FIDDLERS' JOURNEY:

THE PERSEVERANCE OF ONE

MÉTIS FAMILY'S IDENTITY

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

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in

Canadian Plains Studies

University of Regina

by

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SUPERVISORY AND EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Merelda Lynn Fiddler, candidate for the degree of Master of Arts in Canadian Plains Studies, has presented a thesis titled, ***Fiddler's Journey: The Perseverance of One Métis Family's Identity,*** in an oral examination held on September 25, 2009. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

External Examiner:	Dr. Brenda Macdougall, Department of Native Studies, University of Saskatchewan
Co-Supervisor:	Dr. David R. Miller, Department of Indigenous Studies, First Nations University of Canada
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Abstract:

For many Métis people in Canada, understanding and embracing their cultural identity can be challenging. The very existence of Métis people as a unique cultural group has been under attack for decades. The federal government's bureaucratic need to place all Aboriginal people into categorical boxes has resulted in fissures between different Aboriginal groups, and within communities and even families. However, what is missing in these artificial categories is history, the organic development of an individual's, family's, and cultural group's natural evolution overtime. *Fiddlers' Journey: The Perseverance of One Métis Family's Identity* is a case study which utilizes the biography of individuals within the Fiddler family, as well as the author's own autobiography to show how the family's Métis identity grew, developed and evolved, from the family's Métis origins to present. Using oral history, coupled with primary documents such as scrip and land records, this thesis examines the events that shaped Métis identity across the prairies, and how those events affected the direct Fiddler line of the author. Focusing on the story of this portion of the Fiddler family, this thesis documents the unique experience of the Fiddlers, and how their identity flourished when surrounded by other Métis people, and was at times hidden to protect the family when they lived in predominantly non-Aboriginal communities. Finally, it finds a significant conclusion, that each individual, throughout history, had their own unique way of celebrating, preserving, nurturing and sharing their Métis identity so future generations could continue to be proud to be Métis.

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Dedication:

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my grandparents, William and Avelina Fiddler and Louis and Lillian Taillifer. I did not have a chance to meet all of you, grow up with you, or hear your stories firsthand. However, I promise to preserve your stories, your memory, and the beauty of your ability to accept all people no matter what their cultural or economic backgrounds may be. I hope this work will be one small part in my journey to become more like you.

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Chapter One: The Métis: A Persistent Culture and Identity

> Non-Aboriginal people viewed us as being Indian. It was not like they said well they're half Indian so we'll half like them. They liked you or they didn't. If they didn't want you to chum around with their children, that was because you had Indian background in you. So, it was... you didn't go around professing who you were. But I think that there was a lot of denial amongst our people.[1]

Growing up in the Fiddler family in Meadow Lake, there was one truth: everyone in town knew the Fiddlers were 'part-Indian'. The Fiddlers were not quite white, though some were very pale-skinned, and yet they were not 'real' Indians. Many did not live on reserve, though an entire branch of the family lived on the nearby Waterhen First Nation. Those who lived in town were automatically then associated with the 'part-Indian' identity, definitely not the treaty Indians from nearby reserves. As my cousin Rose Richardson so clearly articulates, that 'part-Indian' identity often affected our relationships with non-Aboriginal people. Many preferred their children not have friendships with Indian people. Being 'part-Indian' also affected our relationship with status Indians, because they did not view us as 'real' Indians, since we were not from the reserve and did not carry status cards issued by the federal government. So, the name Fiddler, associated with living in town and originating from a mixed parentage (part-Indian and part non-Aboriginal) made you one of those 'part-Indian' Fiddlers. Whether it was the non-Aboriginal segment of town or the surrounding Treaty Indians living on nearby First Nations, you were something altogether different, and therefore, not a legitimate member of either group. Lines were drawn early in your life: those of us who were fair-skinned could sometimes be accepted by the non-Aboriginal population, and education could also gain you acceptance by this group, while those who were dark-skinned were often aligned with status Indians. As a family, or even as part of the larger Métis community within Meadow Lake, there were no easy answers or clear lines of absolute distinction. Much like my parents and older sister, finding acceptance in the wider community was always challenging. Still, that exclusion, or at least the acknowledgment that the 'part-Indian' Fiddlers were different, both historically and even today, helped those family members unite and even determine their own identity as Métis - an identity that can be difficult to accept and is inextricably bound to the history of Canada's development as a nation.

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[1] Rose Richardson, interviewed by author, digital audio recording, Green Lake, Saskatchewan, 15 April 2007.

As I will establish in subsequent chapters, my own family's identity is directly connected to key historical events in the history of Métis people and the emergence of Métis identity. We are descendents of the Red River Métis and Métis of Northwest Saskatchewan, my family was present for the Resistance in Red River in 1869-70 and my great-grandparents fought in the 1885 Resistance at Batoche, Saskatchewan. It is these roots that my family tried to hide. In part, my parents, aunts and uncles, and even my sister would say that is because they were busy just trying to survive and build a future. There was no time to worry about an identity and culture that everyone believed was just part of who they were, the way it would always be. However, in truth, much of this proud history was quietly shelved because of generations of racism and struggle. In the late 1880s and through most of the first part of the 1900s, being proud of fighting in event like 1885 would be considered treason by most non-Aboriginal people, would bring shame to the family, and could lead to a backlash from the wider community. Still, hiding their history was never easy for the family, and for those like my great grandparents it meant they harboured resentment toward the government and a deep sense of grief for the land and life they had lost. Despite attempts to put aside that question of identity, though, in the small northern town of Meadow Lake, it was never truly possible to ignore one's roots. The Meadow Lake Fiddlers jigged, made bannock, and even spoke Cree. Once a gathering was in full swing, our stories were different from others, stories of skinning animals, beadwork, and vague references to a great-grandmother who made buckshot for our grandfather in the 1885 Resistance. I grew up knowing I was Métis, 'part-Indian', or a halfbreed, and I did not give it much more thought. Sometimes it was hard, when the parents of friends would not let us play together. As I grew up, it seemed that only those who knew what my name meant, that 'part-Indian' identity, would judge me. So, when I left home, I began to hide my identity. Not deliberately, but I simply adapted and integrated into the new communities I was exploring. Unlike my great grandparents and grandparents, I did not continue to maintain my culture and identity. Instead, I let the past lie, I forgot about the languages, dancing, and other things that would signal to people that I was Métis, and therefore different, and looked boldly in to the future. Eventually, though, I realized that my roots would not remain hidden and, as my journalistic career led me back to my identity and a need to prove to the public that Métis people were here, were proud, and would always be here.

Métis culture and identity have been under attack for decades. Many academics and political leaders contend that 'real' Métis people no longer exist, because of their constant movement, dispersals, and out-marriages have diluted the original bloodlines. As I will show in subsequent chapters, others argue a unique Métis identity never authentically developed. However, these arguments simply do not make sense, since the beauty of that identity is its ability to adapt and accept new cultures into its community. According to the 2001 census, almost 300,000 people claimed to be Métis.[2] In 2006, the census shows those numbers continue to rise; and in fact, the Métis are the fastest growing Aboriginal population in Canada. Three hundred thousand Canadians cannot be inauthentic representations of an identity that does not exist. Consequently, I contend there is no need to defend Métis identity, because it exists, as do both Métis communities and Métis as individuals and the influence of the Métis people is undeniable. This study demonstrates how one Métis family, swept up in a growing Métis nationalism, fought for their identity and future as a unique community in the newly formed province of Manitoba, and later in the newly formed country of Canada. It will also show how the members of this family through their decisions about where to live, which religion to practice, and even whom to marry reflected their cultural identity as French Métis people. It will also show that when those communities, the family helped to build, were threatened by outside forces, those same people were ready to fight to protect them. Like many other Métis families, the Fiddlers were dispersed several times, both after the Resistance in Red River in 1869-70 and again after the 1885 Resistance at Batoche. Each time, forced from their land and homes, spread out across the prairies, the remaining family members struggled to rebuild their lives alongside other Métis people. This decision likely minimized the challenge of being accepted in both the new Métis community they were entering and the large mainstream Canadian society around them, while also keeping their culture strong and surrounded by members of the larger society.

This study will look at the Métis experience through the lived stories of my family, explore how a proud culture that began in many places, including Red River and Île à le Crosse, came to settle in Meadow Lake. It will examine how their survival, however bleak at first, eventually gave way to a once again proud and strong Métis identity - an identity that is still alive in Western Canada today. Using autobiography and case study this researcher will

[2] Canada's 2001 census. http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/analytic/companion/abor/contents.cfm (accessed 12 August 2007).

incorporate the voices and life history of my own family, and by using my own individual experiences, as well as examining the case study of my own family, under the microscope of autobiography and life history, I will prove my own thesis – that even under extreme public pressure and out-marriage, some strands of Métis identity were maintained and passed on to subsequent generations. In this study, both autobiography, the study of my own life history, as well as biography, the study of two Métis branches of my family since their birth as Métis, will be used to map the development of this identity. To do this, first I must have a brief, but important, discussion about definitions and culture.

Definitions

The 'Métis' have eluded a concrete definition since their indeterminable birth. They are a people who have existed for several hundred years; and yet, their struggle for recognition is seemingly endless. In 1982, Canada's constitution finally recognized their 'right' to acknowledgement as one of Canada's three Aboriginal groups alongside Inuit and First Nations people. Still, academics, politicians, the general public, First Nations people and even Métis people themselves, grapple with the challenge of defining a people so diverse. Consequently, many are left asking 'Who are the Métis people?'

If this question had one simple, definitive answer, life would be very different for Métis people today. They would not have to 'prove' their lineage, apply for Métis membership cards, or explain their "Métisness." Métis people would not be in a struggle over hunting and fishing rights, right to land or compensation for past grievances. However, this is not the case: Métis groups and organizations, political and social, find themselves trying to determine who can and who cannot legitimately claim to be culturally Métis.

Part of the difficulty in establishing a stable definition for Métis is that there are various forms of the word found in the literature. The word Métis in this study will refer to the mixed blood family of which I am a member. This is a group with a distinct culture and heritage that was neither First Nations (including Cree and Dene) nor French or English. It was a unique blend of all of these cultures (and potentially more) that formed a new, inclusive culture that is distinct. In the case of the Fiddler line of my family, that means a group that was born and developed for several generations in the Red River district and across the Northwest, later

regrouped in Saskatchewan after the first Resistance of 1869-70, fought once more during the Resistance of 1885 in Batoche, and later dispersed throughout the prairies and into the United States. The term "metis" or "métis," for the purposes of this study, will refer to a person(s) of mixed heritage that did not necessarily form a distinct and separate culture. Mixed-breed, halfbreed, and mixed blood as identifiers are all essentially slang terminology that outsiders used to describe the people they saw who were neither distinctly European nor a member of a First Nation group. The term halfbreed, however, was also commonly used by Métis distinct peoples; and it is still a term that is accepted today. By this I mean to assert that many Métis people have adopted and continue to use the term as a means of identifying themselves.

Both the best and, possibly, worst place to determine identity often begins with political organizations. The main Métis political body, recognized by mainstream provincial and federal governments, is the Métis National Council (hereafter MNC) – a recognition that also seems to also have granted them right to write and enforce a membership definition. Since 2002, the MNC definition reads: "Métis means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis Nation ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples and is accepted by the Métis Nation."[3] As one notes by the date, this definition was finalized twenty years after Métis people were enshrined in Canada's constitution. Further reading shows that the 'historic Métis Nation' refers to the Aboriginal people then known as Métis or Half-Breeds (alternatively spelled as halfbreeds or half-breeds) who resided in the Historic Métis Nation Homeland; and the 'Historic Métis Nation Homeland' refers to the area of land in west central North America used and occupied as the traditional territory of the Métis or Half-Breeds as they were then known.[4] Finally, 'Métis Nation" refers to the Aboriginal people descended from the Historic Métis Nation, which now comprised of all Métis Nation citizens and is one of the "Aboriginal peoples of Canada" within s.35 of the Constitution Act of 1982; and, distinct from other Aboriginal Peoples means distinct for cultural and nationhood purposes.[5] It is interesting to note that until the late Steve Powley won his historic court case that recognized hunting rights for the Ontario born Métis man, the

[3] Métis National Council. www.metisnation.com. (accessed 15 March 2005). Métis National Council official definition. One should note that this definition includes only "Métis" people who live in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. It does not include any groups east of Ontario, who may also claim to be Métis people. The definition also refers to the historic Métis Nation, which is often considered to be the Red River and surrounding communities. Thus, this definition would be found acceptable only to those who have been accepted by the political bodies from which this definition has been conceived.
[4] Métis National Council. www.metisnation.com. (accessed 15 March 2005).
[5] Métis National Council. www.metisnation.com. (accessed 15 March 2005).

MNC did not include Ontario in its "Historic Métis Nation Homeland." However, this definition is the political basis by which Métis people in Canada are required to 'prove' their status. The issue of which Métis communities are included in the official Métis definition are discussed in Joe Sawchuk's essay "Negotiating an Identity: Métis Political Organizations, the Canadian Government, and Competing Concepts of Aboriginality." If an individual does not fit the above criteria, there is nothing preventing them from self-identifying as Métis, but they are not officially – in the eyes of the politicians (both Métis and non-Métis) – considered to be part of this historic community.

Another aspect of this debate includes groups that have recently come forward to assert their Métis identity. Currently, the Métis represented by the MNC are located and have their historical and cultural roots in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and the North West Territories. More recently, the Métis of British Columbia and like those from Ontario were also brought into the fold. The main reason for the acceptance of Ontario Métis, and for the inclusion of the Manitoba Métis the year before (allowing them to be included in the court case), is the victory by Stephen Powley in the hunting rights case. However, research on the Great Lakes Métis has been ongoing for a much longer period and can be found works such as, *A Gathering of the Rivers: Indian, Métis, and Mining in the Great Lakes, 1732-1832*, by Louise Eldersveld Murphy, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900,* by Heather Devine, in the essays "Deconstructing Métis Historiography" by Leah Dorion and Darren Prefontaine, " 'Realization' of the Greater Métis Traditional Historic Homeland" by Nicholas C.P. Vrooman, as well as many more. More recently, a series of essays, many of which explore Métis identity in a variety of communities. including the Great Lakes, was released in *The Long Journey of a Forgotten People: Métis Identities & Family Histories,* edited by Ute Lischke and David T. McNab. Two essays in particular stand out. In the first, Karl S. Hele discusses the colonial pressures on the identity of the Métis of Sault Ste. Marie. Before examining the history, Hele looks at the different terminology mentioned above and comes to the conclusion that the community he is researching must be called Métis with a capital 'M'. Hele acknowledges that this term is usually reserved for those members of the "historic" Métis nation. However, Hele makes a compelling argument for the Sault Métis to be able to claim that unique identity:

> To continue to deny that the mixed-race people of the Lakes lacked an identity by referring to the as "métis" is to deny them an existence as a people. While the use of the term "Métis" is fraught with politics – between Métis themselves, as well as with the Canadian government – scholars need to recognize that the monopolitization of the term by the political priorities of one group is itself a form of internal colonialism. Métis identity does not solely rely on biological determinism or geographical origin in the West, but on its history as an identifiable community. [6]

Hele argues the people had a distinct homeland, and just because it was not the same homeland as that of the Red River Métis should not mean they do not get to claim that identity. I believe much more research and many more papers and books will continue to be penned about this issue and Métis communities as a whole will have to find a way to deal with the very nature of their being – their own diversity and how far that should extend before one is no longer Métis.

As well, the final report of the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples backed up Hele's assertion. In the section titled "Métis Perspectives" the commission finds there are many distinct Métis communities. While an official definition of Métis is never actually spelled out, the commission does push for a broader sense of the term, while acknowledging some groups will not want that kind of broadening of the term. The commission also points out that another community that purports to be Métis is located in the Maritimes and Labrador, as well as in a few other locations not accepted by the Métis National Council. While commission members admit "the application of this term is fairly recent," they do seem support any combination of Aboriginal, not just Cree but also Inuit and Dene, with any combination of non-Aboriginal, as creating a Métis person in Canada. Therefore, all people who see their unique combination of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal should be represented and supported under the term Métis that was solidified in Canada's constitution.[7]

In her work, *Real Indians and Others,* Bonita Lawrence takes this argument one step further. Lawrence believes that all mixed blood people in Canada deserve recognition and she applauds groups that are now opening their political organizations for both Métis and mixed

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[6] Karl S. Hele, "Manipulating Identity: The Sault Borderlands Métis and Colonial Intervention," in *The Long Journey of a Forgotten People: Métis Identities & Family Historie,* Eds. Ute Lischeke & David T. McNab (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), 165.

[7] Indian and Northern Affairs Canada – Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples report. http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sj20_e.html#1.2%20M%E9tis%20Identity, (accessed 12 March 2007).

blood people who would not be accepted under the MNC's membership definition. Lawrence even goes one step further:

> Without denying the nationhood claims by individuals who today have no choice by to struggle for empowerment as Métis, I believe that Métisness as a category of existence today should be seen as a product of having a history of intermarriage with non-Natives and of embracing culturally hybrid forms of existence that were frozen by government legislation into the defining feature of a Nativenss that the government did not consider to be Indian.[8]

Lawrence actually wants to see what she calls "two singular identities" -- Indian and Métis. Undoubtedly, this would make a tremendous difference to those struggling for recognition and rights in Canada today. However, it is extremely unlikely, with the limited resources dedicated to First Nations and Métis groups, that such broad sweeping categories would ever be accepted by Aboriginal groups that are currently recognized or their mainstream provincial and federal counterparts.

I do not believe that Lawrence is trying to deny people the right to include or exclude only the members that have a legitimate claim as part of a distinct cultural group. Her aims are more about encouraging political inclusion for equally-distributed monetary benefits. This is an admiral theory. However, especially in Canada, the politics of identity make it almost impossible. It is also somewhat naive to think you can define people, no matter how altruistic your intentions, in such broad strokes. Extinguishing people's individual cultural identities, for any reason, does not reflect what most Aboriginal people want – recognition and understanding. Métis people who ascribe to the definitions of their heritage, as espoused by the MNC, also find these broad generalizations insulting. For it is precisely their unique history, and their role in the birth of Canada as a nation, that makes them distinct. Theirs is a proud history, a history for which some were made to feel ashamed, and that many are struggling to reclaim.

Several other terms also need mention in this chapter. First, there is the term "Indian". Indian holds two common, but different, meanings. The first is more generic, meaning the original peoples of Canada.[9] The second is the definition under that *Indian Act* for a Status

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[8] Bonita Lawrence, *"Real" Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 87.

[9] Indian and Northern Affairs Canada – Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples report. http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sg1_e.html#0 . (accessed 12 March 2007). The 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal

Indian, which is someone who is registered as an Indian under the *Indian Act*. A non-Status Indian is someone who may claim that identity but is not registered under the *Indian Act*.[10] And finally, a treaty Indian is a Status Indian who has membership in a first nation group that signed treaty with the Crown.[11] More commonly, people also use the terms First Nation and Aboriginal. Aboriginal is considered a generic term, that means any person with any Indigenous blood, in addition to the Inuit people as per Canada's constitution.[12] First Nation is a more modern term that means a status, treaty Indian who is a member of a specific First Nation or Indian band.[13]

A Note on Culture:

Entire books have been written on the subject of culture, what it is, how it forms or develops, and how it maintains its boundaries. This study will not recover all of that ground. However, since the focus of this study is to understand how Métis culture was transmitted through more than five generations of a single family, a discussion about culture, what it is, and how it is transmitted is therefore pertinent to this study.

Many individual anthropologists and ethnographers have attempted to unlock the mystery of how culture and group identity is formed. A seminal theory that academics often draw from is Fredrik Barth's notion of ethnic determination. His work, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organizations of Culture Difference,* is the most commonly sourced and referenced in terms of group identity and cultural space. Barth says the problem with anthropologists and the manner in which they approach their work is they assume there are distinct cultural groups, and these groups have easily distinguishable traits which make them unique. Barth disagrees with this assumption and essentially tries to find a more accurate method of group determination. First, Barth states change is inevitable and natural. No cultural group is the same as it was two hundred years ago or possibly even ten years ago: "In other words, categorical ethnic

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Peoples begins Volume One with a section titled: A Note on Terminology. In this section each different cultural group is outlined. It is a useful discussion, and one that is sited in this study as noted. In Canada, the term Indian is directly tied to the *Indian Act* legislation that was passed by the federal government. However, as Aboriginal people begin to assert more control over their own identities, the terms used more commonly begin to change. For another, perhaps more detailed, discussion on terminology in Canada today, you can also access another Indian Affairs online publication *Words First: An Evolving Terminology Relating to Aboriginal Peoples in Canada.*

[10] Ibid., http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sg1_e.html#0.

[11] Ibid., http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sg1_e.html#0.

[12] Ibid., http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sg1_e.html#0.

[13] Ibid., http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sg1_e.html#0.

distinctions do not depend on an absence of mobility, contact and information, but do entail social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained *despite* changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories."[14] Barth argues anthropologists must not prematurely assign categories to groups. In fact, ethnographers should listen to whom groups, and individuals, say they are, and what outsiders say about who they believe those individuals and groups may be. Throughout, Barth notes his theory and way of determining are not easy because there can be extreme variations between members of the same group; and while many may ascribe to one 'culture' grouping, there may be few, if any, signs these individuals belong together. What makes the process even more challenging is that over time a group's 'cultural' traits can appear, disappear, or re-appear, or even transform depending on the membership. In our new 'global village' and after centuries of colonialism, things can become even more complicated, because so many cultural differences change and adapt over time.

At this point, it is useful to look at the work of Anthony P. Cohen. In *Self Consciousness: An Alternative Anthropology of Identity*, Cohen looks at what the self-conscious is and how individuals use it to form the groups to which they ascribe. Like Barth, Cohen wants to throw off some of the previous ways anthropologists and social scientists have looked at identity and self-consciousness. For Cohen, the self-conscious is not a passive subject of society and culture – it has agency and is proactive and creative.[15] In his monograph, Cohen also effectively argues member identities are not created by their groups. In fact, he sees members forming the collective identity, each member being a kind of metonymy of the whole. Group identity is formed through the self-consciousness of the members, allowing them to construct the terms of their own membership and identity. Culture, in Cohen's view, is a product of thinking beings, and this is then passed on to others within the membership, as they interact to determine what their culture will be and how they will claim their own membership.

Another contributor to this body of work is Homi K. Bhabha. Bhabha's monograph, *The Location of Culture*, is another commonly referenced text. In it Bhabha is trying to answer the

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[14] Fredrik Barth , *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), 10.
[15] Anthony P. Cohen, *Self-Consciousness: An Alternative Anthropology of Identity* (New York: Routeledge, 1994), 115.

question – "Where is culture?" An extremely theoretical and philosophical question, Bhabha's answer is somewhat less philosophical and more empirical in nature. For Bhabha, culture is in constant negotiation. In the colonial and post-colonial contexts, Bhabha sees cultures collide. It is at this point the negotiation of culture begins. Like Barth, Bhabha sees some cultural traits drop off and some picked up during this negotiation. What is interesting is Bhabha believes this does not happen in the collision itself. Rather, the collision causes a space 'in-between' where the two cultures meet and begin and negotiate future identities.

Another interesting aspect of Bhabha's monograph is the attention paid to colonial discourse and the effects it has had on culture and cultural determination. For Bhabha, colonial discourse creates Manichean oppositions of me and other. This then 'locks individuals' into a kind a space where their identity is always negative.[16] It also prevents the colonizer and colonized within this oppositional structure from understanding one another, since the "other" would never be capable of such understanding. In Chapter Six, "Sly Civility", Bhabha talks about a kind of negotiation where these binary oppositions are broken down. Throughout the chapter, the reader is given examples of how colonized peoples may appear to adopt certain aspects of their oppressor's culture, when they actually use it subversively to either further their own ends or impress the colonizer, and in turn strengthen their own sense of self or the group's sense of collectiveness. The Métis, both as a distinct cultural group, and my family by itself, had to adapt many times, accepting things like legal marriage in the church, to ensure their families were seen as legitimate. They also tried both in Red River in 1869-70 and later in Saskatchewan in 1885, to use European political organization, like forming councils and sending petitions to the government, not only to show the federal government they were capable of being equals but also to assert their unity as a group.

The question of why one culture never truly dominates another, when the two intermix, is examined in Ann Laura Stoler's *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule.* The answer to the question, according to Stoler, can be found in the sexual relations and progeny of those pairings. In each situation, European men and indigenous women were vying for economic standing and power. Women were looking for the most advantageous situation within this burgeoning power structure, and men needed Indigenous women to forward

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[16] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 75.

their own economic and political aspirations within these indigenous groups. While each colony was ideally to be a little piece of Europe, Stoler argues that simply did not happen. In relation to Bhabha's theory, Stoler finds there were cultural negotiations between these groups, which made each situation unique: some women formed power bases, others were prostitutes, and the men had varying degrees of affection for their mixed blood children. It is these unions which are hard proof of Bhabha's 'blurred boundaries' theory. Stoler explains: "Metis children undermined the principles to which national identity thrived – those *liens invisibles* (invisible bonds) that all men shared and that so clearly and comfortably marked off *pur sang* (pure-blood) French and Dutch from those of the generic colonized."[17] While not all men felt the same level of commitment to their indigenous wives and their mixed blood children, many did try to improve their lives. Fathers often fought for their children to be educated and tried to provide for their wives, even after their contracts were concluded and they returned to their home countries. What is important to note in Stoler's work is the impact sexual relations and mixed blood children had on the group identities.

However, a distinct Métis community is still a rarity. As we see in Stoler's work, many of these mixed blood children were absorbed into their mothers' community, while a few were taken under the wings of their fathers. That is what makes Canada's Métis so unique. As Sylvia Van Kirk outlines in her monograph *Many Tender Ties: Women in the Fur-Trade Society, in 1670-1870* relationships with women were also essential in Canada's fur trade social structures. Like Stoler, she notes the trends and changes in these relationships, from the time when First Nations women were much sought after as wives, then displaced by mixed blood wives, who were eventually pushed aside for European women. In those changing times, Van Kirk notes how identity was changing. Women, who were vital to a man's survival in Canada's harsh climate, were initially very treasured. When mixed blood women enter the scene, these halfbreeds lose some of their freedom, as their European fathers try to turn them into 'cultured' ladies. It was in this cultural transition where Van Kirk begins to see the first identity crises in mixed blood children. In her article, "What if Mama was an Indian?" Van Kirk examines the life of James Ross. As a young man, he was an educated Anglophone mixed blood, but never seemed to be able to reconcile himself and his mixed blood heritage. Ross felt increasingly

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[17] Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 95.

alienated: he could see proud French Métis, but he also wanted to be part of a new 'Canada' - Ross had identity crises. It is for this reason Van Kirk concludes: "Significantly, after 1870 the Anglophone mixed-bloods rapidly ceased to be recognized as a separate indigenous group, and metis has become the label that has tended to subsume all of the mixed-blood people of Western Canada."[18] Although Van Kirk may take this too far, she does make a compelling argument that a strong distinct Anglophone Métis community was lost in this shuffle, because of the identity crises caused by fathers who wanted their wives and children to be more European.

Robert Coutts in *Road to the Rapids: Nineteenth-Century Church and Society at St. Andrew's Parish, Red River,* also explores this loss. Examining the religious leaders of the parish, Coutts charts a similar identity loss and expulsion of the Métis. For Coutts, this expulsion also lies in the changing roles of women as well. As more European women arrive on the frontier, the Métis (who built the church) were displaced. The clergy could not see the value of mixed blood peoples or their First Nation parishioners, and were always holding European culture up to be the standard. Nonetheless, over the decades, many clergy became satisfied with Métis people who proved their worth by eschewing their Aboriginal spirituality and social conventions and replacing those with the code of the church. This resulted in a devaluing of Métis heritage by making them feel like there were no longer worthy to sit in the pews they had built.

In *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country,* Jennifer S.H. Brown charts some of the same territory as Van Kirk and Coutts. For Brown, a distinct Métis identity emerges around the 1780s. It is at this point mixed blood children were no longer being absorbed into either their mother's Indian heritage or their father's European world. Brown quotes from the journal of surveyor and explorer Peter Fidler, finding there was indeed a distinct people emerging: "In July, Fidler was asked to assent to some 'articles of agreement' between "the half breed Indians of the Indian Territory and the Hudson's Bay Company... The signers of this document described themselves as 'The Four chiefs of the half Indians by the mutual

[18] Sylvia Van Kirk, "What if Mama was an Indian? The Cultural Ambivalence of the Alexander Ross Family." in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America.* Eds. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S.H. Brown (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 216.

consent of their Fellows.'"[19] The Métis were acting as a distinct group, recognized by outsiders as a distinct unique peoples. For Barth, this would be enough to consider the Métis as maintaining their own ethnic boundaries, which were being observed, if not respected, by outsiders. Fathers fight for their children to be educated and to find employment within the fur trade, and again we see the ethnic blurring talked about by Bhabha and Stoler. It is these breakdowns of cultural others that turn some to deny the Métis a distinct identity.

As seen above, in order for the church and the fur trade companies to maintain control of the country, women's power and children's links to their mothers' culture had to be broken. These early breaks aided in the division of communities, and pushed families to deny their heritage; and today, it allows some outsiders to continue to deny the existence of a distinct Métis cultural group. In John S. Long's "Archdeacon Thomas Vincent of Moosonee and the Handicap of "Métis" Racial Status," the reader sees how educated Métis had to struggle to find a place in their ever-changing world as more and more Europeans began to settle. For Thomas Vincent, promotion above a certain station in clergy would never happen. He was a mixed blood, and therefore was tainted by Indian blood. According to Long, "The strongest argument levied against Vincent was the Europeans would not respect him because of his mixed race."[20] Without choice in the matter, a European was appointed above Vincent. What had been a valued peoples in the fur trade suddenly had no use in the new 'Canada' that was to come, and certainly a mixed blood could not preach to Europeans. And so the devaluing of the other (other than European) continued. What is interesting, and noteworthy, is how some mixed blood people began to doubt their own self-worth, and believe they were indeed less competent than Europeans.

Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in William Unrau's *Mixed-Bloods and Tribal Dissolution: Charles Curtis and the Quest for Indian Identity.* Unrau charts the illustrious career of Curtis, a mixed blood man who became vice-president of the United States around the turn of the twentieth century. Curtis was raised for the most part by his grandfather. Disconnected from his mother's Indian family, he was heavily influenced by his father's American side. Under this powerful influence, Curtis began to believe that all Indians must make the transition to civility

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[19] Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia, 1980), 173.

[20] John S. Long, "Archdeacon Thomas Vincent of Moosonee and the Handicap of "Metis" Racial Status." *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies,* 3 (1) (1983): 110.

and that could only be accomplished by becoming more European and less Indian.[21] For the next several decades, Curtis worked to get Métis or mixed blood peoples land allotments on reserves their mothers' families were connected to. It was his belief that having Métis nearby would encourage the Indians to convert to 'civility,' engage in agriculture, and become more European. This, for Curtis, was the ideal: by being wholly European, white, and Christian, he could be free of the Indian 'other', a cultural burden that made him inferior to full-blood Europeans. Why would the Indians want to remain Indians? While Curtis never denied his heritage, he did not emphasize anything positive about it. That heritage was simply useless for him, and becoming white was the way to go. Near the end of his career and life, Curtis began to question conversion and whether or not the Indians should be assimilated. Already much too late though, for the seeds of this 'unwanted heritage' had long since been implanted in him and others by families and other Europeans who believed there was something truly dysfunctional in the Indian's tainted blood. For those who believe denial of heritage is something easy to overcome, it is not. And these early beginnings of cultural attack and subsequent repression have opened the door to the problematization of the ethnic identity of mixed blood peoples – particularly the Métis.

The literature surrounding this denial is dense. And, some of it begins with the late John E. Foster. For Foster, the diverse cultural heritage and the large geographical territories of the Métis are just part of the problem: "Historians cannot ignore the possibility of further subdivisions within the Métis populations."[22] The 'problem' Foster perceives is the Métis did not function as one monolithic group. They were a varied and geographically spread out population. This makes it difficult to categorize the Métis' specific cultural traits. From the beginning, the Métis were divided – first along Anglophone and French communities, but also along class lines: merchants, subsistence farmers, and those who lived off the buffalo hunt. However, what is often ignored is the intermarrying between these groups and the connections between the female kinship links. Not unlike many non-Aboriginal groups, Métis families wished to keep their religion along with other traditions through marriage. It did not make them less Métis; rather, it highlights the adaptability of the culture which adapted easily and absorbed many different people, experiences, and cultural markers to form a new identity that was, and

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[21] William E. Unrau, *Mixed-Bloods and Tribal Dissolution: Charles Curtis and the Quest for Indian Identity* (Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1989), 83.

[22] John E. Foster, "The Problem of Métis Roots," in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America.* Eds. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S.H. Brown (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 78.

still is, uniquely Métis. Ignoring these kinship ties is how Foster comes to the conclusion that there was no unique Métis experience – something which is a serious overstatement and simplification of a complex people.

A student of Foster's is Gerhard J. Ens, who believes the Métis did not have a unique cultural experience. In *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Metis in the Nineteenth Century*, Ens examines two communities, St. Francis Xavier and St. Andrew's Parish. Meticulously researched, Ens' work tracks the changing economic roles of the different Anglophone and Francophone Métis groups. What must be noted is that this monograph is part of the research Ens conducted for the Canadian Justice Department to dispute modern day Métis land claims. The Métis, and especially the French Métis according to Ens, were extremely willing and easy to adapt. The French Métis were more mobile, took up the buffalo hunt more readily, and were successful merchants because of their ability to adapt to market demand. The English Métis were not so adaptable, but were also drawing more on their European heritage, farming instead of hunting. Ens' main thesis is that because the Métis were so open to market change and adapting to it, they were never able to form a cohesive unit:

> With the emergence of an identifiable Métis bourgeoisie or merchant class who employed Métis as labourers in the 1850s and 1860s, social and economic divisions within Métis society became much more distinct. A concomitant was the emergence of a Métis labouring class. That there was a clear absence of identity between the various Métis groups is evident.[23]

Ens determines that the Métis did not have a uniform identity, because if every member does not display the same markers, they cannot be a unique cultural unit. He then concludes by saying the Métis were not denied the scrip they deserved, they simply moved away. And in fact, since they did not ascribe to a persistent and clearly outlined identity, they were not and are not an unshakably identifiable group of people. However, the basis of much of Ens' work comes from numbers found in census documents. Meticulous, precise, and when framed in the right light – his research and subsequent findings are extremely convincing. Unfortunately, what makes cultures so interesting and worthy of study is that much of it is so intangible. As Karen J. Travers argues in her essay "The Drummond Island Voyageurs and the Search for Great Lakes Métis Identity," cultural identity cannot be understood without the people: "Identity will not be

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[23] Gerhard J. Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing World of the Red River Métis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 174.

found in the itemized lists of cultural attributes nor will it completely unfold in the academic analysis of documents like the census. It will most likely be found in both the informal and personal recollections of individual Métis and in their collective celebrations held every year in their communities around the Great Lakes."[24]

In examining the literature of the Métis, and whether or not they are a distinct cultural group with an identity, one must also examine the literature surrounding other cultural groups and how their identities are contested, and either proven or disproven for a useful comparison. A return to Fredrik Barth is very useful at this point. In *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries,* Barth takes a closer look at the Pathan people in the Middle East. Barth finds that gaining access to Pathan group is very difficult, and there are strictly adhered to cultural rules that determine where a Pathan might rank in the Pathan world. However, Barth also notes those who may have been Pathan, and subsequently absorbed into surrounding communities, still claim their Pathan heritage. The Pathans have a very small geographic area in which they live, and those who live in that area may say they are the 'true' Pathans. Barth argues those who have chosen to live outside those boundaries, and become part of neighbouring cultures, also still ascribe to a Pathan identity: "Thus, identity retains its character because *many* change their ethnic label, and only *few* are in a position where they cling to it under adverse circumstances."[25] For Barth, ethnic boundaries can be determined by the geographic spaces, but one must also consider the categories in which people place themselves, no matter where they live.

The question of whether or not the Métis are the only group that intermarried and drew on different cultures to form a new identity is easily answered. Many indigenous groups around the world have experienced intermarrying with European, and before that, other distinct indigenous groups. The Métis are somewhat unique in that their cultural identity became so strong and has persisted today. In *The Jumanos: Hunters and Traders of the Southern Plains*, Nancy Parrott Hickerson discusses the existence of the Jumanos, and what she believes were a distinct peoples in the early colonial days of the Spaniards in the southern United States and Mexico. Hickerson says for years anthropologists have been debating whether or not the

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[24] Karen J. Travers, "The Drummond Island Voyageurs and the Search for Great Lakes Métis Identity." *The Long Journey of a Forgotten People: Métis Identities & Family Histories.* Ute Lischeke & David T. McNab eds. (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), 237.
[25] Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries,* 132-33.

Jumanos actually existed as a distinct group, or were merely misidentified by Europeans who travelled and settled in the area. What Hickerson finds is that the Jumanos, much like the Métis, were often middlemen – working in-between the Spaniards and several distinct indigenous groups including the Apaches and Pueblos. Hickerson points to a series of documents and journals where the Jumanos were identified, sometimes as Pueblo-Jumanos and sometimes as Apache-Jumanos. Her eventual conclusion is the Jumanos were an extremely diverse group; and when incoming colonists and the Apaches pressed hard into their trading territory, they were absorbed by other indigenous groups. Like researchers of Métis identity, Hickerson is trying to understand how they live and function as a group – by mapping the movement of cultures, using missionary records, correspondence, and other documentation. She finds they were a nomadic people, some farmed more than trading and hunting the buffalo, but they were all considered at the time to be Jumanos: "In general, I would argue that *Jumano*, as found in the historical sources, was the designation given to a unique, recognizable, cultural and linguistic entity."[26] Hickerson does have to make some assumptions to come to this conclusion, because she does not have the luxury many Métis researchers that have of a much more recent time period, treaty-like documents and legislation pertaining to the Jumanos like the Métis possess, and a strong oral history to aid her research. However, she does make a convincing argument as to the existence of these peoples, and provides a strong reminder that as ethnographers and ethnohistorians we cannot ignore others' identities simply because they are not easy or convenient to explain.

