

THE METIS PEOPLE OF ST.LAURENT, MANITOBA
AN INTRODUCTORY ETHNOGRAPHY

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the lives of a people, the Metis, or the Michifs as they call themselves at St.Laurent, Manitoba. The Metis people were generally referred to as the off-springs of the Native Indian women and of the Europeans during the fur trade era. One hundred and thirty years ago, they enjoyed at Red River a successful economic way of life that was highly integrated to the land and to the environment. The Metis, at the time, were a proud race and called themselves the 'New Nation'. In 1870, after seeing Manitoba become a province within Confederation, their leader Louis Riel, was expelled from his homeland and the Metis gradually became, over the years, a socially and economically marginalized people.

The purpose of this thesis is to document the process by which a particular Metis community at St.Laurent, Manitoba, is moving or has moved from being a self-contained community to a condition in which some aspects of their lives appear more generally 'Canadian' than specifically Metis. Due to the processes of modernization and secularization, many Metis find themselves today at a cultural crossroad. They face the choice of remaining Metis or becoming 'Canadian'. Data reveals that there are some social, cultural and economic implications in making such a decision. I will argue the point that it is possible to

retain a strong and definitive sense of being Metis while at the same time becoming a Canadian and, presumably, less Metis than formerly was the case.

Some findings of this research relate to the constituents of Metisness, both core and surface values. We will follow the process of change these cultural values have undergone within the life-span of the informants. Data shows that some Metis, under economic pressure, made their decision rather quickly as they joined the mainstream of society. Others continue to struggle to retain some aspects of Metisness as they see former cultural ways absorbed by the modern current. In many instances, Metis people are becoming 'Canadian' at the expense of being Metis, that many Metis have assimilated and have become 'Canadian'. As a result, Metis today are not what they were in the past.

However, in the process, we encounter many Metis today, who are rediscovering their family origins, their historical traditions and cultural heritage. These people are, in their own ways, socially, culturally and politically reconstructing new expressions of Metisness in today's technological world.

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Introduction

Personal Background

I was born in 1939 in an old log-house, in St.Laurent, Manitoba and can trace my ancestors to the 1700's at Red River (Sprague: 1983, Table 1, 1818-1870). My great-great-great-grandfather, Ignace Lavallee, born 1760, married 'a la facon du pays', (according to the custom of the country) Josephte Cree, born 1786. Five generations later, in July 1968, I was ordained a Roman Catholic priest in my home village. St.Laurent is a small Metis village situated on the eastern shores of Lake Manitoba, some ninety kilometres northwest of Winnipeg. As a boy, I remember watching, on Saturday evenings, the cabooses of fishermen, a lantern dangling close to the front window, creaking their way back home from a week on the lake, with a load of fresh pickerel and jack fish. The horses would make thudding sounds on the crisp fresh snow as heavy white smoke curled out of the chimneys in the cold winter air. The full moon, like a silver disk, hovered brightly over the Metis settlement.

I had always dreamed of doing some type of research on my home village. Many of my boyhood memories still remain vivid in my mind: the hunters, the trappers, the fishermen, women's work, the children, the social life, the Metis way of life, its challenges and its promises. So when the time

came to choose a geographical area for my field-work, I chose St.Laurent. Having been born and raised there, I had connections and acquaintances who, I felt, would collaborate with me and facilitate my field-work and research. Furthermore, having been away from home for more than thirty years, I was also looking forward to the moment when I would go back and reconnect with my village roots and traditions. I was not disappointed!

A Manitoba free-lance writer once dubbed St.Laurent, 'a village like no other.' There are no streets, no sidewalks, no townsite, no industries. Yet, there are over one thousand people, the majority of them being Metis living in homes sparsely scattered for four kilometres along the new and old highways. In similar manner, I often looked upon the Metis people of my village as unique, because I thought that we were the only people in the world who spoke the Michif French language fluently. Of course, that notion was quickly dispelled as, in my travels across Canada, I met other Metis who also spoke the same language.

Since that time, my ministry has been both varied and hectic, from intercultural settings and inner-city conditions to involvement with Metis social and political organizations both at the local and national levels. My motivation in doing this research was prompted partly by my academic interest in learning more about Metis history and way of life. Hence, in the fall of 1985, I started anthropological studies at the University of British Columbia. Specifically,

I was looking for an opportunity to assess and evaluate my work and ministry from the perspective of the social sciences. My personal reflections on the significance of the social and political dimensions of my ministry with Metis people from 1968 to 1978 led me to make some observations and formulate certain questions:

Metis people have difficulty in asserting themselves as a distinct people, as an ethnic group, as an aboriginal people in their home provinces and in Canada. Why?

In general, the public, including the government, members of corporations, union leaders, the churches and scholars lack a thorough knowledge of Metis history and way of life, and especially on the role the Metis played in the development of Western Canada.

What are some of the personal and social implications of being a Metis in Canada today?

Have modernization and secularization had any effects on Metis culture and way of life? If so, in what ways?

It is not within the scope of this thesis to provide answers to all these questions. We will nonetheless touch on and allude to many related issues and topics throughout the course of our discussion with the Metis people at St. Laurent, Manitoba.

Aim and Purpose of Thesis

The aim of this thesis is to produce an introductory ethnography that will serve mainly as a preliminary and descriptive study of the people and area. It does not pretend to cover and depict all aspects of the Metis way of life. It has neither an exclusive theory nor a particular hypothesis to prove. First and foremost, this research wants to capture and examine some aspects of the Metis way of life and culture as perceived, experienced and lived by the Metis people themselves. I am interested in documenting their version of their story, of their history and of their way of life. Our analysis will focus primarily on some cultural factors constitutive of contemporary Metisness. We will address the following questions:

Does the Metis life experience at St.Laurent, Manitoba, within the life-span of the informants contribute to our understanding of Metisness to-day? And does such experience add to our understanding of 19th century Metisness? If so, how?

As was stated above, the general purpose of this thesis is to document the process by which a particular Metis community, at St.Laurent Manitoba, is moving or has moved from being a self-contained community of Metis to a condition in which some aspects of their life appear more generally 'Canadian' (participating in a way of life that is common to most Canadian citizens) than specifically Metis (a separate community within the Canadian hegemony).

In part, the process is subsumed in what have been called modernization and/or secularization. It is also subsumed in what has been called marginalization, since the story of the Manitoba Metis is one of movement from the centre to the periphery. The specific problems addressed are:

Metis perspectives on their own history. Are the Metis becoming 'Canadian' at the expense of being Metis?

The issue of Metisness. What do members recognize as constitutive values of Metis culture in the twentieth century? Among these values, which ones are considered 'core', which ones are considered 'surface' values?

Is it possible to retain the same Metisness while becoming something other? Surely no. Then, is it possible to retain a strong and definitive sense of being Metis while at the same time becoming something other and, presumably, less Metis than formerly was the case? Probably yes.

Are identities finite or, in principle, not finite? That is, while in adding to what one was one does not necessarily lose anything of what one was, proportionately, but what one was clearly does not exhaust what one is. A difference is entailed. If identity is finite, gaining attributes and qualities necessarily means losing others---leading logically to the wholly different.

If identity is not finite, on the other hand, as seems the case for the Metis, it allows for additional qualities: a difference is implied without necessarily losing what had existed before.

Will the Metis of St.Laurent retain their Metisness within the general meaning of being Canadian or will they become amorphous Canadians? Is assimilation to mainstream Canadian behaviours negatively value-laden for members of the Metis community at St.Laurent? Does the concept of Metisness in the twentieth century need to be changed?

Methodology

According to R.F.Ellen (1984: 9) "Methodology is the systematic study of the principles guiding anthropological investigation and the ways in which theory find its application; it is an articulated, theoretically informed approach to the production of data. A theory is a supposition or a body of suppositions designed to explain phenomena or data".

In other words, methodology is the theoretical framework or model from which we process, analyze and interpret data. For our purpose, here, we will be using the cognitive anthropology model. It is one of many models used in ethnography. Cognitive anthropology focuses on discovering how different peoples organize their culture. It attempts to understand the organizing principles underlying behaviour. It is assumed that each people has a unique system for perceiving and organizing material phenomena--- things, events, behaviour and emotions (Goodenough 1957). The object of the study is not these material phenomena themselves, but the way they are organized in the minds of the people. Cultures then are not seen as material phenomena; they are cognitive organizations of material phenomena. In essence, cognitive anthropology seeks to answer two questions: What material phenomena are significant for the people of a particular culture; and, how do they organize these phenomena (Stephen Tyler 1986: 3)?

In a general way, ethnography can be broadly defined as the study-description of a culture, or an aspect thereof, of a people, based on first-hand accounts. Ethnography implies both theory and method, process and product. However, the essence of ethnography is not to produce a mere description of culture, but to contextualize elements of culture and to make systematic connections among them. Ethnography always implies a theory of culture (Spradley 1979: 5). Hence, an ethnography is a collaborative act between researcher and informant. From the beginning to the end, an ethnography is formed and shaped by the active interplay between researcher and informant.

Within the cognitive anthropology model, then, ethnography is the study-description of a culture from the participant's point of view. Each anthropological model carries within itself certain theoretical assumptions; and the model of cognitive anthropology is no exception. Assumptions are the primary givens or basic principles of a model, and they help us to define data and decide what techniques will be useful in obtaining the data and thereby keep us from circular logic.

A simple and accurate definition of the data that I will use in my study is the knowledge people have of their cultural scene. According to the cognitive anthropology model, the data of a culture is something the informant knows. Cognitive anthropology is a mentalist and ideational approach to our understanding of culture, as compared to the

materialist approach which defines data as something one sees and or observes.

It follows that our assumptions not only assist in recognizing data representing the informant's point of view (EMIC viewpoint), but they also provide certain techniques conducive to obtaining data. Some of the techniques that I employed during my field-work period were participant observation and ethnographic interview.

Since the primary goal of cognitive anthropology is to analyze and describe a culture from the participant's point of view, my goal has been to prepare and present an analysis of Metis culture in terms of members' knowledge. Our main assumption of this model is that culture is understood as knowledge. According to the cognitive anthropology model, culture is defined as the knowledge people acquire and use to interpret their experience and to generate social behaviour (Spradley 1979:5). Another assumption is that its approach is inductive, that is, an hypothesis is not used in the initial formulation of the topic; it comes into play during the middle stages of data collection and analysis. The process is from the specific to the general, from the unknown to the known, while the deductive approach proceeds from the general to the specific, from the known to the unknown. An hypothesis, on the other hand, is a tentative explanation, based on data, which is to be validated or falsified, proven or disproven.

In this thesis, I allow respondents to speak for themselves (emic) and attempt to fit what they say into a general framework (etic) where the main landmarks are modernization and/or secularization, marginalization and identity.

Location and Research Method

While methodology is an articulated, theoretically informed approach to the production of data, method is the general mode of yielding data (Ellen 1984; 9). The data for this research was compiled in St.Laurent, Manitoba, during a two-month period of intensive field-work in September and October 1987. The field-work methods included ethnographic interviewing, participant observation, some archival work at the local Municipal and Church offices, the Public Archives of Manitoba and the Historical Society of St.Boniface, Manitoba.

I interviewed fifty-one people for a total of sixty-four hours, twenty-seven men and twenty-four women, ranging from seventeen to ninety-six years old, twenty-five of whom were seniors. All the interviews were tape recorded and were conducted in the Michif French language.

The main difference between the way in which ethnographers and survey interviewers ask questions is not, as is sometimes suggested, that one form of interviewing is 'structured' and the other is 'unstructured'. All interviews, like any other kind of social interaction, are structured by both researcher and informant. The important

distinction to be made is between standardized and reflexive interviewing (Hammersley and Atkinson 1986: 113).

Consequently, as an apprentice ethnographer, I did not decide beforehand all the specific questions I wanted to ask. Rather, I entered the interviews with a list of issues and areas I wanted to cover and which I wanted to include in the thesis. Upon reflection on the informant's answers to my initial questions, I formulated further questions. Some of the areas and issues are the following: The geographical and historical setting of St.Laurent; people's perception of growing up and making a living in St.Laurent; some aspects of their knowledge on social life, religion, politics and language.

Finally, the disciplinary context for this research is two-fold: historical and ethnographic or ethnohistory. Historical because temporal parameters are central to the analysis, the research covers the life-span of the informants. Ethnographic, because the research circumscribes Metis culture and way of life as perceived, lived and experienced by the Metis people themselves.

Chapter 1

Historical Background and Historiography

As relevant to our general theme of Metisness, this chapter deals in the first part, with some aspects of Metis history especially as it refers to the term, Metis. In the second part, we will review some of the literature relevant to Metis portrayal and identity.

Historical Background

In the Canadian West much confusion surrounds the use of the term 'Metis'. While most people agree that the term refers to persons of mixed Indian and European ancestry, it is difficult to obtain a more precise definition. Metis can refer to individuals and communities whose origins lie in the pre-1870 West. To some people, the term also includes non-status Indian. In one sense, the word conveys a meaning of cultural identity and in another a quasi-legal status. Add other factors such as biological, social, regional, historical and constitutional to the definition and the issue really gets confusing.

Prior to 1870, there would appear to be agreement on what we call the classical image of the Metis as shown in

some of Paul Kane's paintings. The French-speaking, Roman Catholic, non-Indian native buffalo-hunters of the Red River settlement emerge as distinct from the rest of the people of the period and of the region, most of them constituting a strong Riel following. Yet there are problems of terminology. What about the other non-Indian native people who did not fit the 'classical' image of the Metis? Among them, we find the English-speaking Protestant Metis of Portage la Prairie and of Prince Albert; and we find the French and Saulteaux-speaking Metis of Manitoba's Interlake. Also it seems that the French and Cree-speaking buffalo-hunters of Northern Saskatchewan would appear to 'fit' in the image of the classical Metis. Then, there were also the people of Northern Alberta, of the Peace River and Athabasca Rivers, Cree-speaking, Roman Catholic and some Iroquois trapper-hunters. Many of their descendants would demand halfbreed scrip rather than treaty status. Scrip was a piece of paper used by the government that entitled Metis people to money or to land. According to Sealy and Lussier (1975: 135) "Metis children born before July 15, 1870, were given a choice between a money scrip worth \$240 or a land scrip that allowed them to choose 240 acres of unoccupied Dominion lands".

Scholars dealing with the pre-1870 West generally accept two entities of mixed ancestry: British-Protestant and French Catholic Metis. Other terms that were used were Bois-Brules and Halfbreed, Country-born and Rupertslander.

According to John E. Foster (1983: 77), it was in the St. Lawrence fur trade tradition that a term first emerged distinguishing a socio-cultural entity of mixed-blood and Euro-Canadian ancestry from both the Indian and the Euro-Canadian in the West. In the 1820's, the words Metis and Halfbreed were commonly used. Following the fur trade competition in 1820, numerous families of mixed-bloods of the St. Lawrence area journeyed to Red River to join the Metis. As a result, many images of the Metis emerged: plains hunters, fishermen, voyageurs, freighters. Some emphasized their French and Catholic orientation, others their British and Protestant ways.

In the late 1790's, the North-West Company brought into the interior as many as 200 Iroquois, Ottawa and Saulteaux trapper-voyageurs. The Iroquois especially proved to be successful. They took wives among the Cree and became effective traders as well as hunters and trappers. The relationship they enjoyed with the North-West Company continued after the merger of the companies in 1821. At the end of the century, a number of descendants of these families chose scrip rather than treaty. They regarded themselves not as Indians but as Halfbreeds and Metis.

In the Hudson's Bay tradition in the early 1800's, a word distinguishing a third community, distinct from the 'Indians' or 'Natives' or 'Whites', did not arise. In contrast to the St. Lawrence tradition in which the term

'Metis' and its English equivalent 'Halfbreed' arose, people in the Bay tradition remained 'Native' or 'English'. (Foster 1983: 79). After 1820, a number of Hudson's Bay 'English' moved to Red River to become river lot farmers, tripmen to the York Boats and private merchants. (Foster 1983: 79).

Thus, persons of mixed ancestry were socio-culturally identified with way of life, not necessarily biological heritage. It was their role in their respective traditions that would determine the nature of their culture. For our purpose here, the Metis of St.Laurent are the descendants of the French and Catholic tradition of Red River.

Historiography

This section will address some of the literature on Metis people with special reference as to how some authors have defined and portrayed Metis people.

In the last few years, there has been an explosion of literature on Metis people. This is in part due to a new Metis nationalism sparked by the centenary of Batoche and the death of Louis Riel. The various social and political Metis organizations also added vitality to Metisness as many people made efforts to retrace their roots to Canada's aboriginal and fur trade past while others enjoyed a renaissance of Metis historical and political awareness. Researchers today will find relevant information on Metis in church archives, university and public libraries, Metis

organizations and in the Hudson's Bay Company files in Winnipeg.

Some writers of the 19th century portray the Metis as obstacles to the social and economic progress of the colony. Among them is George Stanley (1936). His view is that the Red River events of 1869-1870 and the Saskatchewan Resistance of 1885 were primarily a manifestation of a characteristic frontier problem: the clash between civilized and primitive peoples. This approach has lost all its credibility within Metis circles today. His study neglects the appalling social and economic living conditions of the Metis which they perceived as the real cause of the troubles. At the time, the economy of the Metis, hunting of various kinds, fishing and trapping, was well integrated to the land and to the environment and was highly successful, much more successful than the Scots who tried farming! For the Metis people, the 'insurrections' of 1869 at Red River and the 'rebellion' of 1885 at Batoche, were caused by the fear of losing their central position in the existing economy. Confederation as understood by the MacDonald government meant marginalization to the Metis, cut off from their economy.

For a thorough analysis of the Red River situation, W.L. Morton (1956: 1-148) suggests in his Introduction to Alexander Begg's Red River Journal and other papers relative to the Red River Resistance of 1869-1870 that the Red River settlement was a civilized society, thereby rejecting Stan-

ley's cultural conflict interpretation. Morton's view is that Riel's resistance to the federal government was an extension of the social and religious tension between central and western Canada.

Other writers try to show a little more sympathy for the Metis. One such book is A.H. de Tremaudan's Histoire de la nation Metisse (1935) and translated as Hold High your Heads (1982) by Elizabeth Maguet. Written in 1920, de Tremaudan studied documents, interviewed witnesses and challenges traditional interpretations. He presents Riel's views of Metisness as one where the connection between the French and Roman Catholicism is paramount and that if Riel and the Metis had been left alone in 1870, there would have been a second Quebec in the West. On Metis identity, the author is very clear: "There is none more Catholic than a Metis there is none more French...In religion he is Catholic, in nationality he is French from head to toe---in mind, heart, word and deed".(de Tremaudan 1982: x-xii).

In the same vein of thought is The Collected Writings of Louis Riel (Stanley et al. 1985). The Writings agree with de Tremaudan's thesis and present Riel's view of Metisness as resolutely French and Catholic in orientation with little emphasis on the Indian component.

Perhaps the most comprehensive ethnographic and historical study on the Metis was done by Marcel Giraud in his two-volume work: Le Metis Canadien (1945) and translated by George Woodcock in 1986 as The Metis in the Canadian West

(Woodcock 1986). Giraud portrays the birth of the Metis as a distinct group who considered themselves a 'nation' apart from both whites and Indians. Riel, de Tremaudan, and Giraud all stress the French bonds and affinities when defining the Metis people, but Giraud also includes the English roots, the anglophone Hudson's Bay Company families who constituted his 'northern current'. Whereas de Tremaudan and Riel tend to minimize the Indian heritage of the Metis, Giraud makes it a continuing theme, having a tendency to treat the Indians in a negative way.

Like Stanley's, Giraud's book comes out of the 1930's era; they are both early models of a period in which racism was an underlying assumption. Everything is debated within the framework of civilized and primitive cultures. Both men grew up in a mentality of European expansion and historical tradition.

There have been some biographies on Metis people but particularly on Louis Riel. Such a study of Riel is found in Joseph Kinsey Howard's Strange Empire (1965). He presents Riel as a leader of the Northwestern plains whose plans were far more political than military. In these pages, the author depicts Riel as a mystic, almost a religious fanatic. At one time, he was insane or at least unsettled even though Howard doubts his insanity. He spent months in an asylum, there were many people who thought he was crazy. But there was a quality of leadership in the man, of wisdom, of humility

and of moderation in spite of the contradictions in his personality. Howard presents Riel less a bloodthirsty individual than as an honest and pious figure of political aspirations.

Another biography is The One-And-A-Half-Men: The Story of Jim Brady and Malcolm Morris, Metis Patriots of the Twentieth Century (Dobbins, 1981). This biographical book also provides a unique perspective on 20th century Metis history, Indian and Metis organizations of the 1930's and 40's and the roots of contemporary organizations. Metis are portrayed as people who have suffered powerlessness, discrimination and economic hardships at the hands of government exploiters and land speculators.

Literature on the Metis at St.Laurent does not abound. The most recent one is probably the Tourism Business Opportunity Study (1987) conducted by HKL & Associates from Winnipeg. The report is a feasibility study on tourism in St.Laurent and makes some recommendations for tourism opportunities. The report includes an updated profile of the community compiled by Sandra Funk (1987). It contains sections on: population, labour force, natural resources, health and education services, economic sectors and community infrastructure.

An earlier study on the village is the missionary account of Sister Pauline Mercier, F.M.M. (1876-1976). It is rich with local anecdotes and historical dates and events. Within the context of the Metis Oral History Project

sponsored by the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Nicole St-Onge describes the St.Laurent community in Canadian Oral History Association : "St.Laurent, Manitoba: Oral History of a Metis Community". (St-Onge: 1984). St-Onge uses "oral history as a tool for understanding the evolving social structure of a community...and for indicating where and when changes had occurred over the last fifty or sixty years and how residents reacted to them". (St-Onge 1984: 2-3).

One last portrayal of Metis of St.Laurent is provided by Marcel Giraud. He writes:... "tiny half-breed villages, such as...St.Laurent...are now occupied by very backward people...their mental traits appear as incompletely developed as their biological composition....In competition with the whites, they are handicapped by their lack of initiative, steady will, providence and... poverty. In brief, they are fitted for manual and closely supervised work, but not for supervisory activity... as soon as severe intellectual discipline is required...[He] gives up every exertion...his qualities gradually paralyzed by a lack of will-power which may ultimately result among the adults in a complete disintegration of moral principles". (1937: 541-549).

A review of the literature shows that most writers have not had a high esteem for the Metis people. In a nutshell, Metis were a nuisance to the development and progress of the

oncoming white 'civilization'. Few writers actually had something positive to say about their character traits.

In recent years, due to access to new sources, a new and more positive appreciation of the Metis lifestyle is coming into being. For that reason it is difficult to sum up the concept of Metisness in the 19th century as new interpretations keep surfacing. Metisness of the 19th century is being reconstructed everyday both by scholars carrying out research on the new available data and by the Metis people themselves who are rediscovering their roots and traditions. Thus, new interpretations of Metisness keep popping up and nothing seems to indicate a reversal of that trend.

One feature of the literature on Metis people is most noticeable: there is a dearth of ethnographies on contemporary Metis communities. Most historians have examined the Metis way of life only before 1885. What happened to the Metis after 1885? Outside of Diane Payment's historical community study of Batoche :1870-1910 (1983) and Paul Driben's We are Metis: The ethnography of a half-breed community in Northern Alberta (1985) and Philip Spaulding's Ile-a-la-Crosse (1970), there are actually few writings that deal with contemporary Metis people and communities after the death of Louis Riel. Why is this so? Perhaps historians are more interested in doing simple archival research, while ethnographers have preferred to study 'traditional aboriginal cultures' rather than hybrid ones.

The present research is a modest attempt to fill that void. Specifically, I hope that the description of the life experience of the Metis at St.Laurent will contribute to our understanding of Metisness and of Metis identity in the 20th century; that it will show how such Metisness and identity differ from 19th century concepts, and how the process of modernization has influenced it. Furthermore, I hope it will raise the level of consciousness of Metis people in their understanding of their own history and culture. I hope it will serve as a cultural resource for Metis people and scholars who have a concern for Metis culture, history and language.

Finally, much like native history, that of the Metis has never been recorded from the Metis person's point of view and mode of thought. Scholars remind us that Metis people, being a people of oral tradition, left very little written material regarding their past life. Consequently, I hope this study will act as a stimulant and an encouragement for other researchers, particularly Metis scholars, to record and document Metis culture and history in a Metis perspective.

Chapter 2

St.Laurent, Manitoba

The Geographical and Historical Setting

This chapter introduces the reader to St.Laurent. In the first part, we will look at its geographical setting, location, settlement pattern and topography. In the second part, I will present a review of the people's perception of their history, and also a descriptive account of the people's appreciation of some material aspects of their culture such as shelter, food and clothing. At the same time, I will document some of the changes that have occurred in their cultural understanding of these material aspects since the turn of the century.

Geographical Setting

St.Laurent, Manitoba, not to be confused with St.Laurent, Saskatchewan, is a Metis village in the Interlake region of the province of Manitoba. It is situated on the eastern shores of Lake Manitoba or of "L'Grand Lac Manitoba", as one elder called it, some ninety kilometres north-west of Winnipeg. (Fig. 1).

Some twenty years ago, most English visitors to the area would be somewhat perplexed. As they entered the village from the south end by provincial highway number six,

(Fig. 1 and Fig.2), they would read a green sign with white bold letters: St.Laurent. But they would not see a single house. This is because the settlement pattern reflects its French-Canadian roots.

The thing that strikes the outsider upon arrival here is that there is no town-site. After driving in the area for awhile, one notices the houses randomly scattered along the old and new highway, along side roads, the "fascinage road",¹ and along the railway track over an area of approximately five by three kilometres. (Fig. 2). Many dwellings are built close to the main roads, at varying distances, while others are nestled in the bushes of the wooded grassland.

According to an elder, people were given lake front lots, two miles long by twenty to fifty yards wide. Some were given more, others less. In other words, the land holding system in St.Laurent was patterned on the system established earlier in Red River. Researchers for Parks Canada explain it in this way:

Land tenure in the Red River Settlement was based on the seigneurial system of New France. Unlike the English (and American) system which employed the square township survey, the French system was based on long narrow river lots. Each lot was up to 3km deep but had a river frontage of only 8 - 12 chains (150 - 250m). In Red River, this long narrow pattern suited the settlers needs for both access to the river and to their neighbors. It gave each family a share of fertile black river soil for crops such as wheat, oats, barley and vegetables, as well as space further back for some hay and pasture".²

In a fashion like Red River, the Metis of St.Laurent had access to water (Lake Manitoba) for transportation and fishing, and to the land for needed cultivation and hay making. The settlement was divided into twenty-four lots. The boundaries of the lot system are: to the south, the Twin lake road; to the west, Lake Manitoba; to the north, the present Chartrand Road S.; and to the east, the "fascinage" road. (Figures 2 and 3).

