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Claiming the Best of Both Worlds: Mixed Heritage Children of the Pacific Northwest Fur Trade and the Formation of Identity

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CLAIMING THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS:
MIXED HERITAGE CHILDREN OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST FUR TRADE
AND THE FORMATION OF IDENTITY

by

Alanna Cameron Beason

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

History

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ABSTRACT

Claiming the Best of Both Worlds: Mixed Heritage Children of the Pacific Northwest Fur Trade and the Formation of Identity

by

Alanna Cameron Beason, Master of Arts

Utah State University, 2015

Major Professor: Dr. Victoria Grieve
Department: History

Intimacy and family have been pillars of the North American fur trade since its conception. This is especially true for fur trading companies centered in Canada, specifically the Hudson’s Bay Company and the Northwest Company. Kinship ties formed through intimate relations between European fur traders and indigenous women allowed the fur trade to flourish and created an environment for stable, mixed heritage family units to emerge. As mixed heritage children grew into adulthood, they learned to identify with both sides of their parental cultures. However, the connections they formed with each other proved the most valuable and a separate, distinct culture emerged. In Canada this group of people are known as the Métis, a French word meaning mixed. The fur trade continued its move west and eventually reached the Pacific Ocean. This region known as the
Pacific Northwest was the farthest removed from fur trade headquarters in Montreal and was home to many different Indigenous Nations. These nations, in combination with fur traders many of whom were Métis, also created families and a new culture once again came into being. It shared aspects of Métis, European, and indigenous cultures, but was something distinctly new. Through the examination of education, kinship ties, language and borders, this group's understanding of self and community came into focus.

(120 pages)
PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Claiming the Best of Both Worlds: Mixed Heritage Children of the Pacific Northwest Fur Trade and the Formation of Identity

Alanna Cameron Beason

The fur trade in the Pacific Northwest, a region encompassing Oregon, Washington, Idaho, the western half of Montana, and British Columbia, supplied the needed ingredients for the formation of a distinctive identity to form among the mixed heritage children born to indigenous women and men of the fur trade. This thesis examined how this identity formed in some the leading families of the time. The MacDonald’s, McKay’s, and the Tolmie’s all embraced both sides of their parental cultures and used them to create and defend their own sense of identity and community. Language was an important aspect of this new culture. The combination of indigenous and European words and phrases, based on the language of the Lower Chinooks, was the foundation of group identity within the mixed heritage community. Kinship ties also brought together this community. It connected them to both indigenous and European communities and created bonds with each other. As American colonialism entered the region, this community pulled together and used both sides of their heritage to defend their rights as a mixed heritage community.
Dedicated to the man who showed me life's greatest love.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the guidance of my thesis committee: Victoria Grieve, David Rich Lewis, and Judson Finley, as well as the rest of the History Department at Utah State University including Tammy Proctor, Colleen O'Neill, Kyle Bulthuis, Diane Buist, and Monica Ingold. My cohort also provided the emotional support needed in any academic endeavor. A special thanks to Steve Fountain for putting up with me and my questions for all these years. The financial support of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and the American Indian Graduate Center enabled me to travel to the Pacific Northwest for research. To my mom, Chantelle Beason, thank you for being there for me and guiding me through life. Finally, to the man whose love, support, and encouragement completed my world. I love you, nothing in this world will change that, thank you for being the wonderful man you are.

Alanna Cameron Beason
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In an 1875 letter to his daughter Christina, Angus McDonald summed up the problem facing people of mixed heritage in Flathead Country. “In this world we are in a similar way living under two curses, one is from our knowledge and the other is from our ignorance.”¹ The famous fur trader praised Native American medical knowledge, yet lamented the lack of European educational opportunities for his children. He hoped to add the latter without eroding the former. Christina was a child of the fur trade. Her father was a Scottish trader with the Hudson’s Bay Company and her mother Catherine was Nez Perce, who was also very active in trading. Angus was uncertain of the future in the Columbia Department and worried about his children’s abilities to adapt to the changing cultural climate in the Pacific Northwest. He feared that his daughter might become European and remain ignorant of her Native American ways, or that she might stay firmly grounded in Native American knowledge and practices and lose access to her European ties. While some mixed ancestry peoples chose one path over another, a great many, like the McDonalds found a third route. They resisted conforming

¹ Angus McDonald to Christina McKenzie, February 8, 1875, Letter, Eva Emery Dye Papers, Oregon Historical Society, Portland, OR; Christina’s last named changed throughout her life from MacDonald to Mckenzie with her first marriage and then to Williams with her second marriage. For the purposes of this thesis I will refer to her as Christina. The Angus spelled his last name with a “Mc” but his children used the “Mac” variation. I use the spelling most often identified with each person.
to either category and created something new. Children born in the Pacific Northwest during the fur trade developed their own understandings of self and community as they grew into adulthood. This understanding was built upon, but differed from their parents’ cultural heritage.

The children of mixed heritage in the Pacific Northwest brought together the pieces of both European and Native American cultures and formed their own community within this new cultural framework. This moment of ethnogenesis has received relatively little attention from fur trade scholars, especially in the Pacific Northwest region. The first step towards establishing a sense of community and cultural identity started with the young mixed heritage children born in the region and their interactions with each other in educational settings. Most scholars have focused on European styled education because of the diverse documentation of the struggle to establish schools in the Pacific Northwest. Just as important were Native American lessons, which taught children skill sets different from what they might learn in a European-styled educational context. Tracing patterns of behavior and the way mixed ancestry families used European and Native American educational values reveals a nuanced portrait of identity formation.

In my thesis I will examine how mixed heritage children in the Pacific Northwest fur trade expressed their distinct identities. Showing how children

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2 Stephen Woolworth, “‘The School Is Under My Direction’: The Politics of Education at Fort Vancouver, 1836-1838,” Oregon Historical Quarterly 104 (Spring 2003): 228-251. This is the most indepth discussion about schools in the Pacific Northwest.
understand and internalize their parental Native American and European cultural identities, and how they created a separate identity through education, kinship networks, and the fur trade community. I will examine the geographical area of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, British Columbia, and parts of Montana, an area defined as the Columbia Department by the Hudson’s Bay Company. My thesis will follow the stories of the McKay and McDonald/MacDonald families. Both families had intimate ties with Native groups and with Scotland. They were large families with members who made a variety of choices in how they expressed their identities over time. By examining these families my thesis will complicate the story of how fur trade families and the children within them navigated their dual heritage over time in the Pacific Northwest.

I explore theories of identity, cultural formation, and colonialism. Each of the three chapters traces a separate generation as they formed, strengthened, and defended their community. The first chapter focuses on the first generation of McDonalds and McKays between 1790 and 1845 and how language and education created a space for community development. The second chapter concentrates on the second generation from 1845 to 1890 and the use of kinship ties to fight for community. The third chapter examines the colonizing United States and how these families defended their community from 1890 to 1910. All three chapters will explore the choices family members made, especially when confronted with settler colonialism, and how they defined themselves within and
in opposition to this invading culture.

The first generation of mixed Native American and European heritage children in the PNW helped to establish the Chinook Wawa, the region’s *lingua franca*. This first generation also began to establish a community identity. The second generation would have to grapple with the incoming missionaries and the start of American settlement; the fight to maintain their rights strengthened the connection in the mixed heritage community. The third generation faced increasing American settlement, along with the retreat of the Hudson’s Bay Company north of the 49th parallel. The third generation would also feel the effects of the United States assimilation policies, which pushed them to voice their rights as a mixed heritage community.

Questions abound on the interaction between Native and European cultures, especially in the context of colonization. The extent to which these cultures negotiated their differences, mediated their interactions, and accepted their dissimilarities varied from interaction to interaction. However, the simultaneous changes in both, resulting from contact with each other, is a commonality running through these exchanges. For scholars of Native American women, how colonization affected Native women’s position and power in their society is a crucial question. Many societies had gender relations based on separate spheres of work, production, and religious roles. Many times these cultures were matriarchal in design and afforded honor and respect to members
based on their actions, not their gender. Europeans held different views of
gender relations and often tried to impose them on Native communities, usually
through religion. While not every community was affected in the same manner by
these European values, change did occur. The scholarship of the past few
decades shows the extent and context of this change.³

In 1968, Walter O'Meara wrote Daughters of the Country: The Women of
the Fur Traders and Mountain Men. In drawing attention to the intimate
relationships between Native women and European fur traders, O'Meara
portrayed Native women as sexually exploited. In his introduction O'Meara
states, “there was a gulf that was never bridged: a chasm, not just of race but of
archeological time, that perhaps no civilized man has ever succeeded in closing
between himself and a primitive woman.”⁴ Scholarship since has set out to prove
O'Meara wrong.

Violence and patriarchy are common threads disrupting traditional gender
roles in Native American communities. However, disruption does not mean an

end to gender roles. Women found creative ways to persist in their traditional roles in circumstances less than friendly. Allen was right in claiming women lost power in the patriarchal system. However, as Perdue points out, even within the framework of patriarchy, women found ways to hold onto their own sense of identity. Fowler’s work in particular shows the adaptations women made to their traditional skill sets to survive on the reservation. All these authors work towards a more nuanced understanding of Native American women’s experience under colonization. They show Native American women not as subjugated bystanders, but as women with power and authority who were active participants in the events surrounding them. They did not sit idly by and let changing circumstances dictate their lives, but fought for their cultures, their families, and their identities.

Beyond the importance of colonialism and Native American gender roles, mixed heritage populations represent the intimate relationships between men and women. They are an important part of understanding the nuances of the North American West. Intimate relationships between men of the fur trade and Native women allowed trade goods, ideologies, and language to cross cultural barriers. These men and women created space for a different culture and identity to emerge among their children. The scholarship showing this process has expanded and changed over the last thirty years. The 1980s saw the beginning of the serious scholarship looking at the fur trade cultural history. In the 1990s, historians focused on specific regions and put gender and economics at the
center of the story. In the 2000s, the personal stories of Native women told through a variety of sources show the importance of women to the fur trade, and works within the last few years have put together more holistic narratives of women and intimacy in the fur trade.\(^5\)

While scholarship existed on the intimacy of the fur trade prior to the 1980s, Jennifer S. H. Brown’s book, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*, started the conversation on social relationships of the fur trade and the culture inspired by it. Brown looks at the intimate relationships between fur traders and Native women and the family structure they created, showing the durability and longevity of these families. The lack of colonial mindset -fur traders did not desire land or permanent settlement- and mutual dependence between the two groups allowed the formation of intimate relationships, which produced a stable family culture. Brown bases her argument on the use of company records, both from the Hudson’s Bay Company and the North West Company, the two major competitors in the Canadian fur trade.\(^6\)

Brown shows how each company approached Native marriage and culture. Men of the Hudson’s Bay Company more often encouraged their children to work for the Company and to assume at least some of their European cultural ideals. Those working for the North West Company tended to leave their children and

\(^5\) Intimacy throughout this work will be used as a signifier of relationships between men and women involving sex, marriage, or cohabitation.

wives in their native environments. The importance of intimate relationships and the kinship networks they created came to light as central cultural blocks of the fur trade society in Western Canada. However, Brown’s work falls short on showing how variations between Native tribes and cultures affected these intimate relationships. Brown covers European variances in culture with greater thoroughness than those of the Native women.

In Sylvia Van Kirk’s work *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870*, women, not families, became the focus. Van Kirk shows how “the norm for sexual relationships in fur-trade society was not casual, promiscuous encounters, but the development of marital unions.”7 As kinship ties strengthened between traders through their métis daughters, Native women no longer acted as intermediaries. Van Kirk shows how these métis daughters lost their status when white women finally came to Canada.

In contrast to Brown, the strength of Van Kirk’s analysis lies in her study on women. Van Kirk’s portrayal of how Native American women interacted with traders offers the first in-depth look at métis gender. Van Kirk fails to account for how tribal and cultural variations affected women's choices in the fur trade. Van Kirk also fails to consider how these women and their children interacted with their native cultures after integrating into the fur trade.

