

**Report for Gunn Métis Local No. 55 Participation in National Energy Board Hearing re: Kinder
Morgan Transmountain Expansion**

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Purpose of Report

This report examines and chronicles the archival and other documented evidence pertaining to the historic central practices and traditions integral to the way of life of the Métis population encompassing: Jasper and Grande Cache to the west, Lesser Slave Lake to the north, St. Albert to the east, and Buffalo Lake to the south (defined hereafter as “the Region”). It is my opinion that the Métis settlement of Lac Ste. Anne forms the central node of a broader Métis community encompassing the Region, and that this community emerged in the early nineteenth century. These connections were made, and maintained, through familial ties as well as the Métis’ mode of life characterized by regular travel among Métis settlements and during resource-getting or other social, cultural and economic activities, which maintained the Métis’ community cohesiveness and collective identity.

This report presents and interprets evidence relating to Métis social, cultural, and economic history in this Region. In particular, in my instruction re: Gunn Métis Local No. 55 Participation in National Energy Board Hearing re: Kinder Morgan Transmountain Expansion, I was asked by Woodward & Co Lawyers LLP to provide my opinion in addressing a number of queries. These are answered in detail in this report, and briefly summarized below in the executive summary. It is important to note that the names of Métis individuals and families have been removed from this report, except for those who have themselves contributed to published books or articles, in order to respect the privacy of the living descendants of these families who were not consulted at any stage in the research or writing process.

I certify that I am aware that as an expert witness, my duty is to assist the court and not to be an advocate for any party. My report conforms to that duty, and, if called on to give oral or written testimony, I will give testimony in conformity with that duty.

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INTRODUCTION

Brief overview of the report's main findings:

- Mobility and freedom from outsider interference was the central tradition of the Métis of the Region. Integral to their way of life was the ability to get resources – whether products of the hunt, fish, or material resources— to trade them where they liked, and to return to their settlements as they pleased.
- The Métis of the Region exploited the resources of a large territory beyond their settlements that extended south into the Bow River area and northwest into the Peace River area.
- The Métis in the Region travelled extensively, including beyond the boundaries of the Region, and in the process physically occupied a vast area with permanent and semi-permanent settlements, established regular routes of travel, cultivated fields (an activity which intensified as the nineteenth century drew to a close), and used definite tracts of land for hunting, fishing and gathering.
- The Métis in the Region relied upon a diverse array of resources. Resource use included: hunting animals, cultivating fields, and gathering and extracting plants, other organics (such as trees for timber), and minerals.
- The Métis had a mixed economy that featured commercial and subsistence fishing, hunting, trapping, part-time farming, operating as independent traders, guides, outfitters and entrepreneurs, and working for the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) as well as others who came through the Region including missionaries and settlers.

List of documents reviewed

This report was compiled from archival and published primary and secondary source research. Archival material was utilized from: the Hudson's Bay Company Archives (housed at the Archives of Manitoba), Winnipeg; the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton; the Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (accessed online for digitized Métis Scrip records); the Musée Héritage Museum, St. Albert; and the University of Alberta Archives, Edmonton. A complete list of the sources cited in this report can be found in the Endnotes and Bibliography sections.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

QUESTION 1: Please describe the evidence, if any, in the historical documents of the establishment of central practices, customs and traditions of the Métis community(ies) in the Region. In other words, what were the important aspects of Métis life and defining features of their special relationship to the land?

- **The Métis in the Region valued mobility and freedom from outside restraint above all else, as this ensured them the ability to: support themselves and their families in a variety of ways, often persevering over harsh environmental conditions; trade without restriction and assert their independence; and maintain their connections to multiple places and to the Métis and others who frequented those places.**

QUESTION 2: Please describe any evidence in the historical documents regarding the establishment of physical occupation of lands by the Métis community(ies) within the Region, including but not limited to routes of transportation and travel, the construction of dwellings, cultivation and enclosure of fields, and regular use of definite tracts of land for hunting, fishing, or otherwise exploiting resources.

- **The historic record provides abundant evidence that demonstrates the Métis community within the Region physically occupied lands via regular routes of transportation and travel, the construction of dwellings, cultivation and enclosure of fields, and regular use of definite tracts of land for hunting, fishing and otherwise exploiting resources, which occurred throughout (and beyond) the nineteenth century.**

QUESTION 3: What material resources historically supported the Métis community(ies) within the Region?

- **The Métis community within the Region consistently relied upon an extensive range of varied resources. Hunting generally ranked as the most important, followed by fishing, gathering, and the Euro-Canadian settler style of agriculture (including pasturing horses and raising livestock). While over time the relative importance of certain resources the Métis relied upon may have changed, most notably relying more upon other animals to hunt after the decline of the buffalo population, Métis resource getting practices – of hunting, gathering, and cultivating – remained consistent throughout and beyond the nineteenth century.**

DETAILED RESPONSES

QUESTION 1: Please describe the evidence, if any, in the historical documents of the establishment of central practices, customs and traditions of the Métis community(ies) in the Region. In other words, what were the important aspects of Métis life and defining features of their special relationship to the land?

In regards to their special relationship to the land, the Métis' central practices, customs and traditions all revolved around mobility and freedom. In a sense, the Métis culture in the Region was very much about maintaining their identity as "freemen," or those without a contract with a fur trade company (and as "freewomen" for that matter). **The Métis in the Region valued mobility and freedom from outside restraint above all else, as this ensured them the ability to: support themselves and their families in a variety of ways, often persevering over harsh environmental conditions; trade without restriction and assert their independence; and maintain their connections to multiple places and to the Métis and others who frequented those places.** Such frequent travel, however, did not undermine their sense of community or cohesiveness. Indeed, Father Rene Remas observed in 1864, during the fall buffalo hunt in which a significant portion of the Métis in the Region participated, "that movement from place to place was the only distinguishing mark between the St. Albert-Lac Ste. Anne people and a normal county parish in France."¹

Numerous scholars have commented on the importance of mobility and freedom for the Métis. Marcel Giraud described the Métis of the West as different from those at Red River; the latter, he felt, were more sedentary, while the former enjoyed the ability to move when the desire struck and "accepted confinement in a post with an ill grace."² Anne Anderson contends, "The true characteristics of the Freemen were the love for freedom and the love for excitement in buffalo hunts."³ Étienne Rivard describes this cultural characteristic best; focussing on the Métis of the northwest, he writes spatial mobility was one

central component of Métis territorial experience in the nineteenth-century Northwest. Despite their importance in Métis life, settlements were not continuously inhabited, for many Métis would leave them, often for years. Settlements were points of both departure and arrival. They were elements of a broader network of places dispersed over the prairie, which included winter camps or hunting areas. *Métis mobility was the backbone of this network. It was what connected all these places together.*⁴

The evidence of the Métis from the Region confirms all of these depictions.

Mobility for getting resources was a central component to the Métis' relationship to the land. The HBC Edmonton Post Journal, for example, regularly announced the passage of Métis from the parkland to the prairies to hunt (as detailed in Question 3). Peter Erasmus, a noted Métis hunter and historical figure recounted the large parties of Métis going to the plains to hunt bison via Edmonton,

writing, “The halfbreeds from Lac Ste. Anne came in with nearly a hundred and fifty horses and dogsleds. As soon as there was sufficient snow they made their way out to the plains to prepare dried provisions for their winter use and to trade for winter necessities.”⁵ Erasmus would continue that St. Albert’s “regular custom” was participating in the annual bison hunts.⁶

The distances travelled each year by Métis hunters impressed contemporary observers. Captain W. F. Butler, a British army officer and adventurer who visited the North West in 1876, estimated that Métis hunters travelled over 500 miles in the course of a single summer and described them as “lords over all they survey.”⁷ In addition to the Métis who spent significant amounts of time at one settlement or another, groups of Métis freemen known as *hivernants* or winter rovers also frequented the Region. These groups, which included whole families and extended families, led what was perceived as a “nomadic” existence, hunting and trapping along the margins of the parkland or in wooded areas between the North Saskatchewan and the Athabasca Rivers in the winter, and either continuing to hunt there in the summer or joining the buffalo hunt on the prairies. The Edmonton Post Report of 1862 remarked that the best furs traded at the post came from the winter rovers.⁸ Of these winter rovers, Butler wrote, “Almost nothing is known of the precise locations of the St. Albert winter rovers who wintered in the parkland or forest rather than on the prairie...Some of the winter rovers...penetrated deep into the forest region where the better furs could be gotten, but the majority seem to have established their winter quarters on the parkland’s southern margins.” Butler travelled to one of these camps, five days from St. Albert, and described it as “one of those curious assemblages of half-breed hunters which are to be found in winter on the borders of the great plains.”⁹

Along with the Métis’ mobile lifestyle came an entrepreneurial spirit of independence. The Métis travelled when they wanted to, traded when and with whom they wanted to, and resisted any restrictions to such freedoms. Their constant employment as guides and outfitters also fit this character trait as well; the Métis in the Region, who became reputed as guides, could assume a leadership position and show their knowledge of travelling over lands in which outsiders struggled to survive. This included, most notably, developing modes of hunting to best avoid conflict with the Blackfoot, or to prevail in any battle should it occur, such as travelling in large groups and assuming a quasi-military organization while on the buffalo hunt. When acting as guides or *engagés*, the Métis continued to implement this strategy. For example, in June 1859 Captain John Palliser, who travelled to the Region in 1858-1859 in command of an expedition which was surveying the North West, recorded an instance where, after informing his party which included “half-breed hunters” of his intent to go through Blackfoot territory, the Métis only agreed to proceed further if they could send one of their men back to Lac Ste. Anne to hire another five men from there to ensure security.¹⁰

The Métis’ desire for autonomy and their identity as “freemen” also included undermining the HBC’s ongoing attempts to monopolize trade in Rupert’s Land. Indeed, not all furs the Métis traded went to the company posts in the Region; instead, the Métis of the Region would either go to a different post offering a better rate, or wait for free traders to come to them offering better bargains. For instance, when some Lac Ste. Anne Métis realized they could make a better profit at Red River than they could at Fort Edmonton, they took their furs there. The Fort Edmonton Post Journal for 23 April 1856

records the author's displeasure at one of these occurrences: "This morning we beheld with vocation[sic] five of the Lake St. Anne Freeman with 30 horses Crossing the river below the Fort on their way to Red River carrying away with them 500 Martens together with other valuable furs to be sold there."¹¹ The Lac Ste. Anne Métis also proclaimed the invalidity of the Charter which granted a trade monopoly to the Hudson's Bay Company. As Giraud describes, the Métis population welcomed visits from free traders

who often bought their furs on better terms than the trading fort. At Lake St. Anne, at Deer Lake, trade was carried on freely with these merchants, who arrived either from the Red River or from the American territory...The population of Lake St. Anne...seduced by the advantageous conditions offered by the traders of the Red River, reserved their best furs for them; they would hide them carefully to await the arrival of the free traders in their carts.¹²

Such activities led HBC Chief Factor John Rowand at Fort Edmonton to write to HBC Governor George Simpson in 1853 complaining a spirit of hostility and insubordination existed towards the HBC in the west which the Métis around his post were helping to spread.¹³

Finally, the Métis in the Region regularly visited those places, and notably the people at those places, important to them. Such visits, referred to by traders and missionaries as "rendez-vous", were large gatherings that included trade and religious ceremonies, with much celebrating. Trudy Nicks and Kenneth Morgan explain how such gatherings worked:

During the fall and winter seasons, in particular, the population was distributed in small extended family groups. In spring and summer large groups might have come together in favorable locations, for example where fish and berries were plentiful, or at mission stations...The gatherings facilitated socializing, arranging of marriages, and the establishment of new economic partnerships among kin for the coming fall and winter.¹⁴

Lac Ste. Anne would become the central point for these gatherings on the parkland. Lac Ste. Anne was located near the Northern woodlands and the western plains and thus made an ideal meeting place where peoples from these environments could gather and trade. Jessica Buresi describes the strategic location of the Métis site succinctly:

As Lac Ste-Anne is situated somewhat in the centre of this larger transitional ecotone region, it was conveniently located for different peoples travelling to rendezvous there. Lac Ste-Anne is further situated at the conjunction of two river drainage basins, and lies between the all-important North Saskatchewan river, which flows north into the Athabasca River, and finally into the Arctic Ocean. Lakes and water ways in general were the single most important land marks for the Cree peoples of the northern Boreal forests.¹⁵

Finally, the Métis at Lac Ste. Anne requested a Catholic mission to be built there, which occurred in 1844 and then helped to cement the settlement's central importance to the Métis community.