The land outside the lot system boundaries was surveyed according to the square township and rectangular grid system by the Canadian Government after Confederation. One life-long area resident contends that many lots were not properly surveyed.

The same informant states that the government in the 1870's, established a sort of reserve land without granting individual title. The children of the registered heads of families were suppose to receive so many acres each. The Manitoba Act of 1870 provides land for the Metis children. Up to this day, there is no evidence that the Metis at St.Laurent received the land. With this understanding, the people constructed their house haphazardly on their respective lots and not according to street designs. Furthermore, an elder explains: "People could not stay close and build their homes close to each other as in a town, as they had cows and farms to look after".

Two senior women probably reflect the sentiments of many local Metis residents when they say that this type of settlement pattern is fine with them, as it is more compatible with the Metis way of thinking and way of life. As they remarked: "We enjoy more freedom of movement and independence, instead of being crammed close together as in the cities".

Before the new road was built, the old highway number six was merely a narrow gravel road, (Fig. 2). People travelled by cutters (a small, light sleigh usually pulled by one horse), cabooses (a horse-drawn vehicle consisting of a small cabin mounted on runners and equipped with benches and a stove) and horse-drawn sleighs in the winter, and in the summer by buggy, and horse-drawn wagons.

Some local people knew the area very well, including as a former hunter quipped, every rabbit trail in the bush! At first, he continues, the railroad track was supposed to pass by Norman Gaudry's place, and then another railway was scheduled to be built near "L'Grand Mash-keg",³ (Fig. 2). But, neither of these projects ever materialized. The railway was built in 1904 (Mercier: 1976) where it stands today and it has always been at that one place. From the horse and buggy days to the four-wheel drive of today, the Metis people of St. Laurent, like most Manitobans, have been a very highly mobile population.

Land and Soil

The land around St.Laurent has many characteristics.

Agriculture Canada describes the soil as follows:

"The area has a layer of till which is either covered with water-sorted sediments or is modified on the surface by the lake waters that occupied the Manitoba lowlands for a period of time after the melting of glacial age. The till, strongly calcareous in composition, is derived from the limestone area of the Manitoba lowlands and the granitoid region of the Precambrian Shield. The water-sorted deposits, mainly of moderately calcareous composition, are dominantly from the western uplands."⁴

In sum, the soils on the St.Laurent area consist of glacial tills and lake deposits and have limited agricultural potential. There is some arable land in the St.Laurent area, but because of the stony and calcareous conditions of the soil, most of the land can best serve as pastureland for haying and raising cattle.

A local farmer for many years says that the soil quality of St.Laurent is good. "We can produce just about anything except corn and sunflowers. There are, however, simply too many stones. Corn and sunflowers need special kinds of rows for clean up and stones would be in the way of the cleaning-machine". It is also arid land, he adds, in spite of being surrounded by lots of water. "That is because

there is lots of limestone in the Interlake soil, it needs a lot of rain to produce".

A cattle farmer observes that the soil is good for pastureland, haying and raising cattle, but then, he cautions, it is too stoney and too salty to grow grain. Another respondent tried farming but switched to another business because he found it was too expensive to operate. Nonetheless, he acknowledged that the soil produced good yields of alfalfa.

Climate

The climate in the St.Laurent area is characterized by the seasonal extremes that are typical of the central prairies. Summers are very hot (temperatures reaching 30 - 35 Celsius) and winters are extremely cold with temperatures plunging to -35 -40 degrees Celsius. There is usually a snow cover between November and March and the lake is frozen over between late November and early May.

Early settlement and Historical Development

The inhabitants of the St.Laurent area at the time of the initial European influence were probably Cree and Assiniboine Indians. According to Arthur J. Ray, (1974: 3):

"Throughout most of the historical period, the Siouan-speaking Assiniboine and the Algonquian-speaking Western Cree Indians were the principal inhabitants of central and southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and they figured prominently in the fur trade of the Canadian West".

La Verendrye and his sons also travelled on "L'Grand Lac Manitoba" in 1733.

As early as 1824, a group of Metis from Pembina moved to the St.Laurent area attracted by the fishing on Lake Manitoba. Another group, driven out by the Red River flood of 1826 also settled here shortly after.⁵ It is unclear if the area had been abandoned or if people resided in the area, and if so, who they were, when the first Metis arrived in the 1820's. By 1850, twelve Metis families resided in the vicinity of St.Laurent. Among them were the Lamberts, the Chartrands, the Lavalles and the Ducharmes.⁶ By 1863, several new families had moved into the area. Like their predecessors, they were attracted by the fishing on "L'Grand Lac Manitoba".

Between 1863 and 1881, the settlement developed rapidly. Father Laurent Simonet, OMI, in 1861 was the first resident priest.⁷ Apparently the school that stood at the south-end for many years was named after him. The first baptism, marriage and burial recorded in the parish register are as follows: the baptism is that of Amelie Goulet who was born on May 25, 1864. She was the daughter of Pierre Goulet and Marie Chaboyer, and was baptized here on May 27; the marriage is that of between Louison Comptois and Marie Genaille, on February 5th, 1865, and the burial service that of Suzanne Laurent on December 24th, 1864.⁸

In 1870, the first school was opened and by 1881, St.Laurent had its own government as the Provincial Legislature created the Rural Municipality of St.Laurent.⁹ By this time, St.Laurent had 32 Metis families and a school population of 50.¹⁰ The Franciscan Missionaries of Mary arrived in 1896 and six years later, a three-storey convent was constructed to house the nuns; thirty-five of them were in residence in the 1950's.¹¹ Between 1905 and 1910, several Breton families arrived from France.¹² They were followed by some French Canadian families in the 1930's. Some Mennonite families also moved to the area in the early 1950's. Most of these people moved in the area to carry on cattle and dairy farming or to operate general stores. Today, the population of St.Laurent is approximately 1,100, about three quarter of whom are Metis.¹³

In summary, some Metis families have lived in the vicinity since the 1820's. Over the years, a strong core of Metis people have always remained here. Many white people of different nationalities, Metis and non-Metis alike, have come and gone. People settled here for various reasons. Some came to fish, some to raise cattle and engage in dairy farming.

Thus, the early settlement of St.Laurent was comprised mainly of Metis people but, over the years, became a settlement with people with heterogeneous background. More recently, resorts at the lake have drawn in many city-dwellers, also of many nationalities.

Material Features of Metis culture: Shelter, food and clothes.

Shelter

According to an informant, the typical habitation of the Metis people during the first part of the twentieth century was a log-house. Constructed from the local poplar brought in from the Stony Ridge area, most of the log-houses had one or two storeys. The aspen trees were not used because they were considered too soft and subject to rot in a short time. The logs were set horizontally according to French Canadian structure and not vertically which was considered the English tradition.

Covered with yellow gumbo, mud and grass, they were painted over with mortar, plaster and lime both inside and outside. Another respondent noted that some people also used moss to fill in the cracks in the walls; sometimes, the roof was covered with hay and with black dirt over the hay to prevent the rain from seeping through. In winter, I recall people would place straw bales and hay or pack the snow three or four feet high around the house to contain the heat, and in some cases, that was the extent of the insulation.

The size of the dwellings varied often according to the size of the family. For example, an elder lady informs us that their house was not big. Often, there were no walls

upstairs, just drapes to separate the rooms. She adds that some houses had no stairs to go to the dirt cellar, so they used a home-made step-ladder..

A common sight in the area was the larger two-storey log-house. As I was told by an elder, the door to a large kitchen would usually serve as the main entrance and this would lead to the living-room where one would find a big pot-bellied stove usually in the middle of the floor. And as one informant said: "In the good old days, those spacious living-rooms, some of them 24 X 24 feet, made good dance-halls on Saturday nights".

"Our house was nothing fancy", relates another, "but we had all the basic furniture we needed: tables, chairs, cupboards, beds and linen". As the stoves were the only source of heat, one senior man said that the kitchen stove served for both cooking and heating, while the pot-bellied stove in the living-room provided warmth for the entire household, including the area upstairs. However, it became very hot around the kitchen stove especially when baking bread during the month of July. The kerosene and coal-oil lamps provided a rather dim light for the various rooms. Later, the gas lamp was a welcome improvement in spite of its fragile and easy-to-break mantles.

In the winter, the whole house, especially the floors were as cold as ice when people woke in the mornings. So, they tried to get the stove going as fast as possible. To do so, one informant said that, the night before, they made

"les rippes", small, dry pieces of wood shavings to serve as fire-starters. If one did not have too much difficulty starting the fire, one could hear, after a moment, the flames crackling, and soon afterwards, a pot of hot tea or coffee would be whistling and dancing on the old wood-stove.

Many newly-wed couples stayed in a one-room log-house for their first few years of married life. One elderly lady recalled, some of these dwellings were no bigger than 16 X 16. Once the family got too big, they moved into more spacious quarters or they added on to the original section, some with plank construction and covered with bricksiding. Some large families did lack adequate housing.

In general, even though the homes were small and crowded, they were, nonetheless, kept clean and cozy. As a woman in her eighties told me: "Our mothers taught us to be clean and to make lysol and our own soap with the ashes from the wood-stove". Another woman explained: "We would then wash the walls and the ceiling and scrub the floors with a floor-brush. Mother would come around and inspect to make sure we had done a good job, especially cleaning between the cracks of the wooden floor. We would have to start over again if it was not done to her satisfaction. Some people also tied hay and/or grass to a stick which they used as brooms and brushes".

One of the elders described a typical kitchen as follows:

"To be happy in her kitchen, a woman must have a good stove and I had a good stove. It provided heat, yes, but I used it mainly for cooking. Of course, we had no electricity and no refrigerator then. So we wrapped the meat and other perishables like head cheese and butter, put it in a pail and lowered them into the water down the well to keep fresh. At the centre of the kitchen would be the table. Since there were seven of us at one time for the meals, it had to be a big and strong table. We had chairs and benches, too. Beside my stove, there would be a big box. I would make sure that the boys kept it always full with dry wood. In the corner, beside the window, there would be a stand with a water basin and towel with a mirror hanging on the wall in front of you. We would throw our dirty water either outside or in the slop-pail by the stand".

She said that she spent a lot of time in her kitchen. She remembers preparing the food for the men going to fish on the lake in wintertime. She would pre-cook most of the food like beef or pork roast, lots of potatoes and some home-made pastries and bannock. My kitchen, she recollected would also be the place where I would welcome the visitors. Sitting at the kitchen table, we would talk and drink tea with cake or cookies. The cupboards were usually full of dishes, utensils, pots and pans, odds and ends. Her living-room had all the basic furniture like the sofa, chairs, table and dressers. Finally, she related how she kept and treasured a gallery of family and holy pictures on the walls.

People no longer live in log-houses in St.Laurent. According to an informant, the last Metis family to live in a log-house in St.Laurent was in the late sixties. Today, one can readily observe that new homes, in some cases with

attached car garages, have replaced the old houses. Visitors do not see horse-drawn wagons or sleighs anymore. People now enjoy the commodities and utilities of modern life. In the early 1970's, the local Metis organization was instrumental in persuading the Manitoba Housing Corporation to build 34 new units and a Senior Citizen's Home.

Metis Food

The diet of the Metis of St.Laurent was strongly influenced by the local fishing, hunting and trapping economy. Jackfish, saugers and tullibees were the common fish, but the real delicacies were the pickerel and the whitefish. Some people ate fish many times a week and never got tired of them, especially the pickerel. Today, the residents still eat a lot of fish, but not as much as they used to. According to a fisherman's wife, this is simply because the younger generation has become somewhat fussy as to its taste.

In the past, water fowl figured prominently in the diet. Also wild meat particularly deer and rabbit, were important. St.Laurent lies within the zone fur traders used to call "Muskrat Country". The land teemed with these animals. Until recently, muskrat meat was a common item on the household table. Presently, however the younger generation trap the muskrat only for its fur value. Few young people eat muskrat any longer.

Besides 'country food' the Metis always depended on their gardens. Families grew all the basic vegetables (carrots, lettuce, beet, turnips, cucumber, cabbages and tomatoes) and usually they had a large potato field. An informant told me that some families would have as many as three different cellars in their dirt basement: two large ones for the vegetables and the potatoes and a smaller one for the canned preserves.

Many kinds of wild berries also abounded. Most popular for canning purposes were high bush cranberries or "li pabbinans"¹⁴ as they are called locally, raspberries and strawberries that grew along the lake near "la couli d'Wilson".¹⁵ Also, the highly esteemed saskatoons and choke cherries were always in abundance. Pincherries, gooseberries and hazelnuts were present too, but in smaller proportion.

Besides these various vegetable foods, the Metis kept cattle beef and dairy cattle as well as cows, pigs and chickens. According to an elder, men helped each other in butchering animals. Women used the tripes to make blood sausage. Metis women produced their own butter from the farm fresh cream. Eggs and milk were also fresh everyday. Thus, the local diet was well balanced with vegetables, assorted game meats and wild berries.

The Metis women have always placed a premium on food preparation and cooking. At an early age, children were taught not to waste; food was considered to be a gift from the Creator and a reward for a person's honest day's work.

Many women routinely baked as many as twenty or twenty-five loaves of bread, once or twice a week, not counting the bannock and other pastries she prepared.

Various recipes such as meatballs and tomato sauce, deer steak and onions, rabbit and duck stew with chopped carrots and bannock, Christmas fruit cake and "la Poutchine au Sac",¹⁸ all were considered typical Metis foods and were served with great delight to guests, especially during the festive seasons of Christmas and New Year.

Two former residents have provided recipes of some of the Metis people's more popular and favourite foods. (See Addendum: p.44). Some of these recipes, they admitted, date back to the 1920's and were passed on to them by their mother, Mrs. Madeleine Lavallee.

An elder explained it rather well as she succinctly remarked:

"There is little doubt that our mothers were very good cooks with the little conveniences that they had".

Many families remember the autumn days of canning. An enthusiastic grandmother recalls when, with the help of her family, they would can as many as one thousand quarts of vegetables, fruits, wild berries, fish and wild meat. Washing, cleaning and boiling the jars was quite a chore as was the cooking of the food considering that they did not have electrical or gas stoves then.

However, not all families had a plentiful supply of food. One woman explained how she had to go and snare rabbits, partridges and prairie chicken to make ends meet. A widow stated that, too often, all she had to feed her children was potatoes, macaroni and bologna. Fresh meat? "Only on Sundays", replied another. Some elders also recall eating beaver, lynx, bear and making their own pemmican. Pemmican was dried, lean meat pounded into a paste with melted fat and some berries. After awhile it hardened and it was the usual food of the voyageurs because it would keep for a long time under almost any conditions.

Nowadays, remarked an oldtimer, it seems that members of the younger generation will sometimes prefer Safeway meat and seafood to wild meat and fish from Lake Manitoba.

The source of food has thus changed considerably for the Metis people of St.Laurent in the last few years, and its preparation, accordingly.

Metis Clothing

In the past, Metis people had to be creative and diligent in making the clothes they needed for each season of the year. One of the elder member of the community noted that women especially were adept in designing moccasins, mittens and parkas from deer, moose and rabbit hide; we would never throw away old clothing, we would take old clothes, take them apart and put them together again in new coats or jackets.

A women's sewing club operated for many years in the village. According to a woman who still remembers her mother belonging to such a group, she said that the Metis women would meet at the convent or at each other's place in the afternoon and alternate on a weekly basis. Knitting of woollen socks, mittens and sweaters for the entire family was very important especially for economic reasons. A mother of a large family remarked that orders of clothes from the Eaton or Simpson catalogue were restricted to once or twice a year, usually at Easter or Christmas time.

The women washed their clothes as a part of her household chores. Of course, she preferred soft water if she could get some. People anticipated the rain whenever they saw dark grey clouds gathering in the West over "L'Grand lac Manitoba". Accordingly, they set up the eavestroughs and/or every imaginable container to get as much rain water as possible. In the winter, the boys were expected to shovel fresh and clean snow into a tub or boiler which they would carry in the house and place on the stove to melt. As a young lad, I recall doing that myself often.

An elder observed, for many years, most women used a tub, wash-board and home-made soap to wash clothes. The washing-machine, either the manually operated or the electric one, are recent acquisitions. She describes her work in the following way:

"It would usually take a day or two to wash the heavy batch spread out on the floor according to color and variety, besides, the women had to be healthy and strong to wring the clothes by hand, especially the men's coveralls and working clothes. Often, my fingers would hurt at the end of the day".

A woman standing on a bench, clothespins in her mouth and a basketfull of wet clothes beside her, hanging clothes on a line that she had probably put together herself, was a familiar sight in the village. With a pole, she would then raise the heavy-laden line for the clothes to dry. The ideal condition to dry clothes is a sunny and breezy day. But according to an informant, in the winter, the clothes would freeze and become stiff as a board; after an hour or so in the house, usually on a sofa, chair or bed, the clothes would soften again and exude a clean and fresh aroma. The irons were heated on the stove and clipped on to a handle. By this time, the clothes had been humidified with sprinkling water and were now ready for ironing.

Today, not a single Metis woman uses a wash-board to wash clothes. Everyone uses modern utilities and conveniences. The obvious change as far as clothing is concerned is in the manufacturing of clothes. In the past, people, in general, made their own clothes for themselves and for their families. Today, most people buy their clothes from a department store or from a boutique.

To conclude this chapter, like many other people

of the region and of the province, the Metis people of St. Laurent have undergone considerable changes in their cultural understanding regarding some material aspects of their culture. This is due primarily to a change of life-style from a subsistence to a more complex and cash economy. Consequently, modern life has absorbed many material aspects of traditional Metis culture, except perhaps for some traditional Metis foods. In many respects, the economic experience of the Metis is not unique and no different from that of other pioneer settlers in the region, as most people depended on a subsistence economy.

The difference in the situation, however, lies in the fact that the Metis are an aboriginal people with a special attachment to the land. Their economic life-style, at the time, was successful and highly integrated to the land and to the environment. Whereas, to most white settlers and government people, modernization meant prosperity and progress, to the Metis, their understanding of modernization was based on the fear of losing their central position in the economy. It meant the disintegration of their thriving economic system and marginalization of their people. To many Metis, marginalization was the by-product of modernization.

Table 1 (below) reveals graphically how the Metis of St. Laurent have moved from being a close-knit and self-contained community for the most part exploiting the resources of the immediate environment and engaged in mutual

intra-community relations and obligations with a minimal dependence on the resources of the exterior environment to one in which they have come to rely on the latter almost exclusively. And this requires, above everything else, access to cash which means that they have come to depend on wage labour, paid employment, or small businesses.

Two columns dominate the table: prior to 1950, we find most of the check marks (X) under the column for goods that were self-made(sm), while to-day we find most of these marks under the column (c), bought for cash. The log-house and other goods such as home-made carpets, moccasins and clothes, wood-stoves, buggies and cabooses practically do not exist anymore. Many items that are bought for cash today, such as skidoos and bombardiers, hydro and electrical appliances, and car garages did not exist before 1950. Thus, very few items were bought for cash prior to 1950, while today, only a few articles are made at home.

This drastic socio-economic change indicates in an objective sense that whatever the Metis were in the past they are not the same today. It also raises the questions whether, in thus becoming in so many ways more Canadian than Metis, the Metis still retain their identity as Metis and, if they do, on what basis.

Table 1

Abr.: Sm:self-made; c: cash; E/N-e:Existing,Non-existing.

Material Aspects of Metis Culture

Items	<u>Pre-1950</u>			<u>To-day</u>		
	Sm	c	E/N-e	Sm	c	E/N-e
<u>Shelter:</u>						
Log-house	x		E			N-e
Floor-brush	x	x	E			N-e
Carpets	x		E		x	E
Insulation	x		E		x	E
Furniture	x		E		x	E
Electricity	x		N-e		x	E
Heating	x		E		x	E
Water Works	x		E	x	x	E
Car garage			N-e	x	x	E
Senior Home			N-e		x	E
Housing			N-e	x	x	E
<u>Clothing</u>						
Moccasins	x		E			N-e
Socks	x	x	E		x	E
Mittens	x		E		x	E
Sweaters	x		E		x	E
Parkas	x	x	E		x	E
Gloves	x	x	E		x	E
Sewing Club	x		E	x	x	N-e
Washboard		x	E		x	E
Washing-Machine			N-e		x	E
Dryer			N-e		x	E
Ironing	x		E		x	E
Soap	x	x	E		x	E

Food

Fishing	x	x	E	x	x	E
Trapping	x	x	E	x	x	E/N-e
Hunting	x		E	x		E
Produce	x		E	x	x	E
Dairy	x	x	E		x	E
Wildberries	x		E	x	x	E/N-e

Transport

Buggies	x		E			N-e
Sulky	x		E			N-e
Wagon	x		E			N-e
Democrats	x		E			N-e
Cabooses	x		E			N-e
Sleighs	x		E			N-e
Cutters	x		E			N-e
Tractors			N-e		x	E
Ski-doos			N-e		x	E
Bombardiers			N-e		x	E
Horses		x	E			N-e
Train		x	E			N-e
Bus		x	E		x	E
Car		x	E/N-e		x	E
Trucks		x	N-e		x	E
3-wheelers			N-e		x	E
Plane			N-e		x	E
Boat	x		E		x	E

Addendum1- Christmas cake:

2 cups butter, 2 cups brown sugar,
1 cup molasse, 5 cups of flour, 8 eggs well beaten,
1 cup sour milk, 1 teaspoon baking soda, mix as usual and
stir in at the last, 1 pound currants washed and dried,
1 pound seeded raisins,
1 pound dates chopped,
1 teaspoon cinnamon, 1/2 teaspoon of nutmeg,
1/2 teaspoon mace, 1/2 pound blanched sliced almonds,
1/2 pound mixed peel.
Bake in slow oven 225 degrees for 2 to 3 hours depending on
size of pans.

2- Pudding in a bag. (Poutchine au sac).

1/2 cup beef suet, chopped fine and free from skin,
1/2 cup brown sugar, 1 cup raisins, 1/2 cup currants,
1 teaspoon pastry spice, 2 cups flour, 1/2 teaspoon salt,
4 teaspoons baking powder, 3/4 cup milk,
Mix all dry ingredients together, then add milk. Pour
mixture in 5 lbs. cotton bag or 2, 1-qt. sealer or 4
1-pt. sealer and steam 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 hrs.
Fill jars half-full. Serve with sauce.

Sauce

1/2 cup white sugar, 1 tablespoon cornstarch,
1 cup boiling water, 2 tablespoons butter,
1/2 teaspoon lemon extract, 1/2 teaspoon vanilla,

1/4 teaspoon nutmeg.

Mix sugar and corn starch, stir in boiling water, boil 5 minutes, take from fire, add butter and flavoring.

3- Bannock

4 cups of flour, 2 teaspoon salt,

3 teaspoon baking powder, 1 cup lard.

Mix dry ingredients well, stir in enough water to make soft dough, divide in half and roll out with rolling pin to desired thickness, prick with fork and bake in hot oven 400 degrees for 15 to 20 minutes.

4- Rabbit stew with salt pork

1/2 lb. salt pork cut in pieces,

2 rabbits cut up in serving pieces,

Put in pot of boiling water, add 1 carrot sliced,

1 small onion chopped.

Stew for 2 hours or until tender.

Flour to thicken.

5- Wild ducks

2 wild ducks, mallards,

After ducks are plucked and cleaned,

singe them on an open flame or wood fire,

cut up in serving pieces and

put in pot of boiling water to cover,

add 1 teaspoon salt, 1/2 teaspoon black pepper,

one small carrot sliced, one medium onion chopped,

simmer for 2 to 3 hours or until meat is tender,

then add flour to thicken.

6- Muskrat

Boil in 4 cups of water, 1 teaspoon salt for 1 1/2 hour or until tender. Or roast in oven for 2 hours with a lot of lard, season to taste with salt and pepper.

7-Meat balls (les boulettes)

2 pounds ground beef, lean, 1 med. onion chopped fine, 1 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1/2 teaspoon black pepper, 1/2 cup flour to mix in the meat to hold together, mix well, roll into 2-3 in. balls and roll into flour again. Put in quart of boiling water, 1 teaspoon salt, and let simmer gently for one hour.

8-Pork Hocks (Head cheese)

Wash 4 pork hocks in cold water,
put in large pot,
cover with cold water,
boil for 30 minutes, drain,
rinse hocks and pot,
return to pot and add half amount of water.
Stick 4 to 6 whole cloves, 1 small onion,
1 bay leaf, 1 tablespoon vinegar.
Salt and pepper to taste, cook until tender,
Remove meat from bones. Cut in small pieces or wood-chopper.
Add strain liquid and put into molds to set.

Notes

- 1- French word. The road serving as the eastern boundary of the lot system is known as the 'fascinage' road, some local people believe it was originally built as a fire-guard road.
- 2- Parks Canada, Qs-R103-000BB-A2, 1981.
- 3- "L'Grand Mash-Keg", French Michif pronunciation for the big muskeg. A famous hunting-ground for Metis people, it is situated approximately five kilometres southeast of the village.
- 4- Agriculture Canada, ARDA, map 62-1. Queen's printers, Winnipeg, Manitoba.
- 5- Archives of the St.Boniface Historical Society, in Ami du Foyer, September, 1961, p.5.
- 6- Archives of the St.Boniface Historical Society. ibidem p. 6.
- 7- Archives of the St.Boniface Historical Society. ibidem p. 5.
- 8- St.Laurent Parish Register, No. 1, December 25th, 1864.
- 9- St.Laurent Parish Register, quoted in St.Laurent: 1876-1976, by Sister Pauline Mercier, Fmm. p. 8.
- 10- Rural Municipality of St.Laurent Records. Letter-head of by-law no. 1 signed by J. Mulvihill, warden and by N. Hutton, clerk, January 21, 1882.
- 11- Journal of the Franciscans Sisters, quote by Mercier, ibidem p. 12.

12- Archives of St. Boniface Historical Society, Ami du Foyer, October 1961, p. 5.

13- Annex A, updated Community profile, compiled by Sandra Funk, 1987,

14- Local Michif French pronunciation for cranberries.

