

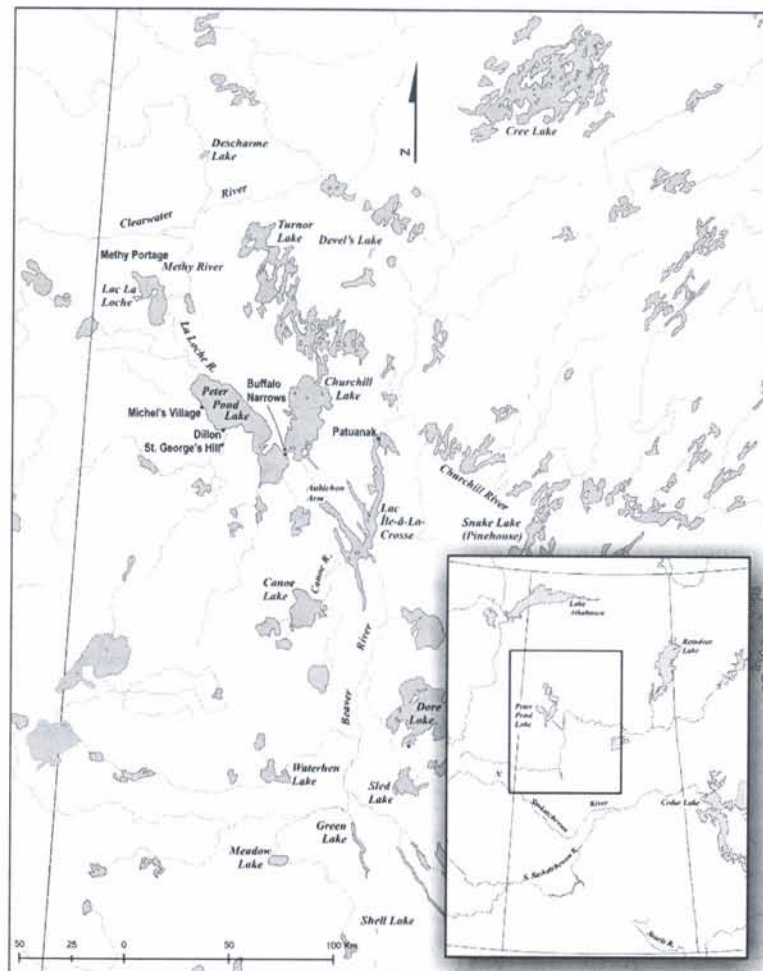
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## West Side Stories

*The Blending of Voice and Representation through a Shared Curatorial Practice*

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On May 26, 2007, after months of research, consultation, and negotiation, an exhibit entitled *West Side Stories: The Metis of Northwestern Saskatchewan*, depicting the social, cultural, political, and economic life of eighteen subarctic Metis communities (see map 2) opened at the Dieffenbaker Canada Centre (DCC) in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.<sup>1</sup> The idea for *West Side Stories* emerged from a need to communicate and disseminate some of the results gathered from a large, interuniversity research project, “Otipimsuak—the Free People: Métis Land and Society in Northwest Saskatchewan,” which is currently funded through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada’s (SSHRC) Community University Research Alliance (CURA) program.<sup>2</sup> The nature of the collaboration that went into the development of *West Side Stories* challenges the manner in which Aboriginal communities, museums, and academic scholarship can forge collaborative relationships. Conceived by three cocurators from the University of Saskatchewan—Teresa Carlson, acting director of the DCC; Brenda Macdougall, Department of Native Studies; and Keith Carlson, Department of History—the purpose for designing the exhibit was to locate an alternative means of communicating research findings to a mixed audience of nonacademics, youths, scholars, and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals in a way that was both informative and visually appealing. It was especially important to represent the more intangible aspects of cultural heritage, such as the voice, values, language, and



2. Saskatchewan, Canada. Map by Elise Pietroniro, GIServices, Department of Geography, University of Saskatchewan. *Projection:* UTM Zone 13N, NAD1983. *Source:* National Atlas of Canada. Vector level: 2,000,000, Natural Resources Canada. Courtesy Brenda Macdougall.

traditions of an Indigenous people—those aspects of life that are rarely given prominence within museum exhibitions, which are typically more artifact-centered in design. The resulting exhibit relied heavily upon text panels to showcase the research findings, which were augmented by photographic and artifact displays, as well as thematic reproductions. The emphasis upon text rather than visuals within an exhibit was unusual and set *West Side Stories* apart from more traditional museological practice. What emerged through the process of negotiating our shared curatorial practice was an active assertion of ownership, governance, and voice by each stakeholder as represented by the people of northwestern Saskatchewan, scholars from the University of Saskatchewan, and the DCC—something that was permitted only by the equitable sharing of both power and responsibility.

The SSHRC's CURA program is predicated upon collaboration between university and communities with shared research interests and goals. The "Otipimsuak" project is engaged in documenting the history of Metis communities of northwestern Saskatchewan and is engaged in capacity-building projects by training local people in various aspects of the research program.<sup>3</sup> By the time the exhibit was conceived in early 2006, much of the CURA's research effort had focused on traditional land-use studies, on analysis of the political and legislative processes by which the Metis were alienated from their lands, and on the overall economic history of the region—the areas typical of Aboriginal research in recent years. Although research focused on the economic, legal, and political history of the region was significant, the communities also wanted the stories about their relationships to one another, to their spirituality, and to the landscape to have a place in the project, providing a more intimate and human portrait of Metis life in both historical and contemporary terms. These stories became the foundation of the *West Side Stories* exhibit. The collaboration to document this particular area of research by the Metis communities of northwestern Saskatchewan, scholars from the University of Saskatchewan, and the staff of the DCC represents a new methodology for telling the story of a people in a way that reflects their cultural values, beliefs, and sensibilities.

One of the most compelling reasons for mounting the *West Side Stories* exhibit was revealed early in the research project, challenging the existing paradigm in which Metis history is captured. Within the larger

research enterprise, which focuses on political, legal, and economic topics, little effort had been made to reflect the social and cultural history of the Metis community, including concepts about their ethnogenesis as a people of the subarctic. But these origins are in fact part of what differentiates them from the Metis of the south, demarcated by the histories of the Metis of Red River and the Metis of the western plains, whose economy was dominated by the buffalo-based trade. Instead, the moment of northwestern Saskatchewan Metis ethnogenesis can be traced back to the eighteenth-century fur trade, when independent traders from Montreal competed with the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) for economic supremacy in the rich subarctic and arctic fur regions.<sup>4</sup> Northwestern Saskatchewan Metis identity was forged independent of the well-known and often-discussed events of southern Canadian Metis nationalism, namely the Battle of Seven Oaks in 1817, the mid-to-late-nineteenth-century history of the Red River, and the events at Batoche, Saskatchewan, in the 1880s. Therefore, this exhibit attempts to highlight historical moments, cultural expressions, and economic and political processes that contributed to making *West Side Metis* society a simultaneously distinct but integral part of greater Metis history. As a result, *West Side Stories* challenges the public to reconsider their understanding of who the Metis are and reflect upon the diversity of Metis experiences within Canada.

The manner in which Metis history and society are interpreted has undergone significant and important changes in recent years. Earlier generations of scholars interpreted Metis culture as though it consisted of the worst aspects of First Nations and European societies, as though in coming together the two cultures gained little and lost much. Alternatively, other historians discussed Metis society as a static relic of the past, unable to find relevance in a world no longer dominated by the buffalo hunt or the fur trade.<sup>5</sup> Early Metis scholarship also tended to focus on prominent figures such as Cuthbert Grant, Louis Riel, or Gabriel Dumont, who led the Metis in their struggles for independence in the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> However, such biographical portrayals seldom presented a sympathetic or balanced perspective that accounted for collective Metis sensibilities or cultural beliefs.

Since the mid-1980s, scholars have forged new paths of historical inquiry. Increasingly, the focus has been on understanding Metis cultural diversity through studies of interrelated subjects such as class and reli-

gious distinctions, the borderlands experience between Canadian and American Metis people, economic and cultural diversity between individuals and communities, and, perhaps most importantly, Metis family life.<sup>7</sup> As a result, Metis history is now beginning to be understood in terms of theoretical concepts of *metissage*, *hybridity*, *aboriginality*, and *syncretism*, which allow for cultural continuity to coexist alongside a dynamic historical progression. It is now broadly accepted that while Metis society was built on a foundation of cross-cultural sharing, it consists of much more than the sum of its First Nations and European parts. While the Metis of northwestern Saskatchewan appreciate the bicultural roots of their society, they recognize themselves as a separate people—with both traditions reflected in their history. For example, they continue to value First Nations ideas about the centrality of family and individual and community identity, as reflected in the Cree concept of *wahkootowin*. This notion in turn also respects Roman Catholic ideas pertaining to the expansiveness of family, as seen in the relationship between the godparents and the birthparents of baptized children.<sup>8</sup> The Metis further acknowledge the legacy of broad regional economic ties, which so clearly influenced the corporate social system and commercial trade that were introduced. While these influences characterized the HBC, the Metis simultaneously participated in traditional, subsistence-based harvesting activities.

