

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE MNO'S RECOGNITION OF
SIX NEW HISTORIC MÉTIS COMMUNITIES:
A FINAL REPORT**

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Introduction

In 2016, the Métis Nation Ontario and Government of Ontario officially recognized six new communities in the province as rights-bearing Métis communities according to their interpretation of the Supreme Court of Canada's 2003 *Powley* criteria: a) Rainy River/Lake of the Woods; b) Northern Lake Superior; c) Abitibi-Inland; d) Killarney; e) Mattawa/Ottawa River; and f) Georgian Bay. The MNO and Government of Ontario's recognition occurred despite the fact that most of these communities are not known to have any connection to the Métis Homeland.

In this report, we examine the recognition of these six communities through an examination of the main research reports used in the recognition process. These include the following three reports:

1. From the Straits of Mackinac to Georgian Bay: 300 years of Métis history, Report on the origins and evolution of the Penetanguishene area Métis community, by Micheline Marchand (with Daniel Marchildon), published in 2006 – “Historic Georgian Bay Métis Community”
2. Mattawa-Nipissing Métis Historical Report: Final Synthesis Report, by Stone Circle Consulting and Know History, published in 2015 – “Historic Mattawa/Ottawa River Métis Community”
3. The Historical Roots of Métis Communities North of Lake Superior, by Gwynneth C.D. Jones, published in 2015 – “Historic River Rainy/Lake of the Woods Métis Community”

We also closely examined all of the other documentation produced by the MNO to support the recognition of these new communities. These include the Summary Reports produced for each of the six communities, as well as the 85 Verified Métis Family Line (VMFL) Assessment Documents that present the MNO's detailed case for the existence of “root ancestors” at the basis of these communities. The research project leads (Drs. Leroux & O'Toole) along with Métis scholar Dr. Jennifer Adese, hired one of the most qualified professional genealogists currently working on French-descendant genealogy, Gail Morin, in order to supplement our analysis in this report.¹

In addition, we cross-referenced these reports with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources' Native Affairs Unit's reports on the existence of “Métis” communities in the same regions, all published between 1999 and 2001. Where applicable, we also cross-referenced other documentation. We've organized the report according to the six recognized communities.

Comments on The Definition of “Métis”

As the purpose of this report is to determine whether there are communities in Ontario that could claim to belong to the Métis Nation, it's worth repeating the definition that the Métis National Council adopted in 2002:

¹ Gail Morin (enrolled citizen of the Confederated Tribes of Colville) has over three decades of professional genealogy experience, publishing dozens of books on French-Canadian, Métis, and First Nations genealogy.

“Métis” means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry and who is accepted by the Métis Nation.

Furthermore, the *Powley* [2003] case provided the following three criteria:

[30] In particular, we would look to three broad factors as indicia of Métis identity for the purpose of claiming Métis rights under s. 35: self-identification, ancestral connection, and community acceptance.

[31] First, the claimant must self-identify as a member of a Métis community. This self-identification should not be of recent vintage: While an individual’s self-identification need not be static or monolithic, claims that are made belatedly in order to benefit from a s. 35 right will not satisfy the self-identification requirement.

[32] Second, the claimant must present evidence of an ancestral connection to a historic Métis community. This objective requirement ensures that beneficiaries of s. 35 rights have a real link to the historic community whose practices ground the right being claimed. We would not require a minimum “blood quantum”, but we would require some proof that the claimant’s ancestors belonged to the historic Métis community by birth, adoption, or other means.

[33] Third, the claimant must demonstrate that he or she is accepted by the modern community whose continuity with the historic community provides the legal foundation for the right being claimed. Membership in a Métis political organization may be relevant to the question of community acceptance, but it is not sufficient in the absence of a contextual understanding of the membership requirements of the organization and its role in the Métis community.

It’s true that the *Daniels* [2016] decision seemed to discard the third criterion.

[49] The third criterion — community acceptance — raises particular concerns in the context of this case. The criteria in *Powley* were developed specifically for purposes of applying s. 35, which is about protecting historic community-held rights: para. 13. That is why acceptance by the community was found to be, for purposes of who is included as Métis under s. 35, a prerequisite to holding those rights. Section 91(24) serves a very different constitutional purpose. It is about the federal government’s relationship with Canada’s Aboriginal peoples. This includes people who may no longer be accepted by their communities because they were separated from them as a result, for example, of government policies such as Indian Residential Schools. There is no principled reason for presumptively and arbitrarily excluding them from Parliament’s protective authority on the basis of a “community acceptance” test.

However, it’s important to revisit the Court’s comments in *Powley* to understand what the Court meant by “acceptance:”

[33] The core of community acceptance is past and ongoing participation in a shared culture, in the customs and traditions that constitute a Métis community’s identity and distinguish it from other groups. This is what the community membership criterion is all about.

Other indicia of community acceptance might include evidence of participation in community activities and testimony from other members about the claimant's connection to the community and its culture. The range of acceptable forms of evidence does not attenuate the need for an objective demonstration of a solid bond of past and present mutual identification and recognition of common belonging between the claimant and other members of the rights-bearing community.

The Court twice equated “acceptance” with “participation.” Evidently, “people who may no longer be accepted by their communities because they were separated from them as a result, for example, of government policies such as Indian Residential Schools” would not be in a position to provide evidence of “participation” in their community. However, “acceptance” and “belonging” need not be defined so narrowly as “participation.” In any event, for the purposes of this report, we are more concerned with the second *Powley* criterion, that of the existence of a historical Métis community and continuity from the historic community to the contemporary community.

The Federal Parliament adopted the *Gender Equity in Indian Registration Act*, which was given royal assent on December 5, 2010. The Act only allowed one to go back to 1951 to reclaim Indian status. It was amended in *An Act to amend the Indian Act*, December 12, 2017. Finally, amendments to Bill S-3 to remove the 1951 cut-off and replace it with an 1869 cut-off date were brought into force on August 15, 2019. It's expected that many individuals of mixed ancestry who currently self-identify as “Métis” will now claim status under the *Indian Act*. Indeed, were he still alive, Powley himself would now be eligible for Indian status.

Comments on Terminology

When reading official documents, one has to be aware of what government officials understood by terms like “Indian” and “half-breed.” According to Foster,² the term *métis* did not appear in Red River until the 1820s – in other words, *after* the establishment of a Catholic mission in St. Boniface. This seems to suggest that French-Canadian missionaries initially introduced it, which not only makes it a product of outsider ascription, but also shows that French-Canadian voyageurs clearly did not think of themselves as *métis*. Prior to that, the Métis used the self-ascription *Bois-Brûlé*. This term is undoubtedly a literal translation of the Anishinaabemowin term *wiisaakode*– a “half brunt wood.”³

The first time that a colonial legislature provided a legal definition of who qualified as “Indian” was in the *Act for the Better Protection of the Lands and Property of the Indians in Lower Canada*, S. Prov., 1850, c. 42, which came into force on August 10, 1850. Section V provided that:

² Foster 2007, 26.

³ Personal communication with Charles L. Lippert. “wiisaakode is wiiS + aakw + ide (*wiiS*- smoke-up, charcoal, half-burn; *aakw*- wood; *ide*- be).” One also finds the spelling *waasaakode*. According to Lippert, this could either come from an initial vowel change form, as *ii ðaa*, which nominalized the verb and carries the meaning of “the one who is” half-burnt wood. It could also be derived from the prefix *waase-* (light, clear). The reference to wood could be a play on words: in some areas, the word for Frenchman is *wemitigoozhi*. The noun *mitig* can either mean a tree (animate) or a branch (inanimate).

[...] the following classes of persons are and shall be considered as Indians belonging to the Tribe or Body of Indians interested in such lands:

First. – All persons of *Indian blood*, reputed to belong to the particular Body or Tribe of Indians interested in such lands, and their descendants.

Secondly. – All persons *intermarried* with any such persons and residing amongst them, and the descendants of all such persons.

Thirdly. – All persons residing among such Indians, whose parents *on either side* were or are Indians of such Body or Tribe, or entitled to be considered as such:

And *Fourthly.* – All persons adopted in infancy by any such Indians, and residing in the Village or upon the lands of such Tribe or Body of Indians, and their descendants.

None of these classes of persons requires that they be a “full-blood.” The first clause simply states that they have to be of Indian blood and belong to the band. The third clause explicitly allows for an individual who does not belong to the band, but has an Indigenous parent on either side and resides with the band to be considered an “Indian.” The second clause allows even for individuals of European descent, whether male or female, to be qualified as an “Indian” so long as they are married to a member of the band and reside with the band. In principle, someone of European descent could even marry another band member of entirely European descent who had been adopted within the terms of the fourth clause. However, this clause was only to remain in force for a year.

Although a similar Act was adopted for Upper Canada on the same day, it did not provide a legal definition of who would be considered “Indian” for the purposes of that Act. However, since both Acts were adopted at the same time by the same Legislative Assembly, government agents in Upper Canada would have evidently been guided by the fifth clause in the Lower Canada Act.

The following year, on August 30, 1851, the Parliament of United Canada adopted *An Act to Repeal in Part and to Amend an Act intituled, Act for the Better Protection of the Lands and Property of the Indians in Lower Canada*, S. Prov., 1851, c. 59. It amended s. 5 to read:

Firstly. – All persons of Indian blood, reputed to belong to the particular Body or Tribe of Indians interested in such lands or immoveable property, and their descendants.

Secondly. – All persons residing among such Indians, whose parents were or are, or either of them was or is, descended on either side from Indians, or an Indian reputed to belong to the particular Tribe or Body of Indians interested in such lands or immoveable property, and the descendants of all such persons: And

Thirdly. – All *women*, now or hereafter to be lawfully married to any of the persons included in the several classes hereinbefore designated; the children issue of such marriages, and their descendants.

With this amendment, non-status men who married a status woman would no longer be considered “Indians” in the eyes of the law, but non-status women who married an “Indian” man were still considered “Indian.” However, in keeping with the second clause, the children issued from a marriage between a non-status man and a status woman would still be considered “Indian” so long as they resided among their mother’s people.

It was well known that many individuals who were considered “Indians” in the eyes of the law were in fact of mixed ancestry. These individuals were commonly referred to as “half-breeds” in English or *métis* in French.⁴ One therefore has to be extremely cautious about jumping to the conclusion that we are in the presence of a Métis individual or community every time one finds the term “half-breed” or *métis* in historical records. As we can see, residence with a band and marriage into that band were the two criteria that determined whether a “half-breed” was considered to be an Indian. An implicit criterion was also that of *lifestyle*.

These definitions, however, only applied to the Province of United Canada. After Confederation, s. 15 of *An Act Providing for the Organisation of the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada, and for the management of Indian and Ordinance Lands*, S.C. 1868, c.42 (31 Vict.) extended the legal definition to the entire Dominion:

15. For the purpose of determining what persons are entitled to hold, use or enjoy the lands and other immovable property belonging to or appropriated to the use of the various tribes, bands or bodies of Indians in Canada, the following persons and classes of persons, and none other, shall be considered as Indians belonging to the tribe, band or body of Indians interested in any such lands or immoveable property:

Firstly. All persons of *Indian blood, reputed to belong to the particular tribe, band or body of Indians interested in such lands or immoveable property, and their descendants;*

Secondly. All persons residing among such Indians, whose parents were or are, or either of them was or is, descended on either side from Indians or an Indian reputed to belong to the particular tribe, band or body of Indians interested in such lands or immoveable property, and the descendants of all such persons; And

Thirdly. All women lawfully married to any of the persons included in the several classes hereinbefore designated; *the children issue of such marriages, and their descendants.*⁵

⁴ On this point, Serge Goudreau et al. maintain that Indian Affairs would often use the term “halfbreed” to refer to the children of Indigenous women who had lost their Indian status, and not as an “ethnonym” to describe a new people, as MNO researchers would have it.

⁵ Emphasis ours.

Section 15 was subsequently amended in s. 6 of the *Gradual Enfranchisement Act, 1869*.

6. The fifteenth section of the thirty-first Victoria, Chapter forty-two, is amended by adding to it the following proviso:

“Provided always that any Indian woman marrying any other than an Indian, shall cease to be an Indian within the meaning of this Act, nor shall the children issue of such marriage be considered as Indians within the meaning of this Act; Provided also, that any Indian woman marrying an Indian of any other tribe, band or body shall cease to be a member of the tribe, band or body to which she formerly belonged, and become a member the tribe, band or body of which her husband is a member and the children, issue of this marriage, shall belong to the father’s tribe only.”

It was only in 1869 then that status women who married non-status men lost their status and, thereby, their right to live on the reserve. Many of these women would settle adjacent to the reserve, along with their husband and their mixed-ancestry children, in order to remain close to relatives. In this way, mixed-ancestry communities sometimes formed next to a reserve. While the descendants of these women have from time to time been thought of as “métis,” they are now once again eligible for Indian status and are essentially non-status Indians of mixed ancestry.

It’s even hazardous to automatically presume that the expression “French Half-Breeds” is a reference to Métis. For example, the website of the Sandy Bay band (now Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation) in Treaty #1 on the west side of Lake Manitoba acknowledges that their ancestors were “Ojibway/French mixed-bloods of the Portage Band.” When they were forced to move from their initial location, they mention that the “new *half-breed reserve* [was] named Whitemud.”⁶ Evidently, the members of Sandy Bay self-identify today as Ojibwe and not “Métis.”

Comments on Ethnogenesis

Ethnogenesis is not a one-way street. Valéry Havard clearly recognized that mixed-bloods could end up being absorbed and assimilated into the surrounding population, whether white or “Indian.”

If a district, inhabited by half-breeds or quarter-breeds, becomes settled by white people, and correspondingly abandoned by the Indians, *the reversion, naturally, will be towards the white race, and the red blood may become so diluted as to scarcely give traces of its presence* either in complexion or intellectual acquirements. *Such is the case in parts of the States of Illinois and Missouri, as well as in Eastern Michigan and other places about the lakes.*

Again, if half-breeds live exclusively among Indians, *the reversion will be towards the red type, so that a point is reached when it is impossible to discriminate between a mixed-blood and a pure-blood native.* We find such individuals among

⁶ Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation 2019, emphasis ours.

the Northwestern tribes, *of which they are a component part.*⁷ Between these extremes is a large middle ground occupied by *intermarried mixed-bloods*, ranging from quarter-white to quarter-red and including many half-breeds. These *true representatives* of the race are *most numerous on the Red River of the North and the Winnipeg Basin.*⁸

According to Havard's reasoning, if the processes of ethnogenesis that began with the first unions between First Nations women and European men resulted in the emergence of a distinct Métis people took three generations of endogamy, then an ethnogenetic reversion from Métis to First Nations or European could also occur within seventy-five years or three generations. It's also apparent that by "intermarried mixed-bloods," Havard was of the opinion that endogamy is a condition *sine qua non* of Métis ethnogenesis.

From the time that Pierre Gaultier de Varennes et de La Vérendrye negotiated with the Nakota (Assiniboine) to build Fort Rouge at the Forks of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers in 1738 to the Battle of Seven Oaks in 1816, which marked the emergence of a Métis national consciousness, is a period of 78 years, or roughly three generations. It's quite possible then for reversion to take place within an 80-year period. In other words, were a Métis individual to marry an individual belonging to a First Nation and all their descendants were to practice endogamy among First Nations, within 80 years they would no longer be Métis in the sense of belonging to a distinct people. Were a Métis individual to marry a partner of European descent and their descendants were to practice endogamy among Euro-settlers for a period of eighty years, the descendants would no longer necessarily be Métis. Of course, they could legitimately claim to have a Métis ancestor and to be "métis" on a purely biological level.

1. Historic Mattawa/Ottawa River Métis Community

In 2016, the Métis Nation Ontario and Government of Ontario officially recognized the "Historic Mattawa/Ottawa River Métis Community." The decision was based on a series of reports by professional consultants in history leading up to 2015. We specifically examined the Stone Circle/Know History "Synthesis Report" (2015) (herein, "Mattawa Report"), which summarizes these previous reports. The Mattawa Report is used as the basis for the recognition of the "Historic Mattawa/Ottawa River Métis Community" and the creation of what the MNO calls Verified Métis Family Lines in the region. There are several differences between the "Métis root ancestors" in the Mattawa Report and the Verified Métis Family Lines approved by the MNO in 2017. We bring up some of those differences when appropriate.

Through our analysis, we've identified numerous discrepancies that cast a serious doubt on the MNO and Government of Ontario's recognition of the "Mattawa/Ottawa River Métis Community." For the purposes of our analysis of Mattawa/Ottawa River, we consulted seven external publications that aided in our analysis, especially of the 17

⁷ Further on, Havard claims that "from Quebec to Vancouver's Island there is scarcely a native tribe, from the Sioux to the Esquimaux, that has not been tinctured with French blood." He evidently did not think that this made all tribes "métis." Havard 1880, 317-18.

⁸ Havard 1880, 314, emphasis ours.

Verified Métis Family Lines (VMFL).⁹ We've organized the flaws in the evidence and argument proffered by the MNO in three themes below.

