Weaving and Baking Nation: The Recognition Politics of the Métis Sash and Bannock in the 1990s

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines and situates the Oral History Project of the Métis Women of Manitoba Inc. within its specific historical context. Two Métis women and Co-Chairs of the Cultural Heritage Committee of the MWM, Lorraine Freeman and Doreen Breland-Fines conducted the project in 1993. These interviews provide a critical entry point into a conversation of Métis identity at a time in which the contours of the Métis Nation were being re-articulated by Métis organizations such as the Manitoba Metis Federation Inc. Before Canadian legislation in Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* and Bill C-31 Métis organizations advocated for both Métis and Non-Status recognition. After these legislative acts Métis organizations increasingly adopted a concept of the Métis Nation within ethno-nationalist parameters. These concerns structured how the OHP operated as a project. The OHP wanted to discuss national symbols, such as the Ceinture Fléchée (the Sash) and bannock, because they were easily distinguishable outward expressions of Métis-ness. However, interviewees challenged these expectations and complicated how Métis national-ism was conceptualized in the OHP. These interviews demonstrated the interplay between individuals, Métis organizations, and the Canadian state in the construction of Métis identities. As an archive this project gestured towards the fluidity of identity.

Lay Summary

This thesis looks at the archival interviews of the Métis Women of Manitoba Inc's Oral History Project. It explores the complicated ways that Métis individuals navigated their identities *as Métis* at a time in the 1990s when Métis organizations were re-articulating Métis nationalism. These interviews demonstrated the interplay between individuals, Métis organizations, and the Canadian state in the construction of Métis identities. As an archive this project gestured towards the fluidity of identity - how its contours shifted over time.

Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Dane Allard.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

I want to begin by acknowledging that a majority of my work on this thesis occurred on the unceded, ancestral territory of the Musqueam Nation. As an uninvited guest outside of my own homeland my work has been fundamentally shaped by the relationships I have built here with people and with the land. This thesis was sustained by blackberries in place of saskatoons.

I would also like to acknowledge Lorraine Freeman and Doreen Breland-Fines. This project would not exist without their important contribution to our nation and its collective memory. A big thank you/merci/miigwetch to all the participants in the OHP whose voices are at the heart of this thesis.

I could never have finished this work without the help of my supervisors Dr. Paige Raibmon and Dr. Laura Ishiguro. Both have devoted significant amounts of time and consideration into reading and re-reading my work, even as it overflowed into nearly double the size of its current form. As a project that started when I stumbled upon the wrong archival collection during an honour's seminar at the University of Manitoba, I would also like to thank Dr. Adele Perry who has encouraged my work every step of the way.

This work would not be here without the relationships I was privileged to be a part of during my time in the history department. I am indebted to every colleague in the department for innumerable acts of kindness and compassion. I would like to specifically mention Nicole

Introduction

> Rose LaFreniere: "My mom is related with the Allards and my mom is a pure Métis like me."
>
> Lorraine Freeman: And what is a pure Métis?
>
> Rose LaFreniere: "It's the one that tells good jokes!"
>
> *Laughter*[1]

On June 03, 1993 Lorraine Freeman and Doreen Breland-Fines, two Métis women and co-chairs of the Cultural Heritage Committee of Métis Women of Manitoba (MWM), sat down with Métis elder Rose LaFreniere at her home in St. François-Xavier, Manitoba. Freeman and Breland-Fines had come to interview LaFreniere for MWM's Oral History Project (OHP).[2] As part of the mandate of the project, Freeman and Breland-Fines had arrived in St. François-Xavier in search of knowledge through which, as the project's descriptive record articulates, to "educate Metis and others on the essence of being Metis."[3] Through this work, Freeman and Breland-Fines planned to "capture and preserve a record of Metis traditional methods of imparting history and culture" as well as to "begin building a foundation of material, on the basis of which other projects could be initiated."[4] The LaFreniere interview was one of forty-three interviews conducted across Manitoba in 1993.[5] Although a Women's organization, the OHP included interviews with

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[1] Rose LaFreniere, "Oral History interview with Rose LaFreniere of St. Francois Xavier, Manitoba," 3 June 1993. Accession No. 1997-44, Location Code C2543. Métis Women of Manitoba Inc. oral history project records, Archives of Manitoba.

[2] MWM was a non-profit organization mandated to provide support for Métis women in Manitoba. It is now called Infinity Women and operates within the Manitoba Métis Federation. The OHP was conducted with the financial and institutional support of the Archives of Manitoba's Oral History Grant Program.

[3] "Metis Women of Manitoba Inc. Oral History Project Records," Archives of Manitoba, accessed July 24, 2019, http://pam.minisisinc.com/SCRIPTS/MWIMAIN.DLL/122896985/1/1/1267?RECORD&DATABASE=DESCRIPTION_WEB_INT.

[4] "Oral History Project Records."

[5] These corresponded to every regional division within the Manitoba Metis Federation. These were: Northwest (6): Louisa Flett and Eva Shuttleworth - Bacon Ridge, Ernest Mohr - Crane River, Bella Morrisseau - Crane River, Maria Morrisseau - Crane River, and Lisa Lambert - Ste. Rose du Lac. The Pas (4): Kathleen DeLaronde - The Pas,

women and men and did not engage an explicitly gendered framework, instead focusing on an essentialized Métis experience.

As a project that sought to define "the essence of being Metis" the OHP functioned within a specific historical context. It was the product of a moment during the 1990s in which changes in Canada's constitutional terrain initiated the reformulation of the national project imagined by the mostly male-led, official Métis organizations.[6] Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* and Bill C-31 (1985), ignited a chain reaction that caused Métis political organizations, such as the Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF), to re-articulate their nationalism in terms that aligned with state discourse. With Section 35 Métis won recognition as a distinct Aboriginal people within the Canadian constitution. The Constitution itself did not define what this recognition meant in practice, however, and delegated this task to negotiations between the federal government, the provinces, and Indigenous peoples. As these negotiations ultimately failed, Métis and other Indigenous peoples turned to the Canadian judicial system as their only recourse. As such, the courts became a new site of Métis political agitation. This initiated what political scientist

Kathryn McLeod and Eve Carpick - The Pas, and Rebecca McIvor - The Pas. Thompson (12): Eva Dram - Wabowden, Henry Garrick - Wabowden, Charles McPherson - Churchill, Jean LeClerc - Churchill, Chris Baker - South Indian Lake, Sandra Anderson - South Indian Lake, Minnie Anderson - South Indian Lake, Hilda Dysart - South Indian Lake, Catherine Bailey - Norway House, Elizabeth Isbister - Norway House, Kenneth McLeod - Norway House, and John Boulette - Norway House. Interlake (10): Frank Walter - Selkirk, Bernice Potoski - Riverton, Ester and Doreen Lea Whiteway - Matheson Island, Roderick and Arthur Oigg - Matheson Island, Mary Whiteway - Matheson Island, Mary Pottinger - Eriksdale, and Lionel and Delia Allard - St. Laurent. Southeast (2): Isabel Simard - Powerview, and Agnes Folster - Pine Falls. Southwest (3): Roger Chartrand - Erickson/Wapiti, Lena Fleury - Binscarth/Ste.Madeleine, and Agnes Boucher - Binscarth/Ste. Madeleine. Winnipeg (4): Ann Carr - Winnipeg, Jules Chartrand - Winnipeg, Rose LaFreniere - St. FX, and Therese Breland - Winnipeg. Not designated (2): Jenny Monkman - Camp Morton, and Joe and Agnes Bell - St. Lazare.

[6] There are 5 provincial organizations that make up the Métis National Council (MNC), the Manitoba Metis Federation Inc, Métis Nation, Saskatchewan, Métis Nation of Alberta, Metis Nation British Columbia, and the Métis Nation of Ontario. While I will primarily focus on the MMF I also use examples from the other organizations as well as MNC.

Daniel Voth has called "the zero-sum game" of Indigenous political competition under a Canadian regulatory regime.[7] As Indigenous organizations struggled to negotiate a stronger meaning of Section 35 recognition, the federal government passed a significant amendment to the *Indian Act* in the form of Bill C-31. Bill C-31 re-articulated the legal categories of 'Indian-ness' within the *Indian Act* in ways the profoundly affected Métis communities and the political landscape of Métis organizations. In the 1990s, under pressure from these changes in the legal landscape, many Métis organizations reimagined themselves and their memberships. In so doing, they changed the parameters of Métis identity. The OHP was not the only project to attempt to capture this new moment in Métis history. For example, Christine Welsh's film collaboration with the National Film Board, *Women in the Shadows*, sought to uncover similar questions of identity as Métis were coming to terms with over a century of Canadian assimilation. I use the OHP records to argue that Métis organizations, in pursuit of long overdue state recognition, centred Canadian expectations of authenticity which produced a dissonance with the everyday experiences of individuals.

Within this political context, the OHP became a project that sought outward, authentic displays of being Métis. In this sense, it engaged the catch-22 politics of authenticity in which Indigenous peoples had long been trapped within a colonial taxonomy. Freeman and Breland-Fines asked questions that revealed their own expectations. Every interview included questions

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[7] Daniel Voth, "Devil's Northern Triangle: Howard Adams and Métis Multidimensional Relationships with and within Colonialism." (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 2015), ii. Voth describes this game as a judicial struggle between Indigenous nations and organizations fighting each other for state recognition and the meagre resources offered as compensation in land claim negotiations by the federal government.

such as, "What is a pure Métis?,"[8] or "Do you remember any other traditional Métis foods?"[9] At times these verged into leading questions to which the OHP expected certain answers: "Do you think Louis Riel was a hero to the Métis people?"[10] Freeman and Breland-Fines were less concerned with the messy history of Métis identity within a settler colonial state than they were in outward displays of Métis-ness. Their construction of Métis identity revolved around national symbols connected to Red River Métis culture, such as the Sash (Ceinture Fléchée, or Lii Saencheur Flechey in Michif) and Bannock.[11] In subsequent years this interpretation of Métis identity became dominant across Canada, in both official and un-official organizations.[12]

I grew up in the 1990s encultured in the political climate that motivated the OHP. The ethnonationalist conception of Métis identity that the OHP fostered shaped my own understandings of being Métis. For me, being Métis meant eating galêt (bannock) and wearing a Sash.[13] Both were intimately tied together with my own personal family history. I remember eating bannock at every family gathering; that recipe grounded me in place and connected me to past generations. As for the Sash, the year that I received my citizenship card through MMF both my father and my partner bought me sashes. The sash for me was woven together with recognition as

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[8] LaFreniere, interview.