While the end of the bison hunt effectively concluded the large Métis-First Nations gatherings on the prairies that had occurred for generations, this social and cultural occurrence continued to operate at Lac Ste. Anne, and continues to do so today, in the form of the annual religious pilgrimage to the lake, where Métis, First Nations, and others visit each July. But the pilgrimage is symbolic of far more than simply attending a religious event; it offered the Métis a journey to engage in a “traditional practice of travelling ‘from one end of the prairie to the other’ for a kind of celebration, even if that celebration had drastically changed in name and rites.”¹⁶ Evidence for this assertion is found in the Lac Ste. Anne Codex Historicus, which records that pilgrims would arrive much earlier than July – sometimes in the spring – and would stay for far longer than the pilgrimage – until the fall.¹⁷ Buresi notes in her research that she found many people who travelled to Lac Ste. Anne for the pilgrimage did not take part in the Catholic rites. The pilgrimage thus provided only one, and not necessarily the most important, reason for ongoing visits to Lac Ste. Anne.

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The Métis community in the Region was connected by a network of trails, cart paths, and eventually roads that linked the Métis locales; much like spokes on a wheel, these often led to central settlements demarcated by the Lac Ste. Anne-St. Albert-Edmonton area. The Métis established dwellings throughout the parkland, the Rockies, and the prairies; archaeologists and nineteenth century accounts alike have described these as timber structures that were relatively quickly built yet sturdy enough to survive the harsh elements, and to which the Métis regularly returned if not living in them year-round. As described in Question 3, the Euro-Canadian, settler style of agriculture, whereby farming was the principal source of subsistence, was not likely practiced to any noticeable extent in the Region until the 1840s, but increased in importance thereafter in Lac Ste. Anne and, later, St. Albert, especially after the buffalo hunt ended in 1881. Finally, the historic record provides fairly detailed – though incomplete – accounts pinpointing the tracts of land where the Métis of the Region regularly hunted, fished, and exploited other resources. Note the definite tracts of land described below are focussed largely on those established as a result of the bison hunt, as this information is most accessible in the written record, and therefore is not to be considered an exhaustive survey.

Routes of Travel & Transportation:

As described above, mobility was a (if not the) central feature to the Métis' culture. Beginning with their initial journey from the east to the western edge of Rupert's Land at the end of the 1700s, to their extended buffalo (among other animal) hunts, to their proficiency as freighters and guides, and the vast distances they would cover doing all three, **the Métis of the Region proved themselves adept at travel. The historic record provides concrete evidence that the Métis, both in groups and as individuals, went at the very least as far east as the Red River settlement, south to the Missouri River, west into British Columbia, and north into the Peace River area.**

The HBC was a keen observer of Métis movements. While at Lesser Slave Lake, Chief Factor Lewes described the Métis as "old Servants of the NWCo. who have Indian women and children by them an[d] thus get completely attached to the country and Indian way of living & are all alike *constantly roving about* living in leathern tents made of skins of Moose or Buffalo."¹⁸ Indeed, Lesser Slave Lake fur trade post records, as detailed by William Baergen, recorded the constant movements of Métis individuals and families.¹⁹ Meanwhile, the Edmonton Post Journal observed the constant traffic of Métis to Fort Edmonton and beyond, often describing where the Métis travellers were coming from, going to, or both, as well as existing routes of travel. Post Journal entries throughout the early to mid-century include (without repeating those noted in the answer to Question 3, and not including the constant traffic to the prairies for the buffalo hunt, which is described in detail further below in this Question):

- Apr. 15, 1833: "Freemen arrive to get supplies to go to Red River."²⁰
- Jan. 6, 1834: "Sent two men to clear the road between this and the fish Lake."²¹
- Feb. 28, 1834: "2 half-breeds from Rocky Mountain House...arrived with letters of how matters stand in that quarter."²²
- May 13, 1834: "Large group of men, women and children going to Red River; [two] other families...taken their departure for their friends in the plains where they will pass the summer. [A Métis employee of the HBC] who left them with the pemmican arrived with news that returns of Lesser Slave Lake will be here in a few days."²³
- Apr. 26, 1834: "there has been too much counselling[sic] amongst the half breeds as to going to Red River for them to attend as they ought to do their hunting."²⁴
- Mar. 27, 1857: "[A Métis] arrived from Lac St. Ann's."²⁵
- Jan. 22, 1858: "Lacombe & men arrived from Lake St. Ann's."²⁶
- Feb. 13, 1858: "[A man] sent off to Lake St. Ann's with the Packet for Mr. Lacombe & others."²⁷
- Sep. 10, 1858: "Some Freemen from [L]ake St. Ann[']s come for provisions that they left here in cache in fall, they went off again at once."²⁸

Aside from the HBC, many others recorded the movements of the Métis as well, often while employing them as guides. The Rev. Robert Rundle in 1841 noted that he travelled with a Métis man while on the way south to Bow River.²⁹ Henry Moberly recalled in 1857 that the roads were clear to Lac Ste. Anne from whence he left, on his way to Jasper House with a party of Métis, "via Island Lake to the

Pembina” where they “followed an Indian ‘pitching trail.’ We reached the crossing at the Grand Rapids and thence took one of the old hunting trails to Lac Brule and Jasper House.”³⁰

Numerous records describe the impressive distances that the Métis travelled by horse in the summer and by dogsled in winter. Father Pierre Jean De Smet wrote, on 12 March 1846,

I bade farewell to the respectable Rowand family and to all the servants of the fort [Edmonton]. I was accompanied by three brave half-breeds...At this season the whole country lies buried in snow, and voyages are made in sledges drawn by dogs...The third day we encamped near Black Eagle lake, which abounds in white-fish; on the 6th we arrived at Fort Assiniboin, a distance of more than 300 miles. With out[sic] sledges we were nine days in accomplishing the journey.³¹

Henry Moberly corroborated this rough figure, stating that, from his observations, with a team of dogs the Métis could easily average thirty to forty miles a day, but that for a good team travelling sixty-seventy miles in a day was not “uncommon.”³² Splitting the difference, Peter Erasmus stated that dogsled runners were able to regularly travel fifty miles a day.³³ The Edmonton Post Journal records on 12 December 1859 the quickest return trip from Edmonton to Lac Ste. Anne’s, including the time taken to load up the sleds with 100 white fish each, with dog sleds piloted by two Metis men; the trip took less than a day and would have totalled around 100 miles.³⁴

Whatever the exact daily mileage – and all are likely accurate to some degree, no doubt dependent in part not just on the team and the motivation, as well on the quality of the trail and the weather conditions – the main point is that the Métis could, and did, move large distances even in winter without difficulty. Indeed, such trails were well travelled, as James Hector, a member of Palliser’s expedition, described and mapped in his 1859 journey. Led by Métis guides and using dog sleds, the party travelled to Jasper House by way of Fort Assiniboine and the Athabasca River, going as far as the trail’s branch leading to New Caledonia, then returning to Fort Edmonton through the woods on a different route, reaching Lac Ste. Anne on March 5.³⁵ Hector reportedly visited Lac Ste. Anne before embarking on the trip to hire a Métis man, who could “drive the priest [Father Lacombe] from Lac Ste. Anne to Edmonton Fort, get 400 pounds of meat, and return before morning.”³⁶ Figure 1 shows the approximate route that Hector took, and also details settlements or camps – notably an Iroquois (Métis) camp at the junction of the McLeod and Athabasca Rivers – that he encountered along the way. It is important to note this map, as well as others in this report, is incomplete and biased; maps show a particular perspective (for example only noting the location of certain routes of travels and excluding others that may have existed), at a particular moment in time, and may not be precisely accurate. They are, however, demonstrative of some of the existing routes of travel and geographical landmarks therein.

By the 1860s, the Métis of the Region had expanded into the Buffalo Lake area, having regularly visited this area to hunt buffalo for decades. Hunting, trading, and travelling for other purposes expanded even further south. Métis ventures into the Bow River area, for example, were growing as

they went further afield to look for the buffalo as well as continued to act as guides and freighters. As W. C. Wonders shows, the HBC and missionaries made extensive use of Métis freighters and the cart trails along the Saskatchewan, as well as those going south through, and close by, the Battle River settlement.³⁷ Wonders describes one of these southern routes, and perhaps the most frequented: the Blackfoot Trail. (See Figures 2 and 3, two maps Wonders produced of the trails and settlements centring on the Battle River and Tail Creek settlements). He writes,

The early Blackfoot Trail providing access to the southern plains swung southeast from Edmonton, skirting the more heavily wooded Beaver Hills by way of the Hay Lakes and Bittern Lake; crossed the Battle River in the vicinity of the Laboucane Settlement; and continued south to the Red Deer crossing at Tail Creek. (From the Battle River crossing a trail led northeast by Beaverhill Lake to Victoria Mission)...Métis traders and freighters used it in travelling as far south as Montana and supply points on the Missouri River.³⁸

In part, the Métis were at an advantageous position compared to First Nations because of their unique heritage; though not always assuring their safety, with kinship relations to the Cree, Stoney (Nakoda), Blackfoot, and others, they could and did travel through the territory of each and all.

Lac Ste. Anne also remained an important hub at the end of the nineteenth century. There were two main trails into Lac Ste. Anne from the east. As recorded in a local history of the Lac Ste. Anne area, Métis and non-Métis, when travelling into the northern part of the territory used what came to be known as the Belvedere Trail; if going to Lac Ste. Anne and west, they followed the Sturgeon River to Lac Ste. Anne, a route known as the Lac Ste. Anne Trail. The publication continues that the Belvedere Trail connected Paddle River, Mossie, Roselea, Peavine, Connor Creek, and Green Court country, and beyond. The other main trail, very old though still in use, was well marked out “for there was continuous going and coming between these two points for more than a hundred years.”³⁹ This trail proceeded west from St. Albert, touched Little St. Peter or Villeneuve, passed through the Calihoo (Michel) Indian Reservation to Noyes Crossing, crossed the Sturgeon River, passed the north end of Little Devil’s Lake, then Onoway and finally Lac Ste. Anne.⁴⁰ (See Figures 4 and 5 which show Lac Ste. Anne, Belvedere and other, though not all, trails in the area). The Métis settled along this corridor, as well as on another trail between St. Albert and Lac La Nonne, where the HBC maintained a horse corral, in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁴¹ Further, many of the Métis set up businesses to take advantage of these trails, maintaining their role as freighters and guides, and even opened at least one hotel.⁴²

Construction of Dwellings:

A mixture of permanent settlements and semi-permanent camps characterized the Métis’ dwellings throughout the Region. For the early period, the historic records are more numerous when describing dwellings in Lac Ste. Anne and St. Albert than other places. Lac Ste. Anne, referred to variously in the historic record as God’s Lake, Devil’s Lake, Lake Manitou and Manitou Sakhahigan (Cree for Lake of the Spirit, or Spirit’s Lake), made an ideal place for a Métis settlement in the context of the Region in the early 1800s. It was off the main trail leading to Edmonton from the south, and thus more

protected from Blackfoot raids, though the Métis could still go raiding if they chose. The lake possessed (what was perceived of as) an inexhaustible supply of whitefish and was nearby numerous other lakes with fish as well, and was less than a day's travel to the post at Edmonton where the inhabitants could trade furs and purchase goods. Edmonton Post Journals note regular visits of the Métis from Lac Ste. Anne, many of whom would at times be employed by the HBC. On 13 April 1834, the Post Journal records famed Métis hunter Gabriel Dumont (Sr.), perhaps the Lac Ste. Anne settlement's founder, and his brother's arrival at Fort Edmonton, noting the pair had "left their tents at God's Lake," and, "Intend to go and steal horses from the Blackfeet."⁴³ By 1838 approximately forty Métis families had established a winter camp in the vicinity of Fort Edmonton.