A more recent and very useful case study is Karen I. Blu's *The Lumbee Problem: The Making of an American Indian People.* The Lumbee live in North Carolina, and are extremely difficult to categorize for anthropologists. In the most recent edition of this book, which contains a new afterword, Blu talks about who the Lumbee claim to be Indians and why they are slowly becoming a very well-recognized Indian group in the United States. As Blu explains, the Lumbee are surrounded by both Caucasian and African-American groups. As a group, the Lumbee have experienced extensive intermarriage with partners from both of these outside cultures. As well, according to Barth's theory, select outsiders acknowledge the Lumbee as Indians and the Lumbee ascribe to that identity as well. The reason Lumbee identity is also strenuously contested, by both mainstream culture and other Indian groups, is because they do

[26] Nancy Parrott Hickerson, *The Jumanos: Hunters and Traders of the South Plains* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), xiv.

not have all of the obvious legal and cultural signs other Indian groups possess. They do not have a distinct language, cultural practices, nor do they have treaties which date back to the settler era (though they have in recent decades signed a modern day treaty). Blu says what makes the Lumbee a distinct cultural group is how the Lumbee act as a group: "The Lumbee are never simply acted upon – they are quite definitely actors acting."[27] Blu shows that the internal community divisions of the Lumbee never prevent them from acting as a group when they need to protect their business investments or cultural recognition as a distinct group. They consider themselves to be Indians; and while other Indian groups may dispute their identity, the Lumbee have always been persistent in their claim to what they see as their unique Indian identity. The Lumbee may be a challenge for anthropologists because the people and their distinct cultural traits may not be as easy to categorize, but Blu says there is enough 'other' evidence, like self-identification and cultural customs, to prove the Lumbee are indeed their own distinct group.

Where does the modern group identity originate, and how do indigenous groups negotiate that identity in modern times? For answers to these questions one must look to the most recent past, the ways in which indigenous people try to 'legitimate' their identities, and what impact those struggles have on identity and group structures. Change began for most ethnic groups in the 1960s. After years of repression, oppression, and being shunted to the side, the 1960s and 1970s saw cultural revival under the boisterous and momentous civil rights movement. In *American Indian Ethnic Renewal,* Joane Nagel looks at this movement and the impacts it had on group identity and culture, and subsequently, a slow but continuous change in identity policies that have continued to this day. Some of Nagel's findings are obvious to those who have been raised in Indian communities: because of colonialism and the subsequent racism, much has been lost in terms of culture, oral history and tradition. Reviving those traditions means they are not the same as they were before contact with and settlement of Europeans in the Americas. Nagel is especially concerned with the American Indian Movement in the United States and its impact on Indian cultures. Nagel sees a continuation of movements from the late 1800s and early 1900s like the Ghost Dance, revived in the Red Power movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which

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[27] Karen I. Blu, *The Lumbee Problem: The Making of an American Indian People* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001 reprint), xiii.

included fish-ins, protests and occupations.[28] What she reveals is while the movement was initially a galvanizing force for many Indian communities, fissures soon began to form between groups. Instead of all Indian groups uniting, urban and reserve Indians alike began to feel alienated from each other. As well, those who felt they were 'true' Indians, those who looked 'the part' (which was subjective to each individual), began to split off. Nagel says the reasons for this are simple. In terms of resources, Indians were now put in competition with each other to get dollars for their people. Poverty was used as leverage by mainstream governments, and impoverished and underdeveloped groups were bought off with program dollars and grants that addressed some of the daily needs while ignoring inherent rights and promises of equality:

> There is no doubt that the growth of Indian population has mixed consequences for American Indian ethnic and cultural survival and change. The increases guarantee the demographic survival of Native American communities and ethnicity. Offsetting this benefit are concerns about the dilution of tribal cultures and traditions and the loss of scarce tribal resources to individuals living off-reservation.[29]

As Nagel points out, just as Indian identity was exploding, and people were reclaiming their heritage, new problems mounted. Suddenly, Indian communities which had banded together to fight for civil rights and recognition were now fighting each other for the right to be the 'true' Natives.

Also along those same lines, Circe Sturm's work on race, culture and identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma draws similar parallels. Sturm argues the Cherokee nation is extremely diverse, which makes claiming that identity difficult: "According to local understandings, Cherokee is more inclusive political category as a Cherokee National Citizen – from those with 'pure-blood' and 'full culture' to those who are phenotypically and culturally white. On the other hand, the term *Indian* is a more explicitly racial category."[30] In the introduction, Sturm indicates that she is Creek, trying to find her place while questioning who has the right to decide who is Indian and who is not. While this debate also takes place in the United States, and deals with what in Canada would be considered to be First Nations or Status

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[28] Joane Nagel, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power and the Resurgence of Identity and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 158 – 163.
[29] Ibid., 246.
[30] Circe Sturm, *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Okalahoma* (Los Angeles: University of CaliforniaPress, 2002), 109.

Indians, it does have direct parallels to the Métis situation in Canada. At one point, Sturm comments that it is often easier for Cherokee people who look Cherokee to be accepted. However, Sturm argues that even if the Cherokee cannot remain biologically and racially Cherokee, "it is even more important to remain culturally Cherokee."[31] Sturm also points out that very little is accomplished when people try to exclude others from the cultural group to which they ascribe. In fact, much like Lawrence, she sees definitions as essentially government, state-sanctioned constructs that are extremely divisive and serve only to rip the nation and the people apart, and thereby avoid financial obligations. Sturm interviews a 76-year-old Cherokee man who talks about the fact that even if someone is only 1/2000 Cherokee, "their ancestors still came from the trail of tears."[32] "In this man's opinion, because the federal government did not discriminate on the basis of race when it forced all the Cherokees – white, black, and red – to leave their homeland, then the descendents of those various individuals should all have rights to Cherokee citizenship."[33] The struggle to be a member of the Cherokee nation is an issue that continues to resurface for that community, just as it is a common problem for many Aboriginal groups across North America, including the Métis.

In Canada, both First Nations and Métis people are experiencing a similar trend. The literature in Canada, written by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal academics, is just as substantial. The academic Joe Sawchuk has been pondering the questions of acceptance and belonging in the Métis community for decades. Sawchuk, who worked with the Métis, has produced a wealth of material about the political and cultural identity of the Métis in Canada. Tracing the breadth of Sawchuk's work over the past thirty years, one can see how government funding and definitions have consistently broken down the unity of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. In one of his more recent essays, "Negotiating an Identity: Métis Political Organizations, the Canadian Government, and Competing Concepts of Aboriginality," Sawchuk argues that the state has impacted the Metis' right to self-determination and to decide who will be members of their group. As Sawchuk so clearly explains, "struggles for self-definition by Aboriginal minorities against an encompassing nation-state are fraught with irony."[34] The Métis,

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[31] Sturm, *Blood Politics,* 100.
[32] Ibid., 209.
[33] Ibid., 207.
[34] Joe Sawchuk, "Negotiating an Identity: Métis political organizations, the Canadian Government, and Competing Concepts of Aboriginality." *American Indian Quarterly,* 25 (Winter 2001): 73.

like so many Aboriginal groups in Canada, are using the court system to determine their rights, and in the Métis' case their group identity. Sawchuk, like Jennifer S. H. Brown, Heather Devine and Lucy Elderveld Murphy, has proven there were many historic Métis Nations across the country including Eastern Canada and the Great Lakes region, but Red River Métis are viewed as more valid because of events like the Battle of Seven Oaks and the 1869-70 Resistance. This makes the Métis appear to be a single, holistic group, when actually they are not. Sawchuk's solution to this problem is a return to seeing everyone as Indian – although this is a somewhat over-simplistic move, it prevents what Sawchuk sees as thinning in the Aboriginal ranks as to who can claim an Indian identity; and that those whom claim the identity are entitled to those rights as members of a more general Indian group.

The discussion above leads this researcher to the following conclusion: the identities of all Aboriginal communities, and in this case specifically the Métis, have been negatively affected by the Western definitions created to label the people. While the Métis Nation of Canada has tried to form its own definitions, the cultural identity of the people continues to be either reinforced or diluted and broken down by the mainstream federal government's need to define them concretely, while also maintaining control of who will be allowed to claim the identity and who will not. Therefore, when the discussion continues in academic circles, the use of Western philosophies and ways of knowing simply perpetuates the problem: the people for whom the definitions have been created actually have very little control over their own membership. The labels create restrictive categories that do not honour the community's own ability to determine its own membership; instead, these labels enforce state-sanctioned definitions and categories. However, there is a recently developed tool that can assist both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal academics in the quest to develop a body of literature that accurately, and respectfully, examines Aboriginal cultures and identities as the communities themselves understand them.

This new tool is what Eva Marie Garroutte describes as Radical Indigenism: "Radical Indigenism suggests resistance to the pressure upon indigenous scholars to participate in academic discourses that strip Native intellectual traditions of their spiritual and sacred elements."[35] It is through Radical Indigenism that Garroutte argues academics can give

[35] Eva Marie Garroutte, *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 103.

themselves over to Indigenous philosophy and relations, so that those philosophies and understandings both generate the academic questions, as well as frame the study.[36] In short, Radical Indigenism sees Indigenous philosophies and traditions as equal to, and even possibly superior than, Western philosophies.[37] In the context of this study, Radical Indigenism is extremely important. By adopting this philosophy, along with more traditional case study methods and Western understandings of biography and autobiography, there are some Métis perspectives that can now be considered as equal to Western perspectives. The first, as asserted earlier, is that Métis identity exists and has since the ethnogensis of the people. The second is that the historic Métis community did disperse, but rebuilt in several other communities both after the 1869-70 Resistance in Red River and again after the 1885 Resistance in Batoche. The reason these communities, and subsequently their identities, persisted is that fundamentally at the core of Métis culture, is their adaptability. As Martha Harroun Foster notes, "their simultaneous cultural homogeneity and heterogeneity allowed the Spring Creek Métis to establish an open community that welcomed diverse neighbours and adjusted to their customs and languages."[38]

I argue that this latter pattern also held true of the Fiddler family: sometimes they found themselves integrating outsiders, at other times they sought acceptance in new Métis communities. However, that is a fundamental part of the culture, its adaptability and strength to continue to rebuild over and over again. "Métis identity was characterized by nothing so much as its porous boundaries."[39] That acceptance of all newcomers, the courage to integrate into new communities, is one of the most important Métis philosophies. It was the kinship networks, constantly being rebuilt by the families, especially by female family heads, that saved the culture and identity in my own family. As Garroutte argues, by accepting Métis philosophies of kinship, Radical Indigenism can actually ease the burdens placed on Aboriginal communities and identities. "In short, a definition of identity founded on traditional notions of kinship sets the conditions for the potential, compassionate incorporation into tribal community of Indian persons

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[36] Ibid., 111-12.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Martha Harroun Foster, *We Know Who We Are: Métis Identity in a Montana Community* (Norman: University of Okalhoma Press, 2006), 134.
[39] Ibid., 135.

whom other definitions can exclude. Thus, it is a flexible definition. At the same time, it is a robust definition."[40]

> Their subsequent history, their constant seeking for a place in Canadian society, their desire to enter it with the dignity of men imbued with a deep sense of history shows how a people, even a defeated and forgotten people, continually search for a future.[41]

Sealey and Lussier's portrait of the Métis is definitely romanticized, and this author would not consider the Métis defeated, and most definitely not forgotten. The Métis are a people who have been searching for a place to call home, a place where future generations can grow, learn and succeed. Even today, there is no Métis homeland, although the Métis Nation of Canada has asserted an historic Métis homeland. It is a connection to the historic homeland that is required in order for a Métis person to be recognized by the MNC, and therefore, represented by that group. Still, many Métis people live outside of that historic region, and, unlike First Nations people, they do not have a reserve base. However, the Métis are a recognized Aboriginal group within Canada, according to the constitution. Métis people have a unique history within the country of Canada, and indeed within the world. In many countries, including places like New Zealand, people either identify with the indigenous group who inhabited the land prior to contact or with the settlers/colonizers with whom their indigenous ancestors created mixed race peoples. "The original meaning of the term *Métis* evokes the idea of a "mixed" or 'in-between' people. However, the notion of a mixed blood people distinct from the Aboriginal peoples of a region is an unusual one in the international experience of indigenous-colonial relations."[42] In Canada, something different happened, a new nation was born. The Métis, congregating in places like Red River, St. Laurent, Batoche, Île à la Crosse and many other communities, drew on the heritages of both sides of their ancestry to form a completely unique group of peoples. As well, the Métis' economic role in the fur trade set them apart. Acting as middlemen between fur traders and Indians, transporting trade goods, and organizing a strictly regulated Buffalo Hunt, the Métis created a niche market for themselves and a geopolitical space in the fledgling country of Canada.

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[40] Ibid.
[41] Bruce D. Sealey and Antoine S. Lussier, *The Métis Canada's Forgotten People* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1975), 10.
[42] Paul L.A.H. Chartrand, *Who Are Canada's Aboriginal Peoples? Recognition, Definition, and Jurisdiction* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Ltd., 2002), 24.

It is my argument that the Métis did not begin to assert this identity, or indeed recognize it themselves, until they were faced with the destruction of their way of life. As Nicholas Thomas notes, "I insist that self-representation never takes place in isolation and that it is frequently oppositional or reactive: the idea of a community cannot exist in the absence of some externality or difference, and identities and traditions are often not simply different from but constituted in opposition to others."[43] Playing the fiddle, dancing the Red River Jig, and carting trade goods on the Red River cart, while important cultural indicators, were not enough to forge a sense of common purpose or identity. In fact, the Métis' sense of identity, of their Métisness, came from opposition to first European, and then Canadian, leaders who were trying to dictate their futures. The battles for control of land in Canada's west were armed resistances fought by the Métis against the European colonial powers, and then the Canadian government using British troops.

With the exception of the events at Battle of Seven Oaks, the Métis were defeated in their subsequent attempts to assert their right to govern themselves, during the Red River Resistance, through their decision to lay down their arms, and then again in 1885 Resistance where they were in fact defeated. What formed this sense of identity was the fact that the Métis were forced to unite and to see themselves as a unique group of people within the country, a group which deserved to be treated as a land-holding nation within Canada. In trying to protect their communities and homelands, they realized their own identity and culture. While they were not successful in their attempts to stave off absorption into the Canadian whole, they were successful in leaving a legacy for future generations. Part of that legacy includes their adaptability, a unique ability that allowed them to rebuild their communities, even while becoming members of new societal groups in villages, towns, and cities far from their original communities of birth. It was during this process that the people continued to pass down their traditions and keep their families, culture, and identity strong. This is what Métis draw on today when talking about culture, identity, and community.

Identity is essentially a description of the components that represent a person. People differentiate themselves based on variables including age, sex, occupation, cultural grouping, country of birth, and same such. It is these markers which help individuals understand with

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[43] Nicholas Thomas, "The Inversion of Tradition." *American Ethnologist,* 20:4 (1992), 213.

whom they are interacting. Much has been written about identity, how it is formed, in both groups and individuals. Philip Gleason, in *Speaking of Diversity*, analyses the emergence of identity and its connection to a reification of the self, through social scientific theory. According to Gleason, public interest in "identity" burst onto the scene in the 1950s as the world started to become more connected by mass media and communications, resulting in a wider awareness of cultural difference and a growing need to explain those differences. In this context, identity became a reaction to an increasingly monolithic, global culture based on Western societal values and minority groups' attempts to resist the 'melting pot.' The idea of having a unique identity became increasingly popular throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s as civil rights movements swept across the continent. Suddenly, identity became connected to crisis – and in this more culturally and politically aware environment, everyone was suddenly dealing with their "identity crisis". This crisis was the loss of culture under racist and sexist economic and political policies that forcibly segregated Blacks, Hispanics, Indians, and indeed the Métis, from mainstream society, encouraging ethnic minorities to enfranchise or assimilate to the Western culture forming and taking control in the mainstream. These movements were directly connected to identity, a result of an understanding about being different from mainstream culture and united with others in your own ethnic group who were also experiencing the same economic, political, and social subjugation. When these groups of people began to unite under the banner of their unique ethnic identity – they were also fighting the legal and political systems within their countries which had tried to force them to conform to the new Western ideology and take on a more global identity.

It was when identity began to be studied as a cultural phenomenon that the concept almost simultaneously became helpful and problematic: "Adding to the already great likelihood of confusion arising from this array of possible meanings is the ambiguity stemming from the fact that the sociologists most apt to talk about identity understand it in a quite different way."[44] Identity discourse can be convoluted, disparate, and sometimes even confusing. When looking at a group from the outside, many things can be attributed to identity. However, not all of the symbols attributed to that identity are actually part of the individual identity of a person. The

[44] Philip Gleason, *Speaking of Diversity: Language and Ethnicity in Twentieth-Century America.* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 143. Gleason raises the point that there is little conformity on the use of the term, and that it is employed, often without context, and this poses a serious problem for the strength of sociological and anthropological work today. However, he also notes that it is practically impossible to do without the term.

characteristics that define an individual or a group are not static. Identity is constantly changing; symbols that identify a person or group at one point in history do not necessarily identify them at another point. This problem is compounded when anthropologists and social scientists begin to focus ethnographic studies on the identities of individuals and their cultural groups. Another issue raised by Gleason concerns the continuity in the use of the concept. Social scientists often employ the concept without any consistency among different ethnographic studies and sometimes within the individual studies themselves. The term is used at will, and social scientists give very little thought, or more importantly explanation, as to what they are trying to examine.

In *Theories of Ethnicity*, Richard Thompson tackles this question of permanent or evanescent identity. Arguing, quite convincingly, that identity is primordial or permanent, Thompson draws on the work of Clifford Geertz. "Geertz [...] has clearly defined ethnicity as a primordial sentiment, *not* because ethnicity is a natural, biologically-based identity, but because ethnicity is a historically important cultural identity that, in certain parts of the world, has become particularly crucial or salient politically."[45] For Geertz and Thompson, ethnicity, or ethnic identity, is about being noticed as 'a somebody,' and as that somebody they are a person who has a rightful place in the new or modern state: "It is the human need for some measure of security, some measure of autonomy, some measure of freedom, and some right to develop one's potential that is at stake."[46]

Most social scientists seem to follow one side or the other of a dialectal opposition of the term. Raymond Fogelson argues social scientists often see identity as formed and developed in one of two ways. Primordialists see identity as a permanent, deep, and internal part of an individual's and/or a group's composition. Optionalists are more apt to view identity as evanescent, shallow, and external. Identity is asserted when necessary; it is invented and re-invented as situations demand.

However neither the optionalist nor the primordialist definitions of identity completely encompass the individual identity or the group identity an individual associates with that I am

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[45] Richard H. Thompson, *Theories of Ethnicity: A Critical Appraisal* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 53.
[46] Ibid, 63. Thompson argue for identity based on the primordial theory line. However, this is not a subscription to the idea of genetic or biological theories which state ethnicity and identity is essentially 'in the blood.'

discussing here. Dealing specifically with Native American identity, Fogelson tackles the issue of the lack of clarity when observing and trying to explain identity in the context of cultural studies, and also gives some helpful and basic guidelines for narrowing the search and producing clearly defined work: "The basic notions of identity in these usages (cultural studies) involve communication of a sense of oneself or one's group intrapsychically to oneself or projected outwardly to others."[47] For Fogelson, there are four distinct connecting aspects to identity that one needs to examine when looking at an individual's connection to a group identity. The first is the 'ideal identity,' the identity one wishes to attain. The second is the 'feared identity' one wishes to avoid. The third is a 'real identity,' the identity one feels most closely resembles the self and the reference group. The final segment is the 'claimed identity,' which is one "that is presented to others for confirmation, challenge, or negotiation in an effort to move the 'real' identity closer to the ideal and further from the feared identity."[48] The problem with adopting either the primordialist or the optionalist view of identity, while excluding the other, is that identity has roots in each definition. Identities are negotiated through interaction with another person or group.[49] This means identities then are both primordial and optional – they are permanently in a state of change or growth. I believe this is particularly true for the Métis. However, since Fogelson's method focuses on individual identity, what is missing is an explanation of how a group manifests a discernible identity to which an individual can desire or strive to belong. Before an individual can assert a connection to an ethnic identity, a group must determine what characteristics or commonalities form that identity. In the birth of that identity is often where the individual finds his or her connection to that group.

In *Ethnicity: Racism, Class and Culture,* Steven Fenton creates a classification system of five situations in which ethnic identities are created and emergent. Each category has a corresponding political, economic and social convergence that in turn results in the emergence of an ethnic identity. Of the five categories, the Métis situation can be applied to three. First, proto-nations which claim to be distinct nations; the emergence of the Métis is often described as

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[47] Raymond D. Fogelson, "Perspectives on Native American Identity" in *Studying Native America: Problems and Prospects.* Ed. Russell Thorton (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 41. Fogelson is examining Native American Identity, but I believe his views on the formation of identity, and the process of examining this formation are particularly relevant to my research into Métis identity.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

the birth of an original group of people. The Métis are considered to be an anomaly around the globe, because they are one of very few mixed cultural groups that became a distinct group or nation as a result of colonial contact. Fenton also discusses ethnic groups in plural societies and how their coerced migration into plural societies causes them to form distinct identities as a reaction against a dominant mainstream culture and the variations of cultures around them. The Métis display these qualities. Their ethnogensis came after contact, sometime in the late 1700s or early 1800s. As they began to form societies distinct from their Indian and European mothers and fathers, their culture and identity were born. However, as I will demonstrate later, it is because of the constant pressure from the European, and later 'Canadian' people, that the Métis continue to maintain the boundaries of their culture and communities.

Finally, Fenton argues land dispossession is often a central feature for the genesis of Indigenous identities.[50] While Fenton is quick to admit his categories are restrictive, he does not explain the particular development of every ethnic group, but rather he does convincingly demonstrate that there are unique historical trajectories that have correlations to the situations in which many distinct communities initially form. The one congruous necessity for the emergence of that identity is the, "real or perceived differences of ancestry, culture, and language are mobilized in social transactions."[51] This means both those from within and outside of the cultural group are able to distinguish both real and perceived difference. For the Métis, this is particularly applicable.

Another important contribution to identity studies comes from Donald Fixico. In *The Urban Indian Experience,* Fixico examines the connection between migrating to and trying to integrate within urban centres. This is particularly important for Métis Identity, considering most Métis people either already lived in what were originally settlements that often included outsiders. Even if they were the first to settle communities, like in the case of Meadow Lake, a community settled by my ancestors, outsiders would soon join them, eventually taking over as they became the dominant, mainstream culture. Or, because of government policies, Métis were

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[50] Steve Fenton, *Ethnicity: Racism, Class and Culture* (London: McMillan Press Ltd., 1999), 43. Since the Métis could be represented in at least three of the categories, it is noted by the author that classification systems which try to encompass an entire group are not very useful. However, for the purposes of this paper, the categories are more markers of 'possible' cultural groupings, and useful in the sense that they allow the author to note a range of instances under which Indigenous identities are formed.

[51] Ibid.

forced to find ways to hide or try to blend in to communities without revealing, or at least accentuating, their Métis identities. Fixico says a large part of the identity crisis comes from these moves into larger and larger urban centres: "Each native person who decided to move to the city grappled with the identity problem while facing a new frontier, an alien culture, and unforeseen changes."[52] While Fixico's study follows urban Indians moving from reservations in the United States to large urban centres, there are many parallels to be made between the identity formations he uncovers in those groups and the ones I see in Métis communities in Canada. According to Fixico, mainstream pressures in the city forced many urban Aboriginal people to become bicultural – forcing the people to learn both ways of life. However, in order to do this successfully, a strong sense of self-esteem has to be maintained.[53] The same is true for the Métis, and more specifically, my own family. Their determination to have a better life, or at least build a better life for their children and grandchildren, meant they would have to make many sacrifices. The biggest one of all was a chance that, in the long run, cultural identity may not survive. However, it is exactly an ability to adapt, that saved many Indigenous families and their cultures and this holds true for many Métis:

> The unexpected conclusion is that social circumstances and economic needs have redefined cultures in order for the people to survive, compelling Indian people to learn to adjust, altering their family structure and personality, and simultaneously threatening their distinct culture, forcing them to deal with society's problems such as racial differences in an urban setting.[54]

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[52] Donald L. Fixico, *The Urban Indian Experience in America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), p. 3.
[53] Ibid.,185.
[54] Ibid.,174.

Chapter Two: The Method

In striving to understand, through Métis philosophies, how the Métis identity of the Fiddler family was passed on from one generation to the next, the lived stories, or biographies and (auto)biographies of individuals within the Fiddler family, and among other family lines that married into the Fiddlers, including the Gervais, LaPlante, DeLarondes and Morins all need some examination.[55] Each individual makes an important contribution. Each story, as it enters the main family line, makes an important contribution to the overall family history, and subsequently, the family's Métis identity. Coupled with the theories of case study, this body of work seeks to understand how the identity was passed between generations, by referencing primary and secondary documents that exist and document the history of the different branches of the family. Documents like scrip records, town histories, and other archival materials will be utilized in an effort to try to understand the actions of the people and how they struggled to maintain their sense of self, their community, and their identity in times when the general public and their own governments seemed to wish they would assimilate and disappear.

(Auto)biography in Ethnographic Research

> But I wonder if it might now be true to say that for the common reader autobiography, taken by and large, is the most appealing form of literature and, after autobiography, biography; true to say that autobiography is the literature that most immediately and deeply engages our interest and holds it and that in the end seems to mean the most to us because it brings an increased awareness, through an understanding of another life in another time and place, of the nature of our own selves and our share in the human condition.[56]

In the beginning of *Metaphors of Self*, James Olney muses about the merits of autobiography and its popularity. He begins by quoting a colleague, whom he says may have overstated it when saying that no man (person) had ever written a dull autobiography. Aside

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[55] The spelling of the name Fiddler changes throughout history for a number of reasons. In some cases, primary documents, filled out by government agents, clergy and others, list the name as Fidler or Fiddler depending on how each decided to spell the name. Many of the early Fiddlers in my line were unable to read and write and so would not have been able to say how their names should be spelled. Other times, it looks as if people have spelled the names phonetically or they have spelled it as if it in a French-sounding English manner. For example, there are times when the name Fiddler is spelled Fideleur. The same holds true for the DeLarondes, De Larondes, and the Delerondes, as all three spellings occur in many primary documents. The Morin, Gervais, and LaPlante names all seem to be spelled consistently, although there is occasionally a space between La and Plante. The different spellings and the impact on this researchers work is discussed in subsequent chapters.

[56] James Olney, *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1972), vii.

from the debatable assumption of that statement, Olney does raise an interesting point. Reading about others' lives and personal circumstances is something many of us do on a regular basis – whether through newspapers, magazines, and of course more traditionally written (auto)biographical books or fictionalized accounts. By observing others' differences and noting similarities, we can often learn more about ourselves. As well, comparison with others is how we start to form an understanding of cultures different from our own. And, there is much to be learned from the histories, experiences, and knowledge of people – hence the longevity of ethnography and anthropology in the social sciences. However, in both of these fields, as well as in Indigenous studies, the use of autobiography is greatly contested for many reasons. In *The Vulnerable Observer,* Ruth Behar, a self-described Latina woman, discusses the questions that are raised when academics begin to use autobiography in their professional work:

> No one objects to autobiography, as such, as a genre in its own right. What bothers critics is the insertion of personal stories into what we have been taught to think of as the analysis of impersonal social facts. Throughout most of the twentieth century, in scholarly fields ranging from literary criticism to anthropology to law, the reigning paradigms have traditionally called for distance, objectivity, and abstraction. The worst sin was to be "too personal.[57]

For Behar, the goal of anthropology, at least historically, is to give others a voice – but only as an 'objective' outsider. Internal observations, even when subjected to the same methodological standards, is frowned upon, or at least not taken to be 'real work' in the fields of ethnography and anthropology.[58] Behar says at some point she began to realize she was speaking from the 'margins' of the academy, when using personal experience in her work. Academics in the field of anthropology were almost all speaking of the 'others' they were observing. And so, by continuing to speak about her own 'self' and not work on the other selves, she was breaking 'unspoken rules.' Behar says many would argue that the popularization of culture, and personalizing that culture, is something for talk shows and other forms of more superficial media. The problem then appears to be when someone writes in a vulnerable manner, because the response is often vulnerable as well -- not clinical and technical with detached interest.[59] However, Behar argues this type of interaction between ethnographer and reader is in reality exactly what one should endeavour to achieve. In fact, the prospects of combining these

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[57] Ruth Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996,)* 12.
[58] Ibid., 26.
[59] Ibid., 16.

fields will, in the end, bring forward new insights at the academic levels: "Critics can keep dismissing these trends as forms of 'solipsism,' but a lot of us are going to continue wearing our hearts on our sleeves."[60] While this statement is a little too sentimental, not every writer will wear their heart on their sleeve, I do believe there is a lot of merit in the use of auto(biography) as a method of studying one's life and culture. In fact, when combined with specific case study research methods (which I will discuss later in this chapter), it is highly effective in understanding how cultural identity is developed and maintained in an individual, and subsequently passed on to the next generation.

The Life History Approach – (Auto)Biography as Method

"Seen in this way, 'biographising' becomes a normal human activity, contributing to the maintenance of identity, the presentation of self and the passing on or transference of key cultural and personal elements: even a guarantee of immortality at the end of life."[61] The basic assertion is that one can apply the same case study techniques to one's own family, and one's own life and personal experiences, and the resulting work is of equal value to those works produced by the supposed 'unbiased' third party. Storying, or storytelling, in this sense then is an important part of identity boundary maintenance within communities. Several critics point to a change in their academic fields that legitimates the role of biography (and autobiography) as well as its theoretical contributions in fields of study.

Phillipe Lejeune is one of the foremost theorists on autobiography. In his work, *On Autobiography,* Lejeune examines the rise of autobiography and its role in research. According to Lejeune, autobiography began as a means for upper class individuals and leaders to explain their existence and tell their 'story.' Then in the nineteenth century, autobiography was taken up by the burgeoning middle class to explain their own existence. Lejeune distinguishes between pulp autobiography, produced for mass consumption without any analysis, and the social scientific use of autobiography. In this theoretical bent, Lejeune says the true autobiographical study is an analysis of a life, and not just a restating of facts. Lejeune then defines the

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[60] Ibid., 32.

[61] Prue Chamberlayne, Joanna Bornat and Tom Wengraf, "Introduction: The Biographical Turn" in *The Turn to Biographical Methods in Social Science: Comparative Issues and Examples.* Eds. Prue Chamberlayne, Joanna Bornat and Tom Wengraf (New York: Routledge, 2000), 9. I have added the quotes around biographising because I cannot locate it in standard dictionaries. I was able to find a reference to biographizing, meaning to tell one's own story. I believe that is the meaning this author intends, based on the context of the use of the word.

relationship required between the writer and the reader as simply one in which a piece of writing is accepted as autobiography:

> I have indeed used the word "autobiography" to designate broadly any text governed by an autobiographical pact, in which an author proposes to the reader a discourse on the self, but also a particular realization of that discourse, one in which the question "who am I?" is answered by a narrative that tells "how I became who I am."[62]

Lejeune argues that the goal of autobiography is truth, though he notes autobiography still exhibits a limited historical accuracy. The individual telling the story is at the same time the protagonist. This means the life of the individual is filtered through his or her own memory and interpretation of events that shaped him or her. Lejeune, however, does not see this as a reason to abandon autobiography as a means of research, for "the text becomes paradoxically not less precious but more: in making of the text the autobiographer constructs a self that would not otherwise exist."[63] Lejeune raises some interesting and important ideas about the value of autobiographical works:

> A narrator, in the here and now, takes upon himself or herself the task of describing the progress of a protagonist in the there and then, one who happens to share his name. He must by convention bring that protagonist from the past into the present in such a way that the protagonist and the narrator eventually fuse and become one person with a shared consciousness.[64]

Jerome Bruner, in *Narrative and Identity: Studies in Autobiography, Self and Culture*, argues autobiography allows individuals to develop agency. And, it is that agency which allows individuals to shape their own existence, as well as the existence of the people around them, "therefore (becoming) the gravitational centre of the world."[65] Following Bruner's argument, the individual has, at the very least, an equivalent agency in identity formation and maintenance to the cultural group in which they subscribe. Individuals are not merely actors moved by the larger group; they play an active role in their own identity construction, as well as the construction of the larger group identity. Along those same lines, Jens Brockmeier and Mark Freeman build up on Bruner's thesis, arguing that autobiographical narratives, "(whether spoken

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[62] Phillipe Lejeune, *On Autobiography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 124.
[63] Ibid., xxvii.
[64] Jerome Bruner, "Self-making and world-making." in *Narrative and Identity: Studies in Autobiography, Self and Culture.* Eds. Jens Brockmeier and Donal Carbaugh (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2001), 27.
[65] Ibid., 35.

or written) are useful vehicles for exploring not only the ethical dimension of identity construction but also the ethical fabric of the social worlds in which they emerge."[66] Brockmeier and Freeman continue: "Autobiography, in this sense, can be seen as an historical genre, and autobiographical identity, in turn, as embedded within the irreversible movement of history."[67] By giving agency back to the individual, autobiography must start with the individual and continue through to the community. Essentially, the community cannot take shape without the actions of the individual; and, the means for studying this boundary formation and maintenance is then through autobiography. By studying the individual, through autobiographical works, larger structures are then given legitimacy by the actors within community.

Several critics emphasize this narrative theory in *The Turn to Biographical Methods in Social Science*. For the authors, biography is a means of understanding how identities change in time and space: "For biographies, which are rooted in an analysis of both social history and the wellsprings of individual personality, reach forwards and backwards in time, documenting processes and experiences of social change."[68] Editors Prue Chamberlayne, Joanna Bornat and Tom Wengrag argue, like Richard Thompson (mentioned above), that a more populist and political turn within history and sociology in the 1960s and 1970s led to the recognition that using personal narrative allowed ethnographers to reach into those sections of society that could not be tapped through formal survey or documentary processes:[69]

> Attempts to account for individual agency, whether in relation to shifting power balances over time, or measured against broad structural determinants in societies, have drawn historians and sociologists towards evidence that is rooted in autobiography, eye-witness statements or straightforward personal narrative. In each discipline, the status of personal accounts, unless drawn from more powerful actors in the case of history, raised questions of reliability, subjectivity and representativeness.[70]

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[66] Jens Brockmeier and Mark Freeman, "Narrative integrity: Autobiographical identity and the meaning of the good life." in *Narrative and Identity: Studies in Autobiography, Self and Culture.* Eds. Jens Brockmeier and Donal Carbaugh (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2001), 77.
[67] Ibid., 78.
[68] Prue Chamberlayne, Joanna Bornat and Tom Wengraf, "Introduction: The Biographical Turn," in *The Turn to Biographical Methods in Social Science: Comparative Issues and Examples.* Eds. Prue Chamberlayne, Joanna Bornat and Tom Wengraf (New York: Routledge, 2001), 2.
[69] Ibid., 3
[70] Ibid.

According to the editors, earlier theoretical analysis, which focused on creating structures with which to analyse groups, was lacking a sense of how individual agents impacted on history, thereby causing social change. Daniel Bertaux asked his students to examine their own families, charting the educational and occupational changes over a number of generations. The result was students better understood their own origins; subsequently, Bertaux believed they were better prepared to use their new analytical skills in application with other groups.[71] Bertaux and Delcroix argue that we might make our own history, but it is not under the conditions of our own choosing. It is how an individual filters this history, within the community, where the understanding of our identities can be more clearly perceived. Michael Rustin continues to shape this argument and take it further. Rustin argues that subordinating the individual under frameworks that we create to identify them takes away their individual power and agency. Seen in the context of defining Aboriginal peoples, conducting research in preconceived categories, originally created by mainstream governments and their bureaucracies, would then take away the individual's ability to self-determination. Rustin says responsible researchers must start the investigation of society with the individual's own experience.[72] To do this, we must situate the actors in their environment and history, and re-tell their experiences as they understand them to have occurred. This does not mean, however, that we simply take the events as they are told. As Tom Wengraf points out:

> Without knowledge of the evolving history... the significance of any stories told cannot be properly understood. Such a researched knowledge of history and context, not least of evolving history of context, is necessary to understand anybody's story, including our own.[73]

Gaining an understanding of that history or addressing the 'Why?' question is exactly the goal that Agnes Hankiss argues ethnographers are trying to accomplish. In fact, she sees the act of autobiography as the means by which the human memory can select events and rearrange those

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[71] Daniel Bertaux and Catherine Delcroix, "Case Histories of Families and Social Processes: Enriching Sociology," in *The Turn to Biographical Methods in Social Science: Comparative Issues and Examples.* Eds. Prue Chamberlayne, Joanna Bornat and Tom Wengraf (New York: Routledge, 2001), 71.

[72] Michael Rustin, "Reflections on the Biographical Turn in Social Science," in *The Turn to Biographical Methods in Social Science: Comparative Issues and Examples.* Eds. Prue Chamberlayne, Joanna Bornat and Tom Wengraf (New York: Routledge, 2001), 49.

