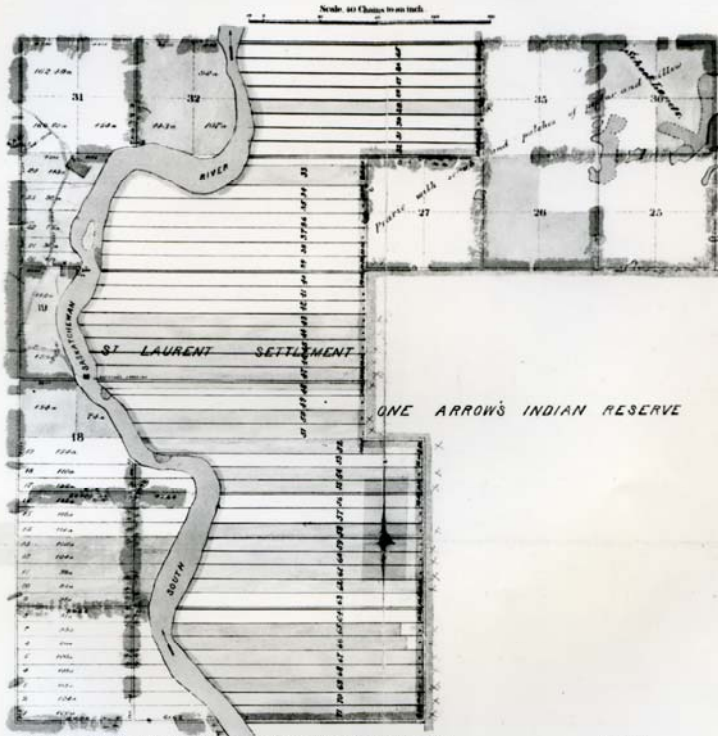


THIRD EDITION (CORRECTED)
 PLAN OF
TOWNSHIP N^o 43
 RANGE 1 WEST OF THIRD MERIDIAN



Note. The portions coloured red are Lands reserved by the Government

Compiled from surveys by

J. L. Road D.L.S. 1879 & P.
 M. Adams D.L.S. 1879
 M. Hart D.L.S. 1884
 Chas. P. Leckie D.L.S. 1889

Domain Lands Office
 Ottawa
 25th June 1890
 Approved and confirmed

H. W. G. Gault
 Surveyor General

EXPLANATION OF COLOURS

Woods — Green. Scrub or Prairie and Woods dotted green. Water — Blue
 Marshes Yellow with small strokes of black. Hills or Slopes — Etching or Grey Shade.
 Roads (Burst Woods) — Brown. Settlers Improvements — Pink

Contents

Land in Sections 7-2-34 00	Acres
Roads	3 9 00 "
Water	" "
Total Area	76 27 00 "

693

Township Plan of Township 43, Range 1, West of the Third Meridian showing St. Laurent settlement and the Batoche ferry crossing; and location of plots relative to the One Arrow Indian Reserve. Saskatchewan Archives Board, Photograph Collection, S-B6500.

Métis Culture

Yvonne Vizina

Roots of traditional Aboriginal worldviews teach that there are four interconnected parts to life including *mental*, *physical*, *spiritual* and *emotional*. Looking at how culture exists also means looking into these four different, but symbiotic aspects of life. Today, the importance of understanding these aspects of culture are more broadly known and adopted. The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) explains that "...culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs..."¹ This article will explore Métis culture from within the framework of a traditional Aboriginal worldview.

Coming to Know: Métis Culture

The Métis Nation emerged from within the Métis Nation Homeland during the seventeenth century, as a result of the French and English fur trade. At that time, Canada did not exist as a country² and the provincial governments we know today in western Canada would not exist for another 200 years. Marriages between European fur traders and First Nation women produced children of mixed ancestry, who eventually became known as Métis, 'Half-Breeds,' or 'Country Born' people. Establishing relationships with Aboriginal³ women gave fur traders valuable contacts with tribal communities, and

tribal communities with regular access to trade goods. The women were also able to teach the traders local languages, show them how to survive on the land and tend to domestic affairs such as preparing food, constructing shelters, and making clothing. Daughters born from these unions usually carried on traditional roles taught by their mothers. Sons grew up to enter the fur trade, become hunters, trappers, or canoemen. Those with schooling were able to become clerks or interpreters at the trading posts.⁴ The development of a unique Métis culture began to unfold.