Metis origins are now conceived as having emerged from within a dynamic contact zone that was more than just a cultural middle ground, where economic opportunity coexisted with social convenience. Rather, Metis history is the story of community and nation building, as well as of how a new people can emerge. Metis origins may have begun in the fur trade, but the nation and its people were shaped by a series of unfolding historical events and processes. The story of Metis emergence in northwestern Saskatchewan is a part of this unfolding narrative and historiography.

### The Community

Undeniably, Metis ethnogenesis in northwestern Saskatchewan occurred in the closing decades of the eighteenth century as a result of fur trade expansion across Canada and the northern United States. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Metis communities emerged in these regions within a generation of the trade's establishment. The ethnogenesis

of this new people was dynamic, occurring in different regions at different times as the trade expanded and contracted.

Île à la Crosse is one of the oldest, most culturally homogeneous Metis communities in the Canadian subarctic and rose in prominence during the competitive race between fur traders to reach the Mackenzie and Athabasca trade regions. It became a hub for Metis sociocultural development in the subarctic. Independent traders Thomas and Joseph Frobisher from the Montreal-based St. Lawrence trade network established the first post at Île à la Crosse as an outpost for their anticipated Athabasca-based trade ventures. While the Montreal traders were the first to move into northwestern Saskatchewan, they were quickly followed by the HBC in the 1780s. On these initial excursions, French Canadian, English, and Scottish traders from the XY, North West, and Hudson's Bay companies, respectively, began to establish, as part of their trading experience, intimate and often long-lasting relationships with local Cree and Dene women.<sup>9</sup> These initial unions between non-Aboriginal men and Indian women are best characterized as that of a protogeneration who, while not Metis, sparked the creation of this new society. The result of these unions was the ethnogenesis of the Metis and the region's formation of communities such as La Loche, Green Lake, Beauval, Dillon, and Pinehouse, all located across northwestern Saskatchewan. The West Side consequently became home to a group of Metis who worked in the fur trade for generations, in occupations ranging from traders and servants to freemen, subsistence hunters, and fishermen.

Roman Catholic missionaries from the Order of Mary Immaculate (otherwise known as the Oblates or as the OMI) arrived in the region in 1845 to establish, at Île à la Crosse in 1846, the first western mission outside of Red River. Subsequent missions were permanently established at Green Lake in 1875 and La Loche in 1890. In addition to these three permanent mission stations, other Catholic missions operated in various communities as needed, and itinerant priests regularly traveled throughout the region.<sup>10</sup> Upon their arrival in the mid-nineteenth century, the Oblates encountered a people who already understood and practiced the holy sacraments, observed the Sabbath regularly, and acknowledged the powers of the saints over their lives. Just as the Metis incorporated the fur trade into their cultural development on the West Side, they also created a flourishing socioreligious lifestyle marked by periods of both intense

revelry and religious piety.<sup>11</sup> Within this milieu, the church worked to establish itself among these people, acculturating to the demands of Metis identity while striving to improve the rudimentary teachings of Catholicism, which had been held by residents since the early the nineteenth century.

Over the next five generations, Metis families of the West Side worked within the economy of the fur trade, intermarried with one another as well as with nearby Cree and Dene community members and incoming traders, adhered to a new form of Catholicism, and, in turn, shaped the region into a homeland. The extension of Treaty Six and Treaty Ten into the region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the concurrent issuance of scrip marked the beginning of a new era in the north, as Canadian legal and political structures extended into the region. For the first time, there was an imposed and arbitrarily created legal and jurisdictional distinction separating Indians from Half-Breeds: the former group took treaty, while the latter was issued scrip; one group were now wards of the federal government and had their lives regulated by the Indian Act of 1867, while the other were citizens of the state; one had treaty rights protected by law, while the other had ceded all rights to the lands and resources and therefore enjoyed no such protection, either real or theoretical. These legal distinctions, however, had minimal impact on the people of the region until the provincial government of Saskatchewan obtained jurisdictional authority over natural resources via the Natural Resource Transfer Agreement in 1930.<sup>12</sup> With no constitutional protection as an Aboriginal people, the Metis were, for the first time, effectively marginalized within their own homeland.

### The Research

Although the Metis are now officially recognized as one of three Aboriginal societies in the Constitution Act of 1982—alongside First Nations (Indians) and Inuit—with existing and, more importantly, protected Aboriginal rights, Canadian legislation neither defines their term “Métis” nor the scope of their rights. These two issues are important considering that Canada’s northern regions are rich in natural resources that have become integral to provincial economies since the late 1940s. The mining sector and the oil and gas industry have, in recent decades, become increasingly significant to Saskatchewan, once an agrarian-based province.

Through most of the twentieth century, the provincial north’s 320,000 square kilometers have been extensively explored, developed, and processed by mining and forestry companies, as well as by other resource-extraction industries such as the commercial and sport fishing and hunting industries. Ownership of most of the land and all of the mineral, oil, and gas rights is held by the government and managed from the provincial capital, Regina, a city located approximately 1,300 kilometers to the south. The region’s largely Aboriginal population—Cree, Dene, and Metis—have historically had very little participation in this lucrative economy and have not shared in the wealth extracted from their territories.<sup>13</sup>

Although few of the northern Aboriginal peoples in the province have prospered during this era of internal colonialism, the Metis have been at a far greater disadvantage. For instance, while they have participated in both commercial and subsistence hunting, trapping, and fishing sectors for generations, as provincial citizens in the postwar era, Metis have had to obtain issued licenses to continue to pursue their livelihood and feed their families (theoretically, registered Indians have had no such impediments and, as treaty signatories, have received much greater protection for their traditional livelihood). In a region that has been historically low on cash, purchasing a license can be too great a financial burden to overcome for many Metis. Consequently, many Metis become “criminals,” arrested and charged with poaching under provincial wildlife legislation.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, unlike their First Nations relatives, the Metis were not compensated when additional limits were placed on their ability to engage in traditional economies. In 1953, for example, the Primrose–Cold Lake Air Weapons Range, a cold war facility for training American and Canadian bomber pilots, was established. Straddling the border between Alberta and Saskatchewan, the range was organized so as to avoid Indian reserves. However, the range encompassed traditional First Nations and Metis hunting, fishing, and gathering sites. For the Metis Nation, four Metis communities—Beauval, Jans Bay, Cole Bay, and Île à la Crosse—were adversely affected socially and economically when residents were prevented from accessing traditional harvesting sites within the range. Citing inadequate compensation and a loss of Aboriginal rights to hunting, trapping, fishing, and gathering, the Metis demanded redress but received no compensation until 2007. By contrast, First Nations groups who had

lost their access to areas within the range were compensated a decade earlier.<sup>15</sup>

The legacy of the pre-1982 era, during which time the Metis were truly Canada's forgotten and ignored Aboriginal people, fueled the passions of contemporary communities to adequately research and document their history as a people. As a result, in the past decade, the Metis of northwestern Saskatchewan have been engaged in research projects to improve their political and economic situation in the hope that this will, in turn, secure their social and cultural well-being. Through engagement with academic researchers in the larger CURA project, it is intended that an atlas representing Metis history, society, and land use in northwestern Saskatchewan will be created. To that end, research topics were pursued that could be easily integrated into regional maps. This approach, however, produced uneven results, as the bulk of the initial research was focused in the fields of historical geography, rural economies, and land use, with emphasis on policy analysis and archival research. Researchers engaged with community members to conduct traditional land-use (TLU) interviews, mostly with male community members. The presumption was that, because men were hunters, trappers, and fishermen, traditional land use revolved around those particular male economies. However, since traditional harvesting activities would have required an entire family's participation, research on those activities could have produced a great deal of data about family and community structure and organization. Regardless, the roles of women and young people in the various levels of production were secondary considerations. Similarly, the archival research focused on the collection of scrip records for the Metis in northwestern Saskatchewan, on files from the Department of Justice relating to the distribution of scrip in the region and across Canada, and on fur trade records that provided insight into the historical resource economy of the region. Again, by and large, these areas of research exclude women because of the focus on typically public and political—and therefore male—zones of interaction.

Perhaps not surprisingly, then, the bulk of the CURA research almost exclusively focused on the stories of men, whether political or economic in nature. It became clear that the narratives of women were embedded in the social life and cultural heritage of the communities themselves. These stories also needed to be told for the research project to be balanced and

truly representative of Metis society in northwestern Saskatchewan. As a result, in the summer of 2006 two of the researchers—Keith Carlson and Brenda Macdougall—organized a research team of five students, trained them in community-based research methodologies, and took them north to conduct interviews. The purpose of the summer research program was, first and foremost, to locate stories that reflected issues of importance to these communities and that detailed the sociocultural traditions of their nation. The five students—MacKinley Darlington, Kevin Gambell, Jodi Crew, Katya MacDonald, and Amanda Fehr—selected topics from issues that had been raised during initial meetings held with the researchers and community leaders. Gambell and Fehr, who were employees of the center, intended to eventually develop an exhibit based on research at the DCC. In this way, the collaboration between the DCC and the CURA began in earnest.