[9] Lionel and Delia Allard, "Oral History interview with Lionel and Delia Allard of St. Laurent, Manitoba," 22 June 1993. Accession No. 1997-44, Location Code C2408. Metis Women of Manitoba Inc. oral history project records, Archives of Manitoba.

[10] Lena Fleury, "Oral History interview with Lena Fleury of Binscarth, Manitoba," 30 April 1993. Accession No. 1997-44, Location Code C2420. Metis Women of Manitoba Inc. oral history project records, Archives of Manitoba.

[11] Gerhard Ens and Joe Sawchuk, *From New Peoples to New Nations: Aspects of Metis History and Identity from the Eighteenth to the Twenty First Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 445.

[12] MNO started using Red River symbols in the 1990s. Even eastern groups who have appropriated Métis Nation rhetoric to claim (sometimes falsely) an Indigenous identity have incorporated these symbols.

[13] My family always referred to bannock as gâlet which is the Michif word for bannock. I will use "the Sash" and "Bannock" as terms throughout this thesis.

Métis; it had a critical role in my own identity construction. The use of clothing and food as outward expressions of identity, and as national symbols was an important component of Métis Nation rhetoric in the 1990s. However, as I joined Freeman, Breland-Fines and LaFreniere in laughter I realized that the interviewees articulated their own distinct ideas about being Métis. These ideas challenged my own assumptions of what it meant, and means, to be Métis. I read them as powerful assertions of Métis as a contemporary people not defined by the binaries that emerge from state demands for legibility.

The OHP interview transcripts are marked with dissonance because the ethno-nationalist framework Freeman and Breland-Fines employed did not mesh with the self-conceptions of interviewees. The issues that the OHP, as an ethno-nationalist project, wanted to discuss were not the same ones that animated interviewees. The OHP sought to identify traditions that demonstrated a historic continuity with previous generations of Métis and that would be recognizable as such to the state. In order to press their claims to rights as an Indigenous people within the Canadian colonial structure Métis organizations needed to present themselves in terms that legitimated their authenticity as Indigenous through Canadian expectations. When interviewees, however, reached back in their memories they recalled events that positioned them as contemporary individuals living within a colonial state. This exchange demonstrated the messy entanglements of individuals and national institutions in Métis identity construction in the 1990s. The ethno-nationalism propagated by Métis organizations did important work towards gaining state recognition even as it obfuscated the multifaceted ways in which individuals' everyday practices and experiences reflected, refracted, resisted and transformed this nationalism. I juxtapose the OHP's ethno-nationalist efforts with the lived/expressed perspectives of its interview participants. By

highlighting the dissonance between the Freeman and Breland-Fines and the interviewees, I demonstrate how, as the Métis nationalist project was re-imagined in the 1990s, individual Métis grappled with changing parameters of identity. These processes overlapped imperfectly; at times they aligned while at others they diverged. National symbols such as the Sash and Bannock held different meanings for the interviewees than for official organizations engaged in a colonial politics of recognition.

This is not to argue that Métis organizations *created* nationalism in the 1990s. The roots of Métis nationalism reach back to at least the Pemmican Wars of the early nineteenth century.[14] The 1990s were a moment when Métis organizations reimagined a nationalist project in response to apparent willingness on the part of the state to recognize Métis. As the Dene scholar Glen Coulthard explains, the liberal, multicultural settler state is predicated on a colonial politics of recognition.[15] The settler colonial state seeps everywhere, what Leanne Simpson calls the "vat of cognitive imperialism."[16] While individuals exist within this system, it does not define who they are. However, as Métis organizations pursued gains for their constituencies, they became invested in this colonial structure. In the midst of these inter-institutional tensions Métis individuals articulated, and continue to re-articulate, what being Métis meant and means to them.

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[14] Ens and Sawchuk, *New Peoples to New Nations*, 90.
[15] Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).
[16] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishers, 2011), 32.

In the fall of 2019 Métis will begin to mark the sesquicentennial anniversaries of the Red River Resistance, Riel's establishment of a Métis National Committee, and the entry of Manitoba into Confederation through the Manitoba Treaty.[17] Métis should commemorate these events with pride, but we should also investigate how Métis organizations have employed ethno-nationalism within the Canadian settler state. By so doing, we gain a sense of this nationalist project's purpose, shape, and audience. And, we see the influence that this nationalist project had on the formation and experiences of identity for generations of Métis, including my own.

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[17] Adam Gaudry, "Kaa-tipeyimishoyaahk - 'We are those who own ourselves': A Political History of Métis Self-Determination in the North-West, 1830-1870," (PhD diss., University of Victoria, 2014), iii.

Conversations (1): Historiography

Issues of identity have long been central to Métis historiography. Academics have sought to answer the question: "who are the Métis?"[18] Debates over how historians have located Métis communities physically, and in the documentary archive, remain contentious and divisive.[19] In the 1980s, historians, focused on hybridity as the defining characteristic of Métis identity, expanded their historical view to locate "Métis" communities in the eastern Great Lakes. The tensions caused by this shift have reinforced a Métis equals mixed (blood and culture) narrative embedded in both academic and public perceptions. Since the 1990s, these tensions have become particularly apparent in an era of state sponsored reconciliation in which claims to Métis indigeneity have been tangibly political for many marginalized and impoverished communities. Métis sociologist Chris Andersen has explored how mixed-race Inuit in Labrador who were denied Status by the federal government employed a Métis identity to fight for their recognition as an Indigenous people within Canada.[20] At the same time, individuals such as public intellectual John

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[18] Ute Lischke and David T. McNab, "We Are Still Here," in The Long Journey of a Forgotten People: Métis Identities and Family Histories, eds. Ute Lischke and David T. McNab (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2007): 1.

[19] By focusing on ethnogenesis in the Great Lakes fur-trade, historians challenged the centring of Métis nationalism at Red River and shifted their gaze east towards the Great Lakes. The 1981 Conference on the Métis in North America hosted at the Newberry Library in Chicago cemented this emphasis on ethnogenesis in Métis studies. Composed of work presented at the conference *The New Peoples* (1985) initiated the m/M debate in Métis studies. In this volume, historians such as Van Kirk, Jacqueline Peterson, and John E. Foster wrote against centring the birth of the Métis Nation at Red River, what J. R. Miller would later call "Red River myopia." They employed métis to designate the pre-Red River mixed-race communities of the Great Lakes. Others, such as Karl Here and Karen Travers, have written against this and have argued that Métis is the correct term to give agency to the contemporary and historical communities claiming to be Métis in eastern Canada. Chris Andersen has strongly written against both sides, condemning both as continuing a colonial essentializing of Métis people as mixed. This "hybridity" has distorted the peoplehood claims of Métis by centring Western concepts of blood quantum.

[20] Chris Andersen, *Métis: Race, Recognition and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014). Or Adam Gaudry and Darryl Leroux, "White Settler Revisionism and Making Métis Everywhere: The Evocation of Métissage in Quebec and Nova Scotia." *Critical Ethnic Studies* Vol. 3, no. 1 (2017): 116-142.

Ralston Saul, and political organizations such as the Reform Party, have reframed Métis history within a multicultural Canadian history.[21] Saul's assertion that Canada is a "Métis nation"[22] remains the most known appropriation of Métis nation rhetoric to legitimate Canadian presence.[23] This rhetorical pilfering has served as a state claim to its own phantom indigeneity.

While there has been some study of the organizational history of Métis political institutions and how they framed Métis identity,[24] the historiography generally focuses on pre-1885 events[25] or contemporary sociological issues.[26] Mi'kmaq scholar Bonita Lawrence touches on twentieth century Métis ethno-nationalism in her discussion of the effects of 'Métis,' as a label, on eastern Non-Status communities.[27] Political scientist Daniel Voth explores how Canada has embedded Métis organizations into state structures by reading these institutional movements through the theory of Métis scholar and politician Howard Adams. Yet the ways in which Métis

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[21] Luiza Chwialkowska, "Reform Embraces Metis Hero," *Calgary Herald*, December 26, 1997, C7.

[22] John Ralston Saul, *A Fair Country: Telling Truths about Canada* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2009).

[23] A number of Canadian political groups from the conservative Reform Party to the Quebecois nationalists Bloc Quebecois have claimed Métis symbols, such as Louis Riel, as their own.

[24] Nicole St-Onge's study of St-Laurent, Manitoba in which she explored the shifting meanings of Métis as a label: Nicole St-Onge, *Saint-Laurent, Manitoba: Evolving Métis Identities, 1850 - 1914* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2004), Doris Mackinnon's work on a Métis matriarch: Doris Jeanne Mackinnon, *The Identities of Marie Rose Delorme Smith: Portrait of a Métis Woman, 1861-1960, (*Regina: CPRC Press, 2012), and Michel Hogue's study of the imposition of the US-Canada border: Michel Hogue, *Métis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), are some of the few works that touch on Métis history in the twentieth century. Though each remains rooted in the 19th century and simply traces the ongoing impacts of 19th century events into the 20th.