Visitors to the place after the Roman Catholic mission was created in 1844 noted the buildings and population. In 1846 Father De Smet observed seventeen families living there.⁴⁴ (Note that Métis families could be quite large, in the dozens). Two years later James Hector described Lac Ste. Anne as consisting of forty-five houses "in three little villages on the west shore of the lake."⁴⁵ In 1860 the HBC had, for an indeterminate amount of time, used one Métis man's house at Lac Ste. Anne for its trading post but eventually had to build a new one because he told the Company he did not want to sell it and "it is necessary for the Company to have a post of their own." The HBC ended up contracting some local men, at least one of whom was Métis, to build the new post, during which time they would pay the men and provide their rations, but not those of their families.⁴⁶ When travelling through Lac Ste. Anne in 1862, William Hind produced a number of sketches of the church, some houses, log fences, cleared areas, and the residents (See Figures 6-10). After Métis primarily from Lac Ste. Anne established St. Albert in 1861, residents of, and visitors to, Lac Ste. Anne's offshoot settlement recorded numerous dwellings. William Wentworth-FitzWilliam, better known as Viscount Milton, and Walter Cheadle, described St. Albert in 1863 as "the most flourishing community we had seen since leaving Red River" and counted forty or fifty houses on the western shore of Big Lake. They also commented about the "substantial wooden bridge" which the Métis constructed, the "only structure of the kind we had seen in the Hudson's Bay territory."⁴⁷ When Bishop Alexandre-Antonin Taché stayed the winter of 1864-5 in St. Albert, he wrote, "What great work has already been done. Handsome and vast construction has been erected as if by enchantment."⁴⁸

By 1869-70, the Métis population had expanded, as had the number of dwellings constructed. St. Albert had approximately 1000 permanent residents (which was the largest population in the North-West, second to only Red River), and Lac Ste. Anne around 300.⁴⁹ Marcel Giraud argues that this population came in part from Métis moving here from more remote districts, notably Lesser Slave Lake and the Peace River.⁵⁰ The Métis settlements at Buffalo Lake and Tail Creek received noticeable attention when an extensive archaeological dig there found substantial and irrefutable evidence of a large settlement with significant numbers – though no exact figure has been found – of log houses and other structures.⁵¹ While Métis were living there as early as the 1860s, by the early 1870s there was an established settlement, one that grew in part because of an early fall blizzard in 1872 that caught many Métis away buffalo hunting by surprise. Though some returned to their homes in Lac Ste. Anne or St. Albert, many decided to spend the winter, where they constructed houses.⁵² Following this blizzard was a period of intensive population increase in the neighborhood and occupation that lasted until 1877.⁵³

Jean D'Artigue, of the North West Mounted Police (NWMP), recorded in 1874 that he visited the Tail Creek settlement and found existing cabins, as well as recorded newcomers who began arriving in October who constructed new shelters. He noted the task was relatively quickly accomplished: "Selecting a site well sheltered from the wind, and amply supplied with wood and water...*The ease with which they are constructed, and the wanderings of game, will account for the number of these cabins to be found throughout the whole North-West.* The surroundings of Tail Creek were soon occupied by three or four hundred persons."⁵⁴ The renowned Samuel Steele, of the NWMP, also recorded the presence of 400 cabins during his visit there in 1876, though scholars have suggested this estimate is likely high.⁵⁵

Towards the end of the century there is evidence of significant construction of dwellings and other permanent features throughout the Region. Writing on Northern Alberta in 1887, the Canadian geologist and cartographer Joseph Burr Tyrell described Savlais' Crossing (south of present-day Camrose, at the head of Driedmeat Lake), as a "flourishing settlement of French half-breeds, consisting of about forty families. They are living in substantial log houses."⁵⁶ Homestead records provide, perhaps, the greatest resource for denoting dwellings in Lac Ste. Anne and St. Albert at this time, as the applications record the answers to the questions, "Give size and description of house," and, "What other buildings have you, and on which ¼ sec. are they listed?" Some examples, all Métis applicants, suffice to show the nature of the dwellings and other structures on the land, as well as the variety of the construction on the lots, in Lac Ste. Anne in 1889:

- "A log house 12 feet square on Lot 19" with no other structures.
- Lot 1 had a log house 14 by 15 feet.
- Lot 18 had "A log house 24 x 20 feet," as well as, "A new house on construction, a milk house on Lot 18 milk house 10 x 8 feet New House 20 x 18."
- Lot 6 had a log house as well as a stable, both 16 x 12 feet.
- Lot 17, with a log house 30 x 18 feet, as well as a 20 foot square shop, a stable, a frame barn, and a milk house.⁵⁷

A survey of Lac Ste. Anne conducted in 1896 showing the lots adjacent to the HBC reserve, as well as an 1896 survey of the Lac Ste. Anne settlement, also shows the location of these applicants and others, as well as where some structures, notably houses and stables, were located on each lot, and the trail which ran through the community. (See Figures 11 and 12) While the 1882-3 river lot survey of St. Albert shows the owner of each lot and the locations of structures within the lot and trails, these are not labelled, showing up only as small squares on each lot. (See Figure 13)

Settlers to Lac Ste. Anne and area at the turn of the century also recall these dwellings. A Mr. Priestly remembered that when he and his family arrived to settle in the area in 1904, the area east of Lac Ste. Anne was still heavily wooded, but there was a couple of Métis families who had "quite an accumulation of log buildings and corrals." Another non-Native settler, Jenny McLeod, whose family arrived in 1905, remembered, "Not far from Lac Ste. Anne we camped for the night – just a canvas thrown over poles for a roof. A Métis Indian and his wife had a house on the hill. After awhile [sic] he came down and told father that we had better come up to his house for the night for it looked very

much like a bad storm...We stayed there two nights...The Métis Indian drove with us the rest of the way to father's homestead."⁵⁸

Not only permanent settlements had dwellings; the "winter rovers," or *hivernants*, set up camps of their own. In 1879, H. M. Robinson observed one such camp in a sparsely timbered area bordering a small tributary of the North Saskatchewan, writing, "It was a picturesque though not overly clean place. Some 30 or 40 huts crowded together built of log, branches of pine trees, raw-hides, and tanned and smoked skins, together with the inevitable teepee or Indian lodge." He continued that every hut was the home of several families, and that while there he slept in structures measuring approximately 12 x 15 feet and which housed up to fifteen people of all ages and both sexes. He noted that a free trader would often set up a store in these camps as well.⁵⁹

Cultivation and Enclosure of Fields:

As detailed in Question 3, while there is little evidence at this point in the research suggesting that the Métis did much farming that would be identified as such by Euro-Canadian settlers, with enclosed, ploughed fields, prior to the 1840s, once introduced it became important for at least those with land at Lac Ste. Anne, St. Albert, and other areas with ecological conditions favorable to agriculture.⁶⁰ Palliser reported that the missionaries at Lac Ste. Anne had "induced" the Métis to "cultivate the ground, and sometimes they realize very fair crops of barley and potatoes."⁶¹ Hind's sketches (Figures 6-9) show what appear to be cleared fields, likely for agriculture. The same year, 1862, HBC Chief Factor William Christie wrote that while wheat did not ripen at the Lac Ste. Anne settlement, potatoes, barley and vegetables were grown.⁶² Milton and Cheadle recorded the next year that they witnessed, in St. Albert, "very respectable farms, with rich corn-fields, large bands of horses, and herds of fat cattle," and observed ploughs and other farming implements for use by the Métis, in addition to a corn mill under construction.⁶³ Bishop Taché wrote, in 1864-5, "broad meadows had been cleared [at St. Albert], well fenced around and put under cultivation, and were already yielding abundant harvests."⁶⁴

All historical accounts and scholarly appraisals suggest that by 1869-70, agriculture was growing in importance – even though most Métis families relied primarily on hunting for their food supplies. Rev. George M. Grant, in his visit to St. Albert in 1872, recorded that the land was "good, but, on account of its elevation, and other local causes, subject to summer frosts; in spite of these, cereals, as well as root crops, succeed when any care is taken. Last year they reaped on the mission farm twenty returns of wheat, eighteen of barley, sixteen of potatoes. Turnips, beets, carrots and such like vegetables, grow to an enormous size."⁶⁵ Beyond Lac Ste. Anne and St. Albert, Doll et. al. argue that the Buffalo Lake area, though established in large part by buffalo hunters, was nonetheless populated with many Métis who took advantage of the agricultural opportunities the site presented.⁶⁶ Others have substantiated these observations, noting that agriculture occurred in the general Battle River-Buffalo Lake area.⁶⁷

During the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century, agriculture assumed greater importance with the decline of the bison. At Salvais' Crossing, Joseph Tyrell commented, "In July, 1885, wheat, barley, oats, potatoes, turnips and Indian corn were well advanced, and I was informed that for the last seven years there had been no failure of crops, seven years being the length of time that my informant

lived in that part of the country. A considerable number of horses, cattle and sheep were also seen around the houses, and all were in excellent condition.”⁶⁸ Other indications of the importance of agriculture are, most noticeably, the river-lot pattern of settlement that developed in Lac Ste. Anne and St. Albert (See Figures 11-13) along with the decades of encouragement by the missionaries to have the Métis prioritize agriculture. Indeed, the missions at Lac Ste. Anne and St. Albert were set up in large part as a means to teach the Métis agriculture. Further, as noted, the Métis who moved from Lac Ste. Anne to establish St. Albert did so partially to take advantage of an environment better suited for farming.

As with identifying agricultural dwellings, other structures, and improvements, one of the most useful sources of information demonstrating the existence of cultivation and fields are the homestead records derived from applications for property under the Dominion Lands Act conducted in Lac Ste. Anne in 1889-1891. In order to prevent settlers appropriating what the Métis viewed as their land, the Métis applied to have the Dominion government recognize the Métis’ historic occupation and to grant them title to their properties within a settler-colonial legal framework. Questions in the application form included the value of fencing as well as acreage “broken,” when it occurred, and the number of acres “cropped.” Examples include:

- The Métis claimant of lot 22 had broken ¼ acre two years ago and planted on it both years since.
- Another form recorded that the Métis claimant had an acre cropped for a garden, and had done so for the last four years. Another had six acres on his claim broken, had \$180 worth of fencing, and had planted crops every year for the last eight, except for two.
- Another Métis claimant had cleared about 2 acres, and had \$50 worth of fence.⁶⁹

When considered in their entirety, these applications show that farms at Lac Ste. Anne were not large, most under five acres of land cleared and planted.

Definite Tracts of Land for Hunting, Fishing and Exploiting Other Resources:

For most Métis of the Region, even those at the more agriculturally-favorable St. Albert settlement, hunting and fishing was a central feature of life into the twentieth century. While much of this content is provided in Question 3, some additional material, especially that which identifies definite tracts of land elsewhere, needs to be noted.

In particular, the Métis would regularly search for bison to the southwest as well as southeast of the Region. Missionaries usually accompanied the Métis while on their hunts, often recording the events and the places they went. Father Lacombe provides one such account, travelling in mid-June sometime in the 1850s on a buffalo hunt with 1300 people, and 1100 carts. The large party followed the Pembina River before eventually ending up at the Turtle Mountain area. The hunt was a resounding success with 800 buffalo killed, and several hundred Métis hunters even accompanied Lacombe to the crest of Turtle Mountain where they erected a cross.⁷⁰ It seems likely that this area was a regular place of travel. In an entry for the Edmonton Post Journal for 3 December 1856, for instance, two men, at least one of whom was Métis, returned with “bad news that there are no Buffalo near Rocky mountain House.”⁷¹

While these two may have missed the bison in 1856, the buffalo were a dependable supply of food through the 1870s; the Métis were constantly on the move to hunt them, sometimes having to go further than usual but demonstrating an understanding based on experience of where the bison were likely to be located. As recorded from Edmonton House in 1855 alone, Métis (often referred to only as Freeman) passing through to the plains on the hunt were a regular, and at times even daily, occurrence:

- Jan. 11, 1855: "Freemen have arrived and taken their departure to the Plains."⁷²
- Jan. 13, 1855: "Rev. Lacombe arrived this morning from Lac Ste. Anne and also a few Freeman who are going to the Plains."⁷³
- Jan. 15, 1855: More freemen pass through.⁷⁴
- Jan. 28, 1855: Two Freeman passed with "loads of Fresh meat."⁷⁵
- Feb. 1, 1855: "Two or three Freeman passed this way on their way to plain, in quest of Buffalo."⁷⁶
- Dec. 14, 1855: "Party of Lake St. Ann's freemen arrived on way to the Plains to hunt Buffalo."⁷⁷
- Dec. 15, 1855: "About noon a party of Freeman arrived from Lake St. Ann's. Those of yesterday took their departure for the Plains."⁷⁸
- Dec. 17, 1855: "A party of Freeman arrived from Lake St. Ann's."⁷⁹
- Dec. 18, 1855: "[A Métis man] and family, as well as the Freeman, departed to the plains to kill Buffalo."⁸⁰
- Dec. 25, 1855: "Some of the Lake St. Ann Freeman were supplied with necessaries for the Buffalo Hunt."⁸¹
- Dec. 26, 1855: "[A Métis man] arrived from the Plains, having come for horses to assist his partners home with their loads as the most of their horses were so much jaded that they could not carry their loads. Report Buffalo are numerous all over the Plains and approaching the [Saskatchewan?] river."⁸²
- Dec. 29, 1855: "The people who were in the Plains for meat arrived this evening with carcasses of 36 buffalo...Some Freeman arrived from Lake St. Ann's."⁸³

Similar entries continue immediately into the next year, and are a regular occurrence through the 1870s. The difference as time went on, however, was that the Métis usually had to go further afield to find the buffalo herds, sometimes going hundreds of miles to places such as Nose Hill (which appears to be in modern-day Calgary), "the banks of the Labiche River," (north east of Edmonton) and the Hand Hills (east of present-day Drumheller).⁸⁴

After the decline of the buffalo hunt, many Métis made their way back from the plains to hunt other fur-bearing animals elsewhere, as they had always done and as explained in detail in Question 3. Moreover, these hunters continued to travel far distances, including to the sources of the Bow and Red Deer Rivers and the boundaries of the territory inhabited by the Kootenay Indians, and could be gone for months at a time.⁸⁵

QUESTION 3: What material resources historically supported the Métis community(ies) within the Region?