15- Local Michif French pronunciation for Wilson Creek, situated one mile north of the village along the lake.

16- French Michif words describing Christmas pudding, literally means 'pudding in a bag'.

CHAPTER 3

GROWING UP IN ST.LAURENT

In the second chapter, we examined how the Metis people of St.Laurent were, in the past, generally reliant on the environment economically, living abundantly off the local and natural resources from the land and water. We also saw how, from the moment they, perforce, became engaged in the complex and cash economy, their economic dependence on the land and on the environment was decreased and they had to rely more and more on the exterior environment and outside resources for their livelihood.

This chapter describes some aspects of the stages of development in a person's life from birth to burial. We will look at some birth practices and childhood behaviour, socializing experiences at school, courtship and marriage, adult and senior years, and finally some of the wake and burial customs. The material in this chapter reveals the drastic changes in Metis life in relation to modernization, secularization, education and family life. Most of the data was provided by the respondents in the field and will serve as the basis to describe the experience of Metis people as they grew up at St.Laurent. Consistent with the model of cognitive anthropology, I will present these experiences from the Metis' point of view and perception.

In the process, I will attempt to identify some of the cultural elements that constitute Metisness throughout the life-span of the informants. I will do so by contrasting the cultural elements in the lives of the elders and the youth, then and now. I also want to point out which of these cultural components have been dropped or retained and if new ones that have been adopted. Finally, the table will indicate whether the components are 'surface' or 'core'.

The main problems addressed are:

- To what extent has modernization and secularization occurred?
- Has the Church lost its influence?
- How has education and family life changed since the turn of the century?

Definition of terms

In its most general usage in the social sciences, *value* denotes any object of any need, attitude, or desire. There is an additional usage which is perhaps the one most frequently found in anthropology. The term has come to denote the shared cultural standards according to which the relevance---moral, aesthetic, or cognitive---of the objects of attitudes, desires, and needs can be compared and judged (Becker 1964:744).

By core values, I mean the central and constitutive elements of a culture as opposed to surface which are the minor and secondary ones. Ever since, largely through Max Weber, 'value' was drawn out of its purely economic context

to include the emotive and cultural, emic and etic, it has become a useful if flexible tool of description. Julian Steward used the term 'core' to mean "...the constellation of features which are most closely related to subsistence activities and economic arrangements. The core includes such social, political and religious patterns as are empirically determined to be closely connected with these arrangements (Steward 1955:37). For our purpose here, we may regard core value as those which the Metis of St.Laurent regard as non-optional for being Metis, for example speaking Michif, and surface values as those Metis people regard as optional. Sometimes, however, an investigator may notice values which seem to be non-optional but are not said to be so by the people concerned. These would still be, in an anthropological analysis, considered core value. Surface values, on the other hand, in this perspective (etic), would be those which seem to be optional in spite of declarations to the contrary to the people involved.

In a general way, Metisness refers to Metis culture, and is defined as the total way of life of the Metis people as they lived it in the past and as they continue to try to live and reconstruct it in their lives today. This total way of life includes their historical origins and customs, their languages and social organization, their traditions and folklore. But, since the primary goal of the cognitive anthropology model is to describe and analyze a culture from the informants' point of view, for our purpose, Metis cul-

ture here is defined as the knowledge Metis people acquire and use to interpret their experience and to generate social behaviour.

Modernization can be defined as the process of cultural and socioeconomic change whereby developing societies acquire some of the characteristics of Western industrialized societies (Haviland 1974: 566). In this context, secularization will mean that life, in general, has become divorced from its former overall organization by an institutionalized church or religion. It does not mean that no one is religious, for many remain so, or that connections with the church have been severed.

Birth and Infancy

According to an elder, the majority of mothers gave birth at home, while some had their babies on a trip, either on the trap-line or a hunting expedition. Some were born around the Stony Ridge area or 'Le P'tit Lac de Roches', as it is called today (Fig.2). A small settlement of close to fifteen Metis families, with their own school, existed some six miles east of St.Laurent in the early nineteen hundreds. An informant told me that some mothers would come to the village to give birth and return to Stony Ridge afterwards.

Families were large, and very few homes had less than six or eight children. Pre-and post-natal care were practically non-existent at the time and, as a result, some women experienced miscarriages. The older ladies who acted

as midwives performed their duties with resourcefulness and ingenuity considering the precarious circumstances and the little means they had at their disposal. One informant told me that, among others, Mrs. Jos. Chartrand had the reputation of being a very good midwife and that she helped many mothers, both Metis and non-Metis in delivering their babies.

Sometimes, the sleeping conditions created some problems. Lack of space necessitated children sleeping more than two to a bed. Some of the boys would sleep crossways at the foot of the bed to make more room. The girls, meanwhile, would usually have their room to themselves. In some instances, the living-room also served as sleeping quarters for two or three children. It was a chore every night to transform the sofa into a bed and to reverse the process the next morning. The cradle for the baby was not fancy, said a mother of seven, but functional, anything would do from a hammock to a homemade crib. Many Metis children were born into already crowded homes, but they grew up, nonetheless, under great parental love and care. Today, mothers give birth in hospitals and the number of children has decreased considerably. In fact, few families have more than three or four children.

Childhood

Most children followed in the footsteps of their parents. The boys would learn to hunt, fish and trap as they

accompanied their fathers on many expeditions. The various chores on the small farms, in summer and in winter, in the garden or around the house were usually more than enough to keep them busy. Thus, the boys were brought up to help out at home as much as possible, whether it was cleaning the barn, feeding the pigs or haying, especially if one of the younger children was sick or disabled. For example, after school, some boys would make \$1.25 sawing a wagon load of wood for the neighbors, while others would dig seneca root and sell it at the general store, for 5 cents a pound, dry.

In the meantime, the girls would be learning the arts of house-keeping, cooking and sewing. They would help their mothers bring up the younger brothers and sisters, especially if one of the parents happened to be sick or had died. One respondent reported that it was common for the older ones to pass their clothes on to their younger brothers and sisters. Both Metis boys and girls in the past learned at an early age, through sharing and caring, to contribute to the strengthening and to the closeness of the family and of the household. Hence, the family and outdoor contexts provided appropriate settings for Metis youth to develop qualities like self-reliance and communal responsibility on the one hand, and on the other, a sense of interdependence with all the members of the family.

Family outings were also a popular part of growing up for the Metis children of St. Laurent. The parents valued these events as they were ways the child or adolescent

participated in family life. In the old days, two or three families would get together, pack a day's lunch and travel with the horses and buggies either to the lake to pick up raspberries and wash clothes perhaps, or just have a picnic with the children and grandchildren. A grandmother who enjoyed such outings said that digging seneca root was a common activity. Children would compete among themselves to see who would dig the most, more for fun than as a subsistence task, as not too many could dig more than a pound during the whole day. Nonetheless, she added, the boys would dig as much as they could because they could then sell it at the local general store. For those who could afford it, children would attend the weekly movie at the parish hall.

With the advent of modernization, the life-style of Metis youth has changed considerably. Nowadays, few boys have to do chores at home or any type of manual labor. After school, one will probably find them, under the watchful eye of a coach, playing on the soccer field or practicing on a computer in a class-room. Meanwhile, the girls could be taking a typing course or practising figure skating at the arena. Besides, Metis youth enjoy many extra-curricular activities such as regional sports and academic field-trips. It is common practice for them to make trips outside of the village and to the city for shopping and for socializing purposes.

In sum, in the past, the Metis identified more with the values of the home and family life. According to an

informant, the traditional extended family was popular: a collection of family units, related by ties of blood lived together. The families, as a rule, were close and well-knitted. There were more local family and kin ties within neighborhoods. Family life was inward-looking and self-contained,

Today, the young people seem to identify less with the traditional structure of home and family. Their base of socializing has also widened and now includes various groups they belong to in and outside the community. The nuclear family consisting of the father, mother and the dependent children has replaced the extended family. As Spindler (1977:55) remarks of modernization: "In this environment... In place of the traditional, extended family, the small nuclear family arises as more flexible and adaptive in the new milieu". Thus, Metis family ties at St.Laurent have loosened to become more open to the exterior environment and in the process have become other-reliant.

Furthermore, due to the effects of modernization, it seems that the family is no longer the core and the center of Metis social organization as it once was, but rather, the family has become secondary to economic progress. "...In today's society...life is governed not...by the family, or neighbors, or religious organization, but by faceless bureaucracies" (Spindler 1977:55).

Secularization has also had its effects on the local people. For many years, the parish hall was once practically

the only center of entertainment and of social activities. For the youth, there were movies and roller-skating once a week, run by the local parish priest. Today, there is no parish hall. The priest and the nuns no longer conduct social activities for the local Metis youth. Instead, young people go to the community recreation centre, to the arena and sports ground, and to the gymnasium at the school for entertainment.

Thus, the social and recreational activities of the youth have shifted considerably in the village from being parish-centred and church-organized to community-based operations with considerable involvement outside the village.

Education

For a long time, there were two schools in the village, (Fig 2), Simonet school at the south end and the Convent school at the north end. Simonet school was to accommodate the students from the south end of the village who had too far to walk to the Convent school. Nuns of the order of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary from Quebec taught at both places. A senior who attended Simonet school for six years recalls that the school was often crowded, three or four grades in one classroom with one teacher not being uncommon. In the wintertime, in the morning, he added, students had to do gymnastics to keep warm before class as the wood-stove heated up.

The Convent school was much bigger, as from 1939 onward high school grades were also being taught. There were more students and more teachers. Some female students from the south end attended high school and boarded at the Convent; it was simply too far to walk, especially in winter time when the temperatures dipped below the freezing mark. Nonetheless, many students still walked two or three miles to go to school every day.

Students learned the basics in reading, writing and arithmetic. A respondent describes the first days of class in the following way: "The pupils would read the letters of the alphabet on a big chart: b-a=ba, m-a=ma. We used a slate board to write on as it was easier to wipe off than in a scribbler. We learned the vowels, the consonants and different syllables. For arithmetic, we counted with our fingers or used little wooden balls attached to pieces of wire". As another respondent told me, some children knew how to count and do basic reading even before going to school as their mothers would teach them at home before starting school.

A grandmother who did not live too far from the school then, describes a classroom: "In the lower grades, pupils sat in double desks. In grade seven or eight, they would sit at single desks, boys on one side of the classroom and girls on the other; this would also apply to recess time: each group would have their own playing area". The nuns were usually strict and, according to an informant, "somewhat overscrupulous at times, for example, they would not allow

the boys and girls to talk to each other without their permission". But as one former student recalls: "We still managed to exchange little notes as we criss-crossed paths in the vestibule or at recess. Then in higher grades, we learned about grammar and composition. Students did their home-work at home under the light of the coal-oil lamp and to the heat of logs burning away in the wood-stove". A point to be made here is that the socializing process of Metis youth at school was based on the separation of the sexes.

A Metis View of Education

The following data reveal some of the Metis people's view on education. One elder stated: "In my time, we did not think too much about going to school; we were more concerned and preoccupied with making a living for ourselves and for our families than sending our sons and daughters to school; as long as they knew how to read and write, we thought that that was good enough for them". "It was not unusual", added another, "for parents to take their boy or girl from school and put them to work at home or elsewhere to help raise the family, especially if you happened to be one of the older ones".

"Forty years ago", recalled a former trapper, "A successful Metis man was one who was a good fisherman, trapper and hunter and who, as a result, was able to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing for himself and for his family". "I hardly knew how to read and write", retorted

another, "and I think I did rather well in raising my family, they are all well established in life today with good jobs, a home and family; besides, the school did not teach anyone how to fish, hunt or trap". Another respondent concluded: "Education was important to me only if it helped put bread and butter on the table".

Based on the above data, some Metis people did not look at education as a core value in their life. Within the context of their subsistence economy which made them heavily dependent on the land and its resources, they did not see in education a direct means of subsistence. Activities like education that did not contribute to their economic welfare were simply discarded. As a result, education did not figure in their understanding of a successful person.

Introduction of Formal Education

With the founding of the high school in 1939 by Father Jean Methe, OMI, the local parish priest, education received the impetus needed to develop into a full-scale operation. An elder remarked: "I guess we never understood the meaning of education as the nuns and the priests understood it". "Their rationale", she added, "seemed to be that the more education one had, the better job one could have, the more money one could make and one could live, according to them, a better life than at present". What the priests and nuns were really suggesting was that if Metis people became

educated, they would become like other Canadians and enjoy a better way of life than they did as Metis.

Gradually, many parents took the words of the nuns and priests seriously and encouraged their children to attend school. But, as a former high school student remarked: "The system did not work too well at first, even though many Metis students attended high school, only a low percentage actually graduated over the years".

Over the years, education became a value for some of the St.Laurent Metis. So much so that in the last few years, the local Collegiate has seen the graduation of many Metis youths. As one parent stated: "We now encourage our children to go to school as far as they want to go, we tell them we will find the money if necessary if they want to go to university and graduate. We will back them up as much as we can". A grandmother concluded: "I hope the young people get as much education as they can, it helps develop their mind, education can be good for them, like helping them get a good job, make a lot of money and enjoy a better standard of living than we had".

Thus, education has become a value for many Metis people now living within the cash economy. Education is seen by many Metis as a stepping-stone to make money, as a way to achieve economic progress, an important facet of modernization. As Metis educator, D.Bruce Sealy (1980: 1-37) has said: "To a great extent education will be the key that allows Metis people to enter into the mainstream of society

and operate within it as equals. The Metis as a group, have chosen complete integration despite the difficulties inherent in achieving it".

Courtship and Marriage

The courtship and marriage customs of the Metis people have undergone many changes since the turn of the century. We will look at issues like morality, secularization and family ties as they affect marriage and family life.

The romances of many Metis couples would start 'way back then', as an elder stated, way back in childhood days, perhaps when they first met in school or when visiting their parents' places. Often, they would also meet at house gatherings or community events like picnics or card parties. One would catch the eye of the other and the relationship would develop and blossom from there. In some instances, the man and the woman were not allowed to speak to each other. They would then write notes. An informant recalled the example of the couple who shared and expressed their feelings about each other through letters handed to them through a third party. This lasted for about six months. Then the crucial time came for the young man to ask the father for his daughter's hand or "faire la d'mande", (Michif French: "to ask a man for his daughter in marriage"), a custom that has practically disappeared. Most courtships did not last too long. The couple did not have a chance to go out too

much as they often had a little brother or sister tagging along to chaperone them.

The parents were usually very strict. One respondent related: "You had to be in a certain time, or else...! And that was never late, whether it was to visit friends or to go to a dance. Even when I visited her at her place at night, I could not stay too long".

Informants were not aware of any marriages that were "arranged" by the parents, whose mate would be selected by the parents. Endogamy or marriage with someone within your own group or village and of your own Catholic faith was the rule. Few married outsiders then. And they usually married within a year after they started their courtship. Older people are somewhat appalled at young people today who go out together for many years before marriage and as one observed, "They even stay together before marriage! That was unheard of in our time, the priest would preach loudly against such behaviour from the pulpit".

Overall, in the past the Metis of St.Laurent married young, although there were no specific rules. An informant stated that some people married in their late teens or early twenties. A few women said they married when they were fifteen or sixteen years old. Today, people marry a little older for economic reasons, they want some economic stability before marrying.

Similarly, there were no specific rules as to post marital residence. According to an informant, it was common

forty years ago, for newly-weds to stay with either parents for economic reasons or at least until the first child was born. Many couples, at the time, considered this situation the ideal post marital residence pattern. But, as modernization set in their lives, the nuclear family gradually replaced the extended family. Thus, for the Metis of St.Laurent, today, the neo-local residence has become the preferred pattern of post marital residence.

The priest conducted the marriage ritual in the local Catholic church. Over the years, the time for the ceremony varied between 6:00 am and 4:00 pm. Beside the bride and groom, the wedding party would usually consist of the bestmen, the bridesmaids and, sometimes, a flower-girl and ring-bearer. In the old days, noted an elder, it was quite a sight to watch the bridal party depart from the church in horse-drawn buggies tastefully decorated for the occasion. In recent years, after the church ceremonies, the bridal party might motor to Winnipeg to be photographed. They would return in the early evening to a house where all the people would be waiting for them. Parents, relatives and friends would present the new couple with colourfully-wrapped gifts and offer them their best wishes for a healthy and happy married life.

Following is a descriptive account of a wedding feast provided by a seventy-five year old informant. He said that Metis people celebrated weddings this way for many years.

One can readily sense social relations as being considered a core value for Metis people in this account.

"Weddings, in the past, would be huge celebrations for the Metis of St.Laurent, lasting anywhere from one to three days. On the first night, there would be a big feast. Women would serve meat-balls, roast pork, wild meat, vegetables, home-made pastries, cakes and pies. The father of the bride would usually serve his choicest wine made from anything from chokecherries or potatoes to rhubarb. At the end of the meal, one relative, often an uncle, would offer a toast to the bride, while another, usually an elder, would give the new groom pertinent instructions as to how to care for his new bride, much to the joy and laughter of the guests. Finally, someone would sing a few humorous songs appropriate for the occasion".

Another man, who provided music for some of these weddings, continues: "By this time, everyone would be in a merry mood and out would go the tables and any other furniture that would be in the way of dancing. The chairs would then be set all around the living-room close to the wall and in would come the musicians with their fiddle and bow, guitars, accordion and spoons. In no time the place would be humming with old time waltzes, fox-trots, waltz-quadrille, two-steps, heel and toe, schottisches. A caller, whose voice rose above all the noise, directed the square-dancing from the 'dip and dive' to the 'little wildhand'. Cheers and shouts of joy would greet the Red River jig dancers and the

couples who would line up for the 'drops of brandy' dance or 'La danse de Crochets', as it is known locally. Other popular dances would include the broom dance and the handkerchief dance, 'La danse de balai' or 'La danse de mouchouaire,' respectively. By this time, the old floor would be trembling and squeaking to the steps of the dancing crowd as one would observe some dust coming up between the cracks of the planks. After a while, the heat in the house would become unbearable, and so, to cool off, people would go outside and share a drink of that famous Lake Manitoba moonshine. Then, back in again to continue dancing 'jusqu'au p'tit jour et encore'. (Michif French: "until dawn and beyond"; le p'tit jour was the time of day, usually at the beginning of dawn, shortly before daybreak, when the Metis fishermen, hunters and trappers would leave their home or camp in search for their game or waterfowl; as opposed to l'grand jour which refers to the period of the day immediately after sunrise).

The next night, people would celebrate to honour the bridesmaids and the best men. In some instances, the wedding would last a third night to cut the wedding cake. By the time this night was over, there would be many tired feet but really nothing to dampen their jolly spirits. Thus would end another wedding celebration of the Metis people at St. Laurent.

But that was not all. If the new couple did not have a baby within the first year, parents and other relatives and

the priest would start wondering what was wrong with them and they would discreetly give them hints and as to pre-natal and baby care. The young couple usually acknowledged that kind of advice but ignored it after awhile. Contrary to the old ways, young couples nowadays simply do not let anyone interfere in their married life. This is one of the effects of secularization. Whereas, in the past, the Church encouraged couples to have many children, today, the influence of the church in that area simply does not exist anymore. It is the couple who now solely determines how many children they want to have.

Table 2 (below) illustrates some of the changes that have occurred in the marriage customs and family life among the Metis at St.Laurent during the life-span of the informants. The construction of the tables is based on the analysis of the data and I have chosen these categories because of their frequencies in the data.

Table 2

Marriage Customs and Family Life

	<u>Pre-1950</u>		<u>To-day</u>	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Strict Morality	x			x
Open Morality		x	x	
Church influence	x			x
Divorce and Separations		x	x	x
Endogamy	x		x	x
Exogamy		x	x	
Mixed Marriages		x	x	
Marriages outside the Church		x	x	x
Large families	x			x
Small families		x	x	
Close family ties	x			x
Loosened family ties		x	x	x

The table indicates how secularization has taken place in St. Laurent. In the pre-1950 era, there were five issues that characterized marriage customs and family life: Strict morality, church influence, endogamy, large families and close family ties. Endogamy is the only marriage custom that has remained from the pre-1950 era but practised to a much lesser degree today. Whereas morality was strict in the past especially regarding the courtship and marriage customs, the morality is now more open and people today are more free from the supervision of parents and from the influence of the Church. This is considered one aspect of the effects of secularization.

People continue to marry within the Church, but not necessarily with someone of their own faith. Religious faith is less a factor today for choosing a mate than it was forty years ago. Along with compatibility, the will to establish economic security together seems to have become a predominant factor in the selection of a mate. Furthermore, new customs have surfaced, for example, the size of the family has diminished considerably, the nuclear family has replaced the extended family, causing a loosening of the original family ties: the influence of modernization.

Adult Years

Despite the presence of values such as close family ties and economic interdependence, it was not always easy to live as an adult and to bring up a family in St. Laurent.

The subsistence economic system was not without its drawbacks. "We were lucky to have cows and chickens and a garden", recalls a retired farmer, "some people really had a hard time, they would come to us for money or clothing and we did our best to help them out. I know a man who sold his cow for ten dollars. Eggs were twenty cents a dozen, bread seven cents a loaf, butter thirty-five cents a pound, shortening fifteen cents a pound and a little can of lysol cost you fifteen cents. At home, an apple was divided into four parts to share with others". A grandmother remembers: "I sewed all my children's clothing then, following closely the patterns from Eaton's catalogue". Some families stayed together to help each other out only to find out that they had become more of a financial burden to each other.

And then there were the Depression Years, said a retired fisherman. He pointed out that not too much money was moving or rolling, men would travel by box-cars all over Western Canada to find work, wages were low. You were not fussy as to what kind of a job you were offered, you just took it because that, at least, assured you of a roof over your head and of three square meals a day.

But then, life had also its good sides. If a couple wanted to make it in life, and many did so, there was only

one way and that was to go out and work. There were no relief, no welfare, no unemployment insurance, no family allowance then. As one informant put it, "Before I was married, I started buying cattle, one at a time, with the little money I was making. By the time I got married, I had a few heads of cattle and a few cows and I worked hard. I was a trapper and a fisherman for most of my life. My wife worked hard too, raising the family and working on the farm. And I would be willing to start all over again and with the same wife to whom I have been married now for fifty-two years". What this man is saying is that one could still live a good life in those days if he had some of the basic economic means, health and the willingness to work. In many ways, he epitomizes the Metis life values of his time, namely, resourcefulness, family-directed self-reliance and a successful economy that was highly integrated to the land and to the environment. Obviously, welfare money, relief aid and government hand-outs did not figure high in his economic priorities. And he made sure that he was not going to inculcate these in the minds of his children.

Furthermore, the transition from a subsistence economy to a cash economy affected the community in various ways. The moment money came into the community, the people simply wanted more of it. The men were often away from home, gone for the week either to work on various jobs in Winnipeg or even gone for a few months, making a bonanza in some northern parts of the province. This created some conflict in

some families. Traditional family ties were disrupted. Family values like mutual consultation and making decisions together, were often relegated and replaced by what was pragmatic and instantly efficient, all in the name of economic progress dictated by some outside, unnamed and faceless bureaucracy. The access to cash, of making money and of economic progress often became for the Metis family the number one priority and this often occurred at the expense of the traditional family values. As Spindler (1977:55) puts it: "In today's urbanized society, decisions are increasingly made on the basis of pragmatic efficiency, of what 'works', rather than on the basis of ethics, values or justice. The accelerated pace is geared to 'progress' and rapid achievement".

The War years

A few informants also shared their experiences of the war years. Metis veterans were proud to say that they had fought as Canadians in the war. A good number of Metis men of St.Laurent fought in both World Wars, some in the Korean War. They were members of the Winnipeg Rifles, Queen's Own Highlanders, the Winnipeg Grenadiers and the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry. Some fought in France and in Italy. Some were taken as prisoners of war by the Germans in Europe, and others by the Japanese in Hong Kong. Many died in action for their country. Others survived to tell

their friends about the atrocities of war and the inhuman conditions of the prisoner of war concentration camps.

Some men proudly display the medals they had won for their heroic acts in saving their comrades. All refuse to talk about the "tortures" they suffered in the camps. Some mention the parcel their family sent them, sweaters, mittens, socks, cigarettes and chocolate bars, but which they never received nor even heard of. A burly veteran recalled: "At the time of war and fighting, you don't realize everything that's happening to you. Either you kill or you get killed. It's only in peace time, when you're back home a few years later that the realities of war really hit you and we become aware of its ugliness and its inhumanity in our nightmares". All the war veterans agreed on one thing: the next world war would destroy the planet.

The war experience affected each man differently. "For most of us", explained a veteran, "joining the forces and going to war was quite an education and a learning experience. For some, it was the first time that we travelled out of the area or of the province, let alone the country". An army veteran added: "Army life put a lot of discipline in our lives, especially after our vagabond days of the depression. It made us see how the rest of the world lived, that we, in St. Laurent, were not the only ones having a hard time. And when we lined up for combat with other soldiers, you did not think too much of your racial background, whether Ukrainian, French, English or Metis. You

were a Canadian first, and you fought as a Canadian, the emblem on our uniform said so. But then, the issue of giving up being a Metis never came up when I was a soldier, fighting as a Canadian did not make me less of a Metis. Today, I am proud to have fought for Canada in the war". Obviously, there is no contradiction in being a Metis and a Canadian for this soldier.

The Senior Years

The life as a senior citizen has also been the object of many changes in the last twenty years. Some seniors have retired in the city, especially if they are alone or if one spouse has passed on. They will live close to their children but not necessarily with them. Many of the seniors who chose to remain in St. Laurent live in the Laurentian Lodge, the local Senior Citizen's Home. As an informant put it: "I enjoy it here because of the social life, activities and organized outings and the priest comes in every day to say mass. Most of the time, it is quiet here, while there is too much noise in the city".

Seniors have their own problems, too. Widows and widowers find it particularly difficult to live alone, especially, as one said, when you have been married to the same person for 40-45 years. "The pain of separation due to death is hard to bear. But our spouses continue to live on in our memory, they never seem to leave us completely, in a way, they are always with us. Nonetheless, the loneliness of

living alone is difficult". An elder widower candidly admitted: "I'm alone now, my wife of forty-four years is gone. I have to learn to cook and clean house. Whenever I start thinking of her too much or 'jongler' (Michif French for brooding deeply) I get in my car and I go for a ride, I miss her too much".