In the spirit of the French voyageurs during the fur trade, Métis men used the superior wilderness skills of their Indian heritage to create their own *esprit de corps*. As agents of the Hudson's Bay Company or the North West Company, Métis men could easily be identified by a blue *capote* (coat), beaded pipe bag and bright red *L'Assomption* sash, which together created a kind of cultural uniform⁵. The Métis even invented their own particular language known as Michif, which was a mix of both European and Aboriginal languages, generally French and Cree or Ojibway. The life of Métis men was rigorous, days were long, work was extremely hard, and always, life and death depended on their skill in the wilderness. During this time, the Cree gave the Métis a name, "o-tee-paym-soo-wuk," which means "their own boss." This characterization underlines the Métis spirit of pride and independence. The versatility and ability of Métis men and women to withstand incredible tests of intellect, strength and endurance during the fur trade, contributed to a growing sense of consciousness of what it was to be Métis. That sense of character, combined with a shared Métis history and language, created a sense of nationhood which would have a significant impact on the development of Canada itself.

During the mid-eighteenth century, the horse was introduced which brought a new means of hunting buffalo and transporting goods. The Métis highly valued their horses, were expert marksmen on horseback, and loved to engage in horse-racing to increase their riding skills, and for the pure joy of it. As the fur trade pushed farther and farther to the western regions, trappers and traders needed a food supply that would not spoil. Dried buffalo meat mixed with fat and wild berries known as pemmican became a valuable commodity sold by First Nations and Métis to the fur trade companies⁶. Horses helped the Métis develop the local buffalo hunts and pemmican trade across Canada and the northern United States. Although this was good commerce for the Métis, in 1814 Miles Macdonnell, the Governor of Assiniboia, issued a proclamation prohibiting the Métis from selling their goods to the fur trade companies, and a second proclamation prohibiting the Métis from hunting buffalo on horseback. Growing animosity between the fur trade companies resulted in a terrible confrontation over pemmican in 1816 at Seven Oaks, in which twenty-one settlers and one Métis were killed⁷. This marked the first time the Métis flag was flown. The flag was emblazoned with the *infinity* symbol, symbolizing two cultures together forever, and demonstrating a statement of nationhood.

On July 1, 1867, Canada became a country governing the newly created provinces of Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and entered into negotiations with the Hudson's Bay Company to purchase the North West Territories,⁸ as the west was then known. The Métis were not consulted in the negotiations, and land surveyors had begun moving into the Red River area to alter the land divisions from long strips designed by the Métis for their use into an American-developed system of square plots designed for new settlers. The new development strategy was seen as a threat to Métis cultural, political, linguistic and religious, rights, and

resulted in the formation of a provisional Métis government in 1869 to negotiate a list of rights with the federal government. Through this process, the province of Manitoba was created and land was promised to the Métis based on a system of scrip land and money coupons.⁹

The Scrip system was a colossal failure from the perspective of the Métis. The federal government did not start issuing Scrip until 1873 and by 1875 three different methods of allocation were introduced; each cancelling out the previous one, resulting in many Métis losing title to their land to settlers. As a result of the lack of justice, relations broke down between the Métis and the federal government. Conflict emerged again as the Métis tried to stand their ground. English-speaking settlers placed a \$5,000 bounty on Métis leader Louis Riel, who managed to escape to the United States. Ambroise Lepine, Riel's Adjutant-General, was arrested in 1873. With the continuous influx of settlers, many Métis left the Red River area and resettled at Batoche and surrounding areas.

There had been a presence of Métis for many generations in northern, central and southern Saskatchewan. It was natural for other Métis to seek out family, friends and familiar lifestyles in areas similar to what they knew. Settlements were already established at Qu'Appelle, Willowbunch, St. Laurent, St. Antoine de Padou (Batoche) and St. Albert (near Edmonton). Northern Métis settlements such as Ile-a-la-Crosse had existed since the early days of the fur trade and were thriving communities. Their desire for peaceful existence was not long-lasting as the surveyors and Scrip Commissions made their way west.

