

Grandmothers of the Métis Nation Judy Iseke-Barnes

This article explores storytelling and sharing of histories by Indigenous Elders. It shares stories and histories that acknowledge the contribution of Métis peoples, particularly Métis women, to the history and life of Canada. Literature on storytelling and Métis women's stories are examined in this discussion. This article acknowledges the contributions of Métis Elders and the ways that they help communities and Indigenous peoples understand who they are, where they came from, the contributions of Indigenous women to this history and unfolding story, and the ways that their lives are extensions of history.

[French translation to come]

Introduction

Indigenous Elders are the educators of children, youth, adults, and communities, and serve as our communities' storytellers and historians.¹ Their stories and histories educate communities and sustain our culture. They help each person know who we are as Indigenous peoples.² The contributions of Métis Elders allow us to understand the contributions of Métis people, past and present, to our communities, provinces, and nations. This article will examine stories and histories shared by Métis grandmother, community historian, and geneologist Dorothy Chartrand, acknowledging the contribution of Métis people, particularly Métis women, to the history and life of Métis communities and Canada.

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1 The word Elders is capitalized to indicate knowledge keepers in our communities, as opposed to uncapitalized elders, which connotes people who have reached an advanced age but may not be knowledge keepers in Indigenous communities.

2 Indigenous peoples is pluralized to acknowledge the diversity of groups who are brought together under this term.

Maria Campbell (1995), a respected Métis scholar, tells us in the introduction to her book *Stories of the Road Allowance People* of her childhood experiences hearing stories in her Cree-speaking Métis community. She writes,

I had hoped when I became a student of storytelling that I would get old women teachers, but that was not to be. The old women were kind, made me pots of tea, cooked me soup and bannock, made me starblankets and moccassins[*sic*], then sent me off to the old men who became my teachers (p. 2).

This need for women's stories reflects the needs of Métis peoples to hear a more complete account of the lives of Métis peoples, including stories about the lives of Cree and Métis grandmothers who are the foundation of communities. We need these stories if we as Métis peoples are to understand fully ourselves, our culture, and our histories within the cultural, social, and economic history of Métis communities. We especially need these stories if we are to understand Métis women's roles and responsibilities that are less well understood than those of male historical figures.

This article is in the tradition of Métis historical family and community stories and biographies (Tough & McGregor, 2007; Devine, 2004; Lischke & McNabb, 2007) and particularly within a literature by and about Métis women's lives (Carpenter, 1977; Paget, 1909; Callihoo, 1953, 1959, 1960; MacEwan, 1995). It shares stories told by Métis grandmother Dorothy Chartrand of the Métis women in her family and community. In preparing to hear these stories, the article first explores challenges in researching Métis women in the fur trade era. Discussion follows about the particular methodology used, including a combination of methods used in historical research, as well as those that draw from research in oral traditions. This is followed by a discussion of the social and geographic context of Métis women's lives.

This paper also retells some of Dorothy Chartrand's journey through twenty-five years of research in archives to unlock the interconnected stories of her family and community, the fur trade, and other Métis communities, through which her Métis ancestors' stories weave their lives. She also retells histories from family narratives as they intersect with her research, including stories about the roles of women in fur trade forts, the implications of Métis struggles for land, her paternal grandparents' lives, her maternal grandparents as they established new lives in Alberta

after leaving Manitoba, the work of Lucy L'Hirondelle in the transition era from fur trade to farming, and, finally, the roles of women as healers in community.

Challenges in Researching Métis Women's Lives

Historical documentation and representations of Métis and Indigenous women pose many challenges for historians. Sylvia Van Kirk (1980) explains a challenge in researching the lives and work of Métis women, in particular the paucity of sources written by Indigenous women: "One is forced to piece together snippets of information from the extensive collections of trader's journals, letters and wills which have survived" (p. 6). She expresses concern with bias in these journals because they are from the perspective of male authors, including male fur traders.

With regard to Indian women, most of the fur traders believed that women occupied a degraded position within western Indian societies; the Indian women in their [traders] view had everything to gain by becoming the wife of the "superior" trader. In reality the Indian women may have ... sacrificed considerable personal autonomy, being forced to adjust to the traders' patriarchal views on the ordering of home and family. In the final analysis, it is debatable whether the lot of an Indian woman in marrying a European was improved to the extent that the fur traders claimed (pp. 6–7).

Ray (1982), Hourie (1996), Fooks (2003), and Murphy (2003) echo these concerns about a lack of sources and bias. Heather Devine (2004) further comments on the paucity of sources of Métis-authored materials that actually examine Métis history. She states that "most documentary sources were created by outsiders whose recording of events was influenced by their own economic preoccupations and cultural biases. In these writings, the lives of the working classes of the fur trade are often almost invisible" (p. 1).

While Devine (2004) and Karen Travers (2007) express concern about the limited and biased reporting of outsiders—particularly European and Canadian clerks who reported in a limited way on the lives of Métis men—Sheila McManus (2006) documents assumptions and biases in writings about Indigenous women by white women between 1862 and 1900. McManus, quoting Ruth Frankenberg, suggests that once white

women were "in the landscape structured by racism, a conceptual mapping of race, self, and others takes shape, following from and feeding the physical context" (p. 117). McManus suggests that white women also write about Métis women within a racial and gendered hierarchy, where Indigenous women are less significant than white women. Devine further warns that "uncritical acceptance of these descriptions has served to reinforce and entrench these stereotypes in the literature where they have persisted to the present day" (p. 2). McManus contends that "once the colonizers had solidified their control over the colonized and their land, it appears to have mattered more to be unquestionably white than to be Canadian" (p. 129).

Van Kirk (1980), writing about the cultural context of the fur trade era and sources of racial and gender hierarchies, concludes that European fur trade fathers in the Victorian era may have believed it best for their daughters to acculturate to European standards of womanhood, particularly Victorian expectations for being "a lady." These standards, Van Kirk suggests, made it difficult for the few European women who came to the Canada in the late nineteenth century to adapt to the many challenges and difficulties of fur trade life. For the part-Aboriginal daughters of European fur trade fathers who acculturated to European expectations, the process may well have rendered them "helpless and vulnerable in a society which was becoming increasingly racist and sexist toward native women" (p. 7).

Van Kirk, however, argues that the literature on fur trade history had, by 1980, overemphasized victimization and oversimplified the social and economic interactions of Indigenous peoples and Europeans in the fur trade. She suggests that revisionist works had begun to identify and explain more active roles for Indigenous peoples in the fur trade. She states that there was a need "to extend this concept of 'active agent' to the women, even though their roles within fur-trade society were restricted" (p. 7). She further suggests the importance of recognizing the many roles that women played in fur trade society, and the ways that women made the most of these spheres available to them. Devine (2004) adds that more recent studies have emphasized the agency of families in response to external forces, as opposed to "passive acquiescence to changing circumstances" (p. 10). An additional challenge to discussing Métis history is that while "officers of the fur trade and their mixed-blood descendants ... generated business and private correspondence, diaries, books, and later, photographs, working class Métis operated, by and large, in an oral tradition" (Devine, 2004, p. 13).

Ruth Swan and Edward J. Jerome (2007), in a study of Red River Valley Métis, suggest that because Native history is oral and more difficult to document, historians may privilege the written text over oral sources, and not attend to the unreliability of written sources. Devine (2007) cautions that historians must verify the authenticity of documents found by appraising and evaluating original documents to “investigate the provenance, or origins, of a document and its relationship to related archival records to determine whether the item will be of lasting scholarly value” (p. 200). She suggests that evaluating the credibility and validity of a source includes asking, “Is the document a reliable source? A first-hand account? Was it created for a specific reader? Is it necessary to corroborate or substantiate the accuracy of the document by locating and reserving other records?” (p. 200).