Many seniors had their share of illnesses, accidents and falls. However, today it is easier to see the doctor and obtain medication. One lady speaks of her husband confined to a wheel chair: "I'll keep him here with me at home as long as I can look after him, after all, we've been married over fifty years; in 1982, we had a family reunion of the Ducharme family here on our land, 300 people for three days. It was wonderful!"

Becoming a senior in St.Laurent changes family relationships in many ways. If living as a couple, there is a choice of remaining at home or at the Laurentian Lodge. In both situations, seniors search for the values of security and comfort. As a widow or widower, the children might want you to move close but not necessarily with them. Unless they are physically disabled, seniors prefer to live on their own. As one senior stated: "If I can help it, I do not want to depend on anyone; I want relative independence for myself, but at the same time, I also want to be independent from my relatives!" In other words, seniors do not want to be totally separated from their children and family, they still want to keep in touch with them through telephone

calls and occasional home visits. On the other hand, they do not want to be so close to their children as to be with them all the time and to become dependent on them.

Thus, in the eyes of the seniors, independence is perceived not as a contradiction to community life but like interdependence as an essential ingredient of community life.

Wake and Burial

The last portion of this chapter will describe briefly some of the customs and ritual practices regarding wake and burial as perceived by the Metis people at St. Laurent. It will show the deep significance these events have in the lives of the people particularly because of their social and psychological functions. On the one hand, they provide for social cohesion and solidarity for the community, and on the other for emotional comfort and support for members of the bereaved family.

Before the old stone church burned down in May, 1961, many local people can still recall vividly when the huge cast-iron bell, snugly lodged in the church steeple, finger-pointing two hundred feet skyward, would solemnly toll the knell of another departed loved one from the village. One elder remembered it this way: "People would immediately stop their activities whether in the house or outside and listen attentively to the number of strokes: nine for a man and seven for a woman. They would ask each other inquisitively

who could it be? In a few hours, the word would get around and soon everyone would prepare for the wake. Normally, according to local Metis customs, it lasted three days and three nights".

A former midwife provided the following account of how the Metis people cared for the body: "Close friends washed and clothed the body of the deceased. The house would be transformed in a temporary funeral home with white drapes hanging on the walls where the body would be placed. They would set the body on planks and cover it with white sheets until they would bring in the casket from the city. In front of the body, a white covered table stood with two burning candles, a crucifix and a dish of holy water with palm branches beside it. In the early evening, relatives, friends and neighbors arrived to pay their respect to the deceased and to offer their condolences to the bereaved. Kerosene and gas lamps provided the light for the household".

As I was told by a respondent, the main activity was the reciting of the rosary. Every hour or so, a person kneeling in front of the body, would lead the visitors, also kneeling, in prayer. People sat quietly together, men in clusters of three or four, and if they had to speak, they did so in low and hushed voices. Once in a while, neighbors would help and serve coffee and sandwiches. People would come and go, some would stay for the rosary while others would stay practically all night. And they would start over

again the following evening. During the day, some school children stopped by to pray briefly.

On the morning of the funeral, she continued, the pallbearers, wearing black arm bands and black and white boutonnières would carefully carry the casket out of the house. A horse-drawn sleigh or express democrat would be waiting to carry it to church. A democrat is a four-wheeled open carriage pulled by two horses. Depending on the season, people in cutter, cabooses, sleighs, wagons or buggies, people walking in the snow or rain, would accompany the body in a devout procession.

In the church, the body was placed on high rollers and covered with a cross-shaped black and white pall. I personally recall the funeral Mass, which would usually last an hour and a half. The choir would open with the traditional latin hymns, the Kyrie and the Dies Irae and finish with the Libera Me and the In Paradisum. Throughout the mass, the family remained seated in the front pews on one side, while the pall-bearers and the relatives would occupy the other side. The prayers of commendation and farewell would signal the starting of the procession to the cemetery. As family members tried to comfort each other, they filed out of the church following the casket. One last time, the church bell would toll the knell of the departed to the entire countryside.

At the graveside, an informant recalled, the pallbearers would set the casket on three bars lying across the

open grave. After the blessing of the grave and the prayers for the deceased, the pallbearers would remove the cross-bars and, using heavy ropes, they would slowly and carefully lower the casket in its double-box six feet into the ground. One of the workers would then go down and remove the crucifix from the top of the casket and hand it over to a member of the family. He would then nail the box firmly. Members of the family, using a shovel or their bare hands would start filling in the grave. In the past, most of the people would remain at the gravesite until the burial was complete.

Mourning would last a year and a half for a spouse and one year for a brother or sister. During that time, there would be no dancing, no listening to music, no gramophone. Family members and close relatives wore black.

Today, mourning customs as they were known in the past, have all but disappeared. Even the priest, now saying the mass in the language of the people, has changed the color of his vestments from black to white as a symbol of Christ's victory of life over death at his Resurrection.

The custom of wake vigil in private homes in St. Laurent does not exist anymore. Today, wake service and prayers are said in the local church or in the funeral home, the night before the funeral service. A funeral director driving a hearse carrying the body is now in charge of the arrangements. The grave which, in the past, took sometimes two or three days to dig with picks and shovels, especially in the

winter time when the ground was frozen, is now dug half an hour before the mass with a back-hoe. After the graveside prayers are over, the family invites the people for lunch and refreshment at the local recreation centre.

Religion is a part of all cultures. It consists of beliefs and behaviour patterns by which people try to control the area of the universe that is otherwise beyond their control. As Haviland says (1985: 587), "Among hunter-gatherer peoples religion is a basic ingredient of everyday life. As societies become more complex, religion is less a part of daily activities and tends to be restricted to special occasions".

Based on the above evidence, weddings and funerals have always remained two religious events that had deep significance for the people at St. Laurent, mainly because of their psychological and social functions. They provide for social solidarity and are occasions for social relations that have always been considered a core values of the Metis way of life. They also provided comfort in the belief that supernatural aid was available in times of crisis.

Weddings were considered primarily a family affair. The ceremony at the church was and is still usually attended mostly by immediate relatives and by close friends. The reception and dance in the evening, however, are usually open to all relatives and to the many acquaintances who come from both far and near.

Funerals at St.Laurent have always been known to be truly community events. Former residents will attend, often travelling many miles to get there. Regardless of the racial background of the deceased, the entire community usually participates and the church is practically always full to capacity. Funeral services cross racial and denominational lines and reinforce community spirit and solidarity among all the residents at St.Laurent. Furthermore, the social gathering at the Recreation Centre following the burial provides the much needed emotional comfort and support for the members of the bereaved family.

Ritual is religion in action. Through these weddings and funeral rituals, the social bonds of the Metis people have been reinforced even though somewhat lessened because of the effects of secularization. Religious rituals have less impact on the lives of a people in a secularized setting than in the traditional context of the lives of a people.

In summary, the purpose of this chapter was, in part to describe the experience of growing up in St.Laurent. We covered the early years from birth and childhood to courtship, marriage and family life. We ended with two sections, the senior years and the wake and funeral customs.

Our analysis brought us to examine how modernization and secularization were instrumental in effecting change in

the family life, education and religious systems of the Metis.

In the process, this chapter also set out to identify some of the cultural elements of Metis people, then, according to the elders point of view, and now, according to the youths' perception. At the same time, attempts were made to determine which components are 'core' or of 'surface' value. The categories in table 3 (page 83) were chosen because of their frequencies in the data. The table will illustrate what constitute Metisness.

Table 3Metisness

Abr: C: core Value; S: surface value.

<u>Values</u>	<u>Elders</u>		<u>Youth</u>	
	<u>C</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>S</u>
Close family ties	x		x	x
Close kin ties	x			x
Education		x	x	x
Resourcefulness	x			x
Independence	x		x	x
Dependence on Environment	x		x	x
Community-minded	x		x	x
Cash/Money		x	x	
Rigorous Morals	x			x
Church practices	x			x
Social relations	x		x	

The table shows that Metisness has undergone some drastic changes in recent years, namely in terms of the transition from a subsistence to a cash economy, their relationship with the church, from a strict morality to a more open morality and in education. The impact of modernization and of secularization compelled some Metis people to drop certain values, retain others and adopt new ones.

In general, Metisness for the elders implied many core values: close family and kin ties, resourcefulness, independence, dependence on the environment, community-mindedness, Church practices and social relations. The younger generation have retained or dropped some of these values and have adopted some new ones.

The only value that has remained 'core' throughout the life-span of the informants is that of their social relations. This is mainly because social relations have been constantly nurtured by community events such as weddings and funerals.

Of the values that elders considered as 'core', three of them, resourcefulness, morality and Church practises are now looked upon as surface values by todays' youth. Modernization and secularization have compelled the younger generation to drop these values.

We notice that there are five values that both elders and youth considered as core at one time, close family ties,

close kin ties, independence, dependence on environment and community-mindedness. Today, however, young people label all these values as surface.

Education is a value that elders considered as surface. It is now looked upon as both a core and surface value by the younger generation. Finally, the value where there is most difference between the two groups goes to the cash/money. Elders considered cash/money a surface value, while for the young people, cash/money has become a core value. Obviously this difference indicates the economy is the area of Metis life where changes have occurred the most drastically in recent years: the transition from a subsistence to a cash economy.

Based on the above evidence, the following are values constitutive of Metisness today: social relations are the only value that have remained 'core' over the years. Other values such as close family and kin ties, community-mindedness, independence, church practices and resourcefulness once considered core values, now constitute the surface values for the majority of the Metis today. The impact of modernization and secularization has compelled them to change their life-style, so much so that Metisness in St.Laurent is no longer what it was in the past. The core values of Metisness are not as strong as they use to be. In the process, many young Metis have become Canadian, some with no apparent affiliation with their Metis heritage and traditions. Does this mean the end of Metisness or the

break-up of the Metis community at St.Laurent? Perhaps not, at least not for the immediate future. It does signal however that Metisness here is, in some ways, severely affected in its roots.

Chapter 4

Making a living in St.Laurent

The last chapter showed us that many Metis traditional values have been absorbed by modernization and secularization and that those values that have been retained are being expressed differently today. We also noted that for many people growing up in St.Laurent this had not been an easy experience while for others life was good as long as they lived depending on the resources of the environment.

The present chapter is an attempt to describe the ways the Metis people make their living at St.Laurent. I want to point out the major sources of livelihood of both men and women from a traditional and modern perspective. At the same time, I want to describe the various jobs people worked at over the years and how the people there adapted economically.

Division of labor

In a general way, there was a clear-cut division of labor between Metis men and women at St.Laurent. The men carried out the bulk of the heavier physical jobs as providers, and these included hunting, fishing, trapping, farming and construction. On the other hand, the women did

all the domestic jobs of cooking, cleaning, sewing, washing clothes and raising the family. In the springtime, however, both men and women tended the gardens. In addition, in the absence of her husband and if the children were too small to help, women would also look after some of the farm chores, cut and chop wood and haul in the water. One must remember, as a respondent told me, that there was no electricity, no plumbing, no running water, no telephone and no television, then.

Few women were involved in heavy work, but as one informant told me, there were some who regularly worked on the farm at either cleaning the barn, milking cows and haying in the summer. As a rule, Metis women have not been known to fish on the lake in wintertime. This is probably due to the extreme cold and the harsh working conditions. Again there could be exceptions here. If one observes a Metis woman going to fish on the lake today, it would probably be in the comfort of a heated bombardier and the trip would last only for that day.

The work of Metis Women

In the village, for many years, most of the work of the Metis women was done in and around their own home. Those who had paying jobs worked for cottage-owners at the local beaches. Most of the work involved housecleaning, from washing floors, window cleaning, washing clothes to baby sitting. An elder informant said: "See my hands, they are not

smooth, they are rough-looking, but at least they are clean and that is because I have kept them in water most of my life". A few women also worked for the nuns at their convent or at the school, again for housecleaning even though some worked as cooks and bakers in their huge kitchen. Some also worked as clerks at the local general stores. Alexandre Coutu owned the local hotel for many years and employed Metis women as waitresses, maids and dishwashers.

According to one informant, most of these jobs in the village were temporary and one could not rely on them to make a living, "But it was better than nothing", she added, "especially in those days, you did not have family allowance or mother's allowance". Another respondent related how some women would get together on a weekly basis and teach each other how to sew and mend clothes.

One informant described her day while her husband was away working in the city. She would get up at 5:30 every morning, do the chores, milk 2 or 3 cows, separate the milk, make butter, wake up the children, feed them breakfast and see them off to school. During the day, she would do her housework which consisted in washing the baby's clothes daily and the family's clothes every second day, all by hand. "There would always be the mending and sewing of clothes", she added, "but the real thing was to bake bread, batches of twenty or twenty-five, once or twice a week, along with the bannock and other pastries, in between, I also had to find time to prepare the family meals; by night

time, the sooner the children were in bed, the sooner I would have some time to myself".

As a result, many Metis women were eager to see Saturday come as they knew they could relax then. A mother of eight described how she felt at the end of the week: "Happiness to me meant to be comfortably settled with my family in the old log-house on a Saturday night in the cold of the winter. The chores are done, the floors scrubbed and the clothes washed, an aroma of freshness and cleanliness permeates the entire household. The fluttering flame of the kerosene lamp on the cupboard shed enough light for all to see. The children are playful and enjoying themselves as they take turns bathing in a tub beside the pot-bellied stove as they prepare for bed. My husband is busy skinning the minks and weasels he caught earlier in the day and he carefully hangs the furs on racks to dry behind the stove. The fire crackles in my kitchen-stove as I bake bannock and pies for the Sunday meal. Outside, in the cold winter night, a blizzard is brewing, the snow starts to fall carelessly and the wind howls intermittently as the dog barks away at some distant object. After a light snack, the family retires peacefully for the night".

Based on the above, Metis women, in the past, showed much resourcefulness in their work and dedication to their family. Locally, they survived the best ways they could with the limited economic means that they had.

Women's work outside the village

Most women who looked for permanent work had jobs outside the village. As soon as they were old enough, many would leave home to look for work in Winnipeg. Among the most common jobs, at the time, were waitresses in restaurants or for catering services, housemaids and baby-sitting in private homes, manual and labor jobs with manufacturing firms and department stores. For those who had the chance to go to high school, there were usually other jobs such as clerks, typists, or secretaries. They would work five days a week in the city and many returned home by bus every week-end.

Others would move permanently to the city or elsewhere, mainly, an informant stated, "because they did not see any economic future for themselves in the village". Thus, seeking paying jobs outside the village marked the beginning of the transition from a subsistence economy to a cash economy for many Metis women of St.Laurent.

Women's work in the village

Today, according to some women, things have not improved a lot. One informant said: "Nowadays, life here is not much better for the women, there are no jobs to keep them here, most of them leave and go to work in Winnipeg or they collect Unemployment Insurance, it is a disgrace that in this day and age, some women still have to live from day to day". Another respondent stated: "There are no jobs nor

any industries here for women; at school, there are about fifteen on staff, and only two local Metis women work there; most young people who get an education move to the city as there is absolutely no work to keep them here".

On the other hand, some women will say that that is not all true. One informant explained it this way: "Some women do stay here and make a decent living, some have even started a business on their own and are successful at it". Some have become school teachers, store owners, and hairdressers while others have initiated a day-care centre and a women's clothing boutique and one conducts a Driver's Education Program. There was a time when most of the stores and businesses were owned and operated by non-Metis, "but, that is not so today", according to one informant.

In 1966, a clothing firm, employing as many as thirty women, opened in St.Laurent. The women worked in an assembly line and produced all-seasons jackets for men and women. One informant who worked there throughout the entire years of operation said that the jobs there were good for the economy of St.Laurent. "It was a regular source of income for the family and under good working conditions. Some women would cut out the pieces of the cloth material, others would assemble them, while others yet would sew them and put them together. Some worked by hand but the majority worked at the sewing-machine. We worked forty hours a week, two thirds of the women working there were Metis from St.Laurent, our boss was a local Metis man who understood his job very well.

Then, in 1980, we were informed by the company that it was going to close down, and the reason given to us was that there was not enough market for the jackets that we manufactured. Some of us, to this day, are still wondering whether we were told the truth or not, all I know is that there was a change of government at the provincial level at the time".

The above information indicates that there were limited opportunities for Metis women to make a living in St.Laurent. Nonetheless, it has been shown that with will-power and a sense of initiative, some Metis women have created new jobs for themselves and, thus, have contributed to the development of the local economy. The clothing manufacture experience also indicates that Metis women can be persistent in their jobs as well as anybody else and, given the economic opportunity, they can contribute equally.

Furthermore, it underlines the point that when people give up an economy based on the local environment and adopt a cash economy dependent on outside resources, they can expect to have their jobs taken away from them and they have very little to say about it. Specifically, it shows that when people are not in control of their economic means and policies these same means can be swept from under at any moment.

Following then, are examples which will serve to illustrate how three Metis women, among others, were able to create jobs for themselves in the context of the modern eco-

nomy. The first informant is thirty-five years old and is a teacher at the local Collegiate. She told me she became interested in teaching at an early age. She got married after high school and started substitute teaching. Then she applied at the Impact Program at Brandon University and was accepted. It was a two-year program, she said. First, there were study skills such as reading and writing, and some practical teaching at St. Ambroise, St. Eustache and at St. Laurent. The second year, she continues, was concerned more with educational courses such as science, drama and art with a practicum both at St. Laurent and at Rivers, Manitoba. Her first full year of teaching was at St. Laurent in 1978, with the grade ones and teaching all subjects. "I learned how to deal with children. It was challenging, as there was always something different with them. I think I would have been bored at an office job. I also taught grade four and five and later grade seven and eight. But my favorite subject has always been art, because it allows for freedom of expression through such things as ceramics, oil painting, oil pastel, flower arrangement, drawing and picture-framing".

In general, students liked ceramics best: "They feel they can be more creative". She described the process of ceramics: "Some of the tools we need are the molds, a kiln, like a baking oven, cleaning tools, buffing pads, sponges and brushes. We start with the liquid clay and pour it in a mold. It has to stay at least a week, then we take the art

mold, clean it and put it in a kiln to bake overnight. Next morning, it is ready to paint. At the same time, the students learn about the vocabulary involved in the process, for example, the types of paints, different molding processes from the pouring to the finished product and that can be anything from a cup to a vase".

When I asked her what got her interested in arts in the first place, she replied: "When I was growing up, I noticed my mother, Alice Roulette, was very good at making quilts and rugs with old rags and stockings. I was told that she even made her own flower bouquet and arrangement for her wedding day in 1937, my Dad has a picture of that. I guess my interest in arts comes from her".

What about the future? I asked. "Because of my present experience, I feel the need for more study. My own children are now in school, so I have some time to myself. I take two correspondence courses from the University of Manitoba, one in Human geography and the other in Psychology. She concluded with: "I would like to go into special Education for students who have learning disabilities and who require special attention".

Another example is a hairdresser. She informed me that she became interested in hairdressing as a girl at home while experimenting on her younger sisters who had to have their pictures taken at school. After she finished school, she attended a ten month course at Red River Community College in Winnipeg. "The first month", she recalls, "was

all about human biology: nails, head, texture of hair, skin, muscles and related illnesses. After that, we worked on mannequins experimenting with finger waves, pin curls, ringlets, sets and perm rods. Only after three months, do we start working with real people. There is a minimum of 1,400 hours of school followed by theory and practicum exams. If we do well, we get a diploma with which we can obtain a licence from the government and work in a Salon".

Her first job was at the Bay in Winnipeg, for one and a half years. Then on to Eaton's in Edmonton for more experience. "This was a very good job", she said, "it included demonstrations and television commercials, I was even sent to Chicago for an advanced hairdressing course. I spent four years in Edmonton". Then I asked her what made her come to work and settle in St. Laurent, "I remember attending a bingo game here", she said, "I observed the people and I concluded they needed a hairdresser here and, besides, I needed a change of scenery in my life. The local people were very receptive and encouraging".

I had to admit to this bright and intelligent lady that I was not too knowledgeable in matters of cutting hair, so I asked her what are some of the basic things one has to know to be a hairdresser. "Well", she started, "one has to know how to cut hair, it seems rather obvious, but a hairdresser has to know that. That is my specialty, others can specialize in perms or in hair dying; to know how to judge scalp is also basic. And then, it is not just a question of

cutting one's hair, the type of haircut has to suit the personality of the individual, the way the person dresses, his/her age, way of life and profession. In other words, the cut must be designed to suit the person. Sometimes, I offer suggestions such as a color of hair dye to suit the color of their eyes or I can point out to them that their hair style is not quite appropriate based on the profile of their face or the shape of their head. Other people are simply in a rut. They have had the same hair-do for the last ten years while the rest of their body has changed"!

"I have been here for eleven years, now", she continued, "We are three qualified hairdressers here, our work-load is heavy. Our customers come from a forty, fifty mile radius, 50% are women, 50% are men. When I arrived here, men were somewhat reluctant and shy to have their haircut done by a woman. Today, they ask us to give them perms.

"I was also involved in some events here at the community level. For example, a committee asked me to be in charge of the Miss St.Laurent Pageant promoting talent expression and a fashion show. I enjoy arranging hair do's, make-up and clothing for young people. One year, we had a show called Century of Fashion. Some people also come for advice regarding an upcoming wedding in their family, about hair-do and clothing. Someday, I would like to be a clothing designer. I was also invited to participate in a Fantasy Program on Futuristic Ways of Hair Styles in Winnipeg. And

then, the Manitoba Government made a 5-minute movie on my work here as part of Career Week for Manitoba High Schools".

Then she added: "Sometimes a hairdresser is like a psychiatrist, we have to listen to people's problems". To conclude, I asked to what she attributed her success, "Hard work", she said. "It was also important to leave St. Laurent and to find out how the rest of the world lives, and then return here. I did not want to change the people here, but I wanted to change the way they looked and I think I have succeeded".

The last example involves the St. Laurent Co-op Day Care Centre Inc. The informant told me that back in 1969 there were grants available through the Union Nationale Metisse, the St. Boniface-based French Metis organization. A motion was passed stating the need of a co-ordinator in the village for an Early Childhood Education Program. She applied and got the job. "In 1970-71", she went on, "we used the old school building for our pre-school program, ages one to six. People were involved in remodelling and furnishing the building through the Summer Jobs and Winter Works Program. We started as early as 7:00 am, especially for the parents who worked at the sewing factory. We operated four days a week, up to ten hours a day.

"The program was comprised of various activities from drawing, music, puzzles, educational films and walks, rest periods, snacks, some field trips, and at times we had to change the diapers of the younger ones". She added: "grants

are available for early childhood education, why not take the opportunity? Such facilities and resources can help a child in his/her early development". As to inquiries about the advantages of such a program, she replied: "Such a program for children centres around the good effects of early supervised socializing with other kids and adults. There is also special consideration for slow learners. Such matters are discussed with the parents; the one-parent child often needs special attention, perhaps more love and affection than the others. Basically, we must remember that a child is wise at two, three and four years old. The program is still going on today, I quit working there two years ago". What about the organization? I asked. "Well, to start off, the parents' reaction was good. We must remember that they have to pay nine dollars per child per day; there are three or four people on full staff and we operate under the Ministry of Health and Social Development. We have an Annual Meeting with election of officers, financial reports and new business. Besides being good for the children, Day-care is also good for the community and provides some employment for Metis women".

Table 4Sources of livelihood for Metis Women

Abr: P: permanent; S: seasonal; L: local; O: outside;

<u>Jobs</u>	<u>Pre- 1950</u>				<u>To-day</u>			
	<u>P</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>O</u>	<u>P</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>O</u>
Mother's Allow.					x		x	
Housewife	x		x		x		x	
Household chores	x		x		x		x	
Hired domestic		x	x	x		x	x	x
Farm chores	x	x	x					
Hunt small game		x	x					
Casual jobs		x	x	x		x	x	x
Housemaids		x	x	x				
Waitresses		x	x	x		x	x	x
Clerks		x	x	x		x	x	x
Day-Care					x		x	
Teacher					x		x	
Hairdresser					x		x	
Custom plant					x		x	
Clothing factory					x		x	

The table shows the sources of livelihood for Metis women then and now. It indicates that most jobs, pre-1950, were seasonal and local. There were few paying jobs then. Today, there are some jobs that are permanent and local, but they employ only a few women. Those who get paying jobs work

mostly outside the village. In the past, there were few opportunities for Metis women to work outside the home and the village. Most of their work was mainly domestic with great dedication to family life. The charts show that they accomplished all kinds of tasks in and around the house and on the farm. This was often heavy physical work with great difficulties and hardships. Nonetheless, Metis women displayed a lot of resourcefulness, industriousness and initiative in carrying out their laborious tasks. Their work was anything but career-oriented.

Today, the work of Metis women has become more specialized and career-oriented. Metis women now have access to a diversity of jobs that they did not have before. This definitely marks the transition from a subsistence to a cash economy. The Day Care project is such an example. Metis women interested in specialized education for youngsters made the most of available opportunities. In some cases, Metis women make personal choices of what they want to do such as teaching and hair-dressing and work locally, but the majority have moved to the city and have taken permanent jobs there.

With easier job opportunities, Metis women today earn their own livelihood, are more independent from family ties. At the same time however, they have become more dependent on their employer and the wage-scale economy. It is all part of the process of becoming Canadian.

The Work of Metis Men

The traditional economy of most Metis men in St.Laurent has always been concerned with outdoor activities. These included hunting, fishing, trapping, digging seneca root, cutting wood, some farming for oneself or for others. A good number of Metis men worked on different construction jobs in the city or around the province in the summer, always returning to St.Laurent in the fall to prepare for winter fishing on "L'Grand lac Manitoba". "Fishing is in Metis blood", quipped an experienced fisherman, "it is like a bug, no matter where you are working, some men just have to come back here on the lake to fish every winter".

Fishing

As early as in September a common sight in St.Laurent is the preparations for fishing. As a visitor drives around the countryside, he will readily observe men disentangling and seaming their nets, attaching floats and sinkers to them. After they finish, they will neatly set them in 12 X 24 X 16 boxes, two nets per box, ready to cast in the lake. Nets are made of various material from cotton to nylon and plastic.