The Métis community within the Region consistently relied upon an extensive range of varied resources. Hunting generally ranked as the most important, followed by fishing, gathering, and the Euro-Canadian settler style of agriculture (including pasturing horses and raising livestock). While over time the relative importance of certain resources the Métis relied upon may have changed, most notably relying more upon other animals to hunt after the decline of the buffalo population, Métis resource getting practices – of hunting, gathering, and cultivating – remained consistent throughout and beyond the nineteenth century. Such resources were collected for personal and family consumption as well as for trade or sale. Métis families and individuals also worked for both themselves and for fur trading posts; in fact, fur trade posts relied largely upon the Métis for provisions and, when such provisions failed to materialize, privation ensued. Note that the following description of the resources which the Métis used in the Region is not an exhaustive survey for all resources.

Sometimes the resources the Métis depended upon were readily available, such as the whitefish in Lac Ste. Anne, or timber for construction and fuel that could be found nearby most Métis settlements. More often than not, however, travel was required, often over significant areas. Trips were usually multipurpose: when out hunting, for example, the Métis would often use the opportunity collect berries or eggs. As Lena L'Hirondelle recounts of her husband's grandparents coming to Big Lake:

They came each spring. This was a special time of year, when the Canada geese returned from the south...The couple would move to Big Lake in search of better trapping. Big Lake was one of the best places around for trapping muskrats...When the ice was still on the lake, they set traps for muskrats and also for mink. The land around Big Lake provided good food for them to eat. When the ice melted, the family picked duck eggs from nests along the shore. Later in the summer, they grew small gardens to add fresh vegetables to their meals. Berries were [also] gathered.⁸⁶

Following the end of the buffalo hunt, the changes to the landscape as settlers occupied more space, as the whitefish population dwindled in certain lakes, and as the timber line receded, the Métis undertook a number of actions: some continued to hunt, simply changing their focus to other fur-bearing species, some focussed on agriculture, and, most often, the Métis continued to engage in a mixed-economy, often being fishers, hunters, farmers, and finding other modes of employment as they always had and depending upon whatever opportunity best suited their needs at the time.

Hunting:

The historic record provides ample evidence that the Métis throughout the Region hunted and/or trapped: bison, muskrats, bighorn sheep, marten, lynx, wolf, mink, moose, porcupine, beaver, fox, elk, bear, bustard, duck, pheasant, snipe, eagle, and owl – and possibly others that have not been documented.

As employees of fur trade companies or as free traders, the Métis sought to hunt animals to sell their skins as well as provision themselves, their families, and the trading posts. Indeed, all fur trade posts in the Region employed dedicated hunters, some of whom are referred to in the post journals simply, though accurately, as “the hunter.” Reading through the journals at any fur trade post shows constant evidence of Métis hunters visiting. At the Jasper House Post, for example, the following is noted over just one month in 1827:

- Oct. 2: “this morning I Received 12 Bags of pemmican from the free men and 6 Bags from the hunter.”⁸⁷
- Oct. 3: “received 160 Beavers from the free men,” which the trader writes was “a very poor hunt for them.”⁸⁸
- Nov. 1: A Métis man arrived from “the hunter” and brought “one young Buck and 45 white fish.”⁸⁹
- Nov. 2: A Métis man arrived from “the hunter to inform mi[sic] that [another Métis man] Killed yesterday four animals and gave them to the hunter for the house [two Métis men] off for the meat to bring to the lodge to [keep?] safe.”⁹⁰
- Nov. 8: Two Métis “off to find the hunter at the Assinaboin River to bring meat or fish.”⁹¹
- Nov. 15: [Two Métis men] arrived from “the hunter lodge they Brought a few Sheep and 80 white fish...a free man come for some of his things and some ammunition.”⁹²

Similar records are constant throughout the Edmonton Post Journals. Again, some examples of post entries, this time from the 1830s:

- Dec. 12, 1832: A Métis freeman arrived with 8 beaver, 1500 [musk]rats, 2 bear skins, and 5 dressed skins.⁹³
- Dec. 18, 1832: “[A Métis man], a trapper, has come also with a good hunt of [?] furs.”⁹⁴ (two days later the same man, “after getting supplies started for his hunting ground.”)
- Mar. 4, 1833: “Six men off to Freeman’s tents to purchase buffalo from them.”⁹⁵
- Mar. 14, 1833: “30 horse and [?] dog sleds driven in, loaded with 13,238 lbs of Buffalo meat, which was got from the Indians and half breeds who were hired to hunt buffalo above Battle River...”⁹⁶
- Mar. 16, 1833: the rest of the party that was out to Buffalo arrived with 12,000 lbs of fresh meat. “Hunters have all deserted the place and gone upriver.”⁹⁷
- Dec. 5, 1833: “a halfbreed to trade rats.”⁹⁸
- Feb. 20, 1834: “Half-breed killing animals for the fort.”⁹⁹

Hunting for food and to bring skins for trade continued through the decades. Examples at Fort Edmonton in the mid-1850s include:

- Dec. 27, 1854: “6 freemen arrived; brought 236 martens.”¹⁰⁰
- Jan. 10, 1855: “Freemen have arrived this evening and have traded the few furs that they had and received a little debt.”¹⁰¹
- Apr. 5, 1855: “party returned from Lake St. Ann’s in company with some Freeman who brought a few Furs.”¹⁰²

- Dec. 14, 1855: "Party of Lake St. Ann's freemen arrived on way to the Plains to hunt Buffalo. Brought about 60 MB [made beaver] in furs."¹⁰³
- Dec. 24, 1855: "Several parties of the Lake St. Ann Freemen arrived to day – brought upward of 200 Martens with [?] other furs."¹⁰⁴
- Mar. 26, 1856: "Also some of the [Lake St. Ann's] Freemen arrived brought furs to the amount of about 300 MB [made beaver]."¹⁰⁵
- May 8, 1856: "[A Métis man] arrived from Lake St. Ann's – brought 3 Martens, 7 Mink, 1300 Musqrats[sic], 3 Lynx, 3 Beaver, 1 Wolf 1 Buffalo Skins & two Buffalo Robes."¹⁰⁶

HBC post journals continue to note that the Métis traded skins through the rest of the century. A report on the post at Lac Ste. Anne in 1889, for example, noted that the local Métis were hunting, but also that, "A considerable part of the Fur trade is derived from the Rocky Mountains. At Jasper's House there is a settlement of Iroquois half-breeds, the descendants of some hunters taken there by the North West Company."¹⁰⁷

The Métis quickly gained a reputation for their hunting prowess of both buffalo and other fur-bearing animals – and this reputation continued through the century. Chief Trader John Lee Lewes wrote at Lesser Slave Lake in 1820 that the "half breeds, their descendants are excellent hunters and will generally procure at Slave Lake from 150 to 200 skins in winter. They are very active in all they undertake and far exceed the generality of Indians in success at hunting...the freemen are much courted by the Traders of the respective companies for the sake of the Interests of their Employers."¹⁰⁸ Father Pierre-Jean De Smet, visiting Jasper House, also marvelled at the prowess of one Métis family's hunting prowess, writing on 6 May 1845:

Provisions becoming scarce at the fort, and the large Iroquois family being encamped round about, resolved to remain until my departure...A little note of the game killed by our hunters during the twenty-six days of our abode at this place [Lake of the Islands]...twelve moose deer, two reindeer, thirty large mountain sheep or bighorn, two porcupines, 210 hares, one beaver, two muskrats, twenty-four bustards, 115 ducks, twenty-one pheasants, one snipe, one eagle, one owl; add to this from thirty to fifty fine white-fish every day and twenty trout...¹⁰⁹

In another instance, Moberly, on his way to Jasper House after leaving Fort Assiniboine in the mid-1850s, wrote, "Occasionally one of the crews – all Iroquois halfbreeds and capital hunters – set off early in the morning ahead of the boats. When they succeeded in killing a moose we stopped to have the carcass carried down to the boat and were thus provided with fresh meat throughout the trip."¹¹⁰ James Hector, writing to Captain Palliser in February 1859, described a similar situation where his Métis guide killed "a moose deer" after existing for days on short rations.¹¹¹ Another member of Palliser's expedition, Captain Royal Blakiston, also proclaimed that the half-breeds are "remarkably adapted for either of these [hunting and voyaging] employments."¹¹² The HBC Edmonton Report for 1862 confirmed

such appraisals, noting that the best furs traded came from winter rovers from St. Albert and Lac Ste. Anne who, with the Assiniboines, hunted between Edmonton and the Athabasca River.¹¹³

As Edmonton was the Saskatchewan District's main depot providing food to many of the northern stations and had one of the largest populations of any post, the amount of provisions required was exponentially higher than at other posts. Visitors to the fort remarked on the amount of food being consumed here, notably in the form of bison/pemmican in addition to whitefish caught at Lac Ste. Anne. Father De Smet wrote of his visit to Fort Edmonton, in 1846, that it housed about eighty servants, the majority of whom would have been Métis, including women and children; its icehouse contained "30,000 fish and 500 bison."¹¹⁴ Captain Palliser observed in 1859 that "great quantities of provisions are traded here, it is the principal depot for provisions, as the several brigades of boats are most supplied from this place."¹¹⁵ Palliser continued, "...[Fort Edmonton] contains a population of about 40 men, 30 women, and 80 children, almost entirely supported on buffalo meat, the hauling of which, for sometimes upwards of 250 miles across the plains, is the source of great and most fruitless expense."¹¹⁶ As Palliser observed, maintaining this level of provisions was a constant struggle, while HBC factors quipped unflatteringly about the amount of food required to feed the Métis employed by the company. For example, the Post Journal entry for 13 May 1860 bluntly stated, a Métis man working for the HBC and "a member of tripmen from the Lake [Ste Anne], arrived to day...These Lake [St Anne's] tripmen eat like wolves, it is really frightful, and we must feed them if we intend to have their services."¹¹⁷ According to Robinson, the HBC provided a daily ration of ten pounds of meat, which would usually be in the form of pemmican (a mixture of meat, usually bison, and fat), to a male Métis employee.¹¹⁸

Buffalo hunting formed the mainstay of the Métis' diet as well as supplied the materials for much of their clothing and other goods (one scholar has referred to the bison as a "tribal department store"¹¹⁹) for those who lived on the edge of the prairies and in the parkland. Métis residents of Lac Ste. Anne, St. Albert, and those settlements and outposts which sprung up on the prairies to the south and east specifically to take advantage of the hunt, travelled *en masse* at least twice a year in the spring and summer. Hunts lasted weeks, if not months, with shorter hunts throughout the winter. As noted above, Fort Edmonton relied heavily upon bison meat and either purchased it from the Métis or hired their own hunters, who themselves were overwhelmingly Métis. The Métis were regularly observed passing the Edmonton Post on their way to the buffalo hunting grounds to the south and east.¹²⁰ William Gladstone, a traveller to Edmonton in 1851, recorded one of the hunts, specifically detailing the collective nature of it:

About the 1st of July some Crees came and told us that six days travel from the fort, the buffalo were feeding. We got ready for the plains and started in pursuit...In the party were 75 families of half-breeds, a lot of Crees and our own hunters...About four days after this we came to an advance guard of buffalo...As far as I could see, the buffalo extended in endless numbers...At night when we camped [after the hunt], each man counted his spoils and we found that 550 buffalo had been killed that day.¹²¹

The buffalo hunt would usually leave Lac Ste. Anne and St. Albert absent of all residents – men, women and children – except for those unable to travel. Hector wrote to Palliser in 1858 that he hoped to visit “the half-breed settlement [Lac Ste. Anne], where I expected to find men...but as I learnt that all population was absent on the plain hunting, I did not visit at this time.” He visited again in February, and found the place temporarily vacated by “all the inhabitants, with the exception of three or four families, [who] were absent on the plain.” Hector set off in pursuit in March, found them “in the neighborhood of Battle River, and succeeded in engaging the guides and men I wanted.”¹²² Similarly, Father Leduc wrote to Bishop Taché in 1868 that the Sturgeon valley was virtually deserted, almost all the residents being off looking for buffalo.¹²³

The buffalo hunt continued throughout the 1870s despite a general awareness that the species’ numbers were ever-dwindling, and the hunt would continue to involve nearly all of the Métis residents at Lac Ste. Anne and St. Albert. As Rev. Grant observed in 1872 of St. Albert, “Their congregation is migratory, spends half the year at home and the other half on the plains. The children are only sent to school when there are no buffalo to hunt, no pemmican to make, or no work of greater importance than education to set them at.”¹²⁴ The last recorded buffalo hunt by the Métis community of the Region was in 1881, when a party of them travelled to Blackfoot Crossing, on the Bow River, approximately 350 kilometres south of Edmonton.¹²⁵

Fishing:

Métis settlements in the Region, especially those occupied during the winter, were usually located nearby substantial bodies of water with an easily accessible supply of fish. These fish made up a significant source of food, especially in winter or during times of poor hunting. The Métis set up a fall and winter fishery at Lac Ste. Anne to supply Fort Edmonton’s employees and their own families with vast numbers of the much prized whitefish, though trout was also caught throughout the Region. Fish were also used to feed the large number of dogs kept by the Métis, which were utilized for pulling sleds in the winter as well as for hunting. As with hunting, the Edmonton Post Journal records regular catches from Lac Ste. Anne and other nearby lakes, such as Pigeon Lake, over the decades. Some examples include:

- Dec. 18, 1832: One man arrived from Manitou Lake [Lac Ste. Anne] with 1064 white fish to sell.¹²⁶
- Dec. 26, 1832: “Three men started this morning with nine horse sleds for Manitou Lake in order to get some more fish...6 men sent to Manitou on 19th returned with 2745 whitefish. Two fishermen of Lac La Nomme[sic] arrived with 100 whitefish, totalling some six thousand.”¹²⁷
- Dec. 31, 1832: Men sent to Manitou Lake on 26th returned, along with 3 of the fishermen, bringing with them about 2000 whitefish.¹²⁸
- Jan. 3, 1833: Men off to Manitou Lake for fish with 40 horse sleds and 4 dog sleds.¹²⁹
- Oct. 8, 1855: “[Two Métis men] sent to establish the fishery at Lake Ste. Anne.”¹³⁰
- Nov. 15, 1855: “This morning 4 men with 15 horses sent to Lake St. Ann’s for some fish.”¹³¹
- Nov. 21, 1855: Fishermen arrived with not as many fish (700) as the Post had hoped; “only about 3000 got in all.”¹³²

- Dec. 8, 1859: Men sent to Lake St. Anne's for fish. One of the Métis men working at the fishery there, "returned home today with his Family by order as there is not so much to do at the Fishery now. [Two Métis brothers] still continue fishing out ther[sic] and still catch from 40 to 50 fish a day – about enough to feed themselves and their large Families."¹³³
- Dec. 9, 1859: 503 whitefish received from Lake St. Anne's, brought by one Métis man using another Métis man's horses. 170 whitefish also delivered to the Fort by a Métis freeman.¹³⁴
- Dec. 12, 1859: "[Two men, at least one of whom was Métis] started for Lac St. Annes last night and returned this evening with 100 whitefish on each dog sled, the quickest run that has ever been made to the Lake & back with loads."¹³⁵
- Dec. 19, 1859: "The 5 men who are hauling Fish from Lake St. Annes had a [?] today for their bags, they went for provisions for themselves."¹³⁶
- Dec. 22, 1859: "5 men and trains that left on Tuesday for Lake St. Annes returned to day...with 479 whitefish. [Two men] were sent off with them two trains of dogs to the Lake for Fish."¹³⁷
- Jan. 17, 1860: "[A Métis], the priest's man, arrived from Lake St. Annes with 45 fish."¹³⁸
- Jan. 21, 1871: "[A Métis man] arrived from Lac St Anns with 1850 W. Fish (hung) & 750 Fresh Fish."¹³⁹
- Jan. 29, 1871: Five freemen from Big Lake (St. Albert) arrived from Pigeon Lake with five dog sleds loaded with fish.¹⁴⁰
- Oct. 14, 1871: "[Two men] returned from Lac St Anns with 5 oxen & carts brought 10 packs of furs & 12 packs leather 29 White Fish."¹⁴¹
- May 29, 1873: "A man arrived from Lake St Annes with 30 whitefish and 15 Black Ducks."¹⁴²

The Métis settlement at Lac Ste. Anne's was established in part because of this seemingly inexhaustible food resource. When Father De Smet visited Edmonton and Lac Ste. Anne in 1846, he commented on the fishery: "The surface of this region is flat for the most part...diversified with forests and meadows, and lakes teeming with fish. In Lake St. Anne alone were caught, last autumn, more than 70,000 white-fish, the most delicious of the kind; they are taken with the line at every season of the year."¹⁴³ Erasmus, while staying at Fort Edmonton when in the employ of Rev. Woolsey, recollected that he occasionally went to Lac Ste. Anne to fish with the Métis, and made a point of stating that for the Christmas and New Year's celebrations at the Fort, the feast included fish brought from Lac Ste. Anne.¹⁴⁴ Captain Palliser, after remarking on the great struggle of keeping Fort Edmonton provisioned with buffalo meat, added that relying upon the buffalo would "frequently become very precarious, were it not for an abundant supply of fish from Lake St. Anne, about 50 miles to the west of the fort, where they are capable of hauling 30,000 or 40,000 in a season; these are a fine wholesome white fish, averaging four pounds weight each."¹⁴⁵ Milton and Cheadle recorded in June 1863 that, "St. Ann's was, doubtless, chosen as the site for a settlement on the account of the immense number of the *coregonnus*, or white-fish, furnished by the lake, forming the staple food of the inhabitants"¹⁴⁶ A decade later, Rev. Grant provided evidence that the Lac Ste. Anne fishery was still of vital importance: "Lake St. Ann's is the great storehouse of white-fish for supplying this part of the country. It provides for all demands up to Edmonton. Last year thirty thousand, averaging over three pounds each, were taken out and frozen for winter use."¹⁴⁷

When food was scarce, Métis families often went to Lac Ste. Anne as a refuge. The Edmonton Post Journal records on 28 March 1860, “7 men with their families were allowed to go to little Lake St. Anns to catch Fish and feed themselves as they best could until the Brigade leaves, as we have not food to feed them any longer. Some more starving Freemen arrived today en route to the Lac Ste. Annes. They brought in a few furs...”¹⁴⁸ The food shortage at Fort Edmonton and area must have been particularly acute in 1860; as late as 16 April the post journal recorded, “some more families preparing to be off to the Lac Ste Annes to try to get Fish. Little or nothing to eat here now.”¹⁴⁹ Local residents, too, depended heavily on the fish at certain times of the year. One of the nuns stationed at the Lac Ste. Anne mission recorded in December 1859 that “fish alone” composed “more than half” of the residents’ diets, and, “Many families lived on fish alone cooked without salt.”¹⁵⁰

Lac Ste. Anne was not the only place where the Métis caught fish, though it does appear to be the one most utilized until the 1870s. It seems probable that any lake in the Region which could be fished, was exploited if it was not inconvenient for the Métis to do so. There are records of freemen from St. Albert, for example, travelling to Pigeon Lake to fish.¹⁵¹

Gathering:

Of all material resources gathered (rather than caught), evidence that the Métis depended upon timber is most prevalent. It was used to build their homes as well as their carts – modelled after the famous Red River fashion, which was constructed without using metal – which were taken out to the plains for hunting buffalo or used for freighting, and could carry up to half a ton. Wood products had an extensive range of other applications. Victoria Callihoo, a descendant of the one of the first Métis families in the Region, recalled many of these, from construction to unconventional items such as milk pans made out of birch bark for their dairy cattle.¹⁵² Timber was also the most important source of fuel.

A large range of other natural resources were gathered for use in the Métis communities as well. Callihoo recalls that collecting moss was an important activity, and it was desired for its versatility. She explains, “Moss was pulled up in the fall, after haying. Little spruce trees were cut half way...and we put our moss on top of this sort of rack, where it would dry...It was hauled in as needed. Moss was a household necessity. We raised our babies in it. We stuffed it in moss bags in which our babies were laced up [to use as diapers].”¹⁵³ Moss was also used to wipe the floors of houses after scrubbing.¹⁵⁴ Callihoo also remembers that when on the plains, the Métis collected buffalo chips (dung) for fuel since there was a lack of wood. Finally, the Métis knew of and utilized an extensive range of herbs and other materials with medicinal properties. Callihoo’s mother, for example, was recognized as a medicine woman and reportedly “knew exactly what native herbs to prescribe for blood poisoning, which ones for stomach disorders and which to appease rebellious intestines.”¹⁵⁵

There are also historical traces which demonstrate that the Métis utilized other resources. This included minerals, such as lime. As recorded in the Edmonton Post Journal, May 29, 1873, a man “returned from St. Annes with 43 whitefish & 24 baskets lime.”¹⁵⁶ Other resources, notably coal, were readily accessible – Palliser and others made extensive note of it – and the blacksmith at Fort Edmonton

would have likely required this, as would the railway once it extended into the Region. Finally, water was a key resource for the Métis: they utilized it for drinking and washing; it was of course key to sustaining the fishery; and some travel occurred over rivers and lakes.

Agriculture:

Based upon research to date, drawing on records almost exclusively produced by non-Métis men, there is no indication that agriculture, in the Euro-Canadian settler form, was practiced by the Métis in the Region prior to the 1840s. Moreover, much of the Region further west and north of Lac Ste. Anne was not especially suitable for agriculture; indeed, even farmers at Lac Ste. Anne were often disappointed by early frosts, and this was likely the most important factor in many of the Métis here moving to St. Albert, which benefitted from a slightly longer growing season. However, finding pasture, or cutting hay, for the large number of horses which they kept was always an important activity.

Agriculture began in Lac Ste. Anne as soon as the Roman Catholic mission was established there in 1844. While it suffered from some set-backs – and the missionaries complained that the Métis did not take agriculture seriously enough, spending much of their time on the plains hunting bison instead – farming efforts succeeded enough that, by the mid-1850s at the latest, they were enjoying a crop and even selling surplus produce. James Tirrul-Jones found that the Lac Ste. Anne Métis actually enjoyed farming returns that were “equivalent to those of the farmers in Ontario before the 1880s.”¹⁵⁷ Erasmus remembers being sent to Lac Ste. Anne at that time to buy potatoes and bring them back in pack horses.¹⁵⁸ Captain Palliser, in his 1859 visit, remarked that the Métis sometimes “realize very fair crops of barley and potatoes.”¹⁵⁹ Nonetheless, after constant crop failures, the Roman Catholic mission was moved to Big Lake (St. Albert) in 1861, where farming was taken up by even more families. When Milton and Cheadle visited St. Albert in 1863, they witnessed “several very respectable farms, with rich corn-fields, large bands of horse, and herds of fat cattle.”¹⁶⁰ Rev. Grant described the Métis’ agricultural method here in 1872, writing, “Early in May, the soil is scratched three inches deep, some seed is thrown in and then the whole household go off to hunt the buffalo. They get back about the first of August, spend the month haying and harvesting and are off to the fall hunt early in September...They raise some wheat and a good deal of barley, oats and potatoes.”¹⁶¹

Nonetheless, other activities – notably the buffalo hunt – continued unabated. Nor did the move to St. Albert mean that the Métis who remained in Lac Ste. Anne stopped farming. According to Grandin in 1871, about 300 French Métis lived there, relying upon a mixture of agriculture, hunting and fishing.¹⁶² In fact, the amount of grain harvested at Lac Ste. Anne came as a pleasant surprise, with Fr. P. Fourmond writing in 1872 in the Lac Ste. Anne Codex Historicus: “At Lac Ste-Anne we managed to step onto the small river, set up the grindstone from St. Albert, and grind about 170 measures of barley. It was a success not expected by anyone and it attracted the attention of Rev. Father Leduc, the procurer for our missions.”¹⁶³ The Edmonton Post Journal also records instances of Métis from both Lac Ste. Anne and St. Albert arriving to use the grist-mill to grind barley.¹⁶⁴

Métis Hunting, Fishing, Gathering and Agriculture at the end of the Eighteenth Century:

Victoria Callihoo recalled, “Though the buffalo had now gone, we raised cattle, hogs, and chickens. Food was still plentiful as moose, deer and bear were plentiful. We turned to these animals for food and clothing.”¹⁶⁵ Her statement is corroborated through evidence written at the end of the nineteenth century that demonstrates the ongoing reliance upon a mixture of hunting, fishing, and agriculture; both scrip applications and homestead records are useful in this regard. Scrip applicants at Lac Ste. Anne, St. Albert, Jasper, Lesser Slave Lake, and other settlements within the Region all indicate a range of occupations on their forms, and nearly all identified more than one, which included hunting, trapping, freighting, and farming. Most of those who chose to accept money rather than land listed themselves as a hunter, trapper and/or freighter, rather than farmer. St. Albert’s scrip applications include noticeable number of farmers, while at Jasper and Lesser Slave Lake hunters and trappers are more prevalent. The scrip application of one Métis woman at Jasper, for example, includes a long letter to verify her identity – she was born at Battle River in 1860 and had a Saulteaux father, was baptized in Lac Ste. Anne and was living at Jasper House in 1885 – as well as details of her family’s hunting area, which was recorded as Birch Lake (near present-day Sundre).¹⁶⁶

From 1889-1891, as noted in Question 2, Métis homestead applications were also made in Lac Ste. Anne, St. Albert and other locales. These provide a wealth of information, of which select examples suffice to demonstrate the multiple modes of living in which the Métis continued to engage:

- One Métis man claimed lot 17 at Lac Ste. Anne, had lived there for thirty years, and listed himself as a farmer, blacksmith, freighter, fisher, and hunter.
- Another claimed lot 10 at Lac Ste. Anne, was recorded as being a farmer, fisher, hunter and trapper.
- The male Métis claimant of lot 12 and was listed as a hunter, fisher, and laborer.
- The female Métis claimant of another lot was listed as a farmer, fisher, and hunter.
- One Métis was listed as a hunter and fisher, as well as owner of six horses.
- Another was listed as a hunter and fisher, who, when not on his lot lived “in the bush trapping”, and, when on his lot, fished and gardened.¹⁶⁷

In sum, the Métis at the end of the nineteenth century continued to engage in a range of activities to obtain material resources, all consistent with the activities they had undertaken throughout the century with the exception of farming, which the Métis had practiced since, at the latest, 1844.