[73] Tom Wengraf, "Uncovering the General from within the Particular: From Contingencies to Typologies in the Understanding of Cases." in *The Turn to Biographical Methods in Social Science: Comparative Issues and Examples.* Eds. Prue Chamberlayne, Joanna Bornat and Tom Wengraf (New York: Routledge, 2001), 144.

events.[74] When this is done, it gives new meaning and understanding to everything that happened in reality – or in other words – provides an analysis of the initial events which may appear to have very little meaning for the autobiographer:

> The image of the self is never just a simple reflection of the experiences related to the self: it always includes a specific response to the 'Why' of the development of the self. Everyone builds his or her own theory about the history and the course of his or her life by attempting to classify his or her particular successes and fortunes, gifts and choices, favourable and unfavourable elements of his or her fate according to a coherent, explanatory principle and to incorporate them within a historical unit. In other words, everybody tries, in one way or another, to build up his or her own ontology.[75]

It is that ontogentical journey in which this author is interested. Through the process of (auto)biography, the author writes a chronology of events, which when properly signposted and evaluated, chart a course that can be compared and contrasted to others. It is through this mapping that one can see the value of the journey created by (auto)biography. Essentially, a narrative, such as (auto)biography, has two functions: one is referential, the other is evaluative. "The referential function consists in the description of past events in their temporal order. The evaluative function consists in referring these events to the present, i.e., in making clear what they mean to the participants in the situation in which the narrative occurs."[76] As mentioned earlier, this study will use both autobiography, the study of my own life history, as well as biography, the study of two Métis branches of my family since their birth as Métis. First, the timeline of my family will be delineated from the introduction of the Métis culture in my family within two branches, as well as a timeline of the resulting family and cultural origins. My own life history will be included in this timeline. Throughout, these referential events will be evaluated to determine what kind of identity exists, how it changes from one generation to the next, and how it is maintained throughout those generations and life spans.

In fact, I argue that the combination of autobiography and ethnography is actually quite profound – especially when examining how ethnicity or ethnic identity is negotiated, maintained

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[74] Agnes Hankiss, "Ontologies of the Self: On the Mythological Rearranging of One's Life-History," in Biography and Society: *The Life History Approach in the Social Sciences.* Ed. Daniel Bertaux (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications Inc., 1981), 203.
[75] Ibid., 203.
[76] Martin Kohli, "Biography: Account, Text, Method," *Biography and Society: The Life History Approach in the Social Sciences.* Ed. Daniel Bertaux (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications Inc., 1981), 67.

and transferred between generations. For it is when you examine the actions of the individual, in a specific time and place, that you can truly see a microcosm of the whole. This is particularly true with my own family members, who were immensely influenced by the actions of the government and other settlers during the two Métis resistances, and by overall public opinion. As you will come to see, even I myself have tailored my own identity to try to navigate social situations, something that has greatly affected me. In fact there is "[a] paradoxical sense that ethnicity is something reinvented and reinterpreted in each generation by each individual and that it is often something quite puzzling to the individual, something over which he or she lacks control. Ethnicity is not something that is simply passed on from generation to generation, taught and learned; it is something dynamic, often unsuccessfully repressed or avoided."[77] In the case of my own family this means each individual's life history, is a part of the larger life history, which is the growth and development of my own Métis family. Still, I could employ only the method of biography, either by charting the identity maintenance and transference of another Métis family or by only mapping and evaluating the journey of my own family. However, it seems to this researcher such a method would not only produce a partially finished manuscript, but it would also avoid challenging this researcher's own ability to evaluate and meaningfully address cultural change and stress within my own family.

In *Take My Word: Autobiographical Innovations of Ethnic American Working Women,* Anne Goldman calls for more women to express their identity through their own voices. Like Goldman, I believe that identity can never be defined without references to difference, whether those differences lie in class, geography, gender, or ethnicity comparisons. In fact, very little progress can be made without acknowledging the existence of these categories. Goldman also claims that autobiography is often considered to be a Western, white, Christian way of writing - something that can, at times, be foreign to many non-white women.[78] She even notes that on occasion, autobiography can actually commodify ethnic identity, by playing into the agenda of the mainstream. However, she does note that when properly employed, autobiography can help

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[77] Michael J. Fischer, "Ethnicity and the Post Modern Arts of Memory," in *Writing Culture : The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography.* Eds. James Clifford and Geroge E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 195.

[78] Anne E. Goldman, *Take My Word: Autobiographical Innovations of Ethnic American Working Women* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1996), xii.

build on a 'real' ethnic identity, by giving a voice and space in the agenda to someone not in the mainstream.

(Auto)biography and Indigenous Peoples – A Method for Change

The question of whether or not autobiography and biography have any place in Indigenous studies is something that has occupied the minds of many academics – both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Among them are Arnold Krupat, Brian Swann, Donald Fixico, Angela Cavendar Wilson, Linda Tuhiwai Smith and many others. According to Arnold Krupat and co-editor Brian Swann in *I Tell You Now: Autobiographical Essays by Native American Writers,* "that form of writing generally known to the West as *autobiography* had no equivalent among the oral cultures of the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas."[79] The editors go on to say that in some Indian cultures it can actually be considered bad form to spend time blithering on about one's self.[80] Part of this 'invention' came from Europeans, and within that group one can assume other social scientists, anthropologists and ethnographers, who wanted to convey the 'real' stories of Indigenous peoples. These stories were a kind of meeting ground between the researcher and the Other (the Indigenous Other). In fact, according to Krupat in an earlier work on the same subject; "for to see the Indian autobiography as a ground on which two cultures meet is to see it as the textual equivalent of the frontier."[81] Perhaps, autobiography in Indigenous cultures began in this manner. However, I would say many First Nations and Métis peoples have embraced it as a form as personal and cultural expression - one need only look to Maria Campbell`s *Halfbreed* for an example (and that was published more than 30 years ago). The most interesting conclusion Krupat makes is an extremely important one in the context of this study: "Nonetheless, any future examples of the genre will appear in a context of increasingly dominated – at least so far as the white world's awareness is concerned – by autobiographies by Indians who, while deeply interested in the old ways, have become extremely sophisticated in their manipulation of new – Euramerican, written – ways."[82]

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[79] Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat, Eds., *I Tell You Now: Autobiographical Essays by Native American Writers.* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), x.
[80] Ibid., xii.
[81] Arnold Krupat, *For Those Who Come After: A Study of Native American autobiography* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 33.
[82] Ibid., 136.

As an Indigenous academic, it is often extremely difficult to navigate the many political minefields when conducting one`s research. Quite often, one is faced with attempting to balance the tested standards of the Western Academy against the desire, and also the pressure from the community, to create works that are based on Indigenous knowledge and practices from an Indigenous world view. As mentioned earlier, using autobiography and case study allows this researcher to do just that - incorporate the voices and life history of my own family, and my own individual experiences, and examine the case study of my own family, to show that even under extreme public pressure and out-marriage, some strands of Métis identity were maintained and passed on to subsequent generations. According to Angela Cavender Wilson, an academic noted for her work with oral history, using the stories of previous generations in research findings is just one of the ways a study can employ an Indigenous lens. She also argues, against some of her peers, like Philip Deloria. Cavendar Wilson says that in an historiographical essay, Deloria argues that it is untenable for Native people to write through a 'strictly Native lens,' and that these forms of research are often not valued enough: "While it is often useful for us to examine both Indigenous and white records of history, Deloria's assertion suggests that Indigenous oral traditions are not viable on their own. This is absurd considering that the majority of our history has little or nothing to do with white people and that our traditions thrived for thousands of years without white documents to validate them."[83] Cavender Wilson continues by noting that many scholars seem to cave under the pressure of the Western Academy, because their own worldviews become submerged below the more dominant ideologies. This is something the she believes cannot be allowed to happen:

> As Indigenous scholars we simply cannot reject that which is unacceptable to the academy (because we value all Indigenous knowledge), so our task is to challenge the academy as an agent of colonialism and carve a place for our own traditions as legitimate subjects of scholarly study, but on our own terms. This means defying the disciplinary boundaries that dissect and categorize our traditions, as these

[83] Angela Cavender Wilson, "Reclaiming our Humanity: Decolonization and the Recovery of Indigenous Knowledge," in *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities.* Eds. Devon Abbott Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 80. Cavendar Wilson's reference is a the essay called "Historiography" published in the book *A Companion to American Indian History* edited by Philip Deloria and Neal Salisbury. What is interesting about this analysis is not what the original essay maintains, but it shows that even within Indigenous Academia there are divisions about the value or historical weight that should be accorded to Indigenous oral history.

> boundaries simply do not exist in Indigenous ways in which the physical, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual are inseparable.[84]

In a similar vein, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, calls on Indigenous academics to force the envelope and challenge the Western standards by ensuring Indigenous voices are the center piece of the research, not just interesting anecdotal stories added for flavour to an otherwise unrelated piece of research. For Tuhiwai Smith, a Maroi academic, the critical deciding factor in self-determination is the ability to rediscover Indigenous voices, by not only understanding how they were initially recorded and shared as the "Other" in non-Aboriginal stories, but also how they can be shared by Indigenous academics today. Tuhiwai-Smith notes that for far too long, Indigenous people have shared their stories and life histories only to become outsiders after they were retold:[85]

> Every issue has been approached by indigenous people with a view to **re**writing and **re**righting our position in history. Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes. It is not simply about giving an oral account or a genealogical naming of the land and the events which raged over it, but a powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying.[86]

In the proceeding chapters, a need to re-tell the histories of Métis people is extremely important, not only for the people, but also to help non-Métis understand the struggles they have faced in trying to become a self-determined people. Their stories are as much about having their identities and life histories stripped from them as any other Indigenous group in Canada, and indeed around the globe. It is as a result of the loss of culture and heritage, a struggle to maintain those identities, coupled with an onslaught of bureaucratic red tape and identity-shaping policies created by the government and other agencies to break down those identities, that a crisis was formed in the first place.

> The urban Indian experience is a story of social and cultural alienation, encounters with racism, regressions into alcoholism, unemployment, and feelings of inferiority, but it is also a saga of survival, adaptations, establishment of an urban Indian identity, and development of an urban Indian culture in virtually every large city in

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[84] Ibid., 69.
[85] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and indigenous Peoples* (New York: University of Otago Press, 1999), 33.
[86] Ibid., 28. (emphasis made by author and reproduced as such in this text)

> the country, so that more than two-thirds of American Indians are now urban Indians.[87]

There is, however, hope of regaining a sense of pride, stripped throughout generations of racism. For Fixico, that begins with telling our own stories: "The identity crisis will persist until a positive image of American Indians is established and accepted by the public and by urban Indians themselves."[88] It is the hope of this writer that this study might contribute to a positive identity for Métis people.

The Case Study Method:

The main focus of my research question involves documenting how Métis identities have changed within five generations of my family, beginning with family origins, and then really starting with the battles around 1885 – when my great-grandparents were part of the 1885 Resistance at Batoche. It examines how those identities are transferred, and how successive generations understand or connect with that identity, and how outside influences impact how family members related to those inherited identities.

Perhaps one of my most famous ancestors is Peter Fidler – surveyor and mapmaker for the Hudson's Bay Company. In his journals, one can read about almost everything he saw, encountered and recorded. But within those pages, he also marks the birth of his children and makes small notes about his family. As a result, a kind of family map within his official records. Seven generations later, I myself, a direct descendant of Peter, am a journalist: a kind of modern day surveyor and mapmaker. I am also a burgeoning academic. And, like Peter Fidler before me, I am mapping a journey of my family to try to understand how and why Métis identity has survived in my family when so many forces – both internal and external – worked against its survival. The goal of this study is to 'map' how my family, and individuals within my family, moved (and continue to shift) in and out of the boundaries of our Métis identity, and why we have done so. I will also examine how internal and external forces have had an impact on family members' decisions to shift in and out of our identity. Consequently, using my 'map', coupled with the case study, I will locate and understand the movement of Métis identity and culture within my family.

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[87] Fixico, *The Urban Indian Experience in America,* 188.
[88] Ibid., 41.

There is much to learn from the history of my family. The struggles within my own family to maintain, and later extinguish, its Métis identity are comparable to that of many Métis families. While my family does have its own unique history within the larger context of Métis history, much can be learned from our experiences and ability to negotiate a Métis identity throughout the generations. Recent social science theory not only embraces, but openly encourages biographical and autobiographical research and writing in social science endeavours. While some theorists search for the answers in larger social structures and cultural groups, others argue that the catalysts behind certain changes exhibited within a cultural group or society can best be understood by examining the lives of the individuals within those groups, whose own history is intertwined with the larger cultural grouping. My thesis, "*Fiddlers' Journey: The Perseverance of One Métis Famly*," is intended to be both a contribution to biographical and autobiographical research, as well as a contribution to Métis and ethnographic studies. Metanarratives in large social groupings give way to infinite variances within their own membership. The metanarrative is actually derived from and constructed by `the individual members of that group, based on their similar experiences of social change, though they act and react differently in each instance.

To explore the research question, I will look at several generations of my own family. Starting with the progeny of Peter Fidler, I will examine the beginnings of Métis identity in my own family – looking for the first reference point of becoming more than just a combination of European and First Nations people. I will then concentrate on my great grandparents, Jean-Baptiste and Veronique Fiddler, who fought in the Battle at Batoche in 1885 and were forced to flee to protect their families from persecution. I will also look briefly at Cyprien Morin, my grandmother's father, and his family. I will examine how this history had a profound impact on the subsequent generation, like my grandparents, who decided to settle in Meadow Lake and try to fit into that diverse and divided community. I will then look at two members of the next generation: first, my father, Ron Fiddler, who decided not to speak of his identity, even though he was raised culturally to be Métis. I will compare his actions with that of my aunt – Rose Richardson – who began fighting for Métis rights during the Indian movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Finally, I will examine my own connection to my Métis identity, and how outside forces in this current global environment are making an impact on its persistence to survive.

Three forms of research will go into this endeavour. First, I will use primary documents relating to my family history. These will include scrip documents, letters, references in post journals, birth and marriage certificates, and other primary sources. I will also utilize secondary sources that refer to my family. Finally, I will conduct interviews with surviving family members including my father, Ron Fiddler, his brother, Lawrence Fiddler, my aunt/cousin Rose Richardson, my mother and sister Charlotte and Joyce Fiddler, and my aunt Elizabeth. These interviews will help me understand the identity shifts in my grandparents' and parents' generations.

While I will utilize many different forms of research in this case study, some will be more important than others in drawing conclusions. Primary documents like scrip records, birth and death notices, as well as family history material compiled by my own family will help tell the stories of those I cannot speak with today. Other sources like town histories and other articles will help tell the story of my recent generations. And finally interviews will be used to help analyze changes in more recent generations. This will all be compared and contrasted with contemporary literature on identity (with special attention on works about Métis identity and culture), (auto)biography and case study theory, and other related research.

These research methods comprise social science case study, which will form the framework of my thesis. According to Robert Yin, "evidence for case studies may come from six sources: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts. The use of these six sources calls for slightly different skills and methodological procedures."[89] Case studies are not meant to be representative of entire populations; they are a means to prove theoretical positions. Case studies must answer how and why. In my own particular case, I need to answer how members of my family negotiated their identity, why they chose to position themselves either closer or further away from that identity, and how that identity shifted and persisted.

As Yin points out, one does not have to do a complete chronology of events in a family, but a time series must have a logical beginning. In this study, that beginning logically starts with the first re-positioning of identity after the 1885 Resistance. "Whatever the stipulated nature of

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[89] Robert Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (London, England: Sage Publications Inc., 1984), 78.

the time-series, the important case study objective is to examine some relevant 'how' and 'why' questions about the relationship of events over time, not merely to observe the time trends alone."[90] And this study is not merely a look at how time generally can be seen as an evolution in how people view themselves. It looks at how external pressures force people to make difficult decisions about who they are, and who they feel pressured to become. The final conclusion will then map identity throughout the generations, to myself, to try to understand why I still cling to my Métis identity – and how our Métis identity not only survived, but was maintained and continues to flourish. Now it is time to proceed to the beginning of this journey.

The Method – Challenges and Problems

Retracing the footsteps and histories of people long since passed presents many challenges and problems. First of all, there is often a lack of a written record. While birth, marriage, and death certificates can often locate an individual or family within a physical space and indicate religious choices, they often provide very little else in the way of details. When examining Métis history, especially in the 1700s and 1800s, many Métis were not able to read and write, and therefore did not keep records of their own experiences. In some cases, like that of Peter Fidler, there is an additional challenge. Fidler does not spend a lot of time documenting his personal history; in fact his family is very rarely mentioned, something that will be discussed in full in future chapters. This provides particular challenges for this researcher, since there do not appear to be any surviving records from his children, including his son George, my great-great-great-grandfather. Without more insight from Peter Fidler, there is a minimal amount that can be learned, drawn upon, and discussed. Also worth noting is that Peter's journals are many and extensive. For the purposes of this study, there was simply not time, nor relevance, to read each and every journal. Still, there are many secondary sources, including two books about the surveyor, that are of significant help in this regard.

There are many primary documents that are used in this study, including birth, death, and marriage certificates, journal entries, post documents, Hudson's Bay Service Records, notes from search files and papers from researchers including Charles Denney and Mary Fidler, as well as land records and accounts, and finally, scrip records. Many of these records provide interesting data and information about the Fiddler family. However, many of these documents are not

[90] Ibid., 114.

complete, since much of the filing practices more than 100 years ago were not as rigorous as efforts today. This means that while there are scrip applications for some family, many of the final scrip receipts for either land or money were either not on file or were simply not logged. Finally, many of these records are spread between federal and provincial archives, including Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Calgary, and Ottawa. Recent changes to archive times, traveling distances and availability of the material itself, assuming it does exist, continue to be an on-going challenge for all researchers of Métis history and genealogy. What follows is the most complete and accurate story this researcher can construct about the birth and development of Métis identity in the Fiddler family based on the materials available.

Chapter Three – "Miscegenation" – The Origins of My Métis Family

> I think a lot of people were worried, especially on the Fiddler side of the family, that they were afraid that we'd get labelled. And (they) tried to make us into something else, by the fact that they tried to say that we were more French than anything else – denying parts of our culture and our heritage. I remember my mom, and her respect, would make sure and not talk to us in that michif language if our white friends were there. Because she didn't want to humiliate us and later I know that was what was happening because she became very quiet and didn't talk much and just let us play and visit with our friends you know. And I remember – I remember our grandmas and my mom they'd say – (eat now in Michif) – and when white kids were at the house they'd say "Eat Now." It was like they picked up English so that we wouldn't be laughed at.[91]

Much like my Aunt/Cousin Rose, much of the 'family history' was kept quiet in my home when I was growing up. If you asked questions about the past, your parents, or aunts and uncles would often ignore you, or tell you not to ask so many questions. I heard stories about Peter Fidler, the great surveyor, who was the first to set up a post in the Meadow Lake area in the early 1800s and hailed from England. Rarely though, was his 'Indian family' mentioned, and there were no stories of the family's life in Manitoba, or my great-great-great-grandfather George Fidler, and definitely no stories of our Dene ancestors. Every now and then, a rare occasion would present itself, when everyone was gathered around for a family event, having fun and reminiscing, and it was then that the stories sneak out; and, if you were quick enough to catch them, you could hang on to them and file them away for future reference. For the most part, though, those stories, along with any other traditions or customs, were hidden whenever 'white' company came over, or whenever we were in the public eye. Now, more than two hundred years after the birth of my first Métis ancestors, I am rebuilding our family story, and in turn understanding more about myself and my story. In *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times,* Neal McLeod discusses the vital connection between collective Cree memory to identity, and argues that the links between the past, present, and even the future, are stories:

> To "be home" means to dwell within the landscape of the familiar, of collective memories, which was the world Mistahi-Maskwa [Big Bear] was struggling to protect; it stands in opposition to being in exile. "Being home" means to be a nation, to have access to land, to be able to raise your own children, and to have political control. It involves having a collective sense of dignity. A collective

[91] Rose Richardson, interviewed by author, digital audio recording, Green Lake, Saskatchewan, 15 April 2007.

> memory emerges from a specific location, spatially and temporally, and includes such things as a relationship to the land, songs, ceremonies, language, and stories.[92]

The collective memory of my Métis family, and therefore our story, begins with the meeting of my great-great-great-great grandfather Peter Fidler and his wife – Mary Mackegonne (also listed in archival sources as Mary M. Cree or Mary Indian).[93] In chapter two, I outlined the argument for using biography and autobiography in academic studies. However, as noted above, there is also a very convincing cultural argument for using (auto)biographical stories to examine identity. As McLeod argues, "one cannot maintain a distinct identity without knowing the past; one will simply have a distorted sense of one's place in the world, shifted and transformed by a colonized understanding of the world wherein the memories and narratives of ancient ancestors are shrouded."[94] In order to understand my family's Métis identity, and thereby my own Métis identity, I must start at the beginning of our collective narrative, the origins of my Métis family. This chapter will outline the beginnings of my Métis family and show how decisions by patriarchs and matriarchs would determine the cultural subscription and eventual identity of the Fiddler family.

Peter Fidler, Mary Mackegonne and their 'Indian Family'

I am a direct descendant of Peter Fidler. Peter the fur trader, surveyor and cartographer was born in Bolsover, England on August 16, 1769. According to Peter's Hudson's Bay Company service record, he joined the Hudson's Bay Company (hereafter – HBC) as a labourer and made his way to York Factory in 1788, the same post where he would meet his future Indian wife.[95] The Fiddler family then began as a mix of English and Cree cultures, but later it will be shown how it evolves into a French Métis family. Early in his career Peter seemed to understand the need to form alliances and to learn from the Indian inhabitants of the country. While he continued to develop Western cartographic and surveying skills, he also spent time with local Dene and Blackfoot people in present-day Saskatchewan and Alberta to learn their

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[92] Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Ltd., 2007), 54. Mistahi-Maskwa means Big Bear in Cree.

[93] Glenbow Archives, Charles Denney fonds and Métis genealogy files, M-7144-154,375 Fidler, Peter and Mary Mackagonne : descendants. - Or Fiddler M-7144-154,000 Fidler, Peter and Mary Mackagonne. - Or Fiddler, Calgary.

[94] McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory,* 92.

[95] Peter Fidler, Biographical Sheet. HBCA – Hudson's Bay Company Arvchives. http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/f/fidler_peter.pdf (accessed 15 August 2007).

methods of mapping, as well as their languages (skills that would continue to solidify his position with the company). In fact, from mid-January to mid-April in 1792, Fidler wintered with the Chipewyans (Dene) in the area of Great Slave Lake, "with no provisions or tent and with little clothing, shot, or powder."[96] While there, Fidler also spent time among the Peigan people, learning their language. Fidler not only learned Blackfoot conventions of mapping, including indigenous techniques in his own work, he even included indigenous maps in with his own maps, sending them back to HBC headquarters.[97] Belyea says it is obvious that Peter saw the value in learning these skills and sharing them (understanding how indigenous people give directions is useful for all traders). However she draws upon Peter's own journals to illustrate that he also still felt Western standards were superior: "Fidler justified sending the Native map by writing that such maps "conveys much information where European maps fail[...]though they [Native cartographers] are utterly unacquainted with any proportion in drawing them."[98]

In 1794, Peter married Mary Mackegonne, according to the custom of country.[99] The next year, the pair welcomed their first child, Thomas, into the world, and Peter also got his big break. That year, surveyor David Thompson suffered an injury, leaving Thompson unable to head out on an expedition with John Turnor. Peter was recommended as a capable assistant, and by 1796 and "with Thompson's departure, Peter Fidler became the Hudson's Bay Company's only official surveyor."[100] In less than ten years, Peter had worked his way up from a general labourer to a surveyor and soon after he built and took charge of several different posts in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Peter did not do all this work alone. Alongside him, likely almost all the way, was his wife, Mary. Mary has many different names, and in many different genealogies and documents created by dedicated Canadian Métis researchers, including Charles Denney's papers, Warren Sinclair's genealogy, and Gail Morin's Métis, Mary is listed as "Mary M. Cree", "Mary Indian", "Mary Mackegonne", and "Mary Swampy Cree Native".[101] However,

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[96] Peter Fidler, Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online. http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=2867&interval=25&&PHPSESSID=bvpet83n0bbq62s4a7qcoam0p7 (accessed 15 August 2007).
[97] HBCA-AM A.11/52, Peter Fidler to the HBC Committee (Alexander Lean), 10 July 1802 quoted in Barbara Belyea, *Dark Storm Moving West* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007), 51.
[98] Ibid., 51.
[99] HBCA-AM, Warren Sinclair Métis Genealogy papers, vol. 3, pg. 1146.
[100] Barbara Belyea, *Dark Storm Moving West,* 29
[101] Glenbow Archives, Charles Denney Fonds and Métis Genealogy Files. HBCA-AM, Warren Sinclair Métis Genealogy papers, vol. 3, pg 1146.

she is never listed as Mary Fidler, even though she would spend the remainder of her life with Peter.

By late 1797, Peter was the one of the best surveyors for the company, and within a few years began building and heading up HBC posts. Given her husband's rising status within the company, he was no longer just a labourer but a surveyor, Mary was able to easily travel and live with him at the posts since the design of the forts, which included private quarters for postmasters, would accommodate his family. This is further proven by examining Peter's HBC service record and comparing it to the family genealogies compiled by early Denney and Sinclair. The records list the birth of each one of his children and each corresponds with the dates he was posted in a specific location. His first son, Thomas, was born at York Factory, 20 June 1795, the same year his father was posted there; four years later Peter is posted as the surveyor at Cumberland House and his son Charles' birthplace is listed as the same location on 10 October 1798.[102] Then on November 10, 1800, at 12:15 pm, while Peter is building Chesterfield House, his third son, George (my great-great-great-grandfather) is born on site.[103] This trend continues for the birth of all of Peter and Mary's fourteen children, as each child is born at the post or fort where their father was stationed at the time.

However, reading through journals written by Peter, one finds surprisingly few references to his wife or children. Many scholars, including Jennifer S.H. Brown and Sylvia Van Kirk, argue part of the reason behind the exclusion of Indian women from historical journals kept by company employees is the HBC's early policy prohibiting men from having relationships with local women.[104] "The Hudson's Bay Company [...] demanded both celibacy and chastity from its Bay employees, seeking to impose monastic as well as military order upon their lives there."[105] The policy was flawed, serving more for the public face of the company back in England than for the social realities of living in the country, and many fur traders found comfort in the arms of their 'illegitimate' Indian wives. Peter Fidler was among those who

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[102] HBCA-AM, Warren Sinclair Métis Genealogy papers, vol. 3, pg. 1146.
[103]Glenbow Archives, Charles Denney Fonds and Métis Genealogy Files. HBCA-AM, Warren Sinclair Métis Genealogy papers, vol. 3, pg. 1159.
[104] Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society 1670-1870* (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1980), 25.
[105] Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1980), 12.

found a wife in the New World. For Brown and Van Kirk the obvious answer is that either the families were not present at the post, or Indian wives and children were not mentioned because of fear of moral reprisals from company officials/headquarters.[106] However, as evidenced by the birth locations for each of Fidler's children, Peter's family was at the post, and since the births of each child were recorded he does not appear to have feared mentioning his halfbreed family. In fact, Peter often listed the date and time of the birth's of many of his children in the body of his journals, although this was the extent of the information – very practical and nothing personal in terms of thoughts about the occasion. Another potential answer is provided by Belyea, who argues that it is possible women's activities were mentioned only when they directly contributed to the operation of the posts; and that, based on the layout and design of the posts, only certain men, like post masters, had private sleeping quarters and therefore a place to house their wives and families within the post itself.[107] There was certainly no room for single women, and other families may have been nearby, but did not contribute anything of any great significance in the eyes of those recording the daily activities in the post journals.

While most of Peter's extensive journals are kept in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in Winnipeg, Manitoba, time constraints and the topic of this paper did not warrant the reading of each and every journal. Also, many other researchers, have combed through these journals, and have reached a similar conclusion: Peter rarely mentions his family in any of his work, only noting the births and the contributions of his children and family as they apply to the operations at the posts in which he is in charge. It is not, however, because his family is not at the post. As Belyea explains, "I have found only a few references to women and children in thousands of daily entries written by seven different HBC traders over a period of ten years." Belyea then goes on to point out one of the only references Peter Fidler makes to his own family in the period she studied: "In 1802 Fidler travelled to Hudson Bay, 'taking down all my family to leave at the Factory with the Womans friends' – the 'Woman' being Fidler's wife Mary. There is no other mention of women living at the posts in these journals."[108] Most of the other traders and postmasters with whom Peter worked applied the same standards to their journals as well. Indian women seem to be mentioned only when they contribute to post operations, either

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[106] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties,* 25.
[107] Belyea, *Dark Storm Moving West,* 93.
[108] HBCA-AM B.39/a/2 and HBCA B.34/a/3, Chesterfield House post journal (Peter Fidler), 1801-02 quoted in Barbara Belyea, *Dark Storm Moving West* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007), 91.

trading goods or providing services either on other own or in cooperation with their spouses. It is possible Peter's decision to keep his family out of the journals was because he was embarrassed he had an illegitimate halfbreed family. For example, his reference to Mary is not 'my wife' or my 'wife's friends', but the "woman" and her friends. Still, Peter and Mary were not officially married until August 14th, 1821, five months before Peter's death. First, it would not make sense to refer to someone as their wife if they were not actually married. As well, the post journals were public company records, not personal diaries, so the scarcity of reference to family should not be seen as deliberate, but rather the separation of work and personal life. Peter also spent 27 years with Mary, they had 13 children which he publicly accepted as his own, and the pair remained together until his death. Clearly he was dedicated to his spouse and children. Still, the family is small part of otherwise detailed and extensive journals, and since he kept no other personal journals that we know of, so much of his wife and children's story will remain silent, simply irreclaimable. I am the seventh generation in the Fiddler line starting with Peter. In our family, much of the oral history has been lost, so it is almost impossible to determine any specifics about Mary Fidler or her children without resorting to the written record. Truly understanding why Peter Fidler did not write any private journals or how he truly felt about his family is difficult when all a researcher has to rely on are work documents that were meant to chronicle the comings and goings, as well as the daily events and work, at the HBC posts. Nonetheless, in what little of a written record is present, some interesting theories and arguments can be made.

One of the most interesting journals penned by Peter Fidler documents his year spent in charge of the Red River colony. On July 20, 1814, Peter Fidler and Archibald McDonald were left in charge of the Red River Settlement. At that time, the Hudson's Bay Company was deeply embroiled in fierce competition with the North West Company, and both companies had posts in the area of the settlement. In a letter to Lord Selkirk, Miles MacDonell, who has just left the settlement in the hands of Fidler and Archibald, writes of Peter: "Mr. Fidler has been with me since the beginning of May laying out lands (sic) we require to have a permanent Surveyor that would keep a regular office, & Mr. Fiddler might answer the purpose from his experience in the country he might be useful in other respects."[109] Even though he has proven himself worthy,

[109] LAC - Miles MacDonell letter to Lord Selkirk. Selkirk Papers, pg. 1203. (reference copy used at AM)

MacDonell points out Fidler is not quite perfect: "his Indian family is some objection to him. I know that he would gladly enter into the service of the Colony & offers to build a house in the town for his family [...] he is far from being a well polished man, & is not well liked by the people, but I think him a well-meaning man."[110] After that letter, Fidler begins his journal and continues daily entries until the colonists are driven out by Cuthbert Grant and the North West Company the following summer. Throughout the year, Peter makes only a handful of references to family; his sons, Charles and Thomas, help with taking meteorological readings and other work around the settlement, Charles is also listed as an interpreter traveling with others from the settlement. During the most serious fighting with the North West company, he also makes reference to his daughter Sally, who he has sent to help a family where a man has been wounded in battle and the wife is overwhelmed caring for her husband and small family. "Yesterday as Mrs. McLean's maid servant had gone away to the Canadian House to go down to Canada, she was left destitute of any assistance her husband being wounded & the small family to take care of - I gave her my Daughter Sally to assist her in her unhappy state, which she was very thankful for."[111]

Not mentioned during this year is his wife, Mary, who was most certainly living in the colony, and his son George (my direct ancestor). There are several potential explanations, but this researcher believes there are three possible explanations that are most likely. In the case of Peter's wife, Mary may not have been present during this year at the colony, or perhaps she did not do anything worth entering in the journal. As MacGregor points out, Peter did not intentionally leave his wife and family out of his journals, "it was simply a matter of not cluttering up the company's records with affairs that were of no interest to the London office."[112] Also, Peter seemed to be comfortable documenting the work of some of his children, when it applied to colony business. A concerned father might have wanted to point out the contributions of his children to aid his offspring in securing a more permanent position within the company when they went out on their own. So, where then is his son, my great-great-great-grandfather George, who at the time, would have been the part of the first generation of Métis Fiddlers? In the summer of 1815, George would have been 14 years old, capable of helping

[110] Ibid.
[111] HBCA-AM, B.235/a/3 Red River Settlement journal kept by Peter, Thomas and Charles Fidler, in the Selkirk Papers, pg. 18480.
[112] Ibid., 164.

around the colony and even making a contribution worth noting. Still, his name does not appear anywhere in the Selkirk Papers, a compilation of letters, journals and other materials gathered from the Selkirk settlement, or the journal penned by his father.

There are several possible answers to the question, "Where was George?" However, the answer is more than just the solution to an intriguing mystery. Like his mother, George perhaps did not contribute anything worth noting in regards to colony business. However, most likely, and what I will now attempt to outline, is George was not in the colony at all. In fact, George likely not living in the colony with his parents at all, and I believe he grew up and lived with his mother's family. This is a very important discovery, because within the answer to the question of where George was, is also very likely the answer to the question, "Where did my family's Métis identity begin?" What is clear from Peter's own journals, and other academic studies of Peter Fidler and his work, is that not all of Peter's children had the same education, training, or experiences. In fact, it seems Peter's eldest sons, Thomas and Charles, received some education from Peter and possibly his colleagues, and both were able to read and write. "Thomas was employed by the Hudson's Bay Company as a writer and George as a boatman. In the accounts for 1821 the father (Peter) makes the following remarks with regard to these two men – 'Thomas very handy, rather addicted to rum, George active, a Moose hunter.'"[113] In Mary Fidler's papers, her research continues the quote, "George: 3rd son Peter Fidler. Had a fit. Classed as a boatsman, active, a moose hunter. Has been with the Indians 17 years. George had a good command of the Indian language... well-liked by his mother's race."[114]

George Fidler – The Beginnings of a Métis Identity

At the time of Peter Fidler's account entry, George would have been almost 21 years old, and if he had been with the Indians 17 years then he would have been a toddler of three or four when his parents left him with his mother's Indian family. From 1802 to 1806, Peter and Mary

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[113] HBCA-AM, Peter FidlerTrader and Surveyor 1769 to 1822. JB Tyrrell, Search File - Peter Fidler.

[114] Mary Fidler's papers, located in England with the author. Mary Fidler is a contemporary researcher, and a Fidler who lives in England, and has been researching Peter Fidler's life and his family history both in Canada and the family ties in her own country. Her research, which includes extensive archival material gathered both here in Canada and in England, is something our family has relied on to trace our own roots, to learn more about Peter Fidler and the first generation, as well as reconstruct our own family history. Some of her research pertaining to George Fidler and his descendants resided with my uncle Lawrence Fidler, before he gave it to me to use in my work. She has also mentioned to our family that some of her research was donated to the Peter Fidler historical site which includes his birth home, located in the town where he was born, in Bolsover, England.

were assisting the HBC in opening up the Athabasca territory, which included setting up the Nottingham House post. The pair, along with their boys, made several trips in and out of the territory, and their daughter Sally, as well as another baby that died shortly after its birth, were born at the post itself. However, this post was particularly dangerous, as the competition between the NWC and HBC was at its height, and life at Nottingham House was perilous, as NWC trader Samuel Black waged a war against Peter and his staff. During one of the trips back and forth to York Factory, where his mother's family originated and still lived, George could easily have been left behind. As already referenced above, Peter did make mention of leaving the family with the "Woman's friends," and it is likely that on one of these trips George did not return with his parents and siblings. Whether his grandparents simply fell in love with having a small boy around again, or if George simply did not want to leave when his parents returned to gather him up, George stayed with his mother's family, something that no doubt affected his outlook on his identity, the land, and the way it should be divided as the new country of Canada began to form. Since Peter did not leave a record of George's whereabouts, this is simply speculation.

While much is missing from the written historical record, much is also documented, enough to give a clearer picture of where George ended up after his time with his extended family. Growing up with his mother's family would no doubt have been a rich experience for a young man like George. He would have learned a great deal about the land, hunting, and the people with whom the fur trade companies wished to deal. It was an ideal education to land him a position with the Hudson's Bay Company. While George was a halfbreed, and by many of his father's peers likely considered to be an Indian, he was also his father's son – a fact that would allow him entry into the HBC. According to George's service record, his official employment with the company started in 1822 as a labourer at the Fort Dauphin post, a post at the time managed by his father. Later that year, in December, Peter passed away; however, George continued to work at that post until 1824. That year, George became a middleman and continued working in the Swan River district until 1826. Even though George did not spend his childhood with his parents, he did live and work with his father right up until his death.

George and his two older brothers, Thomas (the eldest) and Charles, are the other children of Peter who worked for the company. According to Thomas Fidler's record, he joined

the company in 1813 and worked as a writer, clerk, and interpreter, retiring in 1822. However, his record is anything but stellar. He is described as a man who was "5'6 ½, not fit for being an Interpreter disobedient, careless of property and afraid of the Indians but very hardy and ingenious".[115] Charles Fidler's record includes service as a labourer and a steersman, and also includes two stints in charge of trading posts – one at Curling River and later in Fort Dauphin in 1819 when his father took ill.[116] The record goes on to describe Charles as "sober, honest & industrious, likewise a good cooper."[117] Charles Fidler joined the company in 1812, and although there is no clear end date, he likely retired after his father passed away and he was no longer needed to run the Dauphin post. The other important transformation in 1821 was the merger of the North West and Hudson's Bay companies. It was at this time that many young men, like George, lost their jobs with the Hudson's Bay Company. Like modern day mergers, the HBC suddenly found itself with too many employees, and many halfbreeds, like George, were abruptly released from their duties.