The familiar sight on early Monday mornings, while it was still dark, was a train of cabooses of fishermen, loaded with provisions and hay for the week, with smoke curling out of their stove pipe chimney, slowly starting their trek towards "L'Grand lac Manitoba". Once on the lake, the ca-

boose could also serve as a bunkhouse. They would travel a good distance on the frozen and barren lake, some ten and fifteen miles while others would go twenty miles. Some would meet fishermen from across the lake going the other way. A few fishermen also travelled by dogsled. Setting up camp was not difficult. Any place would do, providing there was no open water close by. The team of horses would be well looked after. Covered with blankets and sheltered by the shack from the north wind, there would be plenty of hay and oats for them. One informant stated that they got lost coming back home one day. So, what did they do? They would let the horses lead the way and well enough, the horses found their way home.

In the past, the chisel and the needle bar were the basic tools to make a hole in the ice. The ice varied in thickness from six inches to four feet. The hole was about one to two feet in diameter, enough to lower the net in the water. The net itself would vary in length from seventy to one hundred yards long.

According to a veteran fisherman, it takes two men to cast a net, he describes it in the following way: "Let's call fisherman A, the cord puller and fisherman B the one who follows the jigger. A jigger is the main instrument fishermen use to cast a net. It is a plank 12 feet long by 10 inches wide and by 2 inches thick. About a foot from the front and down the middle, we make a 3 foot long by 3 inches wide cut right through the plank. Covering this area would

be a smaller plank with a 2 inch chisel attached to it. Underneath the plank would be a flat-iron bar to which the fishing cord would be tied. At the end of the larger plank, there would be a small pulley. After lowering the jigger in the water under the ice, fisherman A would pull the rope as fisherman B would listen closely to the chisel hooking itself to the ice. The jigger would advance about four feet each time the rope was pulled. They would repeat this until the entire length of the net was covered. Then, fisherman B, at the other end, maybe eighty or a hundred yards away would make a hole in the ice and grab the fishing cord from the puller. In the meantime, fisherman A, at the other end ties the net at the end of the fishing cord. Fisherman B pulls the cord and net up to his point and the net is set. They would then cover the holes with ice and snow with an identifiable picket beside it. On the average, it would take experienced fishermen fifteen minutes to cast one net and up to twenty-five nets in a day. They would let it set there for two or three days and then they would pull it out hoping for a big catch. Fifty fish per net was considered an excellent catch, at first, we got 5 cents a pound for pickerel and a cent and a half for jackfish".

A fisherman had to keep in motion on the lake or else he would freeze, said a respondent. "It did not matter how cold it was, sometimes 50 below Fahrenheit, it seldom made us stop working. The only times we stopped was when a

blizzard caused so much invisibility that we could no longer see what we were doing or where we were going".

At the end of the day, the fishermen would come back to their caboose or shack, light a lantern, heat up the old wood-stove and prepare for supper. As one informant told me, most of the food was pre-cooked by their wives back home. "All we had to do was heat it up. The grub-box was full of good hearty food, such as roast pork or beef, lots of potatoes, vegetables, bannock, home-made raspberry or cranberry jam and of course, tea".

To pass the long winter evenings, the fishermen would repair any equipment so to be ready to start early again next morning. Some would visit their neighbors, others would read or play cards, while others would try and listen to battery operated radios.

A few incidents that happened on the lake reminded the community how dangerous fishing could become. Some would get caught on a drifting piece of ice, sometimes for hours with no one in sight to rescue them. Others would get lost and walk and walk after losing their sense of direction. One such man was found by fishermen of the neighbouring town some twenty-four hours after he had got lost coming home. There were, and still are a few incidents of men and equipment breaking through the ice. In the nineteen forties, such an accident claimed the lives of two local fishermen. As one wife explained: "I am always worried about my husband

working on the lake, you never know when an accident can happen".

On Saturday, it was the journey back home, some with more fish than others. For a long time the fishermen sold their fish to local buyers. Among the most popular fish were the pickerel, jackfish, sauger and whitefish. They would put them in 80 pound boxes and ship them to Winnipeg via the local transfer.

By the early 1950's, a few tractors and bombardiers had replaced some of the cabooses and shacks on the lake. A bombardier is a large covered vehicle used for travelling over snow and ice, usually equipped with tracked wheels at the rear and a set of skis at the front. Ski-doo, another name for snowmobile, is a small, open motor vehicle for travelling over snow and ice, equipped with skis at the front, by which it is steered, and a caterpillar track beneath the body. They are used mainly as a means of transportation, and also for sport. Today, ski-doods and bombardiers have replaced the horse-drawn cabooses. Only the more ambitious stay overnight on the lake. Most fishermen now come home every night. Few use the needle bar and chisel, they now use the electric hugger on the bombardier to drill the holes in the ice. Efficiency is the name of the game!

According to one informant, there are about 50 licensed fishermen and as many as 30 own their bombardiers today. Fishermen from St. Laurent and some from the surrounding vil-

lages have formed a fishing co-operative, the Lake Manitoba Fishing Co-op Limited. "In the past", he explains, "there were private fish buyers who would sell the fish to various companies in Winnipeg and the buyer would get the profit. Now with the Co-op the profit is divided among the members and, at times, some get an annual rebate. We hire packers and a bookkeeper, so we do pay some administrative fees; but then, we sell our fish directly to the Fresh Water and Fish Marketing Corporation who buy, clean and sell the fish for us. One advantage of the marketing board is that it helps to stabilize the price of fish; before that, we were never quite sure what the price of fish was going to be.

"Our Co-op started in 1969", he continued. "We have a board of Directors that meets four times a year. We discuss some of the problems fishermen encounter and we get acquainted with the new directives from the Marketing Board. The fishermen get money according to the amount of fish they catch. Even though not all fishermen belong to the Fishing Co-op, most of them still sell their fish there".

Trapping

Another popular source of livelihood for the Metis at St. Laurent was trapping. Most men who fished on the lake were also known to be avid trappers. Such men were Ludovic Chartrand, Jean Larence and Jerome Lavallee. According to an informant, they were called Senior Trappers, they worked under the supervision of the game warden. Each one had a

zone he was responsible for and each had eight trappers to look after. His role was to record their catch in a book and report it to the game warden.

Our main respondent, Roy Chartrand, informed me that he started trapping muskrat when he was nine years old. "I remember", he recalled, "three teams of horses and sleighs going to the Delta Marshes, a popular hunting and trapping area, approximately sixty kilometres south-west of the village around the lake (Fig. 2). Fifteen trappers spent a month there and I had to drive a team of horses back home, that was in 1935. That was a good year. Each trapper came home with four to five hundred muskrats, selling them for forty to seventy-five cents each". Another informant said that they hunted muskrat as far North as The Pas, Cedar Lake and Lake St. George. "We would spend the day looking for muskrat houses", he related, "set traps, skin the muskrats under the candle-light in the tent and then set them up on racks. We did that for three or four weeks every Spring time for many years".

Another popular area was the Stony Ridge and Jimmy Lake area, some six miles east of St. Laurent. Closer to the village, some good spots were Lake Francis and the "Dredge" area, local people pronounce it the "Drudge" (Fig. 2). This was a canal built approximately one hundred yards inland off Lake Manitoba so that boats and barges travelling from Reaburn to Camperville (Fig. 2) would be able to turn

around. When the railway track was constructed in St. Laurent in 1904 (Mercier: 1976), that marked the end of the Dredge.

I was curious to know just what kind of preparation a trapper made for a day's work. Our main informant reported: "First of all, we have to prepare the traps, we have to clean them, brush them, wax them and check them well to ensure they are in proper working order". He then described some of the traps that he used: "At first, we had the leg-hold trap, the smaller would be size 0, and the size would increase to 1, 1 1/2, 2, and so on. We would use the first three for muskrats, the number 2 for minks and raccoons, size 3 and 4 for the foxes and the coyotes. There is a "stop-loss" on the trap. When the rat gets caught, a spring pushes the rat away from its leg so as not to chew it and get away. After the stop-loss trap, the conibear trap became popular. It is made in the shape of a square, when it opens up, the whole body of the rat gets caught at the mid section and the rat chokes up instantly. The advantages of such a trap is that it does not destroy the fur, the rat does not have time to fight back and there is no blood loss.

"Then, we would leave for a week or for a month sometimes, with horse-drawn sleighs. Usually, there would be three of us. We would set up our tent with heavy hay underneath and a warm stove inside. Weather permitting, we would get up early in the morning. If it was too cold and freezing, we would not go, but if we heard water dripping outside the tent around 5:00 am, then we would be up and

away. Usually, we would go for half a day until noon, setting about twenty-five traps".

At this point, I was curious to know how he knew where to set his traps. He explained: "I had to find the rat houses first and then, using a spear which I made myself, I would pick at the rat house. If the house was frozen so hard that the spear did not go through, then I concluded that there were no rats in there. But if the spear went through and I heard rats jumping and splashing in the water inside, then I knew this was a good place to set traps". He also mentioned how rats can sometimes freeze and die if there is not enough water; or else rats will simply move out of their house and live in a hole in the ground that they dig for themselves. "One year, some 40,000 rats died because of lack of water and of food. The thing is people drain too much water by making canals for farmlands.

"Using a shovel, you then make a hole in the rat house and, after tying the trap to a picket, you set it where you think the rat will dive. Inside the rat house, there is like a floor where the rat comes to sleep and rest. I would set the trap just above the water where his resting place is. Normally, I would leave the trap overnight, take the rat out and set it again. There are about eight rats to one rat house. Sometimes, the rat can come to stay in the rat house and not come close to the trap. In their own way, they are smart and only an experienced trapper can detect that".

I asked my informant what he enjoyed the most about muskrat hunting. His reply was to the point: "From day one, I wanted and liked to trap muskrats and minks and badgers and foxes and coyotes. Since the time I was old enough to go to the marshes, I enjoyed being in the wide-open spaces. At daybreak, early in the morning, I enjoyed the clean fresh air and the freedom of being my own boss with no one telling me to do this or to do that". This attitude reflects that of the Metis at Red River and surrounding areas a century earlier during the hey-days of the buffalo hunt.

Guiding and Hunting

Another source of livelihood for the Metis of St. Laurent was guiding for hunters in the fall. Some would travel to various points in Manitoba or Northern Ontario, but a good number would remain in the Interlake area. In 1988, one such guide, Tom Lambert, will celebrate fifty consecutive years of guiding for the same people. "I started guiding at Mallard Lodge, Delta Marsh, 14 miles from Portage La Prairie, at the age of twenty", he said. "My father-in-law found the job for me. Having been a duck-hunter since the age of fourteen, I learned quickly. At first, we did not have good boats, some were leaking and we had to bring a can to empty the water. Once, we got caught in a storm and we had a hard time getting back to camp. Today, we leave at 5:00 am, we bring about sixteen decoys, duck and goose calls. We did not have dogs then, but today, we have well-

trained Golden Retrievers with us. We used row boats only since motors are not allowed in marshes. At first, we would go two or three miles and come back by noon. The hunters would shoot only the Mallard and canvasback ducks, they would not even look at the bluebills and there was no limit then as to the number of ducks one could kill in a day. Today, we return by ten a.m. because the limit is down to six ducks a day per hunter".

My next question was how did they come to choose one spot over another. "That depends on the direction the wind blows", he related, "better winds are northwinds, the ducks will then land in the marsh, otherwise they land on Lake Manitoba outside our reach. The northwind also makes the lake too heavy with waves, then the ducks prefer to land in the marshes. We put the decoys where the water is calm in the shade of the wind and we build a blind, the place where hunters hide. It is made of weeds and reeds, we hide there dressed in yellow and green clothes which serve as camouflage. Some hunters bring a little stool to sit on and then we call the ducks; sometimes they come, sometimes they don't, so we move to another blind. Ducks come flying in mostly from the sides, not overhead, sometimes as fast as 75 mph. Depending on the wind velocity, sometimes a hunter has to shoot up to ten feet ahead of the duck if he wants to hit it. The hunters unload their shotguns, the dog retrieves the ducks and brings them back to the blind".

Thus, for Metis men in St.Laurent, the traditional economy was many years concerned with outdoor activities like hunting, fishing, guiding and trapping and they were highly successful at it.

Other Sources of Livelihood

There have been many other sources of livelihood for the Metis at St.Laurent in the past. Locally, activities such as digging seneca root, farming and haying, selling wood and hay, working on the railway track for the CNR section or on the grader and snowplough for the Municipality were always common. But, as one informant told me: "It is very expensive for a young person to go in the farming business today, the cost of the land, of the machinery and fertilizer is way sky-high and you have not even started yet. Only the big farmers survive, even though the small farmers can get loans from the government. However, by the time they pay their loan back, it is hardly worth all that effort with the little profit that they make. The three local dairy farmers do better as they get subsidies from the government for their milk".

The following is an example of how one individual, Claude Lambert is making use of the local resources in a profitable way. His business is picking frogs around Lake Manitoba and shipping them by plane to various points in North America such as Toronto, Philadelphia, California and North Carolina. At the moment, he is the only licensed

person in Manitoba and the second one in Canada to buy and sell (export) frogs. "The season is short", he explains, "two months, September and October, so we have to make the most of it, I have as many as three hundred men picking up frogs for me all around the lake. I put up notices in stores and post offices and people come out and work. I drive around the lake twice a week to pick up the frogs, the average pick for a year is eight tons".

The informant also said that the frogs are used mainly as biological specimens in school laboratories and research centres, and of course, as a delicacy in restaurants. "The kinds of frogs that we pick are the bull-frog and the leopard frog. They have to be a minimum of three inches in size from vent to tip of the nose and green or brown in color. Normally, frogs are found 1/2 to 1 mile from the lake in August, 1/2 mile on September 1st and by September 15th, right close to the lake. Frogs migrate from low-level water lakes and sloughs to Lake Manitoba to avoid the 'winter kill'. Farm fertilizers kill frogs so I go where there is no agricultural land".

"I started in 1982", he continued, "as a way to stay and work in St. Laurent, I did not like to travel morning and night to work in Winnipeg. It is fine to fish in winter, but I cannot depend only on that to make a living. In spring time, I do other jobs such as fencing and in the fall, guiding. We also pick up snakes, the plain garter and the red-bellied. The latter is popular and used as a pet in

California homes. We organize ourselves along the same line as for frog-picking. Five years ago, we picked close to 50,000 snakes, but only 8,000 last year".

Perhaps one point of interest regarding the way people made their living in St.Laurent was the establishment of the step-ladder factory. In 1970, the local Metis organization successfully negotiated the purchase of a vacant school building. It employed as many as fourteen men at one time. Its commercial product was the domestic stepladders made of hemlock wood. It also handled heavier-duty ladders for industrial use and office desks and chairs. The small manufacturing firm shipped its first products in January, 1971. In later years, it had orders from as far as British Columbia and Ontario. Sales grew from 4,200 ladders in 1971 to 10,000 in 1973. Eight years later, the step-ladder factory closed its doors. According to an informant, this was due to a change of government at the provincial level.

While the closure of the ladder factory can be looked upon as an economic setbacks for the community, it was not just due to "a change of government". It reiterates the point made earlier that from the moment the St.Laurent community made the transition from a subsistence traditional economy to a cash and more complex one, it became dependent on an unreliable, whimsical, and even hostile exterior environment. The clothing and ladder factories were not owned by the local people, but by outside interests. Local people and the workers had little to say in

their management, they provided manpower and the labor only. Hence, their job security was always unpredictable and there were no unions to negotiate contracts. The operation and the future of these factories depended entirely upon economic policies formulated outside of St. Laurent and based on the idiosyncracies and caprices of company owners, government officials and ultimately of corporate financiers. It reiterates the point that when a community is not in control of its economic means and policies these can be taken away from them at any time and they have very little to say in it. Thus, becoming Canadian for Metis people is not necessarily an easy nor a joyful process.

Table 5 (next page) shows the sources of livelihood for Metis men, both then and to-day.

Table 5

Sources of livelihood for Metis Men

Abr: P: permanent; S: seasonal; L: local; O: outside.

	<u>Pre-1950</u>						<u>To-day</u>				
<u>Jobs</u>	<u>P</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>O</u>	<u>/</u>	<u>P</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>O</u>		
Fishing		x	x				x	x			
Hunting		x	x				x	x			
Trapping		x	x	x			x	x	x		
Guiding		x	x	x			x	x	x		
Gardening		x	x				x	x			
Farming:											
-Cattle	x		x			x		x			
-Grain							x	x			
-Haying		x	x				x	x			
Cut/haul/wood/hay		x	x								
Dig Sen./root		x	x	x			x	x	x		
Cheese factory	x		x								
CNR section	x		x			x		x			
Munic. Roads maintenance	x		x			x		x			
Construction		x		x			x	x	x		
Taxi-driver -1950's	x		x								
Ladder factory -1970's						x		x			
Tourism							x	x			
Frog-picking							x	x			
Custom Plant						x		x			

In general, the table reveals that most sources of livelihood are local and seasonal. This is complemented by some outside jobs which are also seasonal. Most Metis men rely on two or three jobs for their livelihood, with winter fishing being the main source. Whereas hunting, trapping and

guiding were in the past major sources of subsistence they have become in recent years due to the process of modernization less so for most people. For many people, these traditional sources of livelihood have now become recreation and sport activities.

Conclusion

This chapter sought to describe the sources of livelihood of both Metis men and women over the years at St.Laurent. Data reveals that modernization has changed dramatically the sources of livelihood of the Metis people at St.Laurent. One point that is rather clear is that the Metis at St.Laurent have experienced the transition from a subsistence economy, a successful economy highly integrated to the land and to its environment to a more complex cash economy. Most people today have paying jobs with the majority relying on two or more seasonal jobs. The whole operation of modernization serves to move Metis people out of their traditional subsistence economy into the mainstream of society and modern economy based on a wage-scale system, work-day schedule and salaried jobs, all factors related to the market-place economy. No other place was this transition better illustrated than with the experience of the clothing and ladder factories.

Finally, the data indicates that the elders have, and perhaps some still do, experienced a tension between internal community values and the demands and the temptations of

the exterior environment. Whereas some elders perceived the exterior environment as somewhat contrary to their way of life, evidence shows that the Metis youth of today seem to look at the outside environment as more agreeable and friendly. They will give themselves more willingly to the exterior environment, seeking outside opportunities and jobs and accepting the cash economy as a way of life more readily for themselves and for their children than their elders did.

The charts also show that young Metis people who are financially successful at St. Laurent today have been exposed to outside ideas and often motivated by them to exploit local resources whether that is teaching, hairdressing or frog-picking. These people have travelled and have seen how the rest of the world lives. Consequently, upon their return, they saw possibilities of businesses locally with monetary gains, tried it and are successful at it. The point is that the traditional Metis values of the community mean little to many Metis youth of today and will probably mean less for their children.

Thus, for some people at St. Laurent, Metisness may be becoming or already is an historical value, of the past. While retaining personal pride in their historical origins and traditions, many Metis of St. Laurent have already chosen and accepted the Canadian way of life, while others are implicitly opting for or being forced, for economic reasons, into becoming Canadians.

Chapter 5

Social Life, Religion and Politics

In the previous chapter, we saw how the Metis at St. Laurent made their living from an economic perspective. In this chapter, we will examine three aspects of Metis life: social life, religion and politics. First, we will look at the various groups and activities that have contributed to the community formation and, in the process, I will attempt to show how Metis people give priority to personal and community relations as a basic fibre constitutive of their social life. Second, we will look at some of their religious practices and examine how religious leadership was expressed and has changed throughout the life-span of the informants. And third, we will follow a chronological order to appreciate the political life of the Metis at St. Laurent, underlying how they exercised political will and leadership. The theoretical framework for our inquiry into religion and politics will be leadership as perceived and experienced by the people. The sources of data for this chapter are derived from both participant observation and from interviews with informants in the field.

Social Life

Home entertainment and games

In the past, the social life of the Metis at St.Laurent usually took place in the homes, the parish hall and within the boundaries of the village area. Exceptions would be the hockey and baseball teams who would compete in tournaments in surrounding villages.

At home, people created their own entertainment. An elder recalled how card-playing was a favourite past-time, especially during the long winter nights. Members of the family, parents and children sat around the table and would spend two hours at games such as 'casino voleurs' (French for casino bandits) and 'la bataille' (war).

Children would also have games of their own such as 'hot and cold': one hides an object and the other tries to locate it and depending on the distance they are to the object, they are either hot or cold. 'La Penitence', similar to 'forfeits' in English was a particularly popular card-game if there were many to play it. The aspect of the game that made it interesting was who was going to come up with the weirdest penance. A loser could be asked to go and plant a kiss on a visitor's bald-head or slowly walk around the house in the dark of the night with the ace of spades firmly clasped in one's hands. In the minds of some people, the ace of spades represented the fork of the devil!

In the winter, boys would play in the snow with a home-made sleigh or play hockey on a frozen ditch with sticks made from sturdy willow branches and puck of frozen horse manure. Some would skate on the lake if it was not too cold. An avid outdoorsman remembered the time when he and his two friends skated for about five miles on the lake, only to face a stiff north wind on their way back. "Besides, for many years, we did not have a hockey rink in St. Laurent, let alone an arena like they have today, so the only places we could skate were on dug-outs, ditches or "L"Grand Lac Manitoba".

During the summer evenings, children of a neighborhood would play ball among themselves until darkness set in. This was with a sponge ball, remarked a former player. The object was to bring in as many runs as possible provided the players were not all put 'out'. Then, it would be up to the 'safe' players to deliver the 'out' players. When all the 'safe' players were 'out', the other team would come to bat. As many as ten players played on each side, sometimes more.

Other popular games were hide and seek and 'pom-pom pull-away'. An informant related that the latter game was sometimes rough, as players would try and run through an area defended by two or three others. Those who were stopped were hit on the back three times by the defender who said: 'one-two-three pom-pom pull-away', and the intruder was out of the game and had to stand on the sidelines.

A senior woman related how she and her friends enjoyed playing the 'knife game'. It involved two or more players. "We used a pocket knife", she said, "but sometimes a kitchen knife would do, too. One would place the knife in the palm of one hand, on the back of the hand, on the wrist, the elbow and shoulder, in sequence, and try to make it come down and stick in the ground. If it did not stick, you lost your turn". The game would end with a final throw behind one's back.

Adults also created their own entertainment. The most popular was card-playing. The more popular games after World war II were: 'Charlemagne', 'Five hundred', 'Le pitrou', 'Whist', 'Le Major', 'The four Tens' and 'Yoker'. Many of these games would go on late into the night and would often finish off with a big lunch. A lady whose parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts had entertained such traditions for many generations observed: "Sometimes the card-players would have a full-course meal of meat-balls or pickerel fish in the wee hours of the morning".

She goes on to describe 'Le Major' card game: "There would be four players, usually the husbands against the wives, each player received three cards. The object of the game was to collect five "brices" (French for a ten or an Ace) before your opponent in one round. If you were successful, this would entitle you to turn the entire deck of cards over and administer "La Crepe" to your opponent (French for pancake, the turning of the deck of cards

corresponds to the turning of pancakes in the pan) and you would score points accordingly. Many players would kid each other as they arrived to start the game by asking who had brought the syrup for "La crepe" to-night. At times, there would be some real heated arguments, especially when the women accused the men of cheating, but I really would not be able to understand what they were saying to each other as most of the time the elders would speak in the Saulteaux language among themselves. I guess the main thing is that they seemed to have a lot of fun". Other seniors would spend hours playing checkers, sitting quietly, with a cloud of smoke rising above their heads.

House socials

Home socials were also common, reported another senior: "We would have birthday and anniversary dances in private homes, nothing fancy. Everybody was invited, one did not need to get a formal invitation like today, and as soon as there were enough people, we would have a square-dance. Everyone enjoyed the fiddle and guitar music. If musicians were unavailable, we would crank the old gramophone up and dance to 78 rpm records".

Christmas and New years was a special time for home visits. A respondent stated that this was called: "faire son jour de l'An" (local French expression meaning to visit friends and relatives and celebrate the New Years with them). People travelling in horse-drawn sleighs, cabooses

and cutters would wave at each other and exchange good wishes as they met on the road. The entire day was spent visiting house to house. There would always be plenty of traditional Metis food and refreshments for the visitors, sometimes three or four sittings. They would start early in the afternoon and usually end up "au p'tit jour et encore", (French for: until dawn and beyond).

Alcohol-related events

The local hotel was also a favourite social-gathering place. For a long time, the hotel at St.Laurent was the only one on highway six from Winnipeg. Until recent years, the beer-parlor was open only to men. As an informant told me, the women usually waited for their husband outside in the truck or car. When the beer-parlor closed at ten o'clock in the old days, the place would often be packed on Saturday nights and sometimes there would be some fights.

Some people abused alcohol, she continued, and that created some problems, sometimes depriving families of the basic necessities of life like food and clothing. There were also some alcohol-related accidents involving deaths that shocked and horrified the entire community for many years and for some, up to this day, whenever these incidents are mentioned. For example, people were killed by the "rock train", (as it was called because its cars carried only gypsum rock from Gypsumville, a mine located one hundred miles north of St.Laurent on the CNR line) or by some other

kinds of violent deaths, including homicide and suicide. As a result, St. Laurent developed a reputation of being a very rough place to live in or even to visit, with a severe and high rate of alcoholism and violence among its people. So much so that for a while many outsiders avoided coming to the village and did their business elsewhere, such was the stigma attached to the village and to the people. "Those were the dark days of St. Laurent", she recalled sadly, "from the thirties to the fifties".

This stigma has not totally disappeared, according to a senior. This stereotype has affected the population so much that it has produced a negative self-image among some members of the community. This, in turn, has somewhat stifled their relationships with the outside world: some withdrew from outside activities for a while, others refused to get involved in community events and kept to themselves, while some became too shy to go out and state openly that they were from St. Laurent. To ease their pain, some turned to more alcohol, but that aggravated the situation. Some tried to neglect, ignore or minimize their pain, hoping it would go away by itself. And of course, that did not work either. However, the majority of people seem to have done something about the situation. Many quit drinking altogether and developed a responsible way of life for themselves and their families. For the last twenty years the fellowship of Alcoholic Anonymous has been active in St. Laurent serving the community and the surrounding area.

The Community Picnic

For many years, the big annual social event in the summer was the community picnic. For days and weeks, people would work and prepare for the great day. It featured some of the best baseball in the province, horse races and foot races for people of all ages, and tug-o-war. There would be games and a merry-go-round for the children. Women would serve lunches all day. The picnic grounds at the time were situated west of highway number six across Frank Ducharme's place. (Fig. 2). An elder recalled the popularity of the horse races: "Formerly, the horses would run in a straight line, maybe a half a mile or so. In later years, we built an oval track which became dangerous at times, especially if one of the horses bolted into the crowd. Some people were injured. And for a few years, trotters also raced there. I have nothing against what the young people are organizing today, that is fine, but I would say that those were the real "Metis Days", as people would come from all over and camp in their tents for three or four days in the surrounding area".