[25] Heather Devine has even stretched back into the 18th century in Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900.* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004).

[26] See Andersen's investigation of the Labrador Métis movement in Andersen, *Métis*. Or see the appropriation of Métis identities by white settlers particularly in Quebec in Gaudry and Leroux, "White Settler Revisionism."

[27] Lawrence has explored how *Bill C-31* with a particular focus on Toronto. She has discussed how the use of "metis" as an identity outside of western Canada (an area that roughly corresponds to the contours of the national homeland), and even within western Canada, has created confusion amongst Indigenous peoples of mixed-race ancestry. Lawrence goes on to argue that Métis represented "one historical experience of mixed-bloodedness…[to be] held up as the history of all mixed-blood and non-status people in western Canada," which only served to obfuscate "the tremendous diversity of experiences subsumed under the Métis label in western Canada." Bonita Lawrence, *'"Real" Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004).

organizations crafted identity around national symbols has remained unstudied within academic scholarship. Nor have historians explored in depth the dialogical interplay of these symbols between individuals on the ground and the organizational leadership. By centring the OHP archive I intend to do both.

Conversations (2): Methodology

  The oral history records through which I address these questions are sites of knowledge exchange rather than knowledge extraction. This exchange extends beyond the encounter between interviewer and interviewee to my active engagement with the recordings. Likening the oral historian to a conductor, the oral historian Alessandro Portelli argues that the goal of oral history is to create "a new significant whole out of an array of fragments, bits and pieces."[28] This dialogic discourse opens up a narrative space that the interviewee and interviewer share in constructing.[29] As a "moment in a relationship between times" oral history is also affected by "the time of listening."[30] The historian who uses oral history interviews after-the-fact to create an historical narrative is an active participant in the arrangement and construction of a new text.

  Conceptualizing myself as a co-author of a new text informed through the narrative spaces of the OHP, I decided to construct a conversation with my analysis interspersed. Below, I introduce a subject, and then curate conversations between Freeman and Breland-Fines and the interviewees. I have imagined these conversations and my analysis in the form of a Sash which, as Métis literary critic June Scudeler has discussed, "appear[s] tightly woven, [but] there are gaps between threads, creating spaces for multiple ideas, and more importantly…multiple identities to shape themselves."[31] The use of the Sash as a metaphor allows me to weave together disparate

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[28] Alessandro Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County: An Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 11.
[29] Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 3. Alessandro Portelli, "Living Voices: The Oral History Interview as Dialogue and Experience." *The Oral History Review* Vol. 45, no. 2 (2018): 241. Portelli, "Living Voices," 241.
[30] Ibid, 246.
[31] June Scudeler, "The Song I am Singing": Gregory Scofield's Interweavings of Métis, Gay and Jewish Selfhoods, *Studies in Canadian Literature*, Vol. 31, no. 1 (2006): 129.

moments and ideas, and to read the OHP archive in the context of Métis political history. As a "conductor," or "weaver," I have curated these conversations to reveal the complicated ways in which different currents of Métis nationalism overlap with each other and exist in tension with each other. Individuals and organizations held different understandings of what it meant to be Métis and they sought to mobilize their respective understandings for their own purposes. The framing of Métis identity mattered as much to Métis individuals as it did for academics, official organizations and the Canadian state, albeit in different ways.

Conversations (3): Context

In the 1980s, the Canadian state sought to repatriate the constitution without consulting Indigenous peoples. Indigenous activists prevented the federal government from taking unilateral action and demanded but never received a full seat at the constitutional table. Nonetheless, Canada enacted a number of major legal reforms that reshaped the relationship between the state and Indigenous peoples. Section 35 of the *Constitution Act* and Bill C-31 were the most significant among these. Over the past three decades, Indigenous people and organizations have responded to these acts in a range of ways, to different ends. For Métis, Section 35 and Bill C-31 would come to have two major implications. First, they centred the Canadian state as the arbiter of Indigenous rights, which pushed organizations to perform, or prove, particular models of nation and identity in order to be recognized. And second, in the process, they embedded Métis organizations into state institutions, which meant that organizations came to understand their purpose and goals in terms defined by the state. By the early 1990s, these issues were beginning to emerge. In the OHP, they shaped the interviewers' expectations and questions, although as this section shows, interviewees' comments about Bill C-31 also challenged both state and organizations' understandings of identity.

Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* entrenched the Aboriginal rights of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis within the new constitutional structure of the Canadian state. Most Indigenous organizations had sought to prevent patriation altogether and, in the end, only the Métis Association of Alberta supported the terms enacted in 1982. For Métis, this was the first official recognition by the federal government of their collective existence as a people with inherent

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rights of indigeneity. Section 35 held the promise of federal rights for Métis people. Yet it left the substance of those rights unclarified even as it embedded Métis organizations within state institutions in ways that would reverberate outwards from organizational meeting rooms throughout Métis families and communities.

Three years after the *Constitution Act*, the Canadian government passed Bill C-31, another major legal change in the lives of Indigenous people. Bill C-31 resulted from the pressure exerted by Indigenous women and Indigenous women's groups on the federal government to fix the egregious discrimination of the *Indian Act*. In response, the government unilaterally passed Bill C-31 in 1985. The act ostensibly provided a mechanism through which women, who had lost legal recognition as Indians under the *Indian Act* and thus Band membership, could re-gain status along with their children. In reality, the impacts of the act were not so neat. Predicated on the racialized logics of Canadian settler colonialism, Bill C-31 introduced new pressures within Métis and Non-Status communities.[32] A few short years after Métis rights were entrenched by Section 35, Bill C-31 reduced the number of individuals the state counted as "Métis." The state imposed an "either-or" choice between being "First Nations" or "Métis" regardless of whether these individuals had previously drawn such a distinction. The state, by centring its authority to define the legal categories of *Indian-ness*, undercut the ability of Métis and Non-Status organizations to function. It simultaneously foisted new question and decisions upon Métis individuals that sowed division within families.

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[32] With recognition in Section 35 "Métis" became a tangible tool for mixed-race non-Status peoples in eastern Canada to fight for their own recognition and Aboriginal title. See: Andersen, *Métis*.

In the 1990s, the combination of Section 35 and Bill C-31 forced Métis organizations to initiate a dramatic re-articulation of their collective political project. Before 1982 Métis organizations were often vehicles for both Métis and Non-Status peoples, with Section 35 recognition Métis organizations began to limit their membership criteria to bring it into accord with the new "either-or" legal reality.[33] As Bill C-31 enabled many who had identified as Non-Status or Métis to gain Status, organizations saw an exodus of members. Simultaneously, Métis organizations reframed their membership criteria as "citizenship" regulations and began to exclude Non-Status individuals who did not identify as Métis. As one example, the MNC also refused to register anyone already enrolled with another Indigenous organization.[34] Alongside these shifts in citizenship regulations almost all Métis organizations adopted new names and cultural symbols that reflected

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[33] In their political struggles, Métis organizations partnered with Non-Status peoples - often within the same organizations. The MMF, in its 1971 constitution, opened membership to "any unregistered person of Indian descent." Joe Sawchuk, *The Metis of Manitoba: Reformulation of an Ethnic Identity* (Toronto: P. Morgan Associates, 1978), 48. The Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan (AMNSIS) was an example of an organization that unified Métis and Non-Status Indians to fight for their collective rights. AMNSIS had its origins in two Métis organizations that emerged in the 1930s over political action related to the negotiation of a Natural Resource Transfer Agreement between the Saskatchewan and Canadian governments. By the 1970s AMNSIS had grown into one of the strongest Indigenous political organizations in Canada. However, after the 1980s AMNSIS would disband eventually becoming Métis Nations, Saskatchewan.

[34] As per MNC: "There are individuals, who hold both Métis ancestry sufficient for registry under the Métis Nation Definition and First Nations ancestry sufficient for registry under the Indian Act…These individuals are entitled to the choice but may not retain registration under both regimes. Once a person voluntarily becomes registered under the Indian Act, they lose their entitlement to register or remain registered as a Métis citizen in a Métis Nation registry." See: "PLAINspeak, Bill C-3(McIvor) and Cunningham, Métis Nation Registry or *Indian Act* Status: Choosing Your Legal Identity," Métis National Council, accessed July 24, 2019, http://www.metisnation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Plain-Speak.pdf.

this historical moment.[35] These organizations then also pursued specifically Métis policies in ne-

gotiations with the federal government.[36] By the 1990s, all of these changes meant that Métis or-

ganizations were no longer vehicles for Non-Status issues. As MNC president Gerald Morin

stated by way of justification, "any organization that's made up of Métis and First Nations is not

likely going to work out anyway."[37] In other words, major changes in Canadian legislation had a

profound impact on Métis organizations, including in the ways that they defined their political

projects and membership.

     While both Section 35 and Bill C-31 had a significant impact on Métis political organiz-

ing and communities, it was the latter that individual Métis wanted to discuss in 1993. This was

because Bill C-31 was having a tangible, emotional effect on Métis communities and individuals

in ways that Section 35 did not. Completed only eight years after Bill C-31, the OHP captured a

moment in which Métis people grappled with its effects on their identity, legal status, and rela-

tionship to community.