The topics presented to the students were broadly conceived to cover issues related to spirituality and religion, social organization, and northern farming or horticultural practices. Throughout the summer, as they visited communities, interviewed residents, and read secondary literature, the students narrowed and refined their topics. Furthermore, they chose topics from those broadly presented that heavily reflected their personal interests, thereby creating a synergy between the community, the topic, and themselves. This synergy resulted in the following research projects: the influence of the Virgin Mary on the West Side's form of Catholicism; the emergent and distinctive form of traditional spirituality expressed in public shrine sites and apparitions; the cultural, social, and political meanings embedded in the organization and maintenance of local cemeteries; the role of communal gardening practices on social cohesion and support; and community spatial organization as a means of gaining insight into the values and ethos of a people. Each of these research projects had a significant impact on the conceptualization, creation, and message eventually conveyed within the exhibit.

### The Pedagogy

An integral aspect of the research process is, of course, the dissemination of results. For scholars, this typically involves writing papers and monographs for an academic or educated audience as well as present-

ing at conferences. Too often, research conducted in Aboriginal communities has had very little lasting impact on or contribution to the well-being, intellect, or needs of the people who shared their knowledge, hospitality, stories, values, and artifacts. Accordingly, it was the ambition of those involved in this project to see the research data made accessible to the Metis in a manner that they could appreciate, share, and enjoy. It was essential that, as ethically responsible researchers, we produce useful materials for the communities from which the shared knowledge originated. This decision was just as imperative for Teresa Carlson, acting director of the DCC. Providing access to a broader population within Saskatchewan and contributing to the University of Saskatchewan's centennial celebrations, which were planned for the fall of 2007, were two aspects of the center's greater mandate. The decision to produce a multifaceted exhibit reflective of the varied research efforts that went into the CURA atlas project was unanimous. All that remained was to mount the exhibit as it was envisioned.

Like scholarly writing, by definition and intent, both permanent and temporary museum exhibits are factually based, well-researched, and, generally, developed with the same types of processes and principles that are applied in academic scholarship. In this sense, what we attempted at the DCC with *West Side Stories* did not, in and of itself, contribute to the development of new methodological approaches to innovative cultural heritage displays. Even the concept of partnering with Indigenous communities was not methodologically transformative. Indeed, recent scholarship in the field of museum studies has invested greatly in examining the often tense and rather problematic relationship that has existed between museums and Aboriginal communities.<sup>16</sup> The reasons for examining this relationship are by now obvious. As part of the colonial enterprise, material objects, physical remains, and even the people of Indigenous communities were collected, catalogued, and displayed in order to educate and entertain the citizens in colonial centers of power. Historically, museum exhibits dealing with Aboriginal collections were seldom culturally sensitive to the societies of origin. Museums often displayed "artifacts" such as ancestral remains, funerary items (i.e., religious artifacts and regalia that were highly personalized and symbolic in nature, such as medicines, pipes and bundles, masks, and clothing), and other personal talismans

representing the spiritual guardians of individuals. These items, central to a society's material culture, were often forcibly removed or stolen from their home communities, a practice that is disturbing to living members of the communities.<sup>17</sup> The purpose of these displays was to inform and entertain the viewing public with curios from "primitive" cultures rather than to respond to the cultural sensitivities, ideologies, or belief systems of the other. The secondary purpose for these displays, unstated but undeniably clear to any Aboriginal person who has ever been to a museum, was to reinforce the power and authority of colonial regimes by displaying the collected, and often times confiscated or stolen, possessions of the dispossessed.

There has been an increasing awareness among curators that these types of displays are not simply insensitive but are relics of a colonial past without a place in a postmodern, global society. Increasingly, efforts have been made by various museums, often because of the demands of Indigenous communities, to return to specific, identifiable, and locatable communities many religious artifacts, human remains, and other culturally sensitive objects.<sup>18</sup> Where repatriation is not possible, museums have often removed culturally or spiritually sensitive items from permanent displays, leaving in their place descriptions of the objects and reasons for their exclusion. Part of this growing sensitivity of museums and other cultural heritage agencies to the inappropriateness of previous representations of Aboriginality has been greater efforts to engage and collaborate with Aboriginal peoples in the development of new research and curatorial practices.

Increasingly, there are Aboriginal people on staff at mainstream museums to assist in redesigning existing displays as well as to create new, appropriate displays that include Aboriginal perspectives and voices. Typically, these employees work closely with local communities and elders to ensure that displays of objects, therefore the message of exhibits, reflect cultural sensibilities and values. In Saskatchewan, two instances of Aboriginal participation in museological practice have emerged at, first, a regional cultural heritage center and, later, at a national historic site. Near Saskatoon, Wanuskewin Heritage Park is a regional cultural heritage site located on the banks of the South Saskatchewan River in an area that was an ancient buffalo jump site, making it a place with a high degree of ar-

chaeological, anthropological, and historical significance. Wanuskewin is operated under the leadership and guidance of First Nations people and non-Aboriginal academics and organizations to increase public awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the cultural legacy of the northern plains First Nations people. As such, its board of directors consists of representatives from the University of Saskatchewan, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, the city of Saskatoon, the governments of Canada and Saskatchewan, the Meewasin Valley Authority, and the Friends of Wanuskewin organization. The creation of Wanuskewin was possible because of the involvement of local First Nations people at the conceptualization phase of development. Because they have been involved since the beginning, Wanuskewin is now viewed as a proper Aboriginal enterprise. Conversely, the Batoche National Historic Site is a part of the national parks system and depicts the history of the armed Metis resistance against the Canadian government in 1885. In recent years, however, Batoche has benefited from hiring a Saskatchewan-born, Metis site manager, who has worked to ensure Metis participation at the park through living history and theatrical performances and through the establishment of a genealogical center staffed by an elder. In turn, the site manager has also partnered with scholars in research projects and conferences. While Batoche is still a federally owned and operated site, the emerging relationship between the park and the Metis community is transforming the way in which it operates.

Clearly, there is a growing trend within Aboriginal communities to create and build their own museums or “keeping houses.” Aboriginal societies’ adoption of the museum as an idea has been transformative for a people who had no historical practice of collecting and displaying objects as a means of relating their history and sense of nationhood. Teresa Carlson has had first-hand experience in witnessing and assisting this kind of transformation. In the early 1990s the Stó:lō of British Columbia realized that, although their traditional territory encompassed twenty-one individual reserves within almost 800,000 hectares, many non-Aboriginal people in the area had no idea who the Stó:lō were, where they lived, what their traditions were, or even that they continued to exist. The provincial education curriculum mandated no teaching about the Stó:lō people, and instead it emphasized study of Aboriginal societies from other regions of

Canada. So several departments within the collective Stó:lō Nation (primarily the Aboriginal Rights and Title and the Education and Community Development offices) as well as cultural advisors, Stó:lō government officials and elders, local museums and archives, and the Chilliwack School District developed a Stó:lō Nation education and cultural center.<sup>19</sup>

As a professionally trained museologist, Teresa Carlson, with Stó:lō community members, created Shxwt’a:selhawtxw—the House of Long Ago and Today—a cultural center that houses exhibits of past and present traditions, utilizing historical artifacts as well as contemporary objects. The primary role of Shxwt’a:selhawtxw is not that of a museum but rather of an educational center.<sup>20</sup>

Hands-on exhibits and experiences educate visitors of all ages in the traditional practices and current lifestyles of the Stó:lō. The Aboriginal staff of Shxwt’a:selhawtxw teach visitors not only that the history of encounters between the Stó:lō and the non-Aboriginal people is important but also that shared traditions are threads that continue to link the present with the past. What has resulted is a stronger relationship between the Stó:lō and the non-Aboriginal communities within their territory. Non-Aboriginal people now not only know of the Stó:lō and their past but are also more aware of how they continue to live and contribute to their present, shared communities. This results in more empathetic understanding toward spiritual, cultural, and ritual practices of the living community. The sharing of this knowledge has, in turn, resulted in greater numbers of returned artifacts and objects from “personal collections” and small local museums, in greater respect for areas accessed for spiritual and resource gathering practices, and in interest by non-Aboriginal people in the protection of archaeological sites.

While processes may be changing, the fact of cultural heritage sites being artifact centered has not received similar critical appraisal. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural heritage institutions have focused on archaeological, historical, contemporary, and environmental resources in the forms of landscapes, monuments and sites, material-culture collections, and archival-quality documents. Regardless of the type of facility—traditional museum or Aboriginal-controlled keeping house—they all begin with the collection of artifacts, objects, or documents as the basis of the displays. It is safe to say that most collections begin with objects that are

gathered from a particular era or part of the world and are organized into like categories such as “beadwork” or “clay pots.” These objects are then utilized to re-create large-scale reproductions of the natural environment, villages, or camp sites. In all instances, the objects tell the story. Material goods are usually described in a scientific or anthropological manner—this is what it is, this is what it was used for, this is who made it or owned it, this is when it dates from, this is the material that it is made of. The result is an emphasis on the object, while the people who created it are a secondary consideration. This is not surprising, as the cultural heritage being managed, preserved, and interpreted are tangible resources that can be easily used to represent a storied past. This reality has led to the general practice of museum exhibitions being created around artifacts with very little textual information provided by academic research rather than from objects located and used to corroborate the research-based story being told.