1.1. Lack of Consultation with Algonquin/Nipissing First Nations

As in the case with the other MNO/Government of Ontario reports, the Mattawa research suffers from a lack of consultation with local First Nations. Many of the flaws in their research could've been avoided by consulting First Nation knowledge holders about the existence of any extant Métis community in the region. Since Mattawa is in the Ottawa River watershed, it falls within the territory of the Algonquin people. It's worth noting that at their Annual Assembly in Val D'Or, Québec, in December 2018, the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation Tribal Council (AANTC) passed a unanimous resolution opposing the existence of a distinct, rights-bearing Métis community in Algonquin territory. The AANTC did so as a result of the increasing number of individual and organizational claims to a distinct, rights-bearing "Métis" identity in their territory, especially since the *Powley* decision. In the past seven years alone, there have been six cases heard in Québec provincial court involving individuals claiming to have Aboriginal rights as members of a historic "Métis" community in Algonquin territory. None of these cases have been successful, but two of them are still winding their way through the courts.

Besides the broader political opposition to these claims by the Algonquin people, two Algonquin elders, both from the nearest Algonquin First Nation to Mattawa (Kebaowek First Nation), wrote books in the 1980s that easily dispel many of the claims in the Mattawa Report.

First, Kermot Moore (*Kipawa: A Portrait*), wrote extensively about the ancestral history of today's Kebaowek First Nation. Moore was a well-known political figure in the province, since he was the founder of the Laurentian Alliance for Métis and Non-Status Indians in 1972, an organization that advocated for women (and their children and grandchildren) who had their Indian status taken away prior to Bill C-31 in 1985. In his book, Moore discussed many descendants of the "Métis" root ancestors identified in the Mattawa Report and the MNO VMFLs for Mattawa as current band members of Kebaowek First Nation. One such example comes from what the Mattawa Report calls the "Antoine" family and the VMFL calls the Bernard-Papineau family. Moore explains that band member (in 1980s) Edward (Ted) Mongrain's maternal grandfather was Frank Jawbone (a.k.a. Jambone).¹⁰ In the Mattawa Report, we find out that the same Frank Jawbone and his wife Catherine Anne Suzanne Mary England are both listed as "Algonquin" in the 1912 census. The Mattawa Report also concedes that all of Frank Jawbone's grandparents were either Algonquin or Anishinaabe, even going so far as to explain that his paternal grandparents – Antoine Njikwiwisans and Elisabeth Nipinekijikokwe Gagnon Desjardins, married at the Oka mission in 1832 – both

⁹ Among these sources are the following two books published by recognized Algonquin community members of the Kebaowek First Nation (formerly Eagle Village First Nation): Rita Drouin (1989), *Algonquin Women Anecdotes*, and Kermot Moore (1982), *Kipawa: A Portrait*. We also consulted Siommon Pulla's expert report submitted in the *Tremblay* case (2017) and Jacques Frénette's genealogical report produced for the Kebaowek First Nation (1999).

¹⁰ Moore 1982, 138.

received Robinson-Huron Treaty annuities following a government report into their origins.¹¹ Thus, why Frank Jawbone, who marries an Algonquin woman and has four Algonquin/Anishinaabe grandparents, is identified as a “Métis” root ancestor in the Mattawa Report and the MNO’s VMFL document is unclear. Moore’s work helps to explain that many of the descendants of the “Métis” root ancestors identified in the Mattawa Report continued to identify themselves and were identified as Algonquin/Anishinaabe into the 1980s in Kebaowek First Nation and Wolf Lake First Nation (formerly Kipawa and Hunter’s Point, respectively).

Second, Rita Drouin’s book (*Algonquin Women Anecdotes*) offers us a similar example of the limits of the Mattawa Report’s research methodology. Drouin is an Elder from Kebaowek First Nation who has interviewed a generation of Algonquin Elders over the past three decades. In her book, she identified her great-grandfather as Stanislaus (a.k.a. Tanis or Tanisse) Langevin, one of the “Métis” root ancestors listed in the Mattawa Report and included in the MNO’s Langevin-Mijakwat Verified Métis Family Line. Drouin explained that Langevin, who was trilingual, was also known as “Papigosh” or “one who laughs/one who makes people laugh.”¹² Both Drouin and Moore explain that Langevin was the last traditional Algonquin drummer at Hunter’s Point (today’s Wolf Lake First Nation).¹³ Moore goes on to explain that Langevin is the great-grandfather for the Samuel and Mongrain families in Kebaowek First Nation,¹⁴ whose descendants include the current Chief of Kebaowek First Nation, Lance Haymond. Despite the fact that Langevin’s daughter Philomène’s (Mongrain) eight children were Algonquin (as were their children, see Ted Mongrain above), the MNO’s Verified Métis Family Line Assessment Document nonetheless identifies Philomène in their discussion of the Langevin-Mijakwat “Métis” family.

If we use the Stanislaus “Tanis” Langevin example, the MNO creates “Métis” root ancestors who are actually the ancestral basis of *at least* five (5) generations of subsequent *Algonquin* descendants at Kebaowek First Nation and Wolf Lake First Nation, including dozens who are still living today. The same is true for several other key “Métis” root ancestors identified by the MNO, including in their Commandant-Kijikasowekwe and Bastien-Sibikwe Verified Métis Family Lines. In addition, the same Commandant-Kijikasowekwe VMFL includes numerous descendants who are current members of the Nipissing First Nation (NFN) and the MNO’s Laronde-Sauvage VMFL has numerous current descendants at both NFN and Dokis First Nation, including the current chief of NFN, Scott McLeod. The Stoqua VMFL also has numerous current descendants at NFN and the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation.

While the limitations of this research project have meant that we’re unable to verify every single MNO Verified Métis Family Line or root ancestor couple included in the Mattawa Report, we’re confident that the MNO mistakenly and repeatedly identifies Algonquin individuals and couples who are the ancestors of present-day Algonquin

¹¹ Mattawa Report 2015, 89.

¹² Drouin 1989, 34.

¹³ Drouin 1982, 34 and Moore 1989, 75.

¹⁴ Moore 1989, 75.

people as “Métis” root ancestors. Perhaps the clearest example of this comes from the Mattawa Report itself. The authors list some of the MNO VMFL ancestors who also appear in the Algonquins of Ontario’s (AOO) Master Schedule of Algonquin Ancestors.¹⁵ Overall, they identify 50 ancestors that the MNO claims are “Métis” as Algonquin ancestors on the AOO’s list. To be clear, the AOO’s list of ancestors was used to identify non-status Algonquin individuals on the Ontario side of the Ottawa River watershed who could vote in the comprehensive land claim there in 2016.

We’ve cross-referenced the AOO Voters’ List (2015) to verify the number of non-status Algonquin individuals who are claiming at least one ancestor from the MNO’s Verified Métis Family Lines for Mattawa-Ottawa River. Taking into account that many individuals on the AOO’s Voter’s List include more than one ancestor in their membership application, we estimate that *at least* 2,495 separate individuals are registered as (non-status) Algonquins using Algonquin ancestors remade into “Métis” root ancestors by the MNO. If we consider that in its critique of the AOO membership policy, the Algonquin Nation Secretariat demonstrated that over 30% of the overall AOO membership was non-Indigenous/non-Algonquin and that registered members of the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation account for about a quarter of the AOO membership, than ancestral lines identified by the MNO as “Métis” are used by a remarkable 65% of the AOO’s remaining non-status Algonquin members.

Here’s a table featuring the number of times specific ancestors in the MNO’s Verified Metis Family Lines are used to become members of the AOO.

Table 1 – MNO “Métis” ancestors used in AOO membership

Verified Métis Family Line	Ancestor’s name + number of unique AOO members each	Overall number
1. Atkinson-Moore* *also used in “Abitibi-Inland Historic Métis Community”	→ Angélique Atkinson & Frank Jocko – 8 → Charlotte Atkinson – 5 → Florence Atkinson – 1	13 AOO members
2. Bastien-Sibikwe	→ Ignace Bastien – 56 → Antoine Colton – 42 → Mary Ann Jocko – 9 → Joseph Lamure – 109 → Susan Lamure – 52 → Bernard & Louis Nadowesi – (56)	268 AOO members
3. Bernard-Papineau	→ Amable Ignace (married to Elizabeth Antoine) – 90 → Antoine Nijkwiwisans – 251 → Marie Catherine Papineau – 78	419 AOO members

¹⁵ Mattawa Report 2015, 36–38.

4. Commandant-Kijikasowekwe	→ Louis Commandant and Mari Anne Kijikasowekwe – 160 → Amable Defond (Dufond) – 30	190 AOO members
5. Dorion-McDonnell	→ Caroline Dorion – 15 → Marie Cécile Mawiskak McDonnell – 297	312 AOO members
6. Ferris-Good	→ Walter and Frederick Ferris – 210	210 AOO members
7. Laronde-Sauvage	→ Toussaint Laronde and Marie Kekgikakwoe – 580	580 AOO members
8. Montreuil-Kakwabit	→ Théophile Montreuil – 80 → Marie Montreuil – 45	125 AOO members
9. Montreuil-Mic Mac	→ Louis Montreuil – 88 → Marie Anne Mic Mac – 20	108 AOO members
10. Stoqua	→ Mary Ann Stoqua – 30	30 AOO members
11. Thomas	→ Hannah Mannell – 102	102 AOO members
Dufond-Pinenciwalaupwin (Mattawa Report)	→ Amable (Jon Bon) Dufond and Elizabeth Fisher Minyaki David Pinenciwalaupwin – 138	138 AOO members
TOTAL		2,495 AOO members

Overall, the MNO’s lack of consultation with Algonquin, Nipissing, and/or Anishinaabeg communities in the Mattawa region has meant that its conclusions, particularly about the identities of “root ancestors,” are unreliable. It appears that the MNO transforms the identities of Anishinaabeg individuals in the past and present to suit its political interests.

1.2. Non-status Algonquins Become “Metis”

Another common strategy used in the Mattawa Report and in the MNO’s Verified Metis Family Lines is to turn First Nation individuals who have been dispossessed due to gender discrimination into “Metis” root ancestors. As an example, let’s consider the ancestor at the basis of the Belair-Laronde Verified Metis Family Line, Suzanne Laronde. It’s clear from the MNO’s own documentation that Suzanne is a Nipissing woman (born 1839, married 1857). As they state, her family was enumerated in 1891 as “living in Nipissing. In the sub-district of the Nipissing Indian Reserve.”¹⁶ Yet, by the 1901 census, the family is no longer living on the Reserve, as Suzanne and her children

¹⁶ MNO Verified Metis Family Line for Mattawa-Ottawa River Historic Métis Community, 4.

all live in a small village nearby. Given that Suzanne was married to a white man prior to this and that gender discrimination in the *Indian Act's* was unevenly practiced in Robinson-Huron Treaty territory until the turn of the century, it's quite likely that her Indian status was removed by the Government of Canada.

Whatever the precise case, neither the Mattawa Report nor the Belair-Laronde Verified Metis Family Line Assessment Document ever raise the specter of gender discrimination in the *Indian Act* as a principal reason why First Nation individuals – women and their children and grandchildren – are forced to live away from their First Nation kin. The fact is that mixed-race Algonquin or Nipissing children living in the vicinity of the reserve, who often spoke Anishinaabemowin and were raised by their Algonquin or Nipissing mothers who had lost Indian status (hence the ability to live on the reserve), were being discriminated against as Algonquin or Nipissing individuals because of their mothers' (or grandmothers') gender.

As a product of this specific type of experience, Kermot Moore and other non-status Algonquins (at the time), including Réal Boudrias, would lead one of the most significant national organizations advocating for the rights of non-status Indigenous people in the 1970s and 1980s. The leadership of the Laurentian Alliance was clear in its public statements that it never represented a distinct “Métis” people in Québec (or in Algonquin territory).¹⁷ Nonetheless, the MNO relies on the confusion created by the *Indian Act* as a way to argue for the presence of a “Métis” community in Algonquin territory, including on the Québec side of the Ottawa River watershed such as Fort Coulonge, Hunter's Point, Kipawa, and Notre-Dame-du-Nord, all of which become part of a historic “Métis Community” according to the MNO.

1.3. Presence of Métis Ancestors in MNO Documentation

Only one of the seventeen MNO VMFLs for the “Historic Mattawa/Ottawa River Métis Community” has any direct connection to the Métis Homeland. George Taylor (born 1760 in England) and his “Indian” wife Jane moved frequently due to George's employment with the HBC. They ended up at Red River with their children in the late 1790s. According to the MNO, at least three of their children (Thomas, George, and Margaret) were identified as “Half-breed” in Métis Scrip applications in Manitoba in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Several of their children, most of whom married Métis spouses from Manitoba, eventually received Métis Scrip. Thomas Taylor (born 1797) married Mary Keith, a Métis woman, in 1831 at the Red River Settlement. Thomas and Mary moved to Fort Coulonge on the Ottawa River in 1853, so that he could take up his post as clerk at the HBC post there. Several of their children and grandchildren settled in the Fort Coulonge-Pembroke corridor on the Ottawa River, part of what the MNO now calls the “Métis Community,” in the late 1800s onwards.

2. Historic Killarney Métis Community

Unlike the Mattawa-Ottawa River Community, the MNO didn't rely on a research report in their recognition of what they call the “Historic Killarney Métis Community.” Instead, the MNO prepared collaboratively with the Government of Ontario a Historic Metis

¹⁷ See Leroux 2020.

Communities of Ontario Summary on Killarney in 2016 and the MNO produced a series of Verified Metis Family Line reports in 2017. We've closely examined these documents, and where appropriate, cross-referenced them with additional research. In doing so, we've come to the conclusion that the MNO's recognition of the "Killarney Métis Community" presents several insurmountable obstacles that are indicative of the lack of rigour in the process that led to its recognition of the six new communities in 2016.

The most glaring problem with the MNO's recognition of the "Historic Killarney Métis Community" is the fact that they've only identified *seven* "root ancestor" families for the entire "historic community." While we can't be sure as to why the MNO chose these seven specific family lines, the VMFLs point us to an explanation. Since every VMFL Assessment Document explains that current MNO citizens are directly connected to the family line in question, then we suspect their process of identifying "Métis" family lines begins from current citizens and traces their ancestors back in time to a period before Effective Control. As we explain further below, such a process doesn't actually identify a historical Métis community at all; instead, it traces the family lines of individuals in the present who, for any number of political or social reasons, wish to become a citizen of the MNO.

The fact that the MNO and Government of Ontario don't appear to have relied on any historical research in their recognition of the "Historic Killarney Métis Community" confirms for us the limitations of the recognition process.

2.1. Time/Space Expansion

The six families in question lived in a range of communities on the north shore of Lake Huron, on Manitoulin Island, and at or near Killarney. The MNO's efforts to create a community where none existed in any conventional sense leads them to define the "Historic Killarney Métis Community" in a broad, counter-intuitive manner. For instance, we are to believe that the so-called Métis community existed in at least three Anishinabeg First Nations, including Wikwemikong, Mississauga, and M'Chigeeng for well over a century, besides a stretch of communities along Lake Huron that spans about 150 kms east to west by water and over 250 kilometres by road. In all of the documents it has produced to support the recognition of Killarney, the MNO fails to explain how it came to the decision to include such a wide range of communities in what it calls the "Métis Community."

Besides the MNO's imaginative geographical reconstruction, the proposed timeline for its creation is also questionable. For instance, the two root ancestors in the Tchimanens Verified Metis Family Line were born in the 1850s and both of them and their first child are identified as "Indian" in the 1881 census in Killarney, incidentally a year *after* Effective Control. According to the MNO's own explanation of the different populations living in Killarney ten years prior, it would follow that the Tchimanens family belonged to the "group of 'Indians' under Chief Anaweigonce."¹⁸ Yet, the MNO's eventual recognition of the Tchimanens as "Métis" seems to hinge on the fact that they, as were all of their immediate neighbours, enumerated as "Chippewa Other Breed" in the 1901

¹⁸ Historic Métis Communities in Ontario, The Historic Killarney Métis Community, 1.

census at Killarney. The MNO interprets this specific census record as proof of the Tchimanens family's "Métis" identity, when an alternative reading suggests that they were part and parcel of the Anishinaabe community in the area at the time. That several members of that community were mixed-race certainly doesn't mean they weren't Anishinaabe, as we noted in the Introduction.

Besides its singular focus on the use of the word "breed" in census records to confirm the existence of a "Métis" individual, the MNO isn't able to provide any evidence of kinship relations between the Tchimanens family and any other VMFL for Killarney.

Thus, in order to accept the MNO's inclusion of this specific family as an integral basis of the "Historic Killarney Métis Community," we must:

- ignore the family's prior and much earlier identification as "Indian" at a time when a recognized Anishinaabe community existed in Killarney;
- accept that the 1901 use of the word "breed" by a census enumerator means that the family was "Métis;"
- accept that this specific Verified Métis Family Line had no kinship relations, symbolic or otherwise, with any of the other Killarney root ancestor families.

The Tchimanens family line represents just one of many examples of the weakness of the MNO's recognition process. In this case, it appears that it's simply identifying the ancestors of current MNO citizens with little to no regard for the professional rigour needed to identify the creation and consolidation of historic communities. The next concrete example from the MNO's VMFLs for Killarney further illustrates our argument.