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[35] In 1991 the Métis and Non-Status Native Association of the NWT became Métis Nation, NWT. By 1993 the MSS had become Métis Nation-Saskatchewan and the Ontario Métis and Non-Status Association renamed itself Métis Nation Ontario, while the MAA became the Metis Nation of Alberta. See: Ens and Sawchuk, *New Peoples to New Nation*, 458. Saunders, "No Other Weapon," 351. "Métis Association of Alberta Fonds," Glenbow Museum, accessed July 25, 2019, http://ww2.glenbow.org/search/archivesMainResults.aspxXC=searcharchivesMainResults.aspx&TN=MAINCAT&AC=QBE_QUERY&RF=WebResults&DL=0&RL=0&NP=255&%0AMF=WPEngMsg.ini&MR=5&QB0=AND&QF0=Main%20entry+%7C+Title&QI0=Metis+Association+of+Alberta+fonds.

[36] These differences, which became increasingly apparent during the First Ministers Constitutional Conferences that followed the *Constitution Act*, motivated the provincial Métis organizations to unite under the banner of the Métis National Council (MNC).[36] Siomonn P. Pulla, "Regional Nationalism or National Mobilization? A Brief Social History of the Development of Métis Political Organization in Canada, 1815 - 2011," in *Métis in Canada: History, Identity, Law & Politics*, eds. Christopher Adams, Gregg Dahl, and Ian Peach, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2013): 415 - 420.

[37] Ens and Sawchuk, *From New Peoples to New Nations*, 459 - 460.

At this point Freeman turns to Kathleen DeLaronde, "When you were growing up in Cross Lake like about how many Métis people would there have been?"[38]

Kathleen DeLaronde: "I don't know, about 1000 I guess."[39]

Freeman: "That many?"[40]

Kathleen DeLaronde: "I don't know, maybe 600-700"[41]

Turning to Hilda Dysart, Freeman: "There used to be high population of Métis [In South Indian Lake too?][42]

Hilda Dysart: Right yeah.[43]

Freeman: And now there's very few of you.[44]

Hilda Dysart: "There's very few yes…It's because of the Bill C-31 coming in and a lot people applying to have their status."[45]

Kathleen DeLaronde nods in agreement: "A lot of them went to Bill C-31."[46]

Hilda Dysart intercedes: "You know so I, at one point I had my application and filled it out and had all the information that I needed to fill out, that's quite a few years ago, I still haven't made that taken that step."[47]

Freeman: "Do you think it's something you'll do in the future?"[48]

Hilda Dysart: I don't think so, not now no. I see like the native also having their problems like you know so it sure doesn't create an all-out no problem situation for you if you do go into the Bill C-31 under Bill C-31.[49]

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[38] Kathleen DeLaronde "Oral History interview with Kathleen DeLaronde of The Pas, Manitoba," 12 May 1993. Accession No. 1997-44, Location Code C2424. Métis Women of Manitoba Inc. oral history project records, Archives of Manitoba.

[39] DeLaronde, interview.

[40] DeLaronde, interview.

[41] DeLaronde, interview.

[42] Hilda Dysart, "Oral History interview with Hilda Dysart of South Indian Lake, Manitoba," 18 May 1993. Accession No. 1997-44, Location Code C2439. Métis Women of Manitoba Inc. oral history project records, Archives of Manitoba.

[43] Dysart, interview.

[44] Dysart, interview.

[45] Dysart, interview.

[46] DeLaronde, interview.

[47] Dysart, interview.

[48] Dysart, interview.

[49] Dysart, interview.

Eva Carpick: "You're not getting very much benefits in the first place…"[50]

Chris Baker: "You get shuffled around. Nobody wants to be responsible for you. And that's not fair…The government is just playing a bunch of silly games with us folks."[51]

Rebecca McIvor interrupts: "I figure I'll be selling myself short if I got my treaty rights. I never did have my own number anyways. I don't miss something I never had, and you always have to pay for what you have, eh."[52]

When Eva Carpick interjects: "Well I'm not going to feel bad if I get it. I feel the government owes me that. Taking my mother's treaty rights away from her you know. I haven't got it yet but most of my family have it. So, I don't think I'm going to feel bad when I get it. At least I'll get a little bit of money from the government."[53]

Freeman: "Will you be what you called yourselves earlier, half-breeds or Métis, will you be that if you get this?"[54]

Eva Carpick: "Well, I don't know. I still feel that I'm that whether I get my treaty rights or not."[55]

Hilda Dysart: "Like the way I thought about it was that you know like well gee you know I'm Métis and if I get a treaty number than I'm still Métis, but it doesn't work that way *laughter*"[56]

Freeman wants to move on: "Like I'm not really sure, being a Métis from the south, we don't see a lot of this issue, but in the north, the more that we are in here, and yet I really don't have a clear idea of what it is really…"[57]

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[50] Kathryn McLeod and Eve Carpick, "Oral History interview with Kathryn McLeod and Eve Carpick of The Pas, Manitoba," 12 May 1993. Accession No. 1997-44, Location Code C2425. Métis Women of Manitoba Inc. oral history project records, Archives of Manitoba.

[51] Chris Baker, "Oral History interview with Chris Baker of South Indian Lake, Manitoba," 17 May 1993. Accession No. 1997-44, Location Code C2434. Métis Women of Manitoba Inc. oral history project records, Archives of Manitoba.

[52] Rebecca McIvor, "Oral History interview with Rebecca McIvor of The Pas, Manitoba," 13 May 1993. Accession No. 1997-44, Location Code C2427. Métis Women of Manitoba Inc. oral history project records, Archives of Manitoba.

[53] McLeod and Carpick, interview.

[54] McLeod and Carpick, interview.

[55] McLeod and Carpick, interview.

[56] Dysart, interview.

[57] Baker, interview.

As interviewees' contributions to the OHP suggest, Bill C-31 was a legal change with deeply personal connotations. Although the interviewers did not ask about it, the interviewees wanted to talk about how it was creating a sense of national, community, family, and personal identity in flux. By definition, all of the interviewees identified as Métis before and *after* Bill C-31 came into effect. The decision to pursue status was deeply emotional, especially as family members decided to do so. Kathryn McLeod, Rebecca McIvor, Jenny Monkman and Kathleen DeLaronde, all noted that close familial relations had applied as Status Indians under Bill C-31 stipulations. Interviewees reacted to the new "either-or" context in a number of ways. Some felt that they would be giving up a Métis identity if they applied for status, while others did not see it as a decision that would affect how they understood themselves. However, as Hilda Dysart wryly noted "it doesn't work that way" in the eyes of the state.[58]

Through Section 35 and Bill C-31, the federal government made significant interventions into the lives of Métis people in the 1980s. The effects of these acts were still becoming apparent in the 1990s, when the OHP was created. In interviewees' particular concern for Bill C-31, they made clear that the state reached deep into the personal lives of Métis and imposed new definitions of identity. These Métis individuals grappled with these questions as a direct result of the machinations of the Canadian state.

Whereas individual people were concerned with the impact of Bill C-31 on community, family, and self-identity, Métis organizations – represented in the OHP by Freeman and Breland-Fines – responded to similar issues raised by Section 35 and Bill C-31 in a different way. In the

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[58] Dysart, interview.

1980s and 1990s, Métis organizations sought to respond to a changing political and legal context by defining forms of national identity that provided them access to a newly available form of state recognition. In particular, institutions such as the MMF engaged state actors and worked to make themselves legible through a western discourse of nationality in order to be recognized "as legitimate partners in the federation."[59] Glen Coulthard has critiqued this outsider recognition as wholly subsumed within a western ontological system. Coulthard refuted this recognition as inescapable from the logics of the liberal, multicultural settler state. As Daniel Voth articulated, "law-making power as well as the adjudication of those laws was and remains an integral part of the project of creating and maintaining a state comprised of settlers."[60]

However, in the 1990s, this changing legal context was a major political concern for Métis organizations. As part of their response, they sought the identification of so-called authentic national traditions, which could symbolize Métis-ness in a new politics of state recognition. In this context, Métis nationhood was an essentially historical project, rooted in late-twentieth-century politics and drawing on stories of an authentic collective past that could legitimate Métis-ness in the present.[61] As historian Paige Raibmon has argued, "notions of authenticity were key elements of a colonial cosmology."[62] As Métis organizations articulated formulations of nation rooted in symbols of authenticity, they drew on this colonial ideology. Nonetheless, this was a

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[59] Janique Dubois, "From Service Providers to Decision Makers: Building a Métis Government inSaskatchewan," in *Métis in Canada: History, Identity, Law & Politics*, eds. Christopher Adams, Gregg Dahl, and Ian Peach, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2013): 434 - 462.

[60] Daniel Voth, "Her Majesty's Justice Be Done" *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 49, no. 2 (June, 2016): 247.

[61] Chris Andersen defined Métis peoplehood through a history that stemmed from Red River and stretched across a vast kinship network in the northern prairies. Locating Red River as the heart of the Métis Nation was an important part of defining ourselves and defying Canadian settler-colonialist racialized assumptions.

[62] Paige Sylvia Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late Nineteenth Century Northwest Coast* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005) 3.

powerful and significant project. As Métis sociologist Chris Andersen has argued, Métis organizations worked to mold a national identity through "official commemorative contexts to produce and solidify particular claims to a cultural unity and homogeneity."[63] The 1980s and 1990s were critical years in this process, during which Métis organizations sought to "shape the contours of national memory" by identifying and elevating symbols of the Métis nation.[64]

The resulting symbols have become powerful tools for institutions such as the MMF, allowing them to mobilize contemporary concerns through what historian Eric Hobsbawm has called "invented tradition." This "implies continuity with the past" which "imposes fixed (normally formalized) practices."[65] Groups utilized invented tradition to establish or legitimate "institutions, status or relations of authority."[66] While "invented tradition" could mean inauthentic, or fake, it does not in this context. Instead, it calls attention to the ways that practices become powerful, symbolic traditions in particular historical circumstances. For Métis in the 1990s, the political and legal changes spurred the institutionalization of official symbols, and their uses in new forms for contemporary purposes. The next section explores this process through dress and food, two particularly significant symbols in this ethno-nationalist discourse.