The Métis were not generally accepted by whites or Indians. They were not included in treaty systems and were ineligible for land grants offered to other settlers. Instead, the federal

government continued to insist on the Scrip system as it was intended to extinguish the Aboriginal rights of the Métis¹⁰. The Scrip system was rife with fraud facilitated by the representatives managing the system, land speculators and other wishing to dispossess the Métis of land. Eventually, the Métis were forced again to stand their ground over rights, resulting in a battle with the Canadian militia in 1885 at Batoche.

Coming to Act: Métis Culture

The Métis have been an important part of Canadian history standing for cultural, political, religious and linguistic rights, demonstrating ingenuity creating political and social structures, technology and trade systems, as well as developing a unique presence in art, music, dance and storytelling.

Among the activities Métis are best known for historically are buffalo hunts. The hunts were not just hard work, they were also festive events. Hundreds of families in military precision made the journey to Pembina, Minnesota where the hunt began. Noisy Red River carts were brightly decorated and hunter's horses proudly adorned with intricate quill and beadwork decorations. When it began, the buffalo hunt was extremely dangerous, but horses and riders were a skilled, fearless team able to take down as many as twelve animals in a day. Métis women and children followed behind the hunters skinning the animals and preparing the meat for drying. At the end of the hunt, boisterous parties were held, celebrating a successful hunt. Energetic dancing, fiddle music, card playing and storytelling were all part of the festivities.¹¹

The Métis lived neither a quiet nor sedate lifestyle and celebration was an important part of the culture. Horse racing, horse-trotting, and winter sleigh racing was also enormously

enjoyed as good sporting activities. As a matter of Métis pride, it was also very important to have the horses outfitted with flashy beadwork and colourful saddlecloths.

The Red River Jig fiddle tune has come to be known as the unofficial Métis anthem. It is believed to have been created by the Desjarlais family of the Red River colony. Métis fiddle music and performance was influenced by Scottish, Irish, French and Indian traditions resulting in a unique style. Vigorous foot tapping is believed to have originated as a replacement for Indian and Celtic hand drums.¹² Métis music was intended for social purpose, especially dancing. This became so popular that it was not uncommon for weekly dances to be hosted at someone's house where several fiddle players would combine their talent and visitors would dance all night long. Sometimes, dances lasted several days¹³. In order to accommodate more people, furniture from the house would be piled up in a corner or put outside until the dance was over. Since the houses were small, people would have to take turns dancing. The most popular dances were the rabbit dance, the duck dance, la dance du crochet and the Red River Jig.¹⁴

The artistic skill of Métis women was demonstrated in practical application of clothing design as well as decorative elements of outfits worn by people, horses and even dogs. The unique combinations of European and First Nations economic, social, political and spiritual traditions as an expression of Métis cultural identity gave rise to them being referred to as 'Flower Beadwork People.'¹⁵ Coats, mittens and caps for people were finely decorated, but the Métis honoured the important relationships they had with their animals by inventing elaborately decorated equipment for them. Horse halters, bridles, martingales, blankets, pad saddles, pouches and whips were colourful expressions of skill and artistic design. Dogs too were invaluable companions and workmates, earning

custom-made blankets called *Tuppies* or *Tapis* to wear. Each was decorated with wool yarn, bells, flower beadwork or embroidery. It is said that when the bells jingled in time to their running gait, the dogs seemed to enjoy the sound and gain inspiration in the same way highland pipes inspired regiments.¹⁶ Many floral beadwork patterns were adopted by Indian women, and Métis-style coats made from hide and decorated with porcupine quills became popular with Europeans.¹⁷ Métis women produced many of their crafts for commercial purpose.

Until most recent times, most Métis spoke multiple languages and many were literate in French or English. The Michif language, rooted in a mixture of French nouns and Cree or Saukteaux (Ojibway) verbs, was a unique outcome of Métis mixed ancestry and creativity. Just as the grammar and lexicon of Michif is unique,¹⁸ the stories of the Métis also combine elements, perspectives and traditions of their ancestral lineages. Stories were generally used as teaching methods, a way of passing on cultural history, but Métis storytellers were also well-known for fantastic embellishments intended to make others laugh, or to frighten a little, thereby making the teller a good entertainer. William Henry Jackson (Honoré Jaxon), secretary to Louis Riel in 1885, spent most of his life collecting Métis historical documents and photographs which were lost to the New York City dump on his death in 1952 at the age of 90.¹⁹ Louis Riel was one of the first Métis poets and his spiritually-inspired creations are still published today.²⁰ The tradition of literary art and poetry is carried on by Métis writers including Rita Bouvier²¹ and Gregory Scofield.²²