The Parish-hall as the Centre of Social Activities

The church parish-hall or 'Le Cercle' (French for parish hall) was for many years the social centre for the people of St. Laurent. One informant reported that practically all social activities were held there: from card

parties and bingos, to bazaars and plays or "les chansons actees", (acted songs). All of the money would go to the church. On Sunday nights, the place would be packed for the whist card-parties as there was a friendly rivalry between the parishioners of the north end and of the south end to see who could raise the most money. Then, there were pie socials and basket socials. "I really got mad at my boy friend one time, related an elder lady, because he did not bid high enough to buy my basket and I had put in so much time preparing it for him! And worse yet, I had to go and sit and eat with the man who had bought it and he was one whom I did not like too much".

In the late fifties and sixties, weddings and socials moved out of the homes and into community halls where liquor licenses could be obtained. In St.Laurent, some parishioners once asked the priest for the use of the parish hall for a family wedding reception which would have included liquor. The priest refused to lend the hall. As a result, some parishioners became somewhat confused as to the status of the hall, especially after he had told them that it was 'their' parish hall! Furthermore, other parishioners noted that the priest was perhaps exceeding his authority in the matter. That, according to one informant was a decisive moment in the relationship between the church and the people at St.Laurent. From then on, he continued, the people built themselves a community recreation centre where they now have all their social activities. The parish hall deteriorated

and was eventually torn down as there was no use for it anymore.

The New Recreation Centre

The new community recreation centre at St.Laurent had its beginnings in the early seventies. According to one informant, the local fishermen wanted to build a fish co-op and storage area, which they did after some of them had followed a carpentry course. But then, he continues, they found their building somewhat too small for their purpose. So they decided to turn the building over to a committee of local people which, in turn, became the Recreation Centre Committee. The monies for the completion of the project came through a grant of the Manpower Department of the provincial government, but more important, the local people themselves raised a considerable amount of money through local fund-raising events and activities, including door to door canvassing and selling of lottery tickets. After some fifteen years of hard work, the St.Laurent Recreation Centre Incorporated was formed to manage the recreation centre, the hall, the arena and the sports grounds. It consists of people who are elected for a two-year term at the annual public meeting.

Today, different groups make use of the recreation centre. Socials and weddings are held there on a regular basis. Various community groups meet there for their business: fishermen and trappers reunions, political rallies,

Manitoba Metis Federation local gatherings, sports banquets, women groups, the Legion, and as one informant said: "Let us not forget the four weekly bingos!"

Other community activities include the Sports Days and Ball tournaments, tractor pull and provincial horse-shoe tournament in the summer. In the winter, there are on-going minor and senior hockey and Figure Ice Skating programs and the annual carnival, at the arena. One elder recalled how they used to flood the outdoor rink in the old days with pails and barrels of water and small water hoses. Today, they have an automatic sweeper. Formerly, they had to clean the snow off the ice with wooden scrapers. The Recreation Centre also provides the opportunity for many volunteers to work at the concession stands and for the catering service of community events.

New School Administration

Another significant event in the life of the Metis people at St. Laurent was the transition of the school system from the school district with government appointed inspectors to school divisions with administration through elected trustees. As one informant told me, that marked the end of the Nuns' school administration in St. Laurent. When the school division took over in the early seventies, he added, many nuns could not teach here anymore as they were not qualified. The school division accepted only teachers who had teaching certificates recognized by the Province. As

a result, many of the nuns gradually returned to their native province of Quebec.

A former school trustee reported that there are six wards in the present school division. The school program is the same all over with appropriate adaptations locally. Ten years ago, he continued, it cost \$1,500.00 per student per year at school. Today, it is more like \$4,000.00 with the government paying 60% and the municipality contributing the remaining 40%.

Following is table 6 with a list of some of the community groups which have operated and/or are still operating in St.Laurent today:

Table 6

Abr.: E:Exist; NE: Non-existing

Community groups

	<u>Pre-1950</u>		<u>Today</u>	
	<u>E</u>	<u>: NE</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>: NE</u>
Lake Manitoba Fishing Co-op		x	x	
Manitoba Metis Federation local		x	x	
Day Care Centre, Inc.		x	x	
The St.Laurent Recreation Centre Inc		x	x	
Alcoholic Anonymous		x	x	
Minor and Senior hockey		x	x	
Figure Skating Club		x	x	
Baseball	x		x	
Drivers Education Program		x	x	
Four stores, two Metis owned	x		x	
Three restaurants, one Metis owned		x	x	
Three garages, none Metis owned		x	x	
One hotel, not Metis owned	x		x	
Hairdresser and Boutique		x	x	
Credit Union		x	x	
Municipal office	x		x	
Parish Hall	x			x
Roman Catholic Church	x		x	
Evangelical Church		x	x	
Senior Citizen's Lodge		x	x	
Interlake Packers		x	x	
Tourist Bureau and Crafts shop		x	x	
Collegiate		x	x	
Convent school		x		x
Simonet school	x			x
Nun's Convent	x			x
Nun's residence		x	x	
Oblate Father's Novitiate	x			x
Oblate Father's Rectory		x	x	
The St.Laurent Area Development Corp.		x	x	
Volunteer Fire Brigade		x	x	
Housing development		x	x	

Furthermore, there are local people who now represent the St. Laurent interests regularly on regional committees and organizations. Some of these groups are:

1. The Interlake Development Board
2. The Western Interlake Planning District
3. The Day Care Centre Inc.
4. The Lake Manitoba Fishermen and Trapper Association
5. The Lake Manitoba Recreation District Committee
6. The Lake Manitoba Fishing Co-op
7. The White Horse Plain School Division
8. The Manitoba Metis Federation Inc.
9. The St.Laurent Area Development Corporation

In sum, data reveals that family and community activities nurturing social relations have always abounded in St.Laurent. However, in recent years, family-centered activities such as card-playing and children's games have gradually given way to community sponsored events like Sports days, organized baseball and minor hockey. The extended-family gatherings at Christmas and New Years have all but disappeared. Today, only the immediate members of the family get together for such events.

Data shows that many new groups have flourished in the community to meet the new recreational needs. Thus, there have been a lot of changes in community formation and social life in St.Laurent in the last thirty-five years. The table indicates that the local people have made significant progress in bettering themselves and their community. This

is especially evident in the recreation and community development areas: housing, Senior's Home, Recreation Centre and arena.

Another vital aspect of growth that is becoming more and more apparent has been the participation of local residents on committees affecting the region as a whole. Thus, the people of St.Laurent are no longer left out or isolated from the rest of the district, but representatives of the village now contribute to and participate in the research, the formulating and the implementing of socio-economic policies affecting not only the village but also the region, thus overcoming the negative self-image of themselves and of the village that some people had developed over the years.

As a result, the basis of operation of their social life has expanded from being centered solely on the interior environment of St.Laurent, to include now the wider exterior environment of the district and of the region. In the process, the Metis have continued to maintain and develop a core cultural element, their community relations. Furthermore, the data discloses that the Metis are a community-minded people who, at the same time cherish their sense of independence. Thus in the Metis way of life at St.Laurent, community life and independence are values that are not in opposition, but rather they go together, they are complementary. In sum, in spite of modernization, many Metis

at St.Laurent were able to retain some values of their Metisness, as mentioned above.

Religion

The Roman Catholic religion has always had a large influence on the lives of the Metis at St.Laurent. As a preliminary, we will look briefly at the history of the presence of the priests and nuns there. Then, we will examine some of the religious practices and observances of the people at home, at church and in the school throughout the life-span of the informants. Our analysis will focus on the exercise of leadership in the church and the role the Metis played therein.

"La Mission"

In the first chapter it was mentioned that, because of its unusual settlement pattern, visitors were sometimes at a loss when approaching the village from the south end: not a single house in sight. If the same visitor continued towards the north, in a moment, huge grey stone buildings on the left hand side would catch one's attention. Many an elder referred to this area as 'La Mission' or the mission compound. (Fig. 2). There in all their splendor and grandiosity stood four gigantic stone structures: one to house the nuns whose numbers rose to 30 at one time, another, attached to the convent was the school operated by them. Across the road to the north was the church whose two hundred foot high steeple was once painted by Calixte Richard, a local Metis elder. Then, just north of the church was the four-storey

Oblate Fathers' Novitiate and residence. An elder remarked that it was, to say the least, a most impressive and imposing sight, especially if one compared these buildings with the rest of the residences in the village, the architecture of which were far more modest. Another elder admitted that one could not help but feel somewhat overwhelmed at times by the presence of the church, whose power was symbolized by these buildings. Yet another informant related how visitors would pass remarks at times to the local people: 'I guess it is the priests and the nuns who run your lives here' they would say, or 'these people must have a lot of money to have buildings like that, besides, did they not buy most of the land around here?' The fact was, as one informant said, the priests and the nuns did own a lot of land. How else could they survive? For example, they bought land east of the tracks for the wood they needed to heat all their buildings and the land west of the highway towards the lake was for their pastureland. "They did have big farms, I know", he added, "because I worked for them for two summers".

Today, all these buildings have disappeared. Some were destroyed by fire, others were torn down because they had become obsolete. A new church was constructed in the early sixties. The old school was replaced by the Collegiate at another location. The Oblate Father's Novitiate which housed as many as twenty-five people at one time, including many training for the priesthood, moved out of the village in

1950. No explanation was given to the people for the move, one respondent said, and nobody ever knew why. One elder informant bluntly asked the question: "Were the Oblate Fathers entirely careless about what the local people might feel about the Novitiate closing its doors?"

Today, four nuns now live in a motel-style residence, two teach at the Collegiate and one works in the parish. One priest resides in the rectory. "The mission compound ain't what it used to be", stated an elder. "It is not like it once was; many people have fond memories of these buildings, but we live in new times now".

Religious practices and observances

The religious practices and observances of the Metis people at St. Laurent reflected the mentality and the catholic theology of the time: devotional and legalistic. At home, recalled a respondent, the main devotion centred around Mary, the Mother of God, with the recitation of the rosary in the families practically every night. Other prayers, like the litany of the saints and prayers for the dead, were also common. The walls were usually covered with many holy pictures, sometimes, each person would have his or her favourite saint to pray to. One would also notice crucifixes and palm branches tacked on the walls in a prominent place in the house.

"Of course, holy water was always plentiful", related a senior. "We would use it especially during thunderstorms and

lightning. My wife would go around the house, upstairs, in the bedrooms, and downstairs and sprinkle the entire place with holy water, especially around the windows. We really believed that it was protecting us against the danger. Also, before retiring for the night, it was a common practice to make the sign of the cross with holy water. Other people would make their prayers coincide with the convent bell ringing the Angelus Prayer at 5:30 pm".

People still keep religious artifacts in their homes. Many people cherish crosses or statuettes as souvenirs of religious events such as the visit of our Lady of the Cape or Father Peyton's Crusade of the Rosary. One man was proud to show me a small grotto to the Blessed Mother that he had built in his backyard. I learned later that a few families in St. Laurent had built such 'family shrines', as they called them, in a secluded spot in their backyards.

One informant related how Lenten practices were also rigidly adhered to. Giving up your favourite habit or food was usually the main penance. There would be no dancing nor any type of entertainment to distract one from the sombre lenten atmosphere. Very often, the parish priest would take the opportunity to make his parish visits in the homes during that time. He would remind the parishioners of some of the fads and clothing fashions that should be avoided, such as the short cut of one's sleeves or of too much opening at the collar. Of course, no water nor food could be

taken after midnight if one wanted to go to communion the next day.

At church, the mass would be the most observed practice. Each family paid for their pew, and one had to have a good reason to miss mass on Sundays. Besides, at that time, there was no question of work on Sundays as that was considered to be a serious sin.

An informant observed that religion has changed a lot in the last few years. There was a time, one recalled, when we knew what sin was. The law made it clear for everyone. "But today, I am not too sure what sin is anymore. Everybody is right. Good and evil has disappeared from the vocabulary. People seem to do their own thing, but not only that, they also seem to get away with it!" Another said: "In my days, my mother taught me my prayers, religion was strong at home. Today, young people do not even know the basic prayers anymore. It is disturbing, many do not go or do not want to go to church on Sunday. Too many changes had happened at once, the changes were not explained enough to the people, "like why can we eat meat on Fridays now?" Another senior simply gave up going to church. "I have a hard time understanding all those changes, though I have nothing against people who still attend".

Thus, through their prayers and rituals, Metis people appealed to the supernatural world for aid and protection.

Furthermore, religion sanctioned a wide range of conduct in the lives of the Metis by providing notions of right and wrong.

Major religious events

There were other religious events throughout the years. Sometimes, there would be a parish retreat. Some of the priests would preach in the Saulteaux language, recalled an elder. The visit of the statue of the Blessed Virgin would stir up the fervor of many people, the Midnight masses at Christmas and the Holy Week services were all times of deep spiritual fervor and prayer.

A woman remembers the time when, during the month of May, as a family, everyone would attend Benediction every night at 7:30 pm. Then, on the last day of the month, there would be the crowning of a local high school girl as the Queen of May, representing Mary, along with many school children who, because of their good conduct throughout the year were now rewarded as forming her entourage. The majority of these students belonged to the Croises (crusaders) or Cadets, which were Catholic Action movements that originated in Quebec and brought here by the nuns. For all the time the nuns were in the old convent school, religion and catechism were taught there on a regular basis. This is not the case today at the collegiate.

As one elder related, the most beautiful religious event of the year was the annual procession of the Blessed

Sacrament on the feast of Corpus Christi held in June. The procession would start inside the church with different associations of the parish, each with their group banner, walking in order. There would be the ladies of St. Anne, the children of Mary, all dressed in special attire for the occasion. Then the mens groups, the congregation, the altar boys, the Crusaders and Cadets, the choir, and finally the priest carrying the Blessed Sacrament. The procession would cover close to half a mile and there would be branches and poplar trees planted all along the procession route, as people recited the rosary, sang hymns and recited the litany of the Sacred Heart. The whole atmosphere would be one of piety and reverence. The people would walk to a special temporary altar where there would be Benediction and special prayers for the community. The altar, decorated with multicoloured flowers was covered with an arch made of local trees and branches.

Sacraments of Initiation

The sacraments of initiation were considered important events in the life of the individual and of the family. The baptism of a baby was held on Sunday afternoons, in the sacristy of the church. It was a family affair, underlining the passage of the child from the state of original sin to the new state of a child of God. Special dresses for the baby were carefully chosen for the occasion.

After the ceremony, the godfather was allowed to ring

the church bells as long as he wanted as a way to notify the people and to celebrate that transition. An informant gave the following description: "When the child reached seven or eight years old, he prepared for the first confession and the first communion. This was a community event, usually held at one of the regular Sunday masses. Then, by the time the child was twelve, it was time for Confirmation, the ceremony that officially recognized and incorporated a person in the Church along with the responsibilities attached to it. This was done by the Bishop, and there was a lot of preparation for that. The nuns usually played a big role in preparing the children for the reception of these sacraments. As far as I know, the informant concluded, the people here, have always been interested in these sacraments, along with marriage and the sacrament of the sick. How often people would rush to get the priest to come and give an ill person the sacrament of the sick! In the eyes of many, it would be an assurance of going to heaven, if the person was not cured".

Most Metis people looked at these religious events as important social and psychological functions in their lives. On one hand, they provided comfort in the belief that supernatural aid was made available to them, especially in time of crisis. On the other hand, they played a large role in fostering social relations and in maintaining social cohesion and solidarity among the Metis people.

New administration

A long time resident informed me that in the last few years, there have been some minor changes in the administration and management of the Catholic church at St. Laurent. In the past, there were two or three male trustees, who assisted the priest in the administration of the parish. Then, in the sixties, the parish council was introduced. At first, it was mostly non-Metis who were members and usually the same people, with some exceptions. A Metis woman reported that she did not know what a parish council was when she was phoned to be on it. "I accepted", she said. "And I learned a lot about liturgy and prayer, finances and maintenance and catechism for the children; we met once a month and assisted the priest in the work of the parish. Now we have elections of the members on the parish council, church matters are administered more openly now, decisions are made by all the members of the council, not only by the priest, all meetings are open to the public and attendance is usually 100%". Thus, the parish council structure provides a channel for people today to participate more in the administration and management of the church than in the past.

Table 7 illustrates some of the changes that have taken place in the leadership and administration of the parish.

Table 7

	<u>Pre-1950</u>	<u>Today</u>
Power/Influence	Priests	Priest/People
Administration	Priests	Priest/People
Decision-making	Priests	Priest/People
Trustees	Yes	No
Parish Council	No	Yes
Religious Education	Priests/Nuns	Priest/Nuns/People
Liturgy	Priests/Nuns	Priest/Nuns/People

Table 7 indicates that Metis people now exercise more power and influence in the leadership and administration of the Catholic Church at St. Laurent than the pre-1950 period. This is expressed by their participation in the decision-making process at the parish council level. Other people also belong to committees such as Liturgy and Religious Education and thereby help formulate policies affecting their lives. In sum, during the pre-1950 era, the priests and nuns were in effect the only people running the parish. Nowadays due to new mechanisms such as the parish council, Metis people participate more fully in the life of the church. Hence, the church is less clergy-centered to-day and more lay people-centered. Some people still feel nevertheless that there is lots of room for improvement in this area.

Table 8 shows some of the religious practices of the Metis people at St.Laurent, then and now.

Table 8

	<u>Pre-1950</u>		<u>Today</u>	
	<u>E</u>	<u>Ne</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>Ne</u>
<u>At home</u>				
Family rosary	x			x
Individual rosary	x		x	x
Holy water	x		x	x
Crucifixes	x		x	x
Holy Pictures	x		x	x
Family grottos		x	x	
Priest visit	x		x	x
<u>At school</u>				
Daily catechism	x			x
Catholic Action	x			x
<u>At Church</u>				
Sunday Mass	x		x	x
Sacraments	x		x	x
Processions	x			x
Grotto	x			x
Month of Mary	x			x
Lenten Observances	x			x
Children of Mary	x			x
Parish Retreats	x		x	x
Bible study		x	x	

The tables indicate that Metis people at St.Laurent have had a tradition of religious practices for a long time. As for other traditional peoples, religion for the Metis is characterized by a belief in supernatural beings and forces and through prayer and ritual practices people appeal to the supernatural world for aid. Through the presence and the influence of the priests and nuns, religion also sanctioned

a wide range of conduct for the people by providing notions of right and wrong.

Data shows that many of their traditional ritual practices have but all disappeared: the family rosary, daily catechism, catholic action, parish processions, most of the lenten observances, the month of Mary and some sacramental observances such as confessions. As far as it is possible to know, these practices and rituals have not been replaced. Other ritual practices such as parish retreats and Sunday mass and the use of items such as holy water, holy pictures and crucifixes still exist today but to a lesser degree. The only new religious practice the people have introduced in their lives is the family grotto and there are only few of those in existence. Over the years, the nuns also initiated a weekly Bible study.

The process of secularization has taken place in St. Laurent. The institutional church no longer exercises the influence it once did over the lives of the people. The secular and the religious spheres of the Metis people have been defined and separated and each operates from its respective domain.

Secularization also raises the issue of the role of ritual in society. The Durkheimian view that religion or religious ritual is a unifying element of group identity (in a traditional society) is hereby challenged by the phenomenon of secularization. The question is whether secular rituals are equivalent to religious rituals or do

religious rituals do the same thing, produce the same effect i.e. unifying element, in a secular context ? I am inclined to think that religious rituals point to very little if anything in a secular context. What Durkheim forgot to say was that religious rituals simply lose or have little or no meaning (or force) in a secular context. Secularization simply detracts the value of ritual. For the Metis of St.Laurent, religion, in the past, was integrated in their life and integrated their life at the same time (i.e. unifying element). With the advent of secularization, the data confirms that many religious rituals have lost their value while some have been retained and only a few new ones have surfaced. However, that does not mean that the religious lives of the Metis people has disintegrated or has disappeared altogether or that it is at a standstill or that religion has become just privatized, as some proponents of secularization would lead us to believe.

Table 7 indicates that people play a more constructive role in the affairs of the parish community than ever before, for example, in participation and decision-making in terms of the parish as a whole, in Religious Education and in Liturgy. As a result, some people have developed a stronger sense of belonging and of participation in the church. For example, those who attend church today do so more out of personal conviction than simply out of fear of sanctions or to fulfill a purely legal obligation.

Thus, religion continues to play a significant role in the lives of the Metis in St.Laurent as it has done in the past, but today, with new expressions and new dimensions. So much so that I would argue that religion has always been and remains understood as a core cultural value in the lives of Metis.

Politics

The aim of this section is to describe some aspects of the political life of the Metis people at St.Laurent. As with religion in the previous section, the theoretical framework for our discussion will be leadership as perceived and exercised by the Metis. We will look at the history of the rural municipality with special attention given to the degree of participation of the Metis in its affairs. In the process, I hope to shed some light on the extent to which Metis people controlled their political lives, how much power and political influence they possessed and to what extent they participated in the decision-making process that affected their lives. The sources of data include interviews with informants in the field, participant observation and archival research of the municipal records at St.Laurent.

Some Historical aspects of Municipal Politics

At the moment, we have no knowledge of existing records depicting the political leadership of the Metis people at St.Laurent, from the time they arrived there circa 1824 to 1881. Perhaps, one can assume that like other traditional peoples, the Metis had no formal political organizations as such. As Haviland (1985: 529)remarks: "Social controls may be internalized, built into individuals. Built-in controls rely on such deterrents as personal shame and fear of supernatural punishment".

St.Laurent has a long history of municipal politics. The local municipal records show that the municipality was first incorporated on March 25, 1881 and the first meeting was held on January 17, 1882. A man of the cloth, Brother J. Mulvihill, OMI, was elected Reeve by acclamation, and he served for thirteen years. The councillors were Daniel Devlin, Pierre Richard, Jean Moise Ducharme, Damase Boyer, Pierre Chaboyer and Pierre Laverdure. According to an informant, the municipality operated under a Reeve and Council for forty-eight years until 1929, when, on the eve of the Depression years, it declared financial bankruptcy. H.W. Connelly, an Irishman, was reeve at the time. From that year until 1975, or for the next forty-six years, there were no elected Reeve and Council at St.Laurent, the affairs of the municipality were managed by one man only, an administrator appointed by the provincial government.

The Advisory Board: A New Political Awareness

In 1972, an Advisory Board composed of three local Metis people was set up to advise and to make recommendations to the Administrator regarding issues affecting the lives of the people and the affairs of the municipality. The Board had no power, said an informant, the administrator could take or leave what the Advisory Board said. Many people thought that the political power was concentrated too much in the hands of one individual. As one informant

stated: 'The administrator had all the power of decision-making, one person ran the entire municipality'.

Nonetheless, the administrator at the time, was open to the suggestion of considering bringing back the Reeve and council system. "At first", added an informant, "We were 'in the dark' as to what was going on right here in St.Laurent. Discussions took place on matters affecting our lives and decisions were made and we were never consulted. Now, we have a say in what is going on and we know what is going on. Besides, it was mostly Metis people which started the Advisory Board which led to the Reeve and Council".

The work of the Advisory Board can be qualified as an indication of a new political consciousness among the Metis at St.Laurent. A respondent attributes its foundation to the growing awareness of potential political leadership among Metis people brought about by the creation of the Manitoba Metis Federation local.

Hence, from a political framework where there was no participation, the Metis sought to create mechanisms whereby their views would be heard and dealt with accordingly by a government which represented them. In sum, the Advisory Board was a stepping-stone to achieve a Municipal form of Government where they would regain the control of their lives through effective participation and decision-making.

Re-election of Reeve and Municipal Council

On March 19, 1975, the first election of Reeve and Council in forty-six years took place at St.Laurent. A representative from the Department of Municipal Affairs had the Reeve and Councillors sworn under oath. He also assisted the Council in formulating guidelines for its work and operations and, as a former councillor told me, he helped the council in developing and formulating its own by-laws.

The Advisory Board ceased to exist at that point and the Government representative thanked the out-going Administrator for sound financial management and for a smooth transition from one form of government to another. St.Laurent became once again a self-governing municipality with its elected Reeve and Council.

The Municipality: Organizational Structure

There are six wards in the present Municipality, three in St.Laurent, north, south and center, and as an informant reported, they are predominantly populated by Metis people and Metis people have always represented these wards. The other three wards are composed mainly of non-Metis people. The beach ward, the east ward and the Oak Point ward, a small hamlet, six miles north of the village, have their own elected representatives (non-Metis) on the Council.

Municipal elections have taken place at regular intervals, the first in 1975, the second in 1977, the third in

1980, the fourth in 1983 and the fifth in 1986. No Metis person was ever elected as Reeve. A former councillor informed me that there are as many as seven sub-committees operating under the Reeve and Council. These are the Housing, Transportation, Recreation, Social Assistance, Ambulance and Fire, The Western Interlake Planning Board and the Interlake Development Corporation. When I enquired about the percentage of the people of St.Laurent who are on Welfare and who receive Social Assistance, he said that he was in no position to disclose such figures, but that, thirty years ago, the percentage was very high, and today, the percentage is no higher than for any other villages with the same population.

In the interval, the Municipality joined with two neighbouring municipalities, Coldwell and Siglunes, to form the Western Interlake Planning District. Two councillors from each municipality formed the Board and reported to Council. A respondent stated: "We had a development plan and we held hearings to set up guidelines for the zoning of the land, for example, in towns, industrial, residential and recreational, in rural areas, farm or residential. This also included the zoning of the beach areas in St.Laurent".

Having had no experience in municipal politics, I asked an informant what would be some advantages and weaknesses in the present municipal form of government for the people at St.Laurent. "Heavy bureaucracy", he remarked, "is a slow process and is to be considered a drawback of this form of

government, but then", he continued, "the structure allows for the councillor to be close to the constituents, he can meet the people of his ward and consult them practically everyday if he wants to. The present structure, though not perfect, is good to answer our needs at the moment".

People Involvement

At first, some people did not understand fully how a municipal government functioned. "I, for one," stated a long-time resident and former councillor, "wanted to help the people educate themselves on municipal government. For example, how does the system work? What is the structure, the funding and the budget? How does the tax system operate, the general tax or special tax like for the schools? What is a levy, an assessment, where does the money go? The school tax, for example is paid by all citizens, regardless of age or if one has children in the school or not. These are important questions to which people have to have answers if they want to vote well".