Even though George was no longer employed by the HBC, he was not destitute. In Peter Fidler's will, he stipulated, "that his wife was to receive £15 in goods annually from the HBC for the rest of her life and that the interest on his investments was to be equally divided amongst his ten children until his youngest son, Peter, came of age."[118] Later the entire estate was divided amongst the ten children. The annuity payments would have given George some money with which to purchase land. The next entry on the surviving public record that documents the location of George Fidler is indicated on the 1832 Red River Census. This record is particularly damaged on the section that mentions George, but he is listed as "Fidler, George" and his ethnicity is listed as "Native" and he is living in White Horse Plain; there is no other surviving information on this record.[119] White Horse Plain encompasses Grant Town, named for Cuthbert Grant, and also includes the Saint Francois Xavier parish. Four years later, George was baptized, along with his soon to be wife Nancy Black, and the pair was legally married in the

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[115] Thomas Fidler, Biographical Sheet. HBCA – Hudson's Bay Company Arvchives, http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/f/fidler_thomas.pdf (accessed 12 August 2007).
[116] Charles Fidler, Biographical Sheet. HBCA – Hudson's Bay Company Arvchives, http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/f/fidler_charles.pdf (accessed 12 August 2007).
[117] Charles Fidler, Biographical Sheet. HBCA – Hudson's Bay Company Arvchives, http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/f/fidler_charles.pdf (accessed 12 August 2007).
[118] HBCA-AM, Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation, 1984. Pg 10. Search File - Peter Fidler.
[119] AM, Red River Census records. 1830.

Catholic parish of Saint Francois Xavier. This is significant for several reasons. First, the people of Saint Francois Xavier, the families that founded that community, were the same people with whom Peter Fidler had battled back in 1814-15 when he was setting up the Selkirk Settlement. Throughout the year Peter handled the colony, he battled with the North West Company, as well as many of their men, including Cuthbert Grant. "Capt Grant an Indian tells bad stories when he is drunk about their lands being taken from them this is just into his head by the Canadians, all others seem very glad to see White people come to cultivate their lands & they imagine that for the future they will want nothing."[120] It is clear from the entry that Peter Fidler did not see the Canadians (company rivals), and definitely not an Indian like Cuthbert Grant, as his or his colleagues' equals. Yet, just over fifteen years later his son was living among the Métis families of this community. Another fascinating historical tidbit about the area is that in a note found in the Charles Denney Papers there was a reference to St. Francois Xavier. When Peter Fidler submitted his reports on Red River to the London Committee he included a map of the Red River District dated 1819. The map shows Birsay Village as the community directly below Horse Plain. However, Birsay Village is actually where St. Francois Xavier is located. In the note from the file, the writer says, "roughly where St. Francois Xavier is today, he (Peter Fidler) show Birsay Village, an enterprise begun in the spring of 1818 under Magnus Spencer, but which had been abandoned by the fall of 1818."[121] George's decision to live in this area and eventually become part of the parish represents a very significant shift in culture subscription and identity. Even though George worked for the Hudson's Bay Company, like his father, and carried a British-born name, he was also identified as an Indian who had lived with the Indians. So, it is not a stretch to think that he identified with Indians and eventually came to see himself as a halfbreed, and a person with multiple loyalties and affiliations. Part of this identity shift can also be linked to his choice of wife. Nancy Black was also born in Rupert's Land, in 1810. Like George, her father was a fur trader by the name of John Black. Nothing more seems to be known about John Black – and in Warren Sinclair's genealogy he is only identified as Métis. Nancy's mother is listed as Native, and her name is simply Marguerite Sauvagesse. It is quite possible that Nancy then assumed her father's identity, and was a young Métis woman who influenced her husband's final identity choice. According to Warren

[120] LAC - Red River Settlement journal kept by Peter, Thomas and Charles Fidler. Located in the Selkirk Papers., pg. 18400. (reference in AM)
[121] Glenbow Arvhives, Charles Denney Fonds.

Sinclair's genealogy, Nancy Black is the "metis daughter of John Black (metis) and Marguerite Sauvagesse (Native)."[122]

What is known for sure is that the pair married according to the custom of the country prior to 1825, and later made their marriage official by being baptized in 1834 and were remarried in the Saint Francois Xavier Parish.[123] According to their birth certificates, they were baptized so they would be entitled to be legally married in the church.[124] The listing of Marguerite Sauvagesse, the female form of the French spelling for savage, is also a clue. That means the woman was identified by the French as a 'savage', and since her husband was Métis it might have meant the pair was part of the French Métis community growing on White Horse Plain and the Red River Settlement. The 1838 Red River Census gives a much clearer picture of George and Nancy Fidler. Nancy is listed by name, as women were identified in the line below their husbands and then their father's names were scrolled in a subsequent column – likely an effort by officials to keep families grouped even after the daughters had married. By this time, the record is much more detailed and shows the couple as legally married, with two boys and three girls under the age of 16. The family has 1 house, 1 stable, 1 barn, 2 moin (sp?), 3 oxen, 2 cows, 2 calves, 1 pig, 1 plough, 1 harrow, 3 carts, 1 canoe and they have a total of 5 cultivated acres.[125] While farming was certainly supplemented by hunting, it is clear George and Nancy Fidler had found a community where they felt at home and were making the conversion to farming as well as Catholicism. By 1840, George's acres have increased by 3 to total of 8, and by 1843, the family has 9 acres. An interesting note, although this researcher is focusing on the Fiddler line of the family, is that Jean-Baptiste Gervais, his son Alexis Gervais, and the Gervais family are also listed in the census records in the same community. In two generations, Alexis Gervais's granddaughter, Veronique, will marry George Fidler's grandson, Jean-Baptiste Fidler. The families were neighbours, potentially friends, and they are inter-marrying with one another, building their familial ties and new identities as a distinct Métis people.

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[122] HBCA-AM, Warren Sinclair Genealogy, vol. 3, pg 1159.
[123] Gail Morin, *Genealogical Compendium – Métis Families.* (Pawtucket, Rhode Island: Untin Publications, 2001) vol. 2, 229.
[124] Archives of the Saint Boniface Historical Society, Parish of St. Francois-Xavier, birth records, B. 211 Baptism of George Fidler and Marriage of George Fidler and Nancy Black. George Fidler was baptized at the same time he was married to Nancy Black. B. 7, Baptism of Nancy Black.
[125] AM, Red River Census, 1838.

Outside of the census records and birth certificates, there appear to be no other surviving primary documents that make reference to George Fidler. Several records show George's older brothers, including Thomas and Charles as jurors, and there are many listings of Fidlers as witnesses in court cases; however, there are no files that show George as having any part in the court process or political process either. In fact, repeated searches through the archives listed no more information about George himself or his daily activities. It is plausible that a quiet hunter and farmer could easily keep himself out of the legal and political fray.

The records at St. Boniface Historical Society indicate George Fidler died in 1846, and was buried on July 2nd of that same year. George was buried in the community that he chose to become a part of St. Francois Xavier. George left behind seven children, five of whom were under the age of 8, including my great-great-grandfather Francois Fidler. Still according to the "List of Grantees of Lands in Assiniboia" from 1812 to 1870, George's widow Nancy is among those who was granted land. According to land records in the register, the widow received 82 acres, though another individual named Joseph Gilbeau was indicated as occupying the land.[126] Although the records do not indicate why this individual is living on the land, it could be because at the time Nancy did not have a child who could take over the property and the work that needed to be done. However, by the time the HBC sells its lands in 1870, and the properties were part of the Red River Settlement, the land was re-registered and Nancy Fidler was noted on Lot number 147 of St. Francois Xavier. According to the new registry, the land belonged to Nancy and there was a post script about William Fidler, though it is unreadable. William was the name of Nancy and George's eldest son. His name appearing below that of his mother's possibly indicated that he was in charge of the land or he and his family were living on it with his mother, but Nancy Fidler was the legal owner of the property. While Nancy and her family were living in St. Francois Xavier, many of George's brothers were living in St. James or Baie St. Paul – neighbouring communities. For the next two generations, George and Nancy Fidler's family will be born, baptized, and raised in the community of St. Francois Xavier. It will not be until after the events of 1869-70 that the family began to search for a new community and a new place to raise their distinctly Métis families. What is interesting was how the Fiddler family

[126] HBCA-AM, List of Grantees of Lands in Assiniboia under the Earl of Selkirk and the Hudson's Bay Company, From 1812 to July 15, 1870. Search File - Red River Selkirk Settlers.

would not go alone; in fact many of their fellow St. Francois Xavier Métis neighbours would also leave and reform their community in Batoche, Saskatchewan.

What this chapter has shown is how within a single generation the Fiddler's made a remarkable transformation in terms of cultural identification. In the first generation, Peter Fidler was distinctly white and English, while his wife Mary was Swampy Cree. Within 25 years of George's birth, he had spent 17 years with his mother's family, met and married a young Métis woman, made the transition from hunter to farmer, and become Catholic and moved into a French-speaking Métis community. All of these decisions and life course changes greatly had an impact upon subsequent generations as they made the historical move from valuable middlemen to obstacles in the growth of the expansion of the country of Canada.

Chapter Four – A New Generation Ready to Fight

As George and Nancy Fidler's family grew, so did the community in which they lived - the Red River Settlement. Both English halfbreeds and French Métis had found spaces in which to settle and farm while continuing to hunt on the open plains, raise their families, and build their communities. What began as a home for fur traders and their mixed-blood families - was then a burgeoning Métis homeland, with its own laws and customs. Métis families like the Fidler's fit right in, and continued to do so through the endogamous marriages between their children and the children of the Métis LaPlantes, Gervais, Ross, and Bonneau families. It is during this time, prior to the Riel Resisitance of 1869-70, that these families intermarried with each other and other local Métis families, developing a strong and vibrant Métis community.

Francois Fidler was 14 years old when his father died. Francois was the fifth child born to Nancy and George Fidler. There are several inconsistencies between different researchers and research databases about Francois's exact date of birth. While the Warren Sinclair and Gail Morin genealogies list his date of birth as 1838, Mary Fidler lists his date of birth as 1834, and the St. Boniface Historical Society lists the year as 1832.[127] None of the records give any indication of the month or day of his birth. As such, I will use that date of his birth record, recorded in the St. Boniface birth, marriage and death records for each parish. The confusion surrounding Francois's birth date could be linked to the legitimizing of his parent's union. Nancy and George were married in 1825, according to the custom of the country, a union which was made legitimate (in the eyes of the church) in the St. Francis Xavier parish in 1834.[128] Since Francois was born around this time, his actual date of birth and subsequent baptism may not have been recorded accurately; and indeed, Francois could have been born any time between 1832 and 1838. Still, he was a young boy or young man when his father passed away, and, as a young man, would have been looking for the guidance within his Métis family and Métis community.

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[127] Morin, *Genealogical Compendium – Métis Families,* vol. 2, 238. HBCA-AM, Warren Sinclair Métis Genealogy papers, vol. 3, pg. 1161. Mary Fidler Papers, held by author in England, information transferred to Lawrence Fiddler Papers held by Merelda Fiddler. Archives of the St. Boniface Historical Society, Parish of St. Francois-Xavier, marriage record for Francois Fiddler, M. 74. Both Gail Morin and Warren Sinclair list Francois' birth date at 1838, while Mary Fidler says it is 1834. The St. Boniface record is the recorded date of birth and baptism in the St. Francois Xavier parish, and as such I have chosen that date as the one from which I build. Mary Fidler's papers are a collection of notes and information she has gathered through her own research in England and in Canada on frequent trips to archives and through interviews with Fiddlers living in Canada.

[128] Gail Morin, *Genealogical Compendium – Métis Families,* vol. 2, 238.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the transformation from English, protestant, Hudson's Bay Company halfbreed to French, Catholic, Métis trader most likely began with George's unique upbringing. His life with his mother's family and his decision to live in White Horse Plain, and later marry and become part of St. Francis Xavier parish would have repercussions that would ripple through subsequent generations. George was choosing to live with, and marry into, French Métis people. Following his wife's family lineage, he adopted a French Métis identity and became part of a French Métis community – a community his family integrated with fully. His son Francois, my great-great-grandfather, would ultimately be among the first generation to be swept up in a new wave of Métis people fighting for their right to their homeland, way of life, and ultimately their cultural identity.

Francois Fidler: A Métis Leader

Unfortunately, there is very little oral history within the family pertaining to Francois or his life. Extensive archival searches for any information between Francois's birth and the 1869-70 Resistance reveal an exceedingly sparse paper trail. Assuming Francois was born in 1832, the 1838 census appears to contain a lot of inaccuracies. First, it lists George and Nancy as having two sons (under the age of sixteen) and three daughters (under the age of fifteen).[129] According to both Sinclair and Morin, George and his wife Nancy did not have more than one daughter, and she was not born until 1840.[130] In the 1840 census, only George and his wife are enumerated and the children appear to be excluded all together.[131] By 1843, George is listed as having four sons, which would be accurate according to both Sinclair's and Morin's work; George is also listed as having two daughters at this time.[132] It is difficult to pinpoint the exact cause of these discrepancies, although there are several possibilities, including language barriers, or perhaps George's eldest son, William and his wife lived with George and Nancy and William's wife was enumerated as George's second daughter. Francois appears in the 1843 census, and was either a young boy of six or an infant and could have been mistakenly recorded as a girl. Regardless of the irregularities in the enumeration, Francois grew up on White Horse Plain, in the parish

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[129] AM, Red River Census, 1838.
[130] Morin, *Genealogical Compendium – Métis Families*, vol.2, 238. HBCA-AM, Warren Sinclair Métis Genealogy papers, pg. 1161.
[131] AM, Red River Census, 1840.
[132] AM, Red River Census, 1843.

community of St. Francois Xavier, and his life would be forever shaped by the community and cultural identity into which he was born and raised.

From 1843 until his marriage in 1859, there is little or no reference to Francois Fidler in the primary documents this researcher was able to uncover. There were no references to Francois Fidler in the lists of court documents or other proceedings recorded in the Red River Settlement. In D.N. Sprague and R. P. Frye's *The Genealogy of the First Metis Nation*, the authors list Francois in Table 3, which is a list of Contract Employees of the HBC recruited from or retired to the Red River Colony, 1821 – 1870.[133] Francois is listed as a middleman from 1854 to 1856.[134] I was unable to find a primary source to confirm this reference myself. The authors also explain the various working classifications for the servant class – those not part of the officer class which included chief factors, chief traders, clerks and surgeons:

> Since the data are neither abbreviated nor otherwise modified the table is self-explanatory except some job classifications are not what they seem. A BOWSMAN, for example, is not an archer but a lookout in the bow of a York boat watching for reefs and shoals – a kind of pilot. Similarly, a MIDDLEMAN is not a go-between or retailer but a labourer in the middle of a boat bending his back to the work of rowing, towing, and portaging. The STEERSMAN was the man in the stern on the tiller but unlike a mere helmsman, he was the person in charge of the crew of eight or nine; in effect the steersman was the York boat captain.[135]

While Francois does appear on this list, I was unable to find his record in the biographical listings of the Hudson's Bay Company employees located in the Manitoba Archives. However, much like his father George, Francois is not part of the officer class; even though his grandfather, Peter was a postmaster. Being a middleman, Francois would have been part of the HBC servant class, a posting that lasted two years. Like others in this rank, Francois may have been able to see how he and his Métis brothers were being used to do the back-breaking labour that the company relied on to remain competitive in the region. It was a short contract with the company, and, it will be shown, Francois no doubt relied on small farming and the buffalo hunt to support his immediate family, which would have needed the aid after his father, George, died in 1846.

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[133] D. N. Sprage and R. P. Frye, *The Genealogy of the First Metis Nation: The Development and Dispersal of the Red River Settlement 1820-1900* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Pemmican Publications, 1983) , Table 3 – no page number.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid., 34.

In 1859, according to the St. Boniface church records, Francois Fidler married Josephte LaPlante. The original document is scarcely legible and difficult to read. One interesting note in this marriage certificate/baptismal record is the witnesses. The first witness is Jean LaPlante (the middle name is not legible); who is either Josephte's father, Jean Baptiste LaPlante, signed the document, which is the most probable explanation, or another relative on the LaPlante side signed.[136] The other witness listed is William Fidler.[137] While there are many William Fidlers listed in various records, this is most likely Francois' eldest brother, who, in the previous chapter, was listed as part of the land grant Nancy Fidler received as a widow after her husband's death. As the older brother, and the next in line to be head of the Fidler household after his father's death, William would have likely taken over the fatherly duties for his younger brother Francois. Francois was in his twenties at the time of his marriage, and was described as a "fils majeur."[138] Josephte is described as the "fille mineure de Jean-Baptiste LaPlante and de Madeline Desfonds" which means she was a minor, being only 14-years-old on her wedding day.[139] Josephte LaPlante was a third generation Métis woman. Her grandmother, Josephte Desbiens, was born in 1805, and was part of the first generation of mixed blood children in her maternal bloodline family and married a man by the name of Joseph Dufond or Defond.[140]

In the same land records that list Nancy Fidler as a recipient of a land grant from the Hudson's Bay Company, Jean Baptiste LaPlante appears twice. In fact, Joseph Defond owns a piece of land granted by the HBC as of April 1835.[141] The land changes hands two more times, before Baptiste LaPlante takes over the property, although a note below his name says "transferred to William Dewest (sic?) as of October 1st, 1855."[142] Baptiste LaPlante, Josephte Laplante's grandfather, appears on a second record in the land transfer documents. On parcel 414, Peirre Gladieu transferred 14 acres to Baptiste LaPlante, which was later transferred to

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[136] Archives of the St. Boniface Historical Society, Parish of St. Francois-Xavier, marriage record for Francois Fiddler and Josephte Fiddler (nee LaPlante) M. 74.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid.
[140] HBCA-AM, Warren Sinclair Métis Genealogy papers, vol. 3, pg. 911. The Sinclair genealogy lists Joseph's name as Defond, but this researcher ran across several occasions where both Joseph Defond and his daughter, Madeleine Defond, had their name listed as Dufond. It makes keeping track of who is marrying whom interesting, challenging and fun all at the same time.
[141] HBCA-AM, Land Registrer Book B, E.6/2, pg. 157.
[142] Ibid.

Alexis Goulet.[143] However, Baptiste LaPlante was not just signing over property; he exchanged it for a different parcel, lot 404.[144] These records are interesting for a couple of reasons. First, they show these men were granted land and made into landholders because they were employed by the Hudson's Bay Company. The Hudson's Bay Company does not have a service record for Baptiste LaPlante, Jean-Baptiste LaPlante or Joseph Defond/dufond. Still, in the case of Baptiste LaPlante and Joseph Defond, the men were definitely involved in the fur trade (having been given a land grant from the Hudson's Bay Company), and were, according to the Warren Sinclair genealogies, European men who met First Nations and/or Métis women, had halfbreed families and elected to stay in the Rupert's Land. The decisions then, by men like Francois Fidler to marry into such families, is one that was likely not based on love alone. There were now enough Métis families and communities that the people were now able and desired to marry within their own culture. Being Métis was no longer exceptional. So marriage practices began to shift, from European and First Nations, to include increasing endogamous partnerships between Métis. According to J. Weinstein:

> Red River served as an incubator of the new nation and Métis nationalism. In Eastern Canada, large-scale immigration and agricultural settlement had caused the absorption of people of mixed ancestry into the settler or Indian population, but in the Red River Settlement between 1820 and 1870 the Métis absorbed Europeans and Indians. By 1869, the population of North America west of the Mississippi and north of the Missouri – consisted of 5,720 francophone Métis, 4,080 anglophone Métis, and 1,600 whites.[145]

As Weinstein argues, it was these families with land and a tiny piece of wealth, that stood in the path of creating the Dominion of Canada; the "Métis did see themselves as an indigenous people and co-owners of the land with the Indians."[146] These families were landholders and they would naturally desire to marry landholders like themselves; and, therefore, they continued to build lasting relationships with successful Métis families, as well as strengthen familial ties within Métis communities. Still, these families never became completely endogamous. In fact, according to B. MacDougall they still continued to bring outsiders in to their community and families: "Metis people and communities were certainly a large part of the social dynamics of

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[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid.
[145] John Weinstein, *Quiet Revolution West: The Rebirth of Métis Nationalism* (Calgary, Alberta: Fifth House Ltd., 2007), 5.
[146] Ibid., 11.

the Canadian fur trade structure, but their behaviour, determined by familial obligation and responsibility, shaped the fur trade, making it as much a product of their socio-cultural expectations just as they were a reflection of the fur trade."[147]

Francois and his wife, Josephte, lived in the community of St. Francis Xavier, until sometime after the 1869-70 Resistance in Red River. The events of that year have been well-documented and hotly debated. Some argue the Métis waged war against the federal government, pushing their 'rights' beyond the rightful protest allowed by law treading in to dangerous and illegal territory.[148] According to Gerhard Ens, most Métis-English and French were concerned about their land and rights should the area be annexed.[149] However, Ens argues that previous academic analysis of the event is flawed, since many historians argue that leading into the events of 1869-70 the Métis that supported Louis Riel were French and Catholic, while those who opposed him were English and Protestant. Ens argues it was much more complicated than those diametrically opposed opposites.

> All Métis wanted the best possible terms with Canada, but many French Métis who opposed Riel were members of the colony's commercial and governing elite who had little in common with the militant French-Metis boatmen who made up most of Riel's forces. The elite, unlike the poorer boatmen, had some reason to fear a government led by Riel and saw potential economic benefits to union with Canada.[150]

Ens also notes that the resistance began just as the boat brigade season was wrapping up, thus proving that action was not possible without the poorer Métis to support a physical fight with Canada. However, Ens, quite erroneously, seems to argue Métis identity was based on an individual's status within the company, an economic identity, and that it was not a cultural identity. Undermining himself within his own chapter, Ens almost disproves his own theory. The Métis were indeed diverse, but it was not their various classes that formed that identity, it was their cultural breakdown. While some may have been economically motivated to support or resist Riel's objectives, many more would have been motivated by fear of losing their land and status if they were no longer the ruling elite. Still, parts of the argument laid out in Chapter Six

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[147] Brenda, Macdougall – "Socio-cultural Development and Identity Formation of Métis Communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan, 1776-1907." (Ph.D. diss., University of Saskatchewan, 2005), 50.
[148] Gerhard J. Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing World of the Red River Métis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 174.
[149] Ibid., 127.
[150] Ibid., 126.

titled 'Family, Ethnicity, Class and the Riel Resistance 1869-1870' are useful in the context of my own work, since the boatmen and poorer Métis form the familial lines from which I descend – families who, likely aided Riel and his government in the resistance. Even though the Fiddlers, LaPlantes, and Defonds owned land, they were not part of the mercantile class, but they made up the majority of the men Riel relied on at the end of the season to rise up in 1869-70. In the end, the Métis who chose to fight were the ones who felt they had the most to lose – including land and community.

Don McLean argues the federal government purposely ignored the requests of the Métis, in order to cause such unrest that the land could then be forcibly taken from Métis landholders and transferred to railway companies and non-Aboriginal settlers.[151]

> Central to the goals of the confederation plan was the creation of an internal agricultural colony in the Canadian West. The plan was designed to enable Canadian industry, protected by high tariffs, to expand in this captive market. Capital would thus be generated in the West to finance eastern Canada's industrial growth.[152]

The Métis, lead by Louis Riel, continuously petitioned the government for rights to their land. The government continued to stall, rarely responding to their concerns. As has been previously documented at length, the Métis petitioned the federal government for land rights. Those petitions were ignored, or at the very least never really acknowledged. After the Métis captured Fort Garry, local Orangemen decided to launch their own offensive, and several, including Thomas Scott, were captured and held. Scott, a man who infuriated the Métis men who supported Riel, was executed in March 4th, 1870.[153] That action swayed public support back in Canada East and Canada West, paving the way for the Canadian government to march troops in to the soon-to-be-created province of Manitoba and force the Métis to surrender to the scrip process.

During the 1869-70 Resistance, Francois Fidler would have been approximately 37-years-old, and it is difficult to believe that he would not have participated in the resistance if he were in the settlement at the time. Later, records will show that he was active during the 1885

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[151] Don MacLean, *Home From the Hill: A History of the Métis in Western Canada* (Regina, Saskatchewan: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 1987), 76.
[152] Ibid., 77.
[153] Ibid., 97.

Resistance. However, extensive searches of the Riel Papers and other archival material did not turn up any information that could definitively prove his involvement in the events at Red River. If we accept Ens' argument that it was the poorer Métis families that supported Riel, then Francois, a descendant of a working-class father, may have been part of this resistance. Or, as a man who owned a small piece of property, he may have held back, to prove his loyalty in the hopes the Canadian government would eventually recognize Métis claims in the territory. No one can deny that the years following 1870, and Manitoba's entry in to Confederation, were hard years for many Métis. Land grants to Métis were slow, the buffalo were almost gone, subsistence farming was not yet viable, and the post-Resistance societal climate was harsh for the Métis.[154] Some Métis were forced to flee before they could claim their scrip, because of the violence and their inability to protect themselves and their families against attacks. MacLean goes on to argue that the scrip process was adopted as a supposedly quick way to "extinguish" Métis Aboriginal rights and also make the land easily accessible to land speculators and banks – since many Métis were ill-equipped to farm or were removed from their original plots of land and moved to land that was no longer within their communities, often finding themselves without familial support surrounded by inhospitable neighbours intent on taking their land. Under this extreme duress, according to Ens, MacLean, Lussier and Sealey, as well as Sprague, many Métis fled.

Initially, however, it appears that Francois Fidler, his brothers, sisters, and his future in-laws all attempted to rebuild their lives in Manitoba after the Riel Resistance. According to the 1870 Census, Francois Fidler was a head of his own household.[155] On line 208 of the 1870 census, Francois is listed as age 38, the son of George Fidler, born in the Northwest Territories.[156] He is classified as French-speaking, married, and Catholic, residing in St. Francois Xavier. Josephte, Francois' wife, is just 26-years-old at the time, her birthplace is listed as Manitoba, and her father is Baptiste LaPlante.[157] Like her husband, Josephte is listed as a married, French-speaking, Catholic Métis. By the time the 1870 census was conducted, six of the couple's sixteen children had been born, among them, nine-year-old Jean-Baptiste Fidler – my great grandfather. All six children are also listed a single, Catholic, French-speaking

[154] Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland,* 139.
[155] AM, Red River Census, 1870.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.

Métis.[158] In 1870, nine-year-old Jean-Baptiste Fidler likely did not know his future wife was also living in St. Francois Xavier; and she was, in fact, being enumerated for the last time in the family's original homeland. On line 258, appears the name Cleophas Gervais, Jean-Baptiste's future father-in-law, and below that are the names of Cleophas's wife and children.[159] Cleophas Gervais and Catherine Gervais (nee Ross) were 24 and 22 respectively, their two children - Veronique and William – were recorded as age four and two.[160]

The following year, according to the 1871 field notes of deputy surveyor George McPhillips, the Fiddler and Gervais families were all living along the Assiniboine River, including the property of my ancestors in the Parish of St. Francois Xavier.[161] McPhillips had been sent in to survey the land held by the Métis and his notes offer more than just maps of which family owned which parcel of land. In the case of the families being studied in this work, the notebook shows how closely tied these families were prior to the marriage of two of their children in Saskatchewan almost a decade after the survey was conducted. In the first couple of pages of his notebook, McPhillips discusses the challenges of surveying Métis properties: "the boundaries of their fields and improvements were so irregular that it was impossible to give a true outline of them."[162] However, McPhillips does complete his work, drawing each lot along the river, listing the occupant/owner, and describing what, if any, improvements such as cultivation have been made. McPhillips question's the honesty of the claimants while working near the Roman Catholic Parish of St. Francois Xavier, saying that the north side appeared to be more cultivated, and the sons or sons-in-laws just seemed to claim lots on the south side that were not developed.[163] His query appears to question whether or not the families who claimed these lots were actually living and using them because the lots were not as developed as some of the neighbouring parcels of land. On page 14 of the surveyor's notebook, Widow Fidler is listed in lot 226, and within that lot are cultivated lands, a cart track and various other post markers to indicate the outline of the property.[164] The widow Fidler is Nancy Fidler, Francois Fidler's mother. This record coincides with the property discussed in chapter three that was given to

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[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid.
[161] AM, Land Surveyors Field Books, George McPhillips Surveyor's Notebook, book 533, Schedule # NR 0157, Accession # GR1601, 1871.
[162] Ibid., 3.
[163] Ibid., 7.
[164] Ibid., 14.

Nancy by the Hudson's Bay Company, as the numbers from that registry correspond with the lot number in this notebook. On page 25, George Fidler's name appears on lot 83 – another piece of property allocated to the family. Lot 83 is an odd shape, because it is partly in the middle of a bend in the river, almost like a peninsula. This lot borders lot 79 – which extends around beyond the bend in the river – and also appears to belong to George Fidler. A notation on the page indicates that the remainder of lot 83 is sketched on page 37.[165] The portion of lot 83 that appears on page 25 is largely uncultivated, and was likely part of the land grant given to the family by the Hudson's Bay Company (discussed in the preceding chapter) and was being held for one of George's children. More interesting data can be found on page 37, where the rest of George's lots can be found, along with lot 75 – which belongs to Francois Fidler.[166] However, McPhillips seems to have listed the lot under George Fisher, which could be a simple recording error or the family may have been occupying George Fisher's land. That lot appears to be undeveloped, unlike Francois' lot which is mostly cultivated.[167] These claims are further confirmed by the "List of Grantees of Lands in Assinibois under the Earl of Selkirk and the Hudson's Bay Company, from 1812 to July 15, 1870". This list is the cross reference document one sometimes must consult to find the parcels of land that are registered in the HBC's Register B, the land that was transferred to the government after the Riel Resistance. On page 156 of that list, Francois Fidler is listed as the occupant of lot 75, and on that lot is a house, stable and its noted that he had occupied the land for 14 years.[168] Just two pages later, both a notation for lot 83 belonging to George Fidler and lot 79 belonging to George Fisher appear.[169] However, in

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[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid., 37.
[167] Ibid.
[168] HBCA-AM, Land Registrer Book B, E.6/2, pg. 156-157. When the land was transferred to the government after 1870, the Hudson's Bay Company provided a list of the land grants it had made to families. That list was transferred to land titles in 1874. HBCA, List of Grantees of Lands in Assiniboia Under the Earl of Selkirk and the Hudson's Bay Company, from 1812 to July 15, 1870. The numbers of those lots were then re-numbered by surveyors, so when you look at the lots granted under HBCA system – the numbers are different under the government surveys, making it extremely difficult and time-consuming to cross reference the list of grantees with the Register that was later transferred to the Land Titles Office in Winnipeg. Found the the RR Selkirk Settlers Search File.
[169] Ibid., 158.

somewhat fainter markings, under the George Fisher lot 79 note, is the name Francois Fidler (sic), and a note that there was one house on it, occupied for three years.[170]

Just like the Fiddler family, the Gervais family found themselves looking on as a government surveyor made his way across their land, making notes and writing down the extent of their land and the extent of their development of that land. Since the Gervais family lived in the same parish as Francois Fiddler's family, it is not surprising that their land was located just ten lots away from the Fiddlers. Cleophas Gervais's lot is noted in both the Hudson's Bay Land Registry and the McPhillips survey book as number 62.[171] His father, Alexis Gervais, also listed in both books, was living in lot number 64.[172] In lot 66, lived Donald Ross, Cleophas's father-in-law, and Veronique's maternal grandfather, a man who later played a significant role in the 1885 Resistance, and likely had a substantial influence in his granddaughter's life and her activities during 1885.[173] According to the HBC Land Registry, Donald Ross and Alexis Gervais both have a house, a stable, and claim to have occupied their lots for 17 years.[174] Donald Ross has cultivated 8.17 acres, while Alexis has only cultivated 1.6 acres. Cleophas had only cultivated one acre at the time of survey, and according to the registry notes had made no other improvements or built a house on the lot.[175] An additional notation on the same page is completely illegible.[176] Before linking the stories of the Fiddler, Ross and Gervais families, however, we must expand the context of this era of the Métis history.

The Riel Resistance of 1869-70 was over, Riel had fled, and the Fiddlers, along with many other Métis families in the newly created province of Manitoba, were trying to find their

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[170] Ibid., 158 – 159. This error seems to have been corrected by HBC Registry of 1874. Francois Fidler's name does appear faintly beneath the name George Fischer, and one word is written beside his name. Unfortunately, that word is unreadable, offering no insight about how or why this correction or transfer to Francois Fidler was made.
[171] AM, Land Surveyors Field Books, George McPhillips Surveyor's Notebook, book 533, Schedule # NR 0157, Accession # GR1601, 1871, pg. 124-125
[172] Ibid.
[173] Donald Ross is also known as Daniel Ross. It appears both names were used interchangeably, and sometimes he is referred to as Donald and other times he is referred to as Daniel. In Warren Sinclair's genealogy his name is listed as Daniel, but over time he seems to be have taken on the name Donald. His genealogy can be found in HBCA-AM Warren Sinclair Métis Genealogy, vol.7 pg 3216.
[174] HBCA-AM, Land Registrer Book B, E.6/2, pg. 124-125.
[175] Ibid.
[176] HBCA-AM, Land Registrer Book B, E.6/2, pg. 125. The notation seems to say "Line or land claimed not (sic)" which could mean not developed, not enhanced? Unlike the lots listed for Daniel Ross and Alexis Gervais, which indicate 17 years occupied, there is no number of years occupied... which may indicate Cleophas and Catherine were living with a relative (either Alexis or Daniel) because they didn't own a home and were trying to build up enough wealth to eventually move on to the property.

place in this new part of the Dominion of Canada, since they would now have to re-apply for their land through the scrip process. Weinstein maintains the system was flawed from the beginning, since the 1.4 million acres set aside were for "children of Métis heads of families who weren't themselves also parents."[177] This meant that about 40 per cent of Métis people were excluded.[178] Compounding the problems of exclusion was the actual distribution of the land, which took more than ten years.[179] By the time the claims were processed – only an estimated 15 per cent of the applicants had actually had their claims approved and retained title to their land. However, it appears from the obtainable records, Francois Fidler and his family were initially prepared to make a fresh start in the new province, as they were among the Métis applying for scrip.

The Manitoba Scrip Process: And the Fiddler Family

Working with scrip documents is incredibly challenging for even the most experienced researcher. As mentioned above, the process did not allow the majority of Métis to keep their land and fully integrate in the new Province of Manitoba. Still, the Fiddler family did attempt to stake their claim. However, trying to determine the results of those claims has been incredibly challenging. Many Métis abandoned claims or simply handed over the land to speculators who were waiting outside of scrip receipt centres. As Frank Tough explains, "one of the problems in understanding the scrip process is the lack of records on the transactions or conveyances of the Métis grantee's scrip interest to the scrip middlemen."[180]

Another obstacle to effectively working with scrip documents starts with their location and accessibility. In *The Records of the Department of the Interior and Research Concerning Canada's Western Front Settlement*, Spry and McCradle list no less than 8 different sets of scrip materials pertaining to claims from 1869-70 in Manitoba, and after the 1885 Resistance in Batoche. These records are contained in part in the Archives of Manitoba and Saskatchewan and British Columbia, in various University Libraries across the country, and in full at the National

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[177] Weinstein, *Quiet Revolution West,* 13.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid..
[180] Frank Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail: Native Peoples and Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 1996), 332.

Archives in Ottawa.[181] I was able to find scrip applications and, in some cases, an indication the family member had their claim approved and received either cash or scrip notes allowing them to claim land. The latter was more difficult to trace to actual parcels of land; since, as mentioned above, scrip speculators often obtained the land from the Métis people themselves or the process took longer than they lifespan of the applicant to be concluded. In all of the claims relevant to this study, I have only been able to verify two successful claims that led to a grant of land. The first is that Francois Fidler's son, Francois Fidler, Jr., saw the successful completion of his father's claim in the 1880s. The second claim was that of Donald Ross, which was not completed until 1888, three years after his death.[182] Nevertheless, even though the remaining documents cannot tell a complete story of how or why the claims of this researcher's ancestors did not result in the successful attainment of their land or scrip money, each document does contain valuable insights in to the community the families lived in and the identity to which they ascribed.

Finally, even if the documents are there to be discovered, searching through the archives, online or on site, can be frustrating. At the time these documents were drafted, spellings were not standardized and non-literate people would not have been concerned with those spellings or even recognize that they should be standardized. For instance, Francois Fidler can be found under both Francois Fidler and Francois Fiddler - the addition or deletion of the second 'd' in Fiddler is entirely random and is a constant problem with all primary materials associated with this family. As will be discussed later in this chapter, there is also the challenge of determining which Francois Fidler is being discussed, since Francois also had a son named Francois. In fact, names like Jean-Baptiste, Francois, William (or Guilliame the French spelling of William), or Catherine were very common. Searching these records then demands that each researcher patiently sift through records, looking for alternate spellings of a name, even sounding spellings

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[181] Irene M. Spry and Bennett McCradle, *The Records of the Department of the Interior and Research Concerning Canada's Western Frontier of* Settlement (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1993) , 100 – 105. This guide is extremely helpful in determining where a researcher needs to begin in order to start researching family claims. However, it needs to be read in conjunction with Frank Tough's appendix on understanding the scrip intricacies, since the guide simply lists what the each document in the scrip process is, what it contains, and where it may be located. I use the word 'may' because often these documents are simply lost, cannot be traced past the initial application, or simply were not redeemed for land by the party who received the initial scrip. In Frank Tough's work, the author explains a few of the reasons the scrip may not have been pursued to the conclusion of land ownership by the party who applied for and received the initial scrip.

[182] AM, Donald Ross - The Late, patent, vol. 112, folio 272-274, microfilm C6023.

out to see if they might be the same as an ancestor's name. Only after searching under each potential spelling, as this researcher has, can one say with complete confidence they have found all the materials available to them. Even then, misfiled material, unrecorded documents and simple computer or search file errors can thwart the most diligent researcher. It should also be noted here that in working with the Hudson's Bay Company land registry, the survey notebook of George McPhillips, any of the census data for Red River, and in fact, any primary documentation hold similar challenges; names are often misspelled and/or misinterpreted making the ensuing search challenging.