Coming to Believe: Métis Culture

The spirit of the Métis and the spiritual practices of the Métis are as complex as the ancestral roots of their Indian and

European culture and languages. During the time of the fur trade, the Métis middlemen, who worked between their fathers' and mothers' cultures, were highly influenced by the Roman Catholic Church and sometimes assisted missionaries in spreading the teachings of the Church "telling their wife and children of the Creator and of our duties towards Him, making them pray as they themselves did, baptizing people in danger of death, giving the dead a Christian burial..."²³

This, however, did not mean that Métis relinquished their Indian cultural belief systems, and were comfortable blending them together. Ann Acco (Carriere) of Cumberland House, Saskatchewan explains:

"Women look after the spiritual needs / knowledge of the family. You must be able to pray for yourself. I originally thought that this was because of the Christian ethic in our communities. However, after sifting through all known material and the ceremonies attached to the cultural markers, it is clear that knowing how to communicate with Kitchi-Manitou is beyond culture and ego. This is very important. Women who have no belief system when they are becoming part of a family will sometimes be shunned. "How will the children survive?" becomes the question."²⁴

Starting in the mid-nineteenth century, politicians and clergy determined that Aboriginal Peoples would not willingly give up their ancestral belief systems necessitating a strategy to remove the children from their homes and begin a thorough assimilation and indoctrination process.²⁵ The eventual creation of the notorious residential schools meant multiple generations of First Nations, Métis and Inuit spent many years

of their lives within these systems. The intergenerational impacts of neglect, abuse and efforts to erase the inherent identity of those children are still felt forcefully today and likely will continue for generations to come.

Throughout Métis history, spiritual beliefs and political views were important parts of Métis life. These were things worth fighting for.

Coming to Feel: Métis Culture

Métis history and culture is steeped in laws and ethics that are designed to overcome challenges and give strength to persevere in the face of enormous adversary. The Provisional Government developed in Red River in 1869 and the List of Rights sought to bring order and protection for the Métis way of life in the face of changing times and pressure from settlers pouring into a new land. The Laws of the Prairie assured everyone knew and understood rules of behaviour to ensure a successful buffalo hunt. A vigorous letter-writing campaign by Louis Riel and Métis efforts to utilize the democratic election process showed their strong desire to negotiate a peaceful settlement to disputes with the federal government over encroachment on Métis land and self-governance. In spite of all their efforts, the fiery spirit of the Métis inevitably led to battles at Seven Oaks in 1870 and Batoche in 1885.

The aftermath of the 1885 battle at Batoche left a grieving Métis Nation. Fewer than 300 Métis and Indians led by Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont defended Batoche from the 800-strong North-West Field Force, commanded by Major General Frederick Middleton. While the Métis successfully disabled the *Northcote* steamer bringing militiamen, Middleton's land forces were well equipped with guns and ammunition, four nine-pound canons and a Gatling gun. The Métis held out for

four days. Riel and Dumont both escaped, but Riel later gave himself up.²⁶

After 1885, the Métis were branded as rebels and traitors and were relegated to living on road allowances. Mainstream society rejected Métis people, and the federal government refused them recognition under the *Indian Act*. The Métis have endured many hardships economically and politically, forced to live in poverty between worlds, and denied the right to education because they did not pay taxes.²⁷ Over the next several years, contemporary Métis leaders including Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris brought Métis issues into political discussions to raise awareness and argue for the right to a better life.

Despite many hardships, Métis People have persevered. For many years, in the absence of political structures, processes of friendship and reciprocity remained intact. Howard Adams, a well known contemporary Métis educator recalled,

...my memory of a reasonably happy childhood is consistent with most Métis children of St. Louis-Batoche. Since the area included such a large population of Aborigines, most lived at the same poverty level. It was an understood equality that did not base status or hierarchy on material wealth. I remember ... when the Vizinas, a neighbouring couple, dropped in to visit. Dad suggested to Mom that she make a snack for them, and she had to answer that we [had] nothing, no food to eat. Then he suggested at least a cup of tea, but she claimed that we had no tea. At which point Dad got up and took the water pail and said, “Well, I’ll get a

pail of water, and we can at least have a drink of fresh water.²⁸

Howard Adams died in 2001 at the age of 80. He had grown up in the Batoche area and gone on to become a professor of education at the University of Saskatchewan, sharing his knowledge of Métis history with hundred of teachers in training, staff and faculty members. Today, the Métis Nation continues to press for rights as a means of preserving cultural traditions and as a means of bringing honour to past, current and future generations of those proud to call themselves Métis People.