Jennifer Brown (1983) argues that in studying the lives and work of Métis women, it is important to acknowledge that times change and the practice of collapsing broad time-spans, sometimes over a century in length, is not effective in the case of the emergent Métis nation. She concludes,

The alliances of white traders and Indian women in fur trade post contexts were qualitatively different from second-generation alliances involving the first women of biracial descent, and second-generation from third-generation ones. More detailed family histories with time depths of three, four, and five generations, could bring out important and subtle comparisons and paths of change, as the experiences of these native families accumulated, and as persons outside them in turn responded and reacted to them, helping to confer on them a new ethnicity (p. 45).

Overcoming the Challenges: Developing a Methodology

Devine (2004) overcomes the challenge of limited sources of information by drawing upon genealogical reconstruction to identify family members, clarify different descendent branches, and place individuals in specific geographical locations at particular points in time. She then relates their activities in a cultural, economic, and political context using primary and secondary sources.

Brenda Macdougall (2006) reconstructs genealogies of Métis families to reveal family relations that she refers to by the Cree expression “wahkootowin.”

Wahkootowin is the Cree cultural concept that best represents how family, place, and economic realities were historically interconnected, the expression of a world view that laid out a system of social obligation and mutual responsibility between related individuals—between members of a family—as the foundational relationship within communities. In the Cree language, wahkootowin was the term used to express the sense that family was the foundational relationship for pursuing any economic, political, social, or cultural activities and alliances (pp. 432–433).

Macdougall's research on Île à la Crosse suggests that wahkootowin was produced through choices of marriage partners, employment decisions within fur trade companies, and the organization of independent trade and personal labour. While Macdougall draws upon written records from fur trade companies, mission and church records, census data, and scrip records, she warns,

Alone, none of these sources would provide enough data for comprehensive genealogical reconstruction, but when combined and cross-referenced, the social structure of the family networks becomes more evident. The scrip and mission records, however, provide the most useful data sets for genealogical work because they purposefully recorded the family structures and relationships within communities (pp. 442–443).

Devine (2004) suggests that genealogical information be gathered from contemporary sources—surviving relatives and other informants, as well as from vital statistics—and then worked backward to document their histories from various sources. Devine further notes, as is the case with Dorothy, that information from Métis scrip records and church records from western Canada and Quebec, in addition to those from broader social, political, and economic sources, provide information about the family she is studying. St-Onge (2004) uses a similar approach to the work of the community of St. Laurent in Manitoba.

Swan and Jerome (2007) propose a methodology similar to that used in this study, one in which Métis genealogies are assembled from oral histories and archival records, which, taken together, produce historical

family studies. Swan and Jerome suggest that this is useful where oral traditions and stories from families and communities have been suppressed, or else these can complement existing oral histories. They argue that this methodology challenges assumptions that Aboriginal history is based only on oral traditions. They state that ethnohistorians can make use of both historical and archival evidence in discussing Indigenous knowledges.³ Likewise, Dorothy supported greater understandings of the oral histories but used archival records to find more details and additional historical literature to locate the stories in a larger social and political history.

Oral Methodologies: Remembering Grandmothers of the Métis Nation

Many Indigenous, including Métis, scholars, explore the lives of grandmothers and the importance of their stories. In *Halfbreed*, Maria Campbell (1973) describes the teachings of her Cheechum (grandmother), who “taught me to see beauty in all things around me; that inside each thing a spirit lived” (p. 83). Campbell’s discussion of her grandmother’s lessons of the beauty and wonder of life are tempered with equally hard lessons for surviving a life as a Métis child and woman. Campbell describes her grandmother’s teachings about oppression and its operation in the lives of Métis and Aboriginal peoples:

My Cheechum used to tell me that when the government gives you something, they take all that you have in return—your pride, your dignity, all the things that make you a living soul. When they are sure they have everything, they give you a blanket to cover your shame. ... When I tried to explain to her that our teacher said governments were made by the people, she told me, “It only looks like that from the outside, my girl.” She used to say that all our people wore blankets, each in his own way. She said that other people wore them too, not just Halfbreeds and Indians, and as I grew up I would see them and understand. Someday though, people would throw them away and the whole world would change. I understand about the blanket now—I wore one too. I didn’t know when I started to wear it, but it was there and I didn’t know how to throw it away (p. 159).

³ Indigenous knowledges is pluralized to indicate the diversity and complexity of Indigenous knowledge systems. It speaks back to the tendency in literatures to assume that all Indigenous knowledge is of one kind.

Throwing off the colonial blankets requires disrupting oppression and understanding ourselves as Métis people, and finding ways to take pride in who we are. It means returning to a state of dignity and bolstering our soul as Indigenous peoples. Campbell describes learning to understand who she is through a Métis woman, or, in her vernacular, a Halfbreed woman:

My first teacher was a Halfbreed woman. She was the one who taught me that the earth was my mother, and made me fanatical about searching her out. She made me look into my Indian side, and there I found it. But I had to dig through a lot of stuff because they said "Mother," but there was no real connection to her, it was only the "Father," the "Grandfathers" that have the power; the influence of Christianity had pushed her out and the white side didn't even say "Mother" anymore. But this teacher told me that once, a long time ago, we all had "Mother," and that we were unbalanced because we could no longer revere her (Griffiths & Campbell, 1997, p. 20).

Campbell further understood the importance of women through the teachings of women like Rose Auger, a Cree Elder from Alberta. Auger shared teachings about women, men, and balance.

Indian people must wake up! They are asleep! ... We were in touch but now we are not. Part of this waking up means replacing women to their rightful place in society. It's been less than one hundred years that men lost touch with reality. There's no power or medicine that has all force unless it's balanced. The woman must be there also, but she has been left out! When we still had our culture, we had the balance. The women made ceremonies, and she was recognized as being united with the moon, the earth and all the forces on it. Men have taken over. Most feel threatened by holy women. They must stop and remember, remember the loving power of their grandmothers and mothers. (Auger, quoted in Voyageur, 2000, p. 81).

Gregory Scofield (1999), a Métis poet, storyteller, and activist of Cree descent, published a poetry collection called *I Knew Two Métis Women*, which he produced for "those two most incredible women," his mother

and his aunt (p. 5). He gives thanks for the support of his mother and aunt in a poem entitled “Not all halfbreed mothers”:

... Not all halfbreed mothers
speak like a dictionary
or Cree hymn book,
tell stories
about faithful dogs
or bears
that hung around or sniffed
in the wrong place (p. 105).

His work to honour his mother and her life continues in “True North, blue compass heart”:

...”Seepwaypiyow,” the old people said
and this became her name,
stuck long after
TB ate her lungs, long after
the sanitorium close
and the Wabasca, the people,
the wild roses of her childhood,
became stories
that skipped across the kitchen table,
sung over strong tea
brewed in a blue enamel pot (p. 108).

Scofield further honours his aunt and mother in the poem “Picture 5 (1988)”:

Like Aunty, the guitar was her
one true love
who never got tired
or left for a younger,
smoother woman.
Their dueling guitars
were the twelve strings
I climbed to dreams on (pp. 120–121).

Scofield emphasizes the necessity of Métis peoples telling their stories. In his poetry, he testifies to the struggles of Métis women for survival and

humanity, and suggests that it is important to acknowledge the struggles of women and to tell their stories.

