The New Peoples
Being and Becoming Métis in North America
Edited by Jacqueline Peterson
Jennifer S. H. Brown
MANITOBA STUDIES IN NATIVE HISTORY

Manitoba Studies in Native History publishes new scholarly interpretations of the historical experience of native peoples in the western interior of North America. The series is under the editorial direction of a board representative of the scholarly and native communities of Manitoba.


II *Indian-European Trade Relations in the Lower Saskatchewan River Region to 1840*, by Paul C. Thistle.
This page intentionally left blank
The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America

Edited by
Jacqueline Peterson
Jennifer S.H. Brown
Contents

ix Illustrations

xi Foreword
  Marcel Giraud

xv Acknowledgements

3 Introduction

Part I
Métis Origins: Discovery and Interpretation

19 From “One Nation” in the Northeast to “New Nation” in the Northwest: A look at the emergence of the métis
  Olive Patricia Dickason

37 Many roads to Red River: Métis genesis in the Great Lakes region, 1680–1815
  Jacqueline Peterson

73 Some questions and perspectives on the problem of métis roots
  John E. Foster
Continued

Part II
Communities in Diversity

95 The métis and mixed-bloods of Rupert’s Land before 1870
_Irene M. Spry_

119 Waiting for a day that never comes: The dispossessed métis of Montana
_Verne Dusenberry_

137 Treaty No. 9 and fur trade company families: Northeastern Ontario’s halfbreeds, Indians, petitioners and métis
_John S. Long_

163 Grande Cache: The historic development of an indigenous Alberta métis population
_Trudy Nicks and Kenneth Morgan_

Part III
Diasporas and Questions of Identity

185 “Unacquainted with the laws of the civilized world”: American attitudes toward the métis communities in the Old Northwest
_R. David Edmunds_

195 Diverging identities: The Presbyterian métis of St. Gabriel Street, Montreal
_Jennifer S.H. Brown_

207 “What if Mama is an Indian?”: The cultural ambivalence of the Alexander Ross family
_Sylvia Van Kirk_
Continued

Part IV
Cultural Life

221 In search of métis art
Ted J. Brasser

231 What is Michif?: Language in the métis tradition
John C. Crawford

243 Afterword
Robert K. Thomas

253 Contributors

256 Index
This page intentionally left blank
Illustrations

MAPS

The métis landscape   xxii
Great Lakes métis settlements, 1763-1830   44
Plan of the settlement of Prairie du Chien, 1820   56
The Red River Settlement, 1870   96
Province of Alberta, around 1970   164

FIGURE

Marital alliances in Grande Cache métis population   166

PHOTOGRAPHS

Marcel Giraud   frontispiece
Danny Wanyande, 1919   xvii
James Ross and his wife, Maggy Smith   xviii
Descendants of Gabriel Azure   xix
The Hon. James McKay of Deer Lodge   xix
Continued

Petitioner William Moore, Moose Factory  xx

The Cadotte homes, Mackinac Island  xxi

St. Gabriel Street Church, Montreal  xxi

PLATES

1 Portrait of François Lucie by Paul Kane

2 Long skin coat

3 Dog blanket

4 Skin mittens

5 Quillworked skin coat

6 Joseph Rolette, dressed in classic métis fashion

7 A Red River métis wearing a beadworked skin coat

8 Decorated skin jacket

9 Quillworked shot pouch

10 Beadworked octopus pouch from Mackenzie River region

11 Octopus pouch with silk embroidery

12 A métis wearing typical elaborately beadworked dress

13 “A Halfcaste and his two Wives” by Peter Rindisbacher

14 Horse cruppers with quillworked pattern

15 Tobacco bag with flap of woven beadwork

16 Pad saddle with rosette-and-lozenge designs
To many North Americans it may appear extraordinary that a man coming from a country as remote as France should have focused his attention at the beginning of his career on a general survey of the problems created by the presence of a sizeable halfbreed population in the western prairie provinces of Canada. Having been kindly invited to participate in the scholarly meeting on the métis in North America at the Newberry Library in September, 1981, I found in that friendly and interesting symposium an opportunity to expound on how I had come to feel so much interest in the racial questions concerning western Canada and, by way of comparison, the middle western states.

My interest was awakened at the end of World War I by my first contacts with some American students who were temporarily discharged of their military duties and were studying in a small university in the south of France where I had been enrolled for two years. Since all of those students came from Wisconsin and Minnesota, it occurred to me that this part of America, so completely unknown in France, might provide a possible field of study for someone who was not familiar with its past history and its problems. But my attention was still more attracted, for reasons which I cannot explain, by the seemingly empty spaces, so full of economic possibilities nowadays, which extend north of the international boundary. When I first came to America, in 1934, through the financial help of the Rockefeller Foundation, I was determined to explore whatever possibilities this boundless territory might afford for a scholarly study bearing on a question which had not yet been thoroughly investigated.

Travelling across the western prairie provinces of Canada, I had the opportunity to speak with people of various conditions and origins, and the
conversations, added to a considerable amount of reading, made me aware of local problems, the importance of which I had hardly suspected and which were deeply involved in the historical beginnings of the West. I then discovered that these problems were linked to the existence of a large population descended from the early contacts of the whites and natives during the fur trade era. The very hard fate of a considerable number of those mixed breeds, their destitute condition in many cases, and the marginal status to which many were apparently reduced, coupled with the complete lack of sympathy which they encountered among white people, whether French- or English-speaking, struck my imagination and led me to the conclusion that a complete study of their origin and history was necessary to explain their present situation.

The first stage of my work was mainly on-the-spot observation among people whom I had no difficulty approaching and questioning, thanks to the help of the missionaries of the various parishes which I visited. From Manitoba to Alberta I could thus acquire a notable amount of information concerning the living conditions of the métis groups and their relations with the whites. Among other things, I noticed that the métis who had reached a certain social and educational level had a tendency to look down upon the humbler ones and to reject any racial affiliation with them, while denying their own origins in order to avoid any possible confusion. (This was in the 1930s.)

The work of observation which I pursued was associated with a close study of all the documents accessible in those newly born provinces. I did not find much in the libraries, but the “codex historicus” (the daily journals written by the missionaries who in succession took charge of the western missions after their foundation) was an invaluable source of documentation. So was the correspondence of some of their most prominent bishops. And, thus, my visit to the parishes and missions of the West, which I expected would open to me only a field of direct observation, turned out to open as well a remarkable field of scholarly research.

Consequently, when I came back to France, I had gathered a good initial background which enabled me to start building up the general scheme I had in view. Of course this background had to be completed with the Ottawa records and other archival collections in America, but chiefly with the vast reserve of documents which are in Paris – namely the colonial archives and manuscripts, map collections and printed material of the National Library – and above all the rich and varied source materials of the Hudson’s Bay Company in London, plus the less important sources of the British Colonial Office. If I were to judge the degree of interest of the various sources which
I have used, I would think that the Hudson’s Bay Company records (now in Winnipeg) and the “codices historici” of the numerous missions of the western provinces deserve special mention as being particularly important. These documents are of uneven quality since their worth depends mostly on the capacities and concerns of those who wrote them. But when the author was a careful and perceptive observer, the documents may have an exceptional interest.

The difficulty was finally to have my study accepted by the University of Paris as the subject of my state doctorate. Many of the masters at the Sorbonne objected to it. The subject, le métis canadien et son rôle dans l’histoire des provinces de l’ouest, appeared to them too remote, of too limited a scope, to arouse any interest. The man who supported me and approved of the subject without reserve was a non-university man, but he had great intellectual influence. His name, André Siegfried, used to be well known in the United States and Canada on account of his publications.¹ He is in fact the man who was responsible for the shaping of my whole career. But the greatest reward which I have derived from the ten-year effort devoted to completing this work (begun in 1935 and published in 1945) is the interest which this book, so long out of print, has finally aroused among American and Canadian scholars. I hope that it may contribute to the birth of a growing number of specialized studies which will not only enrich this general field of investigation, but may also suggest satisfactory solutions to the social problems which I found to be so acute years ago in many parts of the western provinces.

Marcel Giraud

NOTE

¹ André Siegfried (1875–1959) was a political economist who wrote two books on Canada: Le Canada, les deux races: problèmes politiques contemporains (1906), and Canada (1937), both later published in English. Frank H. Underhill, in the Carleton Library edition of the former book, retranslated in 1966 under the title, The Race Question in Canada (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart), describes him as “the Tocqueville of Canada.” The races in question were the French and English; Siegfried did not explore questions concerning the native peoples of Canada. (Editors’ note.)
Acknowledgements

We are indebted to a number of individuals and institutions for their help in bringing The New Peoples into being. The book’s foundation – the 1981 first Conference on the Métis in North America – was securely laid through the assistance of a research grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Newberry Library D’Arcy McNickle Center for the History of the American Indian in Chicago, Illinois, has been a friend and generous contributor to the project from its initial willingness to host the conference to, most recently, preparation of the index. We especially wish to thank Richard H. Brown, academic vice president of the Newberry Library; Francis S. Jennings, former director of the McNickle Center; Raymond D. Fogelson, advisory board member; and the other members of the staff, fellows and advisors for their support.

Jeanne Oyawin Eder, a former McNickle fellow and currently head of American Indian Studies, Eastern Montana College, deserves special credit for sharing her invaluable knowledge and advice as a coordinator of the 1981 conference. Many of the ideas first proposed and discussed at the conference have continued to grow and to influence the development of this volume. We are especially grateful to participants Antoine S. Lussier, Arthur J. Ray, Carol Judd, Jeanne Eder, Dennis Demontigny, Lionel Demontigny, Ronald Bourgeault and David Beaulieu for their suggestions and discussions. We also wish to thank Gerald Friesen for his interest in the book manuscript and his recommendation that it be included in the new Manitoba Studies in Native History series. The skillful weaving of this diverse collection into whole cloth, a task which was accomplished with patience and clarity, belongs to Carol Dahlstrom and the staff of the University of Manitoba Press. To them, to Gerri Balter of the University of Minnesota for typing the manuscript, to
xvi  Acknowledgements

Victor Lytwyn for preparing the maps, to Diane Warner for carefully compiling the index, and to the countless others who gave us their time and spirit, we extend our heartfelt gratitude.
James Ross and his wife, Maggy Smith. See "What if Mama is an Indian?": The Cultural Ambivalence of the Alexander Ross Family by Sylvia Van Kirk, pages 207-217. (Photo courtesy of Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)
Descendants of Gabriel Azure: Peter Azure and his nephew, Bert Azure (on guitar) play music in Everett Thompson's Saloon in Zortman, Montana. See Waiting for a Day that Never Comes: The Dispossessed Métis of Montana by Verne Dusenberry, pages 119–136. (Photo by Verne Dusenberry.)

The Hon. James McKay of Deer Lodge (with whip in his hand). See The Métis and Mixed-Bloods of Rupert's Land Before 1870 by Irene Spry, pages 95–118. (Photo courtesy of Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)
Index 265

Ross, George 144, 148
Ross, James 208, 209, 211-214, 215
- educated at University of Toronto 209, 212
- educated at Knox College 210
- marries Margaret Smith 211
- attitude toward mother 211
- attitude toward father 212
- editor of The Nor'Wester 212
- and Red River Rebellion (1869) 213-214
- death of 214
Rowand, John 103
- Margaret 100
- family 197
Royal Commission on the Condition of the Halfbreed Population of the Province of Alberta 170-171
Rupert House 138, 142, 153. See also Fort Charles
Rupert River 138
Rupert's Land 97, 98, 108, 139, 208, 210, 215

Saginaw 60
St. Albert 176
St. Boniface 100, 103-104, 225
St. Castin, Jean-Vincent d'Abbadie, Baron de 20, 25, 26
- son, Bernard-Anselme 20, 26, 28
- métis family of 26, 28
Saint-Etienne de La Tour, Charles, family of 26
St. Gabriel Street Presbyterian Church 198, 199, 200, 202, 203, 204
St. Ignace 42, 43, 45, 46, 51, 55, 57
St. John's River 20
Saint-John River 26
St. Joseph 58, 60
St. Lawrence River 19, 22, 27, 29, 42, 45, 53, 73, 225
St. Mary's River 58
St. Peter's Mission 126
Salone, Emile 20, 22, 23
Sanderson, Emile 112
- George Jr. 97, 105
- George 99
Sandy Lake 61
Sapir, Edward 227
Saskatchewan 5, 19, 126, 173, 248, 249
Saskatchewan River 4, 105, 165
Sauk (tribe) 57, 58
Sault Ste. Marie 55, 57, 58, 59, 61, 78
Sault Ste. Marie (Michigan) 39
Sault Ste. Marie (Ontario) 144, 248
Sault Ste. Marie-Michilimackinac Indian Agency 63
Saulteaux (tribe). See Chippewa
Saunderson, George Sr. 103
- Saunderson, family 106
Sayer Trial 78, 108, 110
Scott, Duncan Campbell 145, 147, 153
Scott, Thomas 214
Scrip 74, 148, 173, 176, 177
Sekani (tribe) 168
Selkirk settlers 95-96. See also Red River Settlement
Sex roles
- men 82-85, 125, 138-139
- women 24, 84-87, 125, 139
Shawnee Prophet 185
Shawnee (tribe) 185, 187
Sifton, Clifford 145-146, 150
Simpson, Sir George 110, 202
- George 112
- John 99, 107
- Thomas 99
Sinclair, James 108-110, 111, 112
- Samuel 106
- Thomas 107
- William III 112
Sioux 57, 106, 107, 225, 226
- Eastern Sioux 222, 223, 226
- Sisseton 226
- Yankton 226
- Oglala 250
Slaves and slavery 47, 48, 55, 61. See also Panis
Slobodin, Richard 5-6
Smoky River 165
South Dakota 7, 250
Spry, Irene 38
Stanley, George F.G. 112
Stewart, Samuel 145
Stone, Lyle 41-42, 48
Strutton Island 142
Sun River 124
Sutherland, Alexander 104
- John 104
- Kate 104
- Robert 107
Temagami 144
Temiskaming 145
"Ten-cent treaty" (1904) 131. See also McCumber Treaty
Thunder Bay (Ontario) 144
Toronto 148, 211, 213, 214
– University of 209, 212
Trans-Canada Railway 144
Traverse des Sioux (Minnesota) 61
Treaty Indians 177
Treaties. See McCumber Treaty, and Treaties, Canadian
Treaties, Canadian
– Treaty No. 3 145
– Treaty No. 6 168–176
– Treaty No. 8 150
– Treaty No. 9, and métis identity 138, 154; native hunters admitted to 143; signed 144; and right of way for railroad 144; background to 145; some halfbreeds included 146–148; excludes halfbreeds of Moose Factory 147, 149; Dominion Indians 147, 149; and Ontario Indians 147, 149; territory covered 147; annuities 149; land allotted 149; and descendants of James Bay mixed-bloods 154; and Moosonee OMNSIA 155–156
Tremaudan, A.-H. de 5
Trois Rivières 28
Turner, Frederick Jackson 3
Turner (Turnor), Joseph, Sr. 139, 141
– family 153, 154
Turtle Mountain Chippewa 7, 128, 131, 133, 134, 235. See also Little Shell, Chief, and Little Shell Band
Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation 7, 130–131, 232, 234, 239, 248, 249
Turtle Mountain Indian Agency 129–130
Turtle Mountains 123, 125, 128, 129, 135
Union Nationale Métisse St.-Joseph de Manitoba 4–5
Van Kirk, Sylvia 79, 84, 137
Vincennes 39, 55, 187, 190
Wabash River 55, 61, 186, 187
Walla Walla 108
Washington 7, 108
Waugh, John 129, 130, 131
Wea (tribe) 55
Welsh, Norbert 98, 104, 112
White Horse Plain 99
Wilkie, Jean-Baptiste 105, 123
Winnebago (tribe) 57
Winnipeg xiii, 64, 123, 144, 215, 228, 247, 250
Wisconsin xi, 40, 60, 61, 62, 63, 119, 186
XY Company 59
York Factory 83, 105
Zortman (Montana) 119