It is the manner in which we began this project that has set West Side Stories apart from other displays of its kind. Beginning with a research project that, while community-based, was fairly standard in form and approach within the scholarly world, the pedagogy that informed West Side Stories approached the creation of an Aboriginal-society exhibit from a different place. Instead of beginning in the past or with artifacts, West Side Stories started with a community of living people who wanted to share their history, stories, values, and ideas about who they were and how their community existed with outsiders who were not familiar with them. Arguably, this is what would happen within the environment of a keeping house, owned and operated by Indigenous people such as the Stó:lō Shxwt'a:selhawtxw is. However, the difference here is that none of the people involved were employees working to fulfill a specific mandate generated by a community or members within the community. The three cocurators of West Side Stories—Teresa Carlson, Brenda Macdougall, and Keith Carlson—are all employees of the University of Saskatchewan. Only one, Teresa Carlson, has previous experience with museology and curatorial practices; and only one, Brenda Macdougall, is Metis (although the West Side is not her territory).<sup>21</sup> However, the community heavily shaped the exhibit, because its members controlled much of the research that went into the displays by choosing the themes, by directing

the student researchers to areas and topics that mattered to them, and by framing the story that was told with their needs and interests. Consequently, West Side Stories began with words, not objects; and it is, therefore, as another institution's curator observed, “text-heavy.”<sup>22</sup>

### The Exhibit

The approach we took with West Side Stories placed agency for the storytelling with the community, whether the text was fashioned from historical records, from the narratives of ancestors embedded in the historical documents, or from first-person interviews that revealed the contemporary voice and historical interpretation. The development of West Side Stories began in January 2007; and while funding had merely come in promises of support, the opening date was set to coincide with the arrival on campus of over 5,000 scholars from across Canada and the United States, as the University of Saskatchewan hosted Congress 2007 (the largest joint annual meeting of all major academic organizations belonging to the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, held in Canada). It was hoped that the exhibit would be widely seen and commented upon by Congress attendees, which, indeed, is what occurred. Another central element during the development of West Side Stories was to design it as an exhibit that, after its time in Saskatoon, could travel to northern Saskatchewan to be displayed and permanently housed in the Metis communities that originally participated in the project. Additionally, the summer of 2007 marked the one hundredth anniversary of the final Half-Breed Claims Commission that traveled to La Loche to issue scrip.<sup>23</sup> Taking West Side Stories north at the end of August would coincide with this anniversary.

The three cocurators along with two graduate students—MacKinley Darlington and Kristina Duffee, master's students in history and Native studies respectively—began conceptualizing the form of the exhibit. The overall scope of the exhibit would examine the processes of ethnogenesis over time—how the communities not only emerged from but also shaped relationships within the territory since the late 1700s as well as how unique character and historical forces shaped their form of being Metis. As such, the exhibit was not chronologically ordered in the linear manner that usually directs exhibits. Visitors could move throughout



the exhibit in any direction, between past and present and from theme to theme, without losing sight of the overall story. For instance, the history of the mission was located next to more contemporary examples of religious influence—such as a Marian shrine re-creation that demonstrated how Catholicism and traditional spirituality work in concert today—which in turn was next to a PowerPoint presentation of how communities have created a unique typology for their homeland. Centrally located is a series of maps and other visual displays that are intended to orient visitors to the Metis spatial conceptualization of the region in general and to Île à la Crosse specifically. The placement of this element in a central location was a conscious decision meant to encourage visitors to revisit the land and relate to the stories of the people.

The central, overarching thematic structure for *West Side Stories* hinges on a representation of the in-depth role of family in the emergence of a new culture and in how individuals and groups of Metis related to one another, influenced the fur trade, transformed Catholicism and traditional spirituality into a new religious experience, shaped political relations with others, and formed the basis of stories that became fundamental to our research. We decided to prominently feature the students' research projects as three-dimensional displays. In this way, we re-created a Marian shrine and cabin (with various items identified by their Michif names); a display highlighting the local, often humorous names for various locations and neighborhoods in the village of Île à la Crosse; garden and cemetery displays, highlighted through an examination of the history of economic and spatial relationships of families in the region; and a scrip display that encompassed the narratives about how Canadian legal definitions disrupted relationships between family members.<sup>24</sup> Along with three-dimensional displays of this research, each student drafted the content for text plates and selected photographs to accompany their work.

Unable to confirm funding for the exhibit until the end of March, the real activity of building the exhibit did not actually begin until about six weeks prior to its opening. Until then, our time was spent planning exactly what we wanted to see in the exhibit, despite our collective anxiety that we would not be able to fulfill our vision or, worse, that we would be left constructing displays made of papier-mâché and crayons. Regardless, the exhibit planning pushed forward, and the team worked to appropri-

ately transform the research and generate ideas about the overall content of *West Side Stories*. Although many individuals conducted the research, the overall presentation of the exhibit required a unified stylistic approach. As a result, it was determined that Teresa Carlson and Brenda Macdougall would handle layout and design. Carlson's experience working for the Stó:lō Nation museum in British Columbia gave her the skills to design the text-plate backgrounds and create an overall unified design element. While drafting the text plates, Macdougall consciously ignored all the museological rules regarding how much text is permissible to maintain the average person's interest. Although advised that the average visitor will not read more than about fifty words per text plate, many of our plates exceeded that limit. However, most of the text on each plate was interspersed with images in an attempt to establish a visual interest.

Because the exhibit was designed around text, the breaking of this cardinal rule of museology was necessary. As text plates were drafted, they were sent to both Teresa and Keith Carlson for editing and review. Teresa also began fashioning the layout for new plates. When gaps in the research were identified, students conducted additional, secondary research and located appropriate images or photographs to fill out the content, and additional text plates were drafted.<sup>25</sup>

The strengths of each cocurator were drawn upon, and each heavily influenced the overall look and content of the exhibit. For instance, in addition to Teresa Carlson's museum experience and knowledge of design, her internal university contacts ensured that necessary items, such as vestments and other items from the Roman Catholic Church as well as a poem and letter written by Metis-leader Louis Riel, were a part of the exhibit design.<sup>26</sup> Keith Carlson had strong technical skills, such as information technology (IT) and mapping capabilities, necessary to turn the research on place names into the dynamic audiovisual PowerPoint presentation that was the central point for the entire exhibit. Brenda ensured that, as the exhibit unfolded, appropriate and authentic artifacts (beaded moccasins, vests, coats, and other items of material production, along with tools and utensils) and artwork were collected from northwestern Saskatchewan community members. Every item included in the exhibit was worn and used in the work life of people, constructed by a Metis artisan, and, as much as possible, manufactured in the north by Metis people.



1. Beaded smoked hide vest on display at Diefenbaker Canada Centre. Photo courtesy M. Teresa Carlson.

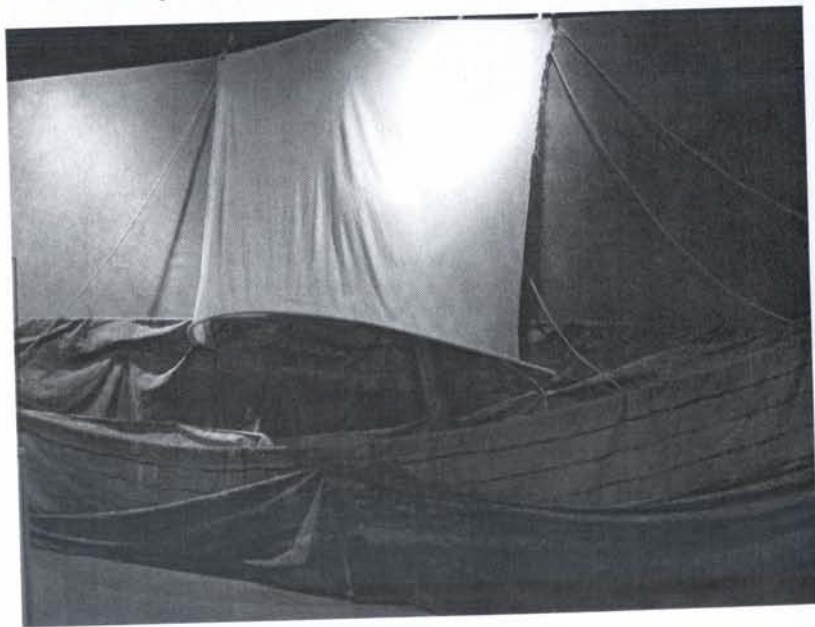


2. Detail of *Batoche* by Christi Belcourt. Photo courtesy M. Teresa Carlson.

Additionally, Brenda's broader contacts with Metis artisans and historic sites, such as the Batoche National Historic Site, provided for the inclusion of paintings and historic artifacts and reproductions in the exhibit. While not necessarily from the north, these items enhanced the textual focal points of the display. Only those items that could support and illustrate the textual content were sought. So, while there is an element of reproduction and viewing of material culture as is found in more traditional museum settings, these items were never the primary focal point for *West Side Stories*. Significantly, no single item is more important or is given more prominence in the exhibit than any other. These items were not chosen because they were the oldest, the most beautiful, the most representative, or the rarest—they were chosen only in so far as they enhanced (and did not detract from) the textual focus of the exhibit.