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[63] Chris Andersen, "More than the Sum of Our Rebellions: Métis Histories beyond Batoche," *Ethnohistory* Vol. 61, no. 4 (2014): 621.
[64] Andersen, "More than the Sum of Our Rebellions," 622.
[65] Eric Hobsbawm, "Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition* eds. Eric Hobsbawm, and Terrence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1 - 2.
[66] Ibid, 9.

Conversations (4): Clothing as Ethno-Nationalist Symbols

In the 1980s and 1990s, Métis organizations responded to state legislation by seeking to

define an authentic Métis identity to gain recognition in the eyes of the colonial state. At the

heart of this was the definition of symbols such as the Sash and bannock. However, the meanings

of nation are produced not only top-down, but also through individuals imagining a collective

identity. The OHP reflected this critical moment, and its tensions. As I show, Freeman and

Breland-Fines sought to define national identity through the identification of symbolic items and

performance of so-called authentic traditions through them. Food and clothing were particularly

significant. However, individual interviewees understood Métis-ness very differently, outside

this new form of ethno-nationalist discourse. Reading them together, this section argues that the

OHP illuminates a critical period in Métis nationalism, during which there was a lag between

how Métis organizations defined national identity and how individuals understood themselves as

Métis.[67]

The OHP, as a project, was a product of its historical context. Like the concerns of Métis

organizations more broadly, Freeman and Breland-Fines wanted to know how Métis expressed

themselves outwardly *as Métis* and how individuals represented this symbolically. Within a na-

tionalist framework, "Métis identity [was] imagined in terms of the historical symbols, people,

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[67] This is commonly asserted as why Métis remained illegible, invisible, to the state after the Riel rebellions. It is
more accurate to say that there is ample evidence that the state was well aware Métis as a collective polity after the
defeat at Batoche but chose to ignore these issues in the expectation that Métis represented a step in the process of
Indigenous disappearance.

places, and events that produced our historical peoplehood."[68] The OHP mimicked the incorporation of a language of folk tradition in organizations' ethno-nationalist reinventions.

Clothing and food are two significant, powerful historical symbols of nation and ethnic identity. This was exactly what Freeman and Breland-Fines sought out in their questions, as the OHP devoted significant time to asking about clothing and cooking practices. Freeman would often ask leading questions such as:

> "Did the Métis women have a certain kind of dress? Like did they dress a certain way back then?"[69]
>
> "I want to ask you about Métis women if they dress different than other women, years ago?"[70]
>
> "Did they [Métis men and women] have, like a, I guess you would call it a costume?"[71]
>
> "Is there any, I guess what people would call today, traditional Métis foods? Is there such a thing?[72]

These questions revealed a lot about the OHP's intentions. It was clear that Freeman and Breland-Fines were searching for examples of clothing and food that set Métis apart as different. The ethnic "costume" and the traditional food were both important displays of Métis distinction and continuity at a time when Métis organizations were attempting to legitimate themselves within the state's legal and social structure. Dress and food were avenues to recognition.

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[68] Andersen, "More than the Sum of our Rebellions," 623.
[69] Fleury, interview.
[70] McIvor, interview.
[71] Mary Pottinger, "Oral History interview with Mary Pottinger of Eriksdale, Manitoba," 22 April 1993. Accession No. 1997-44, Location Code C2407. Métis Women of Manitoba Inc. oral history project records, Archives of Manitoba.
[72] Delaronde, interview.

This presents Freeman with an opening to ask about traditional dress: "Did the Métis women and men years ago dress a certain way?"[73]

Rebecca McIvor: "I don't know."[74]

Jenny Monkman: "Well we dressed the best we could, we didn't wear no rags."[75]

Bernice Potoski: "I dressed sort of not as rich as the other kids could dress and I felt sort of awkward and out of place…[but] I guess I just dress like everybody else."[76]

Mary Pottinger: "Not that I know of, they'd dress just like we do. From what I can remember anyway. I've never seen any other, any way of dressing."[77]

Freeman: "What about clothing for the Métis in the north? Did they wear…could you pick Métis people out by what they wore, years ago?"[78]

Chris Baker: "Not here, 'cause everybody dressed the same. Like they didn't have no, I don't think they had any special outfits or anything. But if you went, if you go further south you could because of the fact they designed their clothes different, and they had different designs for their beadwork and their style of making jackets and hats. Even their shoes, their moccasins."[79]

Hilda Dysart: "Um, not that I can remember like in the community of South Indian Lake we all lived as equals…as far as dress and stuff like that we used native dress, like the moccasins and stuff like that and so did the white people in the community. We didn't have access to any stores or even access in going out of the community to pick up supplies."[80]

When asked about distinctive Métis clothing practices most interviewees remembered

everyday clothing that structured them within a larger diverse community, asserting that they

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[73] Pottinger, interview.
[74] McIvor, interview.
[75] Monkman, interview.
[76] Bernice Potoski, "Oral History interview with Bernice Potoski of Riverton, Manitoba," 14 April 1993. Accession No. 1997-44, Location Code C2402. Métis Women of Manitoba Inc. oral history project records, Archives of Manitoba.
[77] Pottinger, interview.
[78] Baker, interview.
[79] Baker, interview.
[80] Dysart, interview.

"dressed like everyone else."[81] This contrasted with studies of Métis clothing, which have tended

to focus on traditional Métis beading practices or on early nineteenth-century clothing.[82] These

styles of dress "remained distinctively Métis" until the late nineteenth century at which point, as

social and economic structures shifted, European fashions became widely available. By the turn

of the century Métis dressed little different from the "general Euro-Canadian population."[83] Even

when Métis dressed more in the custom of other Indigenous peoples, as noted by Hilda Dysart,

these clothes were also worn by European settlers. Similarly, other communities wore many of

the same clothes associated with Métis communities such as leggings (often beaded) and mocca-

sins (also beaded). Institutes such as Louis Riel Institute (LRI) did discuss other clothing prac-

tices but did not argue they were exclusively Métis. Clothing, for interviewees, was more an in-

dicator of socio-economic status than an expression of being Métis. This economic marginaliza-

tion was certainly tied into being Métis as the interviewees recalled, but it could not encapsulate

the ethno-national symbolism the OHP sought.

> Freeman still looking for distinctive Métis clothing presses the issue, "What
> about what the Métis women wore?"[84]
>
> Ernest Mohr: "Dresses."[85]
>
> Freeman: "Can you describe what they look like for me?"[86]

[81] Potoski, interview.
[82] For example: Gloria Jane Bell, "Oscillating Identities: Re-presentations of Métis in the Great Lakes Area in the Nineteenth Century," in *Métis in Canada: History, Identity, Law & Politics*, eds. Christopher Adams, Gregg Dahl, and Ian Peach, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2013): 3 - 58.
[83] "European fashions gained acceptance and popularity so that by the end of the nineteenth century Métis dress differed little from that of the general Euro-Canadian population." - "Traditional Métis Clothing," Métis Museum, accessed July 20, 2019, http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/db/00745, 2.
[84] Ernest Mohr, "Oral History interview with Ernest Mohr of Crane River, Manitoba," 28 April 1993. Accession No. 1997-44, Location Code C2412. Métis Women of Manitoba Inc. oral history project records, Archives of Manitoba.
[85] Mohr, interview.
[86] Mohr, interview.

Roger Chartrand: Gestures towards a photo he has placed on the table. "Well, I think you see that by the picture I just showed you there and not only the Métis women but every woman in those days, in those years, wore dresses like that."[87]

Freeman looks at the photo, "So it was like a long dark skirt"[88]

Roger Chartrand: "Yeah…you could see their feet and that was it."[89]

Ernest Mohr nods in agreement, "all the old women wore black dresses. Long black dresses you know."[90]

Lena Fleury: "Oh yeah, in the old days they used to wear long dresses. I remember that."[91]

Joe Bell: "Everybody wear long dresses in those days."[92]

Kathryn McLeod: "My grandmother came from Winnipeg…I was so scared of her. All I remember she was so fair and wearing this black dress siting on the rocking chair."[93]

Ernest Mohr: "The Indian women too that's what they used to wear…"[94]

When pushed further by Freeman, what most interviewees remembered were the long, dark dresses that the "old ladies" wore. In what would become an almost formulaic response, the interviewees turned to these dresses after asserting that they could not remember any traditional Métis clothing. These dresses loomed large in the collective memory of the OHP. Women often

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[87] Roger Chartrand, "Oral History interview with Roger Chartrand of Erickson, Manitoba," 28 April 1993. Accession No. 1997-44, Location Code C2418. Métis Women of Manitoba Inc. oral history project records, Archives of Manitoba.
[88] Chartrand, interview.
[89] Chartrand, interview.
[90] Mohr, interview.
[91] Fleury, interview.
[92] Joe and Agnes Bell, "Oral History interview with Joe and Agnes Bell of St. Lazare, Manitoba," 30 April 1993. Accession No. 1997-44, Location Code C2422. Métis Women of Manitoba Inc. oral history project records, Archives of Manitoba.
[93] McLeod and Carpick, interview.
[94] Mohr, interview.

wore long, dark dresses as everyday outfits which were sometimes brightly decorated for "festive

occasions."[95] Yet, while some Métis educational resources do discuss these dress styles they are

not as pervasive across all institutional cultural sources. The LRI, for example, did not discuss

these dresses on its list of cultural clothing.[96] They were harder to structure as national symbols.

As everyday items there were significant deviations in use and style. Most importantly, though,

they could not solely represent Métis when their use was extensive throughout many other

groups.