Storytelling

The importance of storytelling to Indigenous peoples is emphasized by Maori scholar Linda Smith (1999), who explains,

Telling our stories from the past, reclaiming the past, giving testimony to the injustices of the past are all strategies which are commonly employed by indigenous peoples struggling for justice. ... The need to tell our stories remains the powerful imperative of a powerful form of resistance (pp. 34–35).

Through storytelling, we can acknowledge Indigenous knowledges, histories, and stories, reconnect with Indigenous agency and resistance in community activities, and focus upon cultural vitalization and self-determination. As Mary Anne Lanigan (1998), a Métis educator from Saskatchewan, explains, “Stories provide the intergenerational communication of essential ideas” (p. 103). She further states that listeners must interpret the meanings and ideas because stories are multilayered, “allowing listeners to creatively expand their thinking processes so that each problem they encounter in life can be viewed from a variety of angles before a solution is reached” (p. 103). Greg Cajete (1994), a Tewa educator, argues that “story—in creative combination with encounters, experiences, image making, ritual, play, imagination, dream and modeling—forms the basic foundation of all human learning and teaching” (p. 68).

Lanigan (1998) states that oral accounts record the historical events of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. She quotes Edward Ahenakew’s explanation of stories told by old men in communities:

An old man had the gift of eloquence, enhanced by descriptive language and by superb mastery of gesture. He used his skill with natural simplicity, weaving into stories of everyday events the primary meanings of life. The genius was most evident in the narration of past events, of raids and battles and the chase. He might bring a bit of comedy into a tragic story, touch it with pathos or sweeten it with love and loyalty—and do all this in a language highly figurative and yet suited to the subject; and his listeners would sit entranced, imagining that they saw and heard

the events enacted before them—tales of struggles almost superhuman, of endurance, of perilous adventure, of long hazardous excursions into enemy country, of love, of anything indeed that was ever of any consequence in Indian life. All these stories were kept intact, unchanging, entrusted through the years by one generation to the next (quoted in Lanigan, 1998, p. 109).

Older women like Dorothy, who told these stories when in her eighties, share this gift of storytelling. Grandmothers, like the old men of whom Ahenakew spoke, share oral narratives as community historians and personal narratives about families and deeds that express pride and confidence. Their stories are particularly important for the young. Maria Campbell (1995), who related and translated Métis stories from Méchif to a local, non-standard English, writes, “An dah stories you know dats day bes treasure of all to leave your family. Everyting else on dis eart he gets los or wore out. But dah stories dey las forever”(p. 144). Lanigan (1998) explains that many Aboriginal people

have done great deeds. These people are members of families. It is their stories that need to be told to children so that they can look to their past with pride and face the future with courage making new stories for the next generation (p. 111).

Telling stories is a practice in Aboriginal cultures that has long sustained us (Castellano, 2000). In telling stories, we honour the experiences of Aboriginal people and epistemologies, as well as their contributions to multiple, collective, and collaborative readings of our world. It is also through storytelling that we share Aboriginal knowledges.

Storytelling as Research: Methodology and Sources of Data
Smith (1999) further details her insights into the important role of storytelling in the research process.

Story telling, oral histories, the perspectives of elders and of women have become an integral part of all indigenous research. Each individual story is powerful. But the point about the stories is not that they simply tell a story, or tell a story simply. These new stories contribute to a collective story in which every indigenous person has a place. ... For many indigenous writers

stories are ways of passing down the beliefs and values of a culture in the hope that the new generations will treasure them and pass the story down further. The story and the story teller both serve to connect the past with the future, one generation with the other, the land with the people and the people with the story (pp. 144–145).

In this research, Dorothy's stories connect her family to the communities across the Métis homeland, interconnecting her story with the stories of her ancestors and the territories in which they made their lives. The stories represent the Indigenous community that Smith, drawing from Russell Bishop, suggests, "is a collection of individual stories, ever unfolding through the lives of the people who share the life of that community" (p. 145). Storytelling allows Indigenous peoples to engage in a dialogue for ourselves and to ourselves, through humour, gossip, and creativity, sharing themes that are important within our cultures to "invoke a set of shared understandings and histories" (p. 145).

Invoking this practice of storytelling as research, Indigenous storytellers help communities understand their histories so that they can make a future. The stories make sense within the cultural context. Dorothy Chartrand's research has investigated and shares stories that interconnect histories and communities.

Dorothy Chartrand's historical family and community stories incorporate what she learned from her archival research, and she shared them with me through storytelling sessions in her home. These were audiotaped and videotaped in two extended visits. The first was a six-day visit during which Dorothy spoke until her voice weakened and she could no longer share stories. This usually produced about six hours of recordings each day. Recordings of our conversations were later transcribed. Transcripts and audiotapes were copied and provided to Dorothy so that she could work with them because she was writing a book about her research.

I spoke on the telephone to Dorothy many times about her research and the book that she was working on. In one conversation, I explained that I wanted to come with a videographer and record her sharing some of her stories so that I could create a documentary about her work. I explained that I was particularly interested in women's stories for the video and also that I hoped to publish the research in academic journals. She explained that the archival record from which she drew was largely

focused on the male members of families and communities. She said that she could share stories about the women in her family and community, as well as information about those women of whom she had learned during her research, but that the information would be more limited than that of the male record.

I accepted these limitations and came to Dorothy's home with a videographer to record her over a two-day period. I had created a list of items she had shared in the past that I would like her to share again, and she responded with stories reflective of our past dialogue, as well as new stories that she had not previously shared with me. On the evening of the second day, the videographer and I relocated to Musée Héritage Museum in St. Albert to record images of Dorothy's family photographs and family belongings dating from the fur trade era that Dorothy and others had donated.

On the third day of filming, Dorothy met the videographer and I at the museum, where we filmed images from an exhibit of Dorothy's research that was created by the Musée staff. At my request, the staff put up some of the contents of the original exhibit. We filmed Dorothy in front of this display as she spoke about her research. She also shared her World War II veteran experiences while wearing her Canadian Legion uniform, with her women's army uniform hanging behind her.

Following this filming, Dorothy took us out to the family farm where she grew up and where three generations of her family had lived. I had been to this farm many times as a child to visit with my great uncles who lived there. However, the city of St. Albert had diverted Bellerose Drive—the road that used to lead from the town of St. Albert directly to the Bellerose family farm—to go through a subdivision, so the Bellerose farm was somewhat difficult to find. Dorothy volunteered to guide us despite the temperature being -35 degrees Celsius because she was interested in our work on the farm. Dorothy stayed in her car while we filmed buffalo in a pasture, a coyote walking along the north ridge of the family farm, the river, the many buildings, and the surrounding land.

The data for this paper were drawn from two sets of transcripts, those from the earlier audio recordings and later video recordings of Dorothy sharing stories in her home. Subsequent to the filming, I shot portions of what is termed b-roll (images to match the many stories Dorothy had shared). These sessions took place at Fort Edmonton Park in Edmonton, Alberta, and the Fort William Historical Park and the Heritage and Pioneer Village, both in Thunder Bay, Ontario. I also visited the Manitoba pro-

vincial archives and the St. Boniface archives in Winnipeg to trace some of Dorothy's steps in the archives. I also returned to the Musée Héritage Museum and the Michif Institute in St. Albert to verify and cross-reference local historical information. I gathered information from both these archives and material available on the Internet, some of which is thanks to Dorothy's hard work. I also gathered information from the Oblate order of priests who had records about the St. Albert community.