2.2 When the Anishinaabeg Become Métis: The Case of the Corbière-Roy VMFL

Another of the seven MNO Verified Métis Family Lines is the Corbière-Roy line. This specific line, and the MNO's own explanation of it, provides perhaps the clearest example of its push to find/create "Métis" root ancestors where there simply aren't any.

In this case, we find out that both individuals constituting the root ancestor couple at the basis of this VMFL are born at the West Bay Indian Reserve (today's M'Chigeeng First Nation) in 1823 and 1826, respectively. This places them as the children of some of the first Anishinaabe families to live permanently in M'Chigeeng, after many Anishinaabeg were forced to relocate from the North Shore. In fact, every individual presented in the MNO's VMFL document – from the root ancestors to some of their grandchildren – are only ever enumerated in M'Chigeeng between 1823 and 1937. In addition, three generations of this family are all enumerated as either "Ottawa" or "Chippewa" in the 1911 and 1921 censuses.¹⁹ The MNO also admits in their VMFL Assessment Document that, "Current research has not revealed any connection to other Métis Family Lines."²⁰ Thus, after reading the MNO's documentation, one is left grasping for puzzle pieces that simply don't fit.

¹⁹ As a note, the relocation brought together Anishinaabeg people from the Three Fires Confederacy: Odawa (or Ottawa), Ojibway and the Pottawattomi Nations.

²⁰ MNO Verified Metis Family Line for Historic Killarney Métis Community, 4.

It would appear that there are two reasons that the MNO has included this well-documented Anishinaabe family as “Métis” for their purposes. In 1901, three generations of the Corbière family were enumerated in M’Chigeeng as either “Ojibway Other Breed” or simply “Other Breed.” Despite the fact that all family members identified by the MNO are only ever recorded at M’Chigeeng between 1823 and 1937 and are enumerated as “Ottawa” or “Chippewa” in at least two subsequent censuses, the MNO verification process only requires the presence of the word “breed” in an official document at any time for ancestors to pass from “Anishinaabe” to “Métis.”

In addition, the MNO verification process hinges on the identification of present-day descendants who are MNO members: “This Verified Métis Family Line continues to have an ongoing presence within this Métis Community today with many MNO citizens ancestrally connecting to the identified Métis Root Ancestors.”²¹ In other words, many current MNO citizens became citizens because they self-identified as Métis and are direct descendants of the Corbière-Roy line. Again, we know that many individuals self-identify as Métis who are non-status Anishinaabeg, which is likely the case with descendants of the Corbière-Roy line.

In examining the MNO’s own documents, it’s clear that virtually all of the current descendants of this family line are considered Anishinaabeg. Not only did three generations of the family exclusively live in M’Chigeeng until *at least* the late 1930s, but the second and third generation of descendants appears to have mostly married fellow Anishinaabeg individuals from M’Chigeeng or Wikwemikong. Descendants of the Corbière-Roy family line include Anishinaabeg individuals with well-known family names such as Corbière, Debassige, and Bebonang. They also married into well-known Anishinaabeg families in M’Chigeeng, Wikwemikong, and Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation bearing names such as Mishibinijima, Recollet, and Manitowabi today.

Again, to accept the MNO’s claims about the Corbière-Roy family line as “Métis,” we have to be willing to ignore the fact that it appears that a significant number of the present-day descendants of Henri Corbière and Marie Roy are recognized as integral members of the Anishinaabeg Nation, particularly on Manitoulin Island. What’s more, at no point did any of the descendants identified in MNO documentation seem to set foot near Killarney, nor do they share any kinship relations, symbolic or otherwise, with any of the other MNO Verified Metis Family Lines for Killarney.

In cross-referencing genealogical records, we also noticed a pattern among the women descendants of this family line – if they married a non-Anishinaabe man in the twentieth century, they were inevitably recorded off reserve, often quite far from Manitoulin Island. These were the only cases where descendants of this family line were consistently recorded off-reserve. Given the gender discrimination built into the *Indian Act*, such a discovery is unsurprising. The loss of status appears to only have affected Corbière descendants starting around the 1940s, given the high level of in-marriage prior to that. This would mean that all of the living descendants of the Anishinaabeg

²¹ MNO Verified Metis Family Line for Historic Killarney Métis Community, 2.

women who lost status would be eligible to be registered as “status Indians” under the provisions of Bill S-3 (adopted by Parliament and then revised by Cabinet in 2019).

2.3 Presence of Métis Ancestors in MNO Documentation

None of the seven MNO VMFL for the “Killarney Historic Métis Community” have any verified connections to the Métis Homeland, according to the MNO’s own documentation.

3. Historic Georgian Bay Métis Community

The case of Georgian Bay is somewhat unique in relation to the other communities, as the claim here is that a pre-existing community in essence “transplanted” from the (now) United States to Penetanguishene and the greater Georgian Bay area. Core research reports produced for MNO (2006) and for MNR (2000) raise a number of questions with respect to the nature and extent of these claims. Twenty-one MNO Verified Métis Family Lines are associated with the “Historic Georgian Bay Métis Community” (HGBMC). The MNO Report identifies four stages of development of the HGBMC – 1) the initial stage at Fort Michilimackinac (1720–1780) and the following period at Fort Mackinac (1780–1796); 2) St. Joseph Island (1796–1812); 3) Mackinac Island (1812–1815); and 4) Drummond Island (1815–1828).

Other sources such as the MNR Report support the claim that a small population moved through these different forts/islands before arriving to Penetanguishene and the Georgian Bay area. Opinions are reserved here on whether this community has standing as a non-status or half-breed community, however, a review of the two reports, root ancestor documentation, and additional external research clearly reflects that the claim depends largely on “mixed raceness” with little to no evidence provided of historic *Métis* consciousness or connection to the Métis Nation Homeland.

Much of the research presented in the 2006 MNO report was initially published in 1989 as *Les Voyageurs et La Colonisation de Penetanguishene (1825–1871)*, *La colonisation française en Huronie*, document no. 87, by Micheline Marchand for La Société historique du Nouvel-Ontario (Sudbury). Originally published in French, it makes little argument with respect to the development of a distinctive Métis community, although a more formal comparison would be an area for future research to understand the precise nature of the shifting claims made from the French to English translations. It’s known that the report does document the existence of *occasional* intermarriage between (predominantly) French Canadian *voyageurs* and First Nations women. Nonetheless, it focuses more directly on tracing the existence, as the title suggests, of the *voyageur* community and its role in the “colonisation” of Penetanguishene and the broader French colonization of “Huronie” or Huronia, the lands comprising the peninsula on which Penetanguishene sits and which was, historically, the homeland of the Huron-Wendat, Wendake. The original text of Marchand’s document squarely situates the migration of Drummond Island voyageurs as a part of the process of *colonization* of the Huron-Wendat homeland.

With the initial English-language translation and production of the report for MNO in 2006, the term “voyageur” was frequently used to imply Métis, and at times the words

are used *interchangeably*. Even so, in the 2006 document, Marchand writes that *voyageur* refers to a *way of life* that *may* mean Métis, but also includes “French-Canadian, First Nations, and [individuals] of European origin (British or other).”²² Both the MNO and MNR Reports make clear that the “Historic Georgian Bay Métis Community” does not emerge from relations between the French and Huron-Wendat much earlier in the seventeenth century. While they reserve the possibility that “mixed race, métis children” may have been born at the time,²³ they “would have remained in their First Nations families to be raised by their First Nations mothers.”²⁴ As such, no evidence exists to link any potential early population of “mixed race” people to the later arrival of Drummond Island voyageurs to the area.

3.1. Stage 1: Fort Michilimackinac (1720–1780) and Fort Mackinac (1780–1796)

The Historic Georgian Bay Métis Community, as MNO identifies it, finds its origins in a confluence of relationships within the Upper Great Lakes, between Lake Huron and Lake Michigan, originating at Fort Michilimackinac, established around 1715. Built as a French fur trading post, post records indicate some early intermarriage between French, French-Canadian, and later English, Scottish, and other Europeans (in the case of one VMFL, the Solomons, their paternal ancestry is German Jewish) and local First Nations (predominantly Odawa and other Anishinaabeg nations). With the fall of the French to the British, the British assumed control of the Fort. The families associated with the Fort became, in effect, British subjects and would continue to show allegiance to the British through their work and migration patterns.

The only criteria used to identify Métisness in MNO documentation is “mixed race” European-Indigenous ancestry with no clear parameters as to what composition. For instance, Charles Michel Langlade (b. 1729) is identified as “the first Métis of the Langlade line” and represents the first in “the oldest known Métis line that stretches from Michilimackinac to Penatanguishene today.”²⁵ Langlade was born to Augustin Langlade, a French-Canadian fur trader, and Domitilde, the sister of an Ottawa Chief at L’Arbre Croché, an Ottawa settlement “located about twenty-five miles southwest of Fort Michilimackinac.”²⁶ While the MNO Report identifies Langlade as a Métis root ancestor and he is the forebearer of the MNO’s Longlade Verified Métiá Family Line, he was in fact raised within his Ottawa family. Langlade gained respect among Ottawa and other related First Nations due to his deep familiarity with Ottawa customs, protocols, and ways of life. Amid the tensions within the Fort, he led a group of First Nations and some French in conflict against the British. With the Fall of Montréal in 1760, Langlade and others on the island had to adapt to British rule. According to prevailing accounts, Langlade had no issues in adjusting to British rule. Langlade was in fact left second-in-command and maintained the Fort until the British arrived.

²² Marchand, 2006, vii.

²³ Marchand, 2006, v.

²⁴ Marchand, 2006, v.

²⁵ Marchand, 2006, vi.

²⁶ Widder 1992, 47–48.

Although Langlade continued to frequent the island, by 1763 he had moved his family and his primary business to Green Bay, which raises serious questions about his role in the formation of a distinctive “Métis” identity in Michilimackinac and its environs.

On June 2, 1763, under Pontiac, a local Odawa chief, the Odawa launched a historically-significant attack on the Fort in response to the oppressive policies of British General Jeffrey Amherst. They gained control of the Fort and inhabited it for nearly one year, before the British were able to use military might to regain control of the Fort. To appease the Odawa, they promised to resume gift and trade diplomacy and to furnish the Odawa with necessary gifts permitting their continued occupancy of the Fort. Langlade had in fact warned the British commandant of the Fort that an attack by First Nations was impending. As such, with the arrival of the British, his identity seems to connect to the British and their interests.

Regardless, there is no research presented on this period to suggest Langlade identified as Métis, or that a distinctive Métis identity existed among the Fort’s inhabitants, or anywhere else on the island. Langlade married the daughter of a French-Canadian trader, Charlotte Bourassa, and had two daughters. There is some indication he also had a daughter by a Chippewa woman, but no research indicates that he continuously cohabited with her in a discreet family unit.

Concerned with the wood fort’s vulnerability the British build a new limestone fort nearby on Mackinac Island. The fort would come to be named Fort Mackinac. Fort Mackinac is increasingly referred to as a “British military fort” in historical and scholarly literature. Marchand suggests that the village associated with the Fort, drawing on the work of Landon, “pulled itself up by the roots and was replanted. The old life continued in a new environment.”²⁷ The lifestyle associated with the Fort involved a mix of employment within the British military structure and within the fur trade. While Marchand’s MNO Report suggests that involvement in the fur trade implies a distinct Métis community, Landon identifies voyageurs, traders, and “Indians,” a “fringe of almost unclassifiable persons who frequented every frontier community.”²⁸

Marchand’s MNO Report uses Métis and French-Canadian voyageurs interchangeably to describe this time period *and* refers to anyone of “mixed race ancestry” as Métis. There appears to be no distinctive traits associated with a distinct Métis community.

3.2. Stage 2: St. Joseph’s Island (1796–1812)

Although the Jay Treaty was signed between the United States and the British in 1794 as an attempt to broker peace between the two conflicting nations, the British continued to occupy Mackinac Island and were accused by the Americans of, through the fur trade, supplying weapons to the Western Confederacy, an alliance of Indigenous nations defending their lands from American intrusion. The British likewise argued that the Americans were not honouring preceding treaty agreements. In response to ongoing conflict, in which the Americans frequently lost to the Western Confederacy, the US

²⁷ Qtd. in Marchand 2006, 15.

²⁸ Marchand 2006, 15.

government persuaded members of the Confederacy to sign a treaty that would cede much of Ohio to them. Present at negotiations were Indigenous leaders from Mackinac Island. In August 1795, through the Treaty of Greenville, the Western Confederacy's power and influence was suppressed, leading the British to relinquish Mackinac Island to the US in September 1796. The British military fort was then relocated to St. Joseph's Island and with the fort's relocation, British loyalists living in and around the fort also moved. It's important to note here that irrespective of ethnic origins, the community's identity is at this point clearly tied to their status as British subjects. The rationale for the move to St. Joseph's in particular is strategic as the British intended to attract both traders and First Nations – the destiny of the families associated with the fort continued to be determined by British interests.

According to the MNO Report, St. Joseph's Island was formed as a new community, but it's a community of Scottish, French, and English who are military, traders, government agents, as well as First Nations and transients. The Report notes that there is inconsistency in building patterns on the island. Nowhere are Métis framed as a distinct population within this milieu. The term Métis continues to be used, when it is, to refer to intermarriage and children of Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations. The Northwest Company (NWC) established a post and warehouse here; a small settlement is identified as existing by 1797, but even in the MNO Report this is identified as a series of *fur trading* families. There is no indication that a distinctive Métis identity existed or that there was a process of ethnogenesis toward a distinctive collective identity.

Nevertheless, the MNO Report indicates that a “number of Métis” lived at St. Joseph's Island. In the historical literature cited, the term Métis does not appear. If anything, the word “half-breed” is occasionally used. In spite of this, the MNO Report explicitly identifies, for example, Prisque Legris as Métis when noting that in 1810 he was paid 22 pounds and 10 shillings to construct a blacksmith shop at Fort St. Joseph. With no explanation as to how Legris was Métis, he is ascribed a Métis identity in the MNO Report.²⁹ Marchand may be referring to Joseph Prisque (Prisque) Legris a.k.a. dit Lépine, who was born in 1780 in Saint-Pierre-Les- Becquets, Nicolet, Québec, and who died in Penetanguishene in 1834. Extensive research using the Quebec, Canada, Vital and Church Records, Drouin Collection, 1621–1968, indicate that both Legris and his spouse Angélique (Lemire dit St. Germain) Legris were French-Canadian. It's unclear how the Report surmises that Legris is Métis. The tendency to refer to French-Canadians as Métis and/or to, as mentioned above, ascribe the label Métis to those such as Charles Langlade and his descendants, is consistent.

A similar phenomenon happens in the OMNR Praxis Report, when Reimer and Chartrand state that Louis Chevrette had a sugar camp in Penetanguishene “where Main Street now stands;” they then use this statement to firm up the argument that “métis” engaged in maple sugaring.³⁰ However, in cross-referencing Chevrette's genealogy and evaluating the research conducted by Gail Morin, we discovered that he was born in

²⁹ Josette Prisque Legris, whose parents are unknown according to the MNO, is identified as a root ancestor for a MNO's King-Prisque Legris VMFL for the “Historic Sault Ste. Marie and Environs Métis Community.”

³⁰ Reimer and Chartrand 2000, 84–85.

Québec and he and his descendants are consistently noted as White French Canadian in the 1901 Census of Canada. Given the common practice (as will be discussed later) in 1901 of associating mixed-race people with the “lowest” racial designation that may be ascribed based on ancestry, Chevrette seems to be French Canadian.

Further, at various points the MNO Report uses *voyageur*/Métis interchangeably while referring to the people inhabiting St. Joseph’s Island. The Report implies that historical descriptions of *voyageur* dress at St. Joseph’s, such as that made by Fred Landon, point to the existence of a distinctive Métis style of dress: “blue *capot*, his gaudy sash, his deerskin leggings and his gay beaded pouch, the *voyageur* was a figure long to be remembered.”³¹ Whatever the case, the MNO Report jumps to conclusions in its search for Métis distinctiveness.

3.3. Stage 3: Drummond Island (1815–1828)

In the wake of the British and American War of 1812, which further solidified borders between American and British claimed territories, people who had been loyal to the British continued to be so. When the British relocated operations from St. Joseph’s to Drummond Island, many continued in their employ and allegiance as British subjects and relocated. According to the MNO Report, while St. Joseph Island, Mackinac Island, and Michilimackinac represent an early formation of what would later become the Métis community of Penetanguishene/Georgian Bay area, the community on Drummond Island is the crux to the MNO’s claim to a historic Métis community as already formed before moving to southern Georgian Bay.³² While the MNO Report argues that the *voyageur* community that continued on and lived at Drummond Island had a notable Métis community, the evidence upon which such a claim is based reflects the earlier issues in which “mixed race” or “mixed ancestry” and increasingly “half-breed” are taken to *automatically* mean “Métis.” Marchand writes that notable families on Drummond Island include the Solomon, Langlade, and Mitchell “Métis families that moved to all of these locations. The geographic base of this group of Métis changes to become Penetanguishene, but the Métis community itself remains the same.”³³

Such a hypothesis relies on several assumptions in need of further examination. First, there is no concrete evidence of specific Métis shared cultural ties or collective identity among these families during this period. While they may very well constitute a community by virtue of the location where they lived, they appear to share no common ties beyond “mixed raceness” and an allegiance to working in/with British civil administration. For instance, as mentioned previously, the Solomons are posited as Métis on the basis of being German-Jewish (Ezekiel Solomon) and First Nations (Marie Elizabeth Louise Dubois).³⁴ Ezekiel Solomon’s son, William, worked for the NWC and later the British as an interpreter, having learned many First Nations languages. William (b. 1777) is the forebearer of a MNO Verified Métis Family Line for Georgian Bay. His

³¹ Marchand 2006, 19, emphasis in original.