> Freeman turns to footwear. Perhaps interviewees will recall specific Métis
> shoes, anything that can stand in as an outward display of Métis-ness. Turning
> to Joe Bell: "What about shoes?"[97]
>
> Joe Bell: "Oh! Moccasins, then we had moccasins eh."[98]
>
> Elizabeth Isbister: "Yeah that's what they wore. The men. Moccasins. They
> used to wear moccasins and leggings they had beaded."[99]
>
> Chris Baker: "if you go further south…they had different designs for their
> beadwork and their style of making…their moccasins."[100]
>
> Hilda Dysart: "we used native dress, like the moccasins and stuff like that and
> so did the white people in the community."[101]

After dresses, moccasins were the next most common item of dress that interviewees

could recall. These were practical items that many remembered as being a significant component

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[95] Traditional Métis Clothing," Métis Museum, accessed July 20, 2019, http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/db/00745, 11.

[96] "Métis Clothing," Louis Riel Institute, accessed July 20, 2019, http://www.louisrielinstitute.com/clothing.php.

[97] Bell, interview.

[98] Bell, interview.

[99] Elizabeth Isbister, "Oral History interview with Elizabeth Isbister of Norway House, Manitoba," 19 May 1993. Accession No. 1997-44, Location Code C2442. Métis Women of Manitoba Inc. oral history project records, Archives of Manitoba.

[100] Baker, interview.

[101] Dysart, interview.

of their winter wardrobe. Chris Baker asserted that he could tell the difference between northern

and southern Métis because of the style of their moccasins, and the style of beading that southern

and northern Métis would incorporate.[102] However, no one asserted moccasins as a particular

Métis symbol. Métis used moccasins as both a tool and cultural object, but the interviewees saw

them as an inherently First Nations symbol. Their practical use was mixed: Métis wore mocca-

sins and took meaning from them, but "so did the white people."[103] Like the long, black dresses,

in other words, moccasins were not what the OHP was looking for, and the responses insuffi-

ciently nationalist.

> Freeman is still searching for something specifically Métis. She attempts to get
> here by turning to Bernice Potoski to clarify the specificities of being Métis:
> "Bernice can you tell me what you think Métis is?"[104]
>
> Bernice Potoski jumps into a long response: "OK, Métis is a person that has
> native ancestry and white ancestry. They're from two different cultures and um
> I guess they're, they're, they're part of both their cultures because um, like to
> me the fiddling music and like the square dance is Métis but it's a combination
> of the Scottish sword dance and the powwow. To me that's what it is. And to
> me, like ah Métis people are sort of…they're humorous and they're happy-go-
> lucky…Um I'm proud that I come from the two worlds and um the Métis Sash
> signifies for me who I am and where I come from."[105]
>
> At the mention of the Sash Mary Pottinger interrupts, "when I first saw those
> sashes they have, you know at Métis gatherings there, I couldn't believe that
> for a while, all those big fat guys with…*laughter*"[106]

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[102] These flower work patterns have long held an important cultural place in Métis society. Indigenous nations such as the Dakota Sioux and Cree named Métis the "Flower Beadwork People." See: Sharon Blady, "Les Metisses: Towards a Feminist History of Red River," *Issues in the North*, 2 (1997): 184.
[103] Dysart, interview.
[104] Potoski, interview.
[105] Potoski, interview.
[106] Pottinger, interview.

No article of clothing has come to symbolize Métis nationhood more than the Sash. As Ens and Sawchuk write, "[the Sash] has become one of the most important symbols of Métis identity."[107] The LRI claimed that "the Sash has been the most persistent element of traditional Métis dress."[108] However, the thought that the Sash has continuously occupied the same space in Métis everyday lived experiences is an anachronistic re-invention. Rather, its importance in daily life – as well as its symbolic significance – has changed over time.

The Sash was not a Métis invention. Known as a Ceinture Fléchée, the Sash originated in the late eighteenth century at the French Canadian village of L'Assomption, Lower Canada.[109] The specific cultural origins of the Sash are unclear, but there is agreement that it represented both French and Indigenous styles and weaving techniques.[110] The Sash was a practical item; an essential tool for voyageurs in the fur trade.[111] The LRI maintains a list of a wide variety of practical uses for the Sash including serving as a tourniquet, lashing a canoe, and identifying allegiances.[112] As a flexible economic tool the sash quickly spread among French Canadians, Iroquois and other Eastern Woodlands Indigenous nations. It was unsurprising then that the Sash would feature prominently in Métis communities that arose out of this fur trade milieu.

Indeed, by the early nineteenth century, the Sash became closely associated with Métis for outside observers. In their trip to the Northwest, for instance, Peter Rindisbacher and Paul Kane famously captured the extensive use of the Sash amongst Métis men in the fur trade in

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[107] Ens and Sawchuk, *New Peoples to New Nations*, 504.
[108] "The Sash," Louis Riel Institute, accessed July 20, 2019, http://www.louisrielinstitute.com/the-sash.php.
[109] "The Sash," Manitoba Metis Federation Inc., accessed July 20, 2019, http://www.mmf.mb.ca/the_sash.php.
[110] "The Sash," Virtual Museum, accessed July 20, 2019, http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/expositions-exhibitions/batoche/docs/proof_en_the_sash.pdf.
[111] Donald Purich, *The Metis* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1988),11.
[112] "Métis Clothing," Louis Riel Institute.

some of the earliest (European) images that emerged from what would become Manitoba. On the prairies Sash production was a family endeavour. There were as many patterns and styles as local kinship groups and many families "developed their own patterns, which then served as a means of familial identification in the manner of Scottish tartans."[113] While use of the Sash was extensive in Métis communities not all Métis wore Sashes.[114] However, cemented in the romantic imagery of Rindisbacher and Kane, the Sash became affiliated with the Métis Nation, both internally and externally.

While there was evidence that organizations, such as the Union National Saint Joseph du Manitoba, employed the Sash as a cultural symbol post-1885 there has been no study of the endurance of the Sash *within* Métis communities and daily practices through the twentieth century. Nor, has there been any study of the presence of the Sash in Métis dressing patterns outside of the fur trade. However, as the practices of the fur trade and bison hunt gave way to agricultural settlement the Sash no longer served its specific economic niche. Simultaneously, the cultural pressures of increasing European immigration and the settler colonial criminalization of Indigenous cultural practices meant that outward displays of Métis identity were heavily policed by both social pressures and state institutions during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Because of these factors, the Sash featured less in the practices and memories of the twentieth century. As historian Joe Sawchuk argues, "there [was] a tendency…to suppress cultural differences that might precipitate further discrimination."[115] Indeed, as Sawchuk's 1978 study of

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[113] Ens and Sawchuk, *New Peoples to New Nation*, 504.
[114] Purich, *The Metis*, 11.
[115] Sawchuk, *Metis of Manitoba*, 40.

Métis ethnicity in Manitoba concluded in general, "dress is…unhelpful" for locating a Métis identity.[116] While he did note "the weaving of a 'Metis sash,"[117] he did not consider this an authentic Métis cultural symbol but merely a "replica of the belts once worn by the voyageurs."[118]

The Sash re-emerged as an important symbol of Métis identity in the late twentieth century. In the 1990s, institutions such as the MMF turned to it as a symbol that defined the nation and connected it to an authentic, traditional past. In the changing political and legal context of this period, they repurposed a tool of the fur trade as one of the most prominent, recognizable visual symbols of the Métis Nation. Unfettered by "practical use"[119] in the late twentieth century, the Sash took on a different form as a symbolic tradition as Métis organizations adopted the new MMF Sash pattern.[120] The MMF defined this pattern as:

> Blue and White: are the colours of the national Metis flag. It has a white infinity symbol with a blue background. This flag was flown on June 19, 1816 at the Battle of Seven Oaks under the leadership of Cuthbert Grant…
>
> Red and White: are the colours of the Metis hunting flag. It has a white infinity symbol with a red background. During a hunting expedition, the camp flag belonged to the guide of the day. He was therefore standard-bearer by virtue of his office. In some of these hunting expeditions, great battles occurred, like the Battle of Grand Coteau.

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[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Hobsbawm, "Inventing Tradition," 4.
[120] In recent years new ways to wear the Sash have been introduced. Additionally, women have increasingly taken to wearing the Sash in contemporary society. The use of the Sash amongst women in traditional society remains understudied. As per the LRI: "Today, the sash is worn by all members of the Métis Nation as a symbol of nationhood and pride. Métis women occasionally wear it over the left shoulder, while others wear it the traditional way, around the waist and tied in the middle, with the fringes hanging down. The sash has been the most persistent element of traditional Métis dress, worn long after the capote and Red River coat were replaced by European styles." "The Sash," Louis Riel Institute, accessed July 20,2019, http://www.louisrielinstitute.com/the-sash.php.

Black: symbolizes the dark period after 1870 in which the Metis people had to endure dispossession, and suppression, at the hands of the Canadians. In the years that followed, the Metis were shot and beaten on the streets of Winnipeg. Bounties were issued on those who had collaborated with Louis Riel. Many left their land and headed west; those who stayed behind moved north. Those who remained were forced off their land and became squatters, living mostly on road allowances.