Endnotes

¹ United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2003) <http://www.unesco.org/education/imld_2002/universal_decla.shtml#2> (retrieved 21 March 2008)

² Government of Canada was formed in 1867 with jurisdiction over Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Racette, Calvin. *Contrasting Worlds 1: Métis Development and the Canadian West*. (Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 1985), 5.

³ The term Aboriginal is used here to indicate that First Nations, and in later generations, Métis women were selected as partners by the fur traders.

⁴ MacLean, H. *Indian, Inuit, and Métis of Canada*. (Toronto: Gage Publishing Limited, 1982), 91.

⁵ Glenbow Museum. *Métis: A Glenbow Museum Exhibition*. (Calgary, nd), 4.

⁶ Racette, Calvin. *Contrasting Worlds 1: Métis Development and the Canadian West*. (Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 1985), 10.

⁷ Ibid, 11.

⁸ Ibid, 21.

⁹ Ibid, 5.

¹⁰ Glenbow Museum. *Métis: A Glenbow Museum Exhibition*. Calgary, nd, 14.

¹¹ Ibid, 6.

¹² Whidden, Lynn. “Métis Music” in *Métis Legacy*. L. Barkwell, L. Dorion, D. Prefontaine (eds.). Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications Inc., 2001, 169.

¹³ MacLean, H. *Indian, Inuit, and Métis of Canada*. Toronto: Gage Publishing Limited, 1982, 93.

¹⁴ Whidden, Lynn. “Métis Music” in *Métis Legacy*. L. Barkwell, L. Dorion, D. Prefontaine (eds.). Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications Inc., 2001, 170-171.

¹⁵ Troupe, C. “Métis Material Culture and Identity” in *Expressing Our Heritage: Métis Artistic Designs*. L. Dorion-Paquin, D. Prefontaine, T. Huntley, and T. Paquin (eds). Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2002, 7.

¹⁶ Ibid. 39-41.

¹⁷ Glenbow Museum. *Métis: A Glenbow Museum Exhibition*. Calgary, nd, 8.

¹⁸ Bakker, P. “The Michif Language of the Métis” in *Métis Legacy*. L. Barkwell, L. Dorion, D. Prefontaine. (eds). Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications Inc., 177.

¹⁹ Smith, D. *Honore Jaxon: Prairie Visionary*.
<<http://www.coteaubooks.com/bookpages/honore.html>> (retrieved 22 March 2008)

²⁰ Day, D. *The Visions and Revelations of St. Louis the Métis*. (Saskatoon: Thistledown Press, 1997).

²¹ Bouvier, R. *Papiyahtak*. (Saskatoon: Thistledown Press, 2004).

²² Scofield, G. *I Knew Two Métis Women*. (Victoria, BC: Polestar Book Publishers, 1999).

²³ Recorded by Rev. A.G. Morice, O.M.I., *The Catholic Church in The Canadian Northwest*, as cited in Racette, Calvin. *Contrasting Worlds 1: Métis Development and the Canadian West*. (Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 1985), 10.

²⁴ Acco, A. “Traditional Knowledge and the Land: The Cumberland House Métis and Cree People” in *Métis Legacy*. Barkwell, L. Dorion, D. Prefontaine, (eds). (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications Inc., 2001), 129.

²⁵ “Where are the Children? Healing the Legacy of the Residential Schools.” <<http://www.wherethechildren.ca/en/impacts.html>> (retrieved 22 March 2008)

²⁶ “Batoche National Historic Park.” (Canada, 1986).

²⁷ Shore, F. “The Emergence of the Métis Nation in Manitoba” in *Métis Legacy*. L. Barkwell, L. Dorion, D. Prefontaine, (eds). (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications Inc., 2001), 77.

²⁸ Adams, H. *Howard Adams: Otapawy!* H. Lutz, M. Hamilton, and D. Heimbecker, (eds). (Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2005), 6.