While there is a large data set of resource materials in this research study, I will only present here select portions of the more than twenty hours of audio and video recordings of Dorothy that are especially relevant to my original purpose—to understand the roles and responsibilities of Métis women in the changing social, political, and life patterns throughout this history. These stories are buttressed by analysis from academic scholarly research relevant to Métis women's lives.

Dorothy's approach to sharing stories with me was to open one of her carefully assembled photo albums containing images of her ancestors that she had organized from her personal and family collections and archival photos. The albums were organized by generations. She began with the earliest ancestor of whom she had images. One album began with her great-great-grandfather, Olivier Bellerose, who came to Alberta in 1833. Another began with Cuthbert Grant, a well-known Métis leader in the Red River area in the early nineteenth century. In these photo albums, Dorothy recorded the names and included pictures of their wives if available. On subsequent pages, she had photographs, names, and birth dates for the children of the unions of these first generations. These albums contained many generations as Dorothy tracked all the children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren of these earliest Métis. She also included information about several generations of ancestors that predated the photographic era.

With each photograph Dorothy related events about the person, their life, work, and relations, where they were born and lived, and any interesting stories that she had learned either from her family or from research in archives. She also took me to many books and articles that she had amassed. Over the years, Dorothy had collected so much information that she had an entire room in her home dedicated to her research. In this office, she carefully stored photos, documents, and artifacts that aided her in remembering stories of her ancestors and their communities.

Dorothy also shared with me her experiences writing a history of St. Albert, Alberta. She began that work with the St. Albert Historical

Society after learning that others who had planned to start the book with the priests and businessmen who came to region in the 1860s. Dorothy knew that her ancestors, along with many other Métis who came to call this community home, had been in St. Albert well before 1860. So she took it upon herself to document properly the town's history as a Métis community. This involved meeting with descendents of each of the original Métis families and hearing stories of their ancestors. She either wrote down the stories that they told or helped them to write their Métis family histories.

Dorothy shared the contents of a four-drawer filing cabinet, where she kept carefully filed and organized photocopies of records from archives, as well as copious notes from her archival visits from the preceding twenty-five years. She also shared with me numerous charts that she had created to represent the genealogical research she had completed.

The focus of this article is to understand Métis grandmothers and their roles in traditional society through an Indigenous storytelling methodology and theoretic framework, including histories of the fur trade, scrip, and buffalo hunting as they impacted on the lives and work of Métis families in the fur trade era. Particular attention is paid to the responsibilities of Métis women in the fur trade era and the subsequent era of mixed farming and free trading that followed. Another focus is women's responsibilities in sustaining the health and well-being of communities. From life in fur trade forts, to the transition onto Métis scrip land, and then to mixed farmers, Métis women had many roles. One role in particular was that of healer who employed both European and Aboriginal medicines.

The Social and Geographic Contexts of Métis Women's Lives
Economic, social, and political forces, like trade, hunting, commerce, freighting of goods, and kinship ties, combined to produce diverse Métis populations who, over time, migrated across many regions of a vast territory. The Métis homeland is an area

occupied by the Métis [that] ranged from the Great Lakes region westward and northward into the areas that became Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and the Pacific Northwest. Biracial populations also emerged south of the Great Lakes, in what are now the American Midwest, southwest, and Great Plains regions of the United States. People researching Métis populations are compelled to trace their subjects across immense areas (Devine, 2004, pp. 12–13).

Gerhard Ens (1998), for instance, documents the interrelationship of the Métis of St. Francois Xavier (west of Winnipeg) with the Turtle Mountain Métis community in North Dakota. Thorne (1996) documents further ties between peoples of French and Indigenous cultural heritage into the lower Missouri area as interconnected with peoples living farther north in territories that became Canada. Likewise, Devine (2004) shows the massive territory across North America that the Desjarlais family traversed through the generations. All three scholars describe patterns of land settlement and relocation in the United States and Canada, where kinship ties bound these communities together as borders and government policies worked to sever or at least strain them. The history of Métis people "runs deeper and more broadly across the North American landscape than has previously been acknowledged" (Peterson & Brown, 1985, p. 4).

Introducing Dorothy Chartrand

Dorothy Chartrand grew up the eleventh of thirteen children on a river lot in St. Albert. She was raised by her Métis parents and always knew that she was Métis. She was also significantly influenced by her older siblings, some of whom were nearly grown by the time she was born. Her research began in 1979 as her family prepared to hold a reunion to commemorate Alberta's upcoming seventy-fifth anniversary. In preparation for the anniversary, the province encouraged residents to look back and take interest in the histories of their communities. Dorothy knew that her family had been in Alberta and on their family land for far longer than the seventy-five years. Having grown up in a closely-knit community, she knew many Métis cousins and relations. Most of the neighbors and kids in her school were her relatives, but she did not know exactly how they were related.

Dorothy began to ask her brothers and sisters about their ancestors. Her oldest siblings knew about some of the relations and shared with her family names and stories. She learned that her dad's family was Métis of Cree and French descent, and her mother's Métis family was Cree, French, and Scottish from Red River, Manitoba. But the information was not as detailed as Dorothy would have liked, so she began a search for more information. This led her to the Alberta Historical Society, where she met others searching for their family histories in official, church, and Hudson's Bay Company records, provincial archives, and other recorded historical information.

Dorothy's search for her ancestors lasted more than twenty-five years and went back hundreds of years to France, Scotland, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. She amassed information and stories about thousands of people who were connected to her family or ancestors. These appear in her numerous charts and workbooks. At one point, Dorothy said that her husband told her, "You are lucky as you are living with your ancestors."

Dorothy's Research Activities

In 1980, Dorothy became involved in writing the community history for the St. Albert Historical Society, for which she contacted every one of the many Métis families who still lived in St. Albert. She then visited members of each family and encouraged (and sometimes assisted) them to share their stories. Dorothy wanted to ensure that the history project did not erase the Métis presence and history in this community.

Residents of St. Albert gained title to land largely through Métis scrip, and so it is important to Dorothy's story. Tough and McGregor (2007) explain that "Métis scrip, officially known as 'Halfbreed' scrip, was issued to Métis people with the intent of 'extinguishing' Indian title by granting land (or money) to individual Métis people" (p. 38). The government of Canada provided two kinds of scrip coupons to Métis peoples, land scrip and money scrip. Land scrip could be exchanged for land on Dominion lands set aside for homesteading.

Land scrip was usually doled out as two separate coupons in units of eighty acres and one hundred and sixty acres. Money scrip was issued in dollar units and could be converted by the bearer into Dominion lands; however, the acreages of land that could be obtained with the money scrip coupon depended upon prices set by the Interior Department. Early in the settlement of the prairie west, Dominion lands often sold for a dollar an acre. As land values increased over time, 160 dollars of money scrip would not buy 160 acres of homestead lands (Tough & McGregor, 2007, p. 38).

In Dorothy's search for information, she found that Métis scrip records were particularly helpful. Her great grandparents and grandparents, she learned, received scrip land through the scrip commission. Dorothy explains that "Métis scrip application forms asked the individual their

name, who their parents were, how many siblings they had, and were they English, French, Scots." As Macdougall (2006) states, "Up to three generations of family information was recorded in scrip applications, placing individuals within a matrix of family relationships" (p. 443). In an application for scrip, "a Métis claimant would complete a declaration (or application) in the presence of the commissioner, and this declaration would be supported by a witness declaration, with information usually provided by an individual familiar with the claimant" (Tough & McGregor, 2007, p. 39).