My information reveals that there was only about fifty percent of the population that voted at first. Some were simply not interested, others admitted they did not understand the issues. In many cases, people based their vote on whether they 'liked' a candidate or not rather on what the person could actually do. He concluded by saying that most people prefer to go directly to their councillor

to complain instead of speaking in front of the entire council.

In the course of my field-work, I was fortunate to meet some of the present and former councillors. To try and find out what made them decide to run for the office of councillor was uppermost in my mind. Their answers seemed to speak to one or two basic issues: inexperience and lack of information. All said they were curious to find out how a municipal government functioned. "I never knew before", said a respondent. "Nobody ever told us or explained anything to us. Now we publish all the minutes of the council meeting for everyone to see. I learned that people's business and the affairs of the municipality are better run by six elected people than by just one man". I also asked him if he was interested in one area of government more than the other. He replied that a councillor, though he may sit on a subcommittee, he still has to be interested and be as knowledgeable as he can on all aspects of an issue. "For example, for the sub-division of land, we had to hire a lawyer to assist the municipality and to make the entire council understand the legal implications of such an issue .

"After this first experience, we would know how to operate in the future. Today, I have a good idea what Municipal Affairs are all about, it deals mainly with issues and problems affecting the community, and I am also learning a little bit of what this game of politics is all about".

Another councillor said that he always wanted to get inside the council room and find out what was going on there. "We never got any information of what was going on in there. I guess that wanting to find out what goes on at a council meeting and wanting to be part of it was what interested me the most in wanting to become a councillor".

Campaigning

What about campaigning? I enquired. He described his experience in the following way: "I was 'green', I did not know what I was getting involved in. I went door to door, but I never made any promises, all I said was that I would do my best if elected and it was up to the public to decide. I never said, vote for me and I'll do this or that for you". According to another informant, "this would be 'petty politics'. One can make promises and then find out that it is not easy to carry them out. Because it is one thing to say to the people that you are going to do something, but it is a different ball-game once you get inside that council room. First, you have to start by convincing and getting your fellow councillors' support and that is not necessarily an easy task. There are pressure groups within council just like anywhere else, that individual councillors take sides, for or against an issue is normal procedure. Furthermore, Council does not necessarily or automatically approve one councillor's suggestion or recommendation".

At election time, councillors visit their constituents. Some go door-to-door, others rely mostly on casual visits at the stores or at the post-office, while others get busy making telephone calls asking people for their support. Sometimes they have town-hall meetings with all the candidates present, especially for the position of Reeve. One candidate admitted that he did very little campaigning, he simply relied on his existing network of friends.

To inquiries regarding the mood of the people during the election campaign, an informant said that people seemed to become strangers for a little while during an election.

"Would you say that there is some tension in the air?", I asked. "Yes that is it", he replied. "There is a certain tension and a certain distance but with no ill feelings during an election campaign that develops, even between friends".

A younger councillor reported that the people were very receptive. They asked questions such as which reeve candidate to support, while others said it was about time young people got involved in local municipal politics. "I was twenty-seven years old then, and was elected and sat on two subcommittees. I would not change anything if I were to run again. I worked alone, I had no committee working for me. I think I understood the people of my ward rather well, I was born and raised here. When I found out I could no longer spend sufficient time with my constituents, I pulled out. It

was a personal and enriching experience because we are always dealing with the public".

Having myself been away from the village for more than thirty years, I admitted my ignorance to my informants regarding the state of politics there, so I suggested that they describe the interest of the local people in politics. It would seem, one related, that people gradually got interested more in municipal life, for the simple reason that they are more informed of what was going on. They could follow the development of projects and studies affecting their lives. This was not the case under the administrator. "Metis people", he said, "learn politics quickly if given the opportunity, people are smart, they will not be misled". Normally, it is the secretary of the Municipality that announces the date of the elections. Posters are distributed in the post-office and stores and the returning officers revise the electors' list.

Following is a brief description of a typical voting day at a polling station at St. Laurent as provided by a lady who has worked there as a clerk for many years. A friend called her to volunteer as clerk on election day, she said. "I accepted. I started in 1975 and I did my job for ten consecutive years. The Recreation centre would serve as a polling station, Laurentia Beach would also have theirs. We started at 7:30 am until 10:00 pm. We arranged the ballot boxes with witnesses to check the empty boxes and then lock them. My main job was to take the names of the people who

came in to vote and to check if their name was on the election list. Most people come to vote early in the morning, at noon and at or around the supper hour".

I asked her if they encountered any problems at the polling station and asked her to mention them, if any. She said some people came to vote without having first registered. It also happened a few times that one or two refused to take an oath. "Of course, we could accommodate the few people who could not read nor write, as well as the physically handicapped. At the end of the day, we counted the ballots. Sometimes, we made errors and we had to start all over again, under the watchful eye of witnesses".

Some dissatisfaction with the Municipality

Some informants expressed their dissatisfaction with the work of the municipality in the area. One respondent stated, "As soon as someone wants to start a business, the municipality overtaxes him for the least little thing. They do not seem to want to see St. Laurent develop or local people develop their own businesses. Why?". And again, as another informant remarked: "It is nice for the Department of Tourism to tell the people to do something. They encourage and even push for development. But when people show initiative and need their support, they are not around to deliver. St. Laurent has had a long history of being ignored and neglected by the provincial governments. Why?"

Another informant said that the wards within the village of St.Laurent have only five miles of municipal road but receive hardly any public services while the three other wards in the rest of the municipality have over one hundred miles of road and they have services like garbage pick-up, street lights and better roads, and the people of St.Laurent still pay taxes for these services in these other wards just like anyone else. Why can't the wards of St.Laurent receive the same benefits as these other wards of the Municipality do, he asked?

"Let's face it", stated an informant, "the municipality does not work for the wards of the Metis people". Furthermore, according to some residents, some beach residents do not want to see St.Laurent develop economically simply because they do not want their taxes to go up. According to the Annex A, UPDATED COMMUNITY PROFILE, compiled by Sandra Funk, of the HKL & Associates Ltd of Winnipeg, 1987, the report states: "The community of St.Laurent, like many other small rural Manitoba communities has experienced a decline in population over the last 20 years. In 1968 the population was 1,676, in 1981 it was 1,114 and in the most recent census the population count was 1,119. These population numbers do not include the seasonal residents who live in the various cottage developments in the area. In summer the population increases dramatically. The estimated number of available subdivision cottage lots in 1987 is 1,150 and approximately 1,000 have cottages on them. The St.Laurent

Municipal Office 1986 voters list includes 1,192 non-resident eligible voters. The combined permanent and seasonal population estimate varies from 1,119 year round to over 3,000 in the summer months".

According to a life-long resident, there have been a lot of changes at the beaches in the last ten years. Once upon a time, local people had easy access to go and swim there, which is simply not the case today. Access to the beaches is very difficult for the local people today. As an informant told me, "The beaches have become strictly a private affair. There are practically no public beaches anymore for the local people who have no cottages there. Where as a kid, I used to go and play there, I cannot bring my own grandchildren at that same place today. I think", he continued, "it is mostly city people who have purchased the land there and some have developed lots for sale and they make a lot money selling them". Another informant pointed out that the beach people, nonetheless, pay all the taxes like anyone else in the municipality even though they lived there only during the summer months and on week-ends. "They pay the property tax, the school tax and the assessment. As private cottage-owners and tax-payers they have their elected representative on the municipal council and as members of a ward in the municipality they can well do what seems best for themselves just like anybody else".

A seventy-five year old senior candidly put it this way: "The old generation before me fought to get things go-

ing and they were successful. But then, my generation sort of let go and things got bad here for awhile. For many years, we did not have our own elected reeve and council, the government-appointed administrator made all the decisions for us. Now, the younger generation is picking things up again and that is a very good sign". This senior is referring to 'old generation' as the Metis people of St.Laurent before the turn of the century up to the late twenties: they had leadership at the municipal level and they enjoyed a productive economy highly integrated to the land. Meanwhile, the period of 'his generation' is the period between the thirties and sixties, the time when the people at St.Laurent had no elected political leadership. As was mentioned in the section on Social Life, there were many social and economic problems during that period. When he speaks of the 'younger generation', he is referring to the people of the seventies and eighties who again have been able to express their political will and leadership.

Manitoba Metis Federation local

Another form of political involvement for the Metis people at St.Laurent was through the Manitoba Metis Federation. In 1970, the Metis people at St.Laurent formed a local of the Manitoba Metis Federation. The people used this vehicle to express their socio-economic needs and negotiate with various departments of the government in order to effectuate necessary changes for the betterment of the commu-

nity. In St.Laurent, the Metis local was partly responsible for the establishment of the Credit Union, of the Low-Cost Housing Project and various community events such as the 'Metis days' and community picnics. As we can readily observe, its goals are not only 'political' but social, cultural and economic as well. The Manitoba Metis Federation Inc. is the provincial organization for the Metis of Manitoba. It was formed in 1967 in Winnipeg. Today, it has seven regions operating in Manitoba with a total of 147 locals.

In turn, the Manitoba Metis Federation is a member of the Metis National Council (MNC) which is the national voice of Canada's Metis people. Founded in 1983, The MNC is an alliance of five Metis associations from the historical Metis homeland in Western Canada. According to its Newsletter of Fall 1984, MNC has 14 locals in British Columbia, 100 in Alberta, 129 in Saskatchewan, 147 in Manitoba and 26 in Ontario. Finally, the MNC is a member of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples founded in Canada in 1975. This organization represents over twenty countries in the world with indigenous populations. Indigenous here refers to the descendants of the original inhabitants of a given country, who lived there prior to the arrival of the colonial powers and have remained there but who have little or no voice in the national government of the state or states in which they live.

Through the existing network of Indigenous organi-

zations, many Metis people of St.Laurent now feel a solidarity with other Metis peoples of their region and of their province, and to a lesser degree with other Metis in Canada and other indigenous groups around the world. The municipal form of government, in turn, provides them with the opportunity to participate in and to contribute to the Canadian way of life. Thus, the Metis are no longer politically isolated as they once were. Mainly because of their own political will and initiative, the Metis of St.Laurent now participate in the political life of the municipality and of their province. They also have their own organizations not only within the territorial limits of their village but in the region, the province and the country. This political involvement of the Metis at St.Laurent locally, regionally and nationally confirms them as being both Canadian and Metis.

Table 9Chronology of Political Leadership at St. Laurent

The Rural Municipality of St. Laurent was first incorporated on March 25, 1881, The first Meeting of the Council took place on January 17, 1882.

1824-1881: Decentralized and informal political structure.

1861-1881: Leadership influenced by missionaries.

1881-1929: Elected Reeve and Municipal Council.

1929-1975: One man runs entire Municipality, an Administrator appointed by provincial government, no councillors.

1970 : Formation of Manitoba Metis Federation local.

1972 : Formation of Advisory Board to Reeve.
 This Advisory Board was greatly responsible for facilitating the transfer from government-appointed Reeve to elected Reeve and Councillors.

1975 : First election of new Reeve and six Councillors in forty-six years. Advisory Board cease to function.

1977 : Second election.

1980 : Third election.

1983 : Fourth election.

1986 : Fifth election.

Table 10

Metis Political Leadership : Power and Participation.Abr: Metis Power and Influence: Me/Po-InMetis Participation in Decision-making: Me/Pa-De-Ma

	<u>Me/Po-In</u>		<u>Me/Pa-De-Ma</u>	
	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>
1881-1929: Reeve and Council	x		x	
1929-1975: Administrator		x		x
1970: Metis Federation local	x		x	
1972: Advisory Board	x			x
1975: Reeve and Council	x		x	

In sum, this section set out to describe some of the political leadership experiences of the Metis people of St.Laurent. We covered the history of leadership in the lives of the Metis there. From a decentralized and informal political structure in 1824 to a municipal form of government in the 1980's, the political lives of the Metis people has been a continuous see-saw experience.

As stated by an elder, their growth years seemed to have coincided with the years when they were in control of their lives under an elected Reeve and council from 1881 to 1929 and again from 1975 onward. Then, for some forty-six years, between the years of 1929 to 1975, under the

leadership of a government-appointed administrator, their lives seemed to suffer from economic and social instability as both church and secular authority proved themselves unable to bear the responsibilities they had arrogated to themselves. Marginalization once more became the context of their lives.

According to Haviland (1985: 529), political organization refers to the means by which a society maintains order internally and manages its affairs with other societies externally. The municipal structure at St.Laurent has forced the Metis people to look not only at their own internal interests and organizations but also at their relationships with surrounding villages and municipalities and their interests. This is an important facet of modernization. In the process, the Metis people of St.Laurent acquired valuable political know-how, from the Advisory Board experience to the campaigning as a councillor to working as a clerk at a polling station. Also, they seemed to have developed a political maturity in view of the questions they are now asking regarding their political state and future. The complacency of the older generation has begun to disappear, the younger people are not afraid to ask question on burning issues such as the dissatisfaction with the Municipality. One councillor said: "There are a lot of smart people in St.Laurent and we have a lot of resources here and there is a lot to do in the community. We got to get involved, get out of the house and get our feet wet".

This chapter has covered the issues of social life, religion and politics. In the first section on social life, social relations in which a sense of independence combined with or was complementary to a spirit of community life, emerged as one of the core values of Metis culture.

The leaderships expressed both in religion and politics have undergone considerable changes in the last few years. For many years, the priests and the nuns were the only leaders in the lives of the Metis at St.Laurent. With the advent of secularization, Church leaders no longer enforce a religious regime of the people, as this is impossible in a secularized world. Nonetheless, religion continues to play a significant role in the lives of the Metis. Thus, due to new mechanisms, the Metis today have gained some control and influence both in the religious and political spheres of their lives.

The experience of the Metis people in the municipal form of government has given them the opportunity to regain some control of their lives though not as satisfactorily as some wished. Finally, the local Metis organization provided them with another mechanism to formulate their social, cultural, economic and political needs and aspirations and develop a new pride in their cultural heritage and traditions and establish a solidarity with other Metis from other parts of the province and of the country.

Chapter 6

Metisness

In the previous chapter, we looked at some aspects of leadership in the Metis community at St.Laurent. We saw how the people participated in the decision-making process that affected their lives.

This chapter will deal with Metisness. We will attempt to demonstrate that Metis people at St.Laurent see the Michif French language as a symbol of their group identity. After reviewing some aspects of the linguistic history of the Metis at St.Laurent, we will look at some community recollections of initial language contact as well as some experiences by the local people of linguistic acculturation outside of St.Laurent.

While I participated in and observed some of the community events such as socials and church services, it is the interviewees in the field who provided most of the data for this chapter. The data comes from the interview transcripts.

The Michif French Language

This section will deal with the Michif French language: its origin and historical development, the issue of linguistic assimilation, and language as a display of Metisness.

We will also examine the latent and manifest functions of a language. According to Spradley (1975: 39), the function of any cultural practice refers to the consequences it has for the members of the society. When the members of a society recognize a particular function, we refer to it as a manifest function. When the anthropologist, as an outside observer, identifies these consequences, we refer to them as latent functions.

In June, 1985, the first Michif languages conference was held in Winnipeg, Manitoba. In the introduction to the final report, one reads:

"The name 'MICHIF' attempts to elicit the pronunciation of the word 'Metis', as it has been traditionally used in wide ranging areas of the Metis homeland. It also represents the spelling adopted by at least one researcher, Dr. John Crawford, of the University of North Dakota, to describe the language of some Michif people. The languages of the Metis people have received little attention by scholarly researchers. Although some of the aboriginal languages which are, in fact, spoken by some Metis such as Cree and Saulteaux, have indeed been the subject of extensive scholarly analysis, little, if any research has focused specifically on these as well as other languages which reflect and carry the particular cultural stamp of the Metis. The Metis moulded the aboriginal and settler languages into coherent patterns which reflected their own cultural and historical circumstances. Over the generations, grammatical structure, accent and idiom transformed into peculiarly Metis usages. And what was peculiarly Metis varied, of course, from place to place and from group to group, reflecting as it did the unique linguistic, cultural and historical antecedents of each group". (Michif Languages Conference: 1985: 1).

The Michif Language Conference identified four main Michif-related languages: Michif Cree, Michif French, Ojibway and Swampy Cree. Michif French is the language of the Metis of St.Laurent, the focus of this research.

The Michif French language is a dialect of French. As a dialect, it is a non-standard form of the French language. As the mother tongue of the Metis people at St.Laurent, it is a valid form of language and not a misuse of the standard form. The difference between the two lies mostly in phonology (sound system) with some syntactic (sentence structure) adjustment and semantic distinctions (meanings which include understandings peculiar to Michif-French speaking people). Michif French is not an exceptional language nor is it unique. Similar French dialects exist today, such as the many French Creoles, including Cajun, the provincial usages in France and Canadian French itself.

However, it is difficult to determine the exact origin of Michif French in time and place. One can assume it originated at Red River in the 1800's due to the influence of the French missionaries. But then, it may well have been spoken along the St.Lawrence River and around the Great Lakes as early as in the 1700's. Further scientific study is greatly needed in this area. Scholars can no longer satisfy themselves by saying that Michif French is the product of language contact between the Native Indians and the early French-speaking settlers. Such linguistic studies would be beneficial not only to the discipline but would contribute

immensely to our understanding of the origin and development of Metis languages, cultures, history and world-view.

As far as is possible to ascertain, the sketch (below) is an attempt to illustrate the linguistic history of the Metis people of St.Laurent:

1. Pre-contact Period:

An era of the Native language monolingualism, of native Indian languages only. The Cree and Assiniboiné populated the Interlake Region at the time.

2. Circa 1820:

The beginning of a bilingual era with the arrival of Metis people at St.Laurent. We do not have any evidence that other people lived there permanently prior to the arrival of the Metis. During this period, Metis people speak a Native Indian language and the Michif French. Unfortunately, I could not find any convincing evidence as to the origin of Michif French, but as stated above, it presumably started elsewhere and was brought to St.Laurent. It appears that the Metis people who arrived at St.Laurent in the 1820's already spoke Michif French and presumably learned it at Red River.

3. 1840's-1850's:

Gradual demise of Cree and Saulteaux, the Native Indian languages at St.Laurent.

4. 1850's:

Metis people no longer speak Native Indian languages. Beginning of Monolingualism for Metis people: Metis people speak Michif French only.

5. 1930's-1950's:

Attempts at linguistic assimilation, accompanied by discouragement of speaking Michif French and an emphasis on learning Canadian French.

6. 1960's-1970's:

New consciousness of Metisness, reinforcement of speaking Michif French at St.Laurent.

7. 1980's:

Continuation of Michif French Monolingualism. We are referring in this section to Native languages and dialect use. Most Metis are actually now bilingual speakers of Michif French and English.

Metis Construction of the Origin of Michif French

None of the elders knew where the Michif French language came from. When I asked an eighty-six year old elder as to its origin, he simply admitted he did not know: "We spoke it at home with my parents. My grandparents did not speak it, they spoke Cree and Saulteaux". Other elders, however, did have some ideas as to its origin. The majority of the people agreed that it is probably the result of the early contact between the Indians and the white people. As one informant puts it:

"I have a theory about the origin of our language that we speak and it goes this way: "It is, say, in the year 1800 at Red River, this French fur trader who works for the Northwest Company meets this beautiful Indian woman. They get together and nine months later, I am born. My French father has to leave the household to hunt and trap the furs for the Company, sometimes he is gone for two or three months at a time. In the meantime, I am at home alone with my mother who does not understand a word of French but who continually speaks to me in her mother tongue, either Saulteaux or Cree. I grow up learning my mother's language. When my father comes home from the hunt, he speaks to me in his language which is French, he does not know either Saulteaux or Cree. So, I grow up learning both an Indian language, and the French language, and as I interact and play and speak with other children who were in the same situation as I was, we develop this new language called Michif French".

One interesting aspect of this elder's theory is that he sees Michif French as a separate language. In the early stages, Metis people saw it as their own language and, in an embryonic way, focused on it as their own and related to themselves as an ethnic group.

Bilingualism

According to an informant, most elders in St. Laurent within memory of the interviewee spoke both an Indian language (usually Saulteaux) and Michif French. Today, only a handful of elders speak an Indian language, but all Metis people still speak the Michif French language at home and among themselves.

Many elders recall speaking only the Saulteaux or Cree language as they grew up at home in the early 1900's. They

knew neither French nor English as they learned those languages only when they started to attend school. They admitted speaking Michif French in the home as adults, raising their own children with Michif French as mother tongue and speaking Saulteaux only when they did not want the children to understand what they were talking about! Thus at St. Laurent, a generation of Metis who knew only Michif French started marrying and having their own families of monolingual Michif French children.

"The speaking in the Indian language stopped at my parent's generation" added a former trapper, "I do not speak it, my cousins who are my age do not speak it and my children certainly have not learned it from me, simply because my parents never taught it to me". For Metis people at St. Laurent, speaking an Indian language is quickly becoming a thing of the past.

Community Recollections of Initial Language Contact

Some elders attribute the disappearance of the Saulteaux language among the Metis to the presence of the priests and nuns at St. Laurent and to the arrival of the Breton families from Brittany, France, in or around 1907.

They introduced the Canadian French language in the community which in a short time became the status or prestige language. Thus, the missionaries and the Bretons were responsible for establishing an hierarchy of languages: Canadian French, Michif French and Saulteaux.

To the missionaries and the Bretons, the Canadian French language was considered a superior language. To speak 'proper' Canadian French was to be superior to those who did not speak it. In their eyes, Michif French, as a language, did not have a status in its own right. As a non-standard form of the language, it was considered a bastardized language, a corruption of 'proper' language usage, and evidence of incapacity to learn on the part of the speaker. Teachers apparently targeted Michif French immediately as an impediment to assimilation.

And the Metis people quickly became conscious that their language, Michif French, was being portrayed to them as an inferior language. Consequently, there was a social stigma attached to being Metis and to speaking Michif French especially in inter-ethnic circles and interactions. Thus, for some Metis people, being Metis and speaking Michif French became a source of inferiorization and shame. As a result, the influence of the missionaries and the Bretons in trying to establish Canadian French as the first language in the community had a negative impact on the Metis people.

The point of this section is to argue that Michif French is not an inferior form of language or an improper way of speaking French. However the Metis of St. Laurent were made to feel that it was. Biased nuns and Bretons encouraged them to switch to standard Canadian French usage. Despite this pressure, the Metis persisted in speaking Michif French because, I claim, it had become associated with being Metis-

--it was a new part of their identity. One is Metis if one speaks Michif and *vice-versa*.

Over the years Metis people at St. Laurent were led by teachers and outsiders to believe that they did not speak good or proper French when they spoke Michif French. These are strong group memories reinforced by often-retold stories of the bias they were subject to and its effect. A respondent said a nun told her that the Michif French language that Metis people spoke in St. Laurent was an "incorrect language". "At school", another respondent continues, "we were supposed to speak the 'real' French, le vrai Francais, that is French as they spoke it. As a result, they never encouraged us to speak our own language of Michif French. If we did not speak it well, we were told to repeat it in 'proper' French. Michif French was not considered correct speaking. And for all the years that the nuns and priests have been at St. Laurent, I do not know of one single priest or nun who learned our language to converse fluently with us in our own Michif French language; on the contrary, they gave us the impression that if they were to learn to speak Michif French like us, it was as though they were degrading themselves or something! That only reinforced the feeling of inferiority we already had regarding our language". The effect of this bias was to create a generalized group sensitivity to using Michif in interethnic groups.

A former high school pupil said: "I have nothing personally against the nuns, I think they were good teachers

here. But, one thing I do not understand is why some of them had to tell us that we did not speak "good" French. Today, I am often shy to speak Michif in public especially in front of French Canadians. I become very self-conscious and feel somewhat inferior". The results of this sensitivity appear to be discomfort in speaking with non-Michif people. The speaker continues: "Some even try to hide the fact that they speak Michif by making an extraordinary effort to pronounce the words in 'good' French, bon francais as some people say, but most of the time their accent betrays them".

"To tell you the truth", added a former student from Simonet school, "the nuns made us feel inferior whenever we spoke Michif at school. It came to the point where I asked myself if the words we were using were real words or if we had made them up. I am even too ashamed recently to be interviewed on French television regarding community affairs here, because I was told I do not speak good enough French, so why should I go on public TV then and be ridiculed by those who supposedly speak French better than me? I remember a few years ago, that the director at the St.Boniface Museum told me to keep and continue to speak my Michif French language and not to try to speak French Canadian. There are, after all, no good or bad languages, he said. There are no superior or inferior languages and that really surprised me, I had never heard that before!"

So, the Michif French language had been portrayed to the Metis of St.Laurent as a deficient language. People were

uncomfortable using it outside their own group. But people remember that other pressures to assimilate linguistically were applied as well.

In my generation, some former students recall attempts that were made in St.Laurent to change our way of speaking. Most of the priests and nuns came from Quebec. Thus, they sought to change us from speaking Michif French to their style of speaking French Canadian as they spoke it in Quebec. They started encouraging this assimilation by using The Token System in the early 1950's.

This token system worked as follows. At the beginning of each week, the nuns gave each student at school ten tokens, made of thin cardboard about the size of a dime. Each time you spoke Michif, this would entitle another student to stretch out his hand and demand a token from you. The student with the most tokens at the end of each week would be rewarded with a prize, usually a holy picture personally decorated by an elderly nun who had retired in the convent. Some students tried their very best in learning the French Canadian language and some succeeded. The majority, however, had to give away all their tokens after two or three days. Some of them lost them all on the first day! It seems the system did not work. Informants relate that this was because the majority of the Metis students did not see any apparent reason why they should learn to speak Canadian French.

The Bretons

Metis people remember that further attempts to have Michif-speaking people learn Canadian French were conducted by some Breton families in the 1930's. The first families arrived around 1907, to cultivate the land and to fish on Lake Manitoba. According to an informant, some Breton families were absolutely shocked when they overheard how the local people spoke Michif French. Encouraged by the priests and the nuns, the Breton people promptly organized meetings to devise ways and means to teach Michif people how to speak "proper" French. The Bretons, added the informant, ended up attending the meeting by themselves as none of the local Metis people showed up. In St. Laurent, Michif people remember with irony that the project seems to have backfired as some children and grand-children of these same Breton families have, over the years, acculturated linguistically and now speak the Michif language as fluently as the Metis.