Green and Gold: signifies fertility, growth and prosperity for the Metis Nation. Green and gold also mean we must move forward and reclaim our rightful place in Canadian history.[121]

In this description, Métis history is woven into the Sash as part of a nationalist project. The colours no longer represent specific familial connections but are re-imagined as an expression of collective national memory. Linked to the two Métis flags, the MMF associated Red and Blue with important political and military events in Métis history: the battle of Seven Oaks and the Battle of Grand Coteau. Both battles connected into a narrative of increasing Métis political distinction and national consciousness in contrast to both Europeans and other Indigenous nations. Black, here a particularly poignant symbol and a colour not traditionally used in Sash weaving, was an important component of Métis re-invention. The MMF chose to add black to symbolize "the dark period after 1870" in which Métis suffered under the increasing constraints of Canadian settler colonialism. This long history of marginalization was woven into the Sash as a symbol of Métis Nation pride in resilience. Looking to the future, Green and Gold symbolized Métis efforts to "reclaim our rightful place in Canadian history."[122]

What this meant, especially considering the symbolism of black, was open and vague. Within the context of the politics of recognition in the late twentieth century, however, it was

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[121] "The Sash," Manitoba Metis Federation Inc., accessed July 20, 2019, http://www.mmf.mb.ca/the_sash.php.
[122] Ibid.

also powerful. For Métis organizations, the Sash adopted in the 1990s drew on a collective past to articulate contemporary concerns, and in particular to define a new symbol for the nation. However, for Métis individuals, this symbol did not take hold right away in their personal understandings of history and identity. In this, the OHP captured a moment in which understandings of the Sash were in flux.

More specifically, while the OHP enthusiastically engaged the subject of traditional clothing the Sash was conspicuously missing. In all the time spent discussing clothing during the interviews there were only two mentions of the Sash. Apart from Potoski's assertion that the Sash represented her dual European/Indigenous identity no one else used the Sash as a symbol for themselves. Pottinger's response was not positive; its intention was to mock members of organizations, presumably the MMF, who embraced the Sash. Pottinger did not recall seeing the Sash before MMF and other organizational gatherings and associated the Sash with these displays. Her association of the sash of being out of place on "the fat men" was as revealing as the absence of the sash in the others' memories. Pottinger did not dismiss the Sash as representative of Métis nationhood, but found its appearance unexpected. Her surprise led to laughter and ridicule.

The Sash, then, did not hold the same symbolic weight for most of the interviewees as it did for the interviewers. In their questions, Freeman and Breland-Fines saw clothing as an external indication of identity and thus as a way of distinguishing Métis from others. It was an easy way for Métis to wear their nationalism. In this formulation, they expected that the Sash should have been prominent in the collective memories of the OHP interviewees. The absence of the

Sash then was significant and spoke to a more complicated history of the role of the Sash in Métis society.

In the comparative absence of the Sash, and more broadly its concern with Métis dress, the OHP reveals much about ethno-nationalism and identity in the late twentieth century. The proliferation of the Sash in the 1990s indicated the increasing clout of Red River culture in defining Métis ethno-nationalism. In this context, the Sash stood in as a re-invented tradition used to legitimate Métis organizations and their political efforts, representing a "turning back" to a historical past to repurpose an object for contemporary identity creation. This was new in the early 1990s. Such concerns were part of the inspiration for the OHP. However, interviewees' responses show that they did not yet hold as much resonance with individuals. This would change by the early aughts, when the Sash had permeated deeper into individual understandings of personal and national identity. My own experiences with the Sash support this, as well as the increasing visibility of the Sash at ceremonial gatherings. But in the 1990s, this was not yet the case; the OHP, captured the moment in which the symbolic meaning of the Sash at the ground level was not in sync with organizations engaged in a colonial politics of recognition.

Conversations (5): Food as Ethno-Nationalist Symbols

Questions about traditional clothing did not elicit the reaction that Freeman and Breland-Fines expected, nor did their inquiries about traditional food, albeit in distinct ways. Traditional foods are often thought of as static and as such stand in for authenticity. As measures of authenticity, for instance, traditional foods have acted as yard sticks by which colonial officials have measured "pure indigeneity"; to eat non-traditional foods has implied being modern and thus inauthentic. Colonial states have employed these measures against Indigenous peoples as legal arguments to deny claims to land and rights. This is most famous in the Pizza Test in *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*. However, the concept of traditional food is far from static. The anthropologist Brigitte Sebastia describes traditional food as evoking "cultural heritage, the know-how shared and transmitted, quite often by word of mouth, amongst a more or less wide group of people."[123] This is not rigid or homogenous but, represents a "blurring, elasticity and heterogeneity."[124] Traditional foods can be a part of a contemporary identity as much as pizza can. Yet, like their approach to traditional clothing, Freeman and Breland-Fines were searching for answers about specific traditional foods that could represent Métis-ness.

> Freeman uses this as an opportunity to ask about Métis food: "Is there any, I guess what people would call today, traditional Métis foods? Is there such a thing?[125]
>
> Kathleen Delaronde responds: "I don't know."

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[123] Brigitte Sebastia, "Eating Traditional Food: Politics, Identity and Pracitices," in Eating Traditional Food: Politics, Identity and Practices ed., Brigitte Sebastia (New York: Routledge, 2017): 2.
[124] Sebastia, "Eating Traditional Food," 2.
[125] DeLaronde interview.

Looking back Freeman pushes further: Like what kind of things did you eat as a child…or now?[126]

"Like moose meat once in a while…Everything I guess…"[127]

"There was a lot of meat, wild meat." Ernest Mohr adds in agreement. "My dad was a good hunter. That and a big garden, and they had a few head of cattle. Kill a cow in the fall, and a pig, and you're set for the winter. We milked cows all winter…"[128]

Bella Morriseau nods: "Wild meat. A lot of wild meat back in those days. Deer meat. Moose meat. Elk meat. Fish. Potatoes."[129]

Freeman: "So they had vegetable gardens?"[130]

Bella Morriseau: "Yeah, yeah. My mother had a garden."[131]

Picking up this discussion of gardening Hilda Dysart adds: "like my father because he came from a farming family when he was up, when he came here like we always had a garden like as far back as I can remember, and we'd have the cellars in the winter time to keep the carrots and the potatoes, we had all that."[132]

While most families had at least a small garden, Kathryn McLeod reminds us that most of the food that was eaten was "wild foods," and begins to list: "Moose meat, fish."[133]

Which Eva Carpick continues, "Rabbit, Moose meat, Caribou meat, in the summer time we'd have lots of fish…Everything was canned, there was nothing fresh…muskrats in the spring…geese and ducks in the spring."[134]

Freeman seems to be frustrated, she's looking for something, "What about Métis foods? Was there such a thing as Métis food?"[135]

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[126] DeLaronde interview.

[127] DeLaronde interview.

[128] Mohr, interview.

[129] Bella Morriseau, "Oral history interview with Bella Morrisseau of Crane River, Manitoba," 28 April 1993. Accession No. 1997-44, Location Code C2414. Metis Women of Manitoba Inc. oral history project records, Archive of Manitoba.

[130] Morriseau, interview.

[131] Morriseau, interview.

[132] Dysart, interview.

[133] McLeod and Carpick, interview.

[134] Mcleod, interview.

[135] Bell, interview.

Joe Bell: "Oh, I don't know. I don't know."[136]

Agnes Bell: "No. I guess they eat all kinds of things, whatever they find out to eat."[137]

Joe Bell: "Like in them days they used to eat anything. I've eat gophers when I was a kid, I remember."[138]

Agnes Bell: "Them days there was lots of jumper, and rabbits, prairie chicken, ducks, now there's none of those things. Long time ago there was lots."[139]

Ernest Mohr's son interjects, "what about the meat called pemmican?"[140]

Ernest Mohr turns to him: "Oh, that's way before our day. We never seen that. I never tasted any of it."[141]

The initial reactions of interviewees to questions of traditional food were reminiscent of their responses to questions of clothing: none could immediately name a specific Métis food. Métis, as Agnes Bell put it, simply ate "whatever they find out to eat."[142] When pushed by Freeman, interviewees resorted to listing off local foods that they recalled forming a significant part of their diet. This generally included whatever local game was in season and available was often supplemented by garden vegetables grown at home. These harvesting practices have been an integral component of Métis identity, and something that Métis organizations have indeed fought hard to have enshrined as part of Métis Aboriginal rights in Canada. However, in the context of the OHP hunting local game or eating garden potatoes could not symbolically represent Métisness because these were practices common to everyone in the province.

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[136] Bell, interview.
[137] Bell, interview.
[138] Bell interview.
[139] Bell interview.
[140] Mohr interview.
[141] Mohr, interview.
[142] Bell, interview.

Even pemmican, when brought up by Ernest Mohr's son, could not fit Freeman and Breland-Fines' expectation of traditional food. There was a strong historical association of pemmican with Métis peoples. Historians such as Gerhard Ens have linked the emergence of the Métis Nation with the economic niche of providing pemmican for voyageurs in the fur trade. Métis hunted bison which they turned into pemmican and provided to both the Hudson's Bay Company and the North-West Company.[143] The first stirrings of a Métis political consciousness emerged out of the Pemmican Wars.[144] However, for individual Métis, this history seemed distant rather than symbolic in their personal lives. As Mohr, summarized: "that's way before our day."[145] Métis could not sustain pemmican as a traditional Métis food when the bison were all dead. By the late twentieth century, it, like the Sash, was not present in the everyday lived experiences of Métis.

> Freeman tries to narrow the focus of conversation, "What about food at Christmas time? Were there any sort of traditional Métis foods you had to have at Christmas time?"[146]
>
> Mary Pottinger responds, "not really, we usually had turkey or ham…I don't know, nothing Métis about it, unless there's my bannock of course."[147]
>
> And there it is, bannock.
>
> Joe Bell: "Well what I remember mother used to…used to bake bannock in there. Bake outside bannock you know. Make a big fire, there were lots of ashes the bannock would cook that's the best way. I wish I'd have some of that right now. I would eat half a bannock right now!"[148]

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[143] Ens and Sawchuk, *New Peoples to New Nations*, 68.
[144] The Battle of La Grenouillère (Seven Oaks) in 1816.
[145] Mohr, interview.
[146] Pottinger, interview.
[147] Pottinger, interview.
[148] Bell, interview.