Dorothy also gained information from church records. These baptismal, marriage, and burial records helped to "situate an individual within a familial context by recording additional sets of data such as names of parents, grandparents, godparents, and witnesses for these life events, thereby revealing the social life of an individual and, by extension, the family" (Macdougall, 2006, p. 443).

Hudson's Bay Company servant records provided Dorothy with historical information about the people who had been employees for the Company. This company held a royal charter to all the territories that spilled into the Hudson's Bay, which is a very large portion of northern and western Canada. Dorothy found additional information in provincial archives in Alberta, Manitoba, and Quebec, including additional photographs, stories, and histories from other researchers whose research results were stored in archives. Dorothy also found additional information in provincial archives from the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, an order of Roman Catholic priests and lay brothers who paid visits to families and gathered names of all occupants of households in their parish and the apparent financial situation of each family. From these various records, Dorothy pieced together information about her family and community.

Roles of Women in the Fur Trade Forts

Dorothy investigated her great grandfather, Olivier Bellerose, who was born in Nicolette, Quebec, the grandson of a French soldier who had fought against the English on the Plains of Abraham in Quebec City. Olivier came to Fort Edmonton in 1833 with the Hudson's Bay Company. He married Suzette Savard in Lac La Biche, Alberta, and they raised a family of thirteen children who grew up inside Fort Edmonton. Dorothy recounts that "women ... though they weren't mentioned much in the

records ... were still within the Fort walls. They ... cleaned the walks and did the gardening in the summer time. So, they didn't only work with their families and their children. They helped for the good within the Fort walls."

The work of women is often not recorded in fort records (Sutherland, 2007). Phillip Coutu (2004) relates that in the mid- to late-1800s women often worked in and around Fort Edmonton, repairing canoes and fishing nets, and using them for fishing. He also suggests that Elders and children contributed to fort life by gathering berries, cutting wood, sewing, cooking, and assisting with other daily duties. Kaaren Olsen (1989) discusses the important roles of Aboriginal women in the 1800s as "silent partners" in the fur trade—assisting, educating the children, and maintaining the family home while their husbands were out trapping and trading (p. 55). Keith R. Widder (1999), who documents the period 1823–1837, supports this depiction, and also describes Métis women helping their voyageur husbands on portages during some expeditions. Vernon R. Wishart (2006) documents the late 1700s and the work of women in the snaring and trapping of animals like marten, weasel, rabbit, and muskrat at Elk Point, Alberta (located on the North Saskatchewan River several days from Fort Edmonton by canoe). He states that women's roles included "softening leather, sewing moccasins, stringing snowshoes, gutting fish and making fire out of a fire bag," and "provisioning the post not only with furs but also with fish and partridge" (p. 49).

Van Kirk (1980) further describes the important roles of women in the labour force in the forts. She describes the important skills that these women brought to the forts from their Indigenous mothers, like "making moccasins, netting snowshoes, and their skill, in fashioning mittens, caps and leggings," and their bead and quill work that adorned these garments (p. 8). They also acted as interpreters in the trade, and aided in the running of forts by cleaning buildings, planting and harvesting gardens, and gathering or hunting for food on land around the fort. Van Kirk quotes Chief Factor John Rowand at Fort Edmonton as stating, "The women here work very hard ... [and] if it was not so, I do not know how we would get on with the Company work" (p. 111).

Based on her research, Dorothy explains that "after a hunt ... [women] would be busy for a long time, drying out the meat before they could make it into pemmican but they did the pounding of the dried meat into a powder then it was mixed with buffalo fat and sometimes dried berries which would have been most probably Saskatoon berries picked by

women and children. These were stored in leather bags that could be buried in the ground for preservation." Women also made the bags that were used. These could also be stored in underground icehouses at Fort Edmonton (Coutu, 2004).

Donna Sutherland (2007) describes the work of women in fur trade forts as caring for children, making clothing and moccasins, planting and tending gardens, and preserving vegetables and grains for winter. Women also tended to livestock, tanned hides, and smoked, dried, and/or salted meat and wild game to store these foods. Women further cleaned the game and caught fish, as well as made pemmican.

Lucy Murphy (2003) also identifies the role that many Métis women played as cultural mediators in fur trade communities, moving easily between Aboriginal and European society, solidifying social and cultural bonds. Arthur J. Ray (1982) describes how the status of Métis women in the fur trade changed during the 1800s. He explains that as more European women arrived in the West, the status of mixed-blood women and children declined in fur trade society. This was linked to the status of Métis men in the fur trade. Amidst competition with European immigrants for jobs, a limited few were able to attain officer and clerk positions, but most were restricted to seasonal and contract work.

The Way of Life is Changing

Ray (1982) identifies the difficulties encountered by researchers who study fur trade and Métis history. He suggests that researchers often mistakenly generalize concepts from the history and experiences of the Red River Métis to the entire population of mixed-blood people in the fur trade. He also suggests that this is especially common in descriptions of Aboriginal women, particularly Métis. This over-generalizing of the Red River Métis to all Métis masks the diverse and complex experiences of Métis people, and serves to silence their stories. While all Métis experienced changing and shifting social and economic realities, and changes in one region affected changes in another, similar realities in struggles for land, for example, were not necessarily experienced at the same time and in the same way for all Métis. Over-generalizing masks these differences in experience and temporal period.

For example, Coutu (2004) describes deteriorating living conditions at Fort Edmonton in the 1860s due to an influx of gold-hungry fortune seekers. He proposes that this drastically changed the cultural environ-

ment at the fort and precipitated Métis migration to their own settlements. Métis began to retreat to independent Métis communities at this time, and increasingly relied on the buffalo hunt to sustain them.

Victoria Callihoo was the granddaughter of Fort Edmonton Chief Factor John Rowand. She was born in 1861 and lived in Lac Ste. Anne, only a few miles from St. Albert. She documented her participation in four buffalo hunts in which members of her community and those from St. Albert participated, suggesting that there were about one hundred families who participated in each year's hunt. It is likely that Olivier Bellerose and Suzette Savard and their adult offspring participated in the hunts that Callihoo described, as they, too, were buffalo hunters. Taking firewood and poles for tipis and tripods for drying meat on their carts, they traveled south of the South Saskatchewan River, where they found large herds of buffalo (Callihoo, 1960). Buffalo hunting in Alberta is described by the granddaughter of Marie Rose Delorme Smith, a Métis contemporary of Callihoo: "When the captain gave his orders, calling hoarsely 'Astum (come) swing in, asum', the carts were driven into a large circle, forming a natural corral. After the stock had been watered they were driven into the corral and the carts closed in formation" (Carpenter, 1977, p. 27). During the hunt, male riders on horseback would kill the buffalo. Most killed at least one buffalo each, and then the women would dress the meat (MacEwan, 1995; Carpenter, 1977; Callihoo, 1960). The children would pick buffalo chips (dried buffalo dung), which were used to sustain fires that would keep flies away from the drying meat (MacEwan, 1995). The men would then pound the dried meat. Sun-dried saskatoon berries were picked by women and children and added to the dried meat and cured buffalo fat to make pemmican. The pemmican was then stored in buffalo robes sewn with sinew (Callihoo, 1960). This was a staple part of the Métis diet.

With the destruction of the buffalo herds in the late nineteenth century, the Métis began to migrate north to the boreal forests or homesteads, sometimes secured through Métis scrip. Dorothy's great grandfather, Olivier Bellerose, a former employee at Fort Edmonton, became a settler with his Métis wife Suzette Savard. They settled with their surviving Métis offspring, most of whom were already adults, along both sides of the Sturgeon River, just outside the town of St. Albert. They helped establish a Métis community comprised of relations who continued to work together to maintain family ties throughout this territory.