Significant to the overall look of the exhibit was its need to convey a sense of theater or artistic atmosphere. The right ambience, more than artifacts, was the ingredient that became the backdrop for the textual content. Finding just the right template for the text plates became a major

3. York boat on display at Diefenbaker Canada Centre. Photo courtesy Brenda Macdougall.



concern. A great deal of effort went into designing different backgrounds with distinct colors and textures. Selecting appropriate fonts and sizes and images was also part of the overall look of the exhibit. After some effort, we settled upon using a hide vest as the background for the text plates, altering it slightly to give it a more stylized representation (see fig. 1). The goal was to make the text appear as though it was printed upon stretched, smoked hide, making the exhibit appear as though it was a part of the region's traditional economy and, therefore, cultural aesthetic.

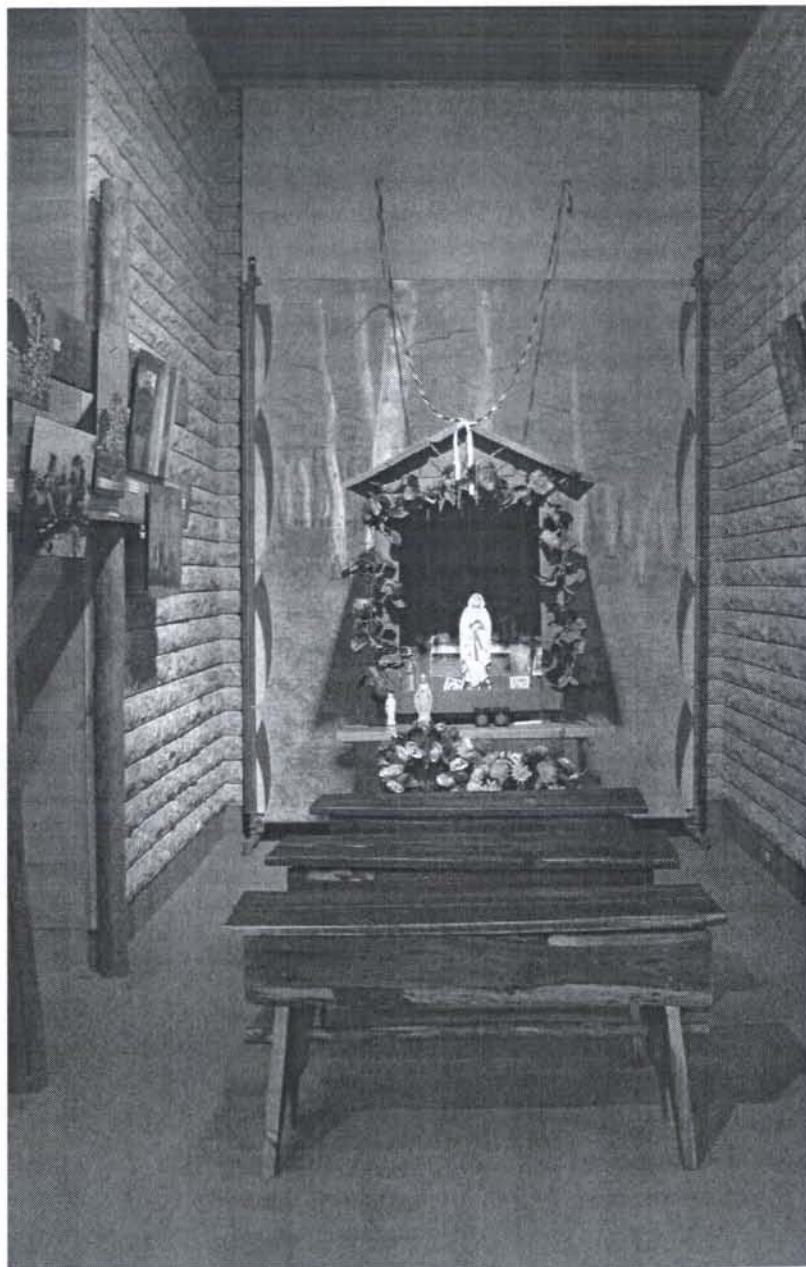
Additionally, representations of intricate flower-patterned beadwork on the text plates that introduced various sections were a subtle means of both highlighting that form of Metis art as well as marking intellectual or thematic shifts in the display itself. Instead of using actual beadwork, we utilized the paintings of Metis-artist Christi Belcourt, which reproduce beadwork using intricate patterns of painted dots (see fig. 2).

With this foundational work completed, we hired the artistic director of the Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company (SNTC), Mark Erickson, and his assistant, Jesse Gerard, to collaborate on designing and constructing the three-dimensional portions of the exhibit, including many of the backdrops upon which the text plates were hung.

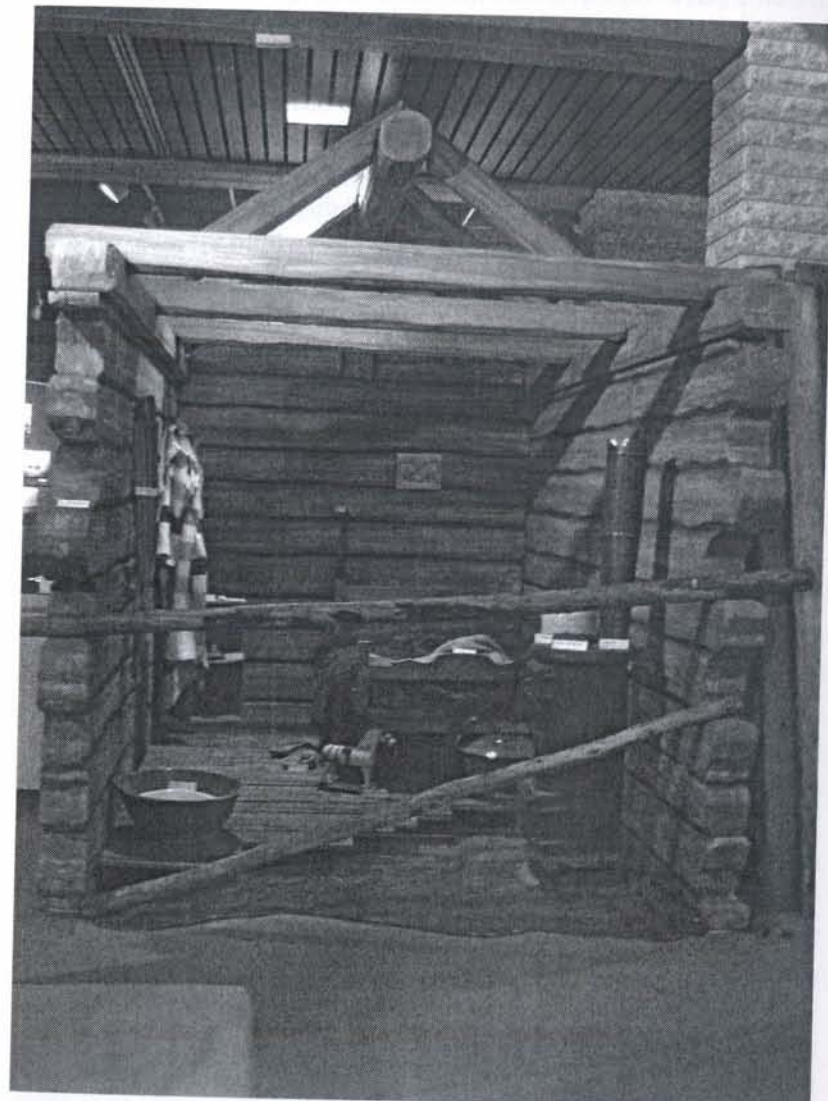
After consultations with the SNTC crew, they took our ideas about authenticity and our desire to set a more theatrical ambience and applied them to the design elements of the exhibit so that there was a singular artistic statement and mood. Erickson further created backdrops, built theatrical sets, and produced creative renderings of items that we otherwise would have had no means of replicating. For instance, the SNTC crew created a three-dimensional mural of a York boat with canvas sails and renderings of water (see fig. 3).<sup>27</sup>

An actual York boat reproduction would have had to have been borrowed and shipped, a prohibitive cost. Furthermore, because York boats were over forty feet in length, there would have been insufficient gallery space to display a boat. The SNTC crew also constructed a cabin in which household items were displayed, built picket fences like those surrounding people's homes in many northern communities, and built a Marian shrine with a mural of trees for a backdrop, as is commonly found throughout northwestern Saskatchewan (see figs. 4 and 5).