FIGURES



FIGURE 1: Route of James Hector in winter 1859, along the Athabasca and McLeod Rivers. In: *Further Papers Relative to the Exploration by the Expedition under Captain Palliser of that Portion of British North America* (London: George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1860), 5.

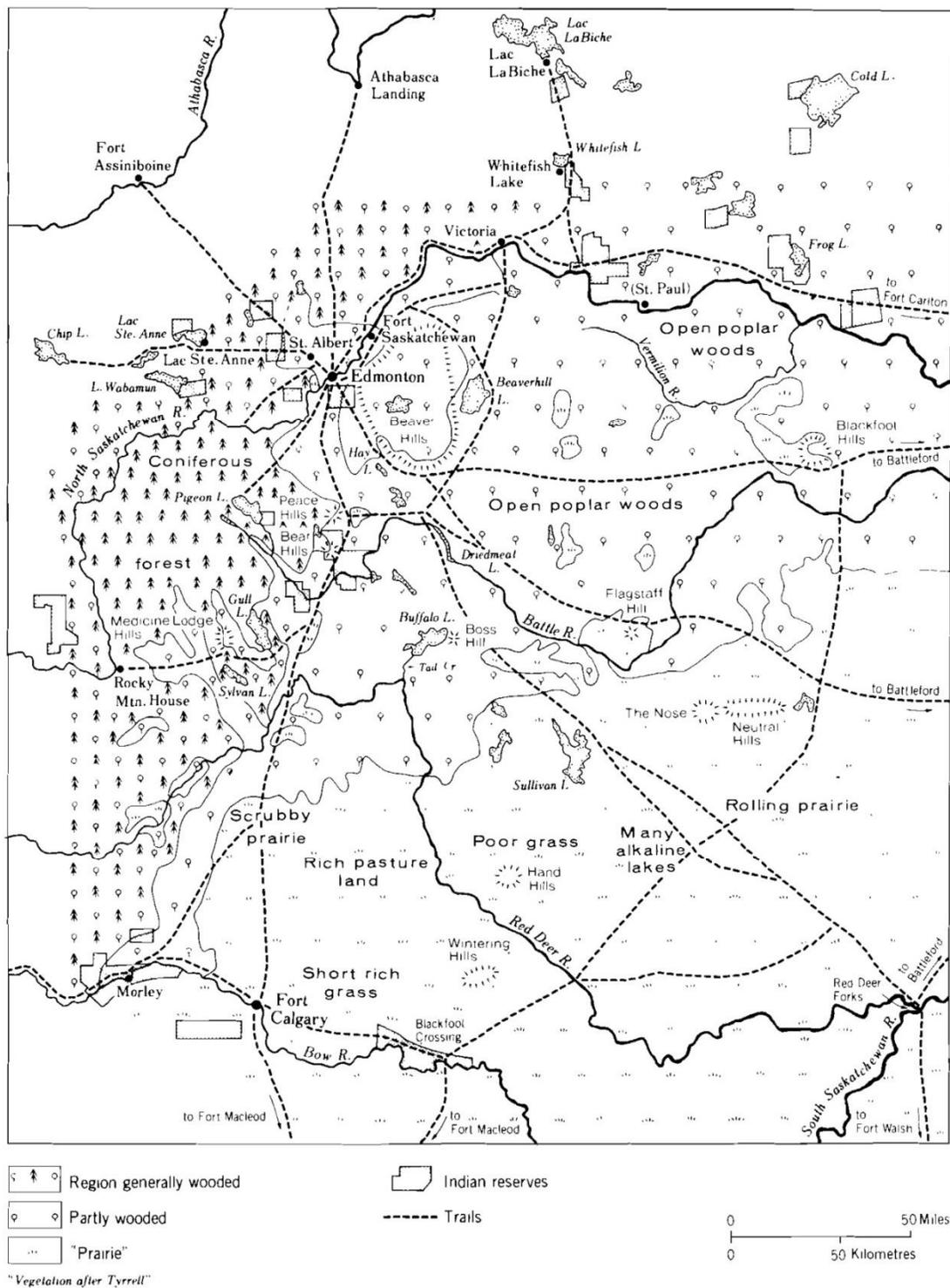


FIGURE 2: Central Alberta and select trails in the late nineteenth century. In: W. C. Wonders, "Far Corner of the Strange Empire: Central Alberta on the Eve of Homestead Settlement," *Great Plains Quarterly* 3, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 97.

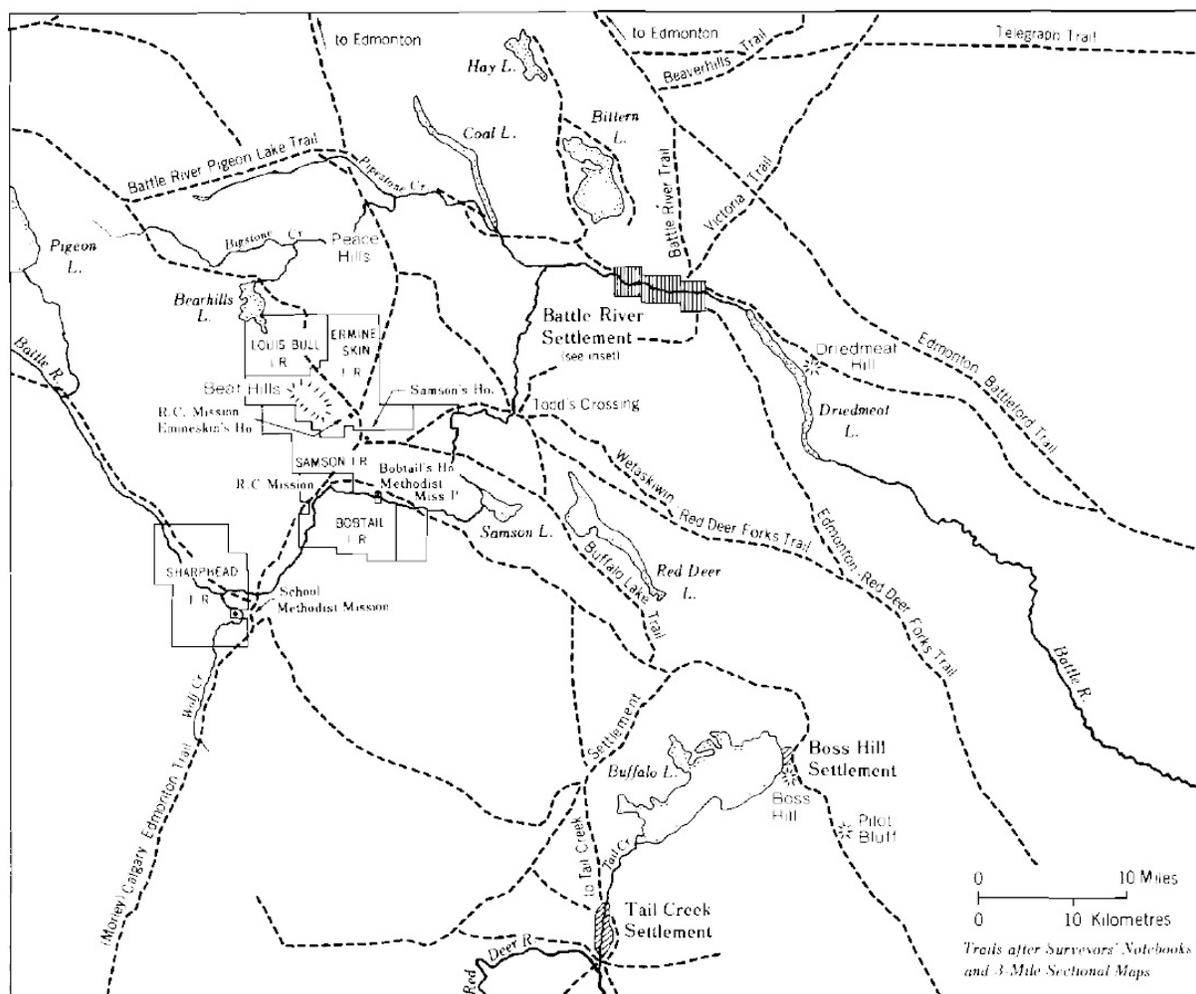


FIGURE 3: The Battle River and Tail Creek settlements with select trails. In: W. C. Wonders, "Far Corner of the Strange Empire: Central Alberta on the Eve of Homestead Settlement," *Great Plains Quarterly* 3, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 98.

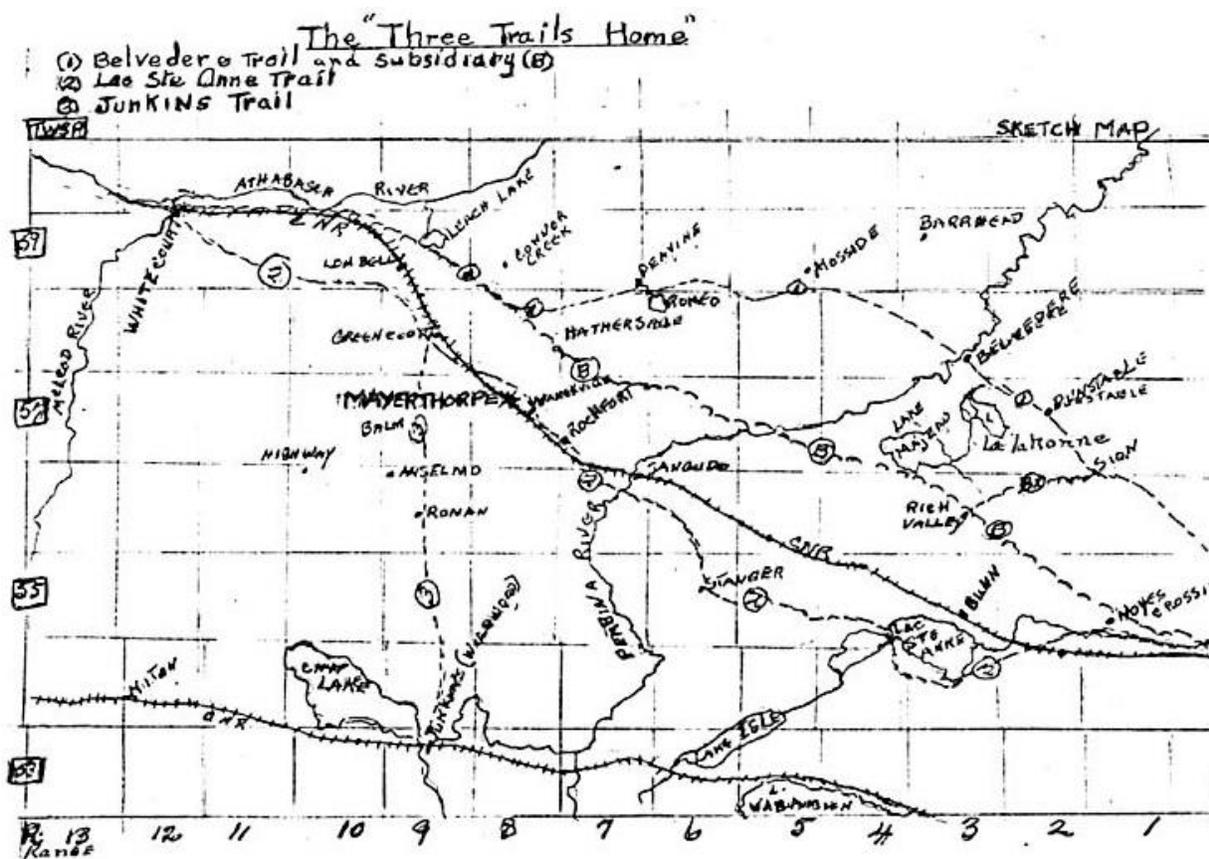


FIGURE 4: Map showing select trails around Lac Ste. Anne. In: Mayerthorpe and District History Book Society, *Three Trails Home: A History of Mayerthorpe and Districts, Alberta* (Canada: Inter-Collegiate Press, 1980), 20.