The New High School in 1939

Some informants also said that the opening of the high school in 1939 was yet another factor in promoting the speaking of the "proper" French language. Its founder, Father Jean-Baptiste Methe, OMI, was an avid believer of bilingualism, Canadian French and English for its graduates. Father Methe left his mark on all people of St. Laurent as an ardent educator. He relentlessly encouraged young people to pursue higher education which included learning both

Canadian French and English as a means to getting a better job and position in life. For some Metis students then, having a high school education was equated with giving up their Michif language, and many were just not willing to do that. Among the Metis students who attended high school in St.Laurent, only a few speak the Canadian French language. Most of them have retained and still speak their Michif language. Thus, Metis students who obtained a high school education at St.Laurent did not, in the process, give up their language. They preferred their own language, as a symbol of their identity, to a higher education.

Linguistic Acculturation outside of St.Laurent.

St.Laurent school was not the only place where Michif-speaking students encountered linguistic problems. St. Laurent Metis people have also been embarrassed by references to their defective French usage outside St.Laurent.

From the end of World War II until 1960, Michif-speaking students were encouraged by the priests and nuns to attend French-speaking colleges, juniorates and convent institutions in different towns and cities across the prairie provinces, at St.Boniface for example or Ste.Agathe, St.Charles, Otterburne in Manitoba, and Gravelbourg in Saskatchewan.

A few students did well at these institutions and graduated there. But the majority are reported to have encountered difficulties in being accepted, primarily, they

felt, because they spoke Michif French. So, after a year or two, they abandoned their studies and came back home. A few stayed only a few weeks or months. One said: "I was often ridiculed for speaking Michif French. At first I thought they were joking, but then I realized they were really making fun of my speaking Michif and that hurt me". Another related feeling socially isolated from the rest of the student body for speaking Michif French and the staff did not pay any attention. "As a result, I quickly developed an odd feeling that there was something wrong with me. I thought things would improve afterwards but they did not. So, I did not go back". Another respondent said she was laughed at in front of the others for not understanding and pronouncing French words in the 'proper way'.

What is of interest here is that these Metis students felt that they became objects of prejudice and ridicule which, they recall, was directed at them because they spoke Michif French. Thus, their entire identity seems to have been focally represented by their language. People reacted to them not because of race, actions, dress, or appearance but because of their language. It is not surprising that this language, Michif French has become so intertwined with their image of themselves, with their identity.

Conclusion: Michif French as a symbol of Metis Identity

What is important in this section on language is not that the Metis of St. Laurent came to see Michif French as an inferior language or as an improper way of speaking Canadian French. The important point here is that Michif French has persisted and come to be recognized by the Metis as a symbol of their Metis identity. The Michif language is intimately interwoven with ethnicity and identity. In summary, the evidence is as follows:

1. Persistence despite resistance. The Metis people at St. Laurent persisted in speaking their Michif French language despite being actively discouraged from speaking it by missionaries and by the Bretons. Their persistence in speaking Michif despite pressure to assimilate linguistically appears to have been purposeful, as a way of articulating their identity. I argue that, implicitly or more self-consciously, they refused to assimilate to Canadian French in order to maintain Michif French as a symbol of their group identity and solidarity.

Today, the Metis at St. Laurent continue to speak Michif French. As a respondent observed, "Most Metis people today, young and old, continue to speak Michif French at home, it is not a language that is disappearing".

From what I gathered from the informants, the language among Metis people remains Michif French in the work place but switches to English if they work in the city. Metis

people at St.Laurent realize that outsiders feel their language is deficient and thus, while they use it as a symbol of Metisness within Metis settings, they avoid it if possible in mixed interethnic groups. As one informant related: "I think it is OK to learn another language, even Canadian French, but not because we are ashamed or feel that our language, Michif French, is inferior".

2. Metis students who return home after having learned some Canadian French in a college or in a convent elsewhere start to speak Michif French again upon returning. An informant counted as many as twenty Michif-speaking students who attended such institutions during the period between 1945 and 1960. Only a handful have graduated. Out of these, the majority have retained the Michif French language.

The above data confirms that the Michif language is recognized as a value-laden symbol of Metis identity at St.Laurent. A latent function of Michif might be proposed, that it is the carrier of Metis culture and the principal vehicle of articulating that culture. But the manifest function of Michif according to the informants and their construction of the social role of Michif, is that it certainly is the most focal symbol of Metis identity.

In spite of secularization, of modernization, of the influence of the exterior environment and of the cash economy, the Metis at St.Laurent continue to retain and speak Michif French. Although stigmatized and in spite of the high emotional price many have had to pay in speaking

their language, Michif French remains for many Metis people at St.Laurent a source of pride in their cultural heritage and historical traditions, a symbol of group identity and solidarity.

Chapter 7

Summary and Conclusion

Summary

This thesis set out to produce an introductory ethnography on the Metis people at St. Laurent Manitoba. In chapter one, we reviewed the general historical background of the Metis people with special attention to the various meanings of the word 'Metis'. We covered some of the major writings on Metis people, especially those of Giraud, Stanley, de Tremaudan, Brown and Payment. Among other things, we noticed that there is a dearth of ethnographies on contemporary Metis communities. Hence, the significance of this research is to serve as a cultural resource for both the Metis people and for the discipline of anthropology.

The geographical and historical setting of St. Laurent was the object of study in chapter two. We followed the historical development of the early settlers there from the pre-contact period to the present. We examined some features of the material culture of the people, namely, food, shelter and clothing. It was in this area of their culture that we first noticed the effects modernization has had on the lives of Metis people. Many aspects of their material culture have been absorbed by modernization.

Chapter three dealt with the individual's life cycle.

The data revealed the drastic changes in Metis life in relation to modernization, secularization, education and family life. To many Metis people, money and economic progress has become the number one priority in their lives within the context of modernization. Secularization has brought some changes in the Metis' relation with the Church. Metis life is divorced from the overall influence of organized religion. From a strict morality in the past, Metis people seem to enjoy a more open life-style today.

Regarding family life and customs, the elders were much more identified with values of the home and family than the young generation. The extended family has all but disappeared and has been replaced by the nuclear family. Thus, there has been a loosening of family and kin ties with fewer children as a rule. At the same time, education has and is still playing a dominant role. Forty years ago, Metis people discarded education simply because it did not contribute to the economic welfare of the family. Today, education has become one of the ways for Metis people to enter the mainstream of Canadian society and a stepping-stone to achieve economic progress.

As we saw in chapter four, making a living in St. Laurent was not always easy. The division of labor between the sexes was usually well understood by both men and women. Women tended the domestic housework and raised the family, while the men did the heavier physical work as the breadwinners.

Fifty years ago, the domestic work of women was difficult and full of hardships, as there were no modern conveniences. Few had paying jobs locally, most of the work was seasonal. Today, Metis women live within the cash economy. Their work is more career-oriented as some take advantage of the education opportunities that are more available.

The work of Metis men has always been identified with outdoor activities such as fishing, trapping and hunting. The traditional economic methods have all but disappeared except perhaps for fishing in winter. Most of the work is seasonal and local. The majority of Metis men today have to rely on two or more jobs to make a living, including outside employment for extended periods of time. The closure of the clothing and ladder factories were not just due to 'a change of government'. It reiterates the point made earlier that the St.Laurent community has become dependent on an unreliable, whimsical and even hostile exterior environment. Modernization has drastically changed the sources of livelihood of Metis people at St.Laurent, from a subsistence to a more complex and cash economy with work schedules and wages scales. Thus, Metisness in the context of a new economy has become or already is for many Metis an historical value, a thing of the past. Metis youth gives themselves more readily to the exterior environment than the elders did. They see in it economic opportunities that did not exist perhaps in the grandparents' days.

The subjects of our investigation in chapter five were Social life, Religion and Politics. The section on social life depicted the various groups that contributed to community formation. We saw how Metis people gave importance to personal and community relations as an element constitutive of their Metisness. This was evidenced in the ways people participated in family and community events as part of their socializing process. One cannot help but notice at the same time how many of these groups have ceased to function due to the process of modernization and secularization.

The context for examining Religion and Politics was leadership. How much power and influence do Metis people exercise in these crucial areas of their lives? To what extent do they participate in the decision-making of issues affecting their lives? We observed that in Religion, Metis people have a long tradition of religious practices and customs in the Catholic church at St.Laurent. These rituals carried significant social and psychological functions in the community, even though many of them have disappeared today. We raised the issue whether rituals have the same impact on the lives of people in a secular context as in a religious context and our answer was negative.

In Politics, we surveyed the historical background of political life at St.Laurent from 1824 to the present day. We reviewed the organizational political structure of the Municipality. However, it is only in recent years, that the

Metis have been able to obtain again (table 9) Municipal government at St.Laurent, thus regaining control of their political lives and joining at the same time the mainstream of Canadian society. The Manitoba Metis Federation local was also instrumental in creating a new social and political awareness among the people. More and more people participate in meetings and groups outside the village boundaries, thus expressing their willingness to participate in the Canadian way of life.

Finally, chapter six introduced us to the Michif French language. We covered its origin and historical development, experiences of attempts at linguistic assimilation and acculturation both at and outside St.Laurent. Mention was also made of some community recollections of initial language contact and how the Michif French language became intertwined with their image of themselves, with their identity, as a display of their Metisness.

Conclusion

The general purpose of this thesis was to document the process by which a particular Metis community, at St.Laurent, Manitoba, is moving or has moved from being a generally self-contained community of Metis to a condition in which they are more Canadian than Metis. In part, the process is subsumed in what has been called modernization and secularization, and it is also subsumed in what has been called marginalization. The questions addressed were:

1. What are the constituents of Metisness?
2. Are the Metis becoming Canadian at the expense of being Metis?
3. Do/will the Metis of St.Laurent retain their 'Metisness' within the general meaning of being Canadian, or will they become 'anonymous' Canadians?

The specific questions are: Is it possible to retain the same Metisness while becoming something other? The answer to that question is surely No.

Then, is it possible to retain a strong and definitive sense of being Metis while at the same time becoming something other and, presumably less Metis than formerly was the case? The answer to that question is probably Yes.

The data of this thesis reveals that drastic changes have occurred in Metisness in relation to money, modernization, secularization, education and family life. Three areas of change are: Independence/Community Life; Internal/Exterior Environment; Metisness/Canadian.

Modernization has forced Metis people to make the transition from a subsistence economy to a more complex and cash economy. As a result, the Metis at St.Laurent are not today what they were in the past. Data shows that some material aspects of their culture like shelter, food and clothing have changed considerably in the last forty years. Their sources of livelihood were modified from the traditional economy based on the local environment to a cash

economy which relies on the exterior environment. This, in turn, has affected family life where the extended family no longer exists and has been replaced by the nuclear family which is much smaller in size as compared to the family of yesteryears.

After 1885, the Metis in Western Canada found themselves economically and socially marginalized. With the advent of modernization and secularization, many Metis have joined and enjoy the mainstream of Canadian society. This is not the case for all, however. Many still feel marginalized today, socially and economically.

Due to the phenomenon of secularization, Metis life is divorced from the overall influence of the institutionalized Church and of organized religion. That does not mean that Metis people at St. Laurent have quit being religious for many have remained so. It does mean that their life is free from the influence of the Church. From a background of strict morality, Metis people now seem to enjoy a more open morality. The question of the force of rituals in a secular context has been raised. And it is the author's view that rituals do not have the same impact on the lives of the people in a secular context as it does in a religious one.

Education has become for many Metis a key way to join mainstream society. In so doing, they use education as a stepping-stone to achieve economic progress.

Metis are implicitly opting for or being forced into becoming Canadian while retaining personal pride in their

historical origins. Perhaps this situation is most obvious with their language. While many aspects of their culture have but all disappeared, including material features, their traditional means of livelihood, most family and marriage customs, many of their religious practices, it is their Michif French language that has remained a core value in spite of the many attempts to assimilate the Metis people linguistically. So much so, as we have seen, their language has become intertwined with their image of themselves. Michif French has come to be recognized by the Metis as a symbol of their Metis identity. One is Metis if one speaks Michif and *vice versa*.

Finally, we must ask ourselves if such identities are finite or, in principle, not finite. That is, in adding to what one was, one does not necessarily lose anything of what one was but, proportionately, what one was does not exhaust what one is. Yet a difference is entailed.

If identity is finite, with limits, then gaining attributes and qualities necessarily means losing others, leading logically to the wholly different, which is not the case for the Metis at St.Laurent.

If identity is not finite, that is, without limits, then, it allows for additional qualities without necessarily losing what had existed before. I argue that this is the case for the Metis at St.Laurent.

Today, Metis at St.Laurent, in general, know they are Metis, historically, socially and linguistically. Some Metis

will best define themselves with a negative statement such as: "I am not a white person, I am not not an Indian, I am not a European". Many simply have a hard time articulating their Metisness. Furthermore, data shows that many were led to believe that being a Metis was to be inferior and lazy. As a result, many Metis do not claim openly that they are Metis. Historical events did not encourage them to do so.

The point is that the Metisness of the elders is rapidly disappearing. There are Metis who no longer consider themselves Metis socially and culturally, even though their language continues to identify them as such. They have opted, either by personal choice or for economic reasons, for joining the mainstream of society. They do not see a value in calling themselves or their children Metis in of re-discovering their Metisness today. To them, Metisness is an historical value, a thing of the past. They are satisfied with being 'Canadian'.

Then there are the Metis who continue to identify themselves and their families as Metis. For some members of the present generation, we sense the emergence of a new Metisness, based on the following principles:

A new interest in discovering one's Metis roots and origins.

A new sense of Metis History, personalities and events, brought about by new scholarly interpretations.

A new sense of identity and a new sense of belonging brought about by their involvement in new social, cultural and political Metis groups.

What appears to be occurring is that Metis in St.Laurent are constructing a new Metisness and new Metis identity in today's world. Despite modernization and secularization, it seems possible to retain and build a strong and definitive sense of being Metis while at the same time becoming Canadian.

Finally, I hope this thesis will serve as a contribution towards our understanding of pluralism in Canada. And as a case study of the impact of modernization on a contemporary Metis community, it is my hope that the findings will encourage further research on Metis culture, history and languages.

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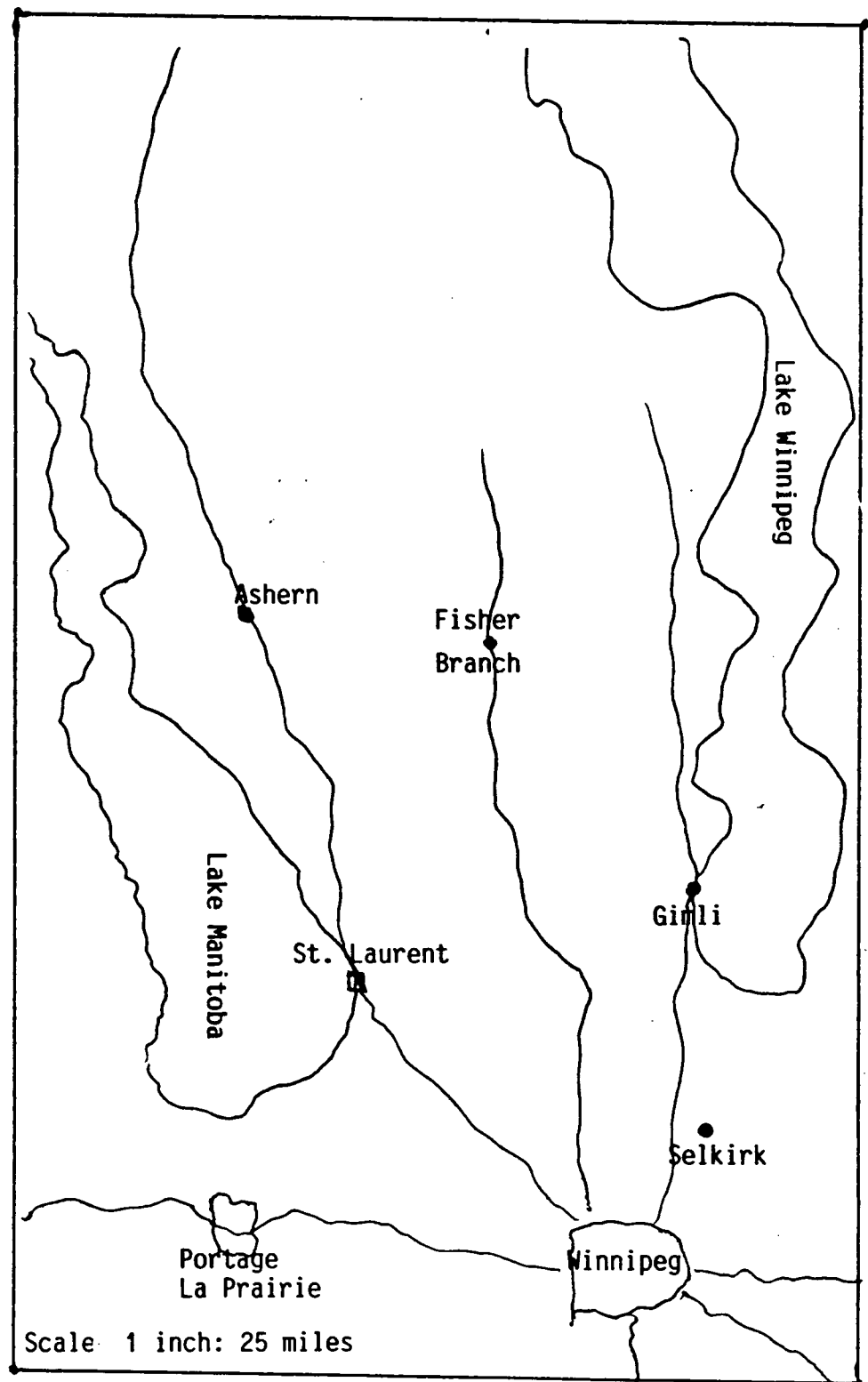


FIGURE 1. MANITOBA INTERLAKE REGION

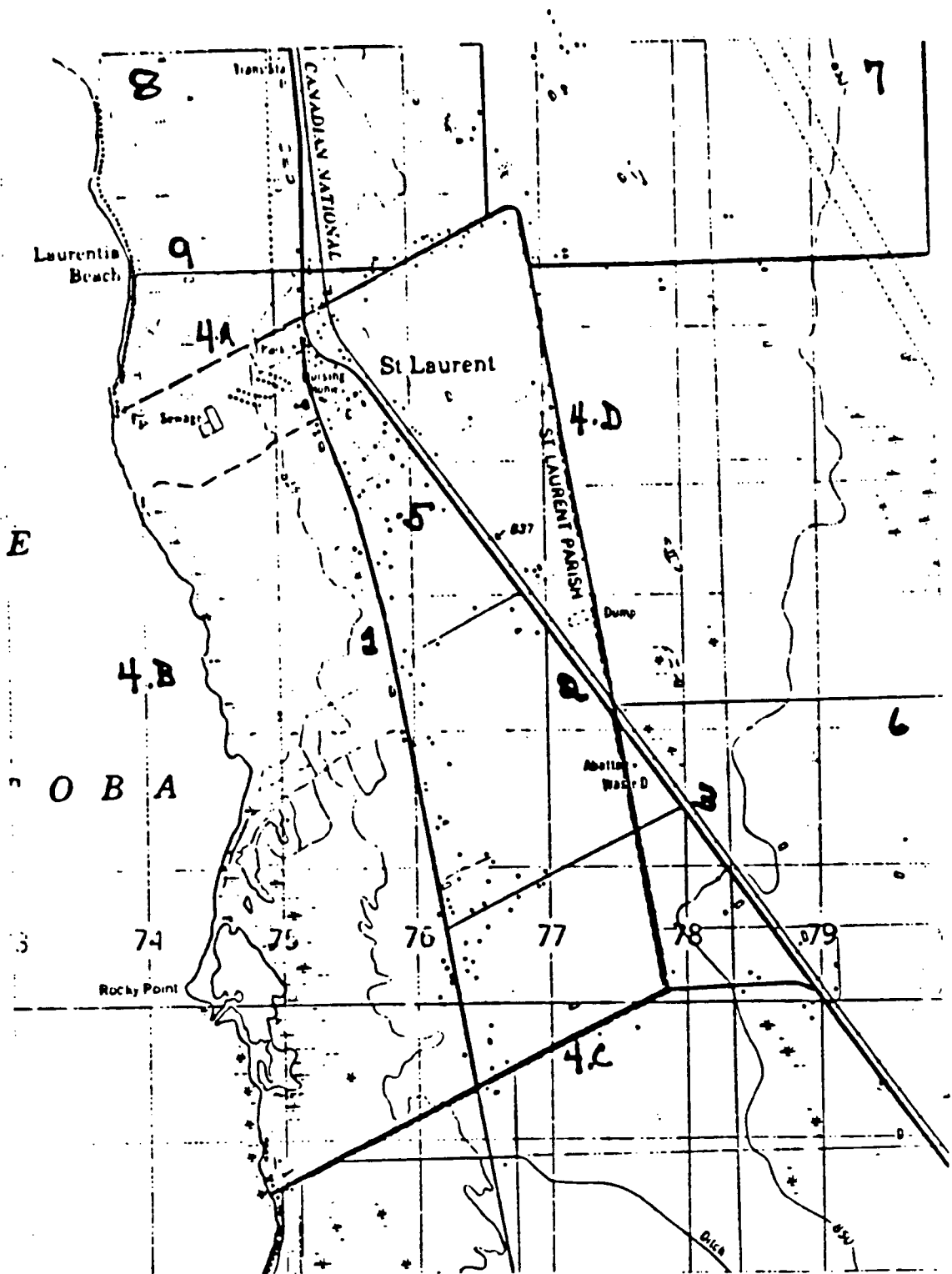


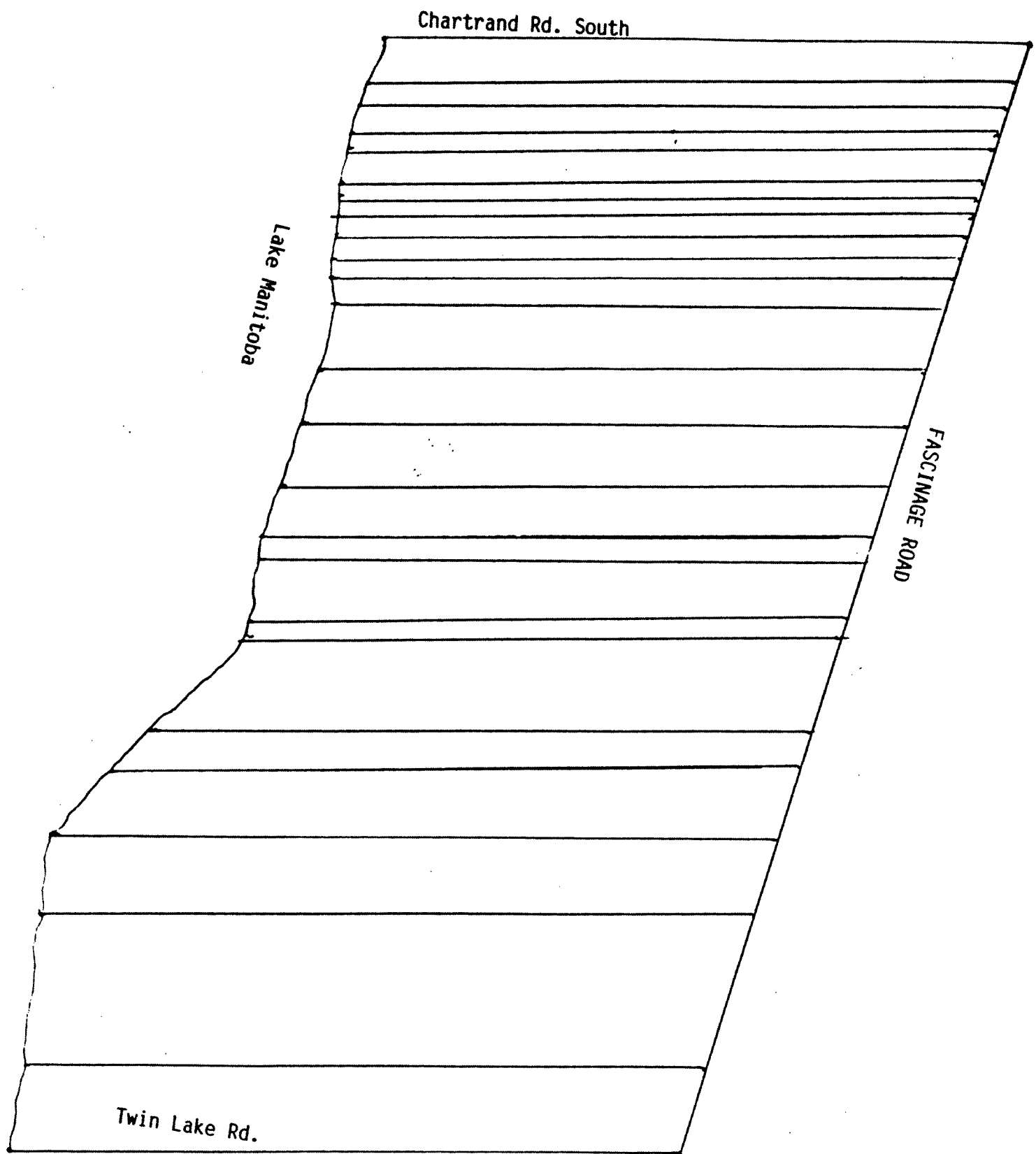
FIGURE 2. ST. LAURENT, MANITOBA. Scale: 1 mi. = 1.37 in.
FOR REFERENCES SEE FIGURE 3. p.212.

Figure 3

References: Map of St.Laurent (Fig. 2, p. 211)

1. Old highway number 6.
2. New highway number 6.
3. Canadian National Railway.
- 4a. Chartrand Road, South.
- 4b. Lake Manitoba.
- 4c. Twin Lake Road.
- 4d. Fascinage Road.
5. Norman Gaudry's Residence.
6. L'Grand Mash-keg, 6 kms. east.
7. Stony Ridge, 10 kms. east.
8. Wilson Creek, 3 kms. north.
9. Chartrand Road, north.

Each dot represents one household.



Scale: 1 ml. = 2.5 in.

FIGURE 4. St. Laurent, Man.
RIVER LOT SYSTEM
CIRCA 1875