The purpose for these three-dimensional pieces was not so much to represent a real item but to set a mood for audiences that provided a sense



4. Marian Shrine replica at Diefenbaker Canada Centre. Photo courtesy Brenda Macdougall.

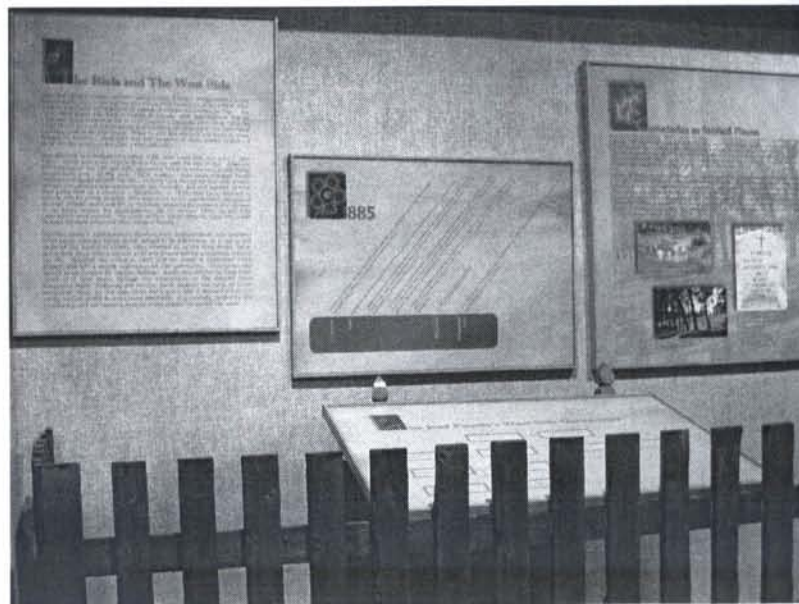


5. Replica of cabin at Diefenbaker Canada Centre. Photo courtesy Brenda Macdougall.

of how people lived and interacted as well as how they created and defined their cultural ethos.

It was important that the overall design and layout reflect the culture that was being represented and provide the sensation of being permitted to view a side of the northern Metis that is largely private and unknown. To that end, the emphasis on the northern way of life was paramount. As such, we avoided thematically or theatrically recreating the typical symbols associated with southern Metis culture—the l'Assumption sash, the particular shade of blue that adorns the Metis national flag, buffalo and Red River carts, and the iconography of Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont. Some of these symbols do appear in the exhibit, but only when they are a part of the history or cultural objects created within the communities. These types of images are commonly used on most promotional materials and displays for Metis people, and as such they have become indelible symbols of the Canadian Metis essence. However, two particular aspects made them inappropriate for our purposes. First, for the most part, they represent southern, plains-based Metis societies; and second, perhaps

6. Riel genealogy display at Diefenbaker Canada Centre. Photo courtesy Brenda Macdougall.



more importantly, they are symbols of masculinity. It was critical that *West Side Stories* provide a more balanced approach to gender and not simply fall into the reproduction of stereotypical, masculine images. By not recreating these iconic images, this exhibit attempted to challenge people to rethink their ideas about who Metis people were, how they lived, and what the culture is today.

However, because subarctic Metis identity contributes to and supports concepts of the Metis Nation as a whole, there are instances when the most iconic symbols of Metis culture appear in the exhibit. As already noted, we included the poem and letter written by Louis Riel, but we did so only because it enhanced and contributed to an important component of the region's history and highlighted the issue of relatedness as a driving force in Metis community and cultural formation (see fig. 6).

While Louis Riel himself was never known to have been in northwestern Saskatchewan, his grandfather had been sent there by a Montreal trading firm to work; and while there he married a local Dene woman. Consequently, Louis Riel's father, Jean Louis Riel, was born in Île à la Crosse. Furthermore, after entering the sisterly order of the Grey Nuns, Riel's younger sister Sara served as a missionary in Île à la Crosse until her premature death in 1883. Because she was a nun, Sara did not marry while in the region; but she did become a godmother for almost a dozen children who were born while she was serving the mission and was thus drawn into the family structure in a more personal manner than typical for clergy. Had the Riel family not been so intimately connected with the region, the letter and poem of Louis Riel would not have been included in the text.<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, the brief history of the Riel family is told from a subarctic rather than a plains perspective.

The exhibit ends by raising some difficult contemporary issues with which northern Metis communities must contend. Their continued tense relationship with the Canadian government has come to the fore recently and old wounds have been opened as the government seeks to settle claims for residential school abuses. Home to the oldest mission station in Saskatchewan, Île à la Crosse was also home to one of the oldest boarding schools in western Canada.<sup>29</sup> However, the government under the current prime minister, Stephen Harper, has declared without foundation that this school was not a "residential" school funded by the federal government.

Instead, it has been declared a provincial (and church-funded) boarding school; and therefore, former Metis students are not entitled to compensation, even if they suffered the same abuses as their First Nations cousins who went to the federal residential school at Beauval, a community located about thirty miles to the south.<sup>30</sup> The injustice of this decision speaks to the power that the scrip and treaty processes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries continue to have on shaping Canada's conceptions of who is Indian and who is Metis. Not far from this portion of the exhibit is the scrip and treaty display that deals with those very same issues and demonstrates that even the treaty and scrip commissioners had a difficult time distinguishing between the people in any meaningful way. As pictures taken at the time demonstrate, cultural or physical markers that could have distinguished Indian from Metis did not exist; and yet today we have rigid legal categories that impact people in profound ways.

The exhibit, however, did not end with a story of betrayal but rather with an assertion of identity and power through the use of community mem-

7. Samples of infinity beadwork at Diefenbaker Canada Centre. Photo courtesy Brenda Macdougall.



ber Rita Bouvier's poem, "Land is the Politic," and a collection of northern beadwork that has transformed the Metis infinity symbol into a local assertion of culture (see fig. 7).<sup>31</sup>

West Side Stories ended as it began, with stories of the land and images of the people who call it home. Our hope, though, is that this exhibit does not end there. We still hope to see it travel to the north and become a part of the cultural legacy that the Metis communities shared with us.

In many respects, West Side Stories was an experiment. It was an attempt by all three cocurators to explore new media and methods for telling the story of a people and disseminating research data. The power of the exhibit, however, lies with the people in the communities who directed the types of research that were conducted and their hope to have their story faithfully told. In this instance, the community did not simply have input into the types of stories being told—they framed the content of the entire exhibit through expressions of their values, ideals, and worldview, all which became the exhibit's text. Our goal as cocurators and researchers was to be faithful first to the culture being represented rather than to museological practice. The comment that the exhibit was text-heavy affirmed for us that we achieved what we set out to do. We located a new, transformative means to disseminate research results to a larger audience than could have been achieved with conference papers, articles, or monographs alone. When people of the West Side attended the opening of the exhibit, they commented on how profoundly touched they were by what we had done, on how so many of the displays invoked memories long forgotten, and on how satisfied they felt that it would be seen by the young people of Saskatchewan. Similarly, noncommunity members also conveyed their sense that West Side Stories was aesthetically attractive and that the story being told was fresh and innovative. Significantly, West Side Stories touched people both emotionally and intellectually because it is an account of a people's humanity.

#### Notes

The support of the northwestern Saskatchewan families and the Northwest Métis Council made both the exhibit and this article possible; to all, we thank you for your kindness and generosity. Financial assistance for this research and exhibit came from the Métis National Council (MNC), the University of Saskatchewan, and

the CURA project "Otipimsuak—the Free People: Métis Land and Society in Northwest Saskatchewan," funded through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). Thank you to co-leads Dr. Frank Tough, Dr. Lawrence Martz, and Clément Chartier for your help and support. A special thanks to all of those individuals who loaned us their personal art and artifacts so that West Side Stories was a success. The writing of this article would not have been possible if not for you all.

1. The Métis communities in northwestern Saskatchewan are all linked to one another by family ties and shared histories. They include Île à la Crosse, Green Lake, La Loche, Dillon, Turnor Lake, Buffalo Narrows, Dore Lake, Beauval, Patuanak, Pinehouse, Sled Lake, Canoe Narrows, Cole Bay, Jans Bay, Michel Village, Deschamps Lake, Bear Creek, and St. Georges Hill.
2. The "Otipimsuak—the Free People" project received three-year funding in 2004 and then received a one-year extension to complete the research. The principal investigators for this project are Dr. Frank Tough, University of Alberta; Dr. Lawrence Martz, University of Saskatchewan; and Clément Chartier, former president of the Métis National Council. It also involves various faculty and student researchers from those two universities as well as trained community researchers in those communities.
3. Throughout this paper the term *Metis*—without an accent—is used to denote mixed-descent people who forged for themselves separate and distinct communities from either of their Indian and European ancestors. The use of the term without an accent over the *e* signifies that it is being used to encompass all mixed-descent people in the region. The reason for this choice is that *Métis* typically implies specific historical circumstance associated with French and Catholic influences that originated with the eastern trade routes prior to the fall of New France and the Scottish takeover of the St. Lawrence trade. The term *half-breed*, also known as "the country born," has historically referred to English and Scottish mixed-bloods who came out of the Hudson's Bay Company trade. The Métis of northwestern Saskatchewan are predominantly, although not exclusively, from French and Cree forebears. So we use the term to be inclusive of all mixed ancestry people in the area. However, *Métis* has modern legal and political usage, as it was spelled this way in the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982. For consistency's sake, this spelling has been adopted by Métis political organizations such as the Métis National Council (MNC) and, therefore, is used as the spelling in the CURA project.
4. Jacqueline Peterson was the first to coin the word ethnogenesis in her PhD research, "The People in Between: Indian-White Marriage and the Genesis of a Métis Society and Culture in the Great Lakes Region, 1680–1830," (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, 1980). The term refers to the birth of a culture, which, she notes, in the case of the Métis occurred in the Great Lakes

during the fur trade; although, she also argues that notions of being a separate people with a national consciousness did not occur until the end of the Pemican Wars and the Battle of Seven Oaks in 1815 at Red River.