The Métis, Cree, Nakoda, and Cree-Iroquois families of the historic Beaver Hills area, along the North Saskatchewan River, up to St. Albert and Lac Ste. Anne and Wabamun, north past Morinville to Alexander, and all around the old Fort Edmonton—the people of amiskwaciwaskâhikan—were often close relatives. That remains true today. We have shared territory, and a shared history (Belcourt, 2006, p. 168).

The Belcourt and Bellerose families were living on river lots and engaged in mixed-farming. Geiger (1996) discusses the river lot system in place in Victoria, a Métis settlement approximately one hundred kilometres downstream from Fort Edmonton on the North Saskatchewan River. Each family had access to the river and engaged in limited agricultural pursuits, with men still fishing, hunting, and trading for the Hudson's Bay Company (Geiger, 1996; Shore, 1996). Coutu (2004) also cites increasing tension between the Cree, Blackfoot, and Europeans as a motivating factor for Métis establishing their own settlements.

Struggles for Land

Struggles for land in Manitoba spilled over onto the Prairies. For the Métis, these struggles began in the Red River area. Treaties had been signed with various First Nations and white settlers were moving in. Despite the Métis having established their own government and land systems, the Canadian state did not guarantee them any right to land. Additionally, their traditional river lot system was not respected in Manitoba.

The Manitoba Act provided extensive land grant to the Métis of Manitoba. Section 31 set aside 1.4 million acres for distribution among "the children of the half-breed heads of families," while section 32 confirmed the title of old settlers, Métis or white, who had possessed land in Manitoba prior to 15 July 1870. ... Additional legislation in 1874 granted \$160 scrip redeemable in Dominion Land, to all Métis heads of families, husbands and wives alike. ... What happened to all this land and scrip is one of the enduring questions of Métis history and is also a current legal and political interest (Flanagan, 2007, p. 105).

Dorothy's paternal grandparents took land in St. Albert. Her grandmother was Lucie L'Hirondelle, a Cree-speaking Métis woman from Lesser Slave Lake. Lucy's mother was a Métis woman from the Gaspar family, born at Jasper House trading post, which was named for her family. Lucy's father worked for the Hudson's Bay Company. Lucy, along with Dorothy's grandfather Octave Bellerose, son of Olivier Bellerose and Suzette Savard, established themselves on a river lot not far from Olivier and Suzette, in the area near all of Octave's brothers and sisters in the emerging St. Albert Métis community. Dorothy explains that

in Octave and Lucy's case. Octave took the 240 dollars in money and Lucy took the 240 acres in the land. And with Octave's having participated in the St. Albert Mounted Rifle Men he was further allowed 80 acres and he bought the rest of the portion of his land outright with money eventually. Some of these scrip negotiations lasted over a period of five to ten years.

Dorothy further states, "When Lucy and Octave were married they lived in a two storied log house which was built on river lot 38." Victoria Calihoo (1953) states that Métis houses were made of hewn spruce logs with windows covered with stretched hide, and bark used as roofing shingles. Calihoo explains that once a house was finished, and within days of a family moving into it, there was a dance in the house to which the neighbors and relations were invited. Because there were no tables or chairs built yet, people ate on the floor, where a white cloth atop a canvas had been laid. There were no beds, so buffalo robes were used as mattresses, with Hudson Bay Company blankets and flour or sugar sack pillows filled with duck and goose feather.

Callihoo (1953) further explains that once the buffalo were gone, Métis people raised cattle, hogs, and chickens, and ate moose, deer, and bear. Dorothy states that Lucy L'Hirondelle worked hard on their farm, where she was

the main stay when Octave was on his extended trading trips. She would likely have some young nephew or relative staying with her that would help look after the chores. But she also managed to keep things going. She had a milk house built not too far away from the house. The earth had been dug down to the hard pan of the soil, like clay soil, and it was hard enough

that they could sweep it tidy. She had a little log building built on that. In those days there were no cream separators so Lucy had a table in her little milk house and she used to put milk in big pans on the table and each morning she would skim the cream off the top with a little metal paddle. It was round shaped with little holes in it and she would scrape this cream off on top of that milk pan to make butter out of the cream and then of course she would have to churn the cream in order to make the butter. I would imagine that she only used the butter for home meals. I have no record of her having traded her butter for supplies at the store.

Many women also sold butter to provide extra money for their families. Carpenter (1977) states that her ancestor, Marie Rose Delorme Smith, had a milk house where she separated the cream by hand (p. 127). She also churned butter that was in high demand.

Historian Sarah Carter (2006) documents the work and lives of Cree people moving to a settled farming existence in the 1880s. According to Carter,

Like other prairie women of this period, Aboriginal women helped in the fields during peak seasons such as haying and harvest, but otherwise the business of grain farming was predominantly a male activity. Women continued to harvest wild resources such as berries, wild rhubarb, prairie turnip, and birch sap, and they hunted rabbits, gophers, and ducks. ... By the late 1880s [women learned skills] such as milking, butter-making, bread-making, and knitting. Women adapted readily to these activities, but a chronic shortage of raw materials made it difficult to apply what they had learned. While the women knew how to make loaf bread, for example, they did not have the proper ovens, yeast, or baking tins, so they continued to make bannock, despite government attempts to abolish it from the diet as it required more flour than loaf bread (p. 234).

In the context of the Bellerose family, Dorothy adds,

Lucy raised the family herself, sort of, because many of those trips that Octave was on were of long long duration, when the

train was being pushed though from the east to BC. There are records of him having gone as far as Swift Current to pick up supplies. So he would have been gone for some time in order to make a trip that long. And he was doing this for the Hudson's Bay Company and the merchants of Edmonton such as the Revenue Brothers who were a fairly big store company. Grandma lived long enough that we as grandchildren knew her. She lived in her little house on the river lot 38 along with us in our yard and she shared many of the meals with us. But she had her own little stove and table in her little house. On occasion, if she had company she would cook a meal herself and choose to make bannock, good bannock, that was the staple of the Métis people.

Lucy also made moccasins for her family using sinu as thread. She prepared sinu from the rear leg of a large animal, likely a cow. The muscle was hung until dried, chewed, and scraped into threads with a sharp knife. Dorothy is sure that Lucy learned her skills from her mother.

Women had great responsibilities in the fur trade era. They provided for their families, ran farms, directed the work of their children, and hired relatives who helped them. They generated wealth by making butter or selling moccasins. They cooked for their families and maintained family and community ties by sharing meals with neighbours, family, and friends. They were often the only consistent adult residents of communities because their husbands were frequently away on long trips. As such, they headed single-parent families for much of the year. Their roles in maintaining communities cannot be understated. Informal networks of meal sharing and community gatherings aided in maintaining communities and familial ties.

Introducing Lucy Breland and Narcissus Beaudry

Dorothy's maternal grandparents were Lucy Breland and Narcissus Beaudry, who originally lived in St. Francois Xavier, on the White Horse Plains in the Red River area where Lucy had grown up. Narcissus had family in this region but had grown up in St. Albert. Carpenter (1977) explains that "farms on the White Horse Plains were narrow at the water's edge and extended back as far as the settler cared to cultivate" (p. 18). Carpenter states that within her family, those who took land on the White

Horse Plains did not farm, but only did what was necessary to claim the land and then lived as buffalo hunters and traders (p. 20). Lucy and Narcissus established a home at St. Francois Xavier, but Dorothy explains that "while they were away on the buffalo hunting trip [in the 1870s] the government surveyors had moved in and insisted that they have the right to chop the land into square sections and eliminate the river lots." Dorothy states that the Métis

wanted their water front and they also wanted their pasture land at the other end of their properties where they could make hay and pastures for the animals. But when they came back they realized that the surveyors had come in and started to break up these pieces of land with their quarter section of land as required by the government.