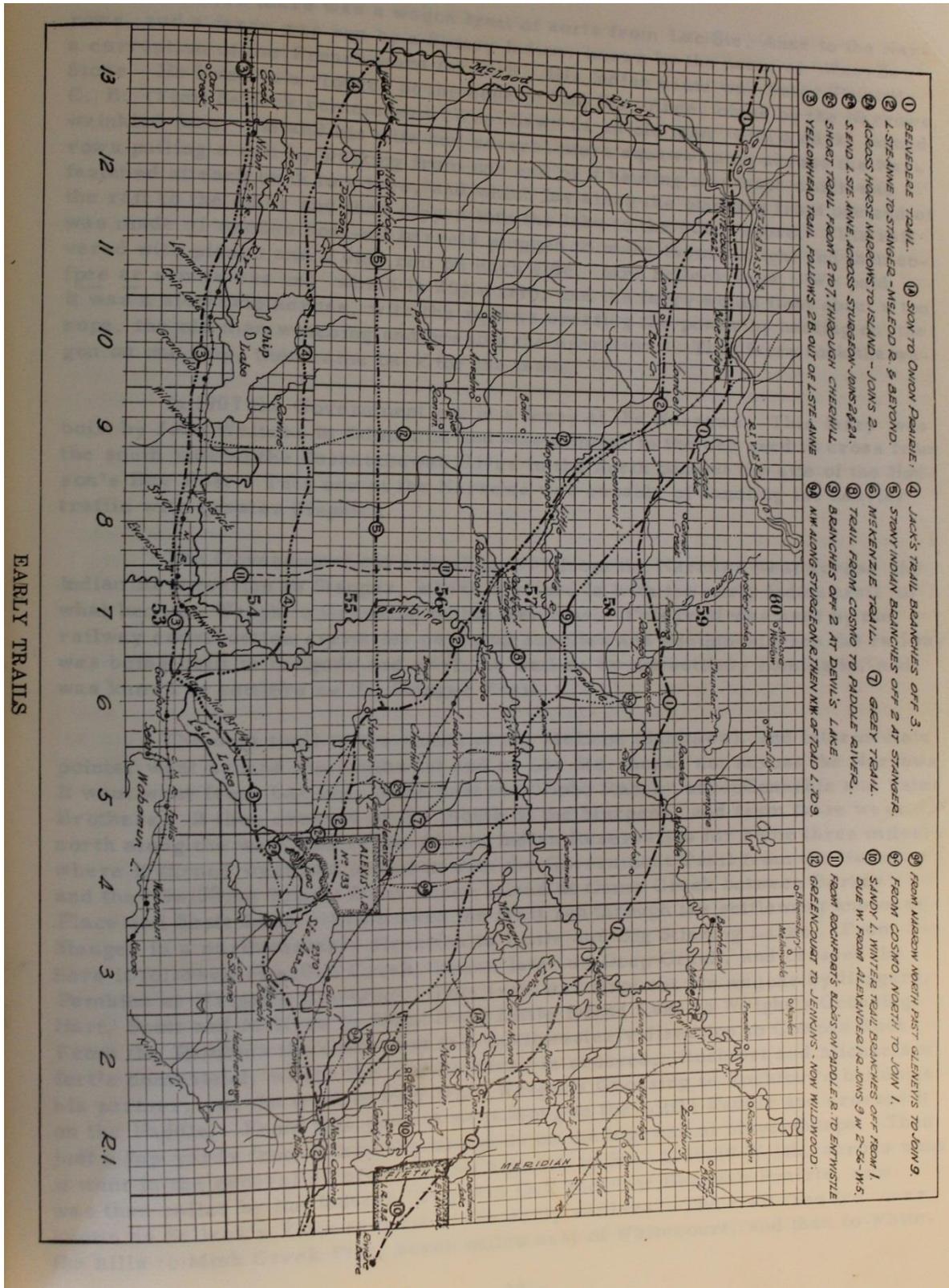


Figure 5: Early trails in the Lac Ste. Anne area. In: Archives Committee Lac Ste. Anne Historical Society, *West of the Fifth: A History of Lac Ste. Anne Municipality* (Edmonton: The Institute of Applied Art Ltd., 1959), 33.



Figure 6: Sketch of Church at St. Ann's Lake, August 1862. In: William George Richardson Hind, "Overlanders of '62 Sketchbook," in Library and Archives Canada, Acc. No. 1963-97-1.76R.



Figure 7: House at Lac St Anns, August 1862. In: William George Richardson Hind, "Overlanders of '62 Sketchbook," in Library and Archives Canada, Acc. No. 1963-97-1.75R.

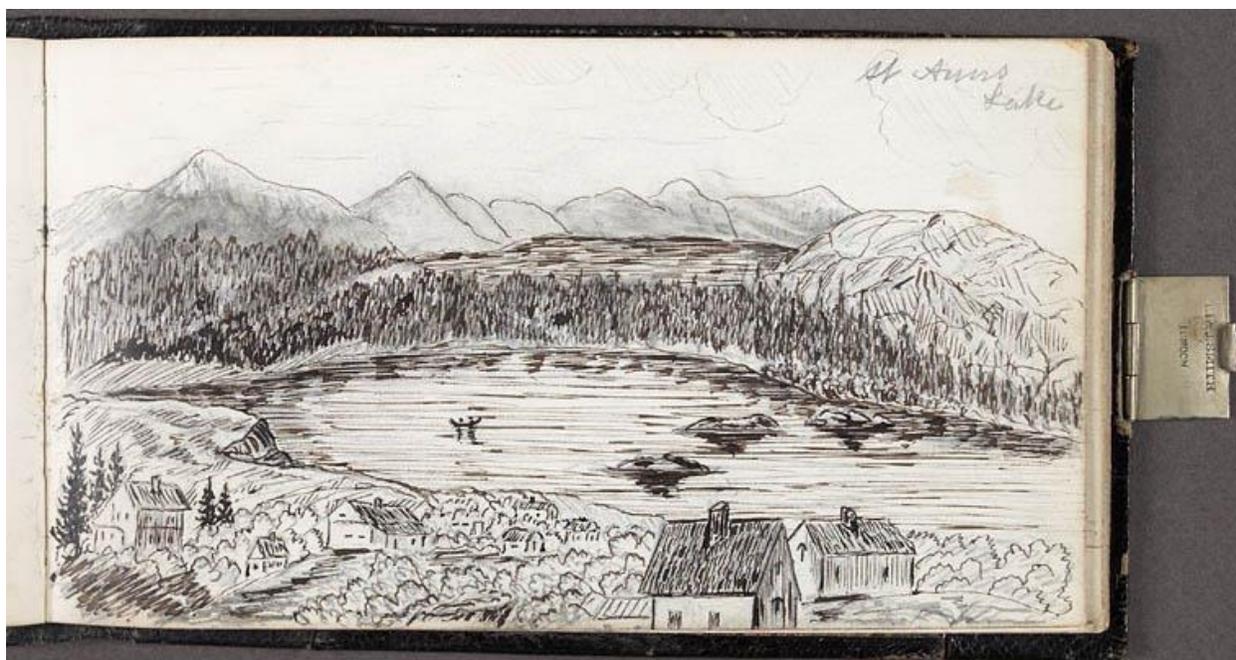


Figure 8: Lac Ste. Anne, August 1862. In: William George Richardson Hind, "Overlanders of '62 Sketchbook," in Library and Archives Canada, Acc. No. 1963-97-1.53R.



Figure 9: Lac Ste. Anne, August 1862. In: William George Richardson Hind, "Overlanders of '62 Sketchbook," in Library and Archives Canada, Acc. No. 1963-97-1.73R.



Figure 10: Group of figures at Lac Ste. Anne, August 1862. In: William George Richardson Hind, "Overlanders of '62 Sketchbook," in Library and Archives Canada, Acc. No. 1963-97-1.74R.

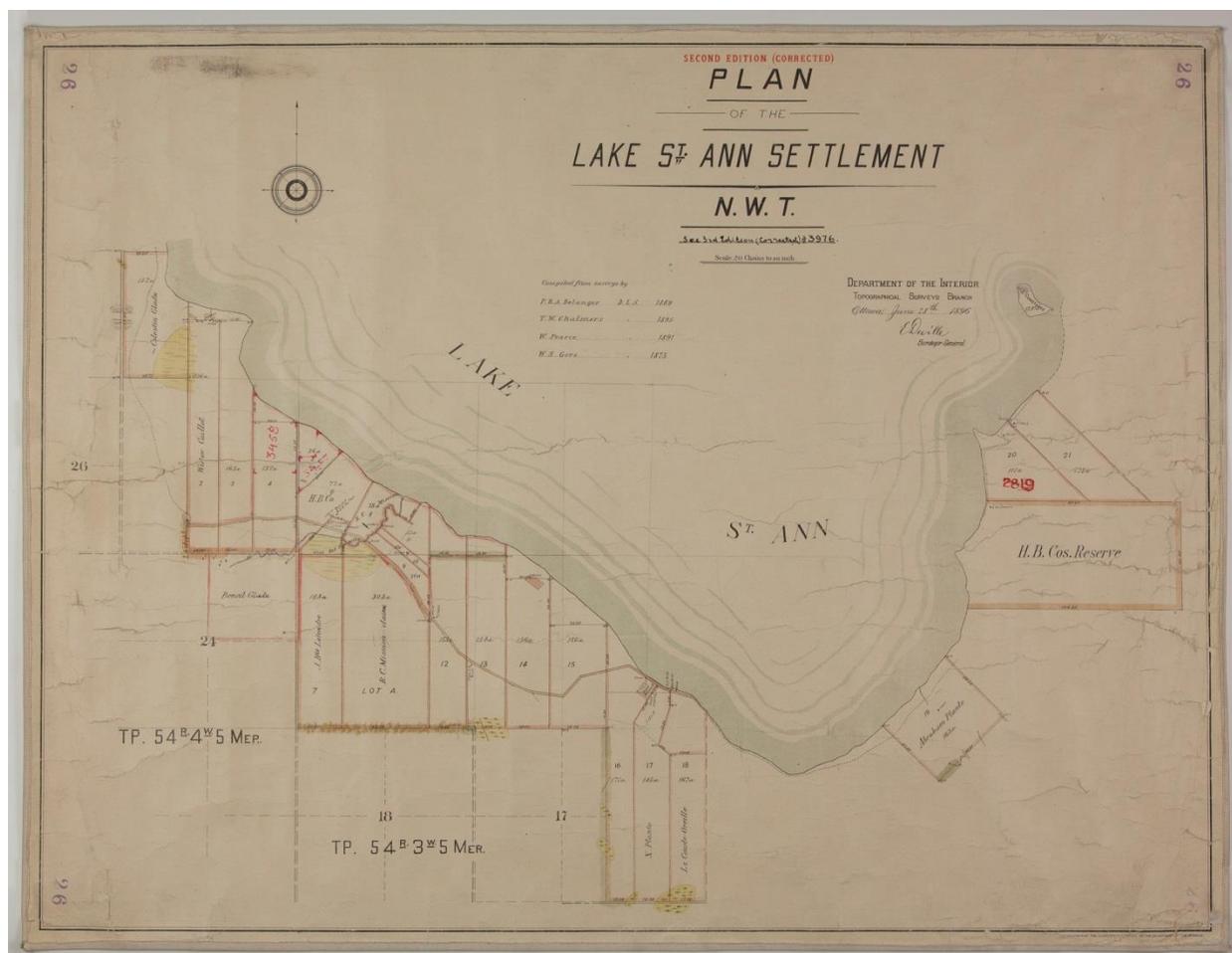


Figure 11: Plan of the Lake St. Ann Settlement, N.W. T., 28 June 1896. Note that the buildings are detailed as small black squares and labelled (e.g., house, stable, etc.). In: Provincial Archives of Alberta, GR2009.0565, Box 24, Item 2.