5. Perhaps the two best examples of this type of scholarship are Marcel Giraud, *The Métis in the Canadian West*, 2 vols., trans. George Woodcock (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1986); and George Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* (1936; repr., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992). Giraud and Stanley both interpret Métis history as being the result of a collision of civilization and savagery on the southern plains. As with all frontier paradigm scholarship, Giraud and Stanley explain the outcome of colonial conquest and rationalize the relationship of the state to those cultures ill prepared for the modern world. A similar, although more sympathetic, rendering of events and treatment of the Métis can be found in John Kinsey Howard, *Strange Empire* (New York: William Morrow, 1952).
6. Cuthbert Grant, a North West Company employee, led Métis traders and hunters in their first resistance against the Hudson's Bay Company in the early nineteenth century, an act that resulted in the Battle of Seven Oaks. Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont are the two most celebrated Métis leaders having challenged the Canadian state's right to colonize western Canada. Through the formation of the Provisional Council in 1869–70, Riel negotiated the creation of the Province of Manitoba and secured land and cultural rights for the Métis within that province. In 1885 Riel and Dumont attempted to do the same along the south Saskatchewan River valley although their efforts resulted in an armed conflict known as the Northwest Resistance. Riel was subsequently hanged for high treason, while Dumont fled Canada and traveled in the American West and Europe as a part of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show before returning to Saskatchewan, where he remained until his death in 1906. See Don McLean, "Cuthbert Grant: First Leader of the Métis," *Fifty Historical Vignettes: Views of the Common People* (Regina SK: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 1989); Denis Combet, ed., *Gabriel Dumont: The Memoirs as Dictated by Gabriel Dumont and Gabriel Dumont's Story*, trans. Lise Gaboury-Diallo (Saint-Boniface MB: Éditions du blé, 2006); George Woodcock, *Gabriel Dumont* (Don Mills ON: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1978); George F. G. Stanley, ed., *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985); and Maggie Siggins, *Riel: A Life of Revolution* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1994).
7. Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980); Frits Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Riel Resistance* (Winnipeg MB: Watson and Dwyer, 1991); Irene Sprye, "The Métis and Mixed-Bloods of Rupert's Land Before 1870," in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, ed. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown (Winnipeg: University of Man-

itoba Press, 1986), 95–118; Gerhard J. Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Métis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670–1870* (Winnipeg MB: Watson and Dwyer, 1980); Martha Haroun Foster, *We Know Who We Are: Métis Identity in a Montana Community* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006); Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); Tanis C. Thorne, *The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indian on the Lower Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996); Lucy Eldersveld Murphy, *A Gathering of Rivers: Indians, Métis, and Mining in the Western Great Lakes, 1737–1832* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000); Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660–1900* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004); Brenda Macdougall, “Wahkootowin: Family and Cultural Identity,” *Canadian Historical Review* 87, no. 3 (2006): 431–62; and Nicole St-Onge, “Uncertain Margins: Métis and Saukteaux Identities in St-Paul des Saukteaux, Red River 1821–1870,” *Manitoba History* 53 (October 2006): 1–9.

8. *Wahkootowin* is a Cree term used to express the sense that family was the foundational relationship for pursuing any economic, political, social, or cultural activities and alliances. See Brenda Macdougall, “Wahkootowin,” as well as Brenda Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan, 1776–1907,” (PhD diss., University of Saskatchewan, 2005).

9. The XY Company’s actual name was the New North West Company; but because of the confusion that would have caused, it was referred to as the XY Company. The term XY was taken from the company’s brand, which they used to mark their fur and supply bundles. See Lawrence J. Burpee, *The Search for the Western Sea: The Story of the Exploration of North Western America*, 2 vols., rev. ed. (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1935); Edith I. Burley, *Servants of the Honourable Company: Work, Discipline, and Conflict in the Hudson’s Bay Company, 1770–1879* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997); Gordon Charles Davidson, *The Northwest Company* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1918); and Arthur S. Morton, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870–71*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973). Despite a lack of firm demographic sources, archaeologists and anthropologists have endeavored to trace the ethnohistorical and material culture of the subarctic Woods Crees and Denes in northwestern Saskatchewan to determine which people first occupied the region around Île à la Crosse. It is generally accepted that the Churchill River is the dividing line between Cree and Dene territory and that Île à la Crosse was the frontier between those two societies. See Robert Jarvenpa, *The Trappers of Patuanak: Towards a Spacial Ecology of Modern Hunters* (Ottawa ON: National Museum of Canada, 1980); Robert Jarvenpa and Hetty Jo Brumbach, *Ethno-Archeological and Cultural Frontiers: Atha-*

*bascan, Algonquian, and European Adaptation in the Central Subarctic* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989); David W. Friesen, *The Cree Indians of Northern Saskatchewan: An Overview of the Past and Present* (Saskatoon SK, 1973), 7; and Morton, *History of the Canadian West*.

10. The mission’s significance to the community is evident when considering the mission’s remarkable growth. Within a few decades, the Île à la Crosse mission became a large, thriving religious and economic center in the region, housing a contingent of Oblate priests, lay brothers, and Sisters of Charity (“Grey Nuns”), who arrived from Montreal in 1860 to establish the school and hospital. By 1867, missionaries had expanded the Île à la Crosse mission to include the Grey Nuns’ school for girls, an orphanage for boys, a small home for the elderly and infirmed, and a hospital for anyone in need of medical services. Gaston Carrière, OMI, “The Oblates and the Northwest, 1845–1861,” *The Canadian Catholic Historical Association Study Sessions* (Ottawa ON: Canadian Historical Association, 1970): 35–66; Thérèse Castonguay SGM, *A Leap in Faith: The Grey Nuns Ministries in Western and Northern Canada* (Edmonton: Grey Nuns of Alberta, 1999), 2:17; Martha McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Sea: Oblate Missions to the Dene, 1847–1921* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1995); and Raymond J. Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996).
11. The observance of Catholic rituals in the English River District has been attributed to the efforts of Catholic Francophones in the employ of, first, the North West Company (NWC) and then the HBC, who adhered to these rituals in an effort to maintain, and also to re-create, familiar sociocultural values within a foreign space. According to voyageur scholar Carolyn Podruchny, experienced voyageurs ritually baptized novice Canadian fur traders in the St. Lawrence River at three sites to mark their entrance into the West and, symbolically, the beginning of their new lives. The third and final site of the voyageurs’ ritual baptisms was at Portage La Loche, the northernmost post in the English River District, where the men began the dangerous, thirteen-mile Methye Portage, a trail that covered a succession of hills before arriving at the edge of a steep precipice demarcating the continental divide. Just as baptisms were performed without clergy, HBC records note that by the 1820s the local population acknowledged the power of the saints over their lives and regularly observed the Sabbath. While not a mandatory religious obligation, Metis people of the district annually observed All Saints Day—a holy day on November 1 for remembering martyrs. Furthermore, Sunday services for the populace were held at the chief factors’ house at the post throughout the early 1800s. See Carolyn Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006); Carolyn Podruchny, “Baptising Novices: Ritual Moments among French Canadian Voyageurs in the Montreal Fur Trade, 1780–1821,” *Canadian Historical Review* 83, no. 2 (2002): 173–74; Carolyn Podruchny, “Dieu, Diable, and the Trick-