In 1875, Francois Fidler, his wife, Josephte, and his mother, Nancy, all applied for scrip within two months of each other. In Francois' claim, there is little additional information. However, he is at this point considered the head of his family.[183] On his affidavit, Francois states, "I am a Half-breed head of a family resident in the Parish of St. Francois Xavier... consisting of myself and wife & children."[184] The document lists his birth date as 1838. Francois lists his birthplace as St. Francois Xavier, his father as George Fiddler, halfbreed and his mother, Nancy [Black], as also a halfbreed.[185] His occupation is listed as that of a farmer.[186] On page two of the application, two men, also identified as halfbreed farmers from the same region, witness the document.[187] Both men, Jean-Baptiste Beauchamp and Theophile Martin, along with Francois himself, make their marks – a letter 'X' made in between their first and last names. Even though the document lacks significant detail, some important information about identity and community can be culled. First, Francois did indeed provide for his family with subsistence farming and was a land and house holder. Since none of the men actually signed their names, they were most likely not literate, and therefore, were not elite or educated. In the bottom left-hand side of the application, the document reads: "Sworn before me at the Parish and County aforesaid on the 23rd day of October A.D. 1875 having, been first read over and explain in the French language."[188] Finally, Francois was indeed French Métis, the group that was

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[183] LAC, RG15 , Interior , Series D-II-8-a, "Manitoba Act Affidavits Document Series," Volume 1320, Reel C-14927. Scrip Affidavit for Francois Fidler. Page 1.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid., pg. 2.
[188] Ibid., pg. 1.

largely responsible for the resistance against the Canadian government. The final notation on this document indicates scrip was issued in August, 1876.[189]

Though these scrip applications are merely forms, littered with blanks to garner only the most basic information, they do hold some extremely important data. Not only were the men and women applying for scrip assigning their own identity, like Francois, they were required to find others in their 'community' who would substantiate their identity claim. In Francois Fidler's case, his community was a French-speaking Métis community. These heads of households were French-speaking Métis of St. Francis Xavier. The claim was then approved by English-speaking representatives of the Crown. Consequently, while one group was assuring membership, the other was also identifying Francois as not only European ancestry. As noted above, this ascription is witnessed in the above document where both Francois and his witnesses assure their own identity boundary as French-speaking Métis and then also confirm that Francois is part of this group. Recalling Barth's work, one can see how this membership process is a clear example of his concept of ethnic determination: when cultures collide, if they agree that these boundaries exist, and they can say within which boundary each person belongs, nothing more is needed to confirm that individual's cultural identity.[190]

It is within the context of this argument that I proceed with the scrip claims of both Josephte Fidler, Francois' wife and his mother, Nancy Fidler. Josephte and her mother-in-law Nancy made their scrip claims a month prior to Francois. On September 16th, 1875, Josephte appeared to make her claim. Her application indicates that she was born in the parish of St. Boniface, the wife of Francois Fidler, a farmer.[191] Her father is listed as Baptiste LaPlante, a French Canadian and her mother is listed as Madeline Savaguesse, an Indian.[192] Josephte's claim includes a section which says she is a halfbreed head of family, who is the wife of "Francois Fidler, farmer" and her birthplace is listed as St. Boniface.[193] The men who witness the application for Josephte are Francois Luigan, also a farmer, and Charles H. House, the hotel

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[189] Ibid.
[190] Fredrik Barth , *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), 16.
[191] LAC, RG15 , Interior , Series D-II-8-a, "Manitoba Act Affidavits Document Series," Volume 1320, Reel C-14927. Scrip Affidavit for Josephte Fidler. Page 1.
[192] Ibid., pg. 1.
[193] Ibid.

keeper.[194] While Francois Luigan makes an 'x' in place of a signature, Charles House actually signs his name, an indication he was literate. When you combine his education with his ownership of a hotel, Charles House could be considered an influential member of the community; and, therefore, his willingness to sign Josephte's scrip is a significant sign of her connection to the halfbreed community of St. Francois Xavier. According to the application, Josephte Fidler applied for her scrip on September 16th, 1875 and it was issued August 20th, 1876. Since there are no patent letters or any other indication Josephte took land, she most likely accepted money scrip for her claim. Six days after her daughter-in-law makes her claim, Nancy Fidler, Francois's mother, also makes a scrip application. Her parents are listed as John Black, half-breed, and Marguerite Savaguesse, Indian. Nancy Fidler is by this time a widow, as the application indicates, but her husband, George Fidler, is named and he is listed as a farmer by trade.

Two additional scrip records must also be discussed here, the claims of William Fiddler and his wife, Marguerite. William Fiddler is the older brother of Francois Fidler. William Fiddler is almost always referenced in scrip documents as Fiddler with two d's, except on his wife's scrip application and some of their children's applications. William and Marguerite's claims were made on September 17th, 1875 and each had scrip issued on August 20th, 1876, the same day as Francois, Josephte and Nancy. The men who witnessed their scrip applications were both Métis farmers from the community of St. Francois Xavier, where all the Fiddlers in this branch of the family were living. On each application, it is noted that the terms of the scrip applications were explained in French. Except for William and Marguerite, each application was witnessed by different members of the community, all confirming those applying for scrip were indeed halfbreeds, who were at the time members of the St. Francois Xavier community. While these documents contain no written statements from those making the applications, they are useful in terms of determining their position within the larger Métis community.

At the bottom of each of the above scrip applications discussed, a handwritten notation says scrip was issued. In the case of Francois, his wife Josephte and his mother, Nancy, each claim has a notation that indicates scrip for all three was issued on August 20th, 1876. Since there is no dollar amount, it is likely the family either initially took land, which they later sold.

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[194] Ibid., pg. 2

Each document does have a 'c' on it – above the date the family received scrip – which often signified the applicant received cash. However, the 'c' on other applications where cash was given in place of land is usually followed by a cash amount that was paid.[195] Comprehensive searches of the archives reveal that only one of the aforementioned claims was eventually successful. However, by the time the claim was honoured, the branch of the Fiddler family under discussion in this paper had moved to the regions that would become Saskatchewan. In fact, two letters of patent exist for Francois Fidler's son, Francois Jr.. In the two letters of patent, the Francois Fidler Jr. was granted '*Part Section Township Range Meridian* SE + S1/2 OF NE 5 8 6 W1 and *Part Section Township Range Meridian* SE 5 8 6 W1,' which was lot 79 in the parish of St. Francis Xavier.[196] Each patent is for a quarter section or 240 acres, indicates the land was transferred to Francois Fidler, Jr., on June 16th, 1887.[197] These letters are the only documents that definitely confirm the land was transferred. Additional searches of maps and other registries turn up only circumstantial evidence, since the lot appears to be blank or list other owners, not Francois Fidler, Jr.. In a map of the community, under lot 79, the name Francois Fidler is so faint, it seems to indicate the lot belonged to him at one time, but dispossession eventually saw the land slip from his ownership, listing other names in that space.[198] Further searches indicated the land did not stay with Francois Fidler, Jr. past 1900.

At some point, before 1885, Francois Fiddler, senior, decided to pack up his family and follow many in their community of St. Francois Xavier to the shores of the South Saskatchewan River and the community of Batoche. Here, they would work to rebuild their lives, and help secure the future of their children. It was here, in the beauty of the Saskatchewan prairies, that the Bonneau, Delorme, Ross, Gervais, Dufond and Fiddler families would become one, with most living in the Batoche and Duck Lake regions or moving around the region, according to our family's oral history. It was here that Veronique Gervais would capture the attention of Jean-

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[195] In the case of Francois Fidler, Josephte Fidler, and Nancy Fidler, all three were issued scrip of some sort on August 20th, 1876. Veronique Fidler's (nee Gervais) father, Cleophas Gervais, was issued scrip two years later. At the bottom of that application a similar notation is made that indicates the claim number, the date scrip was issued and the letter 'c' – which is in brackets – behind the claim amount for $160 dollars. Author John Weinstein estimates only about 15 per cent of Métis claims actually resulted in land being issued and kept by the applicants, Weinstein, *Quiet Revolution West,* 15. Land may have initially been issued, but the applicants may have decided to sell on the spot or sometime before they left Manitoba for good.

[196] AM, Francois Fidler jr., Letters of Patent, vol. 38, folio 214, microfilm C-5970.

[197] Ibid.

[198] AM, St. Francois-Xavier lot patent Map, H9 614.11 gbbd series 1, #22.

Baptiste Fiddler. Just three generations earlier, the mixing of these very distinct family lines would have been unimaginable, perhaps even scandalous. Even though the focus of this thesis is to examine the Fiddler family line and cultural transference through the Fiddler family, the Ross and Gervais lines are an integral part of the continuing development and maintenance of Métis identity in future Fiddler generations. While extensive study of these two families is not possible in the present work, a circumscribed outline of Veronique Gervais' family is essential to this researcher's main objective of demonstrating how the Fiddler family was continuously trying to make its Métis family strong, through association and marriage, in the face of an ever-changing world. Before Cleophas Gervais and his wife Catherine Gervais (nee Ross) were even born – the Ross and Gervais families began much like that of the Fiddler's. In fact, their stories, while unique, are not surprisingly even more similar. The family lines began intersecting long before Veronique and Jean-Baptiste married; at times, ancestors even collided.

As mentioned early, the family lines that united, and eventually led to the birth of Veronique Gervais, are extremely interesting and colourful. It is unlikely that Peter Fidler would have encouraged his great grandson to marry the descendent of Jean-Baptiste Bonneau. According to Sinclair, Jean-Baptiste Bonneau is the great-grandfather of Veronique Fiddler (nee Gervais).[199] Almost two centuries ago, Jean-Baptiste Bonneau was wreaking havoc near the Selkirk Settlement and causing nothing but grief for Jean-Baptiste Fiddler's great grandfather, Peter Fidler. In fact, according to Peter Fidler's diary from his year as head of the Selkirk Settlement, he and Jean-Baptiste Bonneau engaged in at least one altercation. In 1814, Jean-Baptiste Bonneau was working as a labourer in the Selkirk Settlement. In Fidler's journal there are several references to the altercations between Fidler's men and Bonneau, as well as the events leading up to those altercations. The first reference was made on October 1st, 1814: "(sic) Bonneau is not coming to work as usual this morning. I sent Charles away to tell him to come and work, but immediately heard from Trotier that he did not intend to work anymore for us, tho' he got several articles of goods from the store lastnight, in the whole he is due the Settlement 53 ½ Dollars."[200] A loyal servant, Peter Fidler decided to track down Bonneau himself and insist he repay his debt. Obviously knowing Bonneau would not be easily encouraged to do so, Peter "put

[199] HBCA-AM, Warren Sinclair Métis Genealogy Papers, vol. 2 page 369.
[200] LAC - Red River Settlement journal kept by Peter, Thomas and Charles Fidler. Located in the Selkirk Papers, pg. 18449. (referenced in AM)

a pistol in his coat pocket" and strapped on his sword.[201] When they got to Bonneau's tent, Peter questioned "his woman & children" about the whereabouts of the senior Bonneau.[202] Getting no answers, Peter and his contingent of men, including his son Charles, begin looking for Bonneau. A few minutes later, Bonneau and a North West Company man meet Peter on a trail and "in meeting one another at the distance of about 8 yards, Bonneau jumped on one side of the Track, and immediately levelled his gun at me and fired."[203] After a gun battle and a foot chase, Peter and his gang finally apprehended Bonneau, dragging him back to their house and holding him captive overnight.[204] The next day, another company man attends the makeshift prison, determining that even though Peter went to great trouble to capture Bonneau, they would not be able to prosecute him in the colony, and so he would have to be released.[205] Peter Fidler and Jean Baptiste Bonneau are polar opposites; Fidler a loyal, hardworking company man and Bonneau a freewheeling trader, unwilling to repay his debts.

According to Hudson's Bay Company service records, "Jean-Baptiste Bonneau can be found for 1811 only in the North West Company Ledger for 1811-1821, indicating the possibility that his service to that company ended in that year. No location is indicated. No references have as yet been traced to service with the Hudson's Bay Company."[206] In 1821, Bonneau would likely have been part of the massive layoffs following the merger of the Hudson's Bay and North West companies. The record goes on to say that Bonneau can be found in Grantown from 1827 until 1838. However there are no references after 1840, "indicating that he either moved or, more likely, died."[207] The records go on to say that, in all references of Bonneau, he is listed as married until age 70, and afterwards is listed as unmarried – although he is always listed as being from Canada and Catholic.[208] In the Warren Sinclair genealogy, Jean Baptiste Bonneau is neither listed as half-breed nor as Canadian - his origins seem lost. His wife, however, is listed as Louise Native.[209] Their daughter, Madeleine Bonneau, marries a

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[201] Ibid., pg. 18450.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid., pg. 18451.
[206] Jean Baptiste Bonneau, Biographical Sheet. HBCA – Hudson's Bay Company Archives online. http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/b/bonneau_jean-baptiste.pdf (accessed 12 August 2007).
[207] Ibid.
[208] Ibid.
[209] HBCA-AM, Warren Sinclair Métis Genealogy papers, vol. 2, pg 369.

trader named Jean Baptiste Gervais, and they have a son named Cleophas. Cleophas marries a young woman, named Catherine Ross, daughter of Daniel Ross – a man who will later play a significant role in the 1885 Resistance at Batoche. Cleophas and Catherine's first born is Veronique Gervais.[210]

There is only one other reference to an ancestor of Veronique's in Peter Fidler's Red River settlement journal, and that is of James Short. On May 28th, 1815, Peter writes: "James Short and Mr. Sinclair, who came a few days ago from Brandon House here for some Trading goods returned back they have received it from RRS Stores as the H.B.C. have none remaining of what is wanted." [211] Even though the interaction is minimal, it is obvious these fellow traders were working in the same area, and would have known one another. James Short was the great-great-grandfather on Veronique Gervais' maternal side and married to Betsy Saulteaux.[212] In many other documents, including the Hudson's Bay Company Register B, where Nancy Fidler's lot granted by the company is listed (as was discussed in the preceding chapter), names like Baptiste LaPlante, Josephte Fidler's father and, therefore, Francois Fidler's father-in-law also appear. In fact, at one point, land originally allocated to Joseph Defond is transferred to his son-in-law, Baptiste LaPlante, land that when compared to the register after the transfer of company land to the dominion is located in St. Francis Xavier. Also named in the register is Jean Baptiste Gervais, Veronique's grandfather, and once again, his land is located at lot 1449, while Nancy Fidler's lot is 1486.[213] The close proximity of these land holdings show that these families, even though initially engaged in conflict, become neighbours, likely friends, and over time, family.

A brief examination of the roots of Veronique Gervais' family, and what it reveals about how a union between Veronique and Jean-Baptiste Fidler would be accepted, but encouraged, is valuable at this point in my work. In the last chapter, I demonstrated that, likely due to George Fidler's upbringing and subsequent marriage to Nancy Fidler (nee Black), the family split from its English, European roots, and began to assert a Métis identity. Part of that is the constant intermarriage of Fidler men to women, like Nancy Black, Josephte LaPlante, and Veronique Gervais, who are second, third and even fourth generation Métis women. Determining these

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[210] See Appendix 1 - family tree for a breakdown of the family lines.
[211] LAC - Red River Settlement journal kept by Peter, Thomas and Charles Fidler. Located in the Selkirk Papers, pg. 18466. (referenced in the AM)
[212] HBCA-AM, Warren Sinclair Métis Genealogy papers, vol. 7 pg. 3215.
[213] HBCA-AM, Land Register Book B, E.6/2.

generations is often challenging, however, one of the easiest ways is to look at naming conventions. Women, who display a First Nations identity, are often listed by their cultural group. For instance, Peter Fidler married Mary Swampy Cree, Nancy Black's father, John Black married Marguerite Sauvagesse. In Josephte LaPlante's case, she is the mother of Jean-Baptiste Fidler, and at least a third generation Métis woman, as both her mother, and even her grandmother, seem to claim a Métis identity, as evidenced by the recording of their last names instead of identifying by their First Nations cultural group.[214] In both Jean-Baptiste's and Veronique's families, the original European union with First Nations women are two and three generations before her birth. For instance, Veronique's great-great-maternal-grandmother is Betsy Saulteaux who married James Short. Another maternal great-great-grandmother is Maria Native, who married Alexis Vivier, their daughter, Madeleine, married Urbaine Delorme; and their daughter, Catherine, married Daniel Ross (a man who will play a very important role in Veronique and Jean-Baptiste's life after they leave Manitoba). So while there were many differences between these families prior to their unification, there were also some similarities. Both Veronique and Jean-Baptiste's families have roots in the fur trade and are descendents of European men who married First Nations women. Native Studies scholar, Brenda Macdougall in her dissertation about Métis families in the Ile a la Crosse region calls these intermarrying couples the proto-generation – where non-First Nations men marry First Nations women.[215] Both Veronique's and Jean-Baptiste's families begin in this manner. After these proto-generation couples married and had children, those children began to intermarry with other "halfbreed" offspring. In fact, Macdougall finds that by the third generation, the Métis population has stabilized to the point where the female offspring marry fewer and fewer outsider males – this is also true in the both Veronique's and Jean-Baptiste's families.[216] In fact, after the second generation of Métis children is born, they all begin to marry within their own 'culture'. As examined in the last chapter, George and Nancy Fidler's decision to take on a French, Catholic identity, and share that with their children, meant their family was completely absorbed in to and accepted by the French Catholic Métis of Red River, and more specifically St. Francis Xavier.

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[214] HBCA-AM, Warren Sinclair Métis Genealogy Papers, vol. 3, pg. 1161.
[215] Brenda, Macdougall – "Socio-cultural Development and Identity Formation of Métis Communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan, 1776-1907." (Ph.D. diss., University of Saskatchewan, 2005), 443.
[216] Ibid., 449.

As referenced earlier, Veronique's family, like the Fiddlers, also lived along the Assiniboine river and filed scrip applications after the 1869-70 Riel Resistance in the hopes of keeping their land. In fact three claims can be traced on this side of the family. The first, and most straightforward, is Cleophas Gervais's application. Cleophas Gervais files his claim on June 29th, 1877 in Winnipeg. Much like the claims of his future in-laws, his application is witnessed by his father-in-law – Donald Ross and a man by the name of John Pritchard.[217] Less than a year later, on February 9th, 1878, Cleophas Gervais was issued 160 dollars in place of land scrip.[218] Cleophas and his wife, Catherine Ross, also make a second claim for their deceased son – Cuthbert Gervais. In that application, Catherine Ross, on April 27th, 1878, makes a claim for her deceased son. However, there are no notations on the document indicating if it was ever settled.[219] The reason this claim may have never been settled is that Catherine Gervais's father, Donald Ross, makes a scrip claim on behalf of his grandchildren on September 22, 1872, after the death of his daughter Catherine.[220] In the document, Catherine is reported as deceased and Donald Ross is making the claim on behalf of Veronique and Guilliame Gervais. Donald Ross is making the claim because his grandchildren are "being about on the plains."[221] This reference to 'being on the plains' is interesting for a couple of reasons. The first relates back to the development of Cleophas' land, as noted by the surveyor earlier in this chapter. If Cleophas is living primarily as a hunter, this explains why his property had no house and only one cultivated acre. Furthermore, it shows that Cleophas was living as a very mobile Métis person, and he was taking his children with him, which is central to the experience of many Métis at this time. An official death certificate, written in French, confirms Catherine is deceased and her husband, Cleophas Gervais, has given signing authority over to Donald Ross.[222] A patent for land to be paid to Donald Ross and his heirs was located, but the date it was finally granted appears to be

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[217] LAC, RG15 , Interior , Series D-II-8-a , "Manitoba Act Affidavits Document Series," Volume 1321 , Reel C-14928. Scrip affidavit for Cleophas Gervais. Note this appears to be the first reference I can find, along with Donald Ross's own scrip application, that he is now using the name Donald and not Daniel. He is married to Catherine Delorme, so it is the same person.

[218] Ibid.

[219] LAC, RG15 , Interior , Series D-II-8-a , "Manitoba Act Affidavits Document Series," Volume 1323 , Reel C-14932. Scrip affidavit for Catherine Ross. Catherine Ross made a claim for scrip, but died and a new affidavit was subsequently made on her behalf for her two children Veronique and Guilliame Gervais.

[220] LAC, RG15 , Interior , Series D-II-8-a, "Manitoba Act Affidavits Document Series," Volume 1321, Reel C-14928. Scrip Affidavit for Veronique and Guilliame Gervais, children of deceased Catherine Gervais (nee Ross). pg. 1. Donald Ross claim for Veronique and brother.

[221] Ibid.

[222] Ibid., attached death certificate.

1898, many years after Ross's death.[223] On page one of the patent, the letter acknowledges this land was granted to the "late Donald Ross," who died in May of 1885.[224] In fact, Donald Ross was the last Métis soldier to die in the 1885 Resistance – an important part of this family's history and identity. Considering how long it took to validate Donald Ross's claim and transfer the actual land and not just cash (much like the claim by Francois Fidler discussed previously), it is not surprising that these families decided to leave their land, and homes, behind.

> Confronted by a mass influx of hostile Anglo-Ontarians frequently squatting on and gaining title to their traditional lands caught up in red tape of Ottawa's chaotic land grant scheme, the Métis moved on; their proportion of Manitoba's population dropped from 83 per cent in 1870 to 7 per cent in 1886. Two-thirds of the Métis people moved out of the province of Manitoba, most between 1876 and 1886.[225]

Among those heading west, were the Fiddlers and Gervais, most importantly, Veronique Gervais and Jean-Baptiste Fiddler. The characteristics that may have initially differentiated and divided these families over time became similarities and united them. As Fredrik Barth asserts, "it makes no difference how dissimilar members may be in their overt behaviour – if they say they are A, in contrast to another cognate category B, they are willing to be treated and let their own behaviour be interpreted and judged as A's and not as B's; in other words, they declare their allegiance to the shared culture of A's."[226] This ascription is witnessed in the above document, where both Fidlers and the survey taker appear to confirm that the Fidler's are claiming to be French-speaking, Catholic Métis living in St. Francois Xavier, and the surveyor is convinced that claim is true and marks it as such. Barth goes on to say that when cultures collide, if they agree that these boundaries exist, and they can say within which boundary each person belongs, nothing more is needed to confirm that individual's cultural identity.[227] With their longstanding family disputes buried in the past, the Fiddlers and the Ross-Gervais families, headed West together, in search of a new chance to start again and rebuild their community.

Born out of the fur trade, these families grew and developed in to a new nation, a nation ready to fight for the home, families, and community. When the land was lost, what remained were their families and the desire to remain together and try to rebuild the communities that had

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[223] AM, Donald Ross The Late, patent, vol. 112, folio 272-274, microfilm C6023, pg. 1.
[224] AM, Donald Ross The Late, patent, vol. 112, folio 272-274, microfilm C6023, pg. 2.
[225] Weinstein, *Quiet Revolution West,* 5.
[226] Barth , *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, 15.
[227] Ibid., 16.

flourished in what was now Manitoba. In an effort to regain that Métis space, they would move together as groups, building on the past and hoping for a better future.

Chapter Five:

Building a New Home in Saskatchewan

As outlined in the previous chapter, by the time Jean-Baptiste and Veronique were born, they had the blood of about eight different Métis families coursing through their veins. They were representative of the true success of the Métis Nation itself, as it had grown so large that Métis people were able to intermarry within their own cultural unit, carry on traditions unique to their family and community, and evolve into a distinct group of people separate from their historical roots. Even though these families came from Saulteaux, Cree, English, French and Scottish roots, they were wholly Métis, a new culture born out of the Red River and now transplanted to the shores of the South Saskatchewan River. "Some Red River Métis moved farther north, some moved south into the United States, but most moved west to the South Saskatchewan River valley and to the settlements near Fort Edmonton, where they joined or founded Métis communities. There they resumed their demands for a land base in unison with those Métis resident in the North-West before 1870."[228] Among those settling in the Métis communities along the South Saskatchewan River, near Batoche, were the Fiddlers and the Ross-Gervais families.

Jean-Baptiste was the second child, and oldest son, of Francois and Josephte Fidler.[229] According to his birth certificate he was born on January 11, 1862, to his legitimately married parents – Francois and Josephte Fidler.[230] Josephte's parents, Jean-Baptiste LaPlante and Madeleine LePlante (nee Desfonds) were designated Jean-Baptiste's godparents and they signed the certificate as witnesses.[231] The priest who baptized Jean-Baptiste, and entered his baptism on the record, was Jean-Baptiste Thibault, the priest at St. Francis Xavier at this time.[232] Thibault would preside over many baptisms, marriages and births for my family and others, since he was

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[228] John Weinstein, *Quiet Revolution West: The Rebirth of Métis Nationalism* (Calgary, Alberta: Fifth House Ltd., 2007), 14.
[229] HBCA-AM, Warren Sinclair Métis Genealogy papers, vol. 3, pg. 1161. Gail Morin, *Genealogical Compendium – Métis Families.* (Pawtucket, Rhode Island: Untin Publications, 2001), vol. 2, pg. 252. Sinclair's genealogy lists Jean-Baptiste's birth as 1861. His birth certificate Jean-Baptiste's birth certificate lists his birthdate as 1862, as does Morin's genealogy so I am going to go with 1862.
[230] Archives of the St. Boniface Historical Society, Parish of St. Francois-Xavier, B. 6. Birth certificate for Jean-Baptiste Fiddler.
[231] Ibid.
[232] Ibid.

the resident priest in Red River at St. Francis Xavier parish from 1852 to 1871.[233] Interestingly enough, Thibault also presided over the marriages of George and Nancy Fidler, as well as that of Francois and Josephte Fidler. Four years later, Thibault also presided over the baptism of young Jean-Baptiste's future wife, Veronique Gervais, the first child of Catherine Ross and Cleophas Gervais. According to her birth certificate, she was born on the 27 January 1866 to her legitimately married parents.[234] Her godparents were Paul Gervais and Madeleine Pagé.[235] For generations, it was not only the land base and similar lifestyles that united these families, but also as followers of the Catholic Church. Being able to identify themselves as baptized and legitimately married became additional markers that connected them to their families and one another and the church. As explained in Chapter four, these two young children also grew up just a few lots apart in the community of St. Francois Xavier. Perhaps they were destined to one day marry. Or, perhaps, it was the events of 1869-70, and the subsequent decision by their families to head west to the community of Batoche, Saskatchewan, that drew them even closer together. Whatever the reason, by the 1880s, both were living in Batoche, about to begin a new journey together.

When my father, the grandson of Jean-Baptiste, was a young boy, he spent a great deal of time with his grandparents. My father was born with polio, which left him with a crooked spine and one leg shorter than the other. He needed more care than my grandmother, who was busy working, could provide. Consequently, his grandparents, Jean-Baptiste and Veronique, kept him with them and that is when he began his 'family' education. My father says one of the stories he remembers most about his grandparents was how they met. The families were living in the Duck Lake or Batoche area, and Jean-Baptiste had gone to the store with his father, Francois. There he saw Veronique, and he was instantly taken with her.[236] "Jean-Baptiste saw her and he said to his dad (Francois) 'I want to marry that girl.' Later, Francois paid a visit to Veronique's parents. But Veronique wanted to be a nun, and she refused, wanting nothing to do with (Jean-Baptiste).

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[233] LAC. Jean-Baptiste Thibault. Dictionary of Canadian Biography, online. http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=5291&interval=25&&PHPSESSID=2scj0i1uipm8f5djcl4an626b1 (accessed 12 August 2008)

[234] Archives of the St. Boniface Historical Society, Parish of St. Francois-Xavier, Birth Certificate for Veronique Fiddler (nee Gervais).

[235] Ibid.

[236] Ron Fiddler, interviewed by author, digital audio recording, Regina, Saskatchewan, 20 May 2007.

Eventually, grandpa (Francois Fidler) convinced her."[237] Veronique is one of the first in my family (after Peter Fidler) who knew how to read and write. According to many different family members, Veronique could speak fluent French and wrote in French as well, and she also spoke Cree, but knew very little English. Jean-Baptiste, on the other hand, was fluent in both English and Cree, speaking passable French, but was unable to write in any language.[238] The details of this 'marriage proposal' remain somewhat sketchy, and change slightly each time my father tells the story – much like any story that was never written down and transferred only orally. My father is currently 74 years old, and was the second youngest of 13 children. I was born when Dad was already in his forties, and so many details from this story and others that have been lost in time. It also leaves this researcher with questions. If these families had lived so close for so many years, migrated from one province to another to the same area, likely around the same time, then these two should have met long before this day in town. Or, had these families been separated in the move from Manitoba to Saskatchewan, and this chance meeting in town had sparked a flame in my great-grandfather? My father says that Veronique had been studying to be a nun, and it was not until this day in town that my grandfather saw her again (as an adult) and decided he wanted her to be his wife.[239] While researching a play I was writing in 2002, my father said that, after several refusals, Grandpa Jean-Baptiste went down the river where Veronique was washing clothes for her family, and he stayed there – talking to her in Cree the entire time – until he convinced her to give up her calling as a nun and marry him instead.[240] Whatever really happened, however this young man finally won her hand in marriage. Jean-Baptiste Fidler and Veronique Gervais were married on September 21, 1884, in Batoche.[241] Just eight short months later, the couple was thrust into a war that changed their family's life and future course forever and eventually resulted in my birth.

The events of that spring/summer in 1885 have been well documented, from various perspectives: interpretations range from a band of Métis traitors waging war against their government, to Canada's first and only civil war, to a small army of freedom fighters trying to protest their rights to land and community. In 1885, "over 250 Métis men took up arms to fight

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[237] Ibid.
[238] Ibid.
[239] Ibid..
[240] Merelda Fidder, writer and director. *Where it all Began.* Regina, Saskatchewan, 2004.
[241] Gail Morin, *Genealogical Compendium – Métis Families*, vol 2, 252.

for their rights and liberation from an oppressive political regime," among them were several member of the Fiddler family, including Francois Fidler (my great-great-grandfather), his brother William Fidler, and Jean-Baptiste Fidler (my great-grandfather).[242] The Gervais-Ross families were also heavily involved in this battle, including Jean-Baptiste's wife, Veronique Gervais, her grandfather, Daniel Ross, and her grandmother Catherine Ross (nee Delorme), as well as several of her aunts and uncles. In Lawrence J. Barkwell's extensive paper, "*Warriors of the 1885 Resistance*," he outlines all of the families, the individual men and women involved, as well as the events surrounding 1885.[243] What makes this work truly unique and valuable is that the author gives as much personal history of each individual involved, while simultaneously presenting the events from a Métis perspective.[244] The Métis, in then the district Saskatchewan, had been petitioning the federal government for rights to their land since 1872, realizing that after the events in Red River in 1869-70 their claims in this territory were in jeopardy.[245] Once again, the federal government chose to ignore the petitions of the Métis, while at the same time abusing and starving First Nations people living on reserves. By March of 1885, the Métis had recovered their leader from Montana, Louis Riel, and they began to prepare to fight for their land. On March 19th, 1885, the Métis at Batoche formed a provisional government under Riel and "demanded responsible government, parliamentary representation, and local control of public lands, as well as confirmation of land titles according to the river lot system of survey."[246] On March 26, 1885, the federal government sent in the military, after fighting broke out between the Métis and North West Mounted Police.

For many years, I thought the stories of my great-grandparents fighting in the 1885 Resistance were just yarns that my aunts, uncles and particularly my father spun to entertain the kids. It did not seem real, since we never really talked about what happened and we never mentioned it outside of the home or told people that our family was an important part of that

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[242] Lawrence J. Barkwell, *Warriors of the 1885 Northwest Resistance*. Revised and Expaned Second Edition. (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Manitoba Métis Federation, 2007), 3.
[243] Ibid., 1.
[244] Ibid., 38 an 94. These two reference pages are some of the most extraordinary work I have come across for this time period. On page 38, the reference to Francois Fidler Sr., my great-great-grandfather, describes his work in the militia, as well as spouse and other family connections. Also, Barkwell provides an entire section of work on the women at Batoche as well, where he outlines what they did during the battle, including Veronique Fidler, Barkwell, *Warriors of the1885 Northwest Resistance,* 38.
[245] Weinstein, *Quiet Revolution West,* 14.
[246] Ibid., 15.

fight. All the time and effort spent hiding the stories and concealing our identity may be why these histories have become so sparse, leaving only a few fragments behind. However, research by Barkwell has allowed me to confirm some details in those 'family tales' and learn many more. Unlike the period 1869-70, where no oral history exists within the family and no primary documents indicating what, if any, role the Fiddlers may have played in the events at Red River can be located, the Resistance of 1885 in comparison is like a treasure trove. There are a few references to members of my family in the Riel Papers in this period, as well as, scrip applications and even a little oral history. Presently, I have only four living family members who remember Jean-Baptiste and Veronique, and they all know the same story, but with very little detail. My father, my aunt Leona, as well as my cousins Cecil and Rose (Cecil and Rose, because of the age difference in our parents, as well as how old my parents were when I was born, have always been more like aunts to me) are the only people left who remember the stories of that fight in Batoche. My mother also remembers my grandparents, but was never told the stories of their fight in 1885.

It has been through this research that I have only now discovered the real value in my father's recollections. Since he was partially raised by Jean-Baptiste and Veronique, he was around to learn about the family and our history. While the others all knew that Veronique had made bullets, my father, Ron Fiddler, learned much more about what Jean-Baptiste experienced. My father related this story to me:

> **Merelda:** Did you know your dad's parents?
>
> **Ron Fiddler:** They were Jean Baptiste Fidler and Veronique Fiddler, she was a Gervais. And they were married, I guess - I'm not too sure where they were married – probably around Batoche or Duck Lake or somewhere. But they were there with the Rebellion. Because during the Rebellion, my grandfather was a guerrilla and he wished to do away with Louis Riel, because he felt Louis Riel was really not what he wanted in a leader and he wanted Gabriel Dumont to take over. Get rid of him and then you take over and lets go. And we'll fight the Canadian government as they leave the Red River. 'Cause he says once they come into our territory we'll go out and finish them off because it's going to be winter time before long and they're not going to stand this climate. But, Gabriel Dumont wouldn't. And so they got defeated. And my grandfather always believed that had they did what he wanted to do they may have succeeded.

Merelda: So, your grandfather talked about it with you?

Ron Fiddler: Oh yeah – he mentioned it very much so when I was young. And he was really downhearted because he was more or less kicked out of the country when Louis Riel was hanged. And it really was something which when you talk about it to people they say – well how do you know? And I say well by word of mouth was the only way I knew. And, my grandfather was definitely dissatisfied with the government. Because he felt the province should have taken a slightly different direction than it did.

Merelda: Did he talk about what actually happened in 1885 – like in the battle at all?

Ron Fiddler: He didn't mention that too much because he could speak Cree at that time. And everybody that was there that was French or English spoke Cree it was a common language for everybody. And they got along good with the Cree nation. Now we're partially part of the Cree nation – we're also part of the Dene clan which is the Chipewayan. All throughout our family its Cree, Chip, French and English. And if one looks at our – the way we have our family tree you'll find we were married in a circle. And everybody's related to everybody is some way or another.

Merelda: But did your grandpa ever talk about the battle in 1885 and what he did?

Ron Fiddler: No. He didn't. He was a good lieutenant with Gabriel Dumont – but he totally disagreed with him as to what they should have done to Louis Riel. Because he was not – he felt that Louis Riel was an outsider and really not interested in the battle per say for Saskatchewan. Because they had went across the border and got this gentleman to fight because he had finished a fight in Manitoba originally. And they went there and got him, Gabriel Dumont and I'm not too sure if my grandfather was involved because he never mentioned it. But, quite likely they were.[247]

What is so striking about this story is Jean-Baptiste obviously had no trust Louis Riel, nor did he appear to believe Riel could successfully lead the Métis. My father was born in 1936, and would have been hearing these stories almost 50 years after the events took place. Even 50 years later, Jean-Baptiste remained unhappy about the decision to follow Riel and even more dissatisfied with the actions of the government. Jean-Baptiste was only 23-years-old when he

[247] Ron Fiddler, interview. At one point my father makes reference to the climate. Since the battle was in March, winter was obviously not coming, but this is just one of the interesting ways in which a story changes over time.

joined the Resistance; he was also just starting his family. By the 1930s, Meadow Lake was full of non-Aboriginal settlers, and the Fiddler family was not part of the ruling elite. In fact, as we will discuss later, they were barely even landowners. It follows that a man who lost his home twice, under military invasion from his own government, continued to resent that government and the rate at which they had displaced his family, and most Métis in Canada.

Not a great deal of information can be found in the primary documents from this period. However, there are several references to many patriarchs in my family. The warriors found in these documents include, Francois Fidler, and his brother, William Fidler Sr., my great-grandfather Jean-Baptiste Fidler, and Veronique Fidler's grandfather, Donald Ross. All of these men, and many more of their family members, took part in the 1885 Resistance. Within the copies of translated 'Rebel Documents' from the Riel Papers, there is a petition which was sent to Lieutenant Governor Dewdney. In the petition, the petitioners are from St. Antoine, St. Laurent, St. Louis de Langevin, of Duck Lake, or Carlton and others.[248] The petition notes that the governor can designate an area that has one thousand residents and does not exceed one hundred square miles as an electoral district. The document goes on to ask that the district of Lorne be subdivided into a separate electoral district, and among the petitioners is one J.B. Fidler.[249] It is a small reference; however, in light of my father's story, it shows that Jean-Baptiste Fidler really did have a political side and had high hopes for the Métis to have electoral representation within Canada. A little further within the papers and translated rebel documents is an order in council, asking "Jean Baptiste Fidler to get his horse from the Guard House on the other side of the River."[250] This is one of a dozen Orders in Council from the Métis provisional government, and no explanation is given for the need to move the horse. The only date on the page is several orders back, April 10, 1885, and Jean Baptiste's order was likely issued around the same time. The actual information gathered from these two references remains minimal; still, they show Jean Baptiste was present at the time of the fighting and was working with the provisional government. These were the only references to Jean Baptiste and his actions in 1885. Francois Fidler, Jean-Baptiste's father, can also be found within the papers. In first reference, Francois and Donald Ross, Veronique's grandfather, as well as a group of several

[248] Riel Papers. MG3 D1, pg. 47.
[249] Riel Papers. MG3 D1, pg. 47.
[250] Riel Papers. MG3 D1, pg. 68.