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The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America is a collection of essays edited by Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown. It brings together the various research threads on the children of fur traders and Native women. The essays came out of the first Métis conference held at the Newberry Library in 1981, and focus on the issue of the ethnogenesis of Métis identity. The authors look at Métis communities, including questions of identity, both how they saw themselves and how others saw them, and the culture life they left behind, such as art and language. The introduction takes on the challenge of terminology. The authors distinguish between Métis, a distinctive group from the Red River Settlement in Canada, and métis, meaning a person of mixed Native and European heritage.8

This collection offers a great look at the state of fur trade and métis culture in 1985. The authors examine a wide variety of geographical areas, from Red River to Montana to Montreal. The collection also expands the role of women beyond O’Meara’s sexualized portrayal. Understanding how people saw themselves in the past and how historians search for identity in the present offers insight into the complexities of identity and culture. Essays such as “What is Michif?: Language in the métis tradition” by John Crawford look at how the mixing of languages shaped a common identity among Michif speakers. However,

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8 Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, eds., The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 8. Ethnogenesis in this work refers to the formation of a distinctive identity among the métis.
examination of variations in class and culture in intimate relationships between Hudson’s Bay Company men and Native women versus those between North West Company men and Native women, was lacking.⁹

These three works serve as the building blocks for a fur trade cultural history. The importance of women and intimate relationships to this fur trade culture stood out in each work, strengthened by the multiple approaches and sources used. They established the key players in the fur trade. Before Brown and Van Kirk, fur trade history was very male-centered, with little to no mention of women or children. This left a very flat, one-dimensional history of heroic fur traders facing savages and harsh elements alone or, followed in the footsteps of O’Meara, in asserting the submissive roles of women. Instead, these newer works offered a history full of complex identities and cultures, a place where men and women worked together for economic stability, not only for themselves but their children as well. This search for stability created a new culture where métis children could understand both Native and European ways.

The 1990s continued to provide invaluable theoretical frameworks through which to look at cultural interactions between Natives and Europeans. Richard White’s *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* examines an area between two cultures, an

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⁹ The Hudson’s Bay Company was an English based company who operated through a string of posts along Hudson’s Bay. The North West Company was composed of mainly French-Canadians who ventured further into the interior through the use of canoes. The systems of operation and the men involved varied greatly between the two companies.
area where neither French nor Indians dominated the other, making accommodation necessary. However, as White points out, this accommodation was not “acculturation under a new name.”\textsuperscript{10} It created a place between Native and European, where both groups had to come together to create understanding and meaning in order to further their economic goals. Women in particular helped create these spaces. As companions to fur traders, they provided domestic labor and sexual companionship. Algonquian women saw their interactions with the French as a natural part of their own social customs, as well as “an alternative to polygamy.”\textsuperscript{11} Sex created a bridge between social customs: the French needed domestic comfort and Algonquians sought the best relationship for their circumstances. The social space between these two cultures was White’s middle ground, a place of intentional misunderstanding allowing both sides to accommodate and understand the other. Subsequent scholars have bent White’s idea of a “middle ground” to their own scholarly endeavors. Later scholars’ use of the “middle ground” is a more expansive place of social and cultural adaption, which led to new ways of understanding.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10} Richard White, \textit{The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), x. White uses the term Algonquians to refer to the large group of Native people living in the Great Lakes region. It is a term better understood by applying to those belonging to the same language family, not a group with the same political or cultural understandings.

\textsuperscript{11} White, \textit{Middle Ground}, 65.

\textsuperscript{12} For further discussion see Nancy Shoemaker, ed., \textit{Negotiators of Change: Historical Perspectives on Native American Women} (New York: Routledge, 1995); Susan Sleeper-Smith, \textit{Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes} (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001).
In 1997, Elizabeth Vibert’s *Traders’ Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounters in the Columbia Plateau, 1807-1846* diverged from the popular thread of understanding Natives, mostly from the writings of Europeans, to understanding Europeans from their own writings. Vibert focuses on the traders themselves; unpacking their cultural baggage allowed their preconceptions and social pressure to show their views on Native peoples. This book is about how fur traders understood the Indians they met. Their cultural perceptions are an important half of the story of intimate relations. Traders saw the women of the Plateau region as self-sufficient and in command of their place in their society, which did not always sit well with fur traders’ ideas of their own masculinity.

Vibert’s expansive argument is useful for historians trying to understand intercultural fur trade relationships. The fur traders’ one-dimensional accounts of the peoples they encountered reflected stereotyped images taken from the traders’ own cultures, revealing basic misunderstandings at the heart of fur trade relationships. Fur traders categorized Native women as drudges because of their role in food gathering, but completely overlooked the power these women had over their homes and lives due to their role as gatherers. Native partners did not conform to traders’ ideas of womanhood. Cultures mixed, but mutual understanding was much harder to come by, as White suggested.

Carolyn Podruchny’s book *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and*

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Traders in the North American Fur Trade, published in 2006, looks past the stereotypes of voyageurs. Instead, Podruchny focuses on their unique circumstances as fur trade workers who navigated the physical, social, and cultural areas between Native and European peoples. These voyageurs were the laboring force behind the North West Company. Often of French peasant or French-Canadian backgrounds, voyageurs acted as a bridge between Europeans and Natives. However, few were fully literate, leaving few written records. Podruchny therefore uses ethnohistorical methods to fill in the gaps. Voyageurs merged European ideas of culture with the various Natives they encountered to create a new culture that would become the foundation of a métis identity. Their intimate relationships with Native women created the children who would carry on this new culture.

One Step Over the Line: Toward a History of Women in the North American West, is a collection of essays edited by Elizabeth Jameson and Shelia McManus. While not solely focused on the experiences of Native women, this collection strives to understand borders, especially the border between the United States and Canada, through the experiences of women. An essay by Sylvia Van Kirk titled, “A Transborder Family in the Pacific Northwest: Reflecting on Race and Gender in Women’s History” traces the family of Charles Ross.

Carolyn Podruchny, Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 3. Voyageurs were the working class of the North West Company, serving as transporters of goods along the waterways of Canada. Bourgeois refers to those in the upper ranks of the company such as clerks.
Ross, a fur trader and chief factor, married Isabella, the daughter of a French-Canadian trader and an Ojibway woman. Ross and Isabella raised their family of ten in the Pacific Northwest using both Native and fur trade connections to cross borders and pursue stability. They provided a strong example of the importance of intimate relationships in the fur trade and how political borders eventually shaped the fortunes of such families.

In 2010 the essay collection, *Gathering Places: Aboriginal and Fur Trade Histories*, edited by Carolyn Podruchny and Laura Peers, continued the conversation about borders and identity, as well as other aspects of fur trade cultural history like food, identity, mobility, and culture. The essay, “Border Identities: Métis, Halfbreed, and Mixed-Blood” by Theresa Schenck, takes on issues of identity after the drawing of the Canadian-American border. The complexities of border politics played an important role in how the people of the fur trade identified with each other. Identity in intimate relationships was changing from how two intermingled cultures understood each other to how people living on opposite sides of the border did so.

*Recollecting: Lives of Aboriginal Women of the Canadian Northwest and Borderlands*, a collection of essays edited by Sarah Carter and Patricia McCormack, strives to capture the complexities of Native women’s lives. These

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biographies rely heavily on oral histories to show the agency of Native women and their cultural adaptation when Europeans arrived. Maureen Atkinson’s essay, “The Accomplished Odille Quintal Morison: Tsimshian Cultural Intermediary of Metlakatla, British Columbia,” examines how Odille Morison bridged the gap between Native and European cultures using language. Other essays focus on cultural mediation, borderlands, spiritual understanding, and ways of representation. McCormack’s essay, “Lost Women: Native Wives in Orkney and Lewis,” tells the stories of those intimate relationships which took Native women and their children to the homeland of their European husbands. This work’s biographical structure brings the nuances of individuals to light.

In Anne F. Hyde’s book, Empires, Nations, and Families: A New History of the North American West, 1800-1860, empires collide with the intimate realities of life. The story of the Trans-Mississippi West between 1804 and 1860 shows a place dominated by the personal connections made between people, not by the demands of nations. Hyde shows the complex web of families and relations, which created communities in a thriving and diverse world. Her work argues against O’Meara’s world of the rugged individual fighting against social pressure or as a place waiting to be filled with primitive women. Hyde focuses on the

cherished relations of place, the web of connections the fur trade brought, but that family held together. Hyde tries to give “credit to the complex lives people carved out” for themselves and their families.¹⁹

Hyde synthesizes the works of previous scholars of the West, but complements it with primary research. The work lacks primary sources for Native American women. Owl Woman, a central figure in the Plains trade and Bent’s Fort, remains flat, lacking depth of character. However, this well written narrative of the Trans-Mississippi West provides a nuanced view of the personal web of connections formed over a vast area. The uncertainty of national politics and the unsteady rule of empires allowed a multicultural world of fur trade and family to operate. It was a place of cultural exchange. Hyde’s perspective offers western historians an understanding of a wide variety of approaches. Only at the end does the traditional narrative take over, telling the story of how the United States conquered and transformed the multicultural communities into ones of whiteness and otherness.

Recent scholarship published within the last three years follows the same trend as works published in the early 2000s. Questions of borderlands, gender, and identity among Native women, fur traders, and the intimate relationships between the two continued. Fur trade families also came back as an approach to understanding the fur trade, as Brown did in the 1980s. Parents’ reactions to their

political, social, and economic environments often directly influenced how they raised their children. Identity among these children, their association with Euro-Americans, and the choices they made for their own children all suggest that intimate relationships in the fur trade created a new culture, or at least created a new way of identifying self.

Recent works reveal the continued need to understand borders in the context of their times, and to refuse to allow the borders of the modern world to define the scope of scholarship. Both Gathering Places and Recollecting indulge in some border hopping, but do not fully concern themselves with understanding the full story unfolding in the United States. When read together, these works give life and depth to the many relationships of the North American fur trade. Intimate relationships become the foundation for understanding the motivations behind the actions of men and women. Their cultural differences and perspectives on gender shaped their interactions yet created new ways of relating to one another.

The scholarship over the last thirty years has increasingly provided a complexity and depth of detail of how intimacy shaped the fur trade. The 1980s and 1990s laid the foundation of methodological and theoretical frameworks through which to look at questions of identity and gender. The 2000s saw this foundation put to work as scholars tested, expanded, and complemented earlier works. From looking at regional community identity to how borderlands shaped
individual identities, the scholars of fur trade culture have covered a myriad of topics and approaches, and shows the inadequacy of O’Meara’s portrayal of sexually exploited women who had no power over their circumstances. Their intimate relationships created spaces where economics, politics, and gender could be shaped into useful tools, tools used to build a new identity and culture for their children.

Recently, scholarship concerning Métis peoples, identity, and nationhood has grown. New scholars are exploring family ties, oral geography, and moments of political activism, among other areas, to uncover what it means to claim Métis heritage and culture. Two works striving to answer these questions are Nichole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall’s edited collection *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History* (2012) and Chris Andersen’s monograph *Métis: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (2014). *Contours of a People* takes on the many ways ethnogenesis can be experienced and the many ways of identification, both then and now, that people have claimed.20 Chris Andersen’s work is more tightly focused on proving the political identity of the Métis and excluding those who are only of mixed heritage. Both works also pay particular attention to terminology. In *Contours of a People*, the contributors used whichever spelling of “métis” they preferred, while Anderson used Métis exclusively to assert their political identity.

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20 Nichole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda MacDougall, eds., *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012).
Contours of a People probes how dual heritage offspring in Canada and the Northern United States developed their own culture. Questions of family networks, the centrality of women, mobility, language, and geography uncover Métis’ ethnogenesis. Given particular attention are the family ties which, more than any other idea presented, are the binding forces creating their identity despite the many difficulties faced by colonialism and other international forces. The contributors to this collection analyze how people understood themselves in relation to one another and to outsiders, often in a flexible and fluid manner. This makes tracking down and showcasing fixed patterns of identity very difficult. The authors enumerated these difficulties and provided various methodologies for future scholars.

Jacqueline Peterson’s essay concerning terminology and the reexamination of ethnogenesis in the Great Lakes region opens the debate in how scholars term the peoples they study. She calls scholars to start anew and refer to the people as they referred to themselves at their given historical moment. Identity is not a static way of being. It is an ever-changing designation and scholarship needs to reflect this. St-Onge and Podruchny use the metaphor of a spider web to trace family networks and the ways people conceptualized their identity through family

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connections, instead of political or economic factors. Brenda Macdougall ends the collection with a look at myths surrounding the Métis culture as created by Canadians in recent years. She also urges scholars to focus identity studies more on family and less on radicalized concepts of identity. Macdougall pushes scholars to understand that mixed heritage does not make one Métis and claim that identity can denigrate the history of those who are.

Chris Andersen's book, Métis: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood takes a similar argument as Brenda Macdougall, though Andersen focuses more on the political and legal ramification of Métis identity claims. Andersen’s central issue is the radicalization of the term Métis and the ramifications it has had on Métis communities. He uses two official classifications: the Supreme Court of Canada and the National Household Survey of Canada. Andersen argues that these sites produced legal and social meaning, that political self-consciousness constitutes Métis identity, not their radicalized in-betweens, and that radicalization has made it “nearly impossible to recognize a single Métis people.”

Taking colonization and racism out of the accepted

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24 Chris Andersen, Métis: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014).

25 Andersen, Métis, 10.
understanding of Métis identity allows a political Métis identity to come through, which excludes many of dual heritage.

Both these works deal with issues of identity about and within North American Métis communities. In addition, both works set out to show how dual heritage of indigenous and European does not automatically make one Métis, that certain requirements are needed for ethnogenesis to emerge. It is in their aims that these two works differ the most. Andersen strives to create a political definition of Métis peoplehood, to be used in contemporary fights for recognition and rights. *Contours of a People* contributors unpack the multiple ways of understanding self and community and the messiness of how this process played out in Métis communities. They do not limit themselves to one definition, area, or community. Instead, *Contours of a People*, much like Métis identity itself, is fluid, multilayered, and accepting of change.