- ster': Voyageur Religious Syncretism in the *pays den haut*, 1770–1821," *Etude Oblates de l'Ouest* 5 (2000): 75–92; McCarthy, *From the Great River*, 32–33; Carrière, "Oblates and the Northwest," 45–46; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*; and A. G. Morice, OMI, *History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada: From Lake Superior to the Pacific* (Toronto: The Masson Book, 1910). See also *Île à la Crosse Post Journals, 1819–1820*, November 1, 1820, HBC Archives, B.89/a/4, Winnipeg; *Île à la Crosse Post Journals, 1824–1825*, November 21, 1824, HBC Archives, B.89/a/8, Winnipeg.
12. When Rupertsland became incorporated into Canada in 1870, only the very small, postage-stamp province of Manitoba was accorded the same status as the other provinces in the confederation. Until 1905, when the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan were created, the majority of what are now the western provinces were collectively the North West Territory and as such were governed as a colonial frontier by Ottawa. However, these provinces did not gain the full governing rights granted to other provinces until 1930, when they gained control over their natural resources and resource revenue. Until 1930 development of those provincial natural resources and any income derived from that development belonged to the federal government, which would, in turn, transfer monies to Alberta and Saskatchewan accordingly.
  13. According to 1997 statistics, Aboriginal people made up 87 percent of northern Saskatchewan's population of 40,000. There has not been a significant shift in the population in the last decade; and, overall, the entire provincial population has held steady at just over or just under 1 million since the 1960s. Graham F. Parsons and Ron Barsi, "Uranium Mining in Northern Saskatchewan: A Public-Private Transition," in *Large Mines and the Community: Socioeconomic and Environmental Effects in Latin America, Canada, and Spain*, ed. Gary McMahon and Felix Remy, [http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-28034-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-28034-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html).
  14. See F. Laurie Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins: The Native Policies of Tommy Douglas and the CCF* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997); and David Quiring, *CCF Colonialism in Northern Saskatchewan: Battling Parish Priests, Bootleggers, and Fur Sharks* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004).
  15. While it was announced in 2005 that the Metis were to be compensated, no monies were paid out at that time. In 2007 the federal government again reassured the Metis that they would be compensated, although to date no funds have been released. "Métis Receive \$20M in Bomb-Range Compensation," *CBC News*, March 18, 2005; "Ottawa Pledges \$15M for Métis Communities Affected by Air Weapons Range," *CBC News*, January 22, 2007. The Buffalo River Dene Nation, however, have not been satisfied with the compensation and since 2001 have opposed what they deem to be the theft and destruction of their traditional territory and have actively asserted their rights to hunt there.
  16. Deborah Doxtator, "The Home of the Indian Culture and Other Stories in the Museum," *Muse* 6, no. 3 (1988): 26–29; Assembly of First Nations and Canadian Museum Association, *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships Between Museums and First Peoples: Task Force Report on Museums and First People* (Ottawa, 1992); Moira McLouglin, "Of Boundaries and Borders: First Nations History in Museums," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 18 (1993): 365–85; and Danielle LaVaque-Manty, "There Are Indians in the Museum of Natural History," *Wicazo Sa Review* 15 (2000): 71–89.
  17. Majorie Halprin, "Museums Marketing and Modern Anthropology," *Reviews in Anthropology* 17 (1991): 99–110; Julia D. Harrison and Bruce G. Trigger, "'The Spirit Sings' and the Future of Anthropology," *Anthropology Today* 4, no. 6 (1988): 6–9; and Richard Atleo, "Policy Development of Museums: A First Nations Perspective," *BC Studies* 89 (1991): 48–61.
  18. Unlike the United States, Canada has no Repatriation Act. Any removal of artifacts from public viewing or return of remains and objects is done only at the inclination of the museum or cultural heritage site.
  19. The Stó:lō Nation education and cultural center was established in 1994. Within a few years, the group's work resulted in publishing two books with accompanying teaching guides and syllabi, which could replace antiquated and irrelevant core curriculum, as well as an award-winning historical atlas, which was on the provincial best-sellers list for four consecutive months. See Keith Thor Carlson, ed., *A Stó:lō Coast Salish Historical Atlas* (Vancouver BC: Douglas and McIntyre, 2001); and Keith Thor Carlson, ed., *You Are Asked to Witness: The Stó:lō in Canada's Pacific Coast History* (Chilliwack BC: Stó:lō Heritage Trust, 1997).
  20. Shxwt'a:selhawtxw was born from a need for teachers and students to experience aspects of the Stó:lō way of life, philosophy, technology, and culture through a hands-on approach. By touring the longhouse in which the Shxwt'a:selhawtxw is housed, people can participate in demonstrations of fishing, weaving, and carving. See "Chilliwack," *British Columbia Tourism Travel Guide*, <http://www.britishcolumbia.com/regions/towns/?townID=3357>; Meagan Easters, "Repatriation as a Reflection of Stó:lō Cultural Values: *Tset Tháyeltxwem Te lálém S'olhetawtxw* (We Are Building a House of Respect)" (master's thesis, Carleton University, 2004); and "Field Trip Information," *Fraser River Sturgeon Conservation Society*, <http://www.frasersturgeon.com/pdf/HSBCSchool/fieldtrip.pdf>.
  21. With a postgraduate diploma in cultural resource management, Teresa helped to develop the Shxwt'a:selhawtxw by both working with the artifacts and designing the hands-on portions of the museum's exhibits. She additionally worked in the Stó:lō Nation's archeological repository. Since being at the University of Saskatchewan, Teresa has done the same work with the DCC, which mounts various exhibits throughout the year and oversees the development of educational curriculum about those exhibits so tours of school children are able to learn about issues and ideas that they may not have had exposure to otherwise.

22. The expression used was a descriptive observation rather than a negative criticism, although it may have been a subtle assessment of our approach to the exhibit. The speaker of that phrase also noted that the cultural heritage site where he worked would never have used as much text to identify the collections being represented and would have included more artifacts.
23. Scrip, either in the form of land or money, was offered to the Métis of western Canada in order to extinguish their Aboriginal title. To qualify for scrip, an individual applied to the Half-Breed Claims Commission during travel to different regions. Scrip was issued first in Manitoba in 1875 and then in the rest of western Canada between 1885 and 1921. Some of the most comprehensive descriptions and analyses of the scrip system can be found in Frank Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail: Native Peoples And the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1996); and D. N. Sprague, *Canada and the Métis, 1869–1885* (Waterloo ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1988).
24. Michif, a blended language of Cree (or Saulteaux) and French, has received a great deal of scholarly attention in recent years. To a lesser degree, scholars have also examined Bungi, a blend of Cree and Gaelic spoken by British Half-Breeds in the Red River area in the nineteenth century. There is some debate among linguists as to whether the language on the West Side is indeed Michif. However, the people are firm in their assertion that they speak a form of Michif that is unique to their community—it is more Cree than French in both content and structure. See Peter Bakker, *A Language of Our Own: The Genesis of Michif, the Mixed Cree-French Language of the Canadian Métis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); John Crawford, "What is Michif? Language in the Métis Tradition" in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, ed. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1981), 231–42; Patrick C. Douaud, *Ethnolinguistic Profile of the Canadian Métis Mercury Series—Canadian Ethnology Service Paper 99* (Ottawa ON: National Museum of Man, 1985); Margaret R. Stobie, "Background of the Dialect Called Bungi," *Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba* 3, no. 24 (1967–1968): 65–75; and Margaret R. Stobie, "The Dialect Called Bungi," *Canadian Antiques Collector* 6, no. 8 (1971): 20.
25. Photographs were selected from several archival repositories including the Saskatchewan Archives Board, the Société historique de Saint-Boniface, and the Gabriel Dumont Institute. Material relating to scrip in northwestern Saskatchewan was provided by the Métis Archival Project, directed by Dr. Frank Tough (<http://www.ualberta.ca/NATIVESTUDIES/research/mapresearch.pdf>), while research on more contemporary issues, such as residential schools and the Primrose Lake Air Weapons Range, were obtained from recent news coverage by the *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), and the *Toronto Globe and Mail*.
26. Two weeks before being hanged in 1885, Louis Riel wrote a letter and poem to his jailer, Robert Gordon. Both the letter and the poem begin with apologies to Robert Gordon for keeping him waiting for the poem and for the author's poor English before dealing with themes of spiritual redemption and virtue. This letter and poem were in the possession of Edna Robinson, whose father was a newspaper owner in eastern Canada who came into ownership of the writing when he published it in his paper. The letter and poem are one of the few known pieces of Riel's writing to be in English, making it extremely rare. Mrs. Robinson left the letter and poem to the University of Saskatchewan in her will and the bequest was turned over in the fall of 2006. See Louis Riel to Robert Gordon, October 27, 1885, Special Collections, University of Saskatchewan Library.
27. The York boat was an inland boat used by the HBC to carry furs and trade goods along inland waterways in Canada. It was named after York Factory, the headquarters of the HBC, and modeled after Orkney Islands fishing boats, which descended from the Viking longboat. The York boat was preferential to the canoe as a cargo carrier because of its larger size, greater capacity, and improved stability in rough water. It was about fourteen meters long (forty-six feet), and the largest could carry over six tons (13,000 pounds) of cargo. It had a pointed bow, a flat bottom, and a forty-five-degree-angle stern, making beaching and launching easier. The boat was propelled both by oars and by a canvas sail, and it was steered with a long steering pole or with a rudder when under sail. It had a crew of six to eight men.
28. For an overview of the Riel family history, see Maggie Siggins, *Riel: A Life of Revolution* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1994). The information about Sister Sara Riel was drawn from the Île à la Crosse mission records, Registres paroissiaux, 1867–1912, *Eglise catholique, Mission de Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Île à la Crosse, Saskatchewan*, Société historique de Saint-Boniface.
29. The boarding school at Île à la Crosse was established the same year that the Oblates arrived (1846). However, it grew in size; so by the twentieth century, the school boasted a separate school building and boys' and girls' dormitories. The facility was simply known as the Île à la Crosse boarding school and operated until it burned down in the mid-twentieth century. At that time, under pressure from the community, the province of Saskatchewan assumed responsibility for education in northwestern Saskatchewan and instituted a public school system.
30. The prime minister's comments actually demonstrate how little we know about the running and maintenance of the residential school system. We know from community members that some First Nations students attended school in Île à la Crosse, while some Métis students from the region attended school at Beauval.
31. Rita Bouvier, "Land Is the Politic," in *Blueberry Clouds* (Saskatoon SK: Thistle-down Press, 1999). The infinity patterned beadwork came from the collections of Clément Chartier and Brenda Macdougall.