Minnie Anderson: "That bannocks really good on the open fire."[149]

Now, Freeman wants to restate that the purpose of these interviews is to preserve cultural knowledge for younger generations that may have not been raised in that setting. She explains that this might seem odd but it's an important component of her work. She looks at Anderson, "When you say bannock, can you tell me what that is?"[150]

Minnie Anderson: "What do you mean?"[151]

Freeman flounders, "Like…the reason I ask, I should have explained this before, to most people it sounds like a stupid questions but to the some of the younger people in the south, Métis kids, who don't have a grandma and all that, they don't understand what bannock is. I do but…"[152]

Delia Allard: "You don't know what bannock is?!"[153]

Lionel Allard: "You're not Michif then!"[154]

Rose LaFreniere, looking at Freeman, "You know how to make bannock?!"[155]

Freeman: "I'm going to say no because it usually ends up like a rock, my mom and my sisters have the knack…"[156]

Rose LaFreniere: "Well, you know some people are so stupid they phone me and they ask, 'how many cups of flour do you use to make bannock' I say 'how stupid can you be!' Come here and I'll teach you how to make bannock…I have a big bowl, and I fill it with flour and then I make a bird's nest in the middle…I put my baking powder, a little bit salt. I prepare margarine and then the lard to make the bannock. It tastes a lot better. And I take half a pound of margarine and I melt it and I put cold water on it. You don't put it hot in there…And then I roll my bannock and I take my fork and I pick, pick, pick…There's a women and she makes it and one day she says she'll send me a bannock…so she sends me a bannock and she had used a knife to pock holes in

[149] Minnie Anderson interview. "Oral history interview with Minnie Anderson of South Indian Lake, Manitoba," 18 May 1993. Accession No. 1997-44, Location Code C2438. Metis Women of Manitoba Inc. oral history project records, Archive of Manitoba.
[150] Anderson, interview.
[151] Anderson, interview.
[152] Anderson, interview.
[153] Lionel and Delia Allard interview, "Oral History interview with Lionel and Delia Allard of St. Laurent, Manitoba," 22 June 1993. Accession No. 1997-44, Location Code C2408. Metis Women of Manitoba Inc. oral history project records, Archive of Manitoba.
[154] Allard, interview.
[155] LaFreniere, interview.
[156] LaFreniere, interview.

her bannock you know, I never said nothing but I thought you're wrong lady."[157]

Frank Walter strongly agrees, "any old Métis girl that has anything to do with them can make bannock."[158]

"Well if you don't cook your bannock right then that'll be hard tack!"[159] laughs Ernest Mohr.

Though, Ernest Mohr continues "all the white people eat that…"[160]

Kenneth McLeod: It's a white man's recipe. Scotsmen brought it. They called it scones, they used to cook it on the wood stove, like that one there…the Scots brought it eh, the Indians didn't have no bannock."[161]

Every interviewee, when pressed about traditional foods, eventually selected bannock as a Métis food. Like the Sash, bannock did not originate as a Métis invention. It was an important component in many people's diets. For example, in 1992, a year before the OHP interviews, the Manitoba Historical Society published *Manitoba's Heritage Cookery: Selections from Personal Collections*. This cookbook presented recipes from a selection of ethnic groups that comprised Manitoba's population. Following a standard chronology, the MHS presented recipes in a linear evolution from Indigenous nations, or, as the MHS phrased it the "original Manitobans," to Métis, and then, the first "Red River" (Scottish) Settlers.[162] The MHS included recipes for bannock for each of these three "founding" groups. With slight variations, the recipes were remarkably

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[157] LaFreniere, interview.
[158] Frank Walter Interview. "Oral history interview with Frank Walter of Selkirk, Manitoba," 13 April 1993. Accession No. 1997-44, Location Code C2397. Metis Women of Manitoba Inc. oral history project records, Archive of Manitoba.
[159] Mohr, interview.
[160] Mohr, interview.
[161] Kenneth McCleod, "Oral history interview with Kenneth McLeod of Norway House, Manitoba," 20 May 1993, accession no. 1997-44, Location Code C2444. Metis Women of Manitoba Inc. oral history project records, Archives of Manitoba.
[162] Manitoba Historical Society, *Manitoba's Heritage Cookery: Selections from Personal Collections* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Historical Society, 1992).

similar. In this text, bannock stood in as representative for First Nations, Métis and Scottish cooking.

Although shared, bannock was still Métis. Studying the incorporation of Chinese dumplings into an authentic Mongolian national cuisine, the anthropologist Sandrine Ruhlmann argues that "food is arguably the most resistant link with the land of the ancestors," even if that food cannot be said to originate within that national culture.[163] Echoing this, Métis chef Shane Chartrand, in a CBC interview, stated that, "[Indigenous peoples] inherited bannock from the British. We've also made it part of our culture, so is it part of our culture? Of course, it is. We've made it our own. When you're gifted something, it's yours."[164] In this sense, Bannock could represent being Métis even though it originated as a Scottish culinary object and was widely eaten by white settlers and other Indigenous peoples.

In the OHP, the interviewees emphasized this position. When asked about traditional foods, they all drew a strong association between being Métis and knowing how to make bannock. They too acknowledged the widespread use of bannock in other cultures. As Ernest Mohr and Kenneth McLeod both argued, for example, bannock was widely eaten by European settlers. In this sense, it did not operate as the kind of distinctive national symbol that Métis organizations sought in this period Nonetheless, for the interviewees, bannock was important in their daily

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[163] Sandrine Ruhlman, "Are Buuz and Bans traditional Mongolian foods? Strategy of Appropriation and Identity Adjustment in Contemporary Mongolia," in Eating Traditional Food: Politics, Identity and Practices ed., Brigitte Sebastia (New York: Routledge, 2017): 99.
[164] Julie Van Rosendall, "Shane Chartrand's Bannock," *The Globe and Mail*, February 17, 2018, 13.

lives. For them, it was also common knowledge, something that did not require explaining. Minnie Anderson, Delia, and Lionel Allard were all shocked when asked to explain bannock. To them, this was self-evident; if you were Métis, you knew what bannock was. When asked to elaborate, Rose LaFreniere turned the conversation on Freeman, demanding to know if she knew how to make bannock. When Freeman responded ambiguously, stating in the affirmative, but with the caveat that she was not skilled at it, LaFreniere launched into a long discussion on the simplicity of making bannock. For LaFreniere, bannock was both simple and specific. A knife was not an appropriate utensil to make the grooves; that was what a fork should be for, and, this was obvious. To interviewees, the knowledge of bannock was familial and thus Métis.

For both the interviewers and the interviewees, then, bannock could be a symbol that represented a Métis identity. The OHP sought ethno-nationalist symbols – including food – that would be exclusively and specifically Métis. However, this expectation was predicated on, or constrained by, a colonial politics of recognition. In the OHP, individual participants insisted on another interpretation. For them, bannock was clearly Metis. It did not need to be exclusively Métis to have represented Métis life, family, identity, and knowledge.

Conclusion

That bannock represented Métis identity in ways that the Sash did not was not what the OHP expected. It was a complication that did not sit easily within the ethno-nationalism that structured the OHP. Yet, the OHP as a project had a successful conclusion. While Freeman and Breland-Fines did not find and preserve an easy, essentialized "essence" of being Métis, they did carve out a space for Métis voices in Canadian history. That the project's archival record found a home at the Archives of Manitoba was a victory in itself. Freeman and Breland-Fines had won the recognition of a state institution and succeeded in legitimating Métis voices as sources for the state to preserve as part of its history. This was the space that the OHP, like Métis organizations, sought: a place within Canada.

The OHP also, unintentionally, demonstrated that the symbols to which organizations turned to for this recognition were not static. As the legal landscape shifted in the 1980s and 1990s, a dissonance opened between organizations and individuals on the ground. While organizations turned to symbols that could be measured as an authentic tradition, it took time and work for them to gain acceptance as such and, alone, they could not define Métis identity. Cultural objects like the Sash and bannock were much too complicated. The Sash, on the one hand, was not recalled by Métis individuals who had lived through the twentieth century, an era of explicit Canadian colonialism. On the other hand, bannock, although an object that Métis turned to as a tradition, was also explicitly recalled as being a Scottish innovation used by many other communities. These similar but, distinct, reactions demonstrated the messy ways that the colonial politics of recognition enmeshed identity with authentic tradition. As Métis came under the microscope of the Canadian state in new ways following the constitutional entrenchment of Métis rights

43

through Section 35 and the transformation of status rules through Bill C-31, the Sash and bannock became avenues towards cementing recognition – but in ways that were far from immediate on the ground.

Organizations and individuals alike became caught up in these shifting state regulations. Whereas organizations sought state recognition, individuals were more concerned with navigating the personal identity choices instigated by Bill C-31. The OHP was important because it captured a moment before individual Métis had embraced the ethno-nationalism that organizations were turning to in the wake of Bill C-31. The Sash and bannock, as constructed in this ethno-nationalist imagining, would become identity symbols across Métis communities moving into the twenty-first century. This would coincide with the increased use of Métis Nation rhetoric by groups in eastern Canada with no historic connection to Métis peoplehood.[165] These groups sought to adopt these ethno-nationalist symbols at the same time that official organizations sought to restrict them to the recognized Métis national homeland. That it was the federal government that instigated this competition does not open up claims to Métis identity to anyone. The colonial state was not, and can never be, the source of these identities. How Métis organizations choose to articulate their nationalism must be for Métis and not Canada. This does not mean that the Sash and bannock were not, and are not, integral components of a Métis identity, but we must not structure them within a colonial politics of recognition that insists on an authenticity determined by Canadian expectations of tradition.

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[165] Andersen, *Métis*, 194 – 195.

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