not Métis?" Throughout the weekend the lines between what is Métis and what is Indian would be negotiated and debated in various ways.

There was no doubt "A Place of Heart" could be seen as a gendered site, a highly-politicized space where gender and Métis nationalism intersected in many ways. This intersection was demonstrated by an incident between a Métis singer who performed a full moon ceremony on the Saturday night and an Indian grandmother who emphatically objected to her use of the drum and performing what she considered to be "Indian" ceremonies. The "full moon" debate demonstrated how the silencing of Métis women is multi-faceted. As Native feminist scholar Grace Ouellette (2002: 12) asks:

Do Aboriginal women perceive themselves as oppressed within their own Aboriginal societies because of gender or as oppressed within the larger and more dominant Euro-Canadian immigrant settler society, or a combination thereof?

The full moon debate also raised a series of different, but related, questions about the silencing and oppression of Métis women. Do Métis women feel oppressed by Indians as well as the dominant society? And how do we address gender in the context of Native women oppressing each other? Do Métis women feel oppressed within Aboriginal societies because of gender, or because of their cultural positioning among other Canadian Aboriginal societies? While recognizing that the impact of colonization has been different in different locales and for different people, it is nevertheless important to question whether the experience of colonization is different for Métis women than for Indian women.

Official recognition in 1982 seems to have pushed the pendulum back toward the more "Native" side of Métis identity, based on the need to prove Native ancestry in negotiating Métis Aboriginal rights, and to define Métis as distinct from other Aboriginal peoples. But this interpretation is problematic too. For example, as indicated by the OMNSIA survey discussed previously, Métis people did not indicate they had "lost" their status. In fact, this remains one of the main arguments put forth by Métis lawyers in their battle for Métis Aboriginal rights. They argue Métis rights were never extinguished because they were never negotiated and established in the first place. And, as the OMNSIA survey demonstrated, most Métis traced their ancestry to earlier generations, before *Indian Act* policies were in place. Exactly how earlier and more recent legislation affected the status of Métis women and the formation of Métis communities remains to be investigated in any detail.

Conclusion

As this article demonstrates, Métis political organizations are very controversial contexts, where political ideologies, historical specificity, and cultural diversity can clash, sometimes in divisive ways. Division among Métis factions is fostered by exclusive membership policies, and the idea of viewing Métis people as a relatively homogeneous and historical group, often framed as a nation. Paradoxically, constructing the Métis as one nation, distinct from First Nations and Inuit or “the Other Natives,” has created the Other Métis rather than denying it.

The process of political diversification is ongoing, and is not limited to Ontario Métis. Similar processes can be noted in other provinces in eastern Canada and south of the Canadian border. In fact, Canadian Métis people have set a precedent for other hybrid peoples around the world who were created through colonialism. It remains to be seen how our experiences in Canada will influence other peoples who were the product of *métissage*.

As Métis people in Canada define themselves, there is no doubt that differences of opinion will continue to surface as to who is entitled to call themselves Métis. Undoubtedly, criteria for legal status will be determined at some point in the near future. Will these be more inclusive or exclusive? That remains to be seen as the discourse shifts to focus more attention, and hopefully more research, on the “Other Métis.”

In *Nation and Narration*, Homi Bhabha (1993: 3) refers to cultural representations of nationhood as the “Janus-faced discourse of the nation”:

Where meanings may be partial because they are *in medias res*; and history may be half-made because it is in the process of being made; and the image of cultural authority may be ambivalent because it is caught, uncertainly, in the act of ‘composing’ its powerful image.

There is perhaps no better example of a half-made history than that of the Canadian Métis, half-made in the sense that much of it has yet to be written. Also half-made in the sense that what has been written tells us a great deal more about the events and people of the nineteenth century than the history that is currently being made. But, mostly half-made in the sense that it remains to be seen whether the construct of the Western Canadian Métis Nation will indeed predominate, and remain exclusive, or if other “emerging nations” will eventually be recognized as separate entities. For that matter, it remains to be seen if the concept of nationhood will even be the chosen, or most appropriate, framework.