³² Marchand 2006, 31.

³³ Marchand 2006, 31.

³⁴ Dubois’ origins are stated as being predominantly Odawa and other Anishinaabeg nations, though some other accounts suggest Chippewa. A number of others state she was born in Québec to Québécois parents with no First Nations ancestry at all

son, Lewis, in an oral narrative recounted by Osborne, stated that “in his person no less than five nationalities are represented.”³⁵ Osborne later posits that “[a]s the Indian nature appeared to predominate, and since his father was partly German, his mother must have been of very mixed nationality.”³⁶ By Lewis Solomon’s own words, he recognized himself as being comprised of five different nationalities, not a part of a singular nationality – Métis.

Further, as previously discussed, the elder Langlade’s primary home and business operations were located at Green Bay, which raises questions as to whether he constitutes a core part of a community at Drummond Island. There is no evidence that he identified with a distinct Métis identity; on the contrary, he remained closely tied to his First Nations family and community.

In a third example, the Mitchell family was comprised of parents Dr. David Mitchell (British) and Elizabeth Bertrand (Chippewa) and their children, who in the MNO Report are referred to by Marchand as a “Métis” family. Nothing establishes that they self-identified or were externally identified as Métis.

Taken together, these three “root ancestors” come from very different cultural origins and no case other than having “mixed ancestry” and living together in the same place appears to generate a claim that they are Métis. Marchand suggests that their movement across each of these locations reflects that they are a “group of Métis,” who, after their migration from Drummond Island to Penetanguishene, nevertheless represent a cohesive community that remained consistent over time.

A few things must be noted in the efforts to demonstrate common culture ties. First, with respect to lodging on Drummond Island, the MNO Report erroneously refers to “bark lodges” as distinct Métis housing structures.³⁷ *Wigwams*, as they are more commonly called, are housing structures indigenous to various First Nations. The claim insufficiently establishes that they differed from those that many “mixed ancestry” First Nations may have been acclimatized to using. Further, the report refers to the presence of public bakeries as “another characteristic of the organisation of some Métis communities in the Upper Great Lakes.”³⁸ According to Marchand, this was a consistent aspect of Métis family life, extending back to Mackinac Island. To support the claim that public bakeries represent a distinct Métis way, they draw on Murphy’s work.³⁹ However, in their contribution in St. Onge et al.’s book on Métis history and identity,⁴⁰ Murphy’s brief discussion around distinctive lifeways at Mackinac Island, including the presence of public bakeries, makes clear that the attendant community represents a voyageur community and *not* a Métis community. Thus, public bakeries are not a trait to be uniquely associated with “Métis” but represent a French-Canadian voyageur culture.

³⁵ Osborne 1901.

³⁶ Osborne 1901.

³⁷ Marchand 2006, 29.

³⁸ Osborne 1901.

³⁹ Murphy 2000, 65.

⁴⁰ Murphy 2012.

Following a series of surveys of American-British treaties, Drummond Island was found to fall within United States territory and the British relocated their garrison to Penetanguishene, in the Georgian Bay area. The community at Drummond Island was, according to Osborne, “a strange and heterogeneous people,”⁴¹ reflective of Lewis Solomon’s own reference to his “five nationalities.” When the British relocated the garrison and the community followed, many voyageurs settled at Penetanguishene, though others opted for regions such as “Old Fort Ste. Marie, at Fesserton and Coldwater, and another south of Lake Simcoe, near Pefferlaw, York County.”⁴² We suggest that the movement to Georgian Bay reflects less a cohesive sense of community and identity separate and apart from the British and their interests as the voyageurs seem to have assimilated into other British settled areas as British subjects.

3.4. Stage 4: Penetanguishene (1828–Present)

Over and above questions with respect to the framing of Penetanguishene and area as a historic Métis community rests the question of whether they represent an Indigenous “people” prior to Effective Control. The case made by MNO is that they do and that Effective Control can be identified as in 1845. Yet, the lands in and around the harbour at Penetanguishene were already under effective British control much earlier, as evidenced by the presence of some measure of civil administration and the existence of Crown Treaty #5, signed in 1795 and entered into force in 1798 – between the Chippewas of Lake Huron and Governor Simcoe and the British Crown. When the community moved from Drummond Island to Penetanguishene it did so as British subjects dependent on the British and tied to their roles within the British civil administrative structure. While a claim may be made on Canada for the historical mistreatment as British loyalists, there is nothing to suggest that a distinctive collective identity, particularly in political terms, moved from Drummond Island to Penetanguishene.

In another example of the transformation of a French-Canadian man into a “Métis root ancestor,” in the MNO Report Jean-Baptiste Trudeau is identified as a founding member of the “Penetanguishene Métis community” with his earliest arrival to Penetanguishene in 1817, when he was listed as a blacksmith at the Penetanguishene Naval Establishment from May 1817 to October 1820.⁴³ He was then sent to Fort William and eventually to the British Indian Department at Drummond Island (1823–1828). Trudeau is also listed as the “Métis root ancestor” for the MNO’s Trudeau VMFL in 2017. Yet, additional research on Trudeau reveals that he was born in Quebec to Québécois parents and little evidence exists to support the claim by Marchand or the MNO that he was Métis. He did marry a First Nations woman – Angélique Papanaatyhiancock, as identified in the MNO VMFL Assessment Document and confirmed by Gail Morin’s independent research. Their son, Antoine Trudeau (married to Cécile Recollet), is identified as F.B. or French Breed on the 1901 Canadian Census, according to the particular First Nations lineage of Trudeau’s mother. However, *their* children and grandchildren, even when wedded to other families identified as root

⁴¹ Osborne 1901.

⁴² Osborne 1901.

⁴³ Marchand 2006, 38.

ancestors (such as the Longlade family) are recorded as White French Canadian. This once again reflects a practice of indiscriminately applying “Métis” to people on the basis of intermarriage.

While the MNO’s Report mentions HBC employees listed as Drummond Island voyageurs who were “married to Métis women,”⁴⁴ these early intermarriages are positioned as the “root” of later Métis identification. Not only are French-Canadian men often turned into “Métis” men (as Trudeau above), but First Nations women are also turned into “Métis” root ancestors. In other words, the MNO’s claims about these “root ancestors” relies on the belief that *some* form of Métis identity/culture was pre-existing, affirming that the primary way in which Métis identity is framed is as mixed-race. Even when a maternal family member is explicitly identified as “French-Ojibway,” or when historical documents do so, no rationale is provided for why Marchand spuriously reframes their identities and that of their children as Métis.

Overall, there are a number of elements drawn on to make the claim of a distinct Métis community in Penetanguishene – 1) residency patterns (neighbourhoods); 2) social status and social roles (fur trade work and labour jobs); 3) endogamy patterns (in-group marrying and kinship relations); and 4) the 1840 petition.

To the first claim, the MNO Report suggests that the homes of voyageurs were segregated along racial lines. There is evidence that they remained separate from groups who settled later in the area, so this claim would warrant further examination. To the second claim, the Report pays little attention to the way that many families were inextricably tied to the work of the British Indian Department as civil administrators. To the third claim, while the evidence presented suggests some intermarriage, it’s not clear whether this occurs owing to a distinct consciousness as *Métis* or because of shifting cultural attitudes around intermarriage (such as the British effort to discourage intermarriage with First Nations).⁴⁵ The OMNR Praxis report adds to this and suggests that the presence of the fiddle, voyageur songs, and “the rendezvous” are distinctive elements of “métis social life,” but simultaneously notes that this is not “exclusive to métis culture” – what, then, is distinctive enough to be identified and to identify a “métis culture” here?

The most important claim relates to the 1840 petition. Both reports raise the issue of petitions and argue that the offer of land grants to select “mixed race” families is taken as proof of a Métis community, rather than as part of the process of settlement of British subjects largely employed within the British Indian Department. In 1830, it’s noted that 43 grantees “were Métis or married to Métis or First Nations women: Pierre Giroux, George Gordon, Charles Langlade Sr., Charles Langlade Jr., William Solomon, Henry Solomon, Jean-Baptiste Trudeau, André Vasseur, and Charles Vasseur.”⁴⁶ It appears that only half the voyageurs that moved to Penetanguishene received land grants

⁴⁴ Marchand 2006; see also McArthur 2006.

⁴⁵ See Nelson 2002.

⁴⁶ Marchand 2006, 46.

(approximately 75 families relocated from Drummond Island).⁴⁷ According to Marchand, grantees issued complaints about the size of their land grants, arguing that voyageurs received only 20 acres while “ordinary settlers” were granted 200 acres.⁴⁸ It’s possible that some voyageurs faced discrimination as “mixed race” people, but we cannot substantiate this at the moment since Marchand’s claims are uncorroborated in the MNO Report. In fact, only seven of the grantees are, according to Marchand, “identified as Métis”⁴⁹ and not forty-three. There are no documents that *do* identify those grantees as Métis and in the context of dwindling numbers (from 43 to 7), it becomes that much more difficult to assert the existence of a robust, sustained, Métis community. Beyond this, there continues to be no clear explanation as to what constitutes a Métis community in the early years at Penetanguishene. In fact, according to the Governor of Upper Canada at the time, John Colborne (writing in French in May 1832), “they have always been happy to move in order to conserve their beautiful title of British subject.”⁵⁰

The MNO Report relies on earlier work by Reimer.⁵¹ To Marchand and Reimer, such petitioning represents a clear marker for identifying Métis distinctiveness. In discussing the May 1832 petition sent by Drummond Island voyageurs to the British, the OMNR Praxis report indicates that it included “names of individuals who are known to be métis.”⁵² They reference Charles Langlade and other French-Canadian and Scotch/British men married to First Nations or “métis” women as “Métis” (such as George Gordon). There is thus no consistency in their identification of the petitioners nor is there any indication that they are advancing a distinctive Métis identity in their petitions. In October 1832, a petition it sent to Major Winniot at York from Drummond Islanders requesting land grants at Penetanguishene. While Marchand identifies the petitioners as “known to be Métis, French married to Indian or métis, and Brits/Scots married to Indian or métis,”⁵³ in the document itself petitioners refer to themselves as “the Canadian Inhabitants of Penetanguishene, lately from Drummond Island.”⁵⁴ Outside observers, such as an officer stationed there, wrote in 1836 that they are “French Canadian.” This seems consistent with their identification of themselves as *Canadian*. The following year another petition was sent with twenty-five signatures demanding support and including a similarly heterogeneous composition. Marchand writes that the petitions “would seem indicative of Métis self-identification.”⁵⁵ According to the OMNR Praxis report, the first of these had no names attached to it⁵⁶ – and as such the meaning of “Canadian Inhabitants” is unknown, but we can fairly say that they elected not to call themselves Métis, because they did not see themselves as Métis. We

⁴⁷ Marchand 2006, 48.

⁴⁸ Marchand 2006, 49.

⁴⁹ Marchand 2006, 50.

⁵⁰ Marchand 2006, 50.

⁵¹ Reimer 2004, 581.

⁵² Reimer and Chartrand 2000, 98.

⁵³ Marchand 2006, 51.

⁵⁴ Reimer and Chartrand 2000, 98.

⁵⁵ Marchand 2006, 53.

⁵⁶ Reimer and Chartrand, 2000, 98.

must question Marchand's much firmer assertion that it "*would seem* indicative" of Métis self-identification.

Instead, the petitioners themselves appear to take issue with their treatment as British subjects rather than marginalized Métis people. They seek the betterment of their condition as loyal British subjects, not as a distinctive Métis population indigenous to Penetanguishene. While they may have suffered from an inability to meet the terms required for converting their lots into fee simple lands ("clearing and working" the land as necessary), this is an issue that is distinct from their mistreatment arising from a collective Métis identity.

Besides these two petitions in 1832, the 1840 petition from voyageurs at Penetanguishene is the core document propping up claims to a *distinctive* Métis identity there. A petition dated January 27, 1840, was sent to the Governor-General on behalf of "the ... half breeds residing in Town of Penetanguishene" stating that they did "not share in any advantage from presents issued to the 'Indians' from nearby communities." It is from this passage that the MNO Report is largely basing its case for a sense of self-ascription as *half-breed*. According to the Report, local First Nations recognized *half-breeds* as having entitlement to presents and saw them as distinct from themselves in the area. Such recognition did not necessarily mean that *half-breeds* necessarily saw themselves as always separate and apart from First Nations, as the Report itself points out that many *half-breeds* (who Marchand relabels Métis) moved to the Cape Crocker First Nation reserve. In fact, Lawrence A. Keeshig writes that younger "French half-breeds from the north shore" along with a couple of "Scotch half-breeds" were "adopted into the band."⁵⁷

In response to the claim that the 1840 petition marks a distinctive "Métis identity," it's worth mentioning that the petition was not a claim for *land*. Even at a time of heightened anxiety over continual treaty-making and settler encroachment, the petition was for the extension of *presents*, a common practice that the French and British engaged in as a matter of honouring First Nations diplomatic protocols of *gifting* and *exchange*. Some plots of land had already been made available to them as Loyalist *settlers*. A number of the petitioners had worked for the British Indian Department and were involved in administering gifts to First Nations both prior to their arrival at Penetanguishene and upon their arrival. It appears that when they realized that some local *half-breeds* were in receipt of presents as well, they asserted their claim as such. The fact that they did *not* make a petition for land as Indigenous people, could be read as giving some indication that they were aware of their tenuous relationship to the land – that it was not *really* their homeland and that they themselves were settlers encroaching on the territories of local First Nations and that they did not have the right to exercise "Indian title" to the land.

While this reading is speculative on our part, the lack of a claim on land in the petition leads us to question whether they saw themselves as a people distinct *to* such land or as British loyalists making a claim on the British for equal treatment. It's also worth noting

⁵⁷ Qtd. in Marchand 2006, 72.

that while different First Nations at the time were asking for treaties (in the wake of the Toronto Purchase and other Williams Treaties with the Mississauga further south), the Canadian *half-breed* petitioners at Penetanguishene sought presents. MNO states that the petition is evidence that they were asserting “rights,” but there is no clear claim to any kind of distinctive right to anything other than presents being asserted in the 1840 petition – and prior petitions *do not* appeal for land on the basis of Indianness, *half-breedness*, or Métisness, and again it’s not clear if this arises from their desire for equal treatment or a sense of rights as distinctive people. It may also have been that they derived a sense of entitlement from their long-standing loyalty and civil and military service to the British. According to Marchand, *half-breeds* were given a choice if they wanted a treaty – to either “be Indian or not” – but she does not corroborate this statement. Further, in the earlier petitions there is no *explicit* reference by the people of Penetanguishene to themselves as *half-breed*, so with the 1840 petition it’s not clear whether the shift to the language of *half-breed* as a form of “Indian identification” is a strategy to obtain *something* (in this case, presents), which they clearly indicate in the petition “derive[s] from the issue of Indian presents to them and their families” - by this they mean that because *half-breeds* at Sault Ste. Marie receive presents from the British as First Nations do, so, too, should they be given presents. This shift to “Indian identification” may very well have been a strategy following numerous unsuccessful petitions and appeals to the British as loyalists who struggled to adapt in Penetanguishene. As many found it difficult to clear the land and meet homesteading requirements, they suffered from impoverishment and their previous petitions as Canadians were largely ignored by the British.

It’s possible that they did not know that half-breeds could access presents and their consciousness emerged in relation to their “coming to know” that presents had been extended to *half-breeds* in the Sault, but it’s impossible to make such an assertion in the absence of historical evidence to that fact. Further, none of this demonstrates a clear and present *Métis* identity. Despite the MNO Report’s claims to the contrary, there is no evidence of Métis self-identification in petitions prior to 1840, and 1840 likewise raises more questions than provides answers.

3.5. Presence of Métis Ancestors in MNO Documentation

Two of the twenty VMFL identified by the MNO have any known connections to the Métis Homeland: the Dusome-Clermont VMFL and the Brissette-L’Hirondelle VFML.

In the first case, Archange l’Hirondelle was born around 1815 in the Northwest Territories at Lesser Slave Lake (in present-day Alberta). Archange and her husband, Hyppolite Brissette, left for Ontario (Georgian Bay) in 1838, where they and all of their immediate descendants remained. In the second case, François Dusome (a.k.a. François Xavier Jussiaume) married a First Nation woman (likely Saulteaux) named Françoise Clermont at the Red River Settlement around 1822. Their two oldest children – François and Andrew – were born at Red River before the family moved to Penetanguishene by 1833. None of their immediate descendants are known to have moved back west.