Sprague (2007) suggests that while it was not a conspiracy amongst land surveyors to overlook Métis land rights and to record only a few, he claims that surveyors were "more interested in running the boundaries of lots than mapping the locations of persons in the haste to complete everything quickly. The result was many families included in the 1870 census are not found in the surveyor's field notes" (p. 33). Sprague further shows that Protestant parishes were surveyed first (after the Métis resistance of 1870), followed by the large French-Métis parishes. Thus there was up to an eight-year delay in settling lands for the Métis. As a result, allotments for Saint Francis Xavier, where Lucy Breland and Narcissus Beaudry had land, "were not available until that parish had begun wholesale dispersal of its 1870 population." Sprague contends that "still, the migration of recipients was no impediment to the sale of their land," inferring that the lands were not received by the Métis, but rather were sold by the government and others for their own financial gain (p. 33). Tough and McGregor (2007) document some of these land sale abuses.

As a result of the surveyors' actions and delays, Lucy Breland and Narcissus Beaudry left St. Francis Xavier for the St. Albert area to take up land. But their struggles for land occurred again here, for the government was again set to determine land use. The citizens of St. Albert sent a delegation to Ottawa, including a Catholic priest and a white businessman (who was married to a daughter of Olivier Bellerose), to establish their river lot system on the lots they had already established. Eventually the scrip commission was set up in 1885–86, and the second generation of Métis were granted 240 acres of land or \$240 dollars.

Oral history from Dorothy's older brother Robert claims that the Beaudry family lived on land in St. Albert since the 1830s, which was eventually taken from them in the 1860s and became the site of the St. Albert Catholic mission. After their land was taken, Narcissus' father left and returned to the Red River area, leaving Narcissus and his brother to break and farm the lands on which they settled, which was a narrow strip of land further down river. Narcissus and Lucy established the trading post in St. Albert in the 1880s to continue the work of Lucy's father. Pascal Breland used to take Lucy, her mother, Marie Grant, and Lucy's siblings on trading trips across what later became Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. Pascal Breland was the son of a French-Canadian freeman, Pierre Joseph du Boishué dit Berland/Breland, and Louisa Umphreville, also known as Josephte or Louise Belly, a Métis who was born in 1811 in the Saskatchewan District. Louisa's second husband was John Rowand, chief factor of Fort Edmonton. Louisa raised John Rowand's son, Antoine Rowand, who was the grandfather of the aforementioned Victoria Belcourt Calliou. The earlier discussions of family relations being important are no more evident than seen through this family's extended relatives.

Pascal Breland was a hunter and a trader who faced economic hardship, so he moved his family to St. Francois Xavier in the 1820s, where he farmed a small acreage but continued to follow the buffalo hunt. "In 1829, after the death of his father, Pascal took over the family farm and by the 1840s was a leading free trader in the settlement. His career as a trader was helped immeasurably by his marriage in 1936 to Marie Grant, the daughter of Cuthbert Grant" (Ens, 1996, p. 86).

Swan and Jerome (2007) suggest that freemen like Pascal Breland were descendants of French Canadians who lived as Cree interpreters. However, they came to see themselves as distinct from their French Canadian and Indigenous parent groups, having become horsemen and buffalo hunters, and using Indigenous ways to live on the prairie and parkland. These independent men enjoyed economic freedom, hunted with family and community, and participated in the trade of furs, dried meat, and fat with fur trade companies, seeking profit rather than just subsistence in order to care for families. These men were independent of the control of the fur trade companies and understood themselves as free, calling themselves *gens libres*, or freemen. From this independence emerged an understanding of themselves as Métis. Douaud (2007) suggests that the exposure to both European and Indigenous traditions gave the Métis the opportunity to experience "'the best of both cultures' as Albertan Métis

Elder Adrian 'Pete' Hope was fond of saying" (p. 13). Pascal Breland was a freeman who enjoyed the benefits of both worlds while responding to the many challenges that presented themselves.

Dorothy's great grandmother, Marie Grant, lived during both Métis resistances. Marie was the daughter of Cuthbert Grant, a Métis of Scottish and Cree descent who received his education in Scotland. Marie's mother was a Cree woman named Marie Magdolane Demure. Cuthbert became known as the "Warden of the Plains" in the 1812–17 period. He played a leadership role in the skirmish between Métis and Selkirk settlers in the Red River area that ended in bloodshed. This was at a time when both groups were struggling with harsh living conditions and there were no guaranteed land rights for Métis. "Grant was not only the leader of the St. Francois Xavier Métis but one of the few Métis allowed to trade freely by the Hudson's Bay Company. In return for this privilege, Grant was to keep other Métis out of the trade" (Ens, 1996, p. 86). Pascal Breland, who was a businessman, eventually became active as a "member of the Council of Assiniboia and president of the district court of White Horse Plain" (Ens, 1996, p. 87). He was a trader who traveled each summer with Marie and their children, bringing goods and supplies in a cart brigade to the western locations of St. Albert and other locations along their route, then returned to Manitoba with furs.

Breland's quick rise to prominence as a trader in the 1840s, before the Hudson's Bay Company's monopoly had been broken, was no doubt aided by the protection of his father-in-law. ... When Cuthbert Grant died in 1854, Pascal bought out most of the other heirs to Grant's domain and became the largest landowner and trader in St. Francois Xavier (Ens, 1996, p. 86).

Despite the benefits of her father's and her husband's financial successes, Marie and her children lived with the uncertainty of changing times like all other Métis experienced.

Dorothy's Research Results—Women as Healers

Dorothy explains that Marie Grant's father received some medical education and an apprenticeship in Scotland. Apparently he imparted some of this knowledge to his daughter. At the time of a small pox epidemic in 1869/1870, Marie was able to draw upon her father's knowledge and create a serum using blood from people who had survived the disease to

inoculate people in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The disease had much less effect in those communities where she performed inoculations.

According to Dorothy, Marie Grant further instilled in her daughter an appreciation for the importance of healing. Lucy (Breland) Beaudry (Marie Grant's daughter) had a medicine bag, which she left to her daughter, Justine (Beaudry) Bellerose. Justine, in turn, used local plants to make a poultice with a peppermint-flavored plant that grew along the Sturgeon River, which ran through their St. Albert river lot. Dorothy explained that the plant, which Justine chewed into a poultice, was "a very small long slender leaf—something like a spruce tree with little sections that grew along the main stem. She'd chew that when it was still in the green stage and use it to help her children." John J. Martin's *In the Rosebud Trail* likewise documents the creation of poultice by Wishart's grandmother, Eliza, who helped heal a persistent wound on Martin's palm.

Someone told me to go to Mrs. Wishart. In the Wishart kitchen Eliza studied the wound awhile, then ... she got the "medicine bag." It was full of roots and hung high up on a spruce log knot. After selecting the right root she chewed it to a pulp, and placed it directly on the wound and wrapped it with buckskin. I do not remember how many treatments I had but my hand healed" (Martin, quoted in Wishart, 2006, p. 127).