Métis, made a request to the Métis council "to be allowed to kill an animal which is at Boniface Lefort's and which belongs to Kerr and Brother, for the use of the families at a distance sixteen or seventeen in number..."[251] The entry, dated April 15, 1885, shows the Métis were likely preparing for battle and trying to conserve food stocks – so these families had to make a request to kill and distribute the animal. The last reference to Francois is found in a scouting report from Solomon Boucher. The report, dated April 17, 1885, documents the movements of a Métis group getting ready for battle.

> On leaving we stopped at Pilons... Then we went on to Baptiste Vandals. They said there was no gun at Fidlers. We found X. Fidler and the old man. We told Xavier to come back. There was a Gun but it goes off at half cock and we did not take it. When we went to Andre Desjarlais to get a horse, ours being sick. He gave us one. Then to Francois Fidler to get the gun, and he brought the gun. Then we went to Madame Tourond's and we camped there.[252]

Although it is not explicitly stated, it would appear that Francois gave them a gun and they left from there, although it is possible that he, along with his weapon, joined the group.

According to Lawrence J. Barkwell, many members of the extended Fidler family were involved in the fighting. The men involved also did more than just fight; they were also "scouts, runners and messengers, foragers of supplies, gunsmiths, cooks, blacksmiths, horse wranglers and guards."[253] In my direct line, Francois Fidler, Sr., and his son, my great-grandfather, Jean-Baptiste Fidler, were both involved. Francois Fidler was "a member of Captain Calixte Lafontaine's company, one of the 19 *dizaines* led by Gabriel Dumont during the 1885 Resistance."[254] The dizaines was the military structure used by the Métis; it was based on the traditions arising from the buffalo hunt.[255] "Each leader of a military unit had ten assigned members, thus they were called *dizaines*. During the 1885 Resistance 19 Captains were selected but there were actually only 18 full strength *dizaines*."[256] Since Francois was a member of one of these units, and he very likely could have left with the men that day, when they came looking for a gun. Francois' older brother, William Fidler, Sr., "was a captain of one of the 19 companies led by Gabriel Dumont during the 1885 Resistance," and five of his sons also fought,

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[251] Riel Papers. MG3 D1, pg. 15.
[252] Riel Papers. MG3 D1, pg. 18.
[253] Barkwell, *Warriors of the 1885 Northwest Resistance*, 3.
[254] Ibid., 38. Italics used by author.
[255] Ibid., 3.
[256] Ibid.

including William Jr., John, James, Francois, and Cuthbert.[257] William, Sr., and Francois, Sr., who were joined by their brother Maxime, and several other nephews who had followed the family from the Red River area to Batoche.[258] As discussed in the previous chapter, William Fidler Sr., having signed Francois' marriage certificate, seems to have been a family's patriarch and a second father to Francois; perhaps so much of a father figure, that in 1885, Francois followed his older brother in to battle.

Before we move on to the "Heroines of Batoche," one more of the men in my family must be mentioned.[259] Donald Ross, Veronique's grandfather, was the last man killed in the 1885 battle. Perhaps even more so than his Fiddler in-laws, Donald Ross had been more involved with the council. Donald Ross was listed as one of the men who was allowed to take his meals in the Council house, although a notation indicated that he, along with many others, was "nearly always absent." [260] On April 6, 1885, Donald Ross seconded a motion by Mr. Boucher, "the keys of the Fisher store be placed in the hands of Mr. Riel," and then seconded another motion, "That the Provisional Government having need of Mr. Fisher's house and having occupied it up to this day, leave one apartment free which Mr. Fisher may occupy."[261] The final entry to name Donald Ross was a motion which he made "that Scouts be sent to Prince Albert to destroy the Steamboats if possible and bring news to the Council."[262] In the following two days, Mr. Ross seconded several additional motions about the roles and responsibilities of members of the Council, but he was not given any additional duties himself.

Fighting officially began on March 26, 1885, in Duck Lake, "where Gabriel Dumont and the Métis clashed with the North-West Mounted Police, prompting the federal government to dispatch a military expedition under the command of Major General Frederick Middleton."[263] Less than thirty days later, Dumont ambushed Middleton's army at Fish Creek, and intense

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[257] Ibid., 38.
[258] Ibid., 37-38. Almost the entire two pages is dedicated to the Fidler men who joined in the fighting. Most of the men are William Fidler, Sr.'s, children. Since he was very likely a father figure to Francois Fidler, Sr., it seems he was considered the patriarch of the family, and his actions were followed by those of his children, but also his younger brothers Francois and Maxime, as well as one nephew whose father was Charles Fidler. Barkwell erroneously identifies William Fidler, Sr., as Jean-Baptiste's father.
[259] Ibid., 90. This is a phrase I found in Barkwell's paper which is particularly fitting in how it acknowledges the efforts of Métis women in 1885.
[260] Riel Papers. MG3 D1, pg. 47.
[261] Ibid., 77.
[262] Ibid.
[263] Weinstein, *Quiet Revolution West,* 15.

fighting in Batoche carried on through May 9 to 12. On 12 May 1885, the Métis were defeated by General Middleton, his army, and new weapon, the Gatling gun, on 15 May 1885. "During this short but brutal war, Canadian and Métis blood had been shed at Duck Lake, Fish Creek, and Batoche. Canadains and Indians died and were maimed at Cut Knife Hill. . . The cost to the government of suppressing the Métis greatly exceeded the overall cost to those Métis land claims."[264] The cost to Veronique Fiddler was much greater – she lost her land, home, and community, as well as a family patriarch. On May 26, 1885, news of battle, including Ross' death, was outlined in the *Manitoba Daily Free Press*: "Donald Ross, who from all accounts, killed Capt. French, didn't live long to tell about it. In less than ten minutes he lay dead by the roadside with a bullet through his heart."[265] All of Ross' actions were noted by Barkwell. Donald Ross was one of the Councillors of 'The Council of the Provisional Government", created on March 21, 1885. His land was located near Tourond's Coulee. His complete biography reads:

> Donald Ross, also known as Daniel Ross, was born at St. Francois Xavier, the son of Hugh Ross and Sara Short. He married Catherine Delorme and they moved to a claim south of Tourond's Coulee. Ross was a member of Riel's Council (Exovedate) at Batoche during the 1885 Resistance. He shot and killed Captain French at Batoche and was subsequently killed by one of French's scouts on May 12, 1885, the last day of fighting at Batoche. He was first fatally wounded and was finally killed with a bayonet.[266]

A brief mention of his actions and death are found in transcripts from the trial of Louis Riel. During George Ness' cross examination, Mr. Burbridge asks Ness where he lives and what he does, to which he responds he is a farmer and justice of the peace living near Batoche.[267] Ness attended a meeting of the Métis in Batoche, where he warned them that their actions could get them killed, and the men decide to take Mr. Ness prisoner. First, however, they have to ask some 'old men,' Calice Tourond and Donald Ross, who Mr. Ness said, "Tourond made a jump for my horse and caught him by the reins and Ross consented."[268] No additional mentions of Ross appear until nearly a year later. On July 18th, 1886, the *New York Times* carried a story about Lieutenant Howard, who brought the Gatling gun to Canada, had returned to the United

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[264] MacLean, *Home From the Hill,* 226.
[265] *Manitoba Daily Free Press*, May 26, 1885, 2.
[266] Barkwell, *Warriors of the 1885 Northwest Resistance*, 70.
[267] Record of the Trial of Louis Riel, Reel M163 MG3 D1 Riel Papers 618/90.
[268] Record of the Trial of Louis Riel, Reel M163 MG3 D1 Riel Papers 618/90, Ness cross examination.

States to put some of his Indian scalps, Riel's provisional government flag, and other bits of memorabilia on display. As described in a New York Times article: "Donald Ross, a six-foot-three brave, who killed Capt. French, chief of the scouts. His elaborate hat, with the tail on top, is in the corner."[269]

The matriarchs of these families were virtually ignored in primary documents, as their female ancestors were also ignored in much of the history, even though many Métis women nursed the sick and made ammunition for the soldiers. Among those women was my great grandmother, Veronique Fiddler (nee Gervais), as related in this story:

> **Merelda:** Did your grandma [my great-grandma] ever talk about what happened there?
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> **Ron Fiddler:** Yeah she said she made bullets for the Rebellion. She used to melt lead and get it ready for the boys I guess. Probably they had muskets and whatever type of ammunition she used. She didn't really talk about it. But she told me a lot of times – she said – and she wasn't that tall – she was maybe a little bit taller than you if she was taller – I don't think so. But she said that she believed in what her husband was doing because she came from the Red River somewhere – she didn't mention that. But this is where the information that I received was that she came from the Red River. A lot of the work that they did was for the people. They were always with the Cree nation.[270]

My father is not the only one who remembers this story; both my aunt Leona Rolison and my cousin Cecil Gibson heard the stories when they were growing up.

> **Merelda:** Did anyone ever talk about, that great grandma had made buckshot?
>
> **Cecil:** Yeah, that was great grandma.
>
> **Leona:** Great Grandma. During the Louis Riel Rebellion.
>
> **Merelda:** Did grandma or grandpa ever talk about it [the rebellion]?
>
> **Cecil:** Well just grandma did – she used to tell us kids.

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[269] *New York Times*, July 26, 1886. Page number unknown.
[270] Ron Fiddler, interview.

Merelda: What did she tell you?

Cecil: She told us that she made these bullets, she used to use that silver stuff and put in...

Leona: The buckshot or whatever.

Cecil: Yeah, she used to make them as fast as they used them she used to say.

Leona: Yeah, they were unique people.

Merelda: So they did talk about that time?

Leona: yeah, but they didn't really talk about it a whole lot. They'd mention it and then we'd hear it from Mom and Dad.

Cecil: Because more or less they didn't want to tell the kids too much.[271]

Leona Rollison is my dad's sister and the youngest child in his family. Cecil Gibson is Leona's niece, but is actually older than Leona because Cecil's father was married and having children before Leona was born. The above is all either knew about great grandma's role in the 1885 Resistance, and as Cecil notes, that is the way the adults wanted to keep it. Still, Veronique participated by making buckshot. She was just one of the many matriarchs who supported their husbands, including her grandmother, Catherine Ross (nee Delorme and the wife of Donald Ross), and several of her aunts. Veronique was also a young mother at the time, having given birth to her first child, a son, named Joseph (also known as Joe), on November 23rd 1885.[272] Joseph would have been only four months old during the battle, and probably was in grave danger. Veronique

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[271] Leona Rollison and Cecil Gibson, interviewed by author, digital audio recording, Cold Lake, Saskatchewan, 15 April 2007. Leona and Cecil wished to be interviewed together because they were nervous and said they needed a little help, from each other, to remember. The interview with the pair of them together was very engaging, and lead to many interesting and priceless stories about the family.

[272] SAB, R-5.11, Department of Indian Affairs Black Series, "Department of Interior Métis Scrip. Canada Interior Department, Land Claims, 1886-1906," Volumes 1346-47, C 14968. Scrip application for Joseph Fidler's scrip application. The location of his birthplace was listed as Qu'Appelle. This is also confirmed by the family history book my uncle Lawrence Fiddler composed almost a decade ago for a family reunion.

obviously was committed to trying to save her home, and must have made the decision to stay and fight with her family.

As Barkwell notes, many of the non-Aboriginal residents, as well as the women and children of the Métis fled before the battles started.[273] "Those women that chose to stay were loyal to the cause and their husbands knew that their help would be needed." These women risked their lives, carrying messages, making ammunition and nursing the sick; they were also terrorized by Canadian soldiers who stole rings and other belongings from them and then ransacked their homes.[274] In Barkwell's biography, he writes: "She was one of the heroines of Batoche Resistance in 1885. During the battle she recalled that "they were melting lead that came wrapped around the HBC goods, in frying pans over a fire."[275] Aside from oral history and mentions in articles like this one, I have been unable to locate a primary document carrying this quote or story from Veronique. This same story is also located in a French language article written, but not published, by Nathalie Kermoal called "*Les Roles et les Soufferances des Femmes Métiesses ors de la Résistance de 1885.*" After contacting the author, she informed me that she no longer had the raw data, but did find it in the Journal of Abbé Cloutier. Unfortunately, after contacting the Batoche Historical Society and the women who is currently working with that manuscript, I was told it is currently unavailable, and the section that refers to Veronique has not yet been translated.[276] Still, Veronique shared this story with her family, and it has been told and retold many times in both academic articles and within our family. It is just one of many challenges when dealing with these primary documents, which are often more than one hundred years old. This applies to journals, HBC post journals, and particularly scrip records, which were not always correctly filed, if they were filed at all. Finally, in a family, where the researcher is forty years younger than her parents and her parents are the youngest in their families, a great deal of the oral

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[273] Barkwell, *Warriors of the 1885 Northwest Resistance,* 90.
[274] Ibid.
[275] Ibid., 94.
[276] Nathalie Kermoal was unable to find her original paper, nor was she able to find any of the raw data. She did mention that I may be able to find the information if I could find the original manuscript. The Batoche Historical Society, in Batoche, Saskatchewan, did put me in contact with the woman who is currently working on the translation. Unfortunately, the original is not available to the public and she has not translated the section that pertains to Veronique Fiddler.

history is simply lost. These research issues are compounded by the decisions of the matriarchs and patriarchs of this family to begin to conceal their history and try to help their families blend into the new Canada.

Fleeing and Looking for a Place to Rebuild

For the next several years, Jean-Baptiste, his wife, and growing family appear to have moved around the prairies looking for a new home, even moving down into the United States. According to our family history and the scrip applications filed during the 1900 scrip commission, Joseph (Joe) was born in Qu'Appelle and Alexander was born in Fish Creek.[277] Sadly, Alexander would die as a toddler.[278] The couple's third child, Louis, was born in Prince Albert in 1888, and my grandfather, William, was born in Duck Lake the following year. According to William's baptismal certificate, he was born on July 6th, 1889 in Duck Lake and was baptized the same day at the Blessed Sacrament Parish Church.[279] By 1896, the couple had three more children, the last died shortly after birth in Cascade County at Fort Shaw, Montana.[280] The couple would have two more children in Montana, before returning to Saskatchewan, where my father says they eventually started to do some subsistence farming.

Merelda : So how long had grandpa been farming?

Ron Fiddler: I don't know because my father [along with his family] had come from Butte, Montana – shortly after the Riel Rebellion. They were forced into the US – so the government could quieten [sic] it down, because they were fighting for Saskatchewan at that time. And my grandfather and his sons were all totally involved. So they were asked to go to the states. When they came back – my

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[277] SAB, R-5.11, Department of Indian Affairs Black Series,
"Department of Interior Métis Scrip. Canada Interior Department, Land Claims, 1886-1906," Volumes 1346-47, C 14968. Scrip application for Alexander Fiddler. Mary Fidler Papers located in England with author and Lawrence Fiddler Papers located in Regina with Merelda Fiddler. Lawrence Fiddler is my Uncle, and oldest living relative. He was unable to participate in an interview for this paper. However, he and his wife Jean, have spent years doing family history research, confirming as many births and deaths dates and locations through archives and through living family members. They began their work more than 20 years ago, and the result was a comprehension family history book, along with many letters and papers, birth certificates, correspondence with Mary Fidler, an English ancestor who lived overseas and is a direct descendent of Peter Fidler, and much more. All of that material was transferred to this researcher last year.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Baptismal Certificate for William Fiddler, issued January 30th, 1955.
[280] Mary Fidler Papers.

> father was born somewhere around Duck Lake I guess. When they went to Butte – they stayed there a number of years because – according to what I understood most of my uncles were buried in Butte, Montana. When they came back they were not allowed to go back to Batoche, because they felt that my grandfather and his father were so totally immersed in the Rebellion itself and my grandmother and great grandmother – that they should move to the Meadow Lake constituency - so that they would be allowed to live properly again under the rules of the federal government.[281]

It was almost 15 years before the Scrip Commission made it out to the West. Not only was the federal government trying to create a system to log claims of Métis, it was also trying to settle treaties with many First Nations people and bands in Western Canada – a time-consuming process for a small number of bureaucrats to manage. By then, many Métis were scattered across Western Canada and the United States. When Treaty Eight was signed in 1899, "half-breed commissions hearing Métis claims would sit simultaneously with Indian treaty commissions."[282] The process was complicated and while it did allow some Métis to purchase and return to their original lands prior to 1885 – many felt they could not return because it was no longer the community they had built. Also, like in Red River, many feared reprisals from non-Aboriginal people angry about the Resistance. This, coupled with the transiency of Métis people, meant making claims and actually seeing them through to a successful end was challenging. The scrip process is perhaps the most complex and confusing system this researcher has ever encountered. Having consulted both Frank Tough's writing on Land Scrip intricacies and Spry and McCradle's discussion on records of the Department of the Interior and documents for Western Canadian settlement, I have determined that in this scrip process the Fiddlers, particularly Jean-Baptiste and Veronique, did not receive land scrip. As Tough explains, there were four phases in the land scrip process. In the first phase "an order-in-council appointed a treaty and scrip commissioner," before which a Métis claimant would appear and fill out a declaration.[283] That declaration would be checked by the land department, and if the claimant qualified, it would be checked against what had been issued by previous scrip commissions. If the person had not received scrip previously, then a land scrip certificate would be issued and delivered to the person; land scrip was considered non-transferrable, which means

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[281] Ron Fiddler, interview.
[282] Weinstein, *Quiet Revolution West,* 17.
[283] Frank Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail,* 321.

only the person who received the land could own it and no outside speculators could purchase the property.[284] Since no scrip certificates for land can be located for the claims made by Jean-Baptiste and Veronique, the certificates are either lost or the couple must have opted for money scrip. However, as Spry and McCradle note:

> This whole complex of Métis land grant records has apparently been preserved in a more or less complete state, and forms an important body of research on Métis claims and genealogies today... However, it should be noted that (unlike the "military bounty" scrip records) it is often either difficult or impossible to construct a chain and issue of the note, to its redemption (often by another party) on a particular piece of land.[285]

Not to mention the controversy surrounding claims, as speculators and banks persistently stood by ready to buy Métis scrip often at a significantly reduced rate. "Ottawa's collusion with these speculators extended to every step of the scrip distribution and redemption process. . . Scrip speculators travelled with and, in effect, became an integral part of the half-breed commissions."[286] Unfortunately, this process held few answers about any grants that may have been approved for the Fiddler family. My father believes they took money scrip, and bought land around the Meadow Lake area, but says no one in the family ever mentioned receiving scrip – land or money.[287] Still, several documents can be found related to the two claims Jean-Baptiste and his wife Veronique made on behalf of their children.

On August 6, 1900, two claims were filled out by Veronique Fidler [nee Gervais] in Pincher Creek, Alberta.[288] Veronique filled out one claim for her first son, Joseph and a second claim for her deceased son, Alexander. Joseph's claim was very straight forward, listing his birthplace as Lac Qu'Appelle, his father was present for the application, and Joseph was a

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[284]Ibid.
[285] Spry and McCradle, *The Records of the Department of the Interior and Research Concerning Canada's Western Frontier of Settlement,* 101.
[286] Weinstein, *Quiet Revolution West,* 17.
[287] Ron Fiddler, interview.
[288] SAB, R-5.11, Department of Indian Affairs Black Series,
"Department of Interior Métis Scrip. Canada Interior Department, Land Claims, 1886-1906," Volumes 1346-47, C 14968, scrip application for Alexander Fiddler. The forms list her as Veronique Fidler, with one D instead of two. However, all of the correspondence attached to this file inconsistently spell Fiddler with either one or two D's, and occasionally spell it as Fideleur. This makes working with this material somewhat challenging and difficult to search when looking for the initial file.

halfbreed child.[289] The application was signed by Veronique herself, indicating she could actually write, although one application also had her place an additional X by her name which appears to be written by a commissioner. However, the most interesting, and complicated, information appears on Alexander's application. On page two of the document it reads:

> We were never got in treaty. I got my scrip. We have lived nineteen years in the northwest territories. Alexander died at Prince Albert when he was 2 years old. 14 years ago. He was baptized at Batoche. I was living in Batoche the year of the rebellion. It was the fall after the rebellion that the child was born. We left Batoche 5 years ago.[290]

Neither the scrip applicants, nor the commissioners, were as proficient at math, as indicated by the obvious mistakes on the initial application. According to the numbers, Alexander was born in 1884, died two years later – which was actually the year when he was born. A witness declaration signed by William Gervais, confirmed all of the details listed on Joseph's and Alexander's applications.[291] The discrepancies in the dates may be why the rest of this file was filled with so much correspondence between Veronique and Jean-Baptiste, a priest, and the federal government. On the front of Alexander's claim several notations are found. The first of which indicates that the information was examined the same day it was completed and signed and the commissioner examined it and affirmed it was "ok."[292] Several other notations appear in the margins, "discrepancy [two illegible words] + certificate," "wrote to Prince Albert no certificate," and "Disallowed not proved – bogus certificate."[293] These actions set off a flurry of letters and notes sent back and forth to the Department of the Interior. On August 20, a letter was sent from the Parish of Prince Albert, signed by the priest, which state that on the "10th or 12th day of the month of September, 1800 we the undersigned parish priest have buried the body of Alexander deceased the age of two years, being the legitimate child of Jean-Baptiste Fideleur

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[289] SAB, R-5.11, Department of Indian Affairs Black Series,
"Department of Interior Métis Scrip. Canada Interior Department, Land Claims, 1886-1906," Volumes 1346-47, C 14968. Scrip application for Joseph Fidler.
[290] SAB, R-5.11, Department of Indian Affairs Black Series,
"Department of Interior Métis Scrip. Canada Interior Department, Land Claims, 1886-1906," Volumes 1346-47, C 14968. Scrip application for Alexander Fidler.
[291] SAB, R-5.11, Department of Indian Affairs Black Series,
"Department of Interior Métis Scrip. Canada Interior Department, Land Claims, 1886-1906," Volumes 1346-47, C 14968. Scrip application witness declaration of William Gervais on behalf of Joseph and Alexander Fidler.
[292] SAB, R-5.11, Department of Indian Affairs Black Series,
"Department of Interior Métis Scrip. Canada Interior Department, Land Claims, 1886-1906," Volumes 1346-47, C 14968. Scrip application for Alexander Fidler, pg. 1.
[293] Ibid.

+ Veronique Gervais."[294] Twice letters were sent to a company called Prince Bros. – General Merchants, Mill Owners, Cattle Exporters to Jean-Baptiste's attention, both claim to not have the certificate of birth for Alexander.[295] In subsequent correspondence Bishop Pascal writes a letter to the commission saying the only record he can find is for an Alexander Fisher.[296] However, he was clearly searching for the wrong name, and in response Commissioner J.A. MacKinnon asked that the search be resumed for an Alexander Fidler born in July 1880 – six years before Alexander was in fact born. The only additional remarks on Alexander's application say "notified 21/5/1" which could be May 21, 1901.[297] Within the file, another letter to Commissioner McKenna was sent by J. [unknown initial] Prudhomme, who says the birth and burial certificates submitted were bogus.[298] A final letter, dated March 20, 1904, was sent to McKenna from a A.J. McCormack, once again through Prince Bros., land speculators in Western Canada, asking to send a letter if any further information was required because the family was then in North Battleford and still waiting for their claim.[299] It appeared one of two things had happened in this process: the government and church cannot find Alexander's real certificates or the family was trying to fake his birth date to get additional scrip. The final result is not traceable, but it is unlikely this claim was approved. The claim made for Joseph may have been successful, but official confirmation in the documents cannot be found.

Still, the final letters in the file show the family was then living in North Battleford, which was also where Jean-Baptists' mother, Josephte, was filing declarations for the scrip claims of some of her other children.[300] It was around this time that the oral history in my family provided a much needed piece of the puzzle about how this family ended up in the Town of Meadow Lake.

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[294] Ibid., attached letter to scrip application for Alexander Fidler.
[295] Ibid., attached letter to scrip application for Alexander Fidler.
[296] Ibid., attached letter scrip application file Alexander Fidler.
[297] Ibid., pg. 1.
[298] Ibid., attached letter scrip application file Alexander Fidler.
[299] Ibid., attached letter scrip application file Alexander Fiddler.
[300] SAB, R-5.11, Department of Indian Affairs Black Series,
"Department of Interior Métis Scrip. Canada Interior Department, Land Claims, 1886-1906," Volumes 1346-47, C 14968. Scrip applications for Marie Domitilde Fidler and Frederick Fidler.

Lac du Prairies: A New Métis Home

According to the Meadow Lake History book, Jean Baptiste and his wife and family moved to Meadow Lake in 1909.[301] The brief entry goes on to say, "Mrs. Veronica Fiddler who was born Veronica Gervais taught French in the school in the 1800's and was a midwife for many years. J.B. Fiddler died March 3, 1949 and Veronica died on December 5, 1958."[302] A brief and vague entry for a once proud family that fought for their rights to land almost a hundred years prior to the publishing of the book. Although brief, it is one of the only confirmations of the date the family moved to what would become my hometown. However, not all of the family remained Métis in this move, Veronique and Jean-Baptiste's 8th child, Theodore or "Mushkego," moved to Waterhen First Nation, about 45 kilometers northwest of the town.

Merelda: So how did grandpa end up in town and his brother end up on Waterhen?

Ron Fiddler: Okay. My father was asked to join the Waterhen Indian group. They were at that time – the government was creating reserves – they wanted to steal the land from the Indians and the people who lived on it as squatters. So the way they fixed it is they said if you join the way that we would like to set up reserves in the country – and become part of the Indian – that was the term they used the *Indian Act* – they said we will give you a treaty card, a treaty number. And all your children will be declared treaty and as they turn 16 they'll have their own treaty card, treaty number and they'll be alright. But – when my uncle Theodore – who was called "Mushkego" at that time – was his nickname. He married a lady that was already Indian I believe... Anyway his first wife died and he married a second wife. And he joined with his children and became the chief eventually. And some of his children were chiefs. My father on the other hand didn't believe in that. And he said he would join but he wanted to educate his children in Meadow Lake and they said no – so he just simply said well if you don't want to educate my children in Meadow Lake I gotta go and he moved out. Now whether he had joined or whether he had quit before he moved in I don't really know because that business was the kids don't understand and don't know and its better left alone. That's the way we were taught.

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[301] Meadow Lake Diamond Jubilee Heritage Group, *Meadow Lake History: Heritage Memoirs*. (Meadow Lake Diamond Jubilee Heritage Group: Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, 1981) , 131.
[302] Ibid.

Merelda: That things are better left alone?

Ron Fiddler: That's right. And then we [Grandpa William and family] moved – we moved from there – and I believe that is when we went to Pierceland – and we were there – I don't know how many years – but I know I started school in Meadow Lake – probably I was about six or seven.

The move to the town of Meadow Lake changed the family, and represents the last time any direct ancestor of mine married into another Métis family. When the Fiddlers arrived in Meadow Lake, it was not a lonely, desolate place. It was, in fact, a small burgeoning community. The families that had built Meadow Lake were the Morins and the DeLarondes. Both families owned most of the land in the community. According to the town history, a group of Indians in the Meadow Lake area took treaty and settled on a reserve near the present day town.[303] "That same year (1889) a small group of Métis with horses, oxen and other cattle settled on land around the lake to hunt, trap and fish as well as do a little farming, ranching and freighting. This group comprised of several families and several generations of the Morin family clan of which Cyprian Morin was the patriarch and leader."[304] However, the history of the Roman Catholic Diocese disputes this date, saying Cyprien Morin moved to the Meadow Lake area in 1873, operating the Hudson's Bay post out of the area as well.[305] "Cyprien Morin was a truly valuable pioneer of this district. He was the first settler in Meadow Lake; the first fur trader in Meadow Lake, the first rancher in Meadow Lake, and being a good Christian, he worked hard to establish the first Roman Catholic Church in Meadow Lake, which was built on his land."[306] Cyprian's daughter, Agnes Morin, married William DeLaronde, and had seven children who "were all born in Meadow Lake and all contributed to the opening up of the area."[307] Among those children was my grandmother, known as Melvina, Velina, but usually Avelina DeLaronde. One entry in the town history really stood out, "for the three decades, 1889-1919, this isolated settlement lived at peace with the world. They enjoyed the highest standard of living they had

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[303] Ibid., 2.
[304] Ibid.
[305] Compiled by Solange Lavigne, *Kaleidoscope: Many Cultures – One Faith: The Roman Catholic Diocese of Prince Albert 1891-1991.* (Munster, Saskatchewa: St. Peter's Press Diocese of Prince Albert, 1990), 179. Cyprien's first name is often spelled both as Cyprian and Cyprien.
[306] Ibid.
[307] Ibid.

ever known, maintaining the ancient traditions of the fur trade as well as a limited form of agriculture."[308] In 1909, the Fiddlers settled along with the Morins and the DeLarondes. In 1911, their families united, when William Fiddler married Avelina DeLaronde. Their marriage certificate showed the couple married in the church Avelina's grandfather had built, in the town her family founded, on the 8th day of August, 1911. Once again, a Fiddler united with another strong Métis family. In the following years, however, much of the land would be sold, their children would scatter across the country and around the globe, and the Métis community of Meadow Lake would become a town run by white settlers who bought the land and eventually sat on town council. Still, my grandparents worked hard and were strong pillars of the community. Not long after they were married, William and Avelina moved to Pierceland, a small town west of Meadow Lake, to try farming. My father and both Leona Rollison and Cecil Gibson remember that my grandparents lived there for a time.

> **Leona:** I think in those days they didn't buy land. You settled somewhere. Now they make a mint out of it. In those days we lived in Pierceland.
>
> **Cecil:** I was about five or six years old.
>
> **Leona:** I don't even remember being there.
>
> **Cecil:** Cause I know the first home and school meeting they had was at your dad's house. Up in Deer Haven in Pierceland.[309]

My Father also has some vague memories of moving around:

> **Merelda:** ... What did your dad do?
>
> **Ron Fiddler:** He farmed a little bit. But my dad was never really a farmer. Because when he moved to Pierceland and when they sold out there – they sold to a Jeffery family. And we moved to Meadow Lake – and my mother traded a team of horses for the land that we were currently living – when you were born. That was where mom and dad were living. And prior to my marriage to your mom – I lived there too. There was an acre of land there at that time.
>
> **Merelda:** Well first of all – how did he get that land in Pierceland?

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[308] *Meadow Lake History: Heritage Memoirs*, 2.
[309] Leona Rollison and Cecil Gibson, interview.

Ron Fiddler: I don't know. That is something you never really talked about because the family was close and as the old way was. Grandpa and grandma were boss – mom and dad were boss – and you never questioned anything. And as a youth I never questioned anything. They just did as they wanted.[310]

William and Avelina Fiddler had 14 children between 1912 an 1939; one died as a young girl, my father was the second youngest child and Leona was the youngest. My father said his older sister, my Aunt Agnes, held the keys to most of the history. She passed away more than twenty years ago, when I was ten. I never had the opportunity to question her, or to find out more about the family history. In the Meadow Lake History book, Agnes Flammond (nee Fiddler) wrote most of our family's entries, including ones that included the history of my grandmother Avelina's family history. Agnes was also the primary source for the material compiled in the Dioceses of Prince Albert history, *Kaleidoscope: Many Culture – One Faith.* In that history, it says that "Cyprien Morin came to Canada from France in the mid-1800s, and worked for the Hudson's Bay Company, at Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan and Green Lake, Saskatchewan, and other places."[311] However, scrip applications and his own Hudson's Bay biographical sheet showed Cyprien was born and raised in what was known as the English River District, in northern Saskatchewan, and was a half-breed no less. Although the Fiddler family, their moves, and decisions are the primary focus of this thesis, understanding a little about why so much of history was hidden can be directly traced back to Cyprien and his family roots. Cyprien's father was Antoine Morin, from Quebec, and his mother was Pelagié Boucher, a half-breed with Dene roots.[312]

Merelda: Did Grandma know them or did she ever talk about them?

Ron: She would talk about them – but I believe there was some kind of feeling amongst the clan that they shouldn't have been Chipewayan. But this is what happened and all of them got caught that way. And so, they really wanted to kind of sweep everything under the rug.

Merelda: Because they didn't want to be Dene?

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[310] Ron Fiddler, interview.
[311] *Kaleidascope: Many Cultures – One Faith,* 179.
[312] Ron Fiddler, interview.

Ron: They didn't want to be Dene. They were simply against that. So, maybe you have run into the same thing. Where it has been written that he was a Frenchman, that he came from France. But, as far as I know – he was born somewhere around Ile a la Crosse. Because his father went there early, came from France – his father came from France – came through Montreal – straight up into Ile a la Crosse. And that's where he married the Chipewayan lady. (Subsequent research has shown that Antoine, Cyprien's father, was French Canadian and not from France)

Merelda: Because it seems like Cyprien created the town of Meadow Lake.

Ron: He did. Yes. Both him and William – owned either side of the road. The old highway – where the old highway runs – they had the rights of all the land between bush line in the north and the bush line in the south – which was about – oh six miles, seven miles. But they owned both sides of that road. And it took in I would say – all of Meadow Lake, for William. Because William used to live up on the shore of the lake. Where I believe Mr. Lejeneusse lives now. That was where he was. The land for the cemetery was given by my grandmother for her husband. And that was the first person that was buried in Meadow Lake in that property.

Merelda: Was that Grandma's dad?

Ron: Yeah that was Grandma Fiddler's dad.

Merelda: He was the first person buried there.

Ron: Yeah.

Merelda: Did you know like – my Grandma [your mom] – did you know her parents?

Ron: No, I didn't. They died probably before I was actually [born] – I may have been alive when she was still around. But my grandfather – William DeLaRonde – was killed by people in Meadow Lake – because somebody was interested in his wife – and that's how they did that. And he probably died early when Max was small – Max would have been eight or seven years old. So I never met her, I never met him either. I met my uncles from that group – but I never met anybody else.

Merelda: Did Grandma ever talk about about them?

Ron: No, my mother really had a hate on for her mother. Because her mother married a Kennedy – if she hadn't – my mother said if she hadn't married that

> Kennedy – she would have still been her mother. But she's buried in the old cemetery. Across from the golf course in Meadow Lake. There's an old cemetery just south and east of there. And she would never clean her grave. When we went there we would clean the grave – your mom and I. But she would never go there – she cleaned her dad's grave and her daughter's – the one that was three years older than me that passed away as a baby. And those were all she would do – but her mother's – she wouldn't touch her mother's grave.[313]

It seems that my grandmother connected being part Dene with the treacherous murder of her father by her mother's second husband. Or perhaps, both were facts she preferred never came to light. In either case, these truths were not revealed in our family until after the research of this paper uncovered Cyprien's real roots. However, more detailed information through oral family history has gone to the grave with my grandmother and others of her generation. It was just one of many pieces of our past that remained hidden until this investigation.

However, that peaceful and prosperous time came to an end for our family. The land that had all been owned by the DeLarondes and Morins passed out of these, or as my father explains were "drank up."

> **Merelda:** So, what happened then to the land? How did all these other people end up living in Meadow Lake?
>
> **Ron:** Okay what really took place was that – Cyprien owned the property that was west of the highway. And uh, his house was situated oh probably on hole number nine as they say – against the hill that is just west of the clubhouse. That is where his residence was. And a couple of hundred yards probably south of there, by the highway, was the evidence where they had a fort. And at that time the Meadow Lake was all throughout that area – it was lapping at the highway in fact. And that was where they brought their furs – the Indians throughout the country. Peter Fidler started that – my fifth generation grandfather – started the fort there and when Cyprien took it over. I'm not too sure when. But it seems in reading Peter Fidler's book there – they were all young men in the late 1800s. And middle 1800s – 1779 – they were all kind of born in that area. And he felt that Cyprien and my grandfather DeLaronde who was Paul De Laronde senior – he was part of that group – they had a business running in conjunction with the Hudson Bay and my great, great grandfather felt he shouldn't be in business for himself – he should only be in business for the Hudson Bay. Because that generation of grandfathers came directly from England. So, I would say roughly –

[313] Ron Fiddler, interview.

the way it was – we know now for sure that he never left Canada, unless he went somewhere for training... but quite likely it would have been England.[314]

Merelda: Yeah – so how did the land get sold off?

Ron: My uncle George drank a lot of that land up because he...

Merelda: George Fiddler or DeLaronde?

Ron: George DeLaronde. He was my mother's younger brother. I believe he was the baby of the family. And when her mother married – into the Kennedy clan. Josh and George DeLaronde and some of my aunties moved in with mom and dad. Because mom and dad were already married. And so they were together. But they tell me that uncle George drank off a lot of the money, a lot of the land, the money from the land and whatever else they drank off – him and Josh...[315]

With no land base and little work, the oldest children left the area. Grandpa William worked for the Local Improvement District, L.I.D., building roads and bridges.

Merelda: So, what did Grandpa do after you guys moved back to Meadow Lake?

Ron: Dad started first I believe to work for the LID or the town of Meadow Lake. And then he moved on and worked for the second one. And he worked for all the agencies and the third place he worked he was – he worked on a bridge gang for department of highways. They built bridges. And he built bridges all over Saskatchewan. And he worked during the summer. And mom worked in restaurants and we lived right in Meadow Lake.

Merelda: So you said Grandpa worked for the town and then he worked for an agency.

Ron: LID.

Merelda: And what is that?