4. Historic Abitibi-Inland Métis Community

The MNO and Government of Ontario's recognition of the "Historic Abitibi-Inland Métis Community" is similar to Killarney, in that it doesn't appear to have involved any specific historical report. Instead, we are presented with the jointly published Historic Metis Communities of Ontario Summary on Abitibi-Inland in 2016, followed by thirteen Verified Métis Family Lines published by the MNO in 2017. As such, the MNO's recognition of Abitibi-Inland presents many of the same problems as Killarney.

In this case, the "Métis Community," as defined by the MNO, includes a number of places that were, and still are, well-established First Nations communities. By claiming that Cree communities such as Moose Factory, Attawapiskat, Albany (home today to Fort Albany First Nation and Kashechewan First Nation), Eastmain, and Chapleau are in the broader "Métis Community," the MNO appears to erase the specific history of these communities, and especially, of the Cree presence in the region in question. Besides these six Cree communities, the MNO also includes two eventual Anishinaabe First Nations as part and parcel of the "Abitibi-Inland Métis Community": Mattagami First Nation (a primarily Anishinaabe community today with some Oji-Cree citizens) near Gogama, Ontario and the Timiskaming First Nation (an Algonquin community north of Mattawa) near Notre-Dame-du-Nord, Québec.

Notably, in the Abitibi-Inland case, as with Mattawa/Ottawa River, the MNO's geographical definition of the "Métis Community" stretches across the Ontario/Québec border, as both Eastmain (Cree Nation of Eastmain) and Notre-Dame-du-Nord (Timiskaming First Nation) are in the province of Québec. Overall, there appears to be no logic for the MNO's geographic definition of the "Métis Community." It stretches nearly 500 kilometres across the entirety of the southern James Bay shoreline from Attawapiskat to Eastmain. In addition, from Attawapiskat south to Cochrane is an additional 450 kilometres down the western boundary of the "Métis Community" and from Eastmain down to Notre-Dame-du-Nord is about 800 kilometres on its eastern flank. Besides the remarkable size of the MNO's new community (we estimate it to be in excess of 100,000 square kilometres or nearly double the size of Nova Scotia), it's part of two quite distinct watersheds (James Bay/Hudson Bay and Ottawa River/St-Lawrence River) that are home to two separate Indigenous peoples. At no point in any of its documentation does the MNO ever explain the reasoning for its creation of such an expansive "community" and/or what ties it together.

4.1. Lack of Clearly-Defined Community

We've previously established that the MNO's creation of the "Historic Abitibi-Inland Métis Community" follows no clear geographical logic. Similarly, many of the families that it identifies as the basis of said "community" aren't connected to any other family. For instance, in its discussion of the Dallaire-Okimaminew VMFL, the Moore-Beads VMFL, the Mecowatch-Puskewiatch VMFL, and the McLeod-Moore VMFL, the MNO admits that, "Research to date has not identified any connections with other Verified Métis Family Lines." Those four families combine for about a third of the overall Abitibi-Inland "root ancestors." These same families all appear to have been Cree prior to Effective Control, despite the MNO's efforts to suggest otherwise. Following the pattern that we identified previously, it's likely that many, if not most of their descendants today

are “status Indians” at a number of Cree First Nations in the James Bay watershed. Some would also be non-status, depending on whether their root ancestor was a woman dispossessed by the *Indian Act* or not. We examine such cases more closely in the next section.

Besides these four Cree families with no known kinship relations with any other Abitibi-Inland VMFL, two sets of other families – the Fraser-MacDonald VMFL and the Hunter-MacDonald VMFL and the Linklater-Potts VMFL and the Udgarden-Moar VMFL – each share one “kinship” connection between them in the form of witnessing a marriage. A fifth family – the Vincent-Renton VMFL – also has one documented “kinship” connection with another VMFL, when a grandson witnessed a marriage from a non-Abitibi-Inland VMFL in a territory thousands of kilometres west of the so-called “Métis Community.” A sixth family – the Favell-Titameg VMFL – had a great-great-grandson who married a descendant of a non-Abitibi-Inland VMFL. In other words, of the thirteen MNO Verified Métis Family Lines for the “Historic Abitibi-Inland Métis Community,” ten (or 77%) have no actual kinship relations with any other Abitibi-Inland VMFL.

Of the three remaining VMFLs, the Neveu VMFL and the Atkinson-Moore VMFL each feature one descendant who married a descendant in the Polson VMFL.

To recap, according to the MNO, what ties together the entire “Historic Abitibi-Inland Métis Community” in a massive, undefined territory about double the size of Nova Scotia are two marriages between individuals (in 1899 and 1903), who as we will see, were likely identified as Anishinaabe at the time. There are absolutely no kinship relations among any of the Cree-identified “root ancestors” at the basis of the “Historic Community.”

4.2. Cree and Anishinaabeg Individuals Become “Métis” Ancestors

Similar to the cases of the “Historic Communities” we’ve examined so far, the recognition of the Abitibi-Inland community relies extensively on changing the identities of First Nation individuals in the past, in this case, Cree, Anishinaabeg, and Algonquins.

For example, let’s examine the Dallaire-Okimaminew VMFL more closely. Joseph Herménégilde Jean-Baptiste Zacharie Dallaire and Margaret Okimawinew were married in Moosonee on James Bay in 1909. While Dallaire’s identity varies between “French” and “French Cree” in the historical record, Okimawinew is consistently listed as Cree from Attawapiskat (her father John was from Attawapiskat and her mother Julienne Sharkikamikashish was from Albany). Their first daughter, Louise, was enumerated as “French half-breed” in the 1911 census for Attawapiskat, and their two younger daughters, Marie Elizabeth and Marie Thérèse, were enumerated as “Métis Cree” in Attawapiskat in 1921. Sometime later, Margaret, Joseph, and their daughters first appear in Mattice, a small French-Canadian hamlet east of Hearst, founded by Québécois settlers in the 1920s. Their middle daughter, Marie Elizabeth, died while living in Mattice in 1934, as did Margaret in 1943 and Louise in 2002. While we can’t say with certainty what led the Dallaire-Okimawinew family to leave Attawapiskat, it’s

possible that Margaret eventually lost her status after marrying out. Whatever the case, the MNO categorizes the family as “Métis” for the simple reason that Margaret’s daughters are identified as mixed-race in the 1921 census in Attawapiskat, a well-known historical Cree community. Had Margaret actually lost her Indian status at any time due to discrimination in the *Indian Act*, then under Bill S-3 (adopted by Parliament and then revised by Cabinet in 2019) all of her current living descendants would be eligible to be registered as “status Indians” today. In this case, it seems that the MNO mis-identifies a mixed-race Cree family as “Métis” for the purpose of creating and recognizing new “Historic Métis” communities in Ontario.

Another similar case occurs with the Polson VMFL, an Algonquin family that continues to live as Algonquin throughout Algonquin territory. William Polson (parents were Hudson’s Bay Company surgeon William Paulson and an unnamed Indigenous woman) was born in Rupert’s Land around 1785. Polson married Flora L’Évêque dit Otcimakwe, born in Algonquin territory around 1795. They had six known children born between 1825 and 1841 and documented throughout their lives in Algonquin territory near the northern shore of Lake Temiskaming (at today’s Timiskaming First Nation). Their children Elizabeth Flora and John are enumerated in a number of different ways during their lives. For instance, Elizabeth is identified as “Indian” in the 1871 Census and “Métis écossais” (under colour) and “Occhipewa” (under race) in the 1901 Census. John was also identified as “Indian” in 1871 and as “Algonquin” in the 1911 Census. Moving forward, several of the great-grandchildren of the root ancestors are listed as “Chippewa Other Breed” in the 1901 Census, while several great-great-grandchildren (four generations away from William and Flora), some in the same branch, are identified as “Indian” in the 1921 Census.

After reviewing the MNO’s evidence from census reports, it’s clear that enumerators are confused about how to identify the Polson family. Identifiers are frequently crossed out and written over for reasons that are unknown to contemporary readers. Without a doubt, the Polson family features a diverse group of Algonquin, Cree, Scottish, Irish, and French ancestors. Yet, the fact is that many of the specific descendants listed in the MNO’s Polson VFML Assessment Document were enumerated on the Timiskaming First Nation and were active members of that community. For instance, a great deal has been written about Angus McBride and Elizabeth Flora Polson (see above), the root ancestors’ daughter.⁵⁸ Angus’s father was Irish and his mother Algonquin. Elizabeth and Angus are recognized today as one of the first families to live on the Timiskaming First Nation (TFN), one of two Algonquin reserves created in 1854.⁵⁹ They had a small farm on the reserve;⁶⁰ the census enumerator indicated that, “the Indians and their mixed-race children are farming well” in a note next to their entry in the 1881 census. McBride and Polson had twelve known children between 1846 and 1873. Several of the McBride children, including several listed in the MNO VMFL document, marry fellow Algonquin individuals, including Angus Jr. who married Françoise Kistabish at the TFN in 1902. Descendants of the original McBride-Polson couple in TFN continue to live well into the

⁵⁸ Riopel 2002.

⁵⁹ Mitchell 1977, 14

⁶⁰ Riopel 2002.

twenty-first century, including TFN Chief Terence McBride and former Grand Chief of the Algonquin Nation Secretariat, Carol McBride.

Through it all, what's clear is that hundreds of Polson family descendants, including dozens who carry the McBride family name, continue to live in Algonquin First Nations today. Jacques Frénette, who was commissioned to write a genealogical report for both the Kebaowek First Nation and Long Point First Nation (Winneway) in the 1990s, concluded that Algonquin descendants of the Polson family “live in most Algonquin First Nations.”⁶¹ In fact, the current Grand Chief of the Algonquin-Anishinabeg Nation, Verna Polson, is a descendant of the MNO's Polson VMFL. Again, the MNO mis-identifies a historic First Nation family, in this case an Algonquin family, as a “Métis” root ancestor family for its purposes.

4.3 Presence of Métis Ancestors in MNO Documentation

Two of the thirteen MNO VMFL for the “Abitibi-Inland Historic Métis Community” have a direct connection to the Métis Homeland (Vincent-Renton and Favell-Titameg).

Jane Renton (b. around 1782) had six known children with HBC employee and Englishman Thomas Vincent between 1796 and 1810. Two of Jane and Thomas's children (Elizabeth and John) retired with their spouses to the Red River Settlement in 1829 and 1840, respectively. Overall, at least seventeen of Elizabeth and John's children were baptized at Red River between 1830 and 1847. All appear to have been listed as “half breeds” in a range of church documents or scrip applications. It appears that most of these children would later receive Métis Scrip in Manitoba, as they largely married into Métis families. .

Mary Favell was one of four mixed-race children of HBC employee John Favell and an Indigenous woman (likely Cree) known as Titameg, who lived their lives out together at Fort Albany on James Bay. Mary married John McKay around 1791 at Fort Albany. Their son, John Richards McKay, was born at Albany Factory in 1792. By 1808, he entered the service of the HBC in Winnipeg. He married at least two Métis women in Manitoba during his lifetime. In 1877, John received Métis Scrip in Winnipeg. John's brother, William McKay, also moved west to Manitoba. His daughter Elizabeth McKay received Métis Scrip in Winnipeg in 1876.

Neither of the two specific ancestors with connections to the Métis Homeland had any kinship relations with any of the other Verified Métis Family Lines in the “Historic Abitibi-Inland Métis Community,” nor do their descendants return east according to MNO documentation.

5. Historic Rainy Lake/Lake of the Woods Métis Community

The Rainy River District is of particular interest since Fort Frances was the point of no return – it was the furthest west voyageurs bringing goods from Montréal could go and still make it back to Montréal before the freeze. As such, it was also the rendezvous point for voyageurs bringing furs from the Northwest Territories. However, while this meant

⁶¹ Frénette 1999, 17.

it would have been the site of quite a bit of activity, this would normally have been for relatively brief periods of time, which does not necessarily indicate the presence of a large settlement.

It is also of particular interest due to the Half-Breed Adhesion to Treaty #3 that was negotiated in 1875 and resulted in the creation of a Half-Breed Reserve, which is part of the present-day Couchiching First Nation. The following analysis of the existence of historic Métis communities in the Rainy River District examines four key documents:

- Praxis Research, Final Report, Historic Métis in the Rainy River and Kenora Districts of Ontario: Fishing Practices and Off-Reserve Residence. 2002.
- Gwen Reimer and Jean-Philippe Chartrand, Praxis Research, *Historic Métis in Ontario: Rainy River District and Kenora District*. 1999.
- Gwynneth C.D. Jones. *Historic Report. Métis Involvement in Commercial Fishing. Rainy Lake/Rainy River Region*. 2001.
- Justice Canada. Key Documents for Historical Profile of the Lake of the Woods Area's Mixed European-Indian or Mixed European-Inuit Ancestry Community. 2005.

In addition, we cross-referenced several other documents. One of the authors of the Praxis Research Report, Victor Lytwyn, published a book chapter on Nicholas Chatelain,⁶² the root ancestor at the basis of one of the MNO's VMFLs for the region. Sara Mainville, a former Chief of Couchiching First Nation, also wrote a LL.M. thesis in 2007 entitled "Manidoo Mazina'igan: An Anishinaabe Perspective of Treaty 3." She is notably a descendant of Nicholas Chatelaine, who eventually settled on the Half-Breed Reserve. A field report written by Wendy Moss in 1979 entitled "Metis Adhesion to Treaty No. 3" and which is cited in some of the other reports proved to also contain valuable information.

One thing that all the reports agree on is the dearth of archival material on the topic. For this reason, one has to be extremely cautious about drawing any hard and fast conclusions about the existence, or the inexistence, of a Métis community in the Rainy River District. As there is more abundant evidence for the Rainy River District than the Kenora District, this report will emphasize the former.

One of the difficulties with the reports is the use of inconsistent terminology. The use of the term "Métis" or "métis" is problematic in almost all of these reports. Reimer and Chartrand use the term "metis" throughout their report. Its meaning is ambiguous as they also use the lower case "m" when speaking of "Red River métis."⁶³ They acknowledge that the use of the term "half-breed" does not appear in Lac la Pluie (Rainy Lake) journals until 1817–18⁶⁴ – in other words, *after* the Battle of Seven Oaks. They claim that prior to this, the term *Canadien* was used. It is true that the term is ambiguous – an individual called *Canadien* may or may not have been mixed ancestry.

⁶² Lytwyn 2012.

⁶³ Reimer and Chartrand 1999, 8.

⁶⁴ Reimer and Chartrand 1999, 24.

But more astonishing is that they note that the first use of “half-breed” was when one Donald McPherson used it “in relation to his search for a good interpreter, an occupation commonly held by métis.”⁶⁵ McPherson stated that he had “three half Breeds *but none of them are capable to interpret three words* with those Indians to perfection, and indeed what they understand they are too bashful to speak.”⁶⁶ So much for these particular “half-breeds” occupying the “common métis” occupation of interpreter!

They also explain that, “the only mention of métis is [to refer to] the presence of two métis missionaries, Peter Jacobs (Pate-tah-se-gay) and Henry Steinham.”⁶⁷ It is well known that Peter Jacobs was a member of the Credit Band of Mississaugas and Henry Steinham was apparently “a member of the same tribe.”⁶⁸ Reimer and Chartrand also note that only “one instance of the term *brulé* was found” in the archives.⁶⁹

In their 2002 report, Reimer and Chartrand are much more cautious, preferring to use the terms that are actually found in the historical record. They do however revert to using the term “métis” as they did in their initial report without first making a case for it. In her 2001 report, Jones also prejudices her findings by immediately using the expression “Rainy Lake/Rainy River Métis”⁷⁰ and consistently does through throughout her study, even when speaking of what are arguably Ojibwe of mixed ancestry.

Moss’ report is problematic in that she systematically replaces the term “half-breed” with “Métis.” For example, she mentions that during treaty payments for Treaties #1 and #2, “Commissioner Simpson discovered a number of Metis living with the Indians *and calling themselves Indians.*”⁷¹ Here we have a classic case where the author outright ignores self-descriptors and imposes her own view on historical identities.

A common narrative device in these reports is to try to claim that ethnogenesis in the region parallels that at Red River. For example, Reimer and Chartrand hint at what could have been a reproduction of what occurred in the Red River Settlement:

By 1817, Rainy Lake was targeted by the NWC as the favoured location for a settlement where retired servants and their native families could establish permanent homes, farms, industry, and schools, a plan with an apparent long-term goal of self-sufficiency [...] However, *this plan was never fully realized* due to the bitter trade struggles between the NWC and the HBC, and the subsequent amalgamation [of the NWC] into the HBC in 1821.⁷²

⁶⁵ Reimer and Chartrand 1999, 24.

⁶⁶ Qtd. in Reimer and Chartrand 1999, 24, emphasis ours.

⁶⁷ Reimer and Chartrand 1999, 24 n10. Moss also refers to these two Anishinaabeg as “Metis.” See also Moss 1979, 16.

⁶⁸ Nute 1950, 35.

⁶⁹ Reimer and Chartrand 1999, 25.

⁷⁰ Jones 2001, 2.

⁷¹ Moss 1979, 10, emphasis ours.

⁷² Reimer and Chartrand 1999, 27, emphasis ours.

Ultimately, however, Reimer and Chartrand arrive at the conclusion that “the evidence of the development of distinctive self-identity possessed by métis in the Rainy Lake District is indirect and vague” and relies heavily on the Half-Breed Adhesion to Treaty 3 to find “a strong sense of distinctiveness and community had emerged among at least one group of métis under the leadership of Nicholas Chatelaine.”⁷³ It is problematic, however, to assume that these “half-breeds” were “Métis” rather than Ojibwe of mixed ancestry.

5.1. The Period of Effective Control

A first matter to consider is an estimation of the period of Effective Control. While none of the reports explicitly address this, it can be estimated to be in the period from 1873 to 1890. According to Reimer and Chartrand, beginning in the “1870s to early 1880s, the lumber industry and railroad construction brought immigrant settlers of a broad range of ethnic origins into the Kenora and Rainy river [sic] districts.”⁷⁴ The first steamer on Rainy River and Rainy Lake, the Louise Thompson, was put into service in 1875. Reimer and Chartrand explain that, “at its peak, an estimated 21 steamboats travelled between Fort Frances and Kenora.”⁷⁵ The railway between Winnipeg and Thunder Bay, which passed through Rat Portage, was completed in 1882. By 1890, there were two sawmills in operation at Rat Portage and several others were operating elsewhere on Lake of the Woods and on Rainy River. The importance of these changes is that while it is true that many Métis did move into the area from Manitoba, they arguably did so *after* Effective Control. This does not necessarily mean their descendants would not have s. 35 rights in the area. That would depend on whether they married into an already existing historic Métis community in Fort Frances.

Based on the evidence in the reports, there was undoubtedly a population of mixed-ancestry individuals who settled in the vicinity of the fort. However, as Reimer and Chartrand point out, “these were fur-trade communities, as opposed to métis communities, despite the fact that the majority of the population may have been métis. *No evidence has been found to indicate that these settlements were ever characterized as métis, or if they were, at what point this may have occurred.*”⁷⁶

5.2. The Adhesion of Half-Breeds to Treaty #3

There does seem to be some indication that some mixed-ancestry individuals had a distinct identity, although it’s hard to tell whether it was a Métis identity or simply as a distinct Indian band. It is interesting that Nicholas Chatelaine refers to them in 1876 as “French Halfbreeds.”⁷⁷

In her LL.M. thesis, Sara Mainville wrote that Nicholas Chatelaine is her maternal great-great grandfather. He had at least four children, one of whom was Mainville’s great-grandmother, Mary Chatelaine or San-que-wik-amik.⁷⁸ She also comments that she is “a

⁷³ Reimer and Chartrand 1999, 37.

⁷⁴ Reimer and Chartrand 2002, 12.

⁷⁵ Reimer and Chartrand 2002, 60.

⁷⁶ Reimer and Chartrand 1999, vi, emphasis ours.

⁷⁷ Cited in Moss 1979, 26.

⁷⁸ Mainville 2007, 8.

bit conflicted when I read reports that ‘Métis’ were given Treaty rights through my treaty. My understanding is that the families allowed into treaty were already assimilated into *Anishinaabeg* society. Although my great-great grandfather had a French father, he raised his daughters to be *Anishinaabe’kwe*.⁷⁹ Mainville also provides several examples of intermarriage with other bands. Her Jourdain ancestors may have come from Minnesota and one of her great-grandfather’s sons, Patrick Jourdain, moved to Lac la Croix and married Mary. While it is anecdotal, a personal friend who is a Jourdain from Couchiching, told me that she has 106 cousins just on her father's side who come from various reserves in Treaty #3 territory. She grew up in Couchiching, where her father was from, but her paternal grandmother was from *Nigigoonsiminikaaning* (Red Gut) and her mother is from *Niisaachewan* (Dalles).

It is true that the “half-breed” families initially asked to be recognized as a separate and distinct band from Little Eagle’s band. However, according to Moss “between the years 1877 and 1885, the Metis demands for separate recognition disappear,”⁸⁰ and that, “the last reference to the issue of the petitioners retaining their Metis identity” is in a note written by John A. Macdonald in 1885.⁸¹ However, Moss herself admits in her paper that the Half-Breed request “indicates their wish to have their own reserve and Chief but does not reflect their desire to retain a Metis identity.”⁸² Finally, Moss states that as “of 1892, the Metis seem to have completely abandoned any effort to regain status as a separate Half Breed band and instead adopted the government line that they belonged to Little Eagle’s Band [today’s Couchiching First Nation].”⁸³ It’s not clear, however, whether they identified as a distinct Ojibwe band or as a Métis community.

While it’s not certain when the families of the Half-Breed Adhesion became status Indians, this may have happened as early as the adoption of the *Indian Act* in 1876. Although they did express the desire to form a distinct band until 1892, the federal government always saw them as members of Little Eagle’s band. It’s important to recall that the Métis National Council adopted the following definition of “Métis” in 2002: “Métis’ means a person who *self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry* and who is accepted by the Métis Nation.” Given that they are status Indians and therefore not distinct from other Aboriginal peoples (Ojibwe), it seems pointless to consider the descendants of the Half-Breed Adhesion as “Métis.”

In the 2016 Census of Canada, among the 730 members of the Couchiching First Nation who self-identified as Aboriginal, not a single individual among the on-reserve population self-identified as “Metis single ancestry.” Although ten individuals mention Métis ancestry, they are probably the same ten individuals who indicated Métis and First Nations ancestry. Given the definition of Métis as mixed, it’s hard to know whether

⁷⁹ Mainville 2007, 9, emphasis in original.

⁸⁰ Moss 1979, 29.

⁸¹ Moss 1979, 30.

⁸² Moss 1979, 23.

⁸³ Moss 1979, 31.

this is simply acknowledging an Ojibwe ancestor of mixed ancestry or an ancestor from a historic Métis community. It's difficult to know how off-reserve members self-identify.

Even if all or some of the families who were included in the Half-Breed Adhesion were members of the Métis Nation, the 128 years that they have considered themselves “Indians” (from *at latest* 1892 to 2016) is 50 years longer than the 78 years that it took for Métis ethnogenesis. In other words, the data would seem to support Havard's notion of “reversion” to a First Nations (Ojibwe) identity. It's likely that under Bill S-3 (adopted by Parliament and then revised by Cabinet in 2019), many members of the Sunset Country Métis local in Fort Frances would now be able to claim Indian status if they descended from First Nations women who lost their status through marriage with non-status men after 1869.

Eventually, the two “half-breed reserves” were amalgamated with the Couchiching “Indian reserve” in 1967. Since the descendants of the half-breed adhesion were more numerous than the descendants of the Little Eagle band, this was not an “Indian” takeover of a “half-breed” reserve – in fact, it was the opposite.

When the federal government paid annuities for a right-of-way through Treaty #3 territory in 1871, they created a list for a separate group of “Halfbreeds of Fort Frances.” Forty-nine individuals from nine families were on the list – five seem to be from the Jourdain family and the other four were Mainville, Morriseau, Linklater, and Ritchot. While it may be true, as Reimer and Chartrand have argued, that this is an indication that “there already existed a distinct and to some extent recognized métis group at Fort Frances,”⁸⁴ one must keep in mind that five families with forty-nine individuals is nowhere near the scale of the 10,000 Métis in Red River at the time.

Reimer and Chartrand point out that Robert Pither, former HBC chief trader in Fort Frances, wrote on February 28, 1877, that the “Half Breeds of Fort Frances who have not taken pay as Indians are Nicholas Chatellain [sic], Louis Chatellain, John Linklater, Wife [sic] and six children. There are other Half Breeds here *but they belong to Red River or Winnipeg* and are entitled to Land in that Vicinity.”⁸⁵ As we have seen, Nicholas Chatelaine was a first generation mixed-blood. It's uncertain who his son's mother was, but in any event the “Half-Breeds of Fort Frances” only included ten individuals at that time. While there were other “half-breeds,” they are Métis from Manitoba who arguably arrived after Effective Control.

Who was considered Indian at the moment of the signing of the Half-Breed Adhesion is to be found in s. 15 of *An Act Providing for the Organisation of the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada, and for the management of Indian and Ordinance Lands*, S.C. 1868, c.42 (31 Vict.)

15. For the purpose of determining what persons are entitled to hold, use or enjoy the lands and other immovable property belonging to or appropriated to the use of

⁸⁴ Reimer and Chartrand 1999, 38, emphasis ours.

⁸⁵ Qtd. in Reimer and Chartrand 1999, 43. See also Jones 2001, 22.

the various tribes, bands or bodies of Indians in Canada, the following persons and classes of persons, and none other, shall be considered as Indians belonging to the tribe, band or body of Indians interested in any such lands or immoveable property:

Firstly. All persons of Indian blood, reputed to belong to the particular tribe, band or body of Indians interested in such lands or immoveable property, and their descendants;

Secondly. All persons residing among such Indians, whose parents were or are, or either of them was or is, descended on either side from Indians or an Indian reputed to belong to the particular tribe, band or body of Indians interested in such lands or immoveable property, and the descendants of all such persons; And

*Thirdly. All women lawfully married to any of the persons included in the several classes hereinbefore designated; the children issue of such marriages, and their descendants.*⁸⁶

There are several points to be made here. The expression “of Indian blood” in the first clause indicates that a person does not have to be a “full-blood,” but rather, they do have to be “reputed to belong to the particular [...] band.” With regard to the families who were part of the Half-Breed Adhesion, they were “of Indian blood” and “reputed to belong” to Little Eagle’s band. Furthermore, their mixed-ancestry descendants would inherit their parents’ status.

With regard to the second clause, when Chief Mikiesies (*Migiziins* or or “little bald eagle”) asked for the inclusion of certain “half-breeds” during the negotiations for Treaty #3, it was limited to “those that have been born of our women of Indian blood. [...] It is the Half-Breeds that are *actually living amongst us* – those that *are married to our women.*”⁸⁷ In his report, Lieutenant Governor Alexander Morris mentions that “there were some ten to twenty families of half-breeds *who were recognized as Indians and lived with them*, and they wished them included.”⁸⁸ Ogimaa Migiziins’ (Chief Little Eagle) definition of “half-breed” matched that of the settler colonial definition of “Indian” – it was not simply anyone of mixed ancestry, but those “descended on either side from [...] an Indian reputed to belong to the [...] band” (“those that have been born of our women of Indian blood”), who were “residing among such Indians” (“actually living amongst us”) and married to a female member of their band.⁸⁹

The third clause implies that even women of European descent who married a status man would be considered a status Indian in the eyes of the law, as would her mixed-ancestry children.

Section 15 was subsequently amended in s. 6 of the *Gradual Enfranchisement Act, 1869*.

⁸⁶ Emphasis ours.

⁸⁷ Morris 1991 [1880], 69, emphasis ours.

⁸⁸ Morris 1991, 50, emphasis ours.

⁸⁹ Morris 1991, 69.

6. The fifteenth section of the thirty-first Victoria, Chapter forty-two, is amended by adding to it the following proviso:

“Provided always that any Indian woman marrying any other than an Indian, shall cease to be an Indian within the meaning of this Act, nor shall the children issue of such marriage be considered as Indians within the meaning of this Act; Provided also, that any Indian woman marrying an Indian of any other tribe, band or body shall cease to be a member of the tribe, band or body to which she formerly belonged, and become a member the tribe, band or body of which her husband is a member and the children, issue of this marriage, shall belong to the father’s tribe only.”

At the time of the signing of the Half-Breed Adhesion, the children of any status woman who had married a man with European ancestry would have been considered a “half-breed.” Whether or not individuals of mixed ancestry were considered as being “Indian” or “White” seems to depend on their lifestyle.

This amendment was added six months after the Adhesion was signed, but before the Half-Breed reserve was surveyed. It’s important to consider the fact that, legally speaking, the term “half-breed” did not distinguish between Métis and First Nations individuals with mixed ancestry at this time. When they excluded “half-breeds” from treaty, it most notably impacted the children of women with Indian status who married a man without status and thereby lost her status. Even if she married a Native American from the US, the latter would not qualify as a status Indian in Canada. In the eyes of the Canadian State, a non-status Indian was considered enfranchised from a legal point of view and had the same rights and obligations as any other British subject. In other words, they were considered to be “white.”

5.3. Non-Treaty Half-Breeds of Fort Frances

Changes in the law may explain the presence of a population with mixed ancestry in McIrvine (see Figure 1). It was a separate township from Fort Frances until 1948, adjacent to the Couchiching reserve (see Figure 2).

In 1901, the census enumerated 300 individuals of mixed ancestry (“half-breeds”) in the immediate region. Seventy percent of them lived either off reserve in McIrvine or on reserve in Couchiching. Reimer and Chartrand also note that what is of

interest here is the number of metis in McIrvine who identify their Aboriginal ancestry as Cree and not Ojibwa. An analysis of birthplaces indicates that many of these mixed-blood Cree families – Calder, Cyr, Locke, Lyons, and McDonald – left Manitoba and moved into the Fort Frances area during the 1880s and 1890s. A total of 14 families living in the Rainy River District show that all or some of their metis family members were born in Manitoba.⁹⁰

In other words, as of 1901, while there does seem to be a concentration of individuals of mixed ancestry in the township of McIrvine, the total numbers are only 98 individuals from 14 families originally from Manitoba.

⁹⁰ Reimer and Chartrand 1999, 48.

Figure 1 – Fort Frances

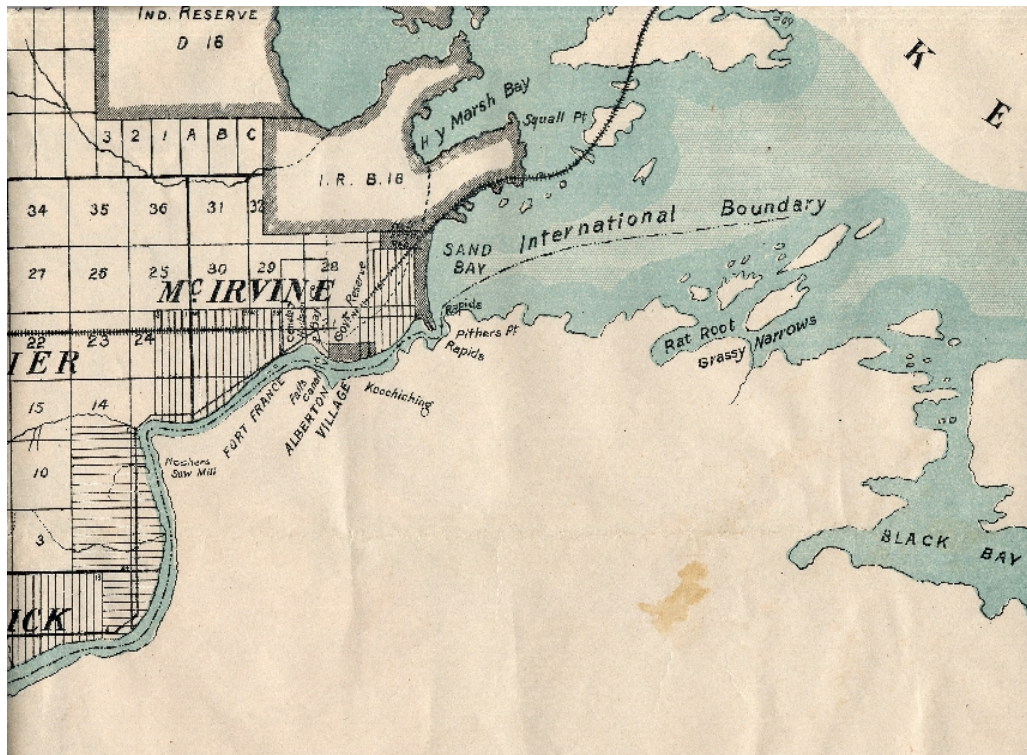
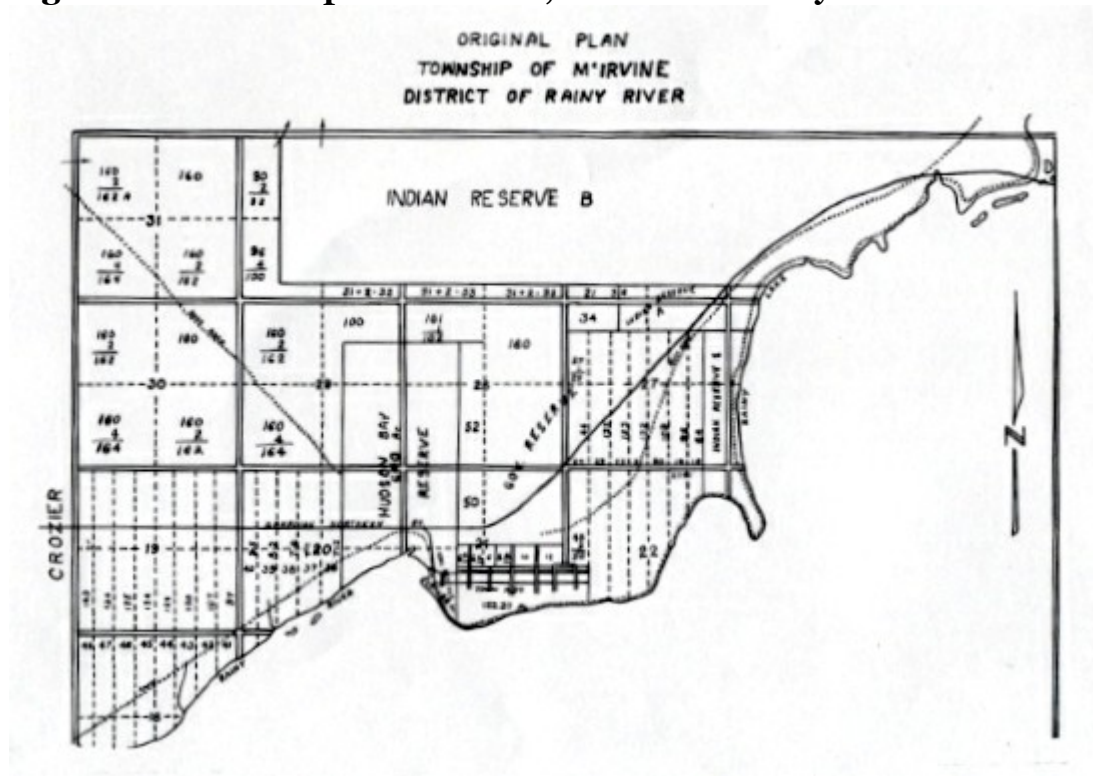


Figure 2 – Township of McIrvine, District of Rainy River



In order to account for the presence of mixed-blood families from Manitoba in McIrvine, Reimer and Chartrand resort to speculating that because the Manitoba/Ontario boundary was uncertain between 1872 and 1879 and was only settled in 1889, then “individuals may have stated Manitoba as their birthplace while actually referring to locations which by 1901 were in Ontario.”⁹¹

It’s not clear why Reimer and Chartrand use the years 1872 and 1879 as reference points. The boundary dispute began as soon as the Dominion annexed Rupert’s Land and the North-West Territories on July 15, 1870 (see Figure 3). The Dominion maintained that the area between the eastern boundary of the postage stamp Province of Manitoba and the western boundary of Ontario were part of the Northwest Territory.

Figure 3 – North-West Territories, July 15, 1870



North-West Territory between Manitoba and Ontario as of July 15, 1870.

On June 26, 1874, Ontario agreed to a provisional western and northern expansion of its boundary, but still disputed the western boundary (see Figure 4).

⁹¹ Reimer and Chartrand 1999, 48.

Figure 4 – Expansion of Ontario, 1876



June 26, 1874: Ontario's borders are provisionally expanded north and west.

On October 7, 1876, the federal Parliament passed legislation to create the District of Keewatin.

Figure 5 – District of Keewatin, 1876



October 7, 1876: The District of Keewatin is created from the North-West Territories, as a region with a higher status than the rest of the NWT to handle the growing population in the area.

Two years later, on August 3, 1878, Ontario won an arbitration award with regard to its western boundary.⁹² Despite this, the federal Parliament passed an Act in 1881 to extend Manitoba's boundary eastward. The Manitoba border was extended in 1881 to the height of land outside of Thunder Bay. It was not until December 23, 1881, that the federal Parliament passed an Act to expand Manitoba's eastern boundary eastward by transferring a section of the District of Keewatin (see Figure 6). It was only at this point that the boundary dispute involved Manitoba. Prior to this, any reference to "Manitoba" was to the original postage-stamp boundaries of 1870.

Figure 6 – Manitoba Expanded, 1881



December 23, 1881: Manitoba is expanded outward into the District of Keewatin and North-West Territories. A dispute arises with Ontario over a large parcel of land.

Soon after, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council rendered a decision in the Ontario Boundaries case.⁹³ Canada referred the matter to the Privy Council at the request of the two provinces by an Order-in-Council dated May 6, 1884 and agreed to be bound by the decision. A decision was rendered by August 11, 1884, which confirmed the Arbitration Award.⁹⁴ When trial court judge, Chancellor Boyd, rendered his decision in the *St. Catharine's Milling and Lumber* case in 1885, the federal government did not argue jurisdiction over the region, but merely that whatever interests the Ojibwe had in

⁹² McNeil 1982, 52–53.

⁹³ The decision was unreported but was included in an Imperial Order in Council on August 11, 1884. McNeil 1982, 9, n40.

⁹⁴ McNeil 1982, 26, n110.

their lands had been transferred to the federal government via Treaty #3. While the decision was not given legislative effect until 1889 in the *Canada (Ontario) Boundary Act*, it's reasonable to assume that government officials would have known as early as 1884 that the region near Fort Frances was in Ontario.

While the criteria for Indian status in the *Indian Act, 1876* are the same as those in the *Gradual Enfranchisement Act, 1869*, it also contains a clause that specifically targeted the Métis of Manitoba to exclude them from its ambit:

s. 3(3)(e) Provided that no half-breed in Manitoba who has shared in the distribution of half-breed lands shall be accounted an Indian; and that no half-breed head of a family (except the widow of an Indian, or half-breed who has already admitted into a treaty), shall, unless under very special circumstances, to be determined by the Superintendent-General or his agent, be accounted an Indian, or entitled to be admitted into any Indian treaty.

If there was any doubt about who was considered a “half-breed from Manitoba,” three years later the federal Parliament passed *An Act to Amend and Consolidate the several Acts respecting the Public Lands of the Dominion, 1879*:

s. 123 The following powers are hereby delegated to the Governor in Governor in Council:

a. To withdraw from the operation of this Act, subject to their existing rights as defined or created under the same, such lands as have been reserved for Indians, or such as may be required to satisfy the half-breed claims created under section thirty-one of the [Manitoba] Act thirty-three Victoria, terms of chapter three; [...]

e. To satisfy any claims existing in connection with the extinguishment of the Indian title, preferred by half-breeds resident in the North-West Territories *outside of the limits of Manitoba, on the fifteenth day of July, one thousand eight hundred and seventy*, by granting land to such persons, to such extent and on such terms and conditions as may be deemed expedient.

It's very clear here that, for the purposes of scrip, “Manitoba half-breeds” were those who were residents of Manitoba such as that province was defined as of July 15, 1870, or the date that the Manitoba Act came into effect. For the purposes of scrip, all other half-breeds were considered to be from the North-West Territories.

Half-Breed scrip was issued to the adult residents of the original postage stamp province in 1874. While legislation did provide for scrip to be issued in the North-West Territories, it defined the latter as “resident in the North-West Territories outside of the limits of Manitoba, on the fifteenth day of July, one thousand eight hundred and seventy.” Métis claims in “Manitoba” were therefore restricted to the original postage stamp province.

If Fort Frances “Half-Breeds” were seen as Half-Breeds of “Manitoba,” it would have been unnecessary to draw a distinction between “Half-Breeds” from Manitoba and those from Fort Frances. The distinction only makes sense if the author was referring to Métis

residents of the original provincial boundaries of Manitoba in 1870. Furthermore, when Pither wrote on February 28, 1877, that there “are other Half Breeds here *but they belong to Red River or Winnipeg* and are entitled to Land in that Vicinity,”⁹⁵ he is clearly not mistaking half-breeds of Fort Frances with Manitoba Métis due to the boundary dispute, all the more so in that it explicitly mentions “Red River or Winnipeg.”

5.4. Presence of Métis Ancestors in MNO Documentation

There are definitely references to what undoubtedly are families of mixed ancestry during the fur trade period in the region. The problem is that it’s rare that names are provided. This makes it impossible to trace the present-day “half-breed” population in Fort Frances and Couchiching to pre-Effective Control fur trade families.

While selected “Lists of Servants” working for the HBC show a continuity of family names from 1838–1870,⁹⁶ all of them (Chastelain, Guimon, Mainville, Jourdain, Bruyère, and Morriseau) seem to be families who were part of the Half-Breed Adhesion to Treaty No 3.

Moreover, independent research conducted by Gail Morin for this report confirms that at least eight of the fifteen MNO Verified Métis Family Lines for the “Historic Rainy Lake/Lake of the Woods Métis Community” were Métis from Manitoba who migrated east to the Rainy Lake region after Effective Control. They are the Begg-Spence, Calder-Gibson, Finlayson-Davies, Harrison-St.Matte, Linklater-Muskego, Loutit, Sinclair-Swain, and Peebles VMFLs. More research is needed to confirm the same is true for two other families, the Crowe-King and Young-Thompson VMFL.

It’s therefore our conclusion, that, on a balance of probabilities based on the historical evidence presented in available reports, what historical mixed-ancestry community there may have been is now part of the Couchiching First Nation and that other contemporary mixed-ancestry individuals in the Rainy River district are either the descendants of Manitoba Métis who settled in Fort Frances after Effective Control or the mixed-ancestry descendants of Ojibwe women who lost their Indians status due to discriminatory legislation in 1869.

6. Historic Northern Lake Superior Métis Community

In order to examine the MNO’s recognition of the “Historic Northern Lake Superior Métis Community” in 2016, we reviewed Gwynneth C.D. Jones’ (2015) “The Historical Roots of Métis Communities North of Lake Superior,” writing for MNO; Arthur J. Ray and Kenichi Matsui’s (2011) “Fur Trade and Métis Settlements in the Lake Superior Region, 1820-50,” writing for MNO; and Gwen Reimer and Jean-Philippe Chartrand’s MNR Report titled “Historic Métis in Ontario: Wawa and Environs” (1999). The areas covered by the MNO Report on Northern Lake Superior include Michipicoten (Wawa) and its outposts (Batchawana Bay) and Fort William (Thunder Bay) and its outposts (Lac la Flèche and Lac D’Original), Nipigon, Rossport, McDiarmid, Longlac, Geraldton,

⁹⁵ Qtd in Reimer and Chartrand 1999 43, emphasis ours.

⁹⁶ Jones 2001, 10.

Terrace Bay, and the Pic.⁹⁷ Sault Ste. Marie is excluded from this study. The majority of the previous MNO research focuses on Michipicoten/Wawa and Sault Ste. Marie, and to a lesser extent, the Thunder Bay area.

6.1. Considering “Origins” to 1821

According to Ray and Matsui there is no evidence that exists to support (or contradict) the hypothesis that there was a “genesis of a population of mixed European and Aboriginal descent on the eastern shore of Lake Superior in the seventeenth century.”⁹⁸ Jones concurs, noting that the documentary record is sparse regarding the “genealogical and ethnic origins of much of the population of the area north of Lake Superior” in the period prior to 1821.⁹⁹ By the eighteenth century some “indirect data” is argued to have existed that “significant interaction” took place between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the area in the late seventeenth century.¹⁰⁰ This indirect data demonstrates that *voyageurs* and *coureurs de bois* lived in and traveled through the Upper Great Lakes region.¹⁰¹ Jones suggests that the large community of traders and “Aboriginal wives and mixed-ancestry children” at Mackinac Island would have operated in and through the north shore of Lake Superior, speculating that “some of their wives and children may have originated there.”¹⁰² Ray and Matsui relatedly theorize that these two populations and the growing number of posts across the north shore of Lake Superior *may* be the origin point for “métis” in the area in the eighteenth century, and in the nineteenth century “métis” may be found as a class of fur traders known as “winterers.” Jones suggests that in this time period a distinctive way of life and economic structure emerged from contact between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.¹⁰³

For the purposes of this earlier period and given the lack of firm information regarding identification and genealogies it’s important to note that Jones refrains from referring to this as “métis” culture but instead uses the term “fur trade culture.”¹⁰⁴ She writes it in this way to acknowledge that the culture that emerged was not exclusive to Métis – though she does establish that much of the culture developed in the region does resonate with the lives and identifies of families “labelled in later documents as ‘half-breeds’ or ‘Métis.’”¹⁰⁵ At the same time, there is some confusing framing of “fur trade culture” in that Jones argues that the transmission of culture was *not* dependent on genetics, but that “even if individuals within the culture were highly mobile ... the distinctive elements of the culture developed and persisted over time.”¹⁰⁶ While it’s not clear what Jones is referring to here, it appears to imply that one need not *be* Métis to be Métis.

⁹⁷ Jones 2015, 4; Ray and Matsui 2011, 1.

⁹⁸ Ray and Matsui 2011, iii.

⁹⁹ Jones 2015, 4.

¹⁰⁰ Jones 2015, 4.

¹⁰¹ Ray and Matsui 2011, iii.

¹⁰² Jones 2015, 10.

¹⁰³ Jones 2015, 4–5.

¹⁰⁴ Jones 2015, 5.

¹⁰⁵ Jones 2015, 5.

¹⁰⁶ Jones 2015, 5.

In contrast to the claims made by Marchand regarding petitions by the “Canadian Inhabitants” of Penetanguishene, Jones notes that “Canadian” may or may not be someone with Indigenous ancestry, but it does generally mean somebody hired to work within the HBC structure with ancestry in “Canada.”¹⁰⁷ In the Praxis report, Reimer and Chartrand choose to use what they see as the “neutral” small “m” métis, avoiding making firm political arguments about the existence of a distinct Métis people. The ambiguous language used at times in Jones’ report is consistent with points raised earlier in this report (see Introduction) regarding research conducted on other regions in Ontario. In fact, Jones, Ray and Matsui, and Reimer and Chartrand all appear to apply the same “logics of misrecognition”¹⁰⁸ at work in the other reports that we examined. There is an assumption that “mixed raceness” or “mixed ancestry” automatically correlates to Métisness. However, Jones is generally much more careful in the usage of “Métis,” initially noting that she only uses it when it appears in the text/context of a document itself.¹⁰⁹ Unfortunately, she doesn’t maintain that distinction, as later in her report she labels “mixed ancestry” families as Métis.¹¹⁰

Jones positions Northern Lake Superior in close relationship to Mackinac Island and Fort Michilimackinac, noting a movement of voyageurs, fur traders, and mixed-ancestry people in and through various areas. She writes that this movement reflects that these places would best be understood as “landing places, meeting grounds, and in some cases retirement communities,” as there was little fixed settlement prior to 1800.¹¹¹ Jones details Ezekiel Solomon’s activities in the Northern Lake Superior region and beyond – Solomon being one of the MNO’s Verified Métis Family Lines for the “Historic Georgian Bay Métis Community” and appearing as part of the Lakehead, Nipigon, Michipicoten Harvesting Areas families in the “Historic Northern Lake Superior Métis Community.” In particular, Louisa Solomon (b. 1851) is noted as a “root ancestor” for the Solomon family, born in Fort William. She is stated as being a “documented Métis” on the basis of having been listed in the 1881 Census at Fort William as “Halfbreed.” No information is offered as to her parentage in any files we reviewed, but it may well be that she is linked to the Solomon family, German-Jewish and Chippewa.

For Jones, the purpose in mentioning Mackinac Island appears to be to highlight the interconnectedness and mobility of voyageurs and other traders in the northern Great Lakes. Jones writes that after abandoning trading in the Sturgeon Lake and Lake Nipigon areas around 1783, Solomon and his family “settled along the north shore of Lake Huron and Georgian Bay and became the progenitors of a large Métis extended family with residential focal points at Killarney and Penetanguishene.”¹¹² There is no evidence that the Solomon family self-identified as Métis and this reflects the slippage in language used by Jones in spite of their earlier statements that they do not intend to use “Métis” except when plainly stated in historical documents. It’s also worth noting that

¹⁰⁷ Jones 2015, 6.

¹⁰⁸ Andersen 2014.

¹⁰⁹ Jones 2015, 7.

¹¹⁰ Jones 2015, 15.

¹¹¹ Jones 2015, 16.

¹¹² Jones 2015, 17.

while Jones references Solomon and others as being in the area (such as Venance St. Germain), she does not argue that a Métis community was formed in these areas. Further, as she continues to detail the activities of various fur trade actors into the early 1800s and includes some reference to people who are *presumed* or “known” to be of “mixed ancestry,” it’s clear that by the close of the eighteenth century, no ethnogenesis has given rise to a distinctive Métis community that identifies itself as such.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, Jones argues that there are discernible “mixed ancestry families from the Nipigon-Lakehead region” that although having their “roots” in earlier fur trade culture appear to become more distinctive in the 1800s. What differs in Jones’ report is that she doesn’t explicitly re-narrate “mixed ancestry” as Métis in all cases, as other authors have done. In fact, she mentions that Roderick McKenzie’s marriage to a “Nipigon Indian woman” in 1803 is evidence of a “mixed-race family,” but makes no leap to claim this constitutes, in explicit terms, a Métis family. Given that McKenzie was of Irish extraction, such a leap would make little sense. In any case, Jones argues that by the second decade of the nineteenth century, there was a “significant proportion of first and second-generation mixed-ancestry families around Fort William and other North West Company trading sites.”¹¹³ Some of these families originate in the area while others are transplants to the area via the mobility of the fur trade. Reimer and Chartrand contend that a study of HBC data from 1810 shows that “biological mixing in itself was insufficient to ‘occasion the rise to recognition and self-consciousness.’”¹¹⁴

The authors of these reports speculate about the mixed-ancestry identity of several men: Louis Chevalier, Alexis Frambay, François La Lancette, Pierre Dumas, Joseph Monier, John Swanston, Louis Boileau, William Harris, Angus Bethune, and Nicholas Chatelaine, among others. Yet, they appear to share no originary familial, cultural, or hereditary ties, and so it’s unclear how their descendants later become cast as Métis and as representing a distinctive collective people and culture. As such, any leap to reframe mixed-ancestry people in the area as Métis is speculative.

With the arrival of the 1800s, Jones produces a reserved analysis regarding Métis community origins, which sits in contrast to the work of Jacqueline Peterson, who, in describing the communities of these northern Great Lakes posts refers to “a growing number of French Canadian, Métis, and Scots and Irish trades [who] had fanned out along both sides of the rapids [at the Sault] with their Native wives and children,”¹¹⁵ recasting such mixed-ancestry families as expressly Métis. While there are some NWC and HBC employees who move through posts like Fort William/Point Meuron and Michipicoten onwards to Red River and points westward, representing the mobility and interconnectedness of the fur trade industry generally, and while there are undoubtedly families of First Nations-French mixed ancestry origin, there appears to be no notion of Métis distinctiveness through the first few decades of the nineteenth century. English

¹¹³ See Jones 2015, 32.

¹¹⁴ Reimer and Chartrand 2000, 24.

¹¹⁵ Qtd in Jones 2015, 34.

language documents refer to them at all posts as *half-breeds* and no French language documents appear to be reviewed by Jones or Ray and Matsui.

6.2. Post-1821 NWC and HBC Merger

Jones argues that following the NWC and HBC merger, the HBC drew from two separate pools of mixed-ancestry employees: “the ‘Hudson’s Bay’ children of its own employees born within its Charter territory, and the Great Lakes fur trade networks.”¹¹⁶ The two populations of “mixed-ancestry” people had their own, Jones argues, identity. The first were those brought in by the HBC to inland posts to fill the roles of interpreters, guides, persons to “trade with the Indians,” canoe-builders, steersmen, and fish and game harvesters.¹¹⁷ The second of these groups, the Great Lakes fur traders, “adhered to their own terms of service for wages and contracts, and preserved a body of knowledge of European and country skills and local geographies and lore.”¹¹⁸ Jones also notes that intermarriage among Great Lakes fur trade families appeared to have “strengthened ties,” but provides little direct evidence of the clear existence of such difference *or* the significance of this distinction. As she mentions, the latter of these, often referred to in fur trade post records and HBC overseers as “Canadians” are a distinct population unto themselves, but a population that is heterogeneous rather than expressly Métis.

Further, the records are not fulsome enough to do more than suggest the possibility of a distinct community, to which end Jones writes that, “the precise origins of many Métis families, and the economy and culture that fostered them, are therefore in many cases hidden from view.”¹¹⁹ By contrast, Reimer and Chartrand argue that children born from HBC fur trade relationships lacked the economic base and residential stability to build a separate identity. With families constantly in motion and in exchange with different parties, the lack of a “settled place” in which to form relationships to land and to each other is taken to demonstrate that there was a lack of distinctive identity as Métis.¹²⁰ They contrast this with the case of Penetanguishene, who they argue show practices of endogamy, while “Great Lakes mixed-bloods generally preferred exogamy.”¹²¹ Of crucial importance is that they summarize existing scholarly research on the subject to distill that consensus exists that the population around fur trade posts were “too diffuse to be considered cohesive” but also that they “lacked the [existential] ‘threat’” that is necessary for provoking a distinctive national consciousness.¹²² The only exception, they note, is the case of Sault Ste. Marie, for which only one unpublished report by Harrington in 1981, examines “the formation of a population of ‘half-breeds’ north of Sault Ste. Marie in the eighteenth century.”¹²³ To summarize then:

The exposure of so many individuals to inter-ethnic contact and marriage may have hindered the group’s ability to communicate a cohesive concept of a common ethnic

¹¹⁶ Jones 2015, 59.

¹¹⁷ Jones 2015, 59.

¹¹⁸ Jones 2015, 59.

¹¹⁹ Jones 2015, 59.

¹²⁰ Reimer and Chartrand 2000, 23.

¹²¹ Reimer and Chartrand 2000, 25.

¹²² Reimer and Chartrand 2000, 29.

¹²³ Reimer and Chartrand 2000, 40.

identity from one to another or to transmit their common culture to succeeding generations. Because endogamy is regarded as an important feature of most ethnic groups, Gorham questions how a mixed-blood group such as this could evolve and pass on a common set of traditions which could firmly establish a shared culture and ethnic identity. Gorham concludes that, 'The Great Lakes mixed-bloods might be better described as an economic class, with subdivisions into traders and voyageurs, rather than as an ethnic group.'¹²⁴

The 2015 MNO Report argues that gradually, in the wake of 1821, the confluence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations gave rise to "new elements combined in distinctive ways,"¹²⁵ suggesting that by contrast to the argument that the Great Lakes represents an *older* "Métis community" or "origin point," that in fact Métis self-identification emerges *later* than that of Red River – and still, little evidence is presented to show that identification as Métis is more than a contemporary phenomenon in the area. Jones infers that there are parallels between this shift and the ethnogenesis of Métis in Red River on the basis of external observation by figures such as French Jesuit Priests, arguing that depictions of French Canadians resonate with that of Métis in Red River,¹²⁶ but again nothing expressly associates this cultural shift with Métisness.

Ray and Matsui argue that there is a discernible difference between the "material life of métis" and that of First Nations in the area. They do acknowledge, however, that there is little data regarding "métis culture," meaning the values, beliefs, and customs of those they designate as métis. Jones notes that travel writings from Umfreville and John Macdonell reflect the emergence of a distinctive culture around Lake Superior, involving things such as baptizing "newcomers with cedar boughs or a dunk in the river when crossing a height of land, making offerings or prayers at dangerous sites or places of commencement, pulling off hats and making the sign of the cross when leaving on stream for another, and of course the ceremonial 'ram' at the completion of some long portages or sections of a journey."¹²⁷ Ray and Matsui suggest that outsider descriptions of the style of dress of "18th century Canadians" "partly matches" with "known articles of historic métis dress."¹²⁸ People like Swanston were noted by outside observers as wearing "moccasins instead of slippers."¹²⁹ The observations that a discernable Métis population *might* have existed because of *partly matching* clothing associated with Métis are ambivalent at best.

Reimer and Chartrand problematically argue that observations by Alexander Henry as to the style of dress of certain Canadian traders reveals that those wearing "large red caps" are likely métis because "historically, the colour red is symbolic of métis identity."¹³⁰ Aside from this obviously problematic logic and the tendency of Reimer and

¹²⁴ Reimer and Chartrand 2000, 28.

¹²⁵ Jones 2015, 60.

¹²⁶ Jones 2015, 60.

¹²⁷ Jones 2015, 63.

¹²⁸ Ray and Matsui 2011, iii.

¹²⁹ Chone 1848, 362–63.

¹³⁰ Reimer and Chartrand 2000, 47.

Chartrand to write only in terms of *probability*, others argue that patterns of social life reflect distinctiveness.

Ray and Matsui argue that because some European HBC employees “took Indian wives and established families at the Michipicoten post” that this corresponds with Métis identity.¹³¹ Drawing on the work of Carolyn Podruchny, Jones notes that “these rituals and customs tended to forge a sense of identity and belonging among the participants.”¹³² While that may very well be true, little evidence is offered to support the claim that this cultural fusion of voyageur fur trade life is indicative of collective Métis self-identification. This leaves other factors as being read into as constituting distinctive Métis identity. Whereas Jones refrains from directly labeling such things as Métis, instead favouring the language of “development of mixed-ancestry populations,” Ray and Matsui (2011) essentially make the case that “half-breed Indians” are Métis and can be identified by the fact that: 1) “Métis” were wage workers for HBC and lived in log houses (in contrast to First Nations wigwams)¹³³; 2) male workers were involved in post-operated resource harvesting and some as interpreters for the British; 3) Métis were promoted to significant roles, such as that of Swanston, who would become Chief Factor at Michipicoten in 1840; 4) Métis were involved in treaties; 5) Métis were involved in resistance movements.¹³⁴ The latter of these are seen as central to the claim of Métis distinctiveness that emerges with the arrival of the mid-eighteenth century – that *half-breeds* were active in treaty-making processes and that they were involved in resistance movements indicative of Métis collective identification. Each of these will now be discussed in turn.

6.3. Robinson Superior Treaties

Many of the mixed-ancestry people working in the northern Lake Superior region acted in multiple roles. For example, John Swanston (who is referred to as “métis” and mixed-ancestry, but for whom we have been unable to verify parentage) was not only Chief Factor at Michipicoten in 1840, but would become an interpreter and recipient of Robinson Superior Treaty annuities.¹³⁵ Most of the documents pertaining to the claim of a historic Métis community in the northern Lake Superior region rely on the entanglement of mixed-ancestry individuals with treaties. Swanston is one example of a number, as Ray and Matsui also identify three treaty signatories – John Bell and Chiefs Michel Dokis and Nebenaigooching. There is no indication that any of these three saw themselves as representatives of Métis communities. For example, Dokis was the Chief of the Nipissing Band. The MNR Praxis Report specifically noted that while Dokis had “a white father and an Indian mother,” there is every indication that Dokis “considered himself as an Indian.”¹³⁶ Further, they add that he “always considered himself *anishnabe* [sic], *even though one of his parents was French-Canadian.*”¹³⁷ This directly challenges the ease with which people of mixed-ancestry, and especially if they have

¹³¹ Ray and Matsui 2011, iv.

¹³² Jones 2015, 63.

¹³³ See also Reimer and Chartrand 2000, 70.

¹³⁴ Ray and Matsui 2011, iv.

¹³⁵ Ray and Matsui 2011, iv.

¹³⁶ Qtd. in Reimer and Chartrand 1999, 78–79.

¹³⁷ Reimer and Chartrand 1999, 78, emphasis in original.

First Nations-French parentage, are cast as “Métis.” Drawing on Borron, Reimer and Chartrand write that Dokis’ manner of self-identification was in direct contradiction to government policy that sought to recognize “children fathered by Indians as Indian, and children fathered by non-Indians as non-Indians (regardless of the ethnicity of the mother).”¹³⁸

In spite of the questions raised by de facto labeling all mixed-ancestry people as Métis and implying a sense of cultural distinctiveness owing to such positionality, Alison E. Gale produced a report for Indian Affairs and Northern Development on the subject of “Robinson Treaty Métis” in 1998. Thus, the argument that there are 1) Métis in the northern Lake Superior area; and 2) that Métis are tied to significant treaties in the area, is not of recent vintage. In fact, in Gale’s report, she draws on earlier work by Lorimer to argue that the Métis community at Prince Arthur’s Landing (Port Arthur, Thunder Bay) is the “second oldest” Métis community to have existed.¹³⁹ As with the other reports under study, this one as well substitutes “Métis” wherein historical documentary evidence uses *half-breed*.

There are, however, a few sources cited that *do* make historical reference to Métisness. According to N. Frerniot of the Jesuit Fathers, in a letter written to his superiors on October 18, 1849, “reporting on the meeting held at Fort William” in the run up to the Robinson treaty, “metis” as he called them were present but were “passed by in silence, for they have not the right to speak at such gatherings.”¹⁴⁰ Frerniot questions whether this silence may be because they are “better informed” than “the Indians themselves” and “might be in a better position to defend their rights.”¹⁴¹ This is echoed in the accounts of Swanston, interpreter for the 1850 Treaty, which he signed as a witness,¹⁴² questioning whether chiefs such as Shingwaukose should have more of a claim to the land during treaty-making than the *half-breeds* (people such as Nicholas Chastelain) given that in his view Shingwauk’s original homeland was on the American side of the border.¹⁴³ While this may be true, little information as to the connections to the lands under question in the treaties is provided – wherein First Nations women are identified as representing *maternal lines*, at least within the texts of the documents there is little indication as to which bands the women came from.

6.4. Mica Bay, Robinson Treaties, and Relations with First Nations

One of the significant moments often highlighted to support the claim of Métis distinctiveness in the northern Lake Superior context, is in reference to the way that mixed-ancestry people were seen by, and related to, local First Nations. Much is made of Chief Shingwaukose’s continual engagement with the local mixed-ancestry population and his advocacy for mixed-ancestry people to be brought into treaty and for the

¹³⁸ Qtd. in Reimer and Chartrand 1999, 79.

¹³⁹ Gale 1998, 2.

¹⁴⁰ Qtd. in Gale 1998, 2.

¹⁴¹ Qtd. in Gale 1998, 2.

¹⁴² Barkwell 2016, 136.

¹⁴³ Qtd. in Gale 1998: 8.

protection of their rights. Historical statements made by Shingwakonse and letters he issued clearly indicated that he saw them as a part of his own people.¹⁴⁴

With respect to Mica Bay, there is no primary evidence offered to support the claim that the mixed-ancestry people in the area self-identified as *Métis*. Additional research must be undertaken because a preliminary scan of publicly-available records implies that Charles Boyer, one of the “3 Métis” to accompany Shingwakonse, Nebenagoching, and lawyer Allan MacDonnell to “evict Government licensees” mining near Michipicoten, would later come to live on reserve.¹⁴⁵ Only 3 “Métis” were present at the Mica Bay resistance and so it becomes difficult to make any firm assertions about this representing the interests of a wider community rather than some people living in the immediate area and/or connected to communities such as that of Shingwakonse. It’s also clear that Shingwakonse actively sought to recruit local mixed-ancestry people “into his Band’s membership in order to strengthen his negotiation position.”¹⁴⁶ His appeals were outright rejected at a council meeting as the local mixed-ancestry people mostly felt “that they were already Indians enough without binding themselves to be under an Indian Chief.”¹⁴⁷ This can be read in a number of ways – it can be read as demonstrating that the local mixed-ancestry people saw themselves as separate from Shingwakonse’s band (clearly), but it can also be read as demonstrating that they possessed a consciousness of themselves as *Indians* in their own right and in their own way.

None of the primary evidence presented even to this context clearly demonstrates that the people saw themselves as *Métis*, and so once again it would appear that the twentieth-century shift to the language of Métis distinctiveness and collectivity is part of a strategy of political adaptation. Even where the mixed-ancestry community (and there is enough evidence to state that at least at Sault Ste. Marie there was such a community) saw some mixed-ancestry people end up on treaty pay lists, they did so on the basis of their rights as *half-breed Indians* rather than through an assertion that they are a *distinct* people or as commonly used to refer to the Métis Nation, a *new* people. Some may reasonably argue that attempts to negotiate their entry into treaty was shut down by the government, thus forcing them into piecemeal “Indian” identification. Mixed-ancestry people from Michipicoten did attend treaty negotiations (although not given space to speak) at Sault Ste. Marie alongside Shingwakonse’s band and others.

However, nothing presented within the documents supports a claim to collective *Métis* consciousness. This is reflected in arguments made by Reimer and Chartrand that “Documents and historical reports pertaining to the Robinson Treaties negotiations neither explicitly support nor contradict the possibility that great lakes métis formed a ‘community’ in a sociological or anthropological sense prior to or shortly following 1850.”¹⁴⁸ They further summarize that, “The extent to which the feelings and perceptions of common identity, legal aspirations, and legitimacy as distinct Aboriginal

¹⁴⁴ Lytwyn 1998, 10.

¹⁴⁵ Jones 2015, 115.

¹⁴⁶ Reimer and Chartrand 2000, iv.

¹⁴⁷ Lytwyn 1998, 8; see also Reimer and Chartrand 2000, 76.

¹⁴⁸ Reimer and Chartrand 2000, 82.

people were also shared by other métis at Michipicoten or along the eastern shore of Lake Superior, is not known since no further data were found relevant to this issue in this research assignment.”¹⁴⁹

6.5. Presence of Métis Ancestors in MNO Documentation

Of the fourteen MNO Verified Métis Family Lines for the “Historic Northern Lake Superior Métis Community,” only one has any known connection to the Métis Homeland according to the MNO’s own documentation: Rose-Arthur family. Sarah Arthur was born in Moose Factory or Rupert’s House near James Bay in 1811, while George Rose was born in Moose Factory around 1816. In 1842, they were married. The couple had three known children between 1842 and 1851. The family moved to Fort William in 1871. George and Sarah’s daughter Harriet Rose moved to St. Clements, Manitoba around 1866. She later applied for Manitoba Métis Scrip in 1878, listing both her parents as “half-breeds.” Her descendants are not known to have moved back east.

Further, several descendants of the Weigand-Corcoran VMFL successfully applied for Northwest Halfbreeds Métis Scrip in Fort William (Thunder Bay) in the 1890s.

¹⁴⁹ Reimer and Chartrand 2000, 82.

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