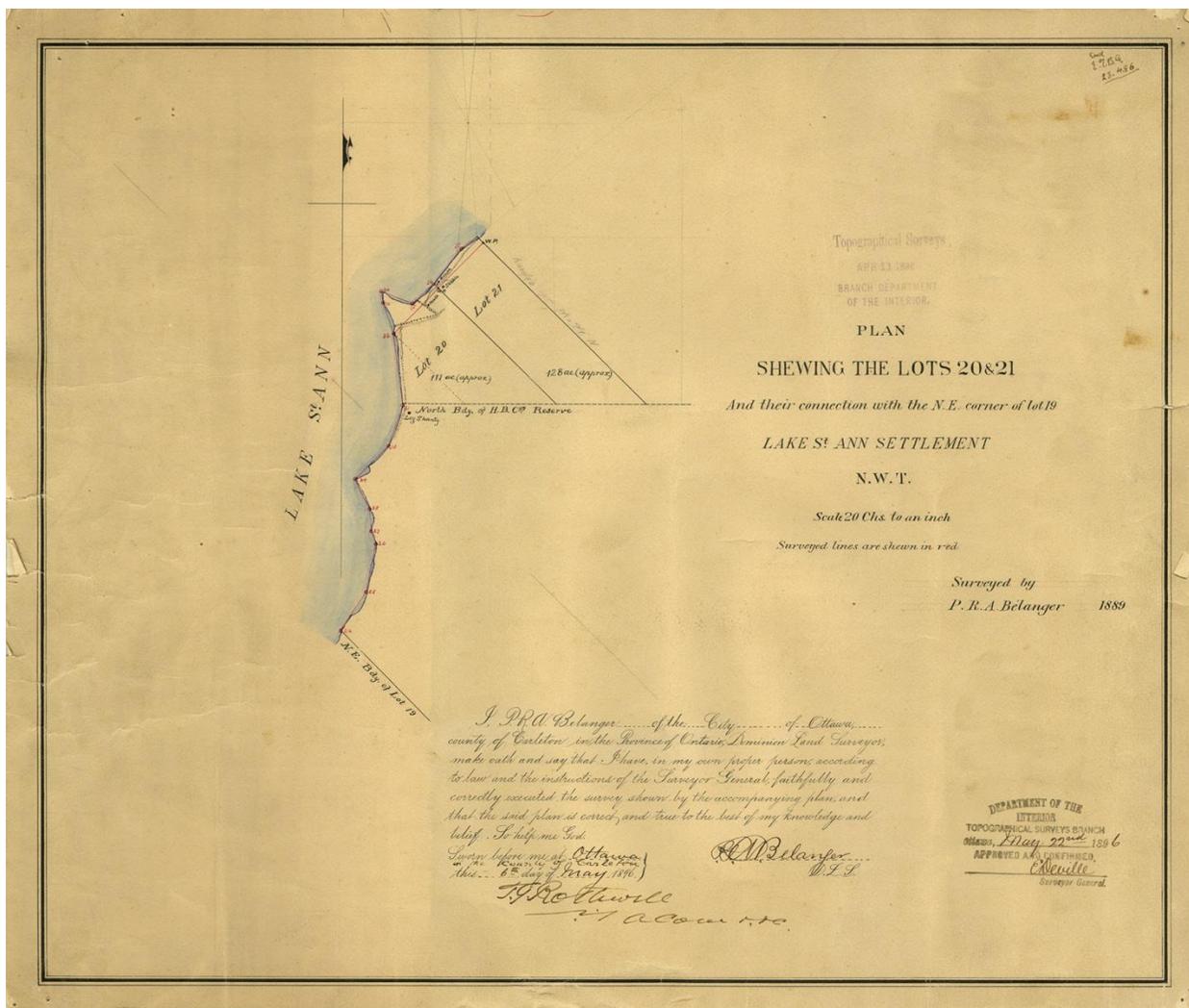


Figure 12: Plan Shewing the Lots 20 & 21 at Lake St. Ann Settlement, N.W.T., 22 May 1896. Note that the buildings are detailed as small black squares and labelled. In: Provincial Archives of Alberta, GR2009.0565, Box 5, Item 2-1.

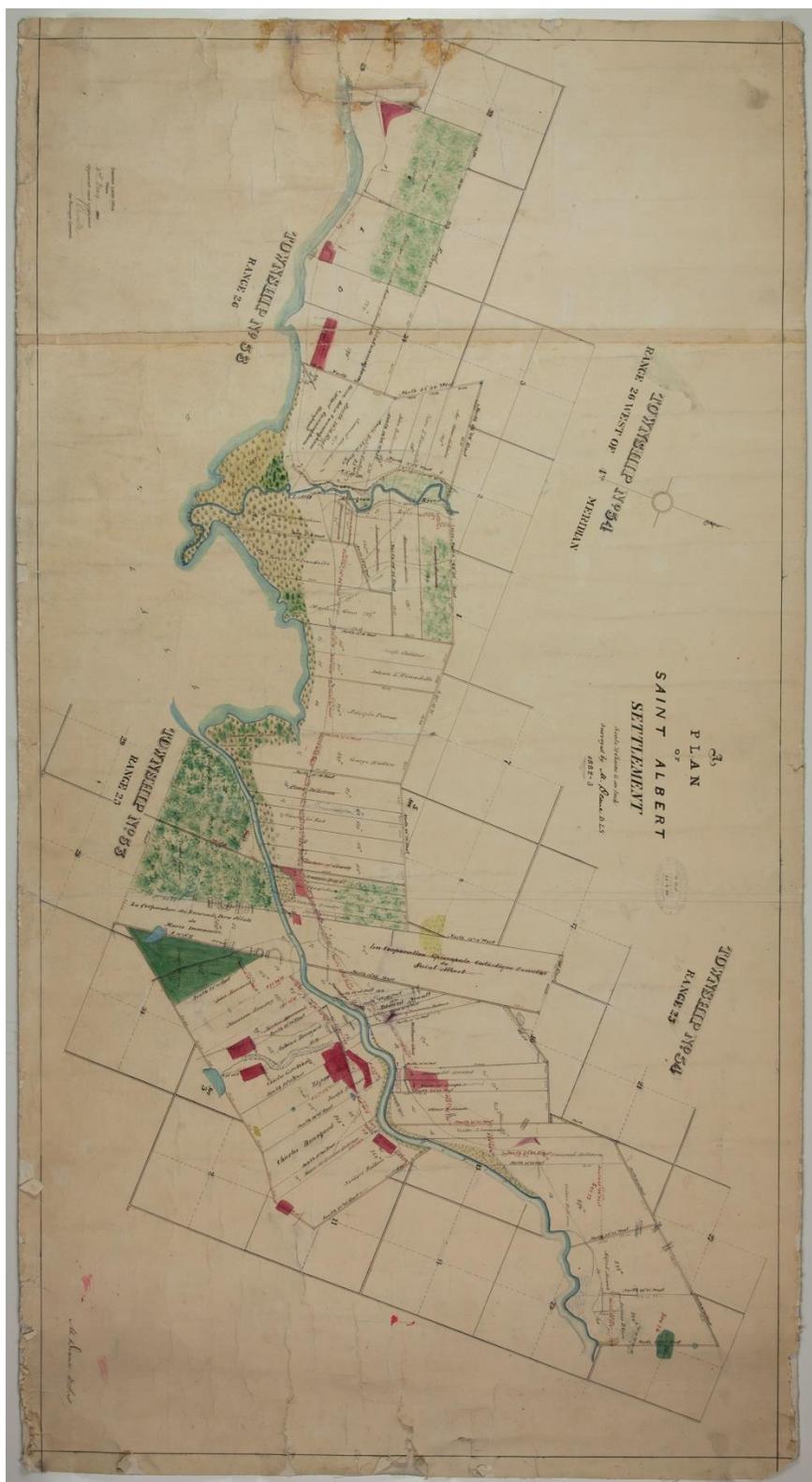


Figure 13: Plan of St. Albert Settlement, 1882-3. In: Provincial Archives of Alberta, GR2009.0565, Box 5, Item 2-1.

ENDNOTES

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- ² Marcel Giraud, *The Métis in the Canadian West, Volume II*. Trans. by George Woodcock (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1986), 306.
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- ⁵ Peter Erasmus, *Buffalo Days and Nights* (Calgary: Fifth House Publishers, 1999), 62.
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- ¹⁴ Trudy Nicks and Kenneth Morgan, "Grande Cache: The Historic Development of an Indigenous Alberta Métis Population," in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America* ed. by Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 167.
- ¹⁵ Buresi, "'Rendezvous' for Renewal at 'Lake of the Great Spirit'," 114.
- ¹⁶ Buresi, "'Rendezvous' for Renewal at 'Lake of the Great Spirit'," 177, 196.
- ¹⁷ Father Zéphirin Lizée, Lac Ste. Anne Codex Historicus 1900-1960, 8, in Provincial Archives of Alberta, Accn. 71.220, Box 99, File 4215. See also Buresi, "'Rendezvous' for Renewal at 'Lake of the Great Spirit'," 125-6.
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- ⁵¹ See Doll et. al., *The Buffalo Lake Metis Site*.
- ⁵² Bishop Vital-Justin Grandin, OMI Missions 1872, cited in Doll et. al, *The Buffalo Lake Metis Site*, 30.
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- ⁵⁶ Joseph Burr Tyrell, *Report on a Part of Northern Alberta and Portions Adjacent Districts of Assiniboia and Saskatchewan* (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1887), 38.
- ⁵⁷ Department of the Interior, "Claims to Land Lac Ste. Anne Correspondence," in University of Alberta Archives, Edmonton, Series 9/2/5/1, #134.
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- ⁶⁰ It is important to note that the information on agriculture has been derived solely from the historic record, which is written overwhelmingly from a European, settler-colonial perspective. The extent to which the Metis practiced forms of agriculture, such as encouraging the growth of certain plants and otherwise altering their ecology for their own needs, would be better understood via oral histories with the Métis themselves, which is beyond the scope of this report.
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- ¹¹⁰ Moberly, *When Fur Was King*, 52.

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- ¹³¹ Ibid.
- ¹³² Ibid.
- ¹³³ Edmonton Post Journal, 1859, in HBC Archives, Microfilm Reel 1M50.
- ¹³⁴ Ibid.
- ¹³⁵ Ibid.
- ¹³⁶ Ibid.
- ¹³⁷ Ibid.
- ¹³⁸ Edmonton Post Journal 1860, in HBC Archives, Microfilm Reel 1M50
- ¹³⁹ Edmonton Post Journal 1870-73, in HBC Archives, Microfilm Reel 1M1003.
- ¹⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ¹⁴¹ Ibid.
- ¹⁴² Ibid.
- ¹⁴³ Chittenden and Richardson, *Life, Letters and Travels of Father Pierre De Smet*, 532-3.
- ¹⁴⁴ Erasmus, *Buffalo Days and Nights*, 38, 43.
- ¹⁴⁵ Report of John Palliser to her Majesty's Principal Secretary, 19 Jan. 1859, in John Palliser, *Papers Relative to the Exploration by Captain Palliser*, 41.
- ¹⁴⁶ Milton and Cheadle, *The North-west Passage by Land*, 206.
- ¹⁴⁷ Grant, *Ocean to Ocean*, 186-7.
- ¹⁴⁸ Edmonton Post Journal 1860, in HBC Archives, Microfilm Reel 1M50
- ¹⁴⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁵⁰ Socur Emery a Mere Deschamps, Mission Lac Ste. Anne, 4 Dec. 1859, 4, in Provincial Archives of Alberta PR1982.0319.
- ¹⁵¹ Edmonton Post Journal 1870-73, in HBC Archives, Microfilm Reel 1M1003.
- ¹⁵² Archives Committee Lac Ste Anne Historical Society, *West of the Fifth*, 23.
- ¹⁵³ Ibid., 23-4.

- ¹⁵⁴ Grant MacEwan, "Victoria Callihoo: Granny," in *Mighty Women: Stories of Western Canadian Pioneers* (Vancouver/Toronto: Greystone Books, 1995), 195.
- ¹⁵⁵ MacEwan, "Victoria Callihoo," 191.
- ¹⁵⁶ Edmonton Post Journal 1870-73, in HBC Archives, Microfilm Reel 1M1003
- ¹⁵⁷ James Tirrul-Jones, "The Metis: New Farmers in a New Land," *Alberta Museums Review* 10, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1993), 14.
- ¹⁵⁸ Erasmus, *Buffalo Days and Nights*, 49.
- ¹⁵⁹ Palliser to her Majesty's Principal Secretary, 19 Jan. 1859, in Palliser, *Papers Relative to the Exploration by Captain Palliser*, 41.
- ¹⁶⁰ Milton and Cheadle, *The North-west Passage by Land*, 185.
- ¹⁶¹ Rev. Grant, cited in Borgstede, *The Black Robe's Vision*, 61.
- ¹⁶² Bishop Grandin, cited in Moodie, "The St. Albert Settlement," 92.
- ¹⁶³ Fr. P. Fourmond, Lac Ste. Anne Codex Historicus 1852-1872, in Provincial Archives of Alberta, Accn 71.220, Box 99, File 4212.
- ¹⁶⁴ See Edmonton Post Journal, 10 Jan. 1873; and Edmonton Post Journal 26 Jan. 1873, in HBC Archives, Microfilm Reel 1M1003.
- ¹⁶⁵ Victoria Callihoo, "Early life in Lac Ste. Anne and St. Albert in the Eighteen Seventies," *Alberta Historical Review* 1, no. 3 (November 1953): 21-26.
- ¹⁶⁶ Metis Scrip Application, Claim No. 1797, 1900, at Library and Archives Canada, North-West Territories Métis Scrip Applications, R190-44-1-E.
- ¹⁶⁷ Department of the Interior, "Claims to Land Lac Ste. Anne Correspondence," in University of Alberta Archives, Edmonton, Series 9/2/5/1, #134, #135.

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