The nature of Métis identity is the central theme in Jennifer S. H. Brown’s historiographical essay “Cores and Boundaries: Metis Historiography Across a Generation” and Martha Harroun Foster’s book *We Know Who We Are: Metis Identity in a Montana Community*. Brown raises questions about self-identity and the relevance of the term Métis for people today. Foster also closely examines the development and maintenance of Métis identity, focusing on the Spring Creek
Métis community in Montana.\textsuperscript{26} What comes from both works is the persistence of community identity, despite various labels, and the importance of family kinship networks in supporting and perpetuating identity.

Terminology is an important note in each work. Brown points out the inappropriateness of labeling everyone of mixed descent Métis.\textsuperscript{27} However, at the first Métis Conference, a majority agreement accepted the term Métis as an umbrella for the multitude of mixed people.\textsuperscript{28} Foster uses a small “m” métis when talking about someone of mixed descent and a capital “M” Métis when referring to a distinctive ethnic group.\textsuperscript{29} This version of terminology came from a collection of essays complied by Brown after the first conference and is the most widely accepted source on the matter today.

Both Brown and Foster talk about the role of gender in maintaining a separate and distinctive identity. Foster, in particular, focuses on the role of women in maintaining kinship networks and a sense of identity within the family unit. The use of traditional medicines such as goose grease, the making of pemmican, beading, and language set the Métis apart from their neighbors and maintained their separate self-identity.\textsuperscript{30} It is in the kinship networks which identity is reaffirmed and handed down through each generation. Brown ends her

\textsuperscript{26} Martha Harroun Foster. \textit{We Know Who We Are: Metis Identity in a Montana Community}, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 5.
\textsuperscript{28} Brown, “Cores and Boundaries,” 11.
\textsuperscript{29} Foster, \textit{We Know Who We Are}, 14.
\textsuperscript{30} Foster, \textit{We Know Who We Are}, 204-205.
essay with the importance of enduring connections Métis used to sustain themselves and their community identity.\textsuperscript{31} While scholars and those of the dominant society may have overlooked the Métis and their networks, Métis have survived and endured to the present day along with their rich culture and historical memory.

This group also migrated to the Pacific Northwest. Jean Barman’s book \textit{French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women in the Making of the Pacific Northwest} turns scholarly attention away from the English speakers of the Pacific Northwest fur trade to those of French Canadian descent.\textsuperscript{32} Using statistical data along with journals and trader reports, Barman pieces together the lives of 1,240 French Canadians who migrated from Canada to the Pacific Northwest. Divided into three parts, this work follows the French Canadians as they entered the fur trade workforce in the Pacific Northwest, created families with indigenous women, and negotiated their communities through the rise of incoming American settlers. It also traces the presence of these families up to the present day and the important roles they played throughout the history of the Pacific Northwest.

Adaptability and flexibility stand as two cornerstones of French Canadian heritage. As the laborers of the fur trade French Canadians relied on their heritage as they migrated across North America. When they came to the Pacific

\textsuperscript{31} Brown, “Cores and Boundaries,” 18.

Ocean these same traits helped them in creating a new homeland for themselves and establishing multigenerational communities. The practice of intermarriage with indigenous women and their reliance on them also proved valuable in establishing families in the region and fighting against American colonialism. After the boundary was established between the United States and Canada the French Canadians and their families used their influence in both American and indigenous communities to help smooth interactions and facilitate communication. Barman argues that without these French Canadians and their families, settlement of the area would have been impossible and that their leadership after American settlement produced a more stable atmosphere. Barman also shows the respect children of French Canadians and indigenous women had for their dual heritage. They claimed both as their identity, without choosing one over another.

Barman’s work takes on the overlooked history of French Canadians and the important role they played in the Pacific Northwest fur trade. Her use of qualitative and quantitative analysis helps fill in the gaps left by an illiterate French Canadian community. She also shows how colonialism is not an all-encompassing term, which can be applied to all interactions between Europeans and indigenous peoples. Instead, Barman points out the many instances of mutual understanding and accommodation between the two groups. Further research into the similarities or differences between fur trade officers’ children
and the offspring of the French Canadians would provide greater depth to this work. However, this work takes an important first look at the rise of mixed heritage communities in the Pacific Northwest.

John C. Jackson’s book *Children of the Fur Trade: Forgotten Métis of the Pacific Northwest* is one of the few that discusses children of fur traders in the Pacific Northwest.\(^{33}\) Introducing chapters on specific, well-known métis trappers, Juliet Pollard’s Ph. D. dissertation “The Making of the Metis in the Pacific Northwest Fur Trade Children: Race, Class, and Gender” is the most authoritative and widely cited work on the children of the Pacific Northwest fur trade.\(^{34}\) She approaches the children of the Pacific Northwest fur trade in developmental stages, showing the effect of parental cultures on each stage of childhood development. She concludes that a distinctive or prevailing cultural cohesion did not emerge with these children. However, Pollard does claim that they were different from either parental culture. She concludes, “fur trade children appear to have been drawn more towards the dominant white culture than towards native life on reservations.”\(^{35}\) This conclusion is drawn from a few examples of officers’ children, who slipped easily between both the white and Native communities. However, this narrow slice of mixed heritage peoples needs


to be expanded and the different choices of a wider variety of people examined to show community cohesion.

Any discussion of mixed heritage peoples needs a note on terminology. Peterson and Brown’s edited collection, *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America* addresses the debate over capitalization. The Métis National Council pointed out the difference between “Métis” and “métis”: when “written with a small ‘m,’ metis is a racial term for anyone of mixed Indian and European ancestry.” When the ‘M’ is capitalized, Metis refers to “a distinct indigenous people during a certain historical period in a certain region in Canada.”36 St-Onge, Podruchny, and MacDougall, edited collection, *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History* offers a new way of addressing the terminology. The editors chose to capitalize the “m” and to remove the accent over the “e,” using the spelling Metis to “show that Metis people should not be considered simply as the descendants of French Canadian voyageurs…capitalization of the term points to the existence of a group identification.”37 In this thesis, I will not use any variation of Metis. While I believe it is a useful designator for the ethnogenesis happening in the Pacific Northwest during the fur trade era, I do not want to detract from the Métis identity established in Canada. For the purposes of this thesis, I will use “mixed heritage” to avoid confusion when discussing the Métis. Those of mixed heritage in the

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37 St-Onge, Podruchny, and MacDougall, eds., *Contours of a People*, 6.
Pacific Northwest did not have a single term to designate their community. However, this did not stop them from relating to each other and acting as a community, especially when faced with adverse conditions.

Using this secondary literature on the fur trade, families, and identity provides new insight into the mixed heritage community of the Pacific Northwest. Chapter One will examine the start of the fur trade in the Pacific Northwest and the first steps towards a separate mixed heritage identity, which stared with the birth of Ranald MacDonald and Billy McKay. Chapter Two will go on to detail how this community fought for their rights against incoming settlement and the choices they made as war escalated between the United States and the Native Americans, paying special attention to the how the MacDonald’s and McKay’s negotiated war time. Chapter Three concludes with how the mixed heritage population defended their rights at the State and Federal level. Although not always successful in their fight, both families struggled against the United States for their claims to land, education, and ultimately respect for their heritage by using the United States legal system.

People of mixed heritage in the Pacific Northwest fur trade created a space for themselves, which drew on Native American and European cultures. However, more than just being a people in between, the mixed heritage community became a distinctive culture. They established their own language, held together their community through ties of kinship, and defended their rights
against the intrusion of outsiders. Gender roles, stable families, and the shifting
powers of colonial rule all played an important role in shaping this mixed heritage
community. The first generation between 1790 and 1830 would lay the
foundation for further generations. As the fur trade companies entered the area,
intimate ties formed between traders and Native American nations, especially the
Chinook. These unions would produce important leaders in the Pacific Northwest,
such as Ranald MacDonald and William McKay.
CHAPTER II

THE FIRST GENERATION: CREATING COMMUNITY THROUGH LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION, 1790-1845

Since the beginning of the North American fur trade in the 1500s, intimacy between European men and Native American women ensured political alliances, the continuation of trade, and the creation of families. This pattern persisted as the Hudson’s Bay Company and the North West Company, the two major fur trading companies in North America, moved west. The Hudson’s Bay Company would later designate the area west of the Rocky Mountains as the Columbia Department, which included Washington, Oregon, Idaho, the western half of Montana, and British Columbia. By 1808, the North West Company, the Hudson’s Bay Company, and the Pacific Fur Company, a company based in the United States, had set up shop along the Columbia River and began establishing more formal and intimate ties with the Chinook Nation on the lower Columbia River. ¹

Native American mothers and European fathers taught their children cultural values from both perspectives. Children learned their Native languages and maintained ties to place and the knowledge they needed to thrive in their environment. Children also learned the importance of kinship, how to subsist in

the Pacific Northwest landscape, and how to cure their physical ailments. All of this knowledge would ultimately help them become successful traders. They also learned the languages of their fathers, European customs of etiquette and dress, along with Christian values. In combining European and Native educational systems, children of mixed heritage created their own ways of understanding and behaving. The Chinook Wawa, a mixture of Native American and European languages, became more complex and prevalent as generations of mixed heritage children grew into adulthood. They put both parts of their education to use defending their rights, and those rights of their extended kinship network, to place and resources. These same networks allowed them to operate as traders within both the HBC and Native American societies.

The North West Company absorbed the Pacific Fur Company in 1812 and in 1821 the Hudson’s Bay Company and the North West Company merged. This brought together English, Irish, Scottish, American, Métis, Iroquois, and Cree, among others, under the umbrella of the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC). The principle traders of the HBC entered a world unfamiliar to them and already populated by the many diverse nations of Indians. They immediately sought ties of trade and intimacy with the Chinooks of the Upper and Lower Columbia, the Nez Perce of the Plateau region, the Northern Paiute of Southeastern Oregon,

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3 Mackie, Trading Beyond the Mountains, xvii.
the Quinault of Washington’s Olympic peninsula, and the Swinomish of the Puget Sound, among others. This is the world children of fur trade unions inherited and the world in which they created their own understanding of identity, belonging, and place.

This thesis deals with two groups, the Nez Perce of the Plateau region and the Chinookan peoples of the Lower Columbia. Generations of interchange had created kinship ties and economic patterns which transmitted some cultural beliefs across language barriers. Children learned the cultural intricacies of other nations, how to provide for their people, and the spiritual beliefs which sustained their communities. All of these cultural interactions provided the base for the creation of a mixed heritage identity during childhood.

Family played an important role in both Chinook and Nez Perce cultures. Gender spheres were separate and complimentary, encouraging cooperation and equality between members. In the Plateau societies, which included the Nez Perce, gender roles allowed for community survival in an uncompromising environment. Women exercised authority in the home, controlled food resources,

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4 The incoming fur traders most often married into these two Native American nations. The people focused on in this study had Scottish fathers and mothers from either the Chinook or Nez Perce nations. The Chinook of the Lower Columbia refers to the Chinook Nation occupying the lower Columbia River. While some linguistic distinction exists between the Chinook of the upper and lower Columbia, it mostly is a reference to the distinctive geographical regions occupied and the resource base they had available to them. On the lower Columbia resources were more numerous and diverse, allowing the lower Chinook to become very powerful.


6 Cebula, Plateau Indians, 11.
ruled immediate family members who resided within the lodge, and wielded political and spiritual power. Men often enjoyed greater authority in community politics and commanded more positions of spiritual power. They also controlled matters pertaining to warfare.\textsuperscript{7} For the Chinook, gendered spheres were also complimentary but those distinctions did not apply to slaves. Male and female slaves in Chinook society gathered fuel and food, manufactured materials, and cooked, along with other tasks. As with the Nez Perce, spiritual practices were not limited by gender. Chinook shamans could be either men or women, invested with an ability to heal the sick by guardian spirits.\textsuperscript{8} There were differences between the two groups, but their use of separate and complimentary spheres insured cultural survival.

The Chinook of the Lower Columbia developed a different social structure because the environment of the Columbia River made the accumulation of foodstuffs much easier than in the Plateau region. Women gathered and men hunted. Fishing, an activity that provided one of the main sources of protein, was an industry in which both participated. Seasonal migration on the Columbia varied the resources available to the Chinook. Root and berry gathering, along with shellfish, nuts, and camas were major sources of subsistence and were the primary responsibility of women. They also collected Western Red Cedar used for clothing, houses, canoes, and many other materials. Families gained access

\textsuperscript{8} Cebula, \textit{Plateau Indians}, 18-19.
\textsuperscript{9} Boyd, Ames, and Johnson, \textit{Chinookan Peoples}, 159.
to these resources through marriage into families who already controlled use rights to these resource areas. The Chinook practiced “out marriage” to broaden their resource bases. For the Chinook, this often meant wives came from villages that controlled a certain resource, such as a fishing site or a berry patch. Social and political organization of the Chinookan people of the Lower Columbia stressed kinship ties and bilateral descent. A complex hunter-gatherer society emerged due to resource abundance. While the rich fisheries of the Columbia River were the most noticeable of traditional Chinook resources, elk, berries, wapato, and camas were also staples of their diet as well as trout, sturgeon, and smelt.\(^9\) Trade was also an important part of their subsistence pattern. Trade networks reached from the mouth of the Columbia to the Rocky Mountains, allowing for diverse foodstuffs and materials to pass across great distances.

The Nez Perce relied on an even greater seasonal migration route to replenish their food stores. Women had complete control over the food resources; they gathered, processed, and stored all foodstuffs including products of the men’s hunting and fishing pursuits. This food became the property of the women once it entered the household. As with the Chinook, the Nez Perce relied on extensive kinship networks. Kinship ties connected small, mobile groups across great distances and allowed access to resource sites that would have

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For the Nez Perce, migrating meant more than acquiring seasonal food resources. Moving to the camas plains or fishing sites on the Columbia River enabled them to maintain an extensive trade network. The arrival of the horse around 1710 increased Nez Perce mobility, as well as giving them access to higher calorie foods, such as buffalo. Kinship relationships determined the trade relations between Native, mixed heritage and HBC officials. Trade was not just an exchange of goods; it often took place in the form of gift giving, gambling, or ritual gift exchanges determined by the parties’ relationship. Kinship ties cemented trade relationships between far-flung groups and enabled cross-cultural language communication to expand even further. The Chinook used their status as intermediaries between the maritime fur trade and the interior Native American nations to rise in status and wealth. As their network of trading partners grew, marriage became an integral aspect of the fur trade. In Chinook society women were the main traders and their marriages into other communities created stable trading networks. Marriage between different trading parties necessitated translators and the renewing of kinship ties. Tribes who started to incorporate colonial economics into their own subsistence patterns early on were able to negotiate from a position of power. Tribes such as the Squamish or the Chinook

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used their knowledge of their environs to their own economic ends.\textsuperscript{11}

The kinship ties between Native Americans and the fur traders started to create a mixed heritage family culture within the Pacific Northwest. Due to the increasing numbers of families to support and the great distance between Montreal and the fur trade posts in the Pacific Northwest, the HBC tried to limit the number of men who could marry, thereby limiting HBC responsibility for their families. HBC servants fought both of these regulations vigorously. Marriage was more than “a useful link between the traders and the savages,” as Archibald McDonald pointed out. There “was no reconciling the men to the place” without these unions and the human companionship they provided. Governor George Simpson, who was opposed to such unions wrote, “these matrimonial connections [were] a heavy tax on a post, in consequence of the increased demand for provisions.”\textsuperscript{12} However, as operations in the Columbia Department continued, Simpson saw their usefulness and began urging company servants and officers to form bonds with the local Native groups. Simpson wrote, “[marriage] is the best security we can have of the goodwill of the Natives.”\textsuperscript{13} After numerous complaints from HBC employees, the Company allocated more


\textsuperscript{13} Governor George Simpson and Archibald McDonald as quoted in Richard Mackie, \textit{Trading Beyond the Mountains}, 308.

resources to mixed heritage children, particularly towards their education.\textsuperscript{14}

Early childhood education produces a vocabulary for children to understand themselves in relation to their surroundings, their communities, and their cultures.\textsuperscript{15} Education for children of mixed heritage drew from the best and worst of both worlds. They accessed both parents’ styles of education and cultural values, which included trading and writing in English, speaking Chinook Wawa and migrating to seasonal hunting and gathering grounds. Children of the fur trade learned the skills they needed to prosper in their world. Fathers, if they had the means, would send their children back east to Red River, Montreal, or in some cases to England to receive a formal European-style education.\textsuperscript{16} Those without the means would hire private tutors, or in some cases communities would come together and establish schools with the ideals of European education in mind.\textsuperscript{17} However, this was not the only method of education for these young children.

In 1821, Archibald McDonald, a Scotsman, arrived in the Columbia

\textsuperscript{15} Van Kirk, \textit{Many Tender Ties}, 148.
\textsuperscript{16} Steven Mintz, \textit{Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), viii-2. Childhood, as Steven Mintz points out, is “a life stage whose contours are shaped by a particular time and place.” Childhood is more than a set timeframe for a person to mature into an adult. It is a stage in life when cultural, social, and religious influences shape a person’s view of the world; Elliott West, \textit{Growing Up with the Country: Childhood on the Far Western Frontier} (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), xviii. West shows the many ways children view the world differently than their parents. When raised in an environment which differs from the parental ones children will develop new understandings of culture.
\textsuperscript{18} While not all children knew their fathers and in some cases did not know their mothers, the fur trade practice of establishing family ties with Native American nations, for both emotional support and trade opportunities, meant that the stable family unit was a norm.
Department. Stationed at Fort Astoria on the mouth of the Columbia River, he soon established himself as a prominent trader in the region and in September 1823 he married Koale’ zoa, the daughter of Chief Concomly, who headed the Chinook Nation. In February of 1824, she gave birth to their son, Ranald MacDonald. (See Appendix 1 and 2) Koale’ zoa died shortly after leaving Ranald in the care of his Aunt Car-cum-cum. Ranald spent the first years of his life happily living in Concomly’s lodge. It was during his time with the Chinook that Concomly gave Ranald his nickname, “Tool,” a Chinook word meaning “bird,” which Ranald’s father would often refer to him as in his correspondence with friends and family.¹⁸

Archibald remarried about a year later to Jane Klyne, a Métis woman from a long established fur trade family. He eventually brought Ranald to his new post at Thompson’s River to be raised by Jane. In reminiscences, Ranald remembered how he was his father’s “constant companion, save when out on expeditions of special danger- from trade post to trade post throughout the Columbia, and northward in the region now known as British Columbia.”¹⁹ By November 1832, Ranald was enrolled at the newly established Fort Vancouver School to begin his education with other children of the fur trade. While many of the students were of mixed heritage descent, there were a number of Native American children who

¹⁹ Ranald MacDonald as quoted in Roe, *Ranald MacDonald*, 9.
attended the school.

Dr. John McLoughlin, the Chief Factor at Fort Vancouver, created the Fort Vancouver School in 1832 to help parents who could not afford, or did not wish, to “place” their children. “Placing” children, a practice of sending children away for schooling or technical training, was a frequent educational choice of fur trade parents. This practice became even more important after the merger of the North West Company and the HBC brought a decrease in personnel hiring, making it harder to find clerk positions within the fur trade. Placing was a practice most often used by upper ranking members of the HBC, ensuring their children’s future in the company was a major concern. After 1821 most children went to the Red River Academy near present-day Winnipeg or to Montreal for a formal education in religion, medicine, or accounting. Affluent families often sent their children, especially boys, to England for a medical education. The distance from the Columbia Department to Red River or Montreal created logistical problems for families wishing to place their children. It was necessary to rely on their friends and family to watch over their children and secure their educational arrangements.20

Due to such problems, parents often decided to teach their own children at home or to hire tutors. Archibald McDonald taught his wife and children using family time and Bible readings to help them learn Christianity and obtain reading

competency. Sunday school also provided a platform to encourage religious education. Dr. William Fraser Tolmie taught Sunday school classes at Fort Vancouver, using Wawa to convey religious morals. This use of Wawa promoted a better understanding of the Catholic faith and helped in cementing ties of community using the new language tailored to meet the needs of the growing mixed heritage population. James Douglas wrote to the governor of the HBC about the frustrations of language barriers saying,

His [Herbert Beaver] professional exertions have been unavoidable limited by the multitude of languages Native & Foreign that flourish here, placing almost insuperable obstacles in the way of religious Teachers, and, in a great measure, preventing that general acquaintance, and benevolent intercourse with the lower classes, which, without degrading so greatly extends the power & efficiency of the Clergy. While on the subject of morals, I may also mention, that a Sunday School, conducted by Dr. Tolmie, who kindly volunteered his services, was opened last winter, for the instruction of the Natives, which they attended in great numbers.  

Parents educated both girls and boys. However, boys often went to Red River or further abroad for their education. Parents of mixed heritage children wanted them to excel in their environment, which meant an understanding of reading and writing in English and basic mathematic skills. Fathers often did not envision their children leading lives in European societies because their connections to place and people were within the environment of the fur trade.

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22 John McLoughlin and Hudson’s Bay Company, *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee*, Hudson’s Bay Record Society (Toronto: The Champlain Society for the Hudson’s Bay Record Society, 1941), 239.
While economic opportunities were available back east in Montreal or even further east in London, families often wanted their children to pursue careers near their families. Children also learned French, the official language of the HBC, and Wawa, which they used in everyday exchanges. However, vocational skills were the important educational standards. Trading, farming, and other crafts were the focus of educational pursuits for both boys and girls. McLoughlin wanted to prepare the young pupils at the Fort Vancouver school for life in the Pacific Northwest. This stood in stark contrast to the Red River Academy curriculum, especially in regard to female education. At Red River officers desired their daughters to be educated in “the ornamental as well as the useful branches of Education.” Great pains were taken at Red River to ensure proper Victorian ideals into their young children. At Fort Vancouver, Victorian ideals did not rank as importantly as economic and practical skills.

When the school first opened there were about twelve boys, including David McLoughlin, William McKay, Ranald MacDonald, and Andrew Pambrun. John Ball, the first teacher of the school also recorded that “Louis Labonte, a servant’s son, and Benjamin Harrison, a Chinook orphan who had been adopted by McLoughlin when he was found to be the only survivor of malaria among his people on Wapato Island” were also members of the first cohort. McLoughlin felt

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26 Ibid., 149–152.
that the purpose of the school was “moral and religious knowledge without reference to sectarian tenets,” as he worried that religious sectarianism would undermine more worldly commercial interests.26

The Fort Vancouver School played an important role in creating a space for mixed heritage children to build a community identity. It brought together mixed heritage children from different villages or posts for the first time. This was important for children who had grown up in nomadic fur brigades or in remote Columbia Department outposts. An established school allowed them to meet others who shared similar backgrounds. Children learned the basics of reading, writing, and math, as well as the necessary skills for them to enter into regional economic pursuits. McLoughlin believed that these skills would better prepare them for life within the HBC, which was the ultimate goal of the company.27 The school was also meant to guide them in the religious faith of their parents’ choosing. For fur trade families this often meant training in the Catholic faith. McLoughlin took his duty to the children of the fort very seriously. He personally oversaw their curriculum and made sure the children were learning the appropriate lessons for their future as employees of the HBC. However, the arrival of Herbert Beaver would test McLouglin’s commitment to the education of the mixed heritage population.

Reverend Herbert Beaver and his wife Jane arrived at Fort Vancouver on September 6, 1836. This “self-appointed judge of men,” was highly critical of life in and around Fort Vancouver; from agricultural practices to marriage, he judged all of Fort Vancouver to be beneath his English sensibilities.\(^{28}\) He especially felt that the education offered by the Fort Vancouver School was lacking in every regard, especially when compared to schools in England. Beaver tried ousting McLoughlin as proprietor of the school. He felt his vision for the school was superior to McLoughlin’s model, noting that,

> this system of instruction, which I should wish to see adopted in the School at Vancouver, is the same with that used in the National Schools of the Mother Country, as having accomplished there much good, and as being the best adapted to the wants and state of society here.\(^{29}\)

Beaver tried to incorporate his European ideals of education and deportment into the lives of Fort Vancouver’s mixed heritage population and found only resistance, most vocally from McLoughlin. McLoughlin fought against Beaver’s intrusion into the Fort Vancouver School and his degrading remarks about the mixed heritage population. Eventually the disagreement and Beaver’s crude remarks about McLoughlin brought the two men to blows as McLoughlin attacked him in the courtyard of Fort Vancouver.\(^{30}\)

While attending the Fort Vancouver School, Ranald learned new ideas and

\(^{28}\) Herbert Beaver, *Reports and Letters, 1836-1838, of Herbert Beaver, Chaplain to the Hudson’s Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver* (Portland, OR: Champoeg Press, 1959), xi.


languages and was surrounded by other young children who, like himself, were of mixed heritage. In this setting, the first strands of a group identity emerged and Wawa evolved into an even more complex language. The first pupils at the Fort Vancouver School were six mixed heritage boys, who spoke Wawa, French, and various Native dialects, but only had a limited understanding of English. John Ball was the first teacher at Fort Vancouver, but he left several months later and was replaced by Solomon Smith. Smith found the school at Fort Vancouver to be “...a bedlam. The scholars came in talking in their respective languages: Cree, Nes Perces [sic], Chinook, etc. etc. I could not understand them, and when I called them to order they could not understand me.”\textsuperscript{31} Most common in this bedlam was Wawa. More than any other language, children used Wawa to communicate within their community.

The Native American communities and the fur traders relied on the Chinook Jargon or Wawa to communicate within their trading networks. It initially developed for trading purposes, but as communities collapsed from epidemic diseases, the need for a more sophisticated language to bridge communication barriers developed. As more children were born into this environment, mothers pieced together a language reflecting the multicultural atmosphere of the fur trade. The sophistication of Wawa grew along with mixed heritage children. Horatio Hale noted in 1841 that children used Wawa around Fort Vancouver as

their native language. It created a bond between the first native speakers of Wawa.\textsuperscript{32}

Wawa was not the first pidgin to develop in the Pacific Northwest. The Nootka Jargon of the Puget Sound developed in response to the increase in coastal trade in the 1770s. Overlap existed between Nootka Jargon and Wawa, but more important were their differences. In particular, they had no geographical overlap. Wawa developed through trade centered along the Columbia River. On the other hand, Nootka Jargon was not widely understood outside the Puget Sound and did not create the same community bonds Wawa inspired. Wawa did not develop to facilitate communication on the Columbia--intermarriage and the use of interpreters had created a multilingual world. However, as disease spread throughout the area and multilingual speakers became scarce, a jargon became necessary.

Wawa’s initial development relied on Lower Chinook for its formation, but after the removal of Hudson’s Bay Company from Fort Astoria to Fort Vancouver, Wawa began to become more influential than English and French. According to George Lang, the development of Wawa began with Native American women creating a community for their children, instead of the previously held theory that fur trade economics necessitated a pidgin.\textsuperscript{33} At Fort Vancouver, Wawa would

\textsuperscript{34} Lang, \textit{Making Wawa}, 107.
come into its own and cement community bonds and the identity of children growing up in the fur trade.

The first Wawa speaking cohort grew in 1824 as Chief Concomly celebrated the arrival of two grandsons. Ranald’s cousin William “Billy” McKay was born in March 1824 to fur trader Thomas McKay and Timmee, another daughter of Chief Concomly. (See Appendix 3) Thomas was the son of Margaret Wadine McKay, an Ojibwa women, and Alexander McKay of Scotland. Alexander and Thomas were among the first fur traders to cross into the Columbia Department. Unfortunately, Alexander perished on the ship Tonquin in 1811 leaving his teenage son by himself at Fort Astoria. Thomas remained in the region and went on to marry Timmee. His mother Margaret also came out to the Columbia Department and married Dr. John McLoughlin. It was at Fort Vancouver that young Billy McKay began his education under the watchful eye of his step-grandfather. Billy attended the Fort Vancouver School with his cousin Ranald McDonald and his uncle David McLoughlin along with other mixed heritage children such as Andrew Pamburn.

The shared schooling experience at Fort Vancouver gave a sense of community to the young of the Pacific Northwest fur trade. Billy and Ranald were part of the first cohort of mixed heritage youngsters to grow up in the Pacific

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Northwest fur trade and to use Wawa as their native language. They were the foundation for later generations to base their own identity upon. The school also created an environment where their own language could develop without much interruption from outside influences. When outsiders did try to intrude, such as Herbert Beaver, they were met with swift and resounding disdain. This mixed heritage community relied upon their parents to protect their interests and guide them through their early stages of life. However, as they grew into adulthood they took over the fight, defending their personal rights and mixed heritage identity as well as the rights of their community.
CHAPTER III

THE SECOND GENERATION: FIGHTING FOR COMMUNITY

USING TIES OF KINSHIP, 1845-1890

In the mid-nineteenth century, a change in imperial regimes and borders occurred in the Pacific Northwest. In 1842 the Hudson’s Bay Company pulled itself north of the 49th parallel, leaving the rest of the Columbia Department area to the United States. This meant a change in laws regulating Native Americans and mixed heritage peoples. However, these changes did not alter the way people of mixed heritage interacted with each other and their bonds of kinship. The adverse conditions resulting from United States settlement reinforced their bonds of community. Kinship ties remained one of the cornerstones of identity and gave a strong foundation for a mixed heritage culture to grow on.  

The upper ranks of the HBC consisted of Scottish men, but French Canadians dominated the lower corporate ranks or served as servants. They were often of mixed French and indigenous heritage and had created a strong

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1 Ann Stoler. “Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Colonial Southeast Asia.” *Comparative Studies in Society & History* 34, no. 3 (July 1992): 514–516. In her article Stoler discusses the “Internal Frontier” and how colonialism in the nineteenth century categorized imperial subjects. This time of colonialism also saw a change in how mixed heritage populations were treated. They went from an integral part of their community to being completely ostracized under an increasingly racist European regime.
cultural identity in and around the fur trade. Adaptability and flexibility stand as two hallmarks of French Canadian heritage. As the laborers of the fur trade, French Canadians relied on their heritage as they migrated across North America. When they came to the Pacific Ocean these same traits helped them in creating a new homeland for themselves and establishing multigenerational communities. The practice of intermarriage with indigenous women and their reliance on them also proved valuable in establishing families in the region and resisting American colonialism. After the establishment of the boundary between the United States and Canada, the French Canadians and their families used their influence in both American and indigenous communities to help smooth interactions and facilitate communication.²

The French Prairie settlement in the Willamette Valley, in what would later become Oregon State, was more than just a community of retired servants; it was an intentionally created buffer between the encroaching United States and the Hudson’s Bay Company holdings. James Douglas wrote to the HBC Committee about the settlement and his concern that “the interests of the Colony and the Fur Trade will never harmonize, the former can flourish, only, through the protection of equal laws, the influence of free trade, and the accession of

² Jean Barman, *French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women in the Making of the Pacific Northwest* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014). Barman argues that without these French Canadians and their families settlement of the area would have been impossible, and that their leadership after American settlement produced a more stable atmosphere. Barman also shows the respect children of French Canadians and Indigenous women had for their dual heritage. They claimed both as their identity, without choosing one over the other.
respectable inhabitants.” These “respectable inhabitants” Douglas wanted were not the missionaries who were showing up in the Willamette Valley. He worried that

the Methodists nourish secret views, at variance with our interests... It is difficult to anticipate their real intentions, and perhaps unfair to question them; but I am naturally anxious about the designs of a body of men, who have the power of seriously injuring our business and whose conduct may justify suspicion.

Retired employees of the HBC had established French Prairie to serve Fort Vancouver with agricultural produce and cattle, and to create a buffer between the encroaching United States and the HBC holdings. The first wave of settler immigration by the United States came in the form of missionaries. Members of the Willamette Valley community had written to the Bishop of Juliopolis, in Red River, Manitoba, requesting a priest. The Bishop had no one to send, but Protestant missionaries from the United States, Jason and Daniel Lee, arrived in 1834. The community welcomed them warmly, helping the missionaries to set up a church and a school for the children of French Prairie. However, Lee’s inability to learn Wawa and communicate religious ideas clearly limited his influence in the community and Catholic priests eventually replaced him.

Other missionaries soon came to the Willamette Valley and to other

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communities around the Columbia Department. They too focused on Euro-American styled education. Missionaries such as Narcissa Whitman instituted training in the domestic arts, teaching sewing and reading to a handful of mixed heritage girls. Herbert Beaver, a Protestant preacher, also commented on the, “needle-work, however course [sic]” of some of the girls. John Minto recalls how he was pleasantly surprised at the family life he found at Fort George where “three or four young women seated on the floor of the main room, engaged with needle work of some kind.” American settlers’ viewed such activities as civilized pursuits. For people of mixed heritage, sitting on the floor sewing was an expression of their dual heritage. Needlework was an essential part of Native American, as well as European, upbringing. The acceptance of European styles of needlework did not negate their attachments to Indian forms or their Native heritage. Mixed heritage peoples easily incorporated practices of both cultures into their daily routines.

Wawa continued to expand as a language within the mixed heritage population. The HBC move from Astoria to Fort Vancouver had separated the new jargon from its parent language of Lower Chinook. At Fort Vancouver any speaker of Wawa had to draw on other languages in order to create words to

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6 Whaley, Oregon and the Collapse of Illahee, 136.
7 Herbert Beaver, Reports and Letters, 1836-1838, of Herbert Beaver, Chaplain to the Hudson’s Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver (Portland, OR: Champoeg Press, 1959), 83.
8 John Minto to Eva Emery Dye, October 31, 1903, Letter, Eva Emery Dye Papers, Box 2, Folder 10, Oregon Historical Society, Portland, OR.
convey meaning in Wawa. They also used the existing structure of Lower Chinook to expand and modify Wawa for their own uses. At Fort Vancouver, Wawa was put under intense usage connected to fur trade operations. In the Great Lakes region interactions between fur traders and indigenous peoples had created the language Michif. In the Pacific Northwest, Wawa became the language of choice.9

In 1841, Horatio Hale, a member of an United States expedition to study the annexation of the Oregon Territory, recorded the languages of Fort Vancouver:

The place at which the Jargon is mostly in use is at Fort Vancouver. At this establishment five languages are spoken by about five hundred persons, - namely, the English, the Canadian French, the Tshinuk, the Cree or Knisteneau, and the Hawaiian. The three former are already accounted for; the Cree is the language spoken in the families of many officers and men belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company, who have married half-breed wives at the posts east of the Rocky Mountains. The Hawaiian is in use among about a hundred natives of the Sandwich Islands who are employed as laborers about the fort. Besides these fiver, there are many others, - the Tishailish, Walawala, Kalapuya, Naskwale, &c., - which are daily heard from natives who visit the fort for the purpose of trading. Among all these individuals, there are very few who understand more than two languages, and many who speak only their own, The general communication is, therefore, maintained chiefly by means of the Jargon, which may be said to be the prevailing idiom, There are Canadians and half-breeds married to Chinook women, who can only converse with their wives in this speech, - and it is the fact, strange as it may seem, that many young children are growing up to whom this factitious language is really the mother-tongue, and who speak it with more readiness and perfection than any other.10

By the 1840s Wawa had taken over as the most natural mode of communication

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for children of the fur trade. Wawa brought together the ethnically diverse peoples of the Columbia Department and served as the easiest means of communication between the established, mixed heritage communities of the area and incoming American settlers. What had begun as a trade jargon had grown into a full-fledge language by the 1840s.

Native American mothers were largely responsible for perpetuating Wawa through generations of mixed heritage children. Women who married into the fur trade brought their native language with them, which was often the first language heard by their children. However, due to the patriarchal structure of the household, they also emphasized the father’s language. As Native American communities contracted European disease leading to huge social and cultural upheaval, languages such as Lower Chinook started to die out. In this language void, Wawa came into its own. As women faced the loss of their own cultures they offered their children a replacement. They used Wawa and words from their own native language to fill in the gaps of Wawa.11

In the midst of the disease epidemic came the influx of American settlement and with it increased conflict between Native American peoples and the United States citizens. These conflicts pulled people of mixed heritage in different directions as they chose where their loyalty lay. Often choosing between cultures was not a black and white decision, but one of more colorful complexity.

Billy McKay, after his schooling at Fort Vancouver, went east in 1838 to Fairfield and Wilbraham in Massachusetts. Later Billy transferred to Geneva, New York and then to Willowby, Ohio where he finished his medical training. He obtained a medical degree at the age of nineteen and returned to the Columbia Department in 1843. His education allowed him entrance into the HBC where he worked as a clerk. After the HBC removal he used his stills to work for the U.S. government during treaty negotiations with Native American nations, eventually becoming the Umatilla Reservation doctor.\(^{12}\) In 1886 he became a commander of the Warm Springs Indian Scouts during the United States campaign against the Paiute nation. His half brother Donald McKay also served in the same campaign. (See Appendix 11 and 14) Donald had a long career as a military scout for the United States Army, serving from 1852 through 1874. He eventually turned his exploits into a work of historical fiction, titled *Daring Donald McKay, or The Last War Trail of the Modocs* and participated in Wild West shows showcasing the McKay’s exploits during the war.\(^{13}\) (See Appendix 12)

Problems between white settlers and the Paiutes followed a pattern similar in other areas. As the white population increased they took the most desirable lands, leaving Native Americans to starve in the least desirable areas.

A gold discovery on Paiute lands increased white settler desires for Paiute


property. In a particularly perceptive, though Eurocentric report, Major General H. W. Halleck noted how white settlers had systematically degraded the lands and food sources of all Native American nations, both friendly and otherwise. In his report to the Secretary of War, Halleck wrote,

> Hence these Indians are almost forced into collisions and hostilities with the whites, and from their shiftless habits in regard to subsistence, they have scarcely any other alternative than to rob or starve. The frequent robberies and murders committed by these savages, and the retaliatory measures of the settlers, have inaugurated a war of extermination in portions of that country which will be ended only with the removal or entire destruction of the Indians. . . .

When the United States Army began its campaign against the Paiutes the Confederated Tribes, who lived on the Warm Springs Reservation, were asked by the Army to aid them in their fight. There was a historical conflict between the Paiutes and the peoples of Warm Springs who agreed to act as scouts for the Army. They did not see it as choosing the United States over their own people; instead it was an economic opportunity in which they would be able to act upon long held hostilities. Billy McKay became the commander of these scouts because of his ability to act with authority in both American and Native American spheres. His training in the United States made him a commanding figure in the eyes of the U.S. government and his cultural ties to the Warm Springs peoples allowed him to interact with them on a cultural level.

The McDonald family extended their kinship networks throughout the 1800s.

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In 1839, Archibald McDonald’s grandnephew Angus McDonald came out to the Columbia Department. (See Appendix 4) Angus was posted at Fort Colville were his great uncle introduced him to fur trade operations. Angus also became deeply interested in the languages, customs, and habits of the tribes around Fort Colville. In the spring in 1840 Angus left Fort Colville for Fort Hall near present day Pocatello, Idaho. Here Angus met his future wife, Catherine Baptiste, the daughter of an Iroquois/Scotsmen father and a Nez Perce mother. (See Appendix 5) She had established herself as a prominent trader among the Nez Perce and was related to many leaders in the Nez Perce nation. Catherine and Angus married in the fall of 1841. After Fort Hall, Angus went to serve as trader to the Salish Nation and established Fort Connah. He remained there until 1852 when the HBC sent him to Fort Colville.¹⁵ (See Appendix 15) Kinship aided Angus in becoming a fur trader and once he married Catherine her ties to the Nez Perce determined where and how he would raise his family. (See Appendix 10)

Duncan McDonald also became a trader like his father Angus. (See Appendix 6 and 7) He served as a clerk at Fort Connah, which his father had established for the HBC. Duncan eventually married a woman from the Flathead Nation, Louisa Quill, whose Salish name was Red Sleep, and spent a great deal of his adult life living on the Flathead Reservation. Duncan’s strongest ties were

¹⁵ F. W. Howay, William S. Lewis, and Jacob A. Meyers, eds. “Angus McDonald: A Few Items of the West.” *Washington Historical Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (July 1917): 189-190.
to his mother’s people, the Nez Perce. American settlement and a gold rush caused conflict with the Nez Perce nation, leading to the Nez Perce war between June and October 1877. The conflict forced Duncan’s cousins, Chief White Bird and Chief Looking Glass, to flee to Canada where they joined Sitting Bull in the hopes of finding a peaceful life. Duncan joined them in Canada for a short time, questioning them on the conflicts, broken promises, and subsequent peace talks between them and the United States. Upon returning home Duncan began publishing his findings in the Deer Lodge, Montana newspaper. Duncan saw first hand the bloodshed that resulted from the collision of white settlers and Native peoples, and because of to his affection for his Native relatives used his knowledge to encourage white settlers to understand their neighbors instead of attacking them.

On April 5, 1878 The New North-West newspaper of Deer Lodge, Montana reprinted a story from the Idaho Statesman summing of the thoughts and feelings of the American settlers of the area:

Those of the Nez Peres who escaped to the British Possessions at the time of the surrender of Joseph and his remnant of the band of the hostiles are disposed to return to their old haunts, and will avail themselves of the first opportunity to do so. Joseph and his band of captives are earnestly begging to be allowed to come back to Northern Idaho, and there is danger that this appeal may find sufficient favor among the people of the East, who cannot understand the situation or the character of the Indiana, to induce the government to grant the request. A number of these Indians,

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16 Josephy Jr., The Nez Perce Indians and the Opening of the Northwest, 333.
who are known to have been the principal murderers at the Salmon river and Camas Prairie massacres last summer, have been indicted by the Grand Jury at Lewiston, and their return to Northern Idaho would be the signal for their arrest and trial, with the utmost certainty of their conviction and execution for the crimes they are known to have committed. Justice alone regarded would require that these Indians should be returned at the expense of the Government and delivered up to the local authorities where they have been indicated, but under the circumstances it is doubtful if this will be done. If they be allowed to return of their own volition with the rest of the band now captured, it would certainly precipitate hostilities, as they would certainly not be allowed to live in that motion or make an escape from it. The Government would commit a grave mistake in permitting these Indians, or any others of the tribe to return to the scene of their depredations and murders. They should be rendered powerless for harm, and kept under surveillance in what is known as the Indian Territory, or elsewhere, sufficiently remote to render their return impracticable.\(^\text{18}\)

In response to this article and others, Duncan McDonald began writing a weekly column in *The New North-West* telling the story of the Nez Perce and their struggle. “It is the condition of the publication,” Duncan wrote in his first column on April 26, 1878, “that the views shall be related from their standpoint, and as full particulars as possible will be given of the tribe and their great expedition.”\(^\text{19}\)

The aftermath of the Battle of the Big Hole, where U.S. troops had slaughtered women and children, compelled Duncan to tell the Nez Perce story. Duncan traveled to Canada and spent six weeks with his cousin White Bird collecting information on how the war started and what had happened to the Nez Perce since. For the next year, until March 28, 1879, Duncan continued to write about


\(^{19}\)Duncan McDonald, “The Nez Perces: A History of Their Troubles and the Campaign of 1877,” *New North-West*. April 26, 1878.
the hostilities from the Nez Perce point of view. In an article focusing on a conference held by the Chiefs whose bands had sought refuge in Canada, Duncan wrote his own feelings concerning potential hostilities:

In compliance with your request to put you in possession of my views concerning the probability of an outbreak on the part of the Indians of the Northwest, I may as well state at once that I am firmly convinced there is not the slightest chance of one for the present. Of course this opinion has no reference to the possibility of isolated crimes, even as the general peace of the States prevents not occasional Ku Klux raids. Others will more readily understand this conclusion by a perusal of one of my conversations with White Bird, which is here to appended.

Duncan went on to give an account of the conference and White Bird’s hopes of keeping his people in Canada and away from the hostile acts of the American government. Duncan’s ties of kinship with White Bird and the Nez Perce granted him access to their point of view and their story of struggle. By using his ties to the American settlers, especially the editor of The New North-West, Duncan was able to share the Nez Perce story with a large audience. While it is impossible to know exactly how influential Duncan’s prose was, in 1885 the Nez Perce returned to the Pacific Northwest, after being exiled to Indian Territory. The United States gave them a reservation at Fort Colville in eastern Washington.

Christina McDonald, the oldest daughter of Angus and Catherine, followed in the footsteps of both her parents. (See Appendix 8 and 9) Christina became a

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20 Hunter, Scottish Highlanders, Indian People, 172-173.
well-established trader, whose business competed with the HBC. In her youth and throughout her life, Christina acted as an interpreter for her father as well as a bookkeeper. She learned the ins-and-outs of the trading business from her father and the HBC, as well as her mother, who was also an established trader. Christina spoke French, English, and Wawa. Later in life she recalled dining with Governor Douglas “and met Lady Douglas and the girls. Mrs. Douglas was a little woman. We talked in our excitement in French, in Indian and in mixed English and Lady Douglas remarked how she liked to hear the old language again.”

Growing up, Christina helped manage the Fort Colville post, keeping the books, entertaining visitors, and accompanying her father on trading trips. Angus felt very strongly that his daughters needed to have a trade to fall back on. Marriage did not always secure a woman’s future, and Angus wanted his daughters to be able to support themselves. Angus also taught his daughter Maggie the skills of trading, which she used to become “the cattle queen of Montana.”

Fur trade marriages were not only for domestic reasons, but economic ones as well. Women worked as interpreters, guides, and traders. The expansion of kinship networks through marriage could also help stabilize the economics of the group. As time went on and métis daughters became more numerous, their

24 Christina McKenzie to Eva Emery Dye, March 28, 1904, Letter, Eva Emery Dye Papers, Box 2, Folder 6, Oregon Historical Society, Portland, OR.
25 Van Kirk, Many Tender Ties, 52–54.
marriages strengthened kinship networks connecting the growing fur trade community to Native groups. Women embodied the center of fur trade culture. They often knew the languages and customs of the many different tribes and peoples participating in this economic venture, they knew how to survive and live in an environment the fur traders often found foreign, and they provided comfort and companionship in a decidedly lonely occupation. As Chief Factor Hames Douglas noted, “the vapid monotony of an inland trading Post, would be perfectly unsufferable, while habit makes it familiar to us, softened as it is by the many tender ties, which find a way to the heart.” The kinship ties created by marriage allowed new ideas and culture to flow across ethnic barriers and helped to establish permanent family units.

In 1869, Christina married James McKenzie, a young clerk in the HBC, who was stationed at Fort Colville. The HBC transferred them to Kamloops in British Columbia after the establishment of the 49th parallel between the United States and Canada. They entrusted Christina with transporting all the records of Fort Colville to the new Fort Vancouver. After a few years of clerking at the new post in British Columbia, McKenzie resigned and started his own trading post. Upon his death in 1873, Christina took over the business and successfully managed it until her return to Montana years later. In 1874, Ranald met his cousin Christina MacDonald in Kamloops. The two became fast friends and went into business

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together as traders in British Columbia. Christina’s education in the fur trade provided her with the foundation she needed to care for herself and her family.\textsuperscript{28}

Ranald finished his schooling at the Red River Academy and remained in eastern Canada until 1842. After spending several years as a clerk in Montreal, Ranald decided to travel and see the world, which would take him from the opportunities secured for him by his father. He worked his way down the Mississippi River to New Orleans then to New York where he signed on as an ordinary seaman with the \textit{Tuskeny}. Upon learning of Ranald’s departure, his father went to New York to search for him. Archibald was not only concerned for the safety of his son, but as the HBC faced losing the lands south of the 49\textsuperscript{th} parallel, he hoped that Ranald’s claim to his Chinook heritage would secure the HBC right to lands of Comcomly.\textsuperscript{29}

Ranald spent two years sailing around the world and in 1846, after a short respite in the Sandwich Islands, Ranald signed on with the whaling ship \textit{Plymouth}. He convinced the captain of the ship to cast him adrift off the coast of Japan, near the Island of Timoshee. Ranald was eventually captured by the Japanese and imprisoned. While in Japan he taught English to interpreters and was an object of curiosity to many. After leaving Japan and a quick jaunt in the Australian gold rush, Ranald headed home. From 1857 until 1877 Ranald

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  \item \textsuperscript{29} Roe, \textit{Ranald MacDonald}, 30.
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roamed British Columbia owning and operating a ferry, prospecting, leading exploring expeditions, ranching, and helping to establish the Canadian Pacific Railway in British Columbia.

The influx of American settlers into the Columbia Department threw the region into chaos. People of mixed heritage created and used their kinship ties to strengthen their community as they tried to negotiate a new place for themselves amongst the settlers. Billy and Donald McKay used the United States Army to fight against their hereditary enemies. Duncan MacDonald used his access to white settlements to convey the tragic story of the Nez Perce, and Christina MacDonald used marriage and her education in the fur trade to rise to prominence among HBC traders. Ranald MacDonald was mostly absent during this turbulent time, but upon his return to the region he used his kinship ties to once again enter the fur trade. As the fur trade shifted north of the 49th parallel and the United States took over the remaining Columbia Department, now known as Oregon Territory, mixed heritage peoples had to rely on each other.
CHAPTER IV
THE THIRD GENERATION: DEFENDING COMMUNITY
BORDERS, 1890-1910

With the creation of the U.S.-Canadian border in 1846, families of mixed heritage found themselves in a perilous position. They had to make a choice between the two nations, which often meant choosing one set of kinship ties over another. After the 49th parallel divided the U.S. and Canada, the HBC moved its headquarters to Victoria, British Columbia on Vancouver Island. For a time many fur trade families stayed in their family homes, but as the United States became increasingly hostile towards these mixed heritage families they chose to move to Victoria. In Victoria they were once again part of the fur trade community and used these ties for economic stability. However, as settlement increased in Victoria the atmosphere became hostile towards mixed heritage families. Many, such as the Ross family, then chose to move back over the border and take up residence on newly established U.S. Indian reservations, using their ties to the Native American communities to establish a land base for their families.

The family of Charles Ross, a fur trader and chief factor in the HBC, used their kinship ties on both sides of the border to cross between the two imperial nations in their search for economic stability and cultural belonging. Ross had married Isabella, the daughter of a French-Canadian trader and an Ojibway
woman in 1822. Soon after their marriage in Rainy Lake, Ontario the HBC transferred them to the Columbia Department where they raised their family. Ross died in 1844 leaving Isabella with nine children and a tenth on the way. The HBC hired their oldest son, John, and he moved his mother and siblings to Fort Nisqually. The Puget Sound Agricultural Company, a HBC-owned entity based out of Fort Nisqually showed promise as an economically sound investment for company employees. While residing at Fort Nisqually, three of the Ross women married settlers in the area, settlers of both Métis and English descent.

However, as American settlers moved into the area, racial discrimination against those with Native American heritage began to grow, especially in regard to land rights. The Ross family decided to leave the U.S. and move up to Fort Vancouver with the rest of the HBC. In Victoria, Isabella claimed land her husband had bought before his death and raised her remaining children, building up the family fortunes. Her oldest children stayed in the Nisqually area. Charles Ross Jr. married a member of the Nisqually nation and in 1884 took up lands on the Nisqually Indian Reservation. His sisters, who had moved to Fort Victoria, eventually came back to Washington State, taking up lands near their brother. The Ross family used both Native and fur trade connections to cross borders and pursue stability in the ever changing landscape of American settlement.¹

Wawa was also going through its own transition. By the 1850s, Wawa had started to become a written language with the production of handbooks and word lists to facilitate learning and standardizing the jargon. In 1893, James Pilling published the *Bibliography of the Chinookan Languages: Including the Chinook Jargon.*² Pilling, a congressional stenographer and ethnologist who compiled extensive bibliographies on Native American languages, aimed to include everything, printed or in manuscript, relating to the Chinookan language and to the Chinook Jargon—books, pamphlets, articles in magazines, tracts, serials, etc., and such reviews and announcements of publications as seemed worthy of note.³

Pilling introduces the jargon as having a “preponderance of material, both published and in manuscript” which “were it proper to speak of the language as an American language a change of title to this bibliography would be necessary.”⁴ Wawa had grown from a trade jargon to a full-fledged, written language with numerous published sources materials, one of the most influential being *Kamloops Wawa*, a weekly newspaper printed in both Wawa and English.

The newspaper started on May 25, 1891 by Father Jean Le Jeune in the Kamloops District of British Columbia. Written in shorthand, *Kamloops Wawa* or “Talk of Kamloops” allowed the reader to understand the sounds composing the Wawa. Mary Balf, an amateur historian in Kamloops, wrote “a bright child could

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⁴ Pilling, *Bibliography of the Chinookan Languages*, vi.
master this [the shorthand] in a few hours. Le Jeune created the shorthand in order to teach the indigenous peoples of the Kamloops district how to read prayers and hymns. *Kamloops Wawa* continued Le Jeune's effort to teach biblical material to the people of his district, but the newspaper also acted as a dictionary and teaching tool for those learning the shorthand. As the newspaper grew in popularity and Le Jeune acquired a printing press, contents grew to include local and world news.

The first issues of *Kamloops Wawa* published in October of 1892 focused on teaching readers the rudiments of the shorthand. Lessons on capitalization, spelling, grammar, and pronunciation appear in the first seven issues of the newspaper. The lessons corresponded with lessons in a reader, which instructed Wawa readers on the finer points of English. *Kamloops Wawa* grew in breath as time progressed, including the printing of Wawa shorthand alongside columns of English. Issue 127 printed in April 1895 contained illustrations, a “Monthly Budget” featuring new words in Wawa, along with ads, religious texts, and a section detailing the emergence of “Chinook Jargon.” Father Le Jeune explains the emergence of Chinook Jargon as

Invented by the Hudson Bay Company traders. Who were mostly French-Canadians. Having to trade with the numerous tribes inhabiting the countries west of the Rocky Mountains, it was necessary to have a language understood by all. Hence the idea of composing the Chinook Jargon….two first missionaries to Oregon, Rev F.N. Blanchet…and Rev.

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6 LeJeune, “Remarks.”
Mod. Demers…arrived from Canada to Vancouver on the 24th of November, 1838. They had to instruct numerous tribes of Indians, and the wives and children of the whites, who spoke only Chinook. The two missionaries set to work to lean it…Father Demers…composed a vocabulary which was very useful….7

Wawa acted as a bridge between different cultures and languages, offering the many peoples in the Pacific Northwest a common language as well as a way to learn the language of others. Kamloops Wawa helped to facilitate this communication bridge; readers of any stage were able to take away important language lessons from every issue. (See Appendix 16 and 17)

In 1898 Father Le Jeune printed a small pamphlet with further instructions on how to read, write, and speak Wawa. In this pamphlet Le Jeune discussed the genesis of Wawa and the creation of certain words, noting a “man named Pelton, going insane, furnished a term for fool or madman…Tum-tum is a sound word for heart (from the pulsation), and is used for will, purpose, desire.”8 Le Jeune’s documentation of Wawa’s growth shows the creativity used by the speakers of Wawa and the community acceptance of these creative words and their meanings.

By June of 1901 the Kamloops Wawa was on Issue 197. This issue covered an even wider range of materials. Le Jeune covered local weather observations of Chief Lekwotem, major happenings of the districts of British

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Columbia, including wedding announcements, and a section containing news only in Wawa. This issue also featured coverage of martyrs in China and images of the new church in Kamloops. Most interesting in this issue is the section “Just a Little Fun” in which Le Jeune shares a humorous comic strip written in Wawa.9 The readers of Kamloops Wawa had grown as a community since the first issues, as had their expectations of content. Sharing community events in the language helped to reaffirm identity among the readers. They read about each other’s lives, world news, and religious texts in a language all their own. (See Appendix 21 and 22)

The newspaper grew in circulation from 100 to 2,000 over the course of thirty-two years of publication, but many more people read it than subscribed. Family and friends passed it around as it made its way through British Columbia communities.10 Because it was written in Chinook Wawa instead of the Nootka Wawa (which was based out of Vancouver Island in British Columbia), it is not beyond the realm of reason that the newspaper made its way to all corners of the former Columbia Department. The white settler population thought the newspaper an oddity and in 1921, thirty years later, many still saw it as a “novel newspaper.”11 To the Wawa speakers of British Columbia the newspaper was not

an oddity; it was an important source of information and learning that bound them
together in a larger community of Wawa speakers and readers.\textsuperscript{12} (See Appendix
18, 19, and 20)

The new American regime brought the formation of reservations, policies
aimed at limiting Native American power, the escalation of war, and the creation
of boarding schools. In 1880, the Indian Training School in Forest Grove, Oregon
opened. The U.S. government set the school up with the intent of teaching young
Native American students trade skills such as farming and animal husbandry
along with household duties and other womanly arts. They renamed the school
Chemawa Indian School in 1885 and moved it to its present location in Salem,
Oregon.\textsuperscript{13}

Chemawa played an important role in Donald MacDonald’s fight for
respectful treatment and the education of his children. Donald, the son of the fur
trader Angus McDonald, used his understanding of American law and his ties to

\textsuperscript{12} Benedict Anderson. \textit{Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of
points out the imagined political aspect to nationalism and the importance of cultural roots to
creating a national identity. Print cultural in particular helps to bring together the diverse aspects
of a community and allows them to think of themselves as a national group. I believe these first
steps towards creating a national mixed heritage identity were taking place throughout the 19th
century and were then being articulated through the Kamloops Wawa. However, Hobsbawm’s
reminder on page 11, that “we cannot assume that for most people national identification- when it
exists- excludes or is always or ever superior to, the remainder of the set of identifications which
constitute the social being” also needs to be kept in mind. People of mixed heritage identified
themselves by different nationalities, their mixed heritage statues gave them access to other
national identities and allowed them to create their own separate social identity.

\textsuperscript{13} Edwin L. Chalcraft and Collins C. Collins, \textit{Assimilation’s Agent: My Life as a Superintendent in
the Boarding School System}, (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2004): xlv.
Native American heritage to claim land and monetary rights for himself and his daughters. At the age of nineteen, Donald started working at the Fort Colville store. When Angus left Fort Colville for Post Creek, Montana, Donald stayed in order to keep the McDonald claim to the land, having it surveyed and eventually gaining the title to the old fur trading post. In 1877 Donald married Maggie Stensgar. Maggie was also of mixed heritage and came from a long line of Nez Percé women who had acted as interpreters and guides for many fur traders.\(^{14}\)

Of Maggie and Donald’s four children, two went to Chemawa in 1903. Julia and Christina, who were unmarried and the right age to be sent away to boarding school, went to Chemawa at the expense of the Indian Department. Donald felt this was their privilege, writing “they have thin native Indian blood and are entitled to the benefits of all that may be given by the Indian Department to Full blooded Indians.”\(^{15}\) Donald hoped his daughters would attain an education not offered by the very new public school system. Instead, what he found was that the United States did not want to educate the Native Americans, they wanted to erase their culture.\(^{16}\) Chemawa had a long list of superintendents over the short years of the school’s operation. Students suffered corporal discipline, solitary confinement, restrictions against speaking their Native languages, horrid food, and harsh conditions.

\(^{14}\) Roe, *Ranald MacDonald*, 223-224.
\(^{15}\) Donald MacDonald to Eva Emery Dye, March 26, 1904, Eva Emery Dye Papers, Box 2, Folder 6, Oregon Historical Society, Portland, OR.
working conditions." It was not the educational experience Donald wished for his daughters.

While attending Chemawa, Julia was physically punished for protecting her younger sister from a beating. Protesting their punishment Donald wrote to the assistant superintendent of the school asking that his daughters be allowed to come home, not only because of their treatment, but also because “The girls are wanted to have themselves enrolled as members of the Flathead tribe in Montana.” Writing to his friend Eva Emery Dye, Donald expressed his outrage at their treatment saying,

[An] Act of Congress…gave them the benefits of inheritance that their parent or parents may have. And again on the other hand, I am a Citizen and Tax payer of the US and how can the Asst. Superintendent think to mark my girls think that they have no liberty, when the constitution calls of protection of life, property, and liberty.

Donald felt his girls had dual rights. Those from their Native blood entitled them to attend a Native school and enroll in the Flathead Reservation, which they eventually did. Donald also felt that they should receive the rights accorded to all American citizens, because they were American citizens. Rights, citizenry, and identity were not mutually exclusive in Donald’s mind. He used his mixed heritage to establish his family’s Native rights under the new American regime even as he asserted his rights as citizen and taxpayer.

17 Chalcraft and Collins, Assimilation’s Agent, xxxviii–xliv.
18 Donald MacDonald to Eva Emery Dye, March 26, 1904, Eva Emery Dye Papers, Box 2, Folder 6, Oregon Historical Society, Portland, OR.
19 Ibid.
Billy McKay would go on to play an important role in the early politics of Washington and Oregon. However, he was denied the vote in 1870. The United States decided he was either a British subject or a member of a Native American nation; he could not be a citizen of the United States and a citizen of any other nation. W.L. Hill, in an article for *The American Law Register*, wrote up his comments on the case:

This being so, in my judgment he was not born in the allegiance of the United States but in that of the British crown. The plaintiff, being the child of an unnaturalized alien, and unnaturalized himself, cannot claim to be an American citizen, except upon the single ground that *he was born upon the soil, and subject to the jurisdiction of the United States*. Nothing that has happened since his birth can add to or take away from the strength of his claim. The treaty of 1846 which definitely acknowledged the country south of the 49th parallel to belong to the United States, contains no provision naturalizing the British subjects living south of that line, who may elect to become American citizens by remaining there, or otherwise.

After years of fighting this claim, Billy did finally win the right to vote in May of 1872, but it required an act of Congress and the signature of President U. S. Grant. This case became the grounds for determining which Native Americans had the right to claim U.S. citizenship and who could not. However, people of mixed heritage did not receive the same treatment across the board. Angus McDonald and his children were all able to become citizens of the United States.

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Billy was not the only person in his family to struggle with rights being denied by the United States government. His children, Lelia and Thomas McKay would fight for years for their father’s army pension.

Billy had attained a “commander’s” position in the US Army during his service against the Paiutes in 1886 and 1887. His brother Donald, who had served an even longer career in the Army as a scout, also sought a military pension in his later years. Donald, along with many other scouts, felt their treatment was due to their mixed heritage status. Upon learning that he would never receive the award due to him for capturing the Modoc Captain Jack, Donald jokingly wrote

I think there is too much Indian in me to ever get it, still I am one-fourth white and one-fourth of the money would come good now that my many wounds have rendered me unfit to do any more service.23

A friend and former Indian scout member of the brothers, J. W. Redington, wrote to Eva Emery Dye about Donald’s pension case. Donald never won his case because of, “red tape officialism…blocking it,” he died “without ever receiving the recognition that he earned by hard war service in the field.”24 After their father’s death, Lelia and Thomas McKay sought federal recognition for Billy’s service and his rightful pension. Redington took an interest in their case as well, helping to negotiate the red tape of the Pension Bureau in Washington. Lelia and Thomas McKay or The Last War Trail of the Modocs., viii.

J.W. Redington to Eva Emery Dye, July 31, 1928, Eva Emery Dye Papers, Box 2, Folder 12, Oregon Historical Society, Portland, OR.
were not the only ones fighting the United States government for pension rights. Many men who had served in the Army as Indian scouts found themselves in similar positions. According to Redington it was due to “the Pension Buro at Wash. Would ask the Oregon Adjutant General’s office about that veteran’s service, and, it would reply that there was no record of that veteran’s service, and nothing to show that the Company he served in ever existed.”

Newspaper coverage of the pension cases drew local attention to the treatment of Indian scouts after their service and provided numerous testimonies from those who had served and their commanding officers. Despite the work of Lelia, Thomas, and their friends, the United States never recognized the service of the McKay brother’s and any of the Indian scouts. Local recognition and acceptance for people of mixed heritage was obtainable. However, at the federal level recognition remained allusive.

By 1888 Ranald was once again living at Fort Colville, this time with Donald MacDonald. Donald had built up a successful ranch and owned a successful hotel along with other properties and warmly welcomed his older cousin. Ranald spent many quiet years at Fort Colville, teaching Donald’s and

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25 J.W. Redington to Eva Emery Dye, March 7, 1931, Eva Emery Dye Papers, Box 2, Folder 12, Oregon Historical Society, Portland, OR.
Christina’s children manners and dancing, talking to the many visitors about the old HBC days, and writing a story of his own adventures. During his time at Fort Colville, Eva Emery Dye contacted Ranald, questioning him on his life and adventures abroad. Dye was collecting information on the fur trade and old fur traders in the Columbia Department in order to write her own books. Many years of correspondence between Ranald and Dye cemented a strong friendship, which would eventually lead to Dye publishing her own book about Ranald’s life in 1906 titled *McDonald of Oregon: A Tale of Two Shores*.

In 1892, shortly after their correspondence started, Ranald wrote to Dye about her current book project:

> You inform that you are writing a story of McLoughlin and the Hudson’s Bay times in Oregon entitled The King of the Columbia. Well! this has made me scratch my old head, and caused me to reflect, is this poss-able that they are also going to deprive me of my now empty title (for I had never assumed it) the lands they have taken away, a heritage that should be mine. being no lawyer, I could not define the limits and perhaps nobody else. but consider myself the only living descendent of the once powerful King Kum Kumly, So as his only surviving representative you will excuse me if I dutifully and loyally enter my protest (for all the good it will do) in this usurping of rights and prerogatives of an other don’t laugh. I mean what I say altho I may not enough to jingle on a tomb stone, but such is the case nevertheless.\(^{28}\)

Ranald understood that his claim to the lands and even the heritage of the Chinook was not one, which the incoming white settler population would respect or understand. However, that did not stop Ranald from identifying himself with his

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\(^{28}\) Ranald MacDonald to Eva Emery Dye, July 24, 1892, Eva Emery Dye Papers, Box 2, Folder 6, Oregon Historical Society, Portland, OR.
Chinook ancestors or claiming the lands of Comcomly as his own. In response to Ranald’s claim Dye retitled her book on McLoughlin and wrote another work focused on Ranald and his claims to mixed heritage, as well as his adventures abroad.

In a book review of *McDonald of Oregon* by Thomas Prosch, Dye’s working relationship with Ranald is revealed:

When she did find McDonald at old Fort Colville, and told him she was going to call McLoughlin "The King of the Columbia," he jokingly said "What, madame, call McLoughlin King of the Columbia! Why, madame, I am the King of the Columbia," and when he told his story, including his adventure in Japan, Mrs. Dye realized that here she had matter for another and greater book than the McLoughlin she then had in mind, and so carefully refrained from mentioning McDonald in that work, retaining this new hero for a book by himself. Arrangements were in progress for the McDonald story when McDonald himself suddenly died, not, however, until he had directed her to various sources of information on his remarkable career. Many letters and some manuscripts he had attempted to prepare had been loaned to Malcolm McLeod, of Ottawa, which he was unable to get back.29

Dye was able to obtain Ranald’s letters and journals from McLeod and used them to finish her work about his life. In a speech given on September 11, 1911 Dye once again reiterated the importance of Ranald’s mixed heritage and the lack of federal recognition of his rights.

After years of adventure, Ranald McDonald returned to Oregon, to find it divided into Oregon, Washington and Idaho…In 1892 he made a pilgrimage to Astoria to press his claims for recompense as heir to the Chinook lands of his grandfather, King Cumcumly. But alas he found himself “a prince without a principality, a king without a subject.” Sadly he journeyed back up

Dye used her book to draw attention to the mixed heritage population and their struggle to claim their rights. Her book on Ranald ends on a similar note as her speech. “The memory of those days and the desire to commemorate them grew with age, and when, as almost his last legacy, he desired this author to write his story she promised as to the dead.” While federal policy did not recognize mixed heritage people, the local population of the Pacific Northwest certainly did.

Claiming the lands of his Native American heritage may have been impossible, but claiming the bloodlines and respect Ranald felt Native Americans deserved was another matter all together. In 1890 Elizabeth Custer, the widow of General Custer, paid the MacDonald family a visit at Old Fort Colville. Ranald gladly showed Mrs. Custer and her party around the old Fort, telling them stories of the early fur trade on the Columbia and his own early memories of the place. Mrs. Custer then wrote an article for Harper’s Weekly calling Ranald a “Prince of Paupers” and to add considerable insult to injury she referred to Donald’s wife as a “squaw.” In response to this Ranald wrote a letter in the Kettle Falls Pioneer newspaper, saying:

As to the application of the word “squaw” to the lady of the house the old Fort with its time honored tenants, Mrs MacDonald the wife of my cousin Donald was well born is well educated, and with as fine literary taste in

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31 Dye, McDonald of Oregon, 395.
share with her husband, commented on by the Colville press, and with as fine an appreciation of habit of the proprieties and duties of civilized life as any of the circle to which Mrs. Custer belongs. Mrs MacDonald is the daughter of Thomas Stranggar a worthy officer in the Hudsons Bay Company and now a well known and highly respected and wealthy citizen of this valley, his wife was a daughter of the late Antoin Plant of Jacko, Montana. There was no white women in the country at the time, so she was of some Indian blood- but then, if not still, the red flowd was the true blue in sovereign lordship of the country.33

For Ranald, having Native blood in one’s veins in no way precluded one from being an equal participant in white, settler culture and made those of mixed Native descent the true sovereign lords of the country, making his family the best of both worlds. Ranald understood the new borders and settler culture were now an integral part of everyday life, but that did not mean the established communities and peoples who predated settler colonialism needed to be swept under the rug.

While Ranald laid claim to his Native ancestry, he also claimed his Scottish side. Ranald felt he was part of that pioneer culture--not the American settler pioneers, but the fur traders as they went into lands unknown to them and created families and lives. In 1892 Ranald wrote to Dye:

To heard of some who style themselves as pioneers they had only followed the food prints of these early pioneers, For after undergoing the daners of the River navigation, expeditions were fitted out to trade to the head of the Missouri to California their were no such boundaries as Montana Idaho, Washington or Oregon to British Columbia in those days that of course you are aware of. I do not wish to distract one iota from those pioneers, They have suffered. undergone hardships and dangers of the scalping knives if

33 Ranald MacDonald to Eva Emery Dye, Sept 3, 1891, Eva Emery Dye Papers, Box 2, Folder 6, Oregon Historical Society, Portland, OR.
they know these dangers and privations they must give credit to the pioneers of 60 and 70 years ago.  

As a mixed descendant of the elite from both Native and European inhabitants of the Pacific Northwest, Ranald did not want to detract from the story of one group or another, but to point out the differences in what they had gone through. They fought for the rights they saw as theirs, using their heritage to do so. Donald MacDonald used his Native American heritage to educate his girls and claim reservation lands. When his girls were treated harshly he used his claim to American citizenship to demand better treatment for them. Billy and Donald McKay’s work as military scouts entitled them to Army pensions, and when they were denied local outrage fought to secure them their rights. Finally Ranald most eloquently declared his mixed heritage. He steadfastly fought for recognition of his birthrights. Ranald did not expect to gain monetary value from his birthright, but he did expect people to treat him with the respect his mixed heritage dictated.

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34 Ranald MacDonald to Eva Emery Dye, July 24, 1892, Eva Emery Dye Papers, Box 2, Folder 6, Oregon Historical Society, Portland, OR.
Throughout his life Billy McKay used Wawa as his native language. On May 11, 1892 at a ceremony celebrating Captain Robert Grey’s first entrance into the mouth of the Columbia River, Billy gave a short address in Wawa, an address widely understood by the gathered crowd. His speech concerned the history of the early fur trade families and their importance to the region. An eager crowd, composed of many “early” settlers of Oregon country, stayed through a long day of speeches to hear Billy’s address.¹

Not only did language grow with the children of the fur trade, it cemented a community identity between them, giving them a common ground on which to understand each other. Today Wawa is still used on the Grande Ronde Reservation in Oregon, and elders keep the language alive by teaching it to younger generations.² Wawa still provides a base for community identity among current generations of mixed heritage peoples.

The fur trade in the Columbia Department created an environment for a new cultural identity to develop. Children growing up during the fur trade used aspects of both parent’s heritage to shape their own community. Language and

² Lang and Carriker, eds., *Great River of the West*, 51.
the creation of a separate space for mixed heritage children in the form of the Fort Vancouver School helped them to establish the foundation of a community. As this first generation grew into adulthood, they used kinship networks to defend and strengthen their community, especially through the use of newspapers. Finally when imperial political borders disrupted the kinship networks long established by mixed heritage families, they used their ties on both sides of the border to pursue economic and social stability. They defended their rights and the rights of their families against the assimilation aims of the United States. Claiming their place within the Pacific Northwest.

The fur traders first entered the Pacific Northwest in the 1790s and almost immediately began forming intimate relationships with the Native American Nations they encountered. The products of these unions grew up in a time of social and political changes in the Columbia Department. New European diseases that followed the traders decimated their mothers’ people, leaving cultural voids that needed to be filled. Language was especially hit hard by the disease epidemics that swept through the Columbia Department. Wawa came into being as languages of the Native nations began to die out, helping to facilitate communication between unrelated communities. This trade jargon became the natural language for the first generation of mixed heritage children to use in everyday exchanges. Between 1790 and 1845, as they grew into adulthood, Wawa grew in sophistication. Education was also important for the
growth of a community identity. The Fort Vancouver School created a separate space for children to congregate together and build a sense of community among themselves, separate from their parents.

As these children grew into adulthood, the Columbia Department experienced even more social changes. The generation between 1845 and 1890 saw their homeland attacked both physically and ideologically. Missionary settlement from the United States brought and spread negative racial views into the region, American settlers perpetuated warfare against Native American nations, and the U.S./Canadian border was created, forcing the HBC to move North of the 49th parallel. The mixed heritage community fought against these intrusions in a variety of ways, most often through the network of their kinship ties. They also strengthened their community through marriage and economic relationships. Wawa also provided a firm foundation for community identity. It grew in complexity as needed to help mixed heritage peoples deal with each other and the settler world, becoming a written language in that process.

The third generation between 1890 and 1910 had to deal with the ramifications of new political borders and imperial racialization. The newly established border divided the Columbia Department and the mixed heritage kinship networks, which spanned it. Racialization pushed families from one side to another as they sought the best space to raise their families and to pursue economic stability. They also used their understandings of the legal system in the
United States to defend their rights as American citizens with mixed heritage. They claimed the rights of both worlds, which they felt they deserved. Wawa also continued to hold together the mixed heritage community, becoming a written language, which allowed them to communicate with other Wawa speakers over a larger geographical area.

Ranald MacDonald died on August 5, 1894. He had witnessed the changing of his homeland, from the realm of Comcomly to the Hudson’s Bay Company’s Columbia Department to the United States and Canada and their respective states and provinces. Today the descendents of the McDonald/MacDonald family and the McKay family still live in the Pacific Northwest. The McDonald/MacDonald family in particular still maintains strong ties to the Flathead Reservation in Montana where they are community leaders. Wawa has also survived to the present. Classes are offered at the Chachalu Museum and Cultural Center in Salem, Oregon to ensure that Wawa is never lost.
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Dissertations

1. Ranald MacDonald as a Young Man

2. Ranald MacDonald in 1891

3. “Donald McKay (seated), Dr. William McKay, and his son John, in 1874 photo taken in San Francisco, at beginning of tour with Warm Springs scouts after Modoc War.”

4. Angus McDonald

“Angus Macdonald,” Archival Photograph from the University of Montana, Image No. 77.0289.
5. Catherine McDonald.

“Katherine McDonald, Wife of Angus McDonald,” Archival Photograph from the University of Montana, Image No. 83.0096.
6. Duncan MacDonald as a Young Man

“Duncan McDonald, Son of Angus McDonald.” Archival Photograph from the University of Montana. Image No. 90.0018.
8. Christina MacDonald, age 14.

9. Christina MacDonald, age 23.


11. “Warm Springs Reservation scouts, with uniform hats and rifles, circa 1873, when they served in the Modoc War. William's brother Donald McKay was in charge of scouts then, and probably is at right, in front of Spencer carbines.”

12. Cover of *Daring Donald McKay* by Edwards Thomas Augustus.


14. Donald MacDonald

15. MacDonald Family at Fort Colville


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