Justine, Dorothy's mother, used many other remedies. Dorothy recalls playing as a child and stepping on a rusty nail. Her mother went to the icehouse, where there was a barrel of salt pork that had been made that spring. Justine brought in a piece of pork to cook later, but took a piece of the skin off the salt pork and put it over Dorothy's wound, where the nail had punctured her skin. A bandage was then tied over the salt pork. The next day, the pain was gone and the healing underway. The wound healed fully and Dorothy never had any trouble with her foot.

Dorothy also recalls that her brother Harry had a terrible cough and her mother thought it was going to become pneumonia. Justine warmed up flax seed in a pan in the oven. Once it was warm, she took the flax seed out, put it between warm cloths, and then put it on his chest and back. He recovered and did not need any additional treatment. Dorothy comments that her mother "had these remedies tucked away in her brain ... that she came ahead with when something happened."

Victoria Callihoo was described in MacEwan (1995) as having a Cree mother who was a recognized medicine woman who cured sick and injured people, particularly using herbs, and who attended to the sick on buffalo hunts. However, Herb Belcourt claims that Victoria's mother was Nancy Drouin Rowand, the daughter of Antoine Rowand and Archange Nippising (likely an Anishnawbe woman). Nancy was of mixed ancestry, so she was not a Cree woman as MacEwan suggests, but rather a Métis healer. She was often made so busy by the sick and injured—those with broken bones or who had been gored by animals—that she had no time to help the other women prepare the buffalo meat when out on hunts. Carpenter (1977) describes her great grandmother, Marie Rose Smith Delorme, a Métis woman referred to as "Mother Delorme," who treated burns and tended to the health of the camp during buffalo hunts using a "buckskin bag with pouches of herbs, tea drinks and poultices" (p. 39). Carpenter writes that the daughter of Mother Delorme learned many things from her mother, and that she too was sought out as a healer and that ill children were left in her care until they were better (p. 149). Marie Rose was also a midwife until sometime after 1914, when she received a letter from officials in Edmonton demanding that she stop the practice.

Murphy (2003) discusses the important role that many mixed-blood women, using a combination of Aboriginal and European medical techniques, played in fur trade communities as healers and midwives to European and Aboriginal people. She uses the term "public mothers" to describe this role. Sutherland (2007) further outlines some of the healing work that Métis women performed in the fur trade era, stating that "she helped to nurture the many ill people who came to the fort in the sub-zero winter months" (p. 320). The records for Oxford House further establish this role of Métis women in aiding the well-being of ill travelers.

Lois Edge and Tom McCallum (2006) describe the continued integration of Indigenous and European medicine in contemporary Métis communities. They suggest that this integration allows for a more balanced approach to health care, addressing not only mental and physical needs, but also spiritual and emotional ones. This mode of healing honours traditional epistemologies and ontologies, while also taking advantage of modern advances in health care. Their approach may well reflect practices undertaken much earlier, when French voyageurs learned about Indigenous practices to get a good wind in the sails to cross Lake Superior by giving gifts of tobacco and other offerings to powerful spirits of the lake; to get food in a time of starvation by dancing and singing as their Ojibway

neighbors did; or to gain knowledge of Indigenous languages and form kinship ties that created Michif, the unique language of the Métis people (Podruchny, 2006, pp. 73, 83, 75).

Conclusions

The methodology employed in this research study included both community-based research with Dorothy Chartrand as well as archival and literary research. The community-based research yielded a large amount of rich data from oral histories. Dorothy's community-based and archival research also yielded considerable information that she integrated into her discussions of her own family. My research followed up her research, further examining sources from which she had gleaned information. I supplemented these understandings by finding first-hand accounts from Métis women authors, as well as from historical academic literature that documents the history of Métis people, particularly Métis women. The tactic of engaging in both community-based oral data gathering with academic and historical/archival research creates a rich data set from which to understand stories. The integration of these various approaches allows the stories to be located in a particular social, cultural, historical, and geographical context. This appears to me to be a rich process that yields the result of a deeper understanding of the contextual realities of Métis women's lives, as well as a rich relationship to the contexts in which the stories are told. While this study is of one grandmother, Dorothy Chartrand, whose unique contribution is as a community historian, it suggests that there are opportunities for valuable understandings by engaging in community research. It also suggests that community research combined with archival and historic research can aid in telling a story from a community perspective, even when the data set is from an archive written by people other than Métis. It also suggests that literature in the field, particularly first-hand accounts, or those based on first-hand accounts, can yield deeper understandings than engaging in any single type of research.

The limited number of first-hand accounts supports a richer connection to the stories that Dorothy told, suggesting that there are connections between Dorothy's ancestors' stories and those told by other Métis peoples. Indeed, that Métis peoples across their homeland share many kinship ties, and familial relations suggest that there are close connections between communities, even those across vast geographic distances.

I was able to overcome the challenge of limited first-hand resources by drawing understandings from Dorothy's oral history, by searching out a large set of resources that document Métis women's lives in various geographic areas, and by drawing upon academic literatures that document some of the lives and work of Métis peoples. Taken together, there is a rich set of information about the lives and work of Métis women in their communities.

Indigenous women have been central figures in creating what we now call Canada. In the fur trade era (from the late 1700s to late 1800s), women were active participants and partners as guides accompanying explorers. They were also actively involved in the maintenance and productivity of forts, supplying goods and labour that made fort life bearable and profitable. They undertook the role of raising families as well as providing through gardening, berry picking, fishing, drying meat, and making pemmican. It is not surprising that women's roles in the fur trade era are not more fully acknowledged. English or French male clerks created the records, and many placed little or no value on the contributions of women. Furthermore, these clerks were charged with recording the work and labour of the men in the employ of fur trade companies and the transit and control of goods. Recording the labour and of women was not their concern, so little of this is acknowledged in the records.

Women were also active in the era of transition, as the fur trade era declined and trade shifted to private transporters. They aided husbands in running stables and trading posts, assisted in the transport of goods on brigades, raised families who would eventually become involved in the trade themselves, and educated children in diplomacy and skills necessary to the practice of trade.

When the era of free traders shifted further to include settled lives of mixed farming, women ran farms while their husbands were away. They coordinated the labour and work of relatives, fed cattle, hauled water, milked cows, gathered eggs, produced butter for sale or family use, planted and harvested gardens, picked berries and other wild produce to be canned or dried for winter provisions, dressed wild and domesticated animals, and made pemmican. They also prepared hides and tendon tissue into sinu to sew leather into moccasins, both for families and for sale to fur trade forts and private traders.

Women also were important and consistent members of settled communities who sustained kinship ties and communities and cultural traditions as they laboured to keep their families fed. The lives of communities

were sustained through informal community practices of sharing meals and family gatherings. Women's role in sustaining stable communities and making the transition from hunter/gatherers to subsistence farmers is central, even though it is often overlooked in the historical record.

Finally, women were active in sustaining communities through provision of midwifery and medical care, both of which combined Indigenous traditional and western medical practices. What we now consider herbal remedies were major practices engaged by women to maintain the health of communities.

Women were central figures in the fur trade, transition, and farming eras in Canada. They were impacted by land shifts, dislocations, relocations, disease, and political and economic changes. Despite the changes, they remained important characters in the maintenance of the health and well-being of their communities. Their work, rarely acknowledged in history texts, is central to understanding the creation of the settlements that were precursors to modern towns and cities, and to understanding the foundations of economic and political realities. Without these powerful women, the Canadian West could not have emerged. I honour their contributions to Canada. All my relations.

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