Ron: The Local Improvement District of Saskatchewan. Then he joined the department of highways because he knew a gentleman there named Bill Tour who was a foreman. He came after dad because he knew he really loved to construct things. And so he used his knowledge and a friend of my dad's – who was a Frenchman from somewhere around Paris – and he taught dad how to mix cement so you could put it in water and then it would set and so my dad did that for quite

[314] Ron Fiddler, interview.
[315] Ron Fiddler, interview.

> a number of years until he turned roughly around 60 years old. When just over work got him and he had to retire.[316]

Grandma Avelina cleaned houses and laundry in more affluent white settler's homes; she and Great-Grandma Veronique were also midwives, and grandma picked up extra work in local restaurants.[317] Everyone also remembers Avelina always taking in extra children, from her younger brothers and sisters, as well as the children of friends or cousins, like my Aunt Betty. Everyone who needed had a home at the Fiddler house.

> **Leona:** Yeah, mom raised many other children besides us thirteen. She worked hard.
>
> **Cecil:** I think that's where I got mine from too, because I sure raised a lot of extra kids.
>
> **Leona:** My dad, he helped her all the time. You know, he used to go and get tipsy too, but that used to be okay and then he used to get grandma mad at him.
>
> **Cecil:** Remember when grandma used to go and do a little house work downtown for Samchuks and grandpa was retired already? And, but he used to clean the house. Summer holidays and I'd be over there and grandpa used to wash clothes with the electric washer. And every time he'd go hang up clothes he'd take grandma's bloomers and he'd take them with the elastic and he'd go like this (motions that he'd stretch the waist out wide) and hang them up.[318]

All of this work in the mainstream built up the reputations of both of my grandparents. They were known as hard workers, people who prided themselves in being honest, diligent and generous.[319] It was this reputation and the respect he received from town officials in Meadow Lake and within the government departments (the L.I.D.) that the people of Waterhen First Nation, where Grandpa's brother lived, were hoping Grandpa William would bring with him when they asked him to become chief. If William had decided to do so, it would have changed our identities forever.

> **Merelda:** Leona said at some point they (the people of Waterhen) came and asked Grandpa to be chief?

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[316] Ron Fiddler, interview.
[317] Ron Fiddler, interview.
[318] Leona Rollison and Cecil Gibson, interview.
[319] Charlotte Fiddler, interviewed by author, digital audio recording, Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, 20 April 2007.

> **Ron:** They did. They did but in order for him to do that he had to take his whole family in there because they wanted a head count. They wanted so many families in there with the number of children they had and they had to become Indian. And my Dad didn't want that – my dad was well liked – and that's why they wanted him because he would have taken a lot of people with him into the reserve. But we were fortunate that Dad and Mom believed in the work ethic – everybody should have a job. So they moved us to Meadow Lake. And that was where we were. And everybody as we grew up – started working on their own – or had jobs. And we have I think fared better than the – my uncle's group – Theodore's family – because we were better educated and we have better jobs. But we didn't depend on the government for a living. Because now they are really. If I was to take you and introduce you to them – you'd understand what I meant.
>
> **Merelda:** Do you think Grandpa was afraid of getting trapped out there?
>
> **Ron:** He really felt – he really felt that he didn't want to be a slave to the government. And I think maybe that was what came from Grandfather Jean Baptiste – that he didn't want to be a slave to the government either. And this is why they fought. I think they were interested in creating a Saskatchewan for the people. And not really have government intervention.[320]

Grandpa Fiddler had also heard about residential schools, and even though school in Meadow Lake would not be without its hardships, it would be nothing compared to the abuses children faced in those facilities.[321] For the younger children, like Aunt Leona and my father, as well as the next generation Cecil and Rose, my cousins, they still had to finish school. All of them recall how times had changed and how racism was now part of their daily lives. Many of the teachers were cruel and did not like Indians. Cousin Cecil still remembers one teacher who left a lasting impression:

> In grade five we had quite the mean teacher. We couldn't do nothing – there was ten of us Native kids in the school. In the winter time we'd go out and play, if you as much as picked up snow and threw it at somebody you were in the school, the ten of us would get the strap – two or three times a day. Her name was Mrs. Jocelyn. And this one day I got so fed up with her, I was in grade five, I said whoever sets the strap for us, this time when we go in, I said, I'll stand up. And

[320] Ron Fiddler, interview.
[321] Ron Fiddler, interview.

> the rest of you stand up. Cause we'd have given her a lickin' cause we'd had enough of her.[322]

Both Leona and Cecil learned to fight back, both in the classroom and outside of school. Leona used to beat up one of the white kids who insulted her almost every day, even if she was in detention for fighting during school hours, she would take her punishment and then find the kid who insulted her and beat her up again.[323] My Father also remembers having teachers who did not like Indians, but said he just let it go and moved on himself, because his parents were pushing all of their children to take advantage of school and get a good job.

Outside of school, my Father, Aunt and Cousin remember a different town and a different kind of respect afforded to the Fiddler family.

> **Cecil:** Like I said when my parents split up if it wasn't for the sake of my grandpa, we'd of starved to death. Grandpa provided food for his home and his family and for us. Cause my mom couldn't talk English, she couldn't work, she was sick all the time. Yeah, I was thinking about that one day...
>
> **Merelda:** So it didn't matter to other people that they (Grandma and Grandpa) were Cree, and French and English?
>
> **Leona:** Not that I know. Mainly I think it was in the schools.
>
> **Cecil:** Yeah in the schools was worse for prejudice.
>
> **Leona:** Mom and Dad had many, many white people for friends, they had the Samchuks, the bakery guy, lots of white people.[324]

Respect in the mainstream Meadow Lake, and a dedication to family, that sums up the life of my grandparents. My Grandmother raised thirteen children, took in numerous other kids, and also raised her two brothers after her father was killed and her mother remarried. Events of the past meant Grandma Fiddler became dedicated to the Fiddlers, and she never looked back to her old family. Their home, as well as, Jean-Baptiste and Veronique's home, became the focal points for the family. Those holidays and celebrations united the family, and took away some of the sting of having to deal with some of the racist people who had moved to the town.

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[322] Leona Rollison and Cecil Gibson, interview.
[323] Leona Rollison and Cecil Gibson, interview.
[324] Leona Rollison and Cecil Gibson, interview.

> **Cecil:** But you know what I remember as a kid? Every Christmas, or was it New Year's – was celebrated at Great-Grandpa and Grandma's house. They had a big log house. The room was bigger than this here. And then another extension where the bedrooms there, nobody went in there but the kids or whoever had to go to bed. But all the relatives would come there. The women would bring food, and the men would play the fiddle all day and all night.
>
> **Leona:** And Uncle George, mom's brother, used to play all kinds of instruments...
>
> **Cecil:** But they always started, everybody used to go to Gervais Hill for goose and whatever meal, that was after church - that was at Christmas. Then everybody would do their chores and some of the guys used to go together and go do chores in different places.

Even my father, who still plays the fiddle and the guitar, remembers how exciting it was to gather the whole clan together.

> **Merelda:** Leona said she remembered dances at Jean Baptiste and Veroniques – yeah – that they had dances in their house.
>
> **Ron:** I used to play guitar there too. Somebody would play the fiddle and I'd play guitar. We had – we were really into family dancing at that time. Even at my mother and dad's house there used to be parties going on. And they would have a dance say on the weekend and everybody have a good time and very little liquor was there... because there was no money. And we had a good time. And there was families come from all over the place and they would move right in. And live at neighbouring housing and wherever they could park their horses and whatever they had. We had I would say – probably – was the making of Meadow Lake – that everybody worked together. We had probably more comradeship than you would have today.

It was a different time for the family. Many of the children and grandchildren still lived at home, and the extended families were much closer. All of the dancing, the beadwork, the picking of Seneca root, midwives going to birth children, as well as tanning hides and snaring were all still ways of life, even if they worked regular jobs as well.[325] These skills were passed on to the older children, but by the time Leona came around, the skills did not seem as important to learn. Leona also did not learn how to speak Cree, though she understood when other people were speaking. The last person to learn how to bead from my Grandmother, in these wonderful

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[325] *Meadow Lake History: Heritage Memoirs,* 132.

floral patterns that curve in delicate circles, was likely my Aunt Agnes. The one thing they all still continued to share was the dancing and the music.

> **Leona:** Well, every weekend there was a dance. And what they used to do was bake a cake and they'd put a dime in that cake and...
>
> **Cecil:** You remember that too?
>
> **Leona:** Yeah and they used to cut the cake and whoever got the dime that was their turn for the next weekend. And that's how the dances worked from place to place. Whoever got it. . .
>
> **Cecil:** They even used to make coffee in a great big double boiler. But they'd fit the whole one end of the stove.
>
> **Leona:** And then they'd just fill things and pass it around. But that's the way we used to have our dances and every weekend we'd have a dance, Friday night.[326]

With both William and Avelina busy working, my father was not the only person who spent a lot of time with his grandparents. Both Leona and Cecil had many memories of them.

> **Cecil:** Oh they were beautiful people. Leona has a different version.
>
> **Leona:** Yeah grandma, she was a miserable thing. And yet she was, I hate to say it, I'm not going to lie.
>
> **Cecil:** But yet, I got it different, I can say that they were such beautiful people. But I think because I come from a broken home, maybe they were extra nice.
>
> **Leona:...** grandpa was nice, I liked grandpa.
>
> **Cecil:** You know that'a half a mile from up that way, and we had a road [upon which] to turn and come our way. And as soon as the little buggy and the little white horse in the front, with the little buggy with the top on it we'd see it turn our way. It was great grandma and grandpa, coming to visit. And he always had a black suit on and a chain across with his watch and a funny little top hat.
>
> **Leona:** And grandma dressed exactly the way she was right there (points to a photo), all buttoned up to the neck, long sleeves...[327]

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[326] Leona Rollison and Cecil Gibson, interview.
[327] Leona Rollison and Cecil Gibson, interview.

Even if they were sometimes strict, Jean-Baptiste and Veronique took care of their family, they passed those values on to their children, and William and Avelina did the same. My father said the racism, which he remembered as rare in his experience, was something his parents always told him not to worry about. Their main concern was supporting their children, and helping them succeed. Some of their sons went off to war, while others moved great distances for work.

Merelda: So how did things change then when you were growing up in terms of how people either worked together or didn't?

Ron: Well a lot of the people there, in Meadow Lake worked as a unit. There was really never anything said. If there was any under current – feelings of racism – it was kinda kept undercover. Nobody really talked about it in the open – it may have been around. And I probably felt a few instances of what was going on myself – but my Dad used to say as long as you keep your reputation clean you don't have to worry about somebody else's let him worry about it. And so we went in that route, and well, I was more in business with myself than I was working for people. But I worked for people there in Meadow Lake and I got along well with them – farmers and business people the plumbers and the electrical people. I worked in there in conjunction with their children and we never had a problem. You had to prove that you could get up in the morning and go to work at eight o'clock with them and stay there until five and go home. And once you built a reputation for yourself you had no problem working. We really never talked about anything. You hear about racism or whatever. Until very recently. More in your period of time. My period of time you grew up and we were all too busy working to really sit down and start calling each other names. But, it is like that now. And I really feel sorry for some of the people who don't understand who they are and what they are.

Merelda: Leona said some of the teachers, and Cecil said the same thing – that some of the teachers were terrible and they fought with the kids.

Ron: Oh yes. Yeah you get [that] – those teachers eventually moved away. Because they couldn't get along within the framework of the community per say. And, a lot of the people, I know myself, even after I was married they tended to want to look at me because I was handicapped for one thing, and I've been handicapped since birth. And they felt that I was an Indian. So I really go along and I still use that term and I go along with that and I talk Cree. And a lot of people say – huh – how did you learn to talk Cree. And I say I learned when I was about two feet high. But, I found it was to my advantage. And my grandfathers all said this is what you got to learn because it was – if you don't you're going to

be set back too far in the world. Because we're all here and this what we're talking so learn it and get on. And so we did. So I think we just became a people – not really what we were or who were we born to – but it was just kind of swept under the rug for most of the people who were around Meadow Lake. The odd one I had one – I had trouble with them too when I was in school. And I quit school in grade nine on account of one teacher. But I got along with the principal and all the rest of the teachers but I couldn't get along with this one teacher so I quit and became a truck driver. And eventually over time I started in the taxi business. So I did that for a number of years and then I left and joined the government.

Merelda: Why do you think most of your brothers and sisters left?

Ron: They left because good jobs. And during the war – my brothers – there was three brothers that went. Let's see there was John, Joe and Lawrence, they joined the second world war. Because there was no jobs to be had. And they needed to make money to eat so they went to war. And my brother Joe said I joined because – and he was the youngest of the group – said I joined because I simply felt that I would rather fight abroad than fight at home. And Lawrence and Johnny done the same. Now the other two Billy and Robert and Leona joined later – after them. But they had already gone through the Korean campaign.[328]

Under the protection of their families, most of the children believed that anything was possible - any job was within reach and nothing was beyond their abilities. Their journeys, whether far away or close to home, saw almost all of them marry outside of the Métis culture. That was the case for both Leona and my father. However, Cecil married another Métis from northern Saskatchewan. Not long after she was married, Leona moved to Prince George. She still identifies herself as Cree, but none of her children speak the language or have any ties left to the old family culture.[329] In Cecil's case, her children still know parts of the history, and some have even become involved in local Métis politics.[330]

My father met my mother in 1959, and they were married in the February, 1961. Neither of them talks about this much at all - mostly because they separated in 1978, shortly after the death of my grandmother Avelina, when my father left his first family to start new one in Regina. Back in 1961, though, my mother and father were in love. My mother's family were

[328] Ron Fiddler, interview.
[329] Leona Rollison and Cecil Gibson, interview.
[330] Leona Rollison and Cecil Gibson, interview.

homesteaders, who had a farm near the village of Makwa, about a thirty minutes drive from Meadow Lake.

Merelda: Okay let's start out with you telling me a little bit about your parents.

Charlotte: My dad was Louis Taillifer. He came from Savoy, France. He was born in Savoy, France. And he came to St. Boniface, Manitoba, when I think he was about five years old. And that's where he lived from what I understand about twenty-one. And I guess he was in different places, Gravelbourg and some other places. And then he came to Makwa where he farmed – him and his brother had a farm. They each had a farm. And later my father bought my uncle's farm. And that's where he lived until his old age, got off the farm and moved to Meadow Lake here. And he lived here until he was about 81 when he passed away.

Merelda: What about Grandma?

Charlotte: My Mother was Lillian Wagner – she was from Germany some place but I'm not sure where. And she came as a little girl – I think she was ten years old when she came to Canada with her mother. Her father had died in Germany. Her and her mother and one brother came to Canada. And she was in Winnipeg when they first moved here. And then she came to Biggar, Saskatchewan. And that's where she was married the first time and she had four girls and a boy. And then she came out towards Makwa and somehow she met my Dad. And she went and just like – keep house – and they eventually had me before married.

Merelda: So her first husband died?

Charlotte: Yes. And then after her first husband died. I was already born. She married my dad. I think I was maybe about four years old. And then later she had my brother. Like they stayed at the farm. ...

Merelda: When did you meet Dad?

Charlotte: I come to work here in Meadow Lake and this is where I met him. Because I became friends with his niece – Verna Flammond – at that time – Verna Tourand after. And that's where I met your dad. Cause that was his niece – your Aunty Agnes' daughter. You knew her. Who's now dead. We started going around together and we got married afterwards.[331]

My sister was their first child, growing up in the sixties, when both my grandmother and grandfather were still alive, and much of the family still lived in Meadow Lake.

[331] Charlotte Fiddler, interview.

Merelda: And so, I guess how did grandma and grandpa react when you married mom?

Ron: They were really loved your mom. They really went out of their way for her because – uh – they told her dad exactly who we were and what we were. And that they were quite happy to accept her and Joyce into the family and they did. All my brothers just loved Joyce to pieces because she was a blonde - the only blonde around. And so she just simply fit into the group and nothing was ever said – she was a Fiddler as far as anyone was concerned. And she's never been treated otherwise that I know of.

My father was one of the only children, aside from sisters Agnes and Elizabeth, who still lived in Meadow Lake. And for a couple years when I was small, our family moved around northern Saskatchewan and down to Regina. However, my father was the one who was responsible for my grandparents land, the acre on the edge of Meadow Lake at that time. When my sister Joyce was small, though, our family lived in Meadow Lake, and she spent most of her free time with my dad's family. My mother's family lived in Makwa, so it was difficult to see them every day. And after my mother's father died, my grandmother moved to Kindersley to live near my uncle. My sister has hours of stories about my grandparents:

Joyce: Yeah – I was spoiled. And um, every year grandma used to make me a new pair of mukluks – every year and moccasins. Every year I always had a new pair of moccasins and a new pair of mukluks – and my mukluks always had rabbit fur on them. That was – that was just something that I got every year. It was always. And food – grandma always used to make bannock. And the white people make bannock too. Just – I don't know. Just the way she made it it was you know. She'd make rahbahboo – her favourite was making it with hamburger and potatoes… and she'd thicken it up. That was her favourite way of conning me into doing something for her. She'd phone me up and she'd always…. Mom would answer the phone and she'd ask "Is *Wâpos* home?" Yeah – so I'd get on the phone. "Hi, my *Wâpos*," she'd say. "What you doing?" Oh no nothing. "Grandma needs your help." "Okay, what you want Grandma?" or sometimes I'd try to make an excuse you know. "Oh I'm busy Grandma." "But I made fresh bannock and rahbahboo and I got fresh pie." "Oh okay what do you need?" That was her favourite way of conning me in. She always had her simple little ways you know.

Merelda: What would she want you to do?

Joyce: Oh I don't know. Sometimes she'd have her garden. She'd want me to come over and she'd need something from there. Or, just simple little things like. Help her bring in some wood or I don't know. Something in her China cabinet – she'd want her stuff cleaned in her china cabinet. So she'd get me to come over and do that cause I used to take them all out – wipe them down real good and put them back and all that. Just simple little things that she wanted done.

Merelda: So, why always rabbit fur then?

Joyce: I don't know. It was just something about rabbit fur. I like rabbit fur – so she always made sure that she had rabbit fur. I don't know. It was just – I guess maybe it was because. Uh – them calling me *Wâpos* all the time. I figured well if I'm a *Wâpos* then I have to have rabbit fur on my mukluks – I don't know. Rabbit fur I like rabbit fur – I didn't like the other furs. I just like rabbit fur – its soft and you know. So it was always rabbit fur.

Merelda: So why did they call you *Wâpos*?

Joyce: Oh boy. Um. Because I was – When I was younger I was really, really small and my hair was real, real a real light blonde – almost like a whitey blonde. And I was always – running and jumping around. I was on the move constantly and that I was always running and jumping and that... Grandma said I was just like a rabbit – and that.[332]

Much like the Leona and Cecil, my sister remembers going to school in Meadow Lake, with teachers who did not like Indians or half-breeds. She also remembers that in school everyone tried to play nice together, but after school the white kids went their way and Indian kids went the other way.[333]

Merelda: When you knew you were different.

Joyce: Oh shoot. When I went to school or right away. You have a last name like Fiddler and you automatically – hey, you're not white you're Indian you know. It's like – well yeah when I first started going to school and that's when I wasn't allowed to speak languages that I could speak. Like when I was small I used to be able to speak Cree. I spoke cree. It was as simple as that – grandma and grandpa were talking that – you talked it too. And same thing with French.

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[332] Joyce Fiddler, interviewed by author, digital audio recording, Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, 19 April 2007. Rahbahboo is the closest I can find to the spelling of this soup... it is a word that I have never been able to find, and I do not know if the family made it up or if it is a combination of several languages. It is like the word teetah. Another word with mysterious origins, that my family uses all the time and knows the meaning of (my mom says it means little one) but they do not know how it is spelled or where it comes from.

[333] Joyce Fiddler, interview.

> You talked that too. And then when it comes time you're getting close to the age to start going to school – well its no more Cree, no more French – its English. And like – it's hard because – to me it was – it was like a foreign language for me. It's like huh – I don't wanna do this. Like I'm already talking – but no it got to the point where grandma and grandpa wouldn't speak Cree to me – no French was spoken to me – it was always English. And when I did go to school at first – I'd talk Cree or French – I used to get heck at school. Because I wasn't supposed to talk like that. Especially the Cree, you talk Cree at school and you were up the creek. Because they didn't want that talk at school – you talked English at school.
>
> **Merelda:** Did mom or dad – or grandma or grandpa – did anyone tell you why?
>
> **Joyce:** Uhm, I was told that you had to talk English when you went to school because that's what everybody was talking. And even the little Cree kids, the little Native kids – they were talking English too you know. Cause they knew that if they talked the language we all understood that we'd get in trouble for it so we all talked English.

Learning to speak only English was hard for Joyce, because both my mother's parents and my father's parents spoke English and French, and the Fiddlers also spoke Cree. Still, to help Joyce adjust, my parents and grandparents were willing to sacrifice language, because as my aunt Leona says, "that was the only thing they ever worried about was their family."[334] Their love of, and dedication to, family guided all of the decisions made by the Fiddler matriarchs and patriarchs in later years. The security they had found in mainstream Meadow Lake society helped them to find a place in a changing world and a community no longer exclusive to the Métis. They watched as their successes became their children's success. In contrast to the past, while it was very important, it did not outweigh the importance of their children's, and grandchildren's, future. As a result, they buried it, or simply let it go. On May 25th, 1976, my parents gave birth to me, Merelda Lynn Fiddler, named after Grandma Avelina's daughter, Marie Hilda, who died as a child. With most of my father's family gone or buried, the few who remained always made time for me. I remember eating rabbit stew at my Aunt Agnes' house, visiting with my auntie Verna (really my cousin), and trying to fit in – another fair-skinned child in a full colour spectrum of a family. We did not speak French or Cree, only English. I learned to jig, but the ones who beaded and tanned hides were no longer around to teach me. All of my cousins were either the age of 'aunties' or the second generation of cousins were all toddlers

[334] Leona Rollison and Cecil Gibson, interview.

when I was in my teens. Consequently, I grew up with friends, always looking toward university. The family never returned to politics, so the movements in the 1930s, then in the 1960s to the 1980s, were never part of my daily life. Still, it was the actions of new generations of freedom fighters that my cousin Rose found in her university days. So while I was growing up, hanging out and riding bike, studying for exams, she joined a new fight. Like my own father, Rose and Cecil's dad left their mother and his children for another woman. While Cecil remembered a loving and caring Fidler family, one where Grandpa William came by with peanut butter and other goods for the kids, Rose remembers Grandma Avelina always wanting to hide their 'Indian' side and really not include her in the family:

> Because my mom and dad were separated – so mainly we were just involved in trying to survive and later on because the Fiddler family didn't actually come in and take me in and really let me be part of the family. I just grew up on my own not really familiar with it and actually not really caring – it was like survival. And I wanted to learn how to survive – to spiritual guidance and direction – as opposed to a lot of people that I didn't have a lot of faith in being good strong role models. That I should follow. So it was on my own and probably on the Fiddler side – where they didn't really accept me probably because I was quite dark and probably because I ended up pulling back – because I felt rejected and not part of the family anymore.[335]

Taking a Different Path: The Fighting Fiddlers Return

Feeling rejected by her family, Rose took a different path. As a young woman she went to university and joined a burgeoning Métis civil rights movement, one that had begun with no involvement from the Fiddlers. As Weinstein explains, "With its transfer of public lands and natural resources to the Prairies in 1930, the federal government absolved itself of any further responsibility for the Métis. Any future interventions on their behalf would have to come from the provinces."[336] By 1941, the Métis had been wiped off the Census as a distinct people, and their history had largely been removed from the public consciousness. "The Métis of the southern prairies were living on road allowances, vacant lots and unused land, as appendages of

[335] Rose Richardson, interviewed by author, digital audio recording, Green Lake, Saskatchewan, 15 April 2007.
[336] Weinstein, *Quiet Revolution West,* 22.

white communities," or Indian reserves.[337] By the 1930s more and more uneducated Métis were filtering in to the towns and cities, being absorbed by the jails, landless and almost hopeless. It was during the dire conditions of the 1930s that the some Métis began to organize and begin to fight for help from the government and the rights of the people.[338] During the 1930s Métis associations began springing up all across the prairies, and Saskatchewan's own Saskatchewan Métis Society was founded in 1937. These groups continued to fight until the Second World War broke out, and then many of the men enlisted and went overseas to fight for Canada, a country that had stripped them of everything – but a land that had always been their home and worth protecting. Still men like Malcolm Norris, Jim Brady and others continued their pursuit for Métis rights when the war was over, and more and more Métis were finding ways to get an education.[339]

What is not at question in this discussion is whether or not the Métis had, or currently have, a cultural identity. Their traditions, stories, and lifestyles did continue. Some continued to hunt and gather, while others trid to make a living with wage labour jobs, or combine the two to make a life for their families. The jig, fiddle playing, and the sash are alive and well today. Hundreds, if not thousands, of Métis congregate at Batoche every year for 'Back to Batoche' days. However, over the next several decades, things were relatively quiet on the political rights front. Métis activists like Jim Brady, Malcolm Norris, and Pete Tomkins were working to organize the Métis in the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta throughout the 1930s and 1940s. However, the Métis were the cohesive nation-wide, or even province-wide, organizations we see today; they rarely tried to assert their rights, and they would never again force armed conflict with the Canadian government over lost land or education. However, in the 1960s and 1970s this would all change.

One of the anthropologists to document this rebirth of Métis ethnic renewal on the political stage is Joe Sawchuk. The political climate of the 1960s and 1970s opened a door to the Métis that had not been there since the resistance at Batoche. Sawchuk says, "The Métis, who appeared to fade from the scene after their last disastrous resistance in 1885, were able to come back in the mid-1960s when the political climate was particularly favourable to the kind of

[337] MacLean, *Home From Hill,* 245
[338] Weinstein, *Quiet Revolution West,* 24.
[339] Ibid., 25.

ethnic politicking the group could practice."[340] Suddenly, issues of minority rights began to take centre stage, and in Canada, politicians were forced to look at the mistreatment of their own minorities, particularly Indians, Inuit and Métis, in their own backyard. To document this process one need only look back to the formulation of the Manitoba Métis Federation in the 1970s. "In the late 1960s and early 1970s there has been a significant rise in ethnic consciousness amoung Canada's Native peoples due at least in part to the fluorescence of voluntary organizations aimed at the social and political advancement of the Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples."[341] Times had changed, and the Métis began to talk about their lack of access to education, proper housing, and employment. A few times in the late 1970s and early 1980s, roads were blocked in Green Lake, protests were held in Regina, and the Métis were looking for their lost land, their lost education, and their right to a better life in Canada. A resurgence of Métis identity swept across Canada. People were standing up and laying claim to their Métis heritage, coming out of a dark time when they had felt they might never be able to be public with their identity again.

At this time, Sawchuk notes that there was no distinct definition of whom was Métis. In fact, the Métis were united as a political entity with non-status Indians in Canada.[342] The two found a 'marriage of convenience', because this original political alliance was based on *not* being included under the *Indian Act*, and therefore not recognized as one of Canada's Aboriginal peoples. "It is primarily a negative identification; they are Métis because they are not somebody else."[343] In this way, the entire group was able to lobby government as a both Métis and non-status Indians to gain a wider population base and a stronger position based on numbers. "Ethnicity can be a response to many stimuli – psychological, cultural, historical, etc. – but for the most part, contemporary ethnic organization is political in nature; it is a way of actually achieving specific social and economic gains."[344] Most of these organizations were voluntary in

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[340] Joe Sawchuk, *The Métis of Manitoba: Reformulation of an Ethnic Identity* (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates Limited, 1978), 12.
[341] Ibid., ix.
[342] The term non-status is not a popular one as used either by Joe Sawchuk or myself. Non-status Indians are those who lost their rights through out-marriage from their communities (if they were women), or through processes of enfranchisement or assimilation. However, this is the term that is still used for those Indians who do not have claims to treaties and do not identify with a strictly Métis heritage. Therefore, this term will be used for the remainder of the article to refer to those peoples.
[343] Ibid., 10.
[344] Ibid., 68.

the beginning. Leaders, in order to advance their own positions, had to advance the position of their groups. They were looking for rights to health, education, and housing. They also wanted to settle historical grievances and work towards civil rights with the federal government, but the base of their organizing was to get funding to help solve some of the dire economic and social problems faced by their people. Métis and non-status Indians found that together they had a larger base of support to pressure the government. Together, many Métis and non-status Indians must have felt they could achieve these goals.

The Métis' cause was one of reasserting and reclaiming their identity, but it was also focused on trying to better the socio-economic conditions of the people they were elected to represent. There was no question of who was a Métis. Métis people needed only to self-identify and have acceptance from the community. There was no talk of historical family trees, connections to ancestors from Red River, or those who had received scrip. A half-breed was a halfbreed, Métis, mixed blood, whomever; they were all looking to better their economic conditions. "If one accepts the argument that ethnic, or ethno-Aboriginal, consciousness is a political assertion to defend special interests, economic, cultural, or otherwise, then if becomes entirely subject to the political climate of the period; it can spring up, recede, and reformulate itself in response to external political or economic pressures."[345] The Métis, exhausted from economic distress and political suppression, found a new political climate in the 1960s and 1970s and began to work to reassert their political identity in Canada, and to try to improve the economic, political, and social situations of their membership. Their focus was to pull themselves out of the road allowance ditch, and this united them with non-status Indians in a pan-Indian group.

In the 1970s, Sawchuk saw real hope for Métis political independence and self-determination. By the 1980s, Sawchuk saw a divide-and-conquer effort by the government to keep Métis and non-status Indians from becoming too powerful. In his most recent book, *The Dynamics of Native Politics,* Sawchuk is very hesitant to declare that Métis will achieve self-determination in the form of self-government.

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[345] Joe Sawchuk, *The Dynamics of Native Politics: The Alberta Métis Experience* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 1998), 27.

The Métis, like other Aboriginal groups across Canada, fell victim to the goals they were striving to achieve: "Only a few moderate leaders had any effective voice in the movement. Likely for this reason, the Federal Government promoted Native collaborator leaders and poured huge sums of money into the mainstream Aboriginal groups."[346] Howard Adams, academic and Métis activist, was not a subtle man. Adams had a vision, to pull out from under what he viewed as a state of internal colonialism subjugating Indian and Métis people in Canada. Adams, by self-admission, left the Métis political scene in Saskatchewan when the organizations decided to opt for a programs and services agenda over a civil rights agenda. Adams believed that by taking government funding, Aboriginal organizations lost their right to self-determination and became co-opted by the state. At the time, funding for education and housing, as well as job training and employment programs, were bigger concerns to the general Métis population – the bannock and butter issues had to be addressed first, civil rights were relegated to take a back seat. Métis were the poorest of the poor in Canada, some argued even worse than the Treaty Indians, who at least had a land base in the form of reserves.

Rose Fiddler, then Rose Bishop, by marriage, was influenced by a whole new generation of freedom fighters.

> **Merelda:** So when did you start meeting people like Howard Adams?
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> **Rose:** I guess I met Howard Adams – I heard of Howard Adams when he was in Berkeley, California. And at that time we started trying to get him to come back to Canada. So – he was in Berkeley – when I first became acquainted with Howard Adams – who he was and maybe how he could help.
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> **Merelda:** And I guess when did you start taking on more of a political bent?
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> **Rose:** I guess I – uh – I started that when I was going to school – when I'd start questioning what was happening. I'd see people coming in and doing various things and always having non-Indian people in charge of fundraising and getting things going and then they'd having meetings and they'd say well we're going to do fundraising – and this is how much we raised and then I'd say well – if you raised that much money than what did you do with it? Trying – at time – to be more transparent in terms of what we were doing and what we were trying to do. And at that time I was always told – well its none of your business. I was continually told that. But I'd always still question. And the very fact that I did

[346] Howard Adams, *Tortured People: The Politics of Colonization* (Penticton: Theytus Books Ltd., 1999), 45.

question started raising questions among people – in terms of yeah – exactly what are you doing? So then it wasn't only me at the end asking questions.

Merelda: What other kind of things as you got older – did you get involved in – I mean I'd heard of road blockades up here (in Green Lake)...

Rose: I never heard of any – starts laughing – Yeah we got involved in a lot of blockading roads – raising questions about the forest and the land that was set aside for the Métis – and there was always government people coming in and giving us back what was yours. You know and I started raising a lot of questions and we would have blockades and we did get CBC in a lot of times to come and do stories – and at times we'd get also upset with them because – mostly the people in power would get to talk the most. And our people being a little bit backwards would sometimes shy away – they were intimidated by microphones or anything like that. So a lot of times they didn't talk much and they became inwardly angry at the fact that there was no results – in terms of a lot of issues facing people. I remember – I think it was in the sixties there was still no electricity in Green Lake. But – the RCMP had electricity the teachers – the pigs had electricity. You know – and the people were still living in poverty and the pigs were living in high class, air conditioning – heating. And I talked to the people and I said listen – let's go take over that piggery and kick the pigs out – clean the place out and have families move in there – it's a big place. And people said sure – maybe we should do that but they wanted me to go out there – and I already had my own place. So it wouldn't look real, it wouldn't look honest. But I knew that people needed housing and I just wanted them to have something more. So it didn't work out. The piggery's still out there – now we all have electricity – including the pigs.

Merelda: I guess – when did you sort of see that there was so much to do in terms of the struggle for rights – for recognition. When did you see how big that was?

Rose: I guess I saw that at the very early age. Only I didn't know what to do about it. Like there was a lot of denial where people blamed themselves. I remember having a friend come over and she was I believe non-Native – or maybe metis – but more on the non-Native side – and she said "Do you believe that people eat fish heads – argh" So I tried to be like here and act shocked and then we get home and there's something boiling on the stove and it was fish heads so I covered it up and we didn't eat until later on after my friend went home. And it was because of how she said it – she made me be ashamed also. You know and the fact that people ate fish heads – and I didn't tell her that I didn't eat fish heads. I became ashamed myself – so I ended up hiding it not talking about it. I

> remember when we'd hide the bannock – we'd hide the bannock until the people left – then we'd bring out the bannock. So you just didn't eat. But if it was a Native person that came then you shared your meals with them, you know. So I understood and I started recognizing all this difference. And that there was a whole lot to be at a young age. And later on – probably in the seventies – then I – even the sixties – I started being more open about it and sort of challenging people. And at that time too we were being told it was none of our business – but we eventually made it out business – we'd get this guy – Craig Oliver – raise issues with him. Like when people first were talking about Easter or Christmas. And Craig Oliver had people hunting rabbits and instead of hunting turkey we'd have rabbits for Christmas dinner so – it just went on from there. Raising issues of concerns. And right now the poverty is still there – there's still a whole lot that has to be done. And but now – it's it's because we struggled so long and hard that now it's at a point where I get more emotional about it – because I know that we have a lot in this world and if it were distributed more evenly – people wouldn't have to suffer. So – there's still a lot that has to be done. But it was noticeable long ago.[347]

Rose was an activist after Adams' own heart. Adams, who advocated armed insurrection and said Métis leaders should never take a dime from the government, was later over-ruled and Métis organizations took the cash to try to educate their people and deal with the widespread poverty. In essence, the government was able to curb Métis activism with funding. Road blockades stopped, protests died down, and Métis began to focus on internal problems and how they could be corrected with government cooperation and dollars. Dyck argues, "In order for tutelage to achieve these ideological, political, and material purposes it must destroy Aboriginality and create dependence."[348]

> The influx of money and a renewed interest in the MAA [Métis Association of Alberta], CYC [Canadian Youth Council] or others, paved the way for those Métis politicians who were able to adapt to the new conditions and meet government representatives on their own terms. Those leaders who were suspicious of government funding, or who were considered to be backward or old-fashioned by the government agents, were shunted aside. New leaders who

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[347] Rose Richardson, interview.

[348] Noel Dyck, *What is the Indian 'Problem'? Tutelage and Resistance in Canadian Administration* (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1991) 30. While Noel Dyck's book deals primarily with First Nations leadership, it is very relevant to the current state of Métis political leadership. As Dyck notes, books have yet to be written about the coercive tutelage inflicted on Métis organizations. However, many parallels can be drawn from Dyck's work to path Métis political organizations are currently treading.

> saw funding as an opportunity for forging a new, more powerful political movement began to take a more active part in Métis politics.[349]

As both Noel Dyck and Joe Sawchuk point out, the way the Canadian government has dealt with assertive, and potentially disruptive, Indian organizations is to offer them funding for programs and services. Métis, status, and non-status Indians had no political or economic foundation to work from. Leaders with no resources, as Adrian Hope – former President of the Métis Association of Alberta – demonstrated, end up sleeping under bridges in order to attend important meetings and try to make inroads for their members. With funding, leaders become a slightly new creature. This money opens the door for governments to co-opt Native leaders. At the time, there were very few opportunities to make the kind of money Aboriginal leaders were suddenly making, thanks to government funding. Leaders had the added pressure of providing real improvements to the lives of their membership. Without an independent economic base, Native leaders are unable to achieve these goals unless the government is willing to kick in serious funding dollars. Also, leaders were, and still are today, expected to use the money to fund training, education, and housing programs for their members. Governments do not look favourably on dollars allocated to Native organizations being used to pressure the government for rights. Dyck, in speaking about First Nations leadership in Canada, says funding sets up an odd dynamic in First Nations political independence. To get the money, leaders need to mirror government officials as much as possible. They needed to meet government standards to get funding and create the image of the 'civilized' and politically savvy Native leader. However, government funding and recognition of Native political groups comes at a high price.

Today, political identity means something very different – and it is all thanks to the repatriation of Canada's constitution in 1982. Métis and non-status Indians had been pressing the Canadian government for rights for more than two decades when constitutional negotiations, which included Aboriginal groups, began. After the dissolution of the National Indian Council, First Nations broke away into the National Indian Brotherhood, while Métis and non-status Indians split off into the Native Council of Canada. In an unofficial report, written by Métis leader Harry Daniels and academic and lawyer Paul L.A.H. Chartrand, the Native Council of Canada, prior to these 'historic' negotiations was lead by non-status Indians. It appeared the

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[349] Ibid., 60.

Métis leaders, and the specific historic grievances they wanted to settle, would be cut out of negotiations altogether. So they split off into the Métis National Council, a group whose base of support is the three Prairie Provinces, but which today also includes Ontario, British Columbia, and the Northwest Territories. The new Métis National Council demanded to be at the constitutional discussion in 1981, and after considerable pressure, the Trudeau government at the time conceded. "With a clenched fist, he (Harry Daniels) told Jean Chrètien, then Minister of Justice negotiating the Aboriginal rights provisions in the Constitution of Canada, 'then I mobilize my people; that is the only thing we'll accept!'"[350] Harry Daniels wanted the Métis included in the 1982 constitution as a distinct Aboriginal group. Daniels demanded and won a prized position for the Métis in the 1982 constitution, but the price was the breakdown and dissolution of the Native Council of Canada. Sawchuk explains, "It now appears that this long-standing alliance is about to be broken and the Métis and non-status Indians will be forced to form two distinct political organizations."[351] Sawchuk did not know exactly how prophetic his words would be when he wrote his article on government influence and Native political alliances:

> Another possibility, however, is that the imposed identity may become accepted and institutionalized, and even vigorously defended by the people in question. To a certain extent, this has happened with the native people of Canada, who have long had definitions of "nativeness" imposed on them by the larger society, and who have often accepted these definitions as their own.[352]

After the inclusion of Métis in the constitution, Métis-specific organizations began to almost immediately deal with the problem. Being recognized as a distinct Aboriginal group, with Aboriginal rights under the constitution, was a huge step for the Métis. The sacrificial lamb however was the non-status Indians (whose position in Canada's political framework is still quite uncertain). Suddenly this group was no longer part of the Métis. For the previous two decades, Métis and non-status Indians had been working together for recognition. Now the two had splintered. Non-status Indians united to form the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, while the Métis proceeded under the Métis National Council. The Métis' political identity was now tied to

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[350] Harry Daniels and Paul L.A.H. Chartrand, *Unravelling the Riddles of Métis Definition*, unpublished paper. October, 2001.
[351] Joe Sawchuk, "The Métis, Non-Status Indians and the New Aboriginality: Government Influence on Native Political Alliances and Identity." *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 17:2 (1985), 137.
[352] Ibid., 135-136.

two things: the first was a legal definition as a distinct Aboriginal people under Canada's constitution, and the second was as a separate political organization under the Métis National Council. And so, the process of definition and redefinition began.

For women like Rose Richardson, who already knows who she is, the political movements were just part of a coming home that she could not find through family. It is through the sacrifices of people like Brady, Norris, Adams, and Rose that Métis like myself were able to find their way back to their identity, and a sense of pride in that identity, without having to face the same struggles. With some of the hardest work behind Métis people, my generation entered an age where racism still existed, but the barriers to education, health care, and a basic standard of living were much more achievable, without having to hide who we are. That is why I was one day able to find my way back to whom I really am.

Conclusion: Perseverance of a Métis Identity

Merelda: So they did talk about that time (1885)?

Leona: Yeah, but they really didn't talk about it a whole lot. They'd mention it and then we'd hear it from Mom and Dad.

Cecil: Because more or less they didn't want to tell the kids too much. You never even asked where a baby came from in them days. I remember when Leona was born. And you know to this day I wish grandma was alive, because I'd call her a liar. They lived next door to us about from her to the garage (points) maybe closer. And I hadn't been over there for quite awhile, the kids [her siblings and Grandma and Grandpas youngest children] were at our place. So mom dressed me up I could go. So I went up there and walked in the house and Grandpa come into the kitchen. Had the stove just so hot, he took my coat off and told me to warm up in front of the stove before I went to the bedroom. And I remember when I walked into that bedroom, and grandpa, he was a good man, all the walls were lined with sheets so no air could come in there. And the bedding on grandma's bed she always had feather ticks hey? And grandma had on a white nightgown, and she was laying in bed covered up to here (gestures to her neck) and I was walking towards her and all of a sudden I spotted a cradle with a baby in it. Here is was Leona. I said to grandma, I said, "Grandma are you sick?" She said, "Yes, grandma was chasing this rabbit cause it had a baby on its back. I tripped and fell and hurt my ankle." And you know I believed her well. (laughs) I'll never forget that. You know I used to believe her and then I'd go home and tell mom that grandma got hurt chasing this rabbit with a baby on its back..."[353]

Secrets, Half Truths, and Reclaiming a Métis Identity

There were many secrets in the Fiddler homes. Some were based on family roots, some on family secrets, while others were based on family indiscretions and painful pasts. I was born on May 25th, 1976, into the Fiddler family. My parents were Ron Fiddler and Charlotte Taillifer. I was their third child, including my older sister Joyce and a son who died shortly after he was born. My grandmother, Avelina Fiddler, died in 1978, shortly before my second birthday. I have no memories of her, but I do have stories from my parents.

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[353] Leona Rollison and Cecil Gibson, interviewed by author, digital audio recording, Cold Lake, Saskatchewan, 15 April 2007. In our family, there are many stories about animals bringing babies to our homes. No one talked about sexuality or about where babies really came from.

Merelda: Let's go back to when I first born. How was Grandma Fiddler with me when I was first born?

Charlotte: Oh, she was happy. That's my grandbaby. (laughs) Your grandpa would have been (pauses – remembering grandpa Fiddler passed away before I was born)... She used to sing to you in Cree. Every once in awhile, a little Cree. She used to call you her little white, Indian girl. And your aunty Vicky, she used to pat you on the back, sleepy aunty's girl. And Alfa, you were quite big. Agnes, I used to go over there, she used to call you Teeta.

Merelda: What was that?

Charlotte: I don't know, she used to call you Teeta all the time. She said your dad used to call his sister that all the time. Marie Hilda – so when he named you, he took letters from each name, mixed them together and got Merelda out of it.[354]

Shortly after my grandmother's death, my father left my mother for another woman. It would take about 13 years to get an official divorce, but from that point on I rarely saw my father. As a small child, I remember going to see my aunt Agnes, and my aunt-cousin Verna. Sometimes, when one of my dad's brothers would pass through town, they would stop by and visit my mother and me. All of my cousins and second cousins still call my mother Auntie, and they still go to visit her. Both my mother and father say, even though she was not Métis, she was completely accepted by the family. She is, of course, French, so she spoke two of the three languages. Her place in my father's family was never taken by my father's second wife, who was never accepted by most parts of the family. After Aunts Agnes and Verna passed away, we did not see a lot of my dad's family, unless we ran into them downtown. From the age of two until I was 18, I saw my father ten times. All of those visits, except for a four day visit to Regina when I was 15, occurred in Meadow Lake. I do not recall my father ever coming to town just to visit me. In fact, it is safe to say that the only visits he ever made were for funerals, and once he brought his son from his second marriage for a visit with us. All of the stories, all of the history was given to me by my aunt Agnes, Verna, my mother, and my sister.

My mother worked as a chamber maid at the Empire Hotel and Motel. We lived in a tiny house near downtown Meadow Lake. We had no car and barely enough money to make it every

[354] Charlotte Fiddler, interviewed by author, digital audio recording, Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, 20 April 2007. I've heard both Teeta and Deeda. No one seems to know what the word actually means, including my father. Some speculate it means little one... but it was used for me because it was also Marie Hilda's namesake.

month. My father maybe paid one or two child support payments to my mother in my entire life. I babysat until I was old enough to get a job after school. I had no cousins my age, and no siblings to play with either. I had a nephew who was three years younger, but he was often playing with his friends, while I hung out with my girlfriends. Since my mom and sister both worked full time, I spent a lot of time alone. At first when I was growing up, I did not understand that I was different from most of my friends. The first thing I noticed going to some of their houses, was that they had a father, and the second thing I noticed was that they had more money. That changed, when I was ten. That year I learned I was not just poor and had no father, but I was something much worse. I was part-Indian. Sleepovers were my favourite thing to do. It was a chance to get out of my house and watch a movie on a video player somewhere. Something we could not do at home, unless we rented one from the Red Rooster and carried it all the way home. That was a luxury we would get only a few times year. So that snowy February weekend, not long before my own tenth birthday, I was getting ready for a sleepover at friend's house. Every girl in my class was going. We talked about it during every lunch hour and recess, and I was so excited I could barely contain myself. Then on Friday after school, I was getting ready to run home and get my stuff together, when my friend came up to me and said, "You can't come." I was shocked, and asked, "Why?" And she replied, very matter of fact, "My father says Fiddler is an Indian name, and he doesn't want any Indians in his house." Then she said something that really confused me: "I tried to tell him that you look white, but he said that doesn't matter." At that, she turned and walked away. I walked home in tears that day, confused. When my mom came home, I told her what happened. At first she did not say anything, but then she said, "Those people don't matter Teeta, you have to ignore them and forget about it." Then she reminded me that I must not be mean to her, even though I was hurt – because, "That's not how we act." I never questioned my mother, so I did what she asked.

Not long after, I started to think that maybe it was not the part-Indianess of our family, but our poverty and me not having a father that was the problem. I started to believe that if my father came back, that things would get better. We would have more money, maybe a better house, a car and perhaps even a video player. Then maybe being part-Indian would not be a problem. So every night I would pray that my father would come back. Every Saturday night, at church, I would pray some more, because when you really want something you pray. I knew that God did not bring you video players and money, but I thought if I asked for my father back that

that would be a prayer God could answer. Much to my surprise, God did answer that prayer. One morning, when I was 13-years-old, I got up and walked in to the living room, and there was my father sitting on the couch with my mother. They said they were getting back together. I was ecstatic. It was proof God existed, and now things would change. In the end, it turned out to be the longest week of my teenage life. They fought, I stayed outside the house as much as possible, and by the following Sunday my father was gone.

That same summer, a small gang of half-breed and Indian girls in my junior high, formed a gang called the flower power. It seems ridiculous today, but back then it was scary. They focused their energies on following white girls home from school and trying to beat them up. One day, on my way home, they walked past me. I never worried they would try to beat me up, but one of them said something that really threw me. "Stop being so white, or we'll have to kick your ass too." I was clueless, so I responded, "What do you mean?" They laughed, "Always getting the best grades, going in the school plays. You're a suck up, too white to be Indian. And then you walk home all stuck up!" That was my only encounter with the group. Within two weeks, none of those girls went to school anymore. This time, I went to see my sister. I thought she could clarify things. When I told her what they said, she smiled, never one to sugar coat things for anyone. "You know Merelda, sometimes you do act like you're too good for your own family. Some of our cousins think you're stuck up and think you're better than them." Too good for the Indians and not good enough for the white people, I had no idea who I was or where I should be or what I should do. So, I did what I did best - I got good grades and left for university. For five long years, I focused and worked and looked ahead, because I was tired of trying to fit in where the rules changed daily and the people accepted or rejected you without ever explaining why, and where your successes were seen as their failures. Soon, I found two lifelong best friends, Angela LaBrash and Jenny Dennis, people who understood me as I understood them, and they helped me belong and gave me refuge. They had no expectations, other than being good friends; they never judged me and they supported my dreams of going to university and becoming a journalist. It was the first time I felt relief in so long I could not remember.

A few years ago, I picked up a book called *Lake of the Prairies* by Warren Cariou. It is a beautiful book about the town of Meadow Lake, his father, and his family's life. Within it,

Cariou reveals he had a Métis grandmother. Perhaps it was only a revelation to me. I had never known any Indian connections in the Cariou family; I had known them only as affluent and well-respected. It turns out, I knew even less about them than I thought. Cariou wrote,

> These days I am more concerned than ever about belonging, because I know how fragile it is. There is a crisis of belonging in the world... But I don't think we need to stay in one place all our lives in order to reconnect with our environments. We need instead to re-examine our stories, to discover a more fluid kind of belonging, one that melds memory and voice and sensation into the complex geometry of our lives.[355]

These words stopped me cold, because I entirely understood what Cariou was describing, and much like he does, I am examining and telling my story to reconnect with my sense of belonging. Still, Cariou remembers some of the same Meadow Lake I grew up in, a town of secrets and stories, town that never really pulled back the veil and revealed the naked truth.[356] In that climate, it was easy to grow up not really understanding one's own history. Cariou admits he had no idea, until much later, that the town had been a home to many First Nations people whose families had lived in the area since time immemorial, that in the late nineteenth century Cyprien Morin had started a Métis settlement there, or that the original non-Aboriginal settlers had tried to have the Flying Dust First Nation (which borders the town) relocated.[357] Cariou's mother was a nurse and his father was a lawyer, already a much different station in life than my parents. They were also still together. I did not know Cariou growing up, I remember his sister a little, but even she graduated at least a year or two before I reached high school. I do remember his father though. Every Saturday or Sunday morning, Mr. Cariou would come in to the Red Rooster where I worked to play the lottery, from Lotto 6-49, to Sports Select or Pick three. He was a very kind man. Working in a convenience store teaches you a great deal about how some people treat others they believe to be beneath them, just as working as a waitress or gas station attendant will prove. My mother always said Mr. Cariou was a hard-working, intelligent, nice man. I never heard anyone say anything else. While I did not know him at all, I do remember he came in every weekend, with the same pleasant greeting, was always patient if it was busy, always had a kind word and always treated me with respect. Even though Mr. Cariou

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[355] Warren Cariou, *Lake of the Prairies: A Story of Belonging* (Canada: Doubleday Canada, 2002), 11.
[356] Ibid., 40.
[357] Ibid., 43-44.

provided legal services to local First Nations, his son held a secret fear. "I never mentioned it to anyone, even though I felt it in my stomach every time I stepped outside the boundary of our yard. I was afraid of Native people. Not so much the women, and certainly not the girls, but the men and especially the boys."[358] It is many years before Cariou says he realizes that the real reason so many Indians kept to themselves is that they had been secluded on their reserves, forced in to residential schools, and, for years, the townspeople had feared or loathed them and kept them separate.[359]

> The Fiddler boys frightened me the most. They travelled together in a little gang, and I often saw them lurking near the T.C. Confectionery or hanging out in the labyrinthine hallways of the hockey rink. Once, when I was in grade one or two, they chased me halfway across town, from the old hospital down to the low-rental housing units and out toward the stampede grounds. They had managed to position themselves between me and home, so there was nothing for me to do but run farther and farther into dangerous territory... I kept running. I heard the Fiddler boys laughing as they followed, and sometimes shouting phrases in Cree."[360]

Eventually, however, the Fiddler boys got tired of chasing Cariou, and left him alone. Now, he sees how his station in life, the fact that people expected him to better himself, an underlying racism, was what really separated people like the Carious from people like the Fiddlers.[361] In the early 1990s, Cariou's grandmother, Marie-Clemence, passes away, and her death brings about some great revelations, stories surface about a woman who was Métis – revealing a hidden history, and around the same time his father also reaffirms his identity.[362] It is interesting to see Cariou realize his identity in this book; to see another mixed blood person try to understand the divisions and they affected our lives. Cariou compares his life and success with the devastation in Clayton Matchee's life. Both are from Meadow Lake, and they went to school together. In 1993, pictures surfaced of a Canadian soldier torturing a Somalia child. The pictures were of Clayton Matchee, and later in army custody, Matchee hung himself in a cell. He did not die, but was so badly injured he lives at home with his parents and is unable to care for himself. These events seem to shock Cariou into a profound revelation, "Clayton and I were placed on different

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[358] Ibid., 102.
[359] Ibid., 103.
[360] Ibid., 109.
[361] Ibid.
[362] Ibid., 219.

sides of the division. But the more I have learned about us, the more I see that the very idea of this division is a falsehood. I have gleaned all the benefits, while Clayton and many others have suffered devastating discrimination."[363] He later takes this a step further, to understand why there were so many secrets in his own family: "I can see why people would want to pass how much of what I have now – education, health, a decent self-image, a job – can be attributed to my grandmother's decision to live as a French woman instead of a Métis?"[364] I would say a great deal more than Cariou may ever appreciate.

I could not blend in to Meadow Lake. My last name was Fiddler; and as Cariou proved, that name meant Indian, the scary "other." I was not even sure I wanted to blend. I knew I was tired of fighting both sides from the middle. So, when I graduated from high school, I packed up my belongings and headed for the University of Regina and a new future as a journalist. It was the first time I had ever gone anywhere where I knew almost no one. My father was still living in the city, but we did not have much of a relationship. Soon, I met new friends, found new interests, and felt freer than I ever had. I loved it; it was truly intoxicating. I never talked about home, or about who I was. I talked about music, literature, history, and politics. I forgot about all the confusion, feeling like I was never good enough or too good all at once. Within three years though, I found myself facing the same old racism I had fled in Meadow Lake. I had not entirely, never ever, talked about my background. In fact, some family friends, from a long time ago, now lived in Regina. Soon, my Métis background was out. At first, I was worried, but for a time everyone seemed fine with it, and no one made any bad jokes or stopped associating with me. Then, shortly after I was accepted to the School of Journalism and I began classes, that old familiar racism came rushing back. One of the other journalism students came up to me and said, "So how did you get in?" I was not sure what she meant, so I just responded, "like you I applied, wrote the tests, did the interview, and was accepted." Her response was like a slap in the face, "Oh, I thought you were one of the Indian students, because the school holds two seats every year, for SIFC's Indian students." [365] I could not say anything. I just stood there, wondering how it could be that that would be the only way an Indian could get ahead – it was if

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[363] Ibid., 226.
[364] Ibid.
[365] SIFC, Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. At one point the school, under director Sat Kumar, did hold two seats for students from SIFC's Indian Communications Arts Program. However, that policy was not in place when I attended the school, and Sat Kumar was not the director at that which might account for the change in policy.

it was just handed over without any work. I have met several First Nations and Métis graduates from the School of Journalism, and none were aware of this policy – even though it was apparently in place under one of the directors. That said, students were not admitted simply because they were Aboriginal, they still had to have the same qualifications as any other student.

Something changed that day. I looked back and realized that I had done something truly terrible. I had become what so many had accused me of being: a person who was too good for her family and her culture. I was ashamed. Still, I did not know how to fix it; I was alone in Regina. I did not have my family or friends from back home, no one to guide me. That is when Shannon Avison found me, thanks to my one of journalism school professors, Jill Spelliscy. Shannon Avison runs a two-year certificate program at the First Nations University of Canada called Indian Communication Arts, INCA for short. In it, First Nations and Métis students participate in a summer Journalism institute, as well as take classes in public relations. The summer I graduated from university, Shannon invited me to teach at the institute. I have been teaching there every summer since. What Shannon gave me was not just a way to make extra money or teach what I love; she reconnected me with an urban Aboriginal community who helped me find the strength to go back home. In 2002, I released a nationally broadcast documentary called "Fiddler's Map: A Journey to Métis." It was a painful process. I was not only telling the story of the Métis, but also my own family; and in it, I had to say publicly that my father had abandoned us and I had abandoned my culture in turn. It also shocked some of the family, those who did not want to talk about our identity, and those who thought I had never cared to be who I was.

> **Merelda:** Do you think people were surprised when I started doing this stuff (researching our family history)?
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> **Joyce:** Oh definitely.
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> **Merelda:** Who do you think was the most surprised?
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> **Joyce:** Mom. Mom probably was. I'd say Dad too. Because I don't really think he expected you to do anything like that. Me. I wasn't surprised. Because I knew sooner or later you were going to do what you did – because you were curious – very curious. Because I remember even before when you were younger you used to ask me questions. And all that. And I knew sooner or later you were going to do what you did I wasn't the least bit surprised.

Merelda: What about other members of dad's family – because you grew up with them – but I didn't see them at all. Except for Agnes and Verna.

Joyce: Yeah they were probably damn surprised when you did. Because they probably figured that you'd just grow up trying to just – going on into the future – doing – how I'm going to phrase this – Okay you went to University and all this… You finished your high school, you graduated – you went on to university – they probably figured that you'd just go in to university and get a degree in something that would be different than journalism. I don't know what they'd expect you to be taking – just to get a degree. And then all of a sudden you're doing the journalism thing and all of sudden you're checking back into the family and things like that. Nobody expected that from you. I think if it came right down to it – I think it would have been more expected of me than you. Because I was always fighting to prove who I was and what I was. And not letting anybody say anything. But yeah – they were definitely surprised.

Merelda: When the documentary came out – did you run into people who saw it who were really surprised I'd done that.

Joyce: Yeah – definitely.

Merelda: Do you remember anyone who reacted?

Joyce: Oh yeah – it's like wow. They'd say Fiddler's Map – we seen you on TV. Well how did this come about? Who did this? Well, my sister did that. That's your sister? Well yeah – a lot of people didn't realize that you were my sister. They thought you were my daughter. A lot of people thought you were my daughter and not my sister. And that. And then a lot of them from Waterhen – would question. Well I seen you and your daughter on TV. Huh? That's not my daughter that's my sister. And they all realized who you were after that. It was like everybody was shocked. She's really checking into the background. Well – duh. Yeah.

Merelda: You kinda said it – but I think a lot of people thought I just wanted to be white and that was it.

Joyce: Yeah.

Merelda: Cause I liked school and was bookish.

Joyce: And me well hell no not me. I was different than you...

> **Merelda:** Well how much do you think – because you were always talking about it and I remember you talking about it. So how much do you think of my curiosity came from growing up with you all the time?
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> **Joyce:** I don't know. Maybe it did. Maybe you were just simply curious.[366]

The truth is I was not just curious. I had run into a documentary buyer, the executive who bought "Fiddler's Map," who said quite convincingly that she thought all Métis people had died after the 1885 Resistance. It was shocking, and I knew she could not be the only person in Canada who did not know that Métis people are still a vibrant part of this country. We may not all have our languages, or some of the skills like beadwork, but we are here. So instead of finding someone else to tell our story through, I decided I needed to tell it through myself. I remember interviewing family members, and being terrified. One of them was Rose Richardson, my cousin. Like me, she had felt rejected by the Fiddler family. Like me, her father had left his first family to start a second. One sunny fall afternoon, I recorded an interview for my documentary with Rose. She was the one who fought for Métis rights, speaks all of languages, picks medicines and works in both the politics and through education to help both First Nations and Métis people. As I sat there, trying not to fidget, I finally summoned the courage to ask:

> **Merelda:** I guess what I'm wondering is can one ever reclaim their identity?
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> **Rose:** You can reclaim your identity any time you want. Some people never do, and some people like you want to claim it. Some people never go beyond the stereotypes that they hear and try to hide it, and I think "How sad." I know for a long time some of my ancestors kept telling me "You're French, you're French, you're not…." I mean I lost more of the French language than anything else. But I was not French. I didn't even feel French. I just spoke the language. And that's sad because some people go through their whole lives – can you imagine going through your whole life trying to prove you're somebody that you really aren't. I mean there's too many important things in life to waste your time trying to prove anything to anybody. And if you become proud of who you are, you can move forward and you can move on with pride.[367]

I no longer worry that I am not Indian enough, not white enough, dark enough, light enough; I have learned to realize that I am exactly who I was raised to be. I am the result of seven generations of hard-working Métis people, who loved their family so much they were willing to sacrifice everything and anything to help them succeed. We may have stopped

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[366] Joyce Fiddler, interviewed by author, digital audio recording, Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, 19 April 2007.
[367] Merelda Fiddler and Robert McTavish, dirs., *Fiddler's Map: Journey to Métis.* Canada, 2003.

fighting for a period of time, but we have continued to live and share and love and help future generations succeed. My work on this thesis has helped me rebuild a relationship with my father, has helped me see how my family's struggles could have forced them underground, and how the struggles of many Métis in the last 50 years have opened the door for myself, and writers like Warren Cariou, to talk about identity and belonging. My grandparents, Avelina and William, worked their whole lives to ensure their children's success. More than that, they were pillars in their community, they were loved and respected, and their sacrifices deserve to be remembered and honoured. Racism has not changed much since the beginnings of the Métis people, but there is no longer a fear of having your home burned to the ground for fighting for your rights. I am product of a different kind of privilege, similar to the one Cariou discusses. I am product of the privilege where today you are able to declare your identity with fear of retribution, and to join others to fight injustice when it does threaten our rights. The Métis never disappeared; the government and others just ignored us, because we were poor and no one expected that we would one day rise again, proud of who we are. Some began that ascension earlier than others. In my family, there were greater secrets, and bigger problems like family breakdown, that kept the history unspoken and the identity unrealized. Today, I do not feel that I need to hide.

Five years ago, on a hot summer night, I was listening to a band play when my future husband walked up and introduced himself. After talking for 30 minutes, he asked, "What are you?" I was a little taken aback by the question and somewhat confused when I responded, "What do you mean?" He said, "I mean what's your ethnic background?" I said, without hesitating, "I'm Métis." I was waiting for some snide comment when he simply said, "That's what I thought." He is as proud of my history as I am. Much like my mother, he is being absorbed into our Métis family, and everybody has a good laugh at the "white boy." Our children will be luckier than even I was. It has taken a lot of work to find all of this history, to trace the lines, and follow and rebuild the stories. My uncle Lawrence has so much faith in me that he has given me all of his research to add to my own and continue the work of rebuilding our history. My children will get to be Métis from the beginning, because I hold the stories, the history, and with luck (and more free time now) I will hopefully regain the languages, and then pass it all on to them, the next generation.

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LAC, RG15 , Interior , Series D-II-8-a, "Manitoba Act Affidavits Document Series," Volume 1321, Reel C-14928. Scrip affidavits for Veronique Fiddler (nee Gervais) and Guilliame Gervais, Catherine Gervais and Cleophas Gervais. (images available at: http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=catherine+gervais&l=20&s9=RG15&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=FINDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FIND&p=1&u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.collectionscanada.gc.ca%2Farchivianet%2F02010507_e.html&r=0&f=S)

LAC, RG15 , Interior , Series D-II-8-a, Manitoba Act Affidavits Document Series," Volume 1321 , Reel C-14928. Scrip affidavit for Catherine Gervais. (images available online at: http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=catherine+gervais&l=20&s9=RG15&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=FINDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FIND&p=1&u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.collectionscanada.gc.ca%2Farchivianet%2F02010507_e.html&r=0&f=S)

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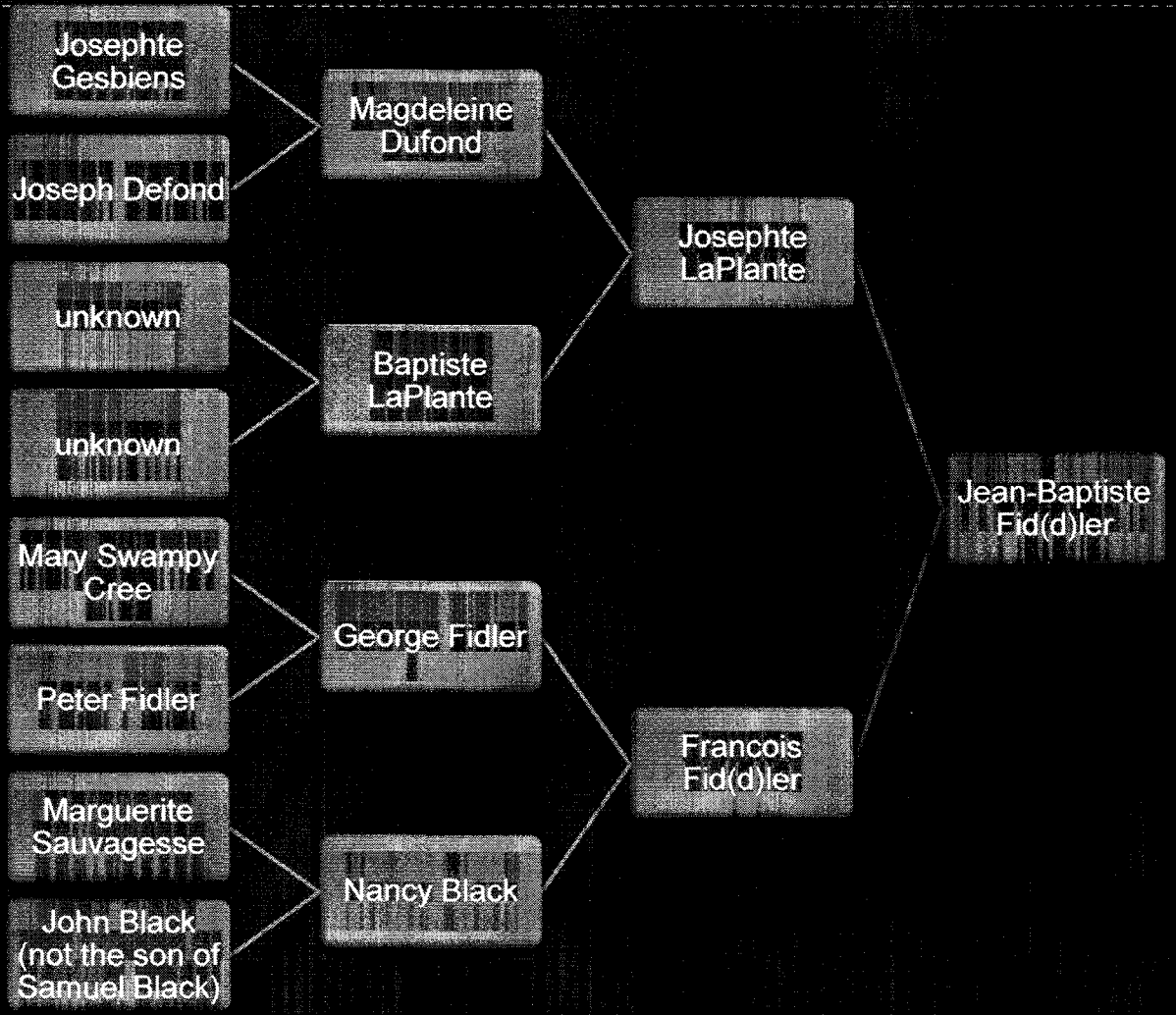
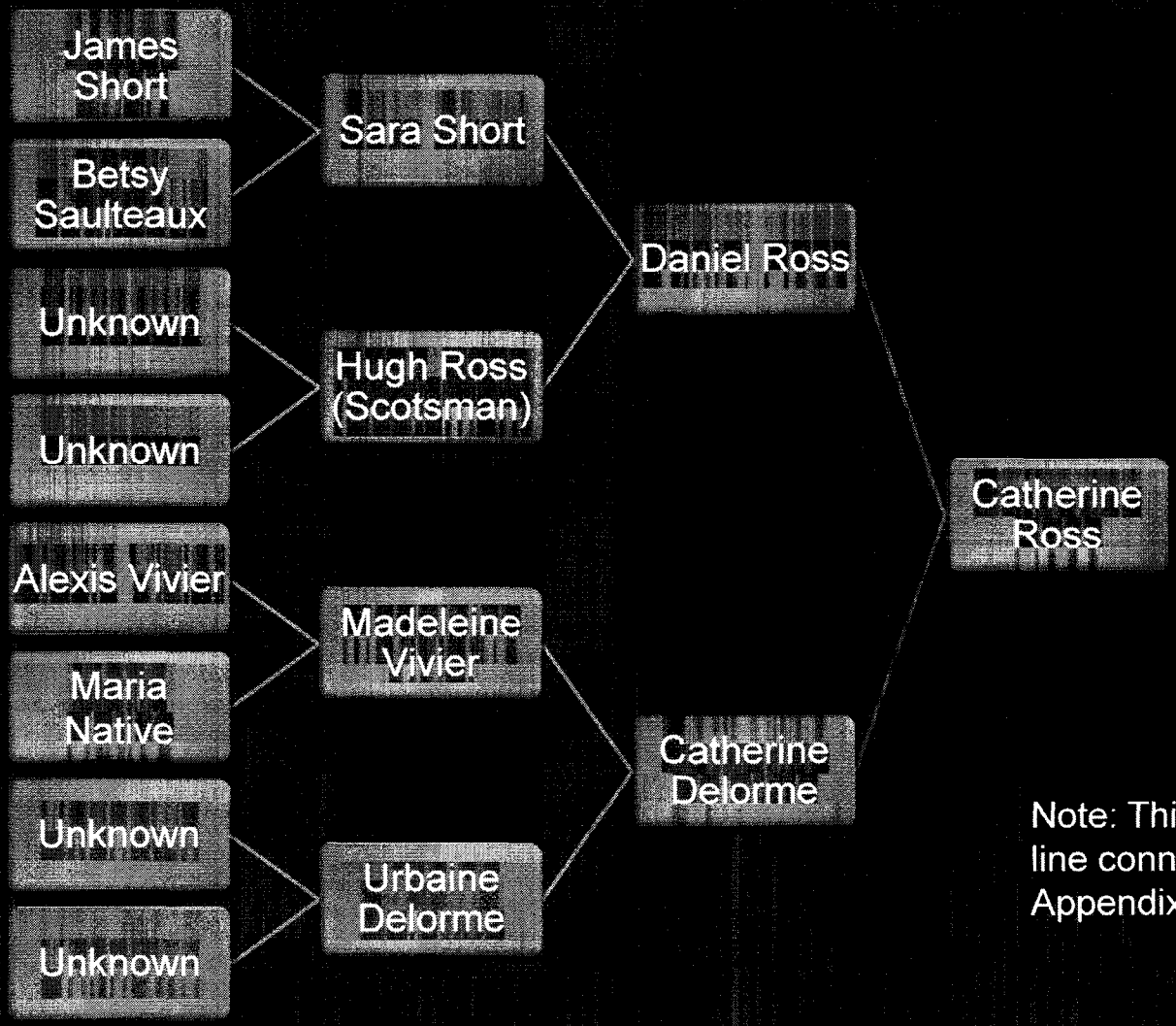
Appendix A: a-1
Fiddler Family line to Jean-Baptiste Fiddler

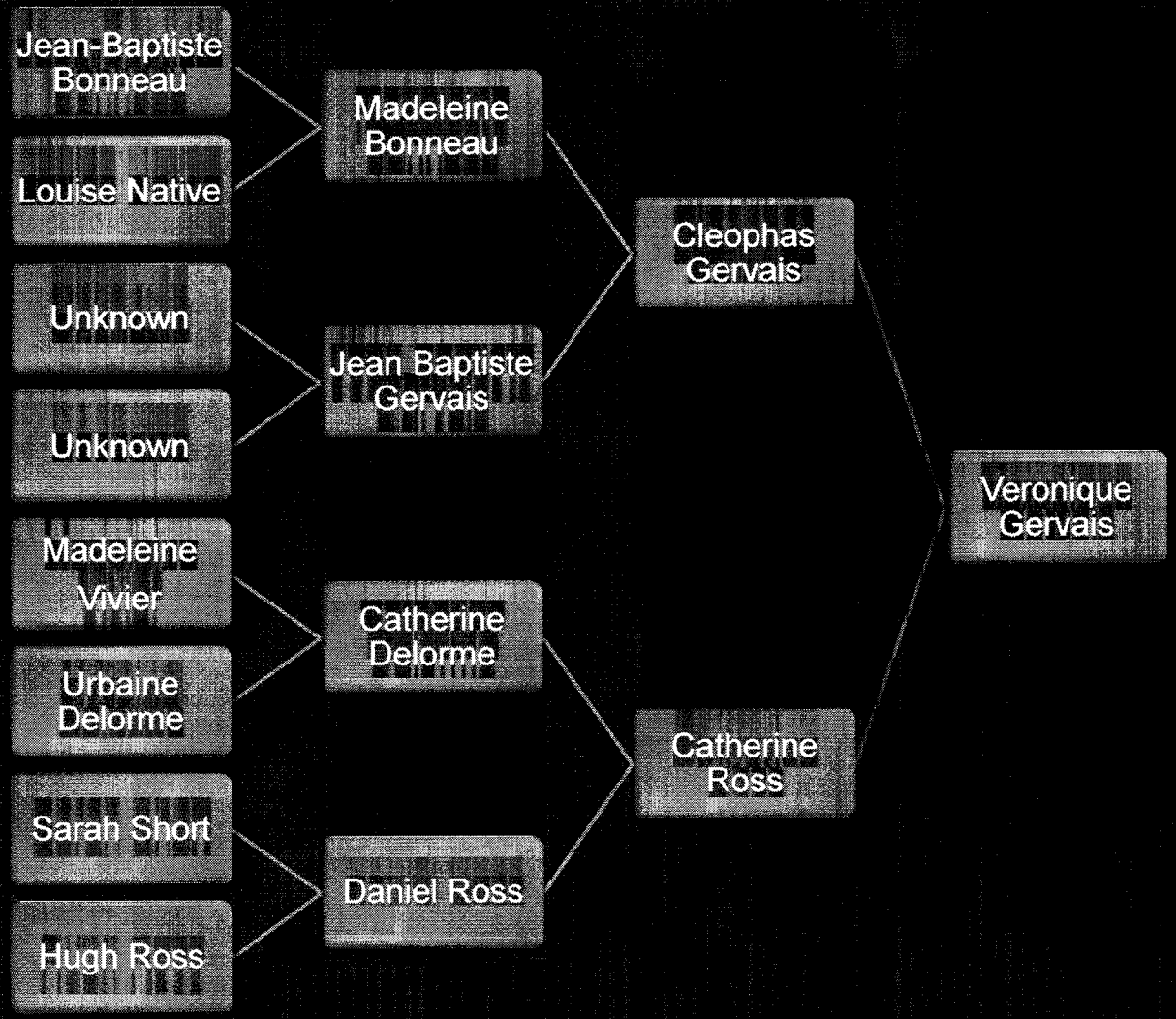


Appendix A: a-2
Ross-Delorme Family Line to Veronique Fiddler



Note: This Family line connects to Appendix A: a-3

Appendix A: a-3
Ross-Gervais Family Line to Veronique Fiddler



Appendix
Fiddler Family Line

x A: a-4

to Merelda Fiddler