Notes

1. This article is drawn from the author's Ph.D. Dissertation, *Fresh Tracks in Dead Air: Mediating Contemporary Métis Identities Through Music and Storytelling* 2005. The author would also like to note that there are different, sometimes even conflicting interpretations, of the events surrounding the emergence of Métis political organizations in Ontario. The interpretations presented here are partially based on the author's personal experiences and communications in these political contexts.
2. Important events on a national level include official recognition in 1982, and the inclusion of "Métis" as a separate category in the 1991 Canadian Census for the first time since the 1920s. In 1993, the Métis National Council accepted an Ontario Métis-specific organization as a member for the first time. In 1994, the first Métis Aboriginal right, the right to hunt moose, was recognized by the Ontario courts in the Steve Powley case, *R. v. Powley*. It eventually made its way to the Supreme Court, who determined that Métis do have the Aboriginal right to hunt moose.
3. Throughout this paper, I use the term "Indian," rather than First Nations or First Peoples, because it is the legal term used to refer to Native people who are registered under the *Indian Act*.
4. Trails run from East to West to represent the direction of the historical development of Métis communities, as well as the direction of the path of life in many Native belief systems. OMNSIA stands for the Ontario Métis and Non-Status Indian Association. OMAA is the Ontario Métis and Aboriginal Association. MNO stand for the Métis Nation of Ontario. CMC represents the Canadian Métis Council, and MWC, the Métis Women's Circle.
5. For example, the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* includes a whole section on the "Other Métis," (1996 V. 4:255-271). Another recent publication called *Resources For Métis Researchers* mentions research on the "Other Métis" as a growing part of Métis studies. See Barkwell, Dorion and Préfontaine (1999:10).
6. For more details on the historical development of Native political organizations in Canada, see Frideres 1988 and Boldt 1993.
7. It should be noted here that the NCC was reorganized in 1993 and renamed the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP). CAP continues to represent the interests of non status Indians and Métis people in Canada on a national level.
8. For more details see "Document Three: The Métis Nation Accord" 1992:135-40.

9. *For Seven Generations*, 1997, "Individual Métis profiles" (page numbers not provided).
10. See, for example, The Métis Nation of New England.
11. Grenier and Guilbault (1994) have aptly demonstrated that anthropologists are faced with increasing difficulty in locating their object of study due to diasporic scattering, world economy, globalization, and mass communication. I would add to this list political and cultural diversification.
12. According to an information bulletin on definitions published by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, a Non-Status Indian is "An Indian person who is not registered under the *Indian Act*. This may be because his or her ancestors were never registered, or because he or she lost Indian status under former provisions of the *Indian Act*." More details are available at www.inac.gc.ca.
13. For more information on OMAA, see www.oma.org.
14. OMAA's affiliation with NCC was transferred to CAP when the NCC was reorganized. As of January 18, 2007, CAP unanimously terminated OMAA's membership for failure to comply with their Constitution and By-laws.
15. This definition is drawn from the OMAA application form for membership. Notably, it does not impose the Red River criterion.
16. There were serious problems with this survey, which was intended to "identify the concerns, attitudes and opinions of OMNSIA members on issues of relevance to Métis and Non-Status Indians in Ontario." Eventually, the data were turned over to scholars for analysis, and were published by the Institute of Urban Studies in 1991. See Peters, Halseth and Rosenberg 1991.
17. Bill C-31 was implemented to address the gender bias in the *Indian Act*, especially the clause that enfranchised Native women when they married a non-Native man. However, gender bias was not completely eliminated by this Bill.
18. The first *Indian Act* was passed in 1876.
19. This request was denied by the government representative, who suggested Métis be dealt with by the local Chiefs. For more details see, Morris 1880: 260.
20. Carol Judd has studied the distinctive architecture of early Métis communities at Moose Factory. (Judd 1983:23-38). John S. Long's research also focuses on the Métis in the James Bay area. (Long 1978; 79; 80; 83; 85). Finally, David McNab's research provides more insights into the participation of Métis in the treaty process in Ontario. He argues that the Métis who participated in negotiations for Treaty no. 3 served in the capacity of reporters, interpreters, and witnesses

rather than active negotiators. He surmises these Métis were actually lobbying for their own interests as a separate group, and maintains the Métis were systematically excluded from treaty benefits through relegation of responsibility by the government to the Band Chiefs (1983; 1984).

21. The social studies of Jacqueline Petersen provide detailed research of early Métis communities in the Great Lakes area, but are centered on American communities (1981; 1987). The research of Ted Brassier traces the Ojibway influence on Métis artwork produced in Western Canada, which he attributes to Northern Ontario (1985). And the author's Master's thesis provides an ethnography of the Métis community in Mattawa, Ontario (Chretien 1996).
22. Estimates of the Métis population in Ontario vary wildly from one source to another. For example, Statistics Canada reports there are 12,055 Métis people in Ontario (Normand 1996:11). By contrast, OMAA claims there are up to 150,000 Métis and non-status Indians in the province.
23. For more details, see www.metisnation.org.
24. Lower court decisions in *R. v. Powley* were rendered by Justice J. Vaillancourt and Justice J. O'Neill. A full description and transcripts of both decisions can be obtained at www.metisnation.ca.
25. The author's Master's thesis, "Mattawa: Where the Rivers Meet: The Question of Identity in Métis Culture" was submitted as evidence in this trial to substantiate the claim that Métis communities had a historical presence in Ontario and that Métis status should not be purely based on racial criteria (1996).
26. Similarly, one of the recommendations of the recent *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* suggested that criteria for legal status of Métis should be reduced to self-identification and community acceptance. For details see, *Perspectives and Realities* 1996 (4):205.
27. Judge Sharpe wrote the decision for all three judges in this case. The other two judges were Chief Justice Roy McMurtry and Madame Justice Rosalie Abella.
28. Many Métis moved to the nearby reserves of Batchewana and Garden River after the signing of the Robinson-Huron treaty in 1850.
29. In recent years, these events have grown to include some cultural events such as fiddling contests and canoe races, which are open to the public.
30. The "Provisional Council" is the provincial ruling body of the MNO. It consists of the President, Secretary-Treasurer, Regional Councilors, and Senators.

31. The Southwest Regional Council was initially a community council within the MNO. It was granted a regional charter agreement rather than a local one due to lack of members. It was the only council in the province granted a regional agreement.
32. This interpretation of the formation of the CMC is based on the author's experience and conversations with various people who were involved, and I should note here that, not everyone agrees on the reasons for the split.
33. For more information see <http://redrival.com/cdnmetisCouncil/>.
34. The Britt and District Métis Cultural Festival was held in August, 2000, in Britt, Ontario, a small community in Ontario's Near North.
35. There is some preliminary research that argues for a more nebulous and diverse reality even for western Métis communities based on commercial production. For more details see, "Variations in Red River: The Traders and Freeman Métis of Saint-Laurent, Manitoba" *St-Onge* 1992:1-21.
36. For a detailed history of logging in this area see Ian Radforth's *Bushworkers and Bosses: Logging in Northern Ontario, 1900-1980*, 1987.
37. A number of different Métis flags were used during the 19th century, especially during the military conflicts involving the Métis. According to Calvin Racette (1987), the white infinity sign against a blue backdrop, associated with the first military conflict involving the Métis, the Battle of Seven Oaks (Manitoba) in 1816, is claimed as the first flag used by the Métis. At that time, it symbolized affiliation with the Hudson's Bay Company. The same symbol against a red backdrop symbolized the North West Company.
38. It is important to note that Métis political organizations do not allow simultaneous membership in other organizations. In other words, you cannot be a member of more than one organization at a time. However, many people will belong to different organizations at different points in time.
39. For more details see www.metiswomenscircle.com.
40. For more details see, D. T. McNab, "Hearty Cooperation and Efficient Aid, the Métis and Treaty #3" *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 1983 3(1):131-149.
41. The most recent demographic information available on Métis in Canada concurs with this anecdotal account. Statistics Canada reports the following in terms of the percentage of people with less than a grade nine education: 42.1% for non-Aboriginal people, 21% for North American Indian; 16.3% for Métis and 9.6% for Inuit. These statistics are based on the 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey. See Chart

- 4.1 in Normand 1996:11.
42. Many studies on fur trade practices clearly indicate the important role of Native and Métis women in furthering trade. Van Kirk further explains that, "while a civilized education was seen as necessary for a boy's advancement in the fur trade, for a girl such an upbringing would serve only to estrange her from the fur-trade way of life" (1993:96).
43. This "pendulum" effect has also been noted by Van Kirk who argues that the arrival of White women profoundly changed the nature of Indian-White marriages in the 1820s and 1830s. Based on this arrival, Métis women, who had been highly desirable previously, fell into disfavor. Van Kirk's study is centered on Western Canada. And it should be noted here that non-Native women did not arrive in Northern Ontario until much later.
44. This conference was held in Ancaster, Ontario